



**P6 Audience will discover me in new ways: Tasnia Farin**



**P7 US won't 'walk away' from Middle East: Biden**



**P8 Dollars -- to buy or to sell?**



**P11 Robert Lewandowski set to join Barcelona**

**NARAIL MAYHEM**

**'They attacked us because we are Hindus'**

Locals leave homes after second attack in a month

DIPANKAR ROY

Deepali Rani Saha can never forget this Friday night when she watched her house burn down.

"After one group looted all our valuables, another group came and found our door open. As there was nothing left to loot, they set our home on fire."

While the looters attacked, the 62-year-old was hiding under the bed in a shed adjacent to the house with her son Gobinda.

"They could not break in [where we were hiding] as it was locked. They then attacked the temple next door and vandalised the idol."

Deepali's was among the three homes and dozens of shops that were vandalised or burnt down in Sahapara village in Dighalia union of Narail's Lohagara upazila.

The attacks were carried out by mobs protesting a Facebook post that reportedly hurt religious sentiments.

Locals alleged the post was made by Akash Saha, an 18-year-old college student of the village.

They gathered after Juma prayers and protested in front of the student's house, demanding his arrest.

As he was missing, the mobs spread to neighbouring Hindu homes -- homes of people who had nothing to do with the Facebook post.

In the evening, the police detained Akash's father Ashoke Saha to "bring the situation under control", while they prepared to file a case under the Digital Security Act against Akash.

None of the attackers, however, have been arrested yet.

Yesterday morning, Deepali stood embracing her eight-month-old granddaughter Rai Saha in front of the charred remains of their home.

She pointed out how even little Rai's possessions were not spared.

"Only because the student is Hindu and I [too] am Hindu, my house was burnt down."

"I don't know how long this threat of violence will haunt us. Who will give us justice? Who will give us security? ... If I were in the house while they set it on fire, I would have died. God saved me. But is this any way to survive? All I have now is the sari on my body."

Many people from the administration have been coming since yesterday morning and giving assurances of safety, but she is unconvinced.

"I am not asking for money; I am not asking for help. I am seeking answers -- why was my house set on fire?"

Her son Gobinda, a betel leaf trader, sat on yard sobbing on the phone, with relatives calling from abroad, as he listed all they had lost.

His wife Chandra Saha was not home the night of the attack. When she returned yesterday, she stood shell-shocked in front of the carnage.

"I don't want to stay here with my children. I don't want to be a victim," she said.

Police have deployed additional forces to ensure security, but locals still feel unsafe.

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3

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A shell-shocked Deepali Rani sitting at the doorstep of her house, which was set on fire during Friday's communal attack on properties owned by Hindu people in Sahapara area of Lohagara, Narail. The mobs went on a rampage after Juma prayers, saying that an 18-year-old man from the neighbourhood hurt their religious feelings on Facebook. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

**PMO steps in to find ways to ease tailback**

Meeting today over gridlock at toll plazas of Padma Bridge, expressway, Hanif flyover

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

There was a fear that opening the Padma Bridge may worsen gridlocks at the entrance to the capital's south due to a lack of planning to dealing with additional traffic.

And the fear of experts, road users and even officials, has now been justified as the entrance to Jatrabari has been witnessing regular traffic congestions since late last month. The situation was grave particularly during the Eid rush.

Meanwhile, manual toll collection at the newly opened bridge and the Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway added to the snarl-ups when the pressure of vehicles increased, leading to the suffering of tens of thousands of passengers.

Amid such a situation, the Prime Minister's Office has called a meeting today to come up with solutions to traffic congestions at the Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover and the toll plazas of the expressway and bridge.

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**Road crashes claim 29 lives in a day**

Dozens hurt in 10 dists; woman, her 2 children among the dead

STAR REPORT

It was a deadly day on the roads yesterday as at least 29 people were killed and more than two dozens injured in crashes in 10 districts.

Of the victims, a woman and her two children died after being run over by a bus near Pakulla bus station in Tangail's Mirzapur upazila.

The dead were identified as Parvin Akter, 26, a resident of Bashtoil village in Mirzapur, her son Sumon, 10, and daughter Sadiya, 8.

The victims' family members Parvin along with her children were returning home yesterday morning after celebrating Eid-ul-Azha with her father at a nearby village.

A bus ran them over while the three were crossing Dhaka-Tangail highway in Pakulla bus station area, leaving Sadiya

dead on the spot.

Critically injured Parvin and Sumon were taken to Tangail General Hospital where a doctor declared them dead, said Monsur Mucha, assistant superintendent of Tangail police.

Another accident in Mirzapur upazila's Dulla Monsur area claimed four lives and left nine others injured. The crash occurred around 4:30am when a Dhaka-bound bus hit a sand-laden stationary truck, said police.

The deceased were identified as bus passengers Alok Kumar Roy of Rangpur's Pirganj, Jakaria Islam of Barishal, Moazzem Hossain of Mymensingh's Fulbaria, and Shakhawat Hossain, helper of the bus driver.

In Mymensingh, three family members, including a pregnant woman, died after a truck ran them over in Trishal

upazila in the afternoon.

The victims -- Jahangir Alam, 42, his wife Ratna begum, 26, and their three-year-old daughter Sanjida -- were from Roymoni village in the same upazila.

A neighbour of the victims said the three were travelling to the upazila town from their village for medical examinations of Ratna. Around 2:00pm, they were standing along a road to cross it.

All of a sudden, an onion-laden truck ran them over, leaving the father and daughter dead on the spot.

Critically injured Ratna gave birth to a baby girl before breathing her last there, said Mohammad Mainuddin Jahangir, OC of Trishal Police Station.

In Sirajganj, four people were killed and five others injured when a bus collided head-on with two trucks in Khalkula area of Tarash upazila.

The dead were identified as bus passengers Abdul Aziz, 46, of Bagha, Rajshahi, Mirazul Islam, 32, of Ishwardi, Pabna, and Raihanur Rahman, 35, of Gazipur and Masud Hossain, 33, a truck driver from Natore.

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**Miracle baby**  
Dying mother gives birth at the scene of accident



AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

The birth of a baby is among the happiest moments in a parent's life. But for Ratna Begum, her happiness was short-lived: she died soon after.

She was headed to the diagnostic centre for her routine pregnancy check-up when an onion-laden truck hit them while at the Court Building area of Trishal upazila of Mymensingh yesterday afternoon.

Her husband, Jahangir Alam, and her daughter Sanjida died on the spot. But the 26-year-old survived long enough to give birth to a girl, said Mohammad Mainuddin, the officer-in-charge of Trishal Police

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Locals block Dhaka-Tangail highway in Pakulla area of Mirzapur, Tangail, after a woman and two children got crushed to death by a bus around 11:40am yesterday. Residents of the area said they have long been demanding an underpass for people to safely go across the busy road. PHOTO: STAR

**MP beat me up and it was all planned**

Rajshahi principal heard saying in audio clip, says the same to NU probe panel: sources

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

College Principal Salim Reza admitted to a probe committee that he was indeed assaulted by Rajshahi lawmaker Omor Faruk Chowdhury at the latter's chamber more than a week ago, according to two individuals who were present when Salim was talking to the committee members.

Salim, principal of Rajbari Degree College in Godagari upazila, termed the assault a "planned" one when he was interviewed by the three-member committee on Friday morning, the sources told The Daily Star.

During the interview at Salim's home in Rajshahi, the committee members headed by National University (NU) Registrar Molla Mahfuz Al-Hossain talked to the principal alone and also in presence of his family members and relatives.

However, the committee members did not talk to reporters about the findings.

NU Human Resources Director Jayanta Bhattacharjee, a member of the committee, said, "We are committed to finding the truth."

The probe body was formed on Wednesday amid reports that MP Omor assaulted Salim at his office on July 7.

The next day, the lawmaker held a press conference

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## Headmaster beaten up by AL men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A headmaster was beaten up by some local Awami League men in Barishal's Wazirpur upazila on Friday afternoon over the possession of Puttari Beel.

At least five other people, including a journalist, were injured when the assaulters attacked them and vandalised the poultry feed shop of Uzzal Kumar Mandal, headmaster of Rajihar Secondary School in the district's Agailjhara upazila.

Witnesses said a group of about 25 people, led by Satla Union AL Organising Secretary Mashiur Mia and his brother Monir Mia, a local Jubo League leader, carried out the attack with sticks and iron rods.

Speaking at a press conference at Barishal press club yesterday, the headmaster alleged that Mashiur and Monir had been occupying Puttari Beel for the last 15 years.

Uzzal said he along with other lessees of the water body released fish fries into it on Friday morning, which angered the siblings.

"Around 1:00pm, some 25 men, led by the two brothers, carrying sticks and iron rods vandalised my business, Eva Enterprises, at Patibari Bazar of Satla union. They beat me up and injured five other people, including local UP member Amar Mallik and journalist Nikunja Bala Palash. They also looted Tk 5 lakh from my business," the headmaster said.

He said he filed a complaint with Wazirpur Police Station in connection with the incident on Friday, but police were yet to record it as a case.

Journalist Nikunja Bala said the assaulters attacked him and vandalised his mobile phone while he was filming the incident with the device.

Despite several attempts, The Daily Star could not reach Mashiur and Monir over the phone for comments as they did not respond to calls.

Momin Uddin, officer-in-charge of Wazirpur Police Station, said he received a complaint over the attack, and that an investigation was underway.

Satla Union Parishad Chairman Shaheen Howladar, also the union AL general secretary, said the attack was led by Monir and his brother Mashiur.

"I have already informed district Awami League President Abul Hasanat Abdullah MP about the incident," he added.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Burnt belongings in the house of Dipali Rani. Even the tin roof got charred after the house was set on fire by a mob on Friday.

## Trip back to Dhaka turns bitter

Thousands stuck in snarl-up for hours on Dhaka-Tangail highway, Bangabandhu bridge link road

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Thousands of people suffered for hours in tailbacks on Bangabandhu bridge link road in Tangail for the fourth straight day yesterday.

Moreover, two crashes in Mirzapur created gridlock on Dhaka-Tangail highway that lasted almost throughout the day.

On the Bangabandhu bridge link road, the tailbacks that began Friday morning were not cleared even at night.

Garment worker Bilkis Akter, who was returning to work in Dhaka with her son, said her child suffered a lot in the heat without food and water as her bus remained stuck in Elega, Tangail, for hours.

Highway police said there were too many vehicles on the road as people were heading back to Dhaka from the northern districts after Eid vacation. Besides, crashes and vehicles breaking down on the road created major

bottlenecks on the narrow link road.

Contacted, officials at Bangabandhu Bridge Traffic Control Room said the traffic was so heavy that even diverting some of the Dhaka-bound vehicles

entering the two-lane link road from the four-lane Dhaka-Tangail highway face major bottlenecks."

He added that the narrow stretch of the road was a major cause for tailbacks.

On Dhaka-Tangail highway in Dulla Mansur area of Mirzapur, a major crash involving a bus and truck around 4:30am kept the road almost blocked until 7:15am when the totaled vehicles were towed away.

But the tailbacks reached miles in the meantime.

Before traffic flow could become normal, a woman and two children were crushed to death by a bus around 11:45am near Pakulla Bus Stand, which is a few kilometres away from Dulla Mansur area.

Locals kept the road blocked soon afterwards and vehicles could not begin to move before 2:00pm, police said.

Congestion on the highway persisted until the evening.



to Bhuapur link road couldn't ease congestion between the eastern side of the bridge and Elega, Tangail.

Ataur Rahman, in-charge of Elega Highway Police Outpost, said, "Motorists

## 1,600-year-old

FROM PAGE 12

There was a time when many believed that the rust-resistant pillar was made out of some mysterious, non-earthly metal, while others speculated that whoever made it used a futuristic technique that was lost in the mists of time. That second theory is technically true, as metallurgists at Kanpur IIT demonstrated in a paper published in the journal Current Science.

R Balasubramanian, co-author of the study, called the pillar "a living testimony to the skill of metallurgists of ancient India," explaining that the wrought iron structure features a protective layer called "misawite", an amorphous iron oxyhydroxide that forms a barrier by adhering next to the interface between metal and rust. The formation of misawite is caused by the high phosphorus content in the iron.

## Miracle baby

FROM PAGE 1

Station, quoting locals.

"Ratna gave birth on the spot in critical condition," he said.

Locals rushed to the spot and rescued the newborn. They took the baby to the Trishal Upazila Health Complex and later to a private hospital.

An injury on the baby's right shoulder was detected after an X-ray, said Jahangir's brother Sharif Uddin.

"But she is out of danger now," he added.

Ratna and Jahangir, who used to work as sub-contractor, left behind an eight-year-old daughter Jannat and a six-year-old son Ebadat Hossen.

"Our family has been ripped apart," said Jahangir's sister Masuda Akther.

Coincidentally, Jahangir's brother Shamsul died in the same way in 2015 in the same area, according to Masuda.

Police seized the onion-laden truck but the driver managed to flee the scene, Mainuddin said, adding that the dead bodies were handed over to the family members.

## 'They attacked us because we are Hindus' PMO steps in to find ways

FROM PAGE 1

After the attack, an eerie and empty silence took over after the 108 Hindu homes in Sahapara village.

Beauty Rani, a former female member of the reserved seat in Dighalia Union Parishad, said most of the able-bodied people have left the village after the attack.

"Almost all houses are locked. Only the elders of some families are home. They too are scared."

Visiting the village, this correspondent came across only two old men in a small house. One was 65-year-old Shibnath Saha, president of the village's Radha Govinda temple.

"Police are on guard in the village, but we cannot trust them. After detaining Ashoke on Friday, the officer-in-charge and upazila nirbahi officer told everyone that they were deploying additional forces and that our community would be safe. The attack took place within a few hours."

Beauty Rani echoed the same. "When we were being attacked, the police were there. They were watching from a distance and no one came to our rescue. The police can no longer be trusted and that is why people are leaving the village."

Gopal Saha, a fertiliser dealer at Dighalia Bazar, described how he was assaulted by the mobs.

"I have been doing business in the market for 22 years. The only reason they beat me up was that I was Hindu. The accused boy's house is far away from mine. How is this my fault? ... As a Hindu, I don't feel safe in this village anymore."

Azgar Ali, union parishad member at Dighalia, said, "I went to the spot and tried to bring the situation under control. Police are examining the evidence to see if a case under the Digital Security Act can be filed against the student."

"In addition, the government is giving Tk 26,000 to the affected families, with the promise that the houses that were vandalised will be repaired."

Haran Chandra Pal, inspector (Investigation) of Lohagara Police Station, said legal action will be taken against the attackers, adding that none of them has yet been identified for arrest.

**PROTESTS EVERYWHERE**  
Rights bodies across the country condemned the communal attack.

Mashrafe Bin Mortoza, parliamentarian and ex-captain of the Bangladesh cricket team, who represents Narail, in a Facebook post said, "The Narail I know, the Narail I grew up in - this is not that Narail." Meanwhile, Ain o Salish Kendra

in a statement, said, "This is not a new incident. We have seen such attacks before - these keep repeating because there is no independent investigation and no probe [is done] in due time."

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpighoshti also issued a statement saying the impunity given to perpetrators of communal violence paves the way for more such attacks.

Chandra Nath Podder, general secretary of Bangladesh Puja Uddayan Parishad and a mathematics professor at Dhaka University, had visited the spot.

"What kind of people do this? Are we living in a civilised society? I demand a prompt investigation."

Meanwhile, 21 eminent citizens, including artists Ramendu Majumdar, Mamunur Rashid, Ferdousi Majumdar, Sara Zaker, M Hamid, and Shimul Yousof; historians Shahriar Kabir and Muntasir Mamoon; and writers Selina Hossain and Abed Khan, among others, condemned the attack in a statement.

"Within a month, Narail has seen two communal attacks. The local administration and political elites in the area can barely criticise these attacks, let alone prevent them," they said.

## Road crashes claim 29 lives in a day

FROM PAGE 1

Quoting locals, police said a Dhaka-bound bus was running against traffic on Hatikumrul-Bonpara highway. The vehicle collided head-on with the two trucks around 1:00pm, causing the casualties.

In Bogura, four people lost their lives in a car-pickup head-on collision in Kalerpukur area of Kahaloo upazila in the morning.

The deceased - Md Tanser, 70, his son Md Tagor, 35, their neighbour Abdur Rahman, 35, and car driver Md Sumon - were residents of Naogaon's Dhamoirhat upazila.

The victims were traveling to Bogura from Naogaon on the car, said Md

Ambar Hossain, OC of Kahaloo Police Station.

In Habiganj, three people were killed in a head-on collision between a CNG run auto-rickshaw and a bus in Nabiganj upazila yesterday afternoon.

The dead were identified as Bokul Begum, 62, of Betapur village in Nabiganj, Ehiya Chowdhury Zaved, 24, of the same village and auto-rickshaw driver Rabban Miah.

Police said the Sylhet-bound bus collided head-on with the auto-rickshaw on Dhaka-Sylhet highway around 5:00pm.

In Brahmanbaria, two people were killed and four others were wounded in a head-on collision between a car

and a CNG run auto-rickshaw in Sadar upazila's Ujanishar area yesterday noon. The deceased are: Chan Badsha, 50, driver of the auto-rickshaw, and its passenger Billal Hossain, 45.

The four injured include three family members of Billal and a police constable.

In Dinajpur, a motorcyclist was killed after a speeding truck hit his vehicle in Khansama upazila around noon.

The deceased, Zakir Hossain, 26, was from Memberpara village in the same upazila.

Quoting locals, police said the accident took place when Zakir was returning home from his shop at Amtali Bazar on his motorbike.

## Five more die from Covid-19 in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, taking the total fatalities from the virus in the country to 29,230.

At least 1,007 new cases were logged after testing 7,351 samples across the country during the same period, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

With the new infections, the total number of Covid cases rose to 19,95,440.

The current daily positivity rate is 13.70 percent and the total positivity rate is 13.77 percent. The death rate now stands at 1.46 percent, added the release.

At least 1,854 Covid patients have recovered during the 24-hour period. This took the total number of recoveries to 19,22,977. The recovery rate is 96.37 percent.

## Transport worker dies in 'police custody'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A transport worker died in "police custody" after being beaten up allegedly by a cop in Magura's Sreepur upazila yesterday afternoon.

The victim, Abdus Salam Sheikh, 52, was a resident of Roynagar village in Sreepur. He was a staffer at a ticket counter of K-line Paribahan in Wapda area.

Locals said a passenger bound for Chowgacha in Jashore had an altercation with Salam at the counter around 1:30pm. He later lodged a complaint with Nakol police camp against Salam.

Around half an hour later, Sub-Inspector Jamal Uddin went to the counter and took Salam to the police camp, they added.

Aliar Rahman, a witness, said Salam became sick after the SI kicked in his chest thrice at the ticket counter.

He died on the way to Magura Sadar Hospital, the witness added.

Following the incident, Jamal was closed to police lines.

## Three wanted on charges of gang rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A case was filed against three men for raping a woman in Narayanganj's Fatullah yesterday.

The accused were Ajay Mondol, 26, Shaon, 27 and Md Rony, of the upazila's Bairagi Bari.

Mohammad Rezaul Haque, OC of Fatullah Police Station, quoting the FIR, said the woman, a resident of Keraniganj, was on her way to her friend's house in Bairagi Bari village on Friday night.

"The three accused waylaid her at knife-point, took her to Shaon's house and raped her." They released her after she got ill.

Once released, she filed a case against the three immediately, the OC said.

He added that drives are going on to arrest the accused, while the victim was sent to hospital for treatment.

FROM PAGE 1

Top officials from the Road Transport and Highways Division, Bridges Division, Roads and Highways Department, Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) and Orion Group - the operator of the flyover - have been asked to join the meeting at the PMO, officials said.

"There are only three toll collection booths on the flyover against the minimum requirement of nine. The meeting is expected to discuss how the number of booths can be increased and also whether an alternative road can be built to address the problem," RHD Chief Engineer AKM Manir Hossain Pathan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the long-cherished Padma Bridge on June 25, establishing a direct link between the capital and 21 southwestern districts.

Opening of the infrastructure has increased traffic on the Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway.

Total 1,500-2,000 vehicles used the Shimulia-Kathalbari ferry route daily on average. The number doubled during Eid rush, according to officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation.

However, total 51,316 vehicles used Padma Bridge on June 26, the first day of opening the bridge to traffic. The authorities later banned motorbikes on

the bridge.

Total 14,410 vehicles used the bridge on June 30, while the number went up to 31,723 on July 8, two days before the Eid, and 29,757 on July 15, according to BBA.

Transport expert Prof Hadiuzzaman said although the number of vehicles entering the capital has increased as expected, the Hanif flyover, which is used as the main entrance to the city by vehicles travelling via Padma Bridge, does not have the capability to cope with the pressure.

The government should have built a ring road around the capital to cope with the additional traffic, he observed. Hadiuzzaman said people who would visit the northern part of the capital could have bypassed the city had there been a ring road.

The Revised Strategic Transport Plan 2015-2035 was adopted for building three ring roads - inner, middle and outer - so that a good number of vehicles can reach their destinations bypassing the capital.

The RHD even carried out a feasibility study around four years ago to build the inner ring road around the capital, but the project is yet to be implemented.

"A lack of coordination among the government agencies concerned is visible here. The authorities should have built the ring road along with the Padma Bridge," Hadiuzzaman said. Asked about the matter, the RHD chief engineer said they were considering building the ring road as soon as possible and that talks with foreign lenders were underway.

Hadiuzzaman said manual toll collection for Padma Bridge and the expressway is also another major reason for the gridlock.

So, the authorities should go for an automated toll collection system - touch and go or electronic toll collection - at the earliest, he added.

The RHD chief engineer said the toll collection problem at the expressway will be solved within two-three months.

Earlier, the BBA had said it would take them about six months to install an automated toll collection system at the bridge.

Our district correspondents contributed to this report.

## DNCC opens control room for free dengue test

60 more hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday opened a control room to provide free dengue test to people.

The control room will also register complaints by residents.

The numbers of the control room are 01769100680, 0171650625, 01715238754, 0171545669, 01756209482, 01716398886 and 01735843693. Meanwhile, at least 60 dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals across the country in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Among the new cases, six are from outside Dhaka. With them, the total

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



While water remains always available for people, for the city's birds, it is something that needs to be searched for every day. And so, this feathered friend was spotted quenching its thirst at a creek in Suhrawardy Udyan amidst the heat yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## 'Communal forces out to turn country into Afghanistan'

Say speakers at 50th anniversary event of Workers Party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will become another Afghanistan if communal forces are not repelled, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Referring to the recent attacks on minority communities, they said pre-planned communal attacks are being carried out across the country.

"It seems that the country has become Afghanistan. The events that are taking place, these are not the characteristics of Bangladesh," said Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon.

He was talking at a discussion at the capital's Jatiya Press Club titled "Spirit of Liberation War and the recent communal situation in Bangladesh", commemorating Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam as part of the party's 50th founding anniversary.

Referring to attacks at different times, he said, "The reaction of Bangladeshis to Nupur Sharma's comment

**“ We want to dream of a state where people of all religions and ethnic communities will live together with equal rights. ”**

Sanjeeb Drong  
GS of Bangladesh  
Adivasi Forum

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## Labour rights violation, 'red-tapism' major barriers

EU envoy on trade between Bangladesh and Europe

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Violation of labour rights and "red-tapism" in business are the two big factors that might hamper trade between Bangladesh and Europe, said EU Ambassador Charles Whiteley yesterday, stressing on the need to improve on these fronts.

"If you have good consumer faith, good labour standards, then you won't have NGOs in Europe questioning the labour standards in the source country," he said. Besides, investors also look for good climate environment when they decide to invest.

Whiteley made these observations at a programme titled "Meet the ambassador," which was hosted by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Bangladesh at a city hotel.

He said a EU delegation during a dialogue in Bangladesh on business climate spoke of these

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Titas snapped 996km illegal lines in 2.5yrs

Says report; experts still skeptical, find steps inadequate

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Titas, the country's largest gas distribution company, has snapped illegal gas lines stretching for 996.81 kilometres in the last two and a half years, which is equal to 7.5 percent of its legal lines, according to a report.

Titas has distribution lines stretching for 13,238 kilometres. The data was revealed in the latest "Illegal Gas Connection Eviction Progress Report".

The report was presented on June 30 at a meeting of the energy division.

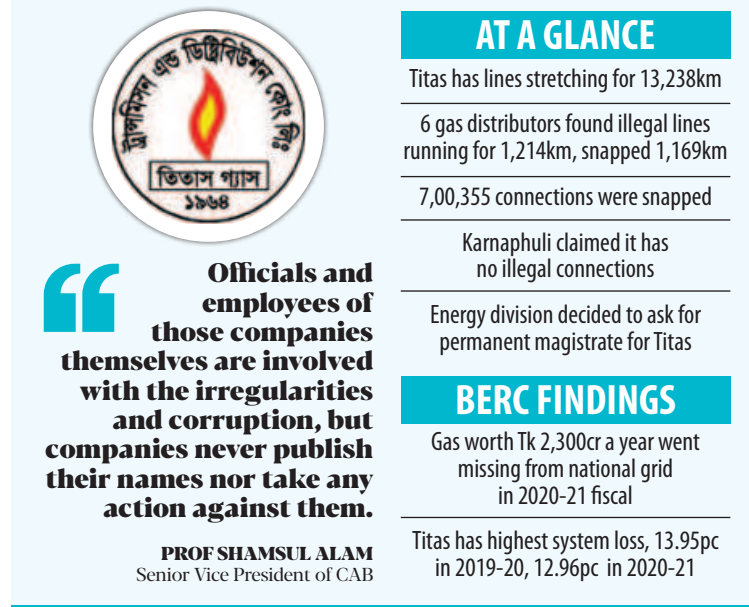
All the six gas distributors -- Titas, Bakhrabad, Karnaphuli, Jalalabad, Sundarban and Pashchimanchal -- presented their activities regarding the snapping of illegal connections.

According to the report, from January 2020 to June 2022, illegal lines running for 1,214 km were detected by Titas and Bakhrabad, and 1,169 km of them were cut off.

The latest progress report claimed the companies have only around 44 km of connections, 43 km belonging to Titas, left to remove. However, data on the actual length or number of illegal lines is unavailable, say experts.

The other four companies did not place figures of the length of illegal gas lines. However, they mentioned that they had found only 2,263 illegal connections and snapped all of them.

The number of snapped connections by the six distributors



is more than 7,00,355.

However, experts said the number is not satisfactory, as the amount of stolen gas in the name of system loss is huge.

On average, 3,012 million cubic feet of gas was transmitted to the national gas grid -- from gas fields and imported liquefied natural gas -- in a day in 2020-21 fiscal, but the six companies distributed 2,785 million cubic feet per day (MMcfd).

"About 227 MMcfd [7.54 percent of total] of gas was missing from the database, which is equivalent to Tk 2,300 crore worth of gas for a year," stated the latest annual report of Bangladesh Energy

Regulatory Commission (BERC).

Titas has the highest system loss, 13.95 percent in 2019-20 and 12.96 percent in 2020-21. According to experts and BERC, illegal connections were major reasons behind the loss.

For ongoing 2021-22, BERC instructed distribution companies to reduce system loss to two percent.

Amidst the current gas crisis, illegal connections have become a burning issue. Prime minister's energy adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, and state minister for power, energy and mineral

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## 15 remanded over death of Buet student

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed 15 people on a three-day remand each in a case filed over the death of Buet student Tarequzzaman Sunny.

The accused are Shariful Hossain, Shakil Ahmed, Sezan Ahmed, Md Rubel, Md Sajib, Md Nuruzzaman, Md Nasir, Md Maruf, Ashrafal Alam, Jahangir Hossain Ripon, Md Noman, Mohammad Jahid, ATM Shahriar Momin, Maruful Haque and Rokonzaman Jitu.

The accused were his local acquaintances.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Kazi Ashrafuzzaman passed the order after investigation officer Shamsul Alam, also a sub-inspector of Kutubpur River Police Outpost under Dohar Police Station, produced them before the court with a seven-day remand prayer, said Additional Public Prosecutor Anwarul Kabir Babul.

In the remand prayer, the investigation officer said at around 3:30pm on July 14, the accused tactfully called Sunny out of his house to visit Moinot Ghat of the Padma River and pushed him into the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## Join polls, politics Quader urges BNP

BSS, Dhaka

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday urged BNP leaders to participate in the elections and politics.

Quader, also the Awami League general secretary, came up with the call at a discussion organised by Dhaka north and south city units of AL, marking the Imprisonment Day of Awami League (AL) President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, at the party's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Urging AL leaders and activists to be careful to counter the conspiracy of BNP and perpetrators of the then one-eleven political changeover, he said they are once again conspiring against the country with the help of foreigners.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## Getting ready to oust AL govt, not to join polls Says Mirza Abbas

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Mirza Abbas yesterday said their party is preparing for ousting the Awami League government, not for joining the national election under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Speaking at a rally, the BNP leader also said their party will no longer let the government continue its misuse and repressive acts.

Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal organised the rally in front of Jatiya Press Club, protesting the killing of its Jashore unit leader Badiuzzaman Dhani.

Badiuzzaman Dhani (42), senior vice president of Jashore District Jubo Dal, was hacked to death by miscreants in Jashore town on July 12.

"We would like to make it clear that this is not an internal feud. Awami League has carried out this killing to scare BNP activists," he claimed.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## Readjust edible oil prices CAB urges govt

UNB, Dhaka

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) has urged the government to readjust edible oil prices in the country following their continuous downward trend in the international market.

SM Nazer Hossain, vice-president of the CAB central committee, made the call through a statement yesterday.

In the statement, Nazer said Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) should readjust the prices of edible oil as the price of this daily essential is

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS WB approves \$500m credit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank has approved a \$500 million credit to help Bangladesh improve disaster preparedness against inland flooding in 14 flood-prone districts benefiting over 1.25 million people.

The Resilient Infrastructure for Adaptation and Vulnerability Reduction (RIVER) project will help Bangladesh reduce vulnerability to riverine and flash floods by constructing over 500 multipurpose flood shelters, access roads, and climate-resilient community infrastructure.

In normal times, the flood shelters will operate as primary schools and they will be equipped with solar energy systems, water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities that cater to the needs of women and vulnerable populations.

The project will also help strengthen the capacity of communities and government agencies to prepare and respond to floods and undertake behavioural change interventions, the World Bank said in a statement on Friday.

"The heart-wrenching flood situation in Sylhet region is a stark reminder of the increasing risks of climate change to development - more frequent, unpredictable and intense natural disasters," said Mercy Tembon, World Bank's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

"Building on our five-decade long partnership of improving disaster risk management in the coastal region, this project will help Bangladesh improve

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Dhaka residents are witnessing the final moments of a relatively empty city, when roads are devoid of the usual gridlocks and tailbacks. As the holidays have come to an end, many are returning to the city to resume their busy, urban life. This photo was taken on Mirpur Road yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Two held over Kushtia journo murder: Rab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) detained two people early yesterday on suspicion of their involvement in the killing of local journalist Hasibur Rahman Rubel in Kushtia.

The detainees are Kazi Sohan Sharif (40) of Thanapara area of Kushtia town and Khandaker Ashikur Rahman Jewel (35) of the same area.

They were detained from Kushtia town around 3:30am, said Squadron Leader Ilyas Khan, Rab-12 company commander.

The Rab team handed over them to Pabna Naval Police after primary interrogation. A press release, signed by Squadron Leader Ilyas Khan, said important information was obtained from the detainees that will be useful to the investigating agency involved in the case.

When asked whether the detainees were accused in the journalist's murder case, the Rab official said no one was accused in the case.

Rubel's office and family sources said, Rubel was working in the office of the daily Kushtia Khobor building at Singer intersection in the town on July 3. Around 9:00pm, he received a phone call and went out of the office. He also informed an office clerk that he will return soon. Since then, his mobile phone had been found switched off. On July 7, police recovered body of Hasibur Rahman Rubel, editor of online portal Crime Vision BD, who was missing for five days in Kushtia. He also worked with Amader Notun Somoy newspaper.

On July 8, Rubel's uncle Mizanur Rahman filed a murder case at Kumarkhali Police Station accusing unnamed persons.

## AL MP 'beats up' party leader on JS premises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After the incident of an Awami League MP in Rajshahi beating up a college principal, another ruling party lawmaker allegedly attacked a Cumilla Awami League leader yesterday on parliament premises.

Razee Mohammad Fakhru, MP from Comilla-4 (Debidwar), allegedly punched and kicked Debidwar upazila chairman Abul Kalam Azad during a meeting at the LD Hall of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, stirring up resentment among the local AL leaders and activists.

Aggrieved grassroots leaders of Cumilla (north) AL, rushed to the residence of AL presidium member Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim in the city to seek remedy in this regard, meeting sources told The Daily Star.

They claimed that Fakhru publicly kicked, punched and slapped Abul Kalam over the formation of Elahabad union under Debidwar upazila.

Three AL leaders of Cumilla present in the meeting - Raushan Ali Master, AKM Shafiqul Alam and Mehdi Hasan

- confirmed this information while talking to this correspondent.

However, lawmaker Fakhru didn't receive calls when this correspondent phoned him to get his version of the incident.

Cumilla north district AL general secretary Raushan Ali said when the names of president and secretary of Elahabad union of AL were announced, the lawmaker became furious as Abul Kalam supported the committee.

Mehedi, a member of Cumilla (north) AL who was sitting close to the MP, said, "All of a sudden, he [Fakhru] swooped on Abul Kalam and started kicking and punching him on his leg, neck, nose and head repeatedly."

Shafiqul, youth and sports affairs secretary of Cumilla (north) AL, echoed him.

Abul Kalam was first taken to ENT Hospital at Tejgaon. Later, he was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Recently, AL MP from Rajshahi-1, Omar Faruk Chowdhury, allegedly assaulted a college principal at his office.

## DNCC opens control

FROM PAGE 3

number of dengue patients rose to 1,670. Among the patients, 220 are still undergoing treatment.

A total of 1,449 patients

have been released from hospitals and one patient died so far.

Warning the Dhaka city corporations of a major outbreak of dengue virus

this year compared to the last couple of years, experts suggested the corporations to take extensive measures immediately to control the Aedes mosquitoes.

## Readjust edible oil

FROM PAGE 3

decreasing regularly in the international market.

He also blamed the BTTC for its reluctance every time for the edible oil price adjustment.

Alleging that BTTC only works for the interest of businessmen, the CAAB vice president said, when prices of edible oil go up in the international market, BTTC raises the price in the local market.

But when price decreases in the international market, it does not show interest to readjust the prices.

The statement said the prices of edible oil went up and down five times from October last year to June

this year, while Bangladesh has hiked the oil price in three phases.

On May 5, the government approved a fresh hike in the prices of soybean and palm oil by Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners & Vanaspati Manufacturers Association (BVOVMA) on grounds of an increase in the global market.

BVOVMA fixed bottled soybean oil at Tk 198 per litre while loose soybean oil at Tk 180 per litre.

It means bottled soybean oil price increased by Tk 38 per litre and loose soybean oil price went up by Tk 44 per litre.

## Parents

FROM PAGE 5

The UNO said evidence of child marriage was found by checking birth certificates and other documents. Kabir married off his school-going teenage daughter to a grown man, and Sajib married off his minor son to an adult girl.

The three were convicted under Prevention of Child Marriage Act 2017.

## Railway

FROM PAGE 5

team will assess whether the vibration on the road bridge will cause problems for track installation. They will solve if any problems arise, he added.

Md Kamruzzaman however said operation of vehicles on the bridge would not hamper track installation works.

## Labour rights violation

FROM PAGE 3

and other issues with the authorities. A delegation of six members of European Parliament will also be visiting Bangladesh from Sunday, see the factories and meet the authorities to understand the whole range of trade-related issues, including labour rights, environmental standards and investment.

Bangladesh's single largest destination for RMG is the EU. Bangladesh currently gets GSP facility that provides duty and quota-free market access to the EU, but with Bangladesh graduating out of LDC, the facility will be over by 2029.

Then, Bangladesh has a scope to avail another scheme, GSP Plus, but more stringent conditions will be attached to avail that. Those include labour rights, human rights, democracy and environmental compliance.

Whiteley said Bangladesh has already signed all the related UN conventions, but implementation is now

the key. The country has already done well in terms of green industries.

On Bangladesh's demand of lifting western sanctions, he said he understands the concerns, but the fact is that the six rounds of sanctions imposed by the EU do not apply on food imports by Bangladesh from Russia.

"We did not, in anyway, hamper wheat being imported under sanction regime..." he said, adding that there may be other reasons being faced by the banking system and supply chain. "We see misleading information that food crisis or high prices are due to sanctions." He said the biggest embargo on the 20 million tonnes of grains export by Russia is to blame for rising cost of food.

He said the fact that Russia is invading Ukraine and killing thousands of people is unthinkable today. There is now an enhanced awareness of the need to defend oneself among the nations of Europe; for this reason, even historically neutral

nations are opting to join Nato. EU also considers China a strategic partner in Asia. However, the EU will strictly oppose China if it hampers freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. And lastly, the EU considers Bangladesh pivotal in providing stability in the South Asia.

Considering that Bangladesh is a key country in the Indo-Pacific region, Whiteley said the EU is eager to work with Bangladesh in maritime and security aspects.

Asked about the foreign diplomats' recent meetings with the Election Commission and BNP, he said they meet to understand the political situation, and even the Bangladesh ambassadors abroad do the same.

Asked if the EU is sending election monitoring delegation to the next parliamentary election, he said there is nothing decided yet as it is still 18 months away.

The event was moderated by Zillur Rahman, executive director of CGS.

## Communal forces out to turn country

FROM PAGE 3

was somewhat moderate, compared to what we saw around the world. But now again... the Hindu community is being attacked. What else can I call it other than a pre-planned incident?"

He urged everyone to be unified to fight communalism like the way Gono Adalat and Gonojagoron Moncho were united as a single platform.

Speaking at the programme, the party's general secretary Fazle Hossain Badsha said, "It is not very easy to make Bangladesh a secular state in the practical sense and within a short time. But, if we fail to create the environment to continue that effort, dire situations await us in the days ahead."

"If we become a little careless, various forms of religious fundamentalism can give communalism a totalitarian form. Only a secular Bangladesh can stand firm against terrorism and fundamentalism," he added.

He also warned that if the communal forces are not resisted and the government does not keep state and religion separate, then Bangladesh's situation will become that of Afghanistan.

Ektattor Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee President Shahriar Kabir said not only the state but to politics also needs to be kept separate from religion. Then Pakistan government oppressed Bangalees and killed 30 lakh people during the Liberation War

in the name of religion.

"In the 15th amendment of the charter, Islam was kept as the state religion to satisfy HM Ershad and to lure him to join the 14-party alliance. But it's directly contradictory to the charter. When you are restoring secularism as one of the four principles of constitutions, how can you keep one particular religion as a state religion?" he said.

He also alleged that the state has failed to play its due role regarding different communal attacks.

"The communal terrorists have to be brought to book immediately, otherwise no one can prevent Bangladesh from becoming another Afghanistan," he said.

Echoing him, noted educationist Prof Syed Anwar Husain said, "State religion is in contradiction with democracy, the constitution of 1972, and principles of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

He demanded a stop to politicisation of religion and abolishment of state religion.

Addressing the event, Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, said, "We want to dream of a state where people of all religions and ethnic communities will live together with equal rights. A state where there will be no discrimination between people, no discrimination due to religious and ethnic identity; everyone desires that kind of state."

## Titas snapped 996km illegal

FROM PAGE 3

resources Nasrul Hamid talked several times in this regard. The meeting minutes said Titas formed 47 teams to detect illegal connections, and a vigilance team called "Titas Force" conducted operations to snap them.

Since January, 2021, Titas Force conducted 166 operations, including 82 mobile courts, and cut off 2.1 lakh household burner connections as well as two industrial and three commercial connections, and collected Tk 13.63 crore as penalty.

In those operations, the officials faced obstacles multiple times from locals. Last month, during an operation at Narayanganj's Sonargaon upazila, the officials were insulted by locals.

On July 3, locals attacked officials and vandalised cars in Narayanganj's Rupganj area.

In another ministry meeting held on June 28, the energy division decided to ask for a permanent

magistrate for Titas.

Minutes of the latest meeting also showed that Bakhrabad - largely serving Cumilla, Feni, Noakhali, Chandpur and Brahmanbaria - snapped the second highest connections, illegal lines stretching for 172 km.

The company snapped 20,001 connections during the period. This year, Bakhrabad sacked four of its employees who were proven to be involved with setting up illegal connections.

Karnaphuli, the distributor of Chattogram region, claimed it has no illegal connections. This year, they have removed lines running for only 0.04 km.

In the meeting, MA Majed, managing director of Karnaphuli, said some legal gas users in high-rise buildings use extra burners. A vigilance team faced trouble when it tried to take action in this regard.

Dr Moha Sher Ali, additional secretary of the energy division, presided

over the meeting.

Contacted, Senior Vice President of Consumers Association of Bangladesh and prominent energy expert Prof Shamsul Alam said he does not trust such information, as it is provided by the companies for their self interest.

"Officials and employees of those companies themselves are involved with the irregularities and corruption, but companies never publish their names nor take any action against them," he said.

He said until they publish data of involved officials and what actions have been taken against the beneficiaries of illegal connections, this whole situation will remain a farce and fraud.

"The illegal connections cannot be installed automatically. So, if they want to bring transparency in this sector, they need to involve the state's detective agencies in the process of detecting and removing illegal gas connections," he added.

## WB approves \$500m

FROM PAGE 3

disaster preparedness in the non-coastal flood-prone areas."

It will also support the country's transition from a disaster response to a disaster risk management approach, she said.

The project will help save lives and properties in the highly flood-prone districts in the Teesta-Brahmaputra-Jamuna, Padma, and Surma-Meghna river basins, which are: Nilpamari, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha,

Bogura, Pabna, Sirajganj, Rajbari, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Madaripur, and Sunamganj, Habiganj.

"Inadequate evacuation facilities for people and their livestock in highly flood-prone areas not only leads to the loss of lives and livelihoods, but it also hampers the ability to provide adequate relief," said Ignacio Urrutia, World Bank's team leader for the project.

The project will also develop a database on the availability and condition of flood shelters, which

will be critical for disaster preparedness and future investment planning.

The project will support the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, a long-term plan to achieve a safe, climate-resilient, and prosperous delta, as well as the World Bank Group's Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025. The credit is from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), which provides concessional financing, and has a 30-year term, including a five-year grace period.

## 15 remanded

FROM PAGE 3

river and since then the victim went missing. Later, the accused called the police on 999 for showing the killing as an accident, he mentioned in the police forwarding report.

To change the motive of killing and hide their involvement, the accused assisted the police and members of the fire service to find out the victim's body, the investigation officer added.

Defence for the accused yesterday submitted petitions, seeking bail along with cancellation of the remand on grounds that their clients were not involved with the incident.

Upon hearing both the sides, the magistrate turned down the defence plea and placed them on remand.

On July 15, the fire service team recovered Sunny's body.

M o h a m m a d Hasanuzzaman, the victim's elder brother, filed a murder case with Dohar Police Station in this connection.

## Join polls, politics

FROM PAGE 3

Highlighting the turmoil situation across the world such as wars, conflicts, price hikes, the minister said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is currently facing big challenges and her government is working relentlessly to deal with these situations.

"The premier (in such situation) now stays awake all night so that the people of the country can sleep," he added.

Referring to Imprisonment Day, he

said it is not only the imprisonment day of Sheikh Hasina, but also the imprisonment day of the democracy.

Hasina was arrested from her Sudha Sadan residence in Dhanmondi on July 16, 2007 during the military-backed caretaker government, which assumed power in the political changeover of 1/11 in 2007.

She was released from the special sub-jail on the premises of the JS building on June 11 in 2008.

## Getting ready

FROM PAGE 3

Abbas slammed Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader for his remark that BNP has become a failed political party.

"Then why are you so afraid of it? We're not allowed to hold processions and meetings."

He said BNP has been in politics even though its Chairperson Khaleda Zia has been jailed and its

acting chairman Tarique Rahman has long been staying abroad.

The BNP leader asked the ruling party workers to think of the consequences when their top leaders will flee the country in fear of facing public wrath.

"We'll go to elections under a neutral government when the parliament will be dissolved and Sheikh Hasina won't remain the prime minister."

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প্রতি কপি ১০০ টাকা  
বার্ষিক চাঁদা (সডাক) ৪৫০ টাকা  
এজেন্সী ও পুরাতন সংখ্যার  
জন্য যোগাযোগ করুন  
সম্পাদকীয় যোগাযোগ  
উচ্চতর গবেষণা কেন্দ্র  
কক্ষ ২০৪ (টিএসসি সংলগ্ন)  
ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ঢাকা-১০০০  
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**OBITUARY**

**Syed Khaledur Rahman,**  
s/o Late. Dr. Syed A.K.M.  
Hafizur Rahman, Ex-Managing  
Director of Rahman  
Chemicals Ltd. died on

July 06, 2022 at the Square Hospital in Dhaka due to respiratory complications. He played a Pioneering role in establishing starch-glucose Industry in Bangladesh as an agrobased industry. He was born on October 12, 1944 and is survived by his wife Mrs. Tahmina Rahman and three sons.

His Janaza will be held on July 20, 2022 baad Zohor at the Ferdous Masjid at Lalbagh and buried at the Banani Graveyard the same day.

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## CHILD MARRIAGE Parents, registrar jailed for six months

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Bagerhat

The parents of two minors and a marriage registrar (kazi) have been sentenced to six months' imprisonment for their involvement in child marriage in Bagerhat.

Bagerhat Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Muhammad Mushabberul Islam gave the sentence after conducting a mobile court at the office of marriage registrar Ataul Bari in Nagerbazar area of Bagerhat town on Friday night.

The convicts are Ataul, Kabir Sardar, father of a girl, and Sajib Howladar, father of a boy.

They were sent to jail on Friday night.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Air quality in traffic free Dhaka 'moderate'

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka's air quality continues to be in the "moderate" zone.

With an air quality index (AQI) score of 59 at 8:56am yesterday, the metropolis ranked 23rd in the list of world cities with the worst air quality.

An AQI between 50 and 100 is considered "moderate" with an acceptable air quality.

South Africa's Johannesburg, Pakistan's Lahore and Iran's Tehran occupied the first three spots in the list, with AQI scores of 172, 160, 148, respectively.

An AQI between 101 and 200 is considered "unhealthy".

Similarly, an AQI between 201 and 300 is said to be "poor", while a reading of 301 to 400 is considered "hazardous", posing serious health risks to residents.



Dhaka-bound passengers from the country's northern regions had to go through a painful wait yesterday, as trains on Dhaka-Panchagarh route got delayed for almost six hours due to a technical glitch. Many were seen sitting on the train rooftop with umbrellas, while others stepped out of the train and waited on the platform. Railway officials blamed the disruption on the huge number of passengers, saying that they're not being able to provide better services due to the overload. This photo was taken at Chatmohor Railway Station in Pabna in the afternoon.

PHOTO: STAR

## RAIL TRACK OF PADMA BRIDGE

# Railway aims to finish installation by Dec

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The project authority of Padma Bridge will start handing over the structure to the railway's authority today so that the latter can start installing rail track on the lower deck of the bridge.

Now both the agency will carry out a joint survey and it may take up to one week to complete the handing over process.

The railway authorities are expected to start installing rail track within two weeks, officials said.

The development came as officials of Bangladesh Railway (BR), Bangladesh Bridge Authority, project officials held a meeting at Mawa Service Area in Munshiganj yesterday, they said.

Md Kamruzzaman, deputy project director (technical) of Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project said they will hand over the relevant portion of the bridge to railway authorities today.

"It may take up to one week to complete the handing over process," the official told The Daily Star yesterday.

Afzal Hossain, project director of Padma Bridge Rail Link Project, said they will start a joint survey as a part of receiving the structure and it may take up to two to

start installation of track.

BR is implementing the rail link project to build a 169-km rail line from Dhaka to Jashore through the Padma Bridge at a cost of around Tk 40,000 crore.

The double-decker bridge -- roadway on the top and rail line on the bottom, was opened to traffic last month. BBA implement the bridge project but railway will install rail track on lower deck of the bridge under the rail link project.

"We will try to complete installation of rail line on around 7km length on the bridge and its connecting portion within December this year," Afzal said.

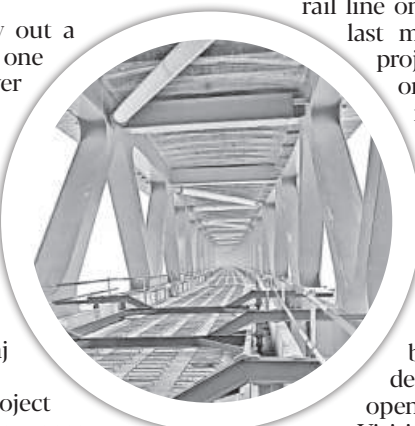
BR had a plan to launch train operation along with the road operation on Mawa-Bhanga section but later changed the decision as BBA declined to handover the bridge before opening due to "technical reasons".

Visiting the project site on Friday, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan said the install of track on the bridge would be started this week.

He also hoped that the train operation from Dhaka to Bhanga via the bridge would be started by June next year.

Replying to a question, the minister said a technical

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Railway is implementing the project to build a 169-km rail line from Dhaka to Jashore through the Padma Bridge at a cost of around Tk 40,000 crore.

## Flood death toll now 121

UNB, Dhaka

The death toll from the devastating floods in the country rose to 121 with two more deaths in Sylhet district in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The latest victims drowned in floodwater, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the total deceased, 94 people drowned in floodwater, 15 were killed by lightning, two died from snake bites, one from diarrhoea, and nine due to other reasons.

Of the deceased, 67 people died in Sylhet, 41 in Mymensingh, 12 in Rangpur and one in Dhaka division.

Of a total of 70 flood-hit upazilas, 33 are in Sylhet division, 16 in Rangpur division, 20 in Mymensingh division and one in Chattogram division.

Sylhet, Sunamganj, Netrokona and Kurigram are the worst-hit districts, with 13, 11, 10 and nine upazilas of the districts respectively affected by floods.

## Man stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A man was stabbed to death on Friday night in Dinajpur's Hakimpur upazila, said police.

The deceased is Bahauddin Sarkar (35) of Mathpara village.


Quoting locals, police said Bahauddin was sitting in front of a local club on Friday night. Suddenly, a youth named Md Emon appeared and locked in an altercation with him.

At one point, Emon pulled out a knife, stabbed Bahauddin and fled the spot.

Locals said the two had previous enmity.

Bahauddin passed away on way to a hospital, said Shariful Islam, inspector (Investigation) of Hakimpur police station.

He said police are looking for Emon, who is on the run. A case was filed.



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When Daserbazar High School had to close down for the floods, it was converted into a shelter for victims in Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila. Children were spending days with no interaction with education, as most of their houses were inundated. This is when the schoolteachers Deepak Ranjan Das and Hashim Ali took up the mantle to educate the children at the shelter, making sure they keep up with their lessons.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Spreading light where the sun doesn't shine

MINTU DESHWARA

For as far as the eye can see, there's floodwater. Educational institutions have been closed for days. In such a situation, Deepak Ranjan Das, headteacher of Daserbazar High School, decided to set up a shelter in the school in Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila.

A total of 54 families from different areas took shelter there.

Deepak then took an initiative to educate the children stuck in shelter. Apart from teaching, he also arranges for free books, notebooks and pens for them.

Hashim Ali, the school's assistant teacher, has been helping him in his efforts.

The teaching programme

started on June 22, and since then, it has been running daily from 11:00am to 2:00pm.

This correspondent visited the spot last Tuesday and found Deepak teaching English to the children in a school room. There were 17 children in that room. They range from primary, high school and madrasa students.

Deepak said Hashim took the responsibility of teaching mathematics and science. He usually takes classes in the morning shift.

A student of the class said, "I had nothing to do besides being stuck here day after day. But when Deepak sir started taking classes, things felt exciting again. Sir not only teaches, but also talks to us.

We discuss many things, and I learn something new every day."

Hashim said most residents taking shelter there have waist-deep water in their homes. Students' books, notebooks and pens were washed away along with valuables when the water came in.

"In such a situation, families left their homes empty-handed and settled in shelters. In shelters, where it's difficult for families to provide two meals a day, so the thought of children studying is unimaginable. Which is why, we stepped in so that their education isn't affected in the long run."

Deepak said, "I saw that if children spend day after day in such confinement, it can have an adverse effect on their minds. It

also increases the risk of students dropping out. Since I'm in school most of the day, I thought let's do something for the children who are stuck here. Now, I see that both children and their parents are happy."

Shamim Ahmad, a parent, said they were worried that when the floodwater will recede and the schools will reopen, what will happen to their children. But now they are grateful that Deepak took this initiative.

Another guardian, Abul Hossain, said the floodwater has not completely receded yet. In this situation, they are still unable to return home. They are relieved that at least their children's education is progressing.



## The audience will discover me in new ways

TASNIA FARIN



**“Shorna is a Managing Director (MD) of a reputed bank. Bold and confident, she is the youngest MD there – like a role model for young women. This was a challenging character for me. But I tried to portray the character just like the script.”**

ANTARA RAISA

Chorki original series “Syndicate”, directed by Shihab Shaheen, was just released on Eid day – being the focal point of many discussions. At the helm of the project was young Tasnia Farin, who is making waves in our entertainment industry. She prides herself on her role in the web-series.

“Shorna is a Managing Director (MD) of a reputed bank. Bold and confident, she is the youngest MD there – like a role model for young women”, said Farin. “This was a challenging character for me. But I tried to portray the character just like the script.”

She shared the screen with Alran Nisho and Nazifa Tushi in this series. Besides them, she has also acted with the likes of Shatabdi Wadud and Nasiruddin Khan, and more than held her own.

She said, “The lead and supporting cast are brilliant actors in their own right. I learned a lot from seniors like Shatabdi Wadud and Nasir Uddin Khan. The series was shot in some beautiful locations, that I had never been to

before. Overall, it was a good experience.”

Having earned her place in tele-fictions and web-series, Farin is all set to make her silver screen debut with the Tollywood film “Aro Ek Prithibi”, directed by Atanu Ghosh. She plays Protikkha, who is on a journey of finding solace and shelter amidst her own struggles.

“She has been on the quest for her own place since she was 11 years old, and that journey has led her to London,” says Farin. “Through this journey, the audience will discover her in different ways. When she reaches London, she finds the connection between the incidents of her past and present. It’s a story of realisation, finding your root and home.”

When asked about why she chose a

Tollywood film to make her silver screen debut, she said, “I wanted my first film to be very special and close to my heart. When you choose a film, there are a lot of factors that comes with it. It does not entirely depend on my choice. This was the right script for me.”

The actress has recently completed the shoot for the Hoichoi original series “Karagar”, directed by “Taqdeer” famed Syed Ahmed Shawki.

“When the director narrated the story to me, I was awed by it. My character here is unique. I can’t reveal any more details, but it’s a one-of-a-kind series.”

To Tasnia Farin, the medium is secondary for an artiste.

“I don’t plan as much for the future. I just try to pick out the best scripts.”

## Shakib Khan attends New York premiere of ‘Golui’

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



The US premiere for “Golui” took place at the Jamaica Multiplex Cinemas in New York on Saturday. The premiere was attended by Dhallywood superstar Shakib Khan, who is also the star of the film. Khan took a picture of himself standing next to a cut-out of his character in “Golui”. This is the first time a film of Shakib Khan has been released in the US, and the superstar looked quite thrilled with the occasion in the pictures from the event. S A Haque Olike, the director of “Golui” was also in attendance at the New York premiere of the film.

## Salman Khan to triple his remuneration for Bigg Boss 16?

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Popular reality TV show, Bigg Boss is going to return for its 16th instalment soon. Salman Khan has hosted the show over the last thirteen years, and the actor recently agreed to host the latest season of the show. Currently, rumours are circulating that the actor has demanded three times his previous remuneration for the latest instalment of Bigg Boss. If the rumours ring true, then Salman will be paid BDT 1,238 crore for hosting the 16th season of show. In the previous season, he had received BDT 413 crore.

## Amitabh Bachchan’s granddaughter makes onscreen debut

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



Amitabh Bachchan’s granddaughter, Navya Naveli Nanda will be making her on-screen debut in a Loreal Paris advertisement. Navya shared an Instagram post for the commercial with the caption, “What is the meaning of self-worth? Stay tuned to find out more.”

The video showcased the beautiful Navya wearing a pair of formal pants and a suit while talking about ‘self-worth’ in the short commercial. The advertisement video will be aired soon.

## COUNTRYWIDE



This narrow bridge over the Ratnai river at Kalughat in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila is a setback for development, depriving people of getting benefits of the newly-built Dharla Bridge. PHOTO: STAR

RAMSHACKLE RATNAI BRIDGE

## An impediment of development

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Economic activities in four upazilas including three in Kurigram district and one in Lalmonirhat could not gain the momentum as desired despite the inauguration of the Sheikh Hasina Dharla Bridge over the Dharla river in 2018.

The Bailey bridge over the Ratnai river in Kalughat area of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, the doorway of the newly-built Dharla Bridge on Lalmonirhat-Phulbari road is vulnerable and narrow and may collapse anytime.

Local business people and traders said that the business as well as development activities in the region especially in Phulbari, Nageshwari and Bhurungamari upazilas of Kurigram and Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila could not pick up the pace due to the ramshackle Bailey bridge over the river Ratnai.

The derelict bridge remains an

obstacle to the movement of larger transports and cargo vehicles on the road connecting Lalmonirhat with Kurigram and other parts of the country, they also said.

Sahidur Rahman, a businessman from Phulbari upazila in Kurigram, said that they were unable to take the advantage of the new Dharla bridge as the narrow Bailey bridge over Ratnai stands in the way of transporting larger payloads.

“Due to the precarious and narrow Bailey bridge over Ratnai, we are deprived of the benefits of the newly-built Dharla Bridge,” he said.

To expedite the socio-economic development in the region, the new Dharla bridge – built at a cost of Tk 206 crore and 85 lakh – has to be used to its full potential, said Moktarul Islam, another businessman from the same upazila.

To achieve that objective, the Bailey bridge over the river Ratnai

needs to be replaced with a stronger and wider bridge as soon as possible, he also said.

Echoing the same, Sheikh Abdul Hamid Babu, president of the Chambers of Commerce and Industries in Lalmonirhat, said he has been pursuing the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) for a new bridge on the Ratnai, but his efforts so far have borne no result.

“If a new bridge is built replacing the vulnerable Bailey bridge over Ratnai River, it will tremendously benefit us,” he said.

Executive Engineer of RHD in Lalmonirhat Khalid Saifullah said a tender will be invited soon for constructing the 138.44-metre long and 10.25-metre-wide concrete bridge replacing the Bailey bridge over the Ratnai river at a cost of Tk 36 crore.

“The work for constructing the new bridge will start in September this year,” he hoped.

## Malaysia starts process of hiring workers

FROM PAGE 12  
was Tk 40,000, which was later raised to Tk 1.6 lakh.

This time, after the signing of the MoU, M Saravanan, Malaysia’s human resources minister, wrote to Ahmad on January 14 informing him that they would select 25 Bangladeshi agents and 250 subagents for the recruitment of workers.

This sparked protest from the other recruitment agencies, who said a syndicated system of recruitment would increase migration costs and lead to exploitation and money laundering, as was the case in the past.

In his reply to his Malaysian counterpart on January 18, Ahmad called for allowing all valid recruitment agencies in the hiring process to ensure transparency, highlighting the Bangladesh

Competition Act 2012 and the ILO charters on overseas labour recruitment.

The Bangladesh government also handed over a list of 1,520 valid agencies to Malaysia.

Against this backdrop, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) in early July started an investigation into the allegations of syndication in the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers.

A MACC team raided the office of Bestinet, a Malaysian IT firm involved in the manpower recruitment process, and interrogated the officials.

Bestinet provides the software solution Foreign Workers Centralised Management System to the Malaysian government.

The move came a day after the youth wing of the Malaysian

political party, People’s Justice Party, submitted a complaint to the MACC.

The complaint also said Bestinet founder Mohd Amin Abdul Nor, a Bangladesh-origin Malaysian, had influenced the Malaysian government to limit the number of agencies supplying workers to 25 companies only.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Competition Commission has formed a team to probe the allegations into the syndicate on labour recruitment.

It sent a notice to Ruhul Amin (Swapan), the owner of Catheris International, a recruitment agency, to appear at a hearing today.

Asked about the matter, Ahmad said as per the MoU, the issue of selecting the recruitment agencies is not in the hand of Bangladesh.

“But if there is anything illegal going on, we will surely play our role.”

## MP beat me up and it was all planned

FROM PAGE 1  
where the principal, sitting next to him, said he was not assaulted and the reports were false.

Meanwhile, Asaduzzaman Asad, former general secretary of Rajshahi district Awami League, held a press conference at his city office yesterday in which he gave reporters an audio clip of a conversation between Salim and former local union parishad chairman Akteruzzaman.

Salim is heard in the clip saying that there was no meeting between the MP and college principals on July

7. “I was called there only to be beaten up.”

Contacted, Akteruzzaman said the clip was an extract from a July 9 phone conversation between him and Salim.

“I called him after I heard about the assault,” he told this correspondent.

Salim could not be reached for comments. But several individuals close to him said the voice heard in the clip was his. He has not left his house since July 7, they added.

In the audio clip, Salim was heard saying that the MP started acting

aggressively from the moment he saw him.

The lawmaker asked Salim a question, and as soon as the latter said he didn’t understand it, Omor started screaming.

“Then he stood up from his chair and started punching and kicking me. At a point, he loudly asked someone to bring him a hockey stick. And then he started hitting me with something blunt.”

Salim then said he was tortured for at least 10 minutes in front of several other college principals.

## Man kills wife, children, turns himself in

FROM PAGE 12  
Chapatola Nagarghat village in the upazila the same night and filed a case against Zahirul.

AKM Shamim Hasan, officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station, “We are investigating to find the motive behind the triple-murder.”

Sabina’s father, Mujibur Rahman, said, “Zahirul married my daughter around 13 years ago. Since then, they would fight a lot.”

Last month, Sabina went to her father’s house with her children and were there till Friday afternoon, when Zahirul picked them up.

“That day, Sabina and Zahirul got into a fight again,” Mujibur said.

“Zahirul’s father called me suddenly and told me that his son is being arrested. When I asked why, he told me to go to their house and see.”

“When I went there, I saw my daughter and grandchildren dead.”

## Crisis-hit Lanka moves to elect new president

FROM PAGE 12  
armed masked soldiers on guard and roads near the building closed to the public.

More than 100 police and security personnel with assault rifles were

deployed on the approach road to parliament.

Al Jazeera’s Minelle Fernandez, reporting from Colombo, said police officers were manning barricades and a water cannon to prevent any unrest,

though protesters had yet to arrive.

“The protesters seem to be adopting a wait-and-see approach to marshal up their energies and resources, because they say they are in it for the long haul,” Fernandez said.



Fires are seen following an Israeli airstrike in Gaza city, yesterday. Israeli warplanes struck a weapons manufacturing facility in the Gaza Strip early yesterday, the military said, after rocket fire against Israeli territory. No one was injured. The exchange of fire came hours after US President Joe Biden visited Israel and the occupied West Bank.

PHOTO: AFP

## UK TORY LEADERSHIP RACE Contenders spar over tax in first TV debate

AFP, London

The five remaining Conservative candidates to become Britain's next prime minister clashed Friday night over tax and honesty in politics in their first TV debate, as they fight to make an eventual two-person run-off.

The 90-minute debate -- the first chance in the days-old contest for both the frontrunners and lesser-known contenders to pitch their credentials to a national television audience -- saw relatively few direct confrontations between them.

But when they did erupt, it came largely over taxation, with former finance minister Rishi Sunak, one of the frontrunners, forced to defend plans to keep rates at some of the highest levels in decades.

Sunak, who has topped the first two rounds of voting by Tory MPs this week as the race narrows towards a final pair next week, is up against several contenders vowing to cut various taxes immediately.

The wealthy and polished media performer, whose political fortunes have been damaged by his family's own tax affairs, urged both caution and patience as the UK grapples with the worst inflation in 40 years.

Foreign Secretary Truss, Tom Tugendhat, a prominent backbencher, Conservative MP Penny Mordaunt and former equalities minister Kemi Badenoch are the five candidates who are trying to replace Johnson.

Johnson last week announced his resignation as Tory leader after a cabinet insurrection led partly by Sunak, following months of controversies.

A snap poll of 1,159 viewing voters by Opinium found 36 percent thought the former army officer performed best, followed by a quarter citing Sunak. Just six percent said Truss, while Penny Mordaunt and Badenoch fared slightly better on 12 percent each.

They will participate in televised debates today and tomorrow.

A further vote and TV debate is scheduled for Tuesday. The ballots of Conservative MPs will end Wednesday, with the party's rank and file members then choosing from the two finalists following nationwide campaigning and hustings.

The winner will be announced on September 5.

## COMBAT DRONES DEAL Russian officials visited Iran: US

REUTERS, Jeddah

The United States believes that Russian officials visited an airfield in Iran recently to view attack-capable drones, US national security advisor Jake Sullivan said yesterday.

The United States earlier this week said it has information that shows Iran is preparing to provide Russia with up to several hundred drones, including some that are weapons capable, and that Tehran is preparing to train Russian forces to use them.

"We assess an official Russian delegation recently received a showcase of Iranian attack-capable UAVs... To our knowledge, this is the first time a Russian delegation has visited this airfield for such a showcase," Sullivan said in a statement.

The statement included satellite imagery dated June 8 showing Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) "that the Russian government delegation saw that day". It said similar equipment was showcased for a second Russian visit to the airfield on July 5.

On Friday, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, in a phone call with his Ukrainian counterpart, rejected as baseless US accusations about Iranian drones being sent to Russia for use in the war against the Ukraine.

Iran, which has supplied UAVs to its allies in the Middle East, on Friday announced its first naval drone-carrying division in the Indian Ocean.

US President Joe Biden has used Iran's growing ties with Russia as a rallying cry to press Arab countries to take a harder stance on the Ukraine crisis. Gulf nations, which have energy and business ties with Moscow, have so far refused to take sides.

## US won't 'walk away'

Biden tells Arab leaders, says no other powers will be allowed to fill the vacuum in Middle East

AFP, Jeddah

US President Joe Biden yesterday told Arab leaders that Washington would remain fully engaged in the Middle East and would not cede influence to other world powers.

"We will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia or Iran," Biden said during a summit in Jeddah, on the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia.

US ties to Gulf powers in particular have been roiled by multiple issues in recent years, notably Washington's push for a deal to curb Iran's suspect nuclear programme and its tepid response to attacks on Saudi oil facilities in 2019 claimed by Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

The summit, the final stop of Biden's Middle East tour, brings together the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council as well as Egypt, Jordan and Iraq.

Biden had been looking to use the trip to discuss volatile oil prices and outline his vision for Washington's role in the region.

On Friday he met Saudi King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler.

Biden told the assembled Arab leaders that "the future will be won by countries that unleash the full potential of their populations... where citizens can question and criticise leaders without fear of reprisal".

Biden said the United States would commit \$1 billion in food aid to the Middle East and North Africa amid rising food insecurity induced by the war in Ukraine.



Russia's invasion of Ukraine has exposed a once unthinkable divergence between Washington and key Middle East allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the oil giants that are increasingly independent on the international stage.

The wealthy Gulf nations, which host US forces and have dependably backed Washington for decades, have notably refrained from supporting the Biden administration as it tries to choke Moscow's lifelines, from energy to diplomacy.

Analysts say the new position reveals a turning point in Gulf relations with the US, long the region's protector against neighbour Iran.

But yesterday's meet brought some conciliatory gestures, with Biden inviting his Emirati counterpart, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, to visit the White House before the year is up.

And in his remarks at the summit, Saudi Prince Mohammed said he hoped it would "establish a new era

of joint cooperation to deepen the strategic partnership between our countries and the United States of America, to serve our common interests and enhance security and development in this vital region for the whole world."

Riyadh and Washington on Friday signed 18 agreements on areas including energy, space, health and investment, including developing 5G and 6G technology, said a Saudi statement.

However, Prince Mohammed yesterday warned that "unrealistic policies" to curb emissions could fuel inflation.

Washington wants Riyadh to open the oil floodgates to bring down soaring gasoline prices, which threaten Democratic chances in November mid-term elections in the United States.

After meeting with Saudi leaders Friday, Biden said he was "doing all I can" to increase the oil supply but added that concrete results would not be seen "for another couple weeks".

## CRITICISM OVER KHASHOGGI KILLING

# MbS hits back at Biden

## Says 'such an incident occurs anywhere in the world', highlights similar US mistakes

AGENCIES

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told President Joe Biden that Saudi Arabia had acted to prevent a repeat of mistakes like the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and that the United States had also made mistakes, including in Iraq, a Saudi minister said.

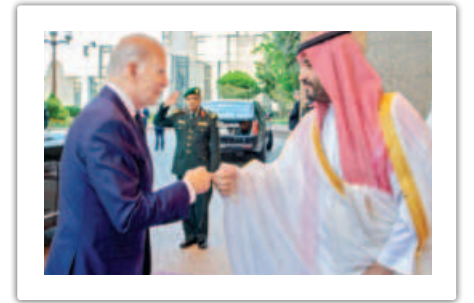
Biden said on Friday he told Prince Mohammed he held him responsible for the 2018 murder of Washington Post journalist Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, shortly after exchanging a fist bump with the kingdom's de facto ruler.

"The President raised the issue... And the crown prince responded that this was a painful episode for Saudi Arabia and that it was a terrible mistake," the kingdom's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel al-Jubeir said.

Prince Mohammed also pointed out that "such an incident occurs anywhere in the world", highlighting "a number of mistakes" made by Washington such as torturing detainees at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, he added.

US intelligence agencies believe the crown prince ordered Khashoggi's killing, which he denies.

Jubeir, talking to Reuters about Friday's conversation between the two leaders, said



the crown prince had made the case that trying to impose values by force on other countries could backfire.

"It has not worked when the US tried to impose values on Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact, it backfired. It does not work when people try to impose values by force on other countries," Jubeir quoted the prince, known as MbS, as telling Biden.

Biden had promised to make Saudi Arabia a "pariah" on the global stage over the 2018 murder of Khashoggi, but ultimately decided US interests dictated improving relations with the world's top oil exporter and Arab powerhouse.

Washington has softened its stance on Saudi Arabia since Russia invaded Ukraine earlier this year, triggering one of the world's worst energy supply crises.

## Russia to step up operations

### Rockets pound Ukraine

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia yesterday said its forces would step up military operations in Ukraine in "all operational areas" as Moscow's rockets and missiles pounded cities in strikes that Kyiv says have killed dozens in recent days.

Rockets hit the northeastern town of Chuhuiv in Kharkiv region overnight, killing three people including a 70-year-old woman and wounding three others, regional governor Oleh Synchubov said.

To the south, more than 50 Russian Grad rockets pounded the city of Nikopol, on the Dnipro River, killing two people who were found in the rubble, the region's governor Valentyn Reznichenko said.

Ukraine says at least 40 people have been killed in such attacks on urban areas in the last three days. Russia says it has been hitting military targets.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu ordered military units to intensify their operations to prevent Ukrainian strikes on eastern Ukraine and other areas held by Russia, where he said Kyiv could hit civilian infrastructure or residents.

His remarks appeared to be a direct response to what Kyiv says is a string of successful strikes carried out on 30 Russian logistics and ammunition hubs using several multiple launch rocket systems recently supplied by the West.

Ukraine's defence ministry spokesperson said on Friday that the strikes were causing havoc with Russian supply lines and had significantly reduced Russia's offensive capability.

Despite the bloodshed, both Russia and Ukraine described progress towards an agreement to lift a blockade restricting exports of Ukrainian grain in recent talks. Mediator Turkey has said a deal could be signed next week.



A firefighter helicopter flies over a wildfire near Bustelo village in Amarante, north of Portugal, yesterday. Wildfires raged in southwestern France and Spain yesterday, forcing thousands of people to be evacuated from their homes as blistering summer temperatures put authorities on alert in parts of Europe.

PHOTO: AFP

## China Covid outbreak grows

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday reported its highest number of coronavirus cases since May, with millions in lockdown this weekend as authorities persist with their zero-Covid policy.

Using snap lockdowns, long quarantines and mass testing, China is the last major economy still pursuing the goal of eliminating outbreaks, even as the strategy takes a heavy toll on the economy.

China reported 450 local infections yesterday, up from 432 a day earlier. Most cases were asymptomatic.

Lanzhou, the capital of northwestern Gansu province, ordered its 4.4 million residents to stay home starting Wednesday, and a county in Anhui province went into lockdown from Friday.

Beihai in the southern Guangxi region also yesterday announced lockdowns in parts of two districts that are home to more than 800,000 people.

## The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

# Save Khuniya Palong reserved forest

### Govt must reverse decision to build a football facility there

WE'RE alarmed to know that the government is allowing Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to build a residential training facility in a reserved forest – Jungle Khuniya Palong – in Ramu, Cox's Bazar. According to our report, 20 acres of land on which the centre will be built were already handed over to BFF, after quietly de-reserving it in early June. Justifying the decision, the minister of environment, forest and climate change has claimed that "there was no alternative to it", and that "we'll make sure the harm to forestland is kept at a minimum level." We find both the justification and the assurance quite unconvincing.

While the practice of ravaging forests is nothing new in Bangladesh, this marks a new low in government-sanctioned deforestation with football thrown into the mix. Forests are critical to our existence. Football is anything but, especially in a country with dangerously low forest coverage. "Football for forest" is thus not only a bad bargain, it also flies in the face of common sense, established conservation practices, our constitution and international commitments, a High Court order... the list goes on. According to an estimate, about 30,000 trees will have to be felled for the planned construction. We cannot help but ask: What's so important about a football facility that a forest will have to be scarred for it? Why are forests, reserved ones no less, always such easy prey?

One may recall a similar incident last year when the public administration ministry sought to build a civil service academy on 700 acres of protected forestland in Cox's Bazar. The land allotment order was met with opposition from activists and even a parliamentary standing committee, and it was eventually stayed for three months by High Court. The court, previously, had directed the government not to hand over any more forestland of Cox's Bazar to any individual or organisation. The latest move shows how little effect that ruling has had on relevant authorities, who continue to defy the highest court of the country.

This is a disturbing development in itself, but more so for forests in Cox's Bazar which are particularly at risk, having suffered largescale clearance after the arrival of Rohingya refugees. The problem was compounded by the continuation of encroachment, de-reservation, deforestation and leasing out of land – a cocktail of crimes against nature in which both locals and officials are equally complicit. We have nothing against building training facilities for anyone, but it must be done responsibly, on plain land. When the government itself breaks law, it sets a very bad precedent. We, therefore, urge the higher authorities to quickly intervene to save Khuniya Palong forest. It should re-reserve the land allotted and take the project elsewhere.

# No Austerity for Chattogram Wasa

### CWasa officials must answer for ignoring instructions on foreign trips

WE are surprised to learn about foreign trips made by officials of the Chattogram Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (CWasa) in the last few months, despite strict government instructions to suspend any such tours for the time being. Currently, a number of high officials of the institution, including its managing director, are in the US, as part of a project called Bhandal Jhuri Water Supply Project.

Although CWasa claims that the 14-day trip is for training and inspection of factories before making purchases under the project, the timing is suspicious as it comes after over 80 percent physical work of the project has already been done. The question is, what is the point of making this trip at this point? How urgent was it? This is just one example of unnecessary trips usually made by government officials wasting huge amounts of public money. Over the last few months, CWasa officials alone made quite a few trips to different foreign countries including Turkey.

The government recently issued a circular suspending foreign trips of officials of all government, statutory, state-owned, autonomous and semi-autonomous organisations as well as state-run companies and financial institutions. So, how could the CWasa officials ignore this directive? One engineer who returned from a trip recently has said that they did not go abroad on government funds, and that the cost was borne by the project contractor. Even if this is the case, it still violates the government directive. Also, no contractor would arrange such costly trips out of the goodness of their heart. The money, in one way or another, will be taken from the pockets of the public.

At a time when the government has been urging all its institutions and even citizens to maintain austerity – and giving specific directives to local administrations across the country to reduce their budget spending – such wastage of money by CWasa is unacceptable.

The fact that such trips were made despite a clear directive also raises the question: What mechanism is there, if at all, to check whether the directive is being followed by all public offices? Clearly, only giving instructions to maintain austerity is not enough. There needs to be a proper policy and system in place to ensure compliance and success. We have various parliamentary committees to oversee the work of various ministries. The austerity drive also needs to be centrally monitored by a high-powered committee, guided by a legal framework, to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Only then can we expect to get some positive results.

## BUYING VS SELLING DOLLARS

# What should we do?



Dr S Nazrul Islam is a visiting professor at the Asian Growth Research Institute (AGI) in Japan.

S NAZRUL ISLAM

THE US dollar has now surpassed the Tk 100 mark, and Bangladesh Bank is making contradictory moves to deal with the situation. Earlier, it sold USD 7.62 billion from the reserves to protect the value of the taka. More recently, the government has been seeking USD 4.5 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and USD 1 billion from the World Bank to replenish the foreign currency reserves. Similarly, after failing to shore up the taka even by selling dollars from the reserves, the central bank apparently decided to let the dollar rate be settled by the market. However, according to press reports, it again tried to stop the devaluation of the taka by fixing the rate at which banks can buy or sell dollars.

The sudden appreciation of the dollar can certainly be unnerving. However, much of its cause is rooted in past failures to adjust the exchange value of the taka in a timely manner. For a long time, Bangladesh allowed the taka to be overvalued. The average annual rate of inflation in the US and Bangladesh during the decade of 2012-2021 was 1.88 percent and 6.05 percent, respectively, implying a difference of 4.17 percentage points. Yet the dollar exchange rate increased from Tk 79.1 in 2012 to only Tk 84.8 in 2021, suggesting an average annual increase of less than 0.7 percent. Though the relative movements of the prices of tradable goods and services could provide a more accurate anchor, it is clear that the adjustment of taka's value fell far short of what was required. It may be noted that neighbouring India devalued its currency several times during the last decade. The robust growth of remittances and exports during these years helped Bangladesh to ignore the necessity of this adjustment. However, a combination of a sharp rise in the import bill and a fall in remittances have now brought to the fore the accumulated unwelcome consequences of an overvalued taka.

There is a perception that devaluation of a country's currency reflects deterioration of its economy. This is not necessarily the case. The exchange rate depends mostly on the inflation rates in the economies in question, and a country can do well even if it has a relatively higher inflation rate. Also, the absolute value of the currency does not reflect the strength of a country's economy. For example, as of July 12, 2022, one dollar was equivalent to 137 Japanese yen and 1,934 Italian lira. This does not mean that Japanese and Italian economies are worse than that of Bangladesh. What is important is to ensure that the exchange rate reflects the price levels in the countries in question.

At a general level, the overvalued taka was expected to dampen export and promote import. The intriguing political-economic question is, why there

wasn't enough pressure from exporters for correcting the overvaluation. The government's policy of offering cash incentives to exporters could be one answer. RMG exporters still account for about 80 percent of Bangladesh's total exports, and they have been receiving cash incentives ever since their emergence. They also enjoy lower corporate tax rates. Given

Second, cash incentive schemes create additional burden on the budget. Third, the overvalued currency creates unreasonable pressure for import.

Of course, the forced and somewhat sudden correction of taka's overvaluation, as happening now, is creating the problem of imported inflation. However, artificially trying to protect the high value of the



▲ The sudden appreciation of the dollar can certainly be unnerving, but necessary.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

this generous support, RMG exporters probably did not have much to gripe about the overvalued currency. In the successful East Asian countries, the privileges given to export-oriented industries were always time-bound and generally expired after a decade. By contrast, the privileges enjoyed by the RMG sector in Bangladesh have become a permanent fixture of the landscape.

The other social group that was hurt by the overvalued taka were remittance senders. Unlike RMG exporters, they form a diffuse group, with relatively small per capita gain from the correction of overvaluation, and hence they were unable to mount any collective action. However, they expressed their displeasure by sending more money through informal channels. The government tried to offset this trend, again, with a cash incentive policy, this time directed at the remittance senders.

However, targeted policies of cash incentives are generally inefficient compared to the universal policy of correct currency valuation. Targeted policies often create distortions and lead to unwarranted behaviour. For example, it is widely believed that the cash incentives given for remittances led to recycling of dollars (sent out through hundi, only to be brought back through official channel) to reap the cash incentives. Similarly, the cash incentives on exports seem to have given rise to a perpetual dependence on government largesse, rent-seeking, and the inability to advocate for a more rational exchange rate policy.

The policy of targeted cash incentives is harmful for at least three other reasons. First, it is discriminatory, because not all exporters receive cash incentive schemes, and overvalued currency makes it harder for potential new exporters to sprout.

taka is not the solution. The earlier sale of USD 7.62 billion from the reserves was a misguided move and proved to be futile. Similarly, the idea of borrowing from the IMF and World Bank to replenish the reserves is also not warranted. Taking on additional loans is not the solution.

In the short run, the first task is to let a correction of the overvaluation happen. This correction has to be sustained, instead of being a one-shot affair. Second, it is necessary to recognise the potential benefits of the forced devaluation. It can boost exports and remittances and dampen import – which are needed now. Instead of cash incentives that create budgetary burden and can be misused, other creative measures should be devised to encourage remittance flow through official channels. The government has already taken some administrative measures to contain import. These need to be effectively implemented. Third, it is necessary to consider removing or relaxing the cap on the interest rate to curb import demand. Fourth, taxes and duties on imports need to be reviewed to maintain the import of critical inputs. Fifth, subsidies need to be provided to offset imported inflation of particular commodities and for deserving sections of the population.

In the medium term, sectoral management has to be improved. This is particularly the case with the energy sector, which has become a main claimant of foreign currency and subsidies, so much so that it is now threatening our balance of payments and macroeconomic stability. Similarly, with the overvaluation corrected, it should be possible to phase out cash incentives to the RMG sector and lessen the burden on the budget. Thus, with some creativity, the current crisis can also be used to better balance the economy.

▲ The earlier sale of USD 7.62 billion from the reserves was a misguided move and proved to be futile. Similarly, the idea of borrowing from the IMF and World Bank to replenish the reserves is also not warranted.

# Unpacking northeast India's potential



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ABANTHIKA KUMARI

BANGLADESH and India share a 4,096km international border, 1,880km of which is with India's northeastern region (NER). India's NER is strategically positioned and might serve as the country's gateway to Southeast Asia. Bangladesh shares borders with Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram in the NER. With the exception of Meghalaya, all states have land and river borders with Bangladesh. The longest land and river-based boundaries with Bangladesh are in Tripura and Mizoram. Closer economic integration and connection with Bangladesh would diminish these states' economic isolation, while simultaneously strengthening their linkages with India's heartland.

The nexus between Bangladesh and the NER determines the current pattern of commerce between the two countries. Some important minerals are found in the NER which are in high demand in Bangladesh. Resources such as coal, limestone, stone chips, and bamboo are important NER exports to Bangladesh, while finished goods such as cement, plastic, goods, ready-made clothing, processed food, and soft beverages are key imports. This makes a compelling case for increased trade between the two regions. Agartala is 1,650km from Kolkata and

2,637km from New Delhi through Shillong and Guwahati. The journey between Agartala and Kolkata via Bangladesh, on the other hand, is only about 550km. Furthermore, the average distance between Bangladesh's major cities and northeast India is 20km to 300km. As a result, Bangladesh is always considered crucial for NER's connectivity with mainland India by rail, road and river routes. Because of its strategic location, there are several opportunities for trade, transportation, commerce, and connection between Bangladesh and the NER. As a result, it is critical to map out some of the most important sectoral prospects.

The northeastern region is a source of around 63,000MW of hydropower energy. Bangladesh can benefit from the extra or underutilised power generated in the NER by bolstering its power supply. As a result, cooperation in this industry can benefit both regions. Connectivity with northeast India, namely the Seven Sisters, might be extremely beneficial to both parties. This aim could be served by establishing government-to-government (G2G) economic cooperation. Establishing G2G economic zones between Assam and Sylhet could help achieve this goal.

The first step towards increasing tourism between Bangladesh and the Seven Sisters will be to reopen all of the blocked border checkpoints to visitors. There are now only three border checkpoints along the states of Tripura and Meghalaya. Both must look into the possibility of adding more border checkpoints and developing infrastructure, including communication lines. Furthermore, the international airport in Sylhet can act as a link between the secluded people of the northeast and the rest of the globe. Given the enormous number of state-of-the-art hospitals and educational institutions on this side of the

border, Bangladesh can also draw a large number of NER population for medical and educational tourism.

It is clear that both the administrations are committed to revive inland navigation between Bangladesh and the NER. However, there are obstacles to making efficient use of the waterways: heavy siltation, shifting channels, lack of needed water depth during the lean season, night navigation limits, and the absence of appropriate navigation, for example. These issues must be addressed for the mutual benefit of Bangladesh and India's NER.

To give access to subregional main cities and ports, the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement (BBIN MVA) would substantially help the chances for cooperation. Under the BBIN MVA, Bangladesh and India should work collaboratively to increase cross-border trade with the NER.

During a meeting between Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in Dhaka in April this year, the Bangladeshi premier offered India the use of Chattogram port when discussing the necessity for greater connectivity between the two neighbouring countries for mutual benefits. This presents a lot of exciting prospects for the two countries to collaborate closely. Bangladesh has the potential to be a major partner of India's efforts to increase trade in the region as the globe "pivots to Asia" and the Indian Look East policy changes into the Act East policy.

Both Dhaka and New Delhi would benefit from a larger role for northeast India. Because of its proximity to Southeast Asia and Bangladesh, the region has the possibility to serve as a bridge for India while also benefiting economically and entrepreneurially.

▲ Given the enormous number of state-of-the-art hospitals and educational institutions on this side of the border, Bangladesh can also draw a large number of NER population for medical and educational tourism.



# 'I just need 30 minutes of silence'



SARAH ANJUM BARI

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I'll let you in on a secret we in the newspaper world experience four or five times a year. On the third day of Eid, when my family is still making plans to watch a movie or visit a talk-of-the-town bridge, I have to explain why I am going back to work. "Already? You have work tomorrow?", "But it's a national holiday!", "But it's Pahela Baishakh!", "Can't you edit the news report later at night?" The conversation unfolds anew each time: "Yes, I have to go in today because you expect your newspaper tomorrow. I edit this article right now because you may not read the news in the middle of the night, but some people do, and that's why some of us are editing even then."

This isn't a diatribe against work culture in the news industry, nor against our families' expectation that we spend a healthy amount of time with our loved ones. In fact, people in both these parts of my life are known to show monumental amounts of patience and understanding given the circumstances. It is a rant against much more – my work emails, at least, are legally, professionally, and for decency's sake required to wait until the holidays officially end, but there were still about 12 messages in my inbox that required replies, and they required that I complete certain tasks before I could begin to form a response. Completing each of those tasks would take an hour at least. Add them to the hours I need for the more urgent items on my to-do list, and the math shows that my holidays ended before they even began. I don't suspect – I know that this applies to my friends who work in the media world, in the advertising world, who teach, who are studying, and those who are raising a child.



VISUAL: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

The truth is that, even as you sit reading this article, some corner of your mind is worrying about a text you haven't replied to, an email you have yet to open (thanks for the third reminder, Google), a call you promised you'd return, a lunch you promised you'd make time for... are you even still reading? Do you still sit and read things longer than the length of an Instagram caption?

Instead of these pressing tasks, our weekends, holidays, even the end of the workday, are supposed to be about reconnecting with things we don't normally find time for. You want to finish a book that has been on your nightstand for months. You want to watch a TV show everyone has been talking about. It's 2022 and you're still only on the second episode of Stranger Things (Season ONE). What even is Wordle?

We call Dhaka a noisy city, but hardly ever do I feel like the noise stops at our doorsteps. Like the honking that crashes in through our windows and walls when we're attempting a rare nap, the noise of life – of how much we're expected and

required to communicate, communicate, communicate, reply, reply, reply, reply, pick up, ring back, like, comment, subscribe, "hello-can-you-unmute-your-microphone-please?" – the volume is deafening.

I no longer need to cite an article to tell you that overuse of social media has been found to correlate with mental health issues – depression and anxiety topping the list. But I don't think we understand what this really means, beyond blaming video games, influencer culture, and addiction to oversharing on Facebook or Instagram. The virtual "social networks" we entrap ourselves in aren't actually fuelled by algorithms, but by the charged, frenetic expectations we send out into each other's lives, demanding that our every thought, every emotion be met with a reaction at a time of our choosing, even as we ourselves stretch at the seams within the same web. We need to consume, consume, consume, every show, every film, every song, every TikTok-gone-viral, and we need to let the world know that we're doing it all. The panic hits in the

**I'm so full of words that I haven't written anything just for myself in months, and they're bursting out of my brain and through my fingertips in a messy, unrefined outpouring of mixed metaphors.**

## REMEMBERING SHINZO ABE

# Tragic death of an Asian statesman



ENAYETULLAH KHAN

Enayetullah Khan is the editor-in-chief of UNB and Dhaka Courier.

FROM the moment he appeared on the world stage, Shinzo Abe, Japan's most compelling politician in a generation – perhaps even in the entire post-war era – was cut from a different cloth. Whereas the norm for Japanese leaders during this period has been being the efficient, managerial type, who could be relied upon to not rock the boat, Abe, who was assassinated at a political event on July 8, broke the mould by defining himself in terms of the political vision he espoused with such clarity and purpose.

His distinctive lineage was steeped in politics: maternal grandfather Nobusuke Kishi was part of Japan's war cabinet during World War II (while paternal grandfather Kan Abe sat in the opposition benches in the National Diet, campaigning to end the war), and was later prime minister as well under the new, pacifist constitution that Japan adopted in the aftermath of the war. His

father Shintaro was a leading figure in the Liberal Democratic Party's politics in the 80s, and served a four-year stint as Japan's foreign minister with distinction.

Vital to Abe's vision was a restoration of Japan to its rightful place at the top table, within the international family of nations. Having relinquished the premiership due to ill health after just a year in office once before, this urge was even more evident when he fashioned an improbable comeback to become the prime minister again in 2012. Shortly afterwards, he gave an address at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, in which he explained his economic and diplomatic objectives and declared that he had returned to the prime-ministership to prevent Japan becoming a "Tier Two Nation." By the time he was forced to resign once again, due to a recurrence of the same ailment in 2020, no one had led Japan for longer as prime minister.

His desire to see Japan expand its sphere of influence was amply reflected in the unusually busy international schedule he adopted. From December 2012 to September 2014, Abe visited an astonishing 49 countries, including Bangladesh. Keen to unshackle his country from the constraints of its post-war constitution, Abe positioned Japan



Shinzo Abe (1954-2022)

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

as a key player in regional security vis-à-vis the Asia Pacific. Perhaps his most audacious foreign policy coup d'état lay in securing Washington's buy-in for the constitutional changes he had in mind, to expand the scope of Japan Self-Defense Forces (it did away with a standing army in the aftermath of World War II) to act in cooperation with and in defence of allies.

Abe's foreign policy moved Japan away from its traditional focus on the "big

three" bilateral relationships with the United States, China, and South Korea, and sought to increase the country's international engagements by expanding ties with Nato, the European Union, and others beyond the Asia Pacific region. Bangladesh was one of the countries that benefited from his endeavours, and he held frequent summits with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in the process elevating the bilateral relationship between the two countries to a new comprehensive partnership.

In another sign of the greater priority accorded to Bangladesh under Abe, Prime Minister Hasina was invited to attend the 2016 G7 Summit, which Japan hosted that year, as part of the outreach segment. Invitations to the outreach segment are very much the hosts' prerogative, and it was the first time Bangladesh had been invited to attend the annual meeting of rich, industrialised economies.

Notwithstanding his nationalist credentials, the fact remains that his death has occasioned an outpouring of grief from many corners of the globe, and has been officially mourned at the state level by at least two countries in Asia, including Bangladesh. In death, his reputation will likely be further enhanced.

Opinion

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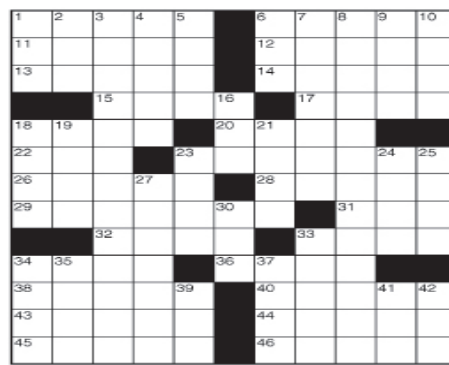
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### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Turning tool
  - 6 Top roles
  - 11 Was sore
  - 12 Crowd scene actor
  - 13 Plow pioneer John
  - 14 Sales pitch
  - 15 Singer Mitchell
  - 17 Leave out
  - 18 Took turns
  - 20 Trick
  - 22 Unoriginal
  - 23 Library penalty
  - 26 Scoundrel
  - 28 Decorate
  - 29 mascara holder
  - 31 Relieve
  - 32 "Auld Lang"
- DOWN**
- 1 Young fellow
  - 2 Perfect serve
  - 3 John Grisham novel
  - 4 Ibis's cousin
  - 5 Perfect place
  - 6 "Miserables"
  - 7 Bared
  - 8 John Grisham novel
  - 9 Zwei follower
  - 10 Pretzel topping
  - 16 S&L offering
  - 18 Steamed
  - 19 Stratagem
  - 21 Bryce Canyon setting
  - 23 Incline
  - 24 Lake near Buffalo
  - 25 Cuts off
  - 27 Homer hero
  - 30 Min. part
  - 33 Fragrance
  - 34 Beginning for trooper or medic
  - 35 Prayer finish
  - 37 Fresh
  - 39 Pig's place
  - 41 Fellows
  - 42 Catch sight of



### YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

DOFF STREAK  
OGRE TEETH  
OLES ANDEAN  
MESSAGES  
HUB TESTS  
ROMPS SATIN  
UKE ADO  
ERASE CELEB  
DATED AXE  
DIPLOMAT  
OFLATE TACO  
WAITON ITEM  
ENTERS CEDE

### BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



### BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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# The world is moving backwards in efforts to eliminate hunger and malnutrition!

Global hunger numbers rose to as many as 828 million in 2021

**According to a United Nations report, the number of people impacted by hunger worldwide increased to 828 million in 2021, an increase of around 46 million since 2020 and 150 million since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**STAR HEALTH REPORT**

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report, 2022 edition, provides updates on the global food security and nutrition situation, including the most recent estimates of the cost and affordability of a healthy diet. The paper also considers how governments may repurpose their present agricultural support to lower the cost of healthy meals, keeping in mind the limited public resources available in many regions of the world.

- The figures portray a bleak picture:
  - In 2021, 828 million people were impacted by hunger, 46 million more than the previous year and 150 million more than in 2019.
  - After remaining largely stable since 2015, the number of people afflicted by hunger increased in 2020 and is expected to climb further in 2021, reaching 9.8% of the global population. This compares to 8% in 2019 and 9.3% in 2020.
  - In 2021, the gender gap in food insecurity widened further: 31.9% of women worldwide were moderately or severely food insecure, compared to 27.6% of males, a difference of more than 4 percentage points from 2020.
  - In 2020, over 3.1 billion people could not afford a nutritious diet, up 112 million from 2019. This is due to the rise in consumer food



costs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its containment measures.

- Approximately 45 million children under 5 suffer from wasting, the worst type of malnutrition, which raises the death risk by 12 times. Additionally, 149 million children under five had stunted growth due to a chronic shortage of critical nutrients, while 39 million were overweight.
- In 2020, roughly 44% of infants under 6

months will be exclusively breastfed. The goal is 50% by 2030. Two in three youngsters do not get the minimal diversified diet they need to grow and develop.

Even with a worldwide economic recovery, almost 670 million people (8% of the world's population) will remain hungry in 2030. This is comparable to 2015 when the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aimed to abolish hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition by the end of the decade.

As this report is being published, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, involving two of the world's largest producers of staple cereals, oilseeds, and fertiliser, is disrupting international supply chains and driving up prices for grain, fertiliser, energy, and ready-to-use therapeutic food for severely malnourished children. This occurs at a time when supply chains are already being harmed by increasingly frequent extreme weather events, particularly in low-income nations, and has potentially grave consequences for global food security and nutrition.

This report frequently underscores the escalation of these primary causes of food insecurity and malnutrition: conflict, climatic extremes, and economic shocks, along with widening disparities. Therefore, we must take bolder action to build resilience against future shocks.

## Importance of vitamin D during pregnancy

FAHMIDA HASHEM



Vitamin D deficiency during pregnancy is a global health issue. This causes neurodevelopmental and immune system problems for the child. Maternal vitamin D deficiency causes long-term damage. Therefore, pregnant women must avoid vitamin D deficiency.

Higher vitamin D levels in pregnancy may lead to higher childhood IQ scores, according to a study published in The Journal of Nutrition. In utero, a mother's vitamin D helps regulate her baby's processes. Vitamin D is essential for maternal, foetal, and child health during pregnancy, according to research. Food may provide small amounts of vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) and vitamin D2 (ergocalciferol), but sun exposure is the body's primary source of vitamin D, which is synthesised from cholesterol derivatives.

Vitamin D plays an essential role in bone metabolism by regulating calcium and phosphate equilibrium. Vitamin D is produced by the body during exposure to sunlight but is also found in fish-liver oils, fatty fish, mushrooms, egg yolks, and liver & fortified foods. Apart from this, vitamin D supplementation also plays a leading role. Vitamin D supplementation should be implemented into primary health care, and fortification of staple foods should be done based on dietary patterns.

Finally, programmes that are supported by government funding are more likely to be widespread and effective.

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## Improving road safety measures could save half a million lives every year



Improving road safety by adopting proven interventions in 185 countries could save up to half a million lives a year and improve the health and development of individuals and nations, according to a new Series in The Lancet.

Road deaths affect the youngest and poorest hardest—almost half of the adolescents killed in road collisions in 2019 lived in low middle-income countries (LMICs), up from around a quarter in 1990. Yet, despite global progress, not enough has been done at the country level to address road safety as a public health crisis. The authors call for immediate political and financial commitments to address one of the world's most significant development challenges.

New global and country-level estimates suggest that routinely wearing helmets and seatbelts, obeying speed limits and avoiding drunk driving could save between 347,000 and 540,000 lives worldwide. In addition, improving post-crash emergency response, trauma care, and clinical interventions to control haemorrhage and early resuscitation could save up to 200,000 lives a year in low- and middle-income countries.

The Series authors outline ten challenges that must be addressed to prevent 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030. Building a stronger global road safety movement that incorporates other health and environmental impacts (e.g., air pollution, sedentary lifestyles), generating more and better data on what works in different LMICs, and adequate domestic and donor funding.

## Signs your headache may be a migraine

**STAR HEALTH DESK**

A migraine is worse than a headache. You may feel moderate-to-severe throbbing pain for days. Pain that pulses or beats repeatedly is throbbing.

**Where you feel the pain:**

Headaches might vary. Some headaches cause eye aches. A sinus headache causes pain in the cheekbones and forehead. A migraine usually is worst on one side of the head, but this varies.

**You have what is called an aura:**

15–20% of migraine sufferers experience aura. It can occur before or during migraines and lasts 10–60 minutes. Auras may cause visions:

- Bright flashing lights, spots, dots, or sparkles
- Different shapes
- Wavy lines or lines with sharp, pointy edges
- Nothing at all, though your vision will come back

When you have an aura, you can also experience:

- A feeling of prickly pins and needles in your arm or your leg
- Difficulty talking or changes to the way you talk
- Ringing in your ears
- A feeling that things don't smell or taste the same
- Feeling weak or numb on one side of the body

Your doctor can help you get effective treatment for your auras.

**You have a family history:**

Migraines can run in families. Family history affects 80% of migraine sufferers. A parent's migraines increase a child's risk by 50%. If both

parents get migraines, their child is 75% more likely to.

**Increased sensitivity:**

When you have a migraine, you may become more sensitive to lights, sounds, smells, sometimes, touch.

**You feel like throwing up:**

Migraine causes nausea and vomiting.

**You are a woman:**

Women get migraines more often. Female hormones cause this inclination. Migraines are frequent in 15- to 55-year-old women.

**Warning symptoms before a migraine:**

A migraine can have stages.

First stage is 1 or 2 days before headache. This is called prodrome stage.

Prodrome can cause:

- Trouble concentrating or sleeping
- Irritability or depression
- Sensitivity to lights and sounds
- Nausea
- Food cravings

**Triggers:**

Headaches have several causes.

They can be caused by stress. Other medical issues can cause this. Migraines can have "triggers." Triggers can include missing a meal, caffeine, weather changes, alcohol, red wine, cured meats, being sensitive to the chemicals in some pre-packaged foods, and hormonal changes in women caused by menstrual periods, pregnancy, or menopause.

Remember to consult your doctor if your headaches cause you discomfort or if you suspect you have a migraine.



## Physiotherapy in critical care: A neglected part of ICU treatment

BJOY DAS

Bangladesh's intensive care units (ICUs) care has improved over time. Medical advances have improved ICU survival. However, critical illness survivors have significant morbidities that require Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation.

Early physiotherapy improves ICU patients' quality of life and reduces secondary impairments. The role of a Physical Therapist in the ICU has been established concerning airway clearance. Therefore, physical therapy is an essential ICU requirement. The critically ill patient's ability to walk was attributed to ICU culture and physical therapy services to promote early mobilisation.

Interventions used by physical therapists include mobilisation, positioning, limb exercises, respiratory muscle training and electrical stimulation. Mobilising conscious, medically stable ICU patients on mechanical ventilation has been safe and feasible. Sitting on the bed, sitting in a chair, and exercising the limbs while on mechanical ventilation appears to improve the patient's psychological framework and facilitate Rehabilitation once they are extubated.

In addition, physical therapy and routine chest physiotherapy improve ICU survivors' functional outcomes and quality of life.

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## Not the end of the world for Anamul

SPORTS REPORTER

There was talk that Bangladesh should test their bench strength in the third ODI against the West Indies on Saturday after they won the three-match series with a game to spare and Anamul Haque, who made a return to the national side after seven years during the tour of the Caribbean, was the frontrunner to get a nod in the game.

Anamul had a phenomenal season in the domestic 50-over Dhaka Premier League, registering a record 1,138 runs in the List A competition in the last season for Prime Bank, to force his way into the limited-overs side.

Despite scoring the bulk of his runs in the 50-over format, Anamul made his comeback through the longest format of the game after former Test skipper Mominul Haque was dropped for the second Test against the Windies due to a prolonged run of poor form.

Anamul failed to utilise that opportunity, scoring 23 in the first innings and managing just four runs in the second innings. The wicketkeeper-batter also featured in all the three matches of the T20I series against the hosts, but once again failed with scores of 16, three and 10 respectively.

To keep the 'selection process fair', ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal preferred Najmul Hossain Shanto ahead of Anamul during the first two ODIs, with the left-hander promoted to open the innings in the second game.

As Bangladesh had already won the series and Najmul had been unable to perform significantly in the first two ODIs with knocks of 37 and 20, there were speculations the team management would give Anamul an opportunity in the final ODI.

It would have also been the ideal platform for Anamul and, more importantly, could have provided him confidence after a disappointing comeback to international cricket.

Surprisingly, Anamul was not included for the third ODI and many believe it is another example of the lack of foresight in the selection process.

"I think it's the team management's call whether they pick Anamul or not. Obviously, the team management had their own plans and they did whatever they felt was best with the conditions and pitch in mind," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told The Daily Star.

"We are planning to have him for the upcoming Zimbabwe tour. I think we need to show some patience and have faith in the team management's decision. We have a long-term plan for Anamul. It's not the end of the world for Anamul because he didn't feature in the ODI series in the West Indies," he concluded.



Bangladesh batter Liton Das hit his sixth ODI fifty in chase of West Indies' 178 runs in the third and final ODI of the three-match series in Guyana on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Taijul roars back into ODIs

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh continued their dominance over the West Indies in the three-match ODI series and once again it was the spinners who paved the way for the Tigers, with left-arm spinner Taijul Islam leading the charge.

Taijul registered his maiden five-wicket haul to bundle out West Indies for a small total of 178 in the third and final ODI at the Providence Stadium in Guyana yesterday.

Taijul, who was the only change in the playing eleven as he replaced Shoriful Islam to make a comeback to the ODI format after 28 months, picked up his first wicket off the very first ball that he bowled yesterday to dismiss opener Brandon King.

Interestingly, the 30-year-old cricketer, who over the years has been considered



As skipper Tamim Iqbal once again won the toss and opted to field, it was clear that Taijul would be brought into the attack soon on a pitch that had aided the visiting spinners throughout the series.

Introduced in the third over of the game, Taijul grabbed the opportunity instantly as his sharp turners had undone the Windies batters. He dismissed Shai Hope, the other Windies opener, with a classical left-armers' delivery -- a flighted ball enticing the right-hander to stretch forward only to turn away sharply and have the batter stumped. Stunned by the brilliant Taijul delivery, Hope walked back after scoring just two.

Before travelling to the West Indies,

Taijul had said during an exclusive interview with The Daily Star that his main target will be to assess the pitch away from home and adapt accordingly. And the left-arm spinner seems to have waited for his opportunity and once he got that, he latched onto it.

"It is difficult if you have a set plan. Instead, you have to be flexible. My initial goal is to help the seamers by bowling tight. If the spinners get purchase, it's a different ball game," Taijul had said.

The cricketer from Natore went on to remove Keemo Paul and Rovman Powell next as West Indies were left reeling. It was skipper Nicholas Pooran who held the key for his side and scored fifty. But Taijul got the wicket of Pooran as well, bagging his maiden fiver with the big fish.

Pooran was beaten by yet another turning delivery from Taijul, which came into the left-handed batter as he tried to play across the line. With Pooran making no connection, the ball went on to hit the timber as the Windies skipper had to depart after a team-high 73 off 109 balls.

Taijul's experience played a crucial role in adapting to the condition and the pitch as he tried to give more air to the ball to get purchase from the surface. He ended up with career-best ODI figures of 28 for five in 10 overs that included two maidens.

Apart from Taijul, another left-arm spinner Nasum also played a vital role with the ball for the Tigers. He bagged two wickets alongside Mustafizur Rahman.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

#### WEST INDIES

178 all out in 48.4 overs (Carty 33, Pooran 73, Powell 18, Shepherd 19; Nasum 2-39, Mustafizur 2-24, Taijul 5-28, Mosaddek 1-23)

#### BANGLADESH

179 for 6 in 48.3 overs (Tamim 34, Liton 50, Mahmudullah 26, Mosaddek 14, Nurul 31 not out, Miraz 16 not out; Motie 4-23)  
Result: Bangladesh won by 4 wickets.

the Tigers' specialist Test bowler, had made his mark in international cricket in the ODI format -- back in 2014 when he bagged a hat-trick on his ODI debut against Zimbabwe.

## Barcelona close in on Lewandowski

REUTERS

Poland striker Robert Lewandowski is set to join Barcelona after Bayern Munich reached a verbal agreement with the LaLiga side on a transfer, the Bundesliga champions said on Saturday.

The 33-year-old has 12 months remaining on his Bayern contract and multiple media reports had said he was expected to sign a three-year deal with the 26-times Spanish champions.

"We have come to a verbal agreement with Barcelona," Bayern president Herbert Hainer said in a statement.

"It's good to have clarity for all parties. Robert is an incredible player and he won everything with us. We are incredibly grateful to him."

Spanish media reported that Barcelona would pay around 45 million euros (\$45.4 million) plus another 5 million in add-ons for the striker.



Lewandowski joined Bayern in 2014 from Borussia Dortmund and has won the Bundesliga every year since then, as well as the Champions League in 2020.

Named FIFA Best Men's Player for the second straight year in January,

Lewandowski said in May that his story with Bayern was over and he could not imagine staying on with the German champions. Read full story

The club were not eager to let the Bundesliga's second-highest all-time scorer go, but Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic had confirmed Lewandowski did not accept an offer to extend his contract and was looking for new experience elsewhere.

Bayern also announced that German international Serge Gnabry, who had been linked by the British media with a return to the Premier League, had extended his contract until 2026.

## Robinho staying at Kings

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Premier League champions Bashundhara Kings have extended contract with their talismanic Brazilian forward Robson Robinho by two more years.

The 26-year-old signed the contract extension in presence of the club's chairman Imrul Hasan at the club headquarters on Saturday afternoon.

The attacking midfielder joined Bashundhara Kings in August, 2020, on loan from Brazil's Fluminense before making the move permanent at the end of the season. He scored 24 goals in his first season. This season the Brazilian has scored 13 goals in the league so far as the Bashundhara-based club are on the verge of winning a third consecutive BPL title.

## Bernardeschi signs for Toronto

REUTERS

Toronto FC have signed Italy international and free agent Federico Bernardeschi, the Major League Soccer side said, adding to its Italian lineup after it signed Bernardeschi's Italy teammate Lorenzo Insigne and former Italy international Domenico Criscito. Bernardeschi spent five seasons with Serie A side Juventus but his contract expired in June, paving the way for a move to the MLS side as a Designated Player on a four-year contract.

"We are thrilled to add Federico to our team. As a player and a person, we believe he's exactly what we need right now, both on the field and in the locker room," Toronto FC President Bill Manning said in a statement.

"Federico has proven himself to be a champion and a leader at Juventus and for the Italian national team and brings a pedigree to Toronto that's second to none."

Bernardeschi won three league titles and two Coppa Italia trophies with Juventus.



## Xavi denied US visa

AFP, BARCELONA

Coach Xavi was not allowed to board Barcelona's flight to the United States on Saturday because of his history of visits to Iran.

Sports daily El Mundo Deportivo reported Xavi went to Iran three times while he was playing for Qatari club Al Sadd, and so needed to apply for special permission to visit the United States.

Xavi played the last game of his career in Tehran. Barca only realised they had a problem on Friday. They thought they had found a solution, but when they arrived at the airport, Xavi was not allowed on the plane and the team had to travel without him.

Reports said Xavi should be able to fly on Monday and arrive in Miami in time to lead the final training session before the friendly against Inter Miami on Tuesday evening. Barcelona's recent signings Raphinha, Andreas Christensen and Franck Kessie all travelled with the squad.



Shaheen Afridi spreads his arms as his teammates join him in celebration after one of four wickets for the Pakistan pacer during their first Test against Sri Lanka at the Galle National Stadium yesterday. Pakistan bowled out the opposition for 222 runs before losing two wickets for 24 runs at the end of the first day's play.

PHOTO: AFP

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Tajjul Islam (C) celebrates with Afif Hossain (L) and Mehedy Hasan Miraz after taking one of his five wickets during Bangladesh's third ODI against the West Indies at the Guyana National Stadium in Providence on Saturday. The left-arm spinner's efforts helped bundle the hosts out for 178. Bangladesh chased down the target with four wickets in hand and nine balls to spare to clinch the series 3-0.

PHOTO: AFP

# Malaysia starts process of hiring workers

Bangladeshi labourers can leave as early as the end of this month

PORIMOL PALMA

Malaysia has started the process of hiring workers from Bangladesh without settling the controversy surrounding the syndicate of 25 agencies chosen to conduct the recruitment.

"Yes, the process has started -- I think the workers can start flying from the end of this month," Imran Ahmad, the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment minister, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The recruitment cost per worker has been fixed at Tk 79,990, he said, without giving a breakdown.

The development comes after the Malaysian human resources ministry in a statement on July

14 said the attestation process involving more than 2,000 Bangladeshi workers has been completed by the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur and the process was expected to pick up in the coming weeks.

The employers who had paid the levy and plan to hire Bangladeshi workers could now submit their applications for confirmation of employment and work visa documentation to the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian news agency Bernama reported.

"However, the entry of Bangladeshi workers is subject to safety and health screening, including compliance with the

requirements of the Immigration Department," the statement added. Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur signed a memorandum of understanding on labour recruitment on December 19 last year after a pause of more than three years following allegations of a ten-member syndicate that manipulated recruitment during 2017-18.

The Malaysian government halted recruitment in September 2018 because the high cost of recruitment was causing forced labour and human trafficking.

Workers during that time were charged up to Tk 4 lakh each to go to Malaysia for jobs. As per the then MoU, the recruitment cost initially

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

# Man kills wife, children, turns himself in

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A man, who turned himself in to police after murdering his wife and children,



Zahirul

was sent to jail through a Jashore court yesterday.

The accused Zahirul Islam Babu, 40, son of Mashiar Rahman Biswas, went to Abhaynagar Police Station after killing his wife Sabina Yasmin Bithi, 28, and his daughters nine-year-old Sumaiya Khatun, 9, and two-year-old Safia, on Friday night.

Police then recovered the three bodies from

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

# 1,600-year-old iron pillar that refuses to rust

AGENCIES

The Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque complex in New Delhi is home to an ancient wonder of metal work -- a 1,600-year-old iron pillar that is exceptionally resistant to rust.

The Iron Pillar of Qutub Minar, as this ancient monument is sometimes referred to, measures 7.21-meters-tall, has a diameter of 41 centimeters, and weighs about 6 tons. It's also more than a millennium and a half old, believed



to have been erected during the reign of Chandragupta II, one of the most powerful emperors of the Gupta Empire. And even though it has spent all that time outdoors, the Pillar of Qutub Minar shows almost no sign of rust damage. For decades, scientists and metal workers from all over the world speculated about the properties of this unusual marvel, and it wasn't until 2003 that the mystery was finally cracked.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

# Crisis-hit Lanka moves to elect new president

AGENCIES

The Sri Lankan parliament yesterday met to begin choosing a new leader to serve the rest of the current term after the president fled abroad and resigned following mass protests over the country's economic collapse.

Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena promised a swift and transparent political process that should be completed within a week.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in on Friday as interim president until parliament elects a successor to Gotabaya Rajapaksa, whose term ends in 2024.

Protesters in the crisis-hit island nation, however, insist the six-time prime minister too should step aside. The new president could appoint a legislator to replace Wickremesinghe.

Nominations for the presidential post will be heard on Tuesday, the parliament's secretary general Dhammika Dasanayake said during a brief session. If there is more than one candidate for the president, the legislators will vote on Wednesday.

Rajapaksa, 73, fled to the Maldives and then to Singapore this week to escape a popular uprising against his government.

During the proceedings, Dasanayake also formally read out Rajapaksa's resignation letter, the contents of which have not previously been made public.

In his letter, Rajapaksa said Sri Lanka's financial crisis was rooted in years of economic mismanagement that predated his presidency, along with the COVID-19 pandemic that drastically reduced Sri Lanka's tourist arrivals and remittances from foreign workers.

"It is my personal belief that I took all possible steps to address this crisis, including inviting parliamentarians to form an all-party or unity government," the letter said.

The protesters accuse Rajapaksa and his powerful political family of siphoning money from government coffers and of hastening the country's collapse by mismanaging the economy.

The family has denied the corruption allegations, but Rajapaksa acknowledged some of his policies contributed to Sri Lanka's meltdown.

Security around the parliament building in the capital, Colombo, was increased on Saturday with

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

**বাংলাদেশ মেরিন একাডেমি, চট্টগ্রাম সহ সরকারি/বেসরকারি মেরিটাইম শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে মেরিন ক্যাডেট প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্সে ভর্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

**২০২২-২০২৩ সালের নটিক্যাল / ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে যোগ দিন**

আবেদন করতে ভিজিট করুন : [www.dos.gov.bd](http://www.dos.gov.bd)

**নিম্নলিখিত মেরিটাইম শিক্ষা/প্রশিক্ষণ প্রতিষ্ঠানে ২০২২-২০২৩ সালের ক্যাডেট ভর্তির জন্য অনলাইনে আবেদন আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।**

১. বাংলাদেশ নৌকো একাডেমি, মেরিন (মেরিন সেক্টর) - পুরনো-১০০ কক্ষ ও মেরিন-১০০ কক্ষ।
২. বাংলাদেশ নৌকো একাডেমি, মেরিন (মেরিন সেক্টর) - পুরনো-১০০ কক্ষ।
৩. বাংলাদেশ নৌকো একাডেমি, মেরিন (মেরিন সেক্টর) - পুরনো-১০০ কক্ষ।
৪. বাংলাদেশ নৌকো একাডেমি, মেরিন (মেরিন সেক্টর) - পুরনো-১০০ কক্ষ।
৫. মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং একাডেমি, মেরিন (মেরিন সেক্টর) - পুরনো-১০০ কক্ষ ও মেরিন-১০০ কক্ষ।
৬. ইন্টারন্যাশনাল মেরিটাইম একাডেমি, মেরিন (মেরিন সেক্টর) - পুরনো-১০০ কক্ষ।
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৯. মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং একাডেমি, মেরিন (মেরিন সেক্টর) - পুরনো-১০০ কক্ষ।

**নিম্ন: প্রয়োজনীয় বিবরণী পরে প্রদত্ত তালিকা পরে দেওয়া হয়েছে।**

**আবেদনের শর্তাবলী :**

(ক) বয়স: ১৬-১৮ বছর।  
 (খ) শিক্ষার স্তর: সিনিয়র সেকেন্ডারি বা সমতুল্য।  
 (গ) মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদনকারীদেরকে মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদন করতে হবে।  
 (ঘ) মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদনকারীদেরকে মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদন করতে হবে।  
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**প্রশিক্ষণ :**

প্রোগ্রামের মেরিন ক্যাডেট হিসেবে মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদনকারীদেরকে মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদন করতে হবে।

**অনলাইন আবেদন পদ্ধতি :**

মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদনকারীদেরকে মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদন করতে হবে।

**আবেদন ও গণিত পরীক্ষার তারিখ/সময়/সেতর :**

মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদনকারীদেরকে মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদন করতে হবে।

**আবেদনের শেষ তারিখ :**

৩১ জুলাই ২০২২ খ্রিঃ

**বিষয় নির্দেশনা :**

মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদনকারীদেরকে মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদন করতে হবে।

**স্বাক্ষরিত্ব :**

মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদনকারীদেরকে মেরিন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে আবেদন করতে হবে।