

## Pay for pets!

DSCC slaps tax on pet dogs; animal lovers outraged

HELEMUL ALAM and NAZIBA BASHIR

Dhaka South City Corporation has recently imposed an annual tax of Tk 500 per pet dog and Tk 1,000 for horses and deer — drawing huge flak from animal rights activists and pet owners.

Animal experts have termed the move unacceptable, saying this will discourage people from adopting animals, especially the strays in desperate need of homes.

According to a public notification, "City Corporation Model Tax Schedule, 2016", pet owners will have to pay the annual tax for each animal.

According to rights activists, many countries across the world have a licence fees on pets, which needs to be renewed every year. This fees ensures the pets' treatment and other welfare services. However, whether the tax in Bangladesh will ensure the same remains to be seen.

Issued on December 1, the DSCC notification said owners will have to pay an annual tax for each



COURTESY: RIDWAN RABBY

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A long queue of CNG-run auto-rickshaws in front of a filling station at Noapara in Chattogram's Raozan upazila around 1:00pm yesterday. The vehicles have to wait there for a long time as gas dispensing is slow due to low pressure in supply.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Cold War redux in Dhaka?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has somehow become the latest frontier in what appears to be the new cold war between the US and Russia that has begun since the latter's invasion of Ukraine.

The back and forth on Twitter between the two countries' embassies in Bangladesh has culminated in the Russian mission on Wednesday posting a cartoon that seemed to mock the US government.

After the Bangladesh government expressed disappointment over some diplomats' statements on Bangladesh's politics, the Russian embassy on Tuesday issued a press release taking a stand against foreign interference in local political issues.

In the statement, the Russian embassy said it was committed to the principle of not interfering in domestic affairs of other countries. It added that countries like Bangladesh "which shape their foreign

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## Take action against those responsible for fettering man

Urges NHRC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Human Rights Commission has called for legal action against those involved in the cuffing and fettering of an accused BNP leader during his mother's namaz-e-janaza in Gazipur.

"To prevent the recurrence of such incidents, the commission has directed the authorities concerned to take legal action .... It urged for more caution in handling such cases in the future," said an NHRC press release yesterday.

It said the commission believes the act was not only inhuman but also against the constitution and basic human rights, adding that the High Court directive against fettering prisoners was also violated in this case.

The accused, Ali Azam, president of BNP's Boali union unit under Gazipur's

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## US aid for Ukraine investment, not charity

Zelensky tells US Congress invoking WWII as Biden vows to back Kyiv 'as long as it takes'

AGENCIES

President Volodymyr Zelensky told the US Congress on Wednesday that aid to Ukraine is an investment in democracy, not charity, and invoked American victory over the Nazis in a key World War-II battle to press for continued assistance.

Zelensky, on his first foreign wartime visit, wore his trademark olive green pants and sweater, and earlier met President Joe Biden, who urged support to keep flowing in 2023, when congressional approval for Ukrainian aid will be harder.

The United States has sent about \$50 billion in assistance to Kyiv as Europe's biggest land conflict since 1945 drags on, killing tens of thousands, driving millions from their homes and reducing cities to ruins. On Wednesday, it pledged to provide Patriot missiles.

But some Republicans, who will take control of the House of Representatives from Democrats on January 3, have expressed concerns about the price tag. They could hold up billions of dollars in

war aid starting next month.

"Your money is not charity. It is an investment in the global security and democracy that we handle in the most responsible way," Zelensky told a joint session of the US Senate and House of Representatives, speaking in English.

The world was too interconnected to allow any

**"I'm not at all worried about holding the alliance. I feel very good about solidarity and support for Ukraine."**

— US President Joe Biden

country to stand aside and feel safe, he added.

Zelensky's speech was aimed at softening the concerns of Republicans when they take over Congress and keeping US public opinion on his side with reminders of the hardships his people face, reports Reuters.

Members of Congress stood,

cheered, applauded and shook Zelensky's hand as he entered the chamber, with several wearing the colours of the Ukrainian flag, blue and yellow.

He received multiple standing ovations from an audience that also included members of the Ukrainian diaspora and religious figures.

Earlier, Zelensky was greeted by Biden and first lady Jill Biden on the White House lawn and the two leaders appeared together at the Oval Office, followed by a news conference.

"Ukraine's fight is part of something much bigger," Biden said, pledging that the United States would lend its support against "Russian aggression" for "as long as it takes."

"I'm not at all worried about holding the alliance," Biden said. "I feel very good about solidarity and support for Ukraine."

Zelensky said: "The United States will stand up for our shared values, the values of freedom."

US Secretary of State Antony

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## 2 members of new militant outfit arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two members of a newly formed militant outfit — "Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya" — have been arrested in the capital and Sylhet, said the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit yesterday.

The arrestees — Saiful Islam Tuhin, 21, a former madrasa student in Sylhet, and Nayeem Hossain, 22, a student of Agriculture Training Institute in the capital's Agargaon — earlier averted a crackdown by the law enforcers in Bandarban, said CTC unit officials.

Tuhin left home to join a Tablighi Jamaat programme on November 15, 2021, while Nayeem went into hiding on October 2 that year, Md Asaduzzaman, chief of the CTC unit, told a press briefing in the DMP media centre.

The arrestees stayed at different camps in Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) for about a year with

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## Nasa formally retires Mars InSight lander after 4-year mission

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Nasa has formally retired its Mars InSight lander, the first robotic probe specially designed to study the deep interior of a distant world, four years after it arrived on the surface of the red planet.

The US space agency made an announcement about it on Wednesday.

Mission controllers at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) near Los Angeles determined the mission was over when two consecutive attempts to re-establish radio contact with the lander failed, a sign that InSight's solar-powered batteries had run out of energy.

Nasa predicted in late October that the spacecraft would reach the end of its operational life in a matter of weeks due to increasingly heavy accumulations of dust on its solar panels, depleting the ability of its batteries to recharge.

JPL engineers will continue to listen for a signal from the lander, just in case, but hearing from InSight again is unlikely, Nasa said.

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## Environment accounting in the works

RASHIDUL HASAN

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNDP are jointly working on Environmental-Economic Accounting (EEA) across the country, according to the contents of a parliamentary body session yesterday.

EEA is a framework for organising statistical information to help decision-makers better understand how the economy and the environment interact. By bringing together environmental and economic information it is possible to observe and quantify the contribution the natural environment makes to the economy.

This work, which will be the first of its kind in Bangladesh, will assess the monetary valuation of all forest land, wetland, forest, hills and bio diversities.

"The valuation will be added with the country's total gross domestic product and we are expecting to get the

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**A FISH OUT OF WATER ... A Blue-Spotted Mudskipper taking a stroll in a muddy spot in the Sundarban's Shundori Khal. Found in swamps and rivers of tropical and subtropical Africa, Australia and Asia, the ever-fascinating fish prefers spending more time on land than in the water, in which a prolonged stay may cause them to drown. Although it has no special organs for breathing air, it can absorb oxygen through its skin and the lining of the mouth, as long as it stays moist. It has large and muscular pelvic fins, which look like legs. These "legs" can even help the fish climb trees if needed. Blue-Spotted Mudskippers are more visible during low tides when they are seen on exposed mudflats; during high tide, they remain in their burrows. Though habitat destruction and overharvesting remain a threat to their population, Mudskippers are listed in the least-concern category by the IUCN.**

PHOTO: TIMU HOSSAIN

## SUU KYI'S RELEASE UNSC adopts first-ever resolution on Myanmar

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council called for Myanmar's junta to release Aung San Suu Kyi as it adopted on Wednesday its first ever resolution on the situation in the turmoil-ridden Southeast Asian country.

The 15 member Council has been split on Myanmar for decades and was previously only able to agree on formal statements about the country, which has been under military rule since February 2021.

Suu Kyi, 77, has been a prisoner since the army toppled her government almost two years ago and violently cracked down on dissent.

Wednesday's resolution "urges" the junta to "immediately release all arbitrarily detained prisoners," including Suu Kyi and ex-president Win Myint.

It also demands "an immediate end to all forms of violence" and asks for "all parties to respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law."

The adoption marked a moment of relative Council unity in a year in which divisions have been heightened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Any opportunity for the Security Council to speak with one strong, united voice on any issue and especially on Myanmar would be much welcomed," Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's spokesman said ahead of the vote.

The text was adopted with 12 votes in favour. Permanent members China and Russia abstained, opting not to wield

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