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BNP SIT-INS

Year's first demo mostly peaceful

Rallies across the country on January 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP will hold rallies and demonstrate across the country on January 16 to drum up support for its 10-point demand and to protest the government move to hike power price.

The announcement came at the party's sit-in in the capital yesterday.

The programme passed off peacefully in Dhaka though the ruling Awami League leaders and activists took position in different parts of the city.

The four-hour programme, the BNP's first political programme this year, began at 10:00am in Dhaka and at 11:00am elsewhere in the country.

BNP leaders in Faridpur alleged their sit-in was attacked by police and Jubo League and Chhatra League men.

Police, however, said it was the BNP activists who threw brick chunks at them forcing them to retaliate with rubber bullets.

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

BNP leaders and activists stage a sit-in in front of the party's Nayapaltan headquarters in the capital yesterday to press home its 10-point demand, including resignation of the government and election under a non-party interim government.

Get rid of 'caretaker ghost'

AL urges BNP, says next polls to be free

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League yesterday called upon the BNP to drop the demand for a poll-time caretaker government and reiterated that Sheikh Hasina will remain the prime minister during the election.

The AL, however, assured the opposition party that the next election will be free and fair and without intervention from the government. The general election will be held the same way polls take place in other democratic countries, it added.

The ruling party staged two separate rallies in the capital yesterday -- one at Mirpur-1 and another at the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Besides, the Juba League held two programmes at Farmgate and Central Shaheed Minar and Chhatra League organised a rally at Shahbagh.

All these programmes were apparently to counter the sit-ins arranged by the BNP and 32 like-minded political parties in the

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US OFFICIAL'S VISIT

Bilateral ties, rights issues on agenda

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Assistant Secretary for State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu will discuss ways to strengthen bilateral relations and economic engagement during his visit to Bangladesh on January 14-15.

He will also hear perspectives on labour and human rights.

After his two-day India visit, Lu will fly to Dhaka and meet senior officials and civil society leaders.

Foreign ministry officials said he may also raise the issue of security concerns that stemmed from an incident during US Ambassador Peter Haas's meeting with relatives of enforced disappearance victims.

He had earlier discussed the issue with Bangladesh Ambassador to Washington Muhammad Imran.

According to the US embassy in

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Donald Lu

Furnish proof to support claims

PM says about allegations of corruption in mega projects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rejecting outright the allegations of corruption in different mega projects, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday threw down a challenge to an opposition lawmaker to come up with concrete proof.

The allegations of corruption are baseless, she told parliament while replying to a supplementary question from Gonoforum MP Mokabbir Khan about allegations of graft in various major projects.

Mokabbir said that the Russia-Ukraine war was not solely responsible for the country's current economic crisis; many internal issues were also responsible. Chaos in the financial sector, widespread corruption in mega projects, smuggling of thousands of crores of taka abroad, and massive looting in financial institutions were responsible for the economic crisis, he alleged.

In reply, the leader of the House asked the MP to state clearly where the corruption took place and how much money was involved. "Then I will give the answer."

Hasina said the BNP, which quit the 2018 national election halfway through the voting, was able to make the polls questionable through propaganda.

Responding to a supplementary question from Jatiya Party MP Fakhrul Imam, the premier said the BNP apparently stayed away from

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RANGPUR CITY POLLS

Slow voting thru EVM prompts EC to launch enquiry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal yesterday said the Election Commission was concerned about the slow voting through electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the recently held Rangpur City Corporation polls.

He also said the commission was looking for the reason behind the delay in voting.

"We will review these allegations and try to overcome the crisis. At the same time, I am telling you that we didn't face problems to this extent in other elections," Habibur said.

He was talking to reporters after holding a views-exchange meeting with a group of journalists and election observers who covered the December 27 RCC polls.

"Slow voting rate was a major complaint, and in some cases fingerprints of voters didn't match. The delay might have occurred due to many reasons. We will think about it," the CEC said.

He said that the commission would talk with technical experts about why the delay occurred, and why fingerprints didn't match.

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DHAKA-CTG RAIL LINK

Project on cards to build chord line

It'll shorten distance between two cities by 90km

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Railway is moving forward with its plan to build a chord line from Dhaka to Cumilla via Narayanganj to shorten the distance between the capital and the port city.

The line will reduce the distance between Dhaka and Chattogram by 90 kilometres and travel time by one-and-a-half hours, say BR officials.

At 320km, the Dhaka-Chattogram rail line, which goes through Tongi-Bhairab-Akhaura-Cumilla-Laksham, is rather drawn-out at present.

Once the new line is built, it could be used as a dedicated line for passengers, with the existing line reserved for freight service.

BR yesterday got the nod from the cabinet committee on government purchase to hire a consortium of Japan's Oriental Consultant Global, France's EGIS and Malaysia's HSS to carry out the feasibility study and detailed design for the project.

The consortium will carry out the feasibility studies and prepare detailed designs and development project proposals for 11 projects, including the chord line, over 30 months for Tk 193.64 crore.

BR is now aiming to sign the contract with the consulting firm this month, according to Mahbubur Rahman, the project director.

The chord line will bring a significant change in the railway, said BR officials involved with the proceedings.

The feasibility study and detailed design for the chord line will be carried out while keeping the provision of electric traction, meaning it is likely to open a new avenue for BR.

But, discussion for the construction of a chord line went on for decades, with BR carrying out a feasibility study for the project in 2010.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Govt to import over 20 lakh tonnes of fuel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation is set to import 20.4 lakh tonnes of refined petroleum from five countries, including India and China, for Tk 18,215 crore in the first half of the year to meet the country's annual demand.

The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase approved the procurement at a meeting chaired by Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal yesterday.

The BPC will buy the fuel from seven state-owned enterprises in Indonesia, the UAE, India, China and Malaysia.

The meeting also approved the BPC's proposal for importing 60,000 tonnes of diesel at Tk 545 crore from India's Numaligarh Refinery this year.

The cabinet committee also approved the import of 60,000 tonnes of fertiliser at Tk 333.5 crore to ensure uninterrupted agricultural production.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



An elderly couple seeks warmth from a fire they lit using straws and hay in Salapak village of Rangpur's Gangachara upazila. With the cold ripping through the northern districts, people from low-income families usually turn to fire to stay warm yesterday. However, this has already caused major accidents in at least eight districts, as many people have had to suffer serious burns. Two women have recently succumbed to such injuries in Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

IMF \$4.5B LOAN

Deputy MD to get a taste of Bangladesh

Monsio Sayeh is expected to arrive on Sunday

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

There would not be any further negotiations on the \$4.5 billion loan programme during International Monetary Fund's deputy managing director Antoinette Monsio Sayeh's forthcoming visit to Bangladesh.

"We wanted to emphasise that it's not the purpose of this visit," a spokesperson for the Washington-based multilateral lender told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sayeh, who is also visiting India, Vietnam and Thailand, is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on Sunday on a four-day tour.

Her visit is to underline the IMF's strong relationship with its Asian member countries, the IMF spokesperson said.

"The visit to Bangladesh will provide an opportunity to strengthen the IMF's engagement and reiterate its continued support to the country," the spokesperson added.

Sayeh's itinerary suggests she wants to get an idea of the economic progress made by Bangladesh over the decades, where the country stands now and what its future potential is -- putting her in good stead to answer all questions that the IMF executive board may have later this month when Bangladesh's loan proposal is placed for approval.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

LAND DISPUTE

Attempt to carry out attack on indigenous people foiled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bogura*

Several hundred Bangalees in Bogura's Sherpur upazila yesterday attempted to carry out an attack on indigenous people following a land dispute.

However, the attempt was foiled by police.

Locals said there has been a rivalry between indigenous Turi, Singh, Mahato and Barmon communities and Bangalees over a piece of land in Amboil village.

The indigenous people claim the land belongs to them while the local Bangalees deny it.

On Sunday morning, the two sides got locked into a clash that left at least 30 people injured.

Later on Tuesday, Sherpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sanjida Sultana arranged an arbitration at her office, directing all to refrain from violence and settle the matter through discussion.

But several hundreds of Bangalees yesterday morning gathered in Amboil village with bamboo sticks around 11:30am yesterday. Others from neighbouring Balenda and Gorta Uttar Para villages also joined them, said witnesses.

"They were urging people through loudspeakers of mosques to gather and carry out an attack on us," said Santosh Singh Babu, an indigenous community member.

"They are trying to forcibly occupy our land by spreading communal hatred," said Santosh, also president of Bogura District Adivasi Parishad.

He also alleged that Bangalees beat up two indigenous youths, Sujan Singh, 25, and Ujjal Singh, 32, yesterday morning.

However, local Bangalees denied the allegations and said the indigenous people first beat up a Bangalee youth triggering the chaos.

"They [indigenous people] first beat up one of our men, who is physically-challenged, this [yesterday] morning. His name is Faruk. Even, they were preparing to attack on us. In retaliation, we gathered to resist their attack," said Sujan Miah, 30, a resident of Amboil.

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PHOTO: AFP

Local people stand in the remains of a fireworks warehouse destroyed after Russian strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine, yesterday.

Fate of Ukraine's Soledar hangs in the balance

Russian mercenary group claims to control the gateway town; Kyiv says its forces holding on amid bitter fighting

AGENCIES

Russian and Ukrainian forces were engaged in intense fighting yesterday over the town of Soledar in eastern Ukraine -- a stepping stone in Moscow's push to capture the entire Donbas region -- with the Russians appearing to have the upper hand.

The mercenary group Wagner, which has spearheaded the assault, on Tuesday claimed to have taken control of the small salt-mining town but said pockets of Ukrainian resistance were holding out in the centre.

Russia's defence ministry said yesterday that airborne units had cut off Soledar from the north and south. But Ukraine's military denied that Soledar had fallen and said its defensive lines had not been

breached.

"Heavy fighting continues in Soledar," Ukraine's deputy defence minister Hanna Maliar wrote on Telegram yesterday.

"The enemy has again replaced its units after sustaining losses, has increased the number of Wagner (Russian mercenaries) and is trying to burst through our forces' defence and fully seize the city, but is not having success."

The Kremlin also stopped short of claiming victory and acknowledged suffering heavy casualties.

"Let's not rush, let's wait for official statements. There is a positive dynamic in progress," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said when asked about the situation on the ground.

A Reuters photographer who has reached the outskirts in recent days said many residents had fled along roads out of the town in perishing cold. She said plumes of smoke could be seen rising over the town and the incoming artillery fire was relentless.

A victory in Soledar, which had a pre-war population of around 10,000, would have symbolic, military and commercial value for Moscow after battlefield setbacks in recent months.

Elsewhere, the head of the Kherson military administration in southern Ukraine told a news briefing that Russian forces were keeping up their shelling of the provincial capital, which they vacated in November.

Bilateral ties

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka, Haas's December 14 meeting at the home of a missing BNP leader in the capital's Shaheenbagh was interrupted by members of Mayer Kanna, who had gathered outside the house.

Mayer Kanna is a platform launched by the families of those who fell victim to court martial during President Ziaur Rahman's regime.

Lu's visit comes less than a week after the visit of Rear Admiral Eileen Laubacher, senior director for South Asia at the US National Security Council. More US officials are likely to visit Dhaka later this month and the next.

Foreign policy analysts said the US is increasing its engagement with Bangladesh not only to press for free and fair elections, human rights and labour rights, but also for drawing the country on its side under its Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Also, the US considers Bangladesh a potential market as its economy is expanding rapidly, and a strategic partner because of its importance regarding maritime access.

Foreign ministry officials further said Bangladesh would request the US official to withdraw the sanctions his country imposed on the Rab and its officials in December 2021 for alleged human rights violations.

Dhaka will also seek to have the GSP facility on Bangladesh's export to the US, which suspended the duty-free facility following the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster.

According to the State Department statement, in India Donald Lu will participate in the India-US Forum and also meet senior Indian officials to discuss ways in which the US and India can further expand energy, trade, security, and human rights cooperation.

Govt to import

FROM PAGE 1

Of the quantity, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) will buy 30,000 tonnes of granular urea at Tk 150 crore from the UAE under a state-to-state contract.

The fertiliser will be purchased at \$470 a tonne, \$10 less than the rate the government had paid the company on its previous purchase.

Besides, the government will buy 30,000 tonnes of urea at around Tk 150 crore from Saudi Arabia. The cost of urea will be \$470 per tonne, which was \$551 per tonne previously.

Moreover, the cabinet committee approved the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh's proposal to import 12,500 tonnes of sugar from Kolkata-based Srinova Ispat at Tk 70.2 crore.

Year's first demo mostly peaceful

FROM PAGE 1

"The Awami League is in power thanks to police and bureaucrats ... They are isolated from the people," Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the party, said at the sit-in at Nayapaltan.

As part of the simultaneous programme led by the BNP, Ganatantra Mancha held a similar programme in front of the Jatiya Press Club, while 12 Party Alliance held one at Bijoy Nagar, Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote at Purana Paltan, LDP in front of FDC, Ganatantrik Bam Oikya at the east end of Jatiya Press Club, and Gonoforum (Montu) at Arambagh.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami did not join.

The south lane between Fakirapool and Nightingale intersection was off-limits to traffic as BNP activists swarmed the area. A large number of police personnel were present there with armoured vehicles and water cannons.

Speaking as the chief guest at the Nayapaltan sit-in, Fakhrul alleged that the ruling party activists and law enforcers attacked their peaceful sit-in in Faridpur.

He also called upon people from all walks of life to join their movement to force the "autocratic" government to quit, paving the way for a pro-people government and parliament through an acceptable election.

"Let us move towards that goal. We have to march forward uniting the people to restore our voting rights and democracy. Signs are there that noted citizens of the country are also coming forward," he said.

Project on cards to build chord line

FROM PAGE 1

In 2012, the railways ministry even sent a proposal for constructing the line under a public-private partnership. But this did not see much progress due to unknown reasons, the BR officials said.

Asked about the delay, BR Director General Quamrul Ahsan said since it would be a new line, it would require a huge amount of land and money for implementation.

"This caused the delay. But ADB has shown interest in investing in the project, so we are now hopeful of implementing it," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

In June 2020, the government approved the Tk 235.37 crore Technical Assistance Project, with the Asian Development Bank providing Tk 167.14 as a loan for feasibility study and detailed design of the 11 projects.

Apart from the chord line, the consulting firm will carry out the feasibility study and detailed design

Fakhrul then announced the programme for January 16.

He said the programme would be observed in cities, districts towns, upazilas, and municipality headquarters.

"People of Bangladesh have woken up," he said.

He claimed that 600 BNP leaders and activists were in Keraniganj jail enduring unbearable sufferings. "One of our activists was killed here [Nayapaltan] on December 7. So far, 15 of our activists have been killed."

BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, who chaired the programme, said the government used to say that the BNP announces programmes to create chaos, but the BNP arranged 10 rallies and subsequently held other programmes peacefully.

"We will also hold all our programmes in the days to come in the same way, together with the people to oust the government," he said thanking the party leaders and activists.

BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas said the government must go as the people have woken up.

"We don't want to remove this regime. We want to ensure that it falls through a credible election under a caretaker government," he said.

In Faridpur, the sit-in began at Ambika Maidan around 11:00am as per schedule and eyewitnesses said motorbike processions of Chhatra League and Jubo League men went passed the venue around 12:15pm.

The Chhatra League and Jubo League men were carrying sticks, and

at some point, a cocktail exploded at the entrance to the venue.

The BNP men chased the Chhatra League and Jubo League men away and hurled brick chunks and sticks.

Witnesses said the BNP men then started throwing brick chips at policemen stationed on the east end of the ground. The police retaliated with rubber bullets.

Around 12:25pm, police stopped a BNP procession near the Government Rajendra College and the BNP men threw brick chunks at the police.

The police dispersed the procession. BNP central leaders then rushed to the Ambika Maidan for safety but their programme was foiled.

The situation came under control around 1:00pm.

At a press briefing later on, BNP Vice-Chairman Ahmed Azam Khan alleged that the programme was peaceful until 12:30pm "when the supporters of the ruling party men attacked, and BNP leaders and activists resisted them. Later, members of the ruling party joined the police and fired indiscriminately on BNP leaders and workers. Many BNP members were injured."

Shamim Haque, president of Faridpur Awami League, said, "No one from the Awami League obstructed any programme of the BNP."

Suman Ranjan Sarkar, additional superintendent of police (Sadar Circle), said the BNP was not supposed to bring out any procession. "But they brought out a procession and attacked police personnel. Police fired rubber bullets for safety."

Get rid of 'caretaker ghost'

FROM PAGE 1

city and other divisional headquarters to press home their 10-point demand that includes the national election under a non-partisan interim government.

The AL Dhaka city south unit organised the rally at its central office marking the homecoming day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, but party insiders said it was part of a strategy.

The BNP's divisional rally in Dhaka on December 10 was "not a huge success" as the Awami League leaders and activists occupied the streets, added the insiders.

Keeping this in mind, the AL has chalked out strategies to keep the BNP under pressure and stay on the streets -- whenever the opposition party comes up with programmes, an AL presidium member told this

newspaper, seeking anonymity.

Apart from the scheduled programmes, the ruling party men took positions and remained vigilant across the city.

Addressing the Mirpur rally arranged by the party's Dhaka north city unit, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader urged the BNP to get rid of the ghost of the caretaker government demand.

"Sheikh Hasina will remain the Prime Minister during the election period. The government will not interfere in the polls," he added.

He also said if the BNP assumes power again, the spirit of the Liberation War will be destroyed.

Speaking at the rally, AL Joint General Secretary Hasan Mahmud said BNP will fail again like on December 10 if it tries to oust the government.

Lawyers' boycott

FROM PAGE 12

in Narsingdi, told this correspondent yesterday that a land-related case of his was pending with the court. As the verdict of the case was scheduled to be delivered on January 5, he had to go to Brahmanbaria from Narsingdi.

He said he was not getting compensation for land acquisition by the government because the case was still pending.

Nurul Islam, of Madhberbagh village of Bijoynagar upazila, said his son is accused in a case filed under the Women and Children Repression

Prevention Act.

He added that hearing of a bail plea was slated for January 4, but a week has gone by and no hearing has been held.

Contacted, Tanbir Bhuiyan, president of Brahmanbaria District Bar Association, said the boycott will continue until their demand for withdrawal of two judges and a court employee is met.

The boycott is hampering the proceedings of 2,500 to 3,000 civil and criminal cases in the district, said court sources.

Bodies of 2 Rohingyas recovered from Naf river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

Police have recovered the bodies of two Rohingya nationals from the Naf river in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar.

The bodies were recovered from the estuary of the river at Jadimura in Teknaf's Hnila at 3:30pm yesterday, Md Abdul Halim, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, told The Daily Star.

The deceased, Abdus Salam, 38, and his brother-in-law Shafiullah, 28, were residents of a Rohingya refugee camp at Nayapara in Hnila.

They were accused in robbery and drug peddling cases, the OC added.

Fish trader shot dead in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

A fish trader was shot dead by unidentified criminals in Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila around 8:00am yesterday.

Two men shot Subrata Mondal, 45, near Damukhali Primary School and fled the scene on a motorcycle, said police, quoting locals.

He might have been killed by "extremists", said AK Shamim, officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Jashore General Hospital morgue for autopsy, he added.

The reason behind the murder could not be known immediately, the OC said.

TRAWLER CAPSIZE IN BALESHWARI

Bodies of 2 missing fishermen found

STAR REPORT

The bodies of two fishermen, whose trawler sank in the Baleshwari river in Barguna's Patharghata on January 3, have been found.

Five days after the trawler capsized, the body of Bayezid, 17, was recovered on Tuesday evening. The body of Yusuf, 23, was recovered around 9:00am yesterday, Sanjay Majumdar, officer-in-charge of Patharghata Police Station, confirmed.

According to family sources, Yusuf and Bayezid took a small trawler for fishing on January 3 with four days of food in stock.

Yusuf and Bayezid went missing after the trawler sank in Pakkidia Lachi area of the Sundarbans, 30km southwest of Patharghata.

Barguna District Trawler Owners Association General Secretary Masum Akon said, "The fishermen were cousins."

Five trawlers had been searching the river to rescue them, he added.

Deputy MD

FROM PAGE 1

It includes a trip to the Padma rail and a ride in Dhaka's metro rail -- the two mega infrastructure projects that were inaugurated in 2022.

She will also witness first hand the dynamism in Bangladesh's famed garment sector, the second-largest manufacturer of apparel in the world, when she visits an industrial unit.

Sayeh, who was previously the finance minister of post-conflict Liberia, will also get an experience of Bangladesh's much-talked-about demographic dividend: she will visit the University of Dhaka and hold a session there.

During the visit, which wraps up on January 18, she will meet with the prime minister, the speaker, the finance minister and the Bangladesh Bank governor to discuss the economic challenges facing

Bangladesh and the ways the IMF could help the authorities to deal with them and support their efforts to foster strong, inclusive and green growth.

She will also engage with women leaders and university students.

This will give her a fair idea to accurately present Bangladesh's case before the IMF executive board, which is expected to convene later this month to take a call on Bangladesh's loan proposal.

Bangladesh has agreed to as many as 30 conditions, including some key structural reforms stalled for years.

If the board approves the loan application, the first instalment of \$447.8 million would be released in February. It will be followed by six equal instalments of \$659.18 million subject to fulfilling the timebound reform measures laid out in the loan proposal.

AL to continue dev journey if voted to power, says Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also president of Awami League yesterday said if her party is voted to power in the next election, it will continue the country's development journey and serve the people.

The premier said this while Vice Minister of the International Department of the central committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Chen Zhou, called on her at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PM's speechwriter M Nazrul Islam briefed reporters after the meeting.

In the last 14 years, Bangladesh has transformed socioeconomically and people are enjoying the benefits of that, said Hasina.

While talking about the Russia-Ukraine war, sanctions and counter-sanctions, she reiterated that Bangladesh does not want conflict and that this war needs to be stopped.

Hasina welcomed the Chinese cooperation in Bangladesh's journey towards advancement and hoped that China would extend its assistance towards a developed and prosperous Bangladesh by 2041. In this connection, she recalled the Chinese cooperation in building various mega-projects such as the Padma Bridge, and the Karnaphuli Tunnel – the first of its kind in South Asia.

Hasina sought Chinese investment in Bangladesh, particularly in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Shilpanagar in Chattogram's Mirsharai.

The visiting Chinese vice minister said his country will provide all required assistance to Bangladesh to materialise its aspiration of becoming a developed country by 2041.



These two, engrossed in their little game with grains of sand, have found a way to escape from the daily struggle, as their mothers stay frozen in the long line behind to get essentials from a TCB truck. Every day, many bring their children and wait for hours in front of these vehicles, because they have no other option. But the little ones always seem to find the bright side of life. This photo was taken yesterday in Bosila of the capital's Mohammadpur.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Student dies after being hit by train

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 19-year-old college student died after being hit by a train in Dhaka's Tejgaon yesterday morning. The deceased was identified as Saeed Abdullah who sat for the HSC exam from Tejgaon Science College.

Saeed died on the spot after a train hit him as he was walking on the rail tracks around 11:00am, said Kamrul Islam, a sub-inspector of Dhaka Railway Police Station. The body was sent to DMCH morgue for an autopsy.

Woman dies as bus runs her over

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An elderly woman died after a bus ran her over on Dhaka's Elephant Road yesterday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Rokia Begum, 60, who worked as a househelp in the area.

A Malancha Paribahan bus ran the woman over when she was crossing the road around 2:00pm, said Murad Khan, a sub-inspector of New Market Police Station.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

Police seized the bus and detained its driver after the incident, said the SI.

Alauddin, a relative of the deceased, said Rokia was going to her daughter's house at Demra when the accident took place.

40 inspectors promoted to ASP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty inspectors have been promoted to the post of assistant superintendent of police (ASP).

The home ministry issued four separate notifications signed by Deputy Secretary Sirajam Munira in this regard yesterday.

The promoted members will get BCS (Police) cadre status.

Their goal: build an arsenal for militants

Says CTTC after foiling plan of a newly-formed outfit

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Counterterrorism officials have claimed that the newly-formed militant outfit "Jamatul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya" were planning to create an arsenal in the remote hilly areas.

For this, the outfit even received several dozens of firearms in three separate consignments, and 7.62 mm bullets, mainly used by law enforcers. What's more, the firearms are factory-made and were manufactured in 2019, said officials.

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit made the claims after conducting a special drive in Bandarban and Dhaka's Kadamtoli area on January 8.

During the drive, CTTC reportedly seized three locally made firearms, six single-barrel rifles, 11 rounds of the 7.62 mm bullets, 140 rounds of other kinds of bullets, lead, acid, gunpowder, octane, and other chemicals from Bandarban.

These firearms and bullets were put inside a big plastic drum, which was then buried, according to officials.

CTTC said it is now looking into from where and how the special bullets were sourced.

The militants would use the chemicals to train outfit members on making bombs, officials said.

SK Imran Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of CTTC, told The Daily Star yesterday that by conducting multiple drives and arresting suppliers, they have successfully managed to foil the outfit's

The outfit received several dozens of firearms in three separate consignments, and 7.62 mm bullets, mainly used by law enforcers. What's more, the firearms are factory-made and were manufactured in 2019.

A high-official involved with the investigation said the firearm consignments reached the militants' den from arms factories in Naikhongchhari of Bandarban and Moheshkhali of Cox's Bazar.

plans of creating an arsenal.

"We have got some information centring the arms supply and are now investigating to take action against the perpetrators," added Imran.

On January 8, CTTC also arrested Kabir Ahmed, an arms supplier, and two members of the outfit – Yeasin and Abdur Rahman Imran – according to officials.

Both of them are aides of Shamin Mahfuz, one of the planners of the militant group, they said.

A high-official involved with the investigation said the firearm consignments reached the militants' den from arms factories in Naikhongchhari of Bandarban and Moheshkhali of Cox's Bazar.

"The consignments were sent to the militant outfit three times, in November 2021, and March and July of 2022," the official said, requesting anonymity.

Arms manufacturers sent the consignments by hiding them inside big drums, he said.

Citing the findings, officials said each of the drums can keep six to seven rifles and three to four small firearms. For each consignment, the suppliers sent two to three drums.

Based on estimates, at least 60 locally-made firearms were sent to the outfit in three consignments, and drives are underway to seize those, said sources in CTTC.

Regarding the firearms' value, another CTTC official said that they have primarily come to know that the small arms and rifles cost between Tk 40,000 to 1 lakh.

Investigators said the arms factories have been built

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

DNCC DRIVE

Woman dies 'jumping off' building in Gulshan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman died and another sustained critical injuries after "jumping off" a building in Dhaka's Gulshan area yesterday, during a DNCC drive against residential buildings being used for commercial purposes, according to police.

The deceased was identified as Farzana Akter, 19, an employee of a spa centre that was being run in the building, said police. Another woman, aged around 22, whose identity could not be known immediately, is receiving treatment at DMCH.

Sheikh Sahnur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of Gulshan Police Station, said they came to know that the two jumped off during a drive at the building by a team of DNCC.

Mukbul Hossain, public relations officer of DNCC, said a mobile-court team led by executive magistrate Mahmudul Hasan was conducting a drive at the area to clear footpaths and check whether residential buildings were being used commercially.

When the team went into the building, the two jumped off the rooftop. The officials then informed the local police station immediately, he said.

Alamgir Hossain, a sub-

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

DENGUE FEVER

21 more hospitalised in 24hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 21 dengue patients were hospitalised in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

Among the cases, nine patients are from outside of Dhaka.

With the new cases, the total number of dengue patients rose to 342, of whom, 176 are from outside of the capital, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

One dengue patient, so far, died this year.

Some 168 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment, of whom, 113 are from outside of Dhaka.

The total number of deaths due to dengue was 281 last year, while the total number of cases was 62,382, of whom, 23,162 were from outside of Dhaka.



COURT CORNER

Fardin denied bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday denied bail to Fardin Iftekhar Dihan, the lone accused in the case filed over the rape and murder of an O-level student in Dhaka's Kalabagan in January 2021.

The HC, however, asked the lower court concerned to finish the trial proceedings of the case expeditiously, saying that the tenure of stipulated 180 days for completing the trial has already expired.

The bench of Justice SM Emdadul Hoque and Justice KM Zahid Sarwar Kajol passed the order after holding hearing for nine phases on the bail petition filed by Fardin, said Deputy Attorney General Sujit Chatterjee Bappi.

TIPU, PRITY MURDERS

Investigators get 9th date to finish probe

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked the Detective Branch of police to submit the probe report of Awami League leader Jahidul Islam Tipu and college student Samia Afran Jamal Prity murders by February 27. Investigators have now taken nine dates to complete the investigation.

Metropolitan Magistrate Rajesh Chowdhury passed the order after DB Inspector Yasin Sikder failed to submit any report. On March 24 last year, Tipu, 55, former general secretary of AL's Motijheel unit, was returning home in a microbus in Motijheel AGB Colony. His vehicle got stuck at traffic in Shahjahanpur when attackers arrived at the scene on a motorcycle and opened fire indiscriminately.

A college student, Prity, 22, who happened to be in a rickshaw next to the vehicle, was also shot.

POSSESSING COCAINE

Peruvian national gets life term

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced a Peruvian national to life imprisonment for possessing 2.3kg of cocaine. Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge Farhana Ferdous handed down the sentence in presence of convict Jaime Bardales Gomez, 52.

Police filed a case against him with Bimanbandar Police Station in September 2015.

According to the case statement, Customs House and Department of Narcotics Control seized cocaine, worth around Tk 50 crore, from him at Dhaka airport on September 1, 2015.

Piyasha indicted in drug case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against model and former television presenter Faria Mahbub Piyasha in a narcotic case.

Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge Morshed Alam read out the charges and set April 17 for starting the trial.

The accused, now on bail, was sued under Narcotics Control Act with Gulshan Police Station in August 2021 after police arrested her from her home in the capital's Baridhara area on August 1, 2021. Some 780 yaba pills, eight bottles of foreign liquor, and four cans of beer were seized from her house.

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 12

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:30	12:45	4:00	5:36	7:00
JAMAAAT 6:05	1:15	4:15	5:40	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Road divider or death trap?

Median causing accidents in Patuakhali-Kuakata highway

SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) recently constructed a new six-lane road in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila, with a divider to prevent collisions among motorists. Ironically, the divider has apparently been serving the exact opposite purpose.

Due to its small size, poor positioning, lack of proper reflective paint and effective warning signs, the divider is causing far too many accidents, according to locals.

The new road connects Rajopara area of Kalapara on Patuakhali-Kuakata highway to Payra thermal-power station, and the 50-metre long divider has been built at the entry point of the road at the Rajopara end.

In the last one week alone, at least 20 vehicles have accidentally rammmed into the divider, confirmed Officer-in-Charge of Kalapara Police Station Md Jasim Uddin.

Many have been injured, while people fear that lives may be lost if authorities do not remove the median.

Abdul Mannan, a local, said, "Whenever I pass by this road, I see damaged vehicles and injured passengers more often than not... They are happening because of the divider. It needs to be removed immediately."

Shahidul Islam, a bus driver who plies Patuakhali-Kuakata highway, said, "As the height of the divider is only two feet, it isn't clearly visible from the driver's seat. As a result, cars and buses regularly collide with the divider."

Other bus drivers demanded the divider be demolished immediately before any major accident occurs.

Patuakhali RHD Executive Engineer AM Atiq Ullah said, "The local administration, including police, have also informed us about the accidents. In view of this, both sides of the divider have been marked with adequate painting."

"As accidents are not decreasing, arrangements are being made to remove the divider as soon as possible in consultation with higher authorities," he added.



Vehicles colliding with this divider in Patuakhali-Kuakata highway has become a common scene, with 20 such incidents occurring in last week alone. PHOTO: STAR



Big piles of earth, bricks and sand have just been lying on the roads of Khulna city for the last few months, restricting traffic and pedestrian movement. This problem arose from the city corporation's drainage work, which started in 2019 and is showing no sign of completion. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Nightmare on the Khulna streets

Drainage work goes on in slow pace, causing gridlock

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Waiting hours in gridlocks and treading carefully on footpaths have become the norm for Khulna city dwellers due to the haphazard work to improve drainage, which is showing no sign of completion since it started in 2019.

As part of the renovation work, authorities have dug up drains at the roadside, and piles of earth, bricks and sand now cover the roads. This has narrowed existing roads, multiplying the suffering of both commuters and pedestrians.

Footpaths at some important locations -- especially at the city's Sonadanga, Phulmarket, Boyra

Bazar areas, and on Khan Jahan Ali Road, Lower Jashore Road, Haji Mohsin Road, and Ahsan Ahmed Road -- are completely unusable.

Such delays are nothing new. Once construction starts in an area, authorities fail to finish the work in time.

According to Khulna City Corporation (KCC), authorities had started reconstructing 225 drains and culverts, and dug seven canals to expand them in 31 wards, spending Tk 823.79 crore.

Out of the total 192-km stretch of drains, works on only 81 km (120 drains) have been completed so far.

The renovation project was passed in 2018, and work began

in 2019 officially. The work is scheduled to end in 2023, but authorities told this correspondent that they will not be able to complete the work in time.

Visiting different areas of KCC -- notably those in wards 23, 22, 19, 14 and 17 -- this correspondent saw piles of dirt on the road due to the construction work. The slow progress of work has left 15 important roads completely unusable for almost two months.

Besides, the culvert at Karimnagar of Sonadanga Notun Rasta Road has remained incomplete for four months now, causing regular gridlocks in the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

DIALYSIS FEE HIKE AT CMCH

Police now sue protesting patients

UNB, Chattogram

A case was filed yesterday against some kidney patients and their relatives who have been protesting the recent hike in dialysis fee at Chattogram Medical College and Hospital.

Mostafizur Rahman, sub-inspector of Panchlaish Police Station, registered the case against Md Mostakim, a patient and 50 to 60 unidentified others around 12:30am.

Inspector Sadekur Rahman of the police station said the case was filed against the patients on charges of assaulting police and obstructing their work.

Five policemen were injured while trying to remove the protesters from road, he said.

On Tuesday, police detained Mostakim from the CMCH during the patients' demonstrations blocking road and obstructing vehicular movement, said Md Nazim Uddin Majumder, officer-in-charge of Panchlaish Police Station.

The kidney patients and their relatives have been staging demonstrations in front of the dialysis centre of the hospital for the last four days protesting the hike in dialysis fee.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Bela serves legal notice to save 'Machu Dighi'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) yesterday served a legal notice on the authorities concerned seeking conservation steps to protect Machu Dighi, a century-old pond, in Sylhet city.

They also demanded steps to stop garbage dumping and filling of the pond.

The notice was sent to the mayor of Sylhet City Corporation, secretaries of the ministry of land, the ministry of local government, rural development and cooperatives and the ministry of environment, forest and climate change, and the director general of the Department of Environment.

The notice was also sent to the deputy commissioner of Sylhet, superintendent of Sylhet district police, DoE director in Sylhet, UNO of Sylhet Sadar upazila and assistant commissioner (land) of Sylhet Sadar upazila.

In the notice, Bela stated that the pond had

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Russell finds fortune in plum cultivation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Cultivation of several varieties of plums has turned out to be a money-spinner for Abu Bakkar Siddique Russell.

The 45-year-old from Gochkhali village in Barguna's Amtali upazila, who lost his job and became unemployed during the coronavirus pandemic, has witnessed a huge success in the first season by cultivating four different varieties of plums like applekul, kashmerikul, bansundarikul and baukul.

Seeing his success, a number of

unemployed youths in the locality are now opting for plum cultivation.

After losing his job in 2020, Russell, who worked at a private organisation, thought only farming could change his fortune.

Then he decided to talk with the upazila agriculture officer and according to his advice, Russell started his farming venture by taking a lease of 2.17 acres land from one of his neighbours.

He first started cultivating malta



on the leased land, but failed to make any profit.

He then switched to plum cultivation, and the wheels of his fortune started turning.

He collected four different varieties of plum saplings from Kushtia's Meherpur at the start of 2021.

Now all the 450 trees at his garden are full of plums that started ripening about two months ago.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Two killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least two people were killed in road accidents in Dinajpur and Faridpur yesterday, report our correspondents.

In Dinajpur, a 5-year-old boy was killed in a road accident in Ghoraghat upazila around 11:30am.

The deceased is Sifat Rahman, son of Rana Rahman of Panchpir village under the upazila.

Quoting locals, police said Sifat was walking home in the morning. While crossing the Azadmor intersection in the upazila, a brick-laden tractor hit him, leaving him critically injured. He died on his way to Ghoraghat upazila Health Complex.

Police seized the vehicle but the driver fled away, said OC Abu Hasan Kabir of Ghoraghat Police Station.

In Faridpur, a rickshaw-van puller was killed after a truck hit his van in Sahorali area of Boalmari upazila. The deceased is Zahan Sheikh, 50.

Quoting locals, OC Abdul Ohab of Boalmari Police Station, said the accident took place when Zahan was going to a local brick kiln to drop off some logs. On the way, a truck hit his rickshaw-van. He died on the spot.

বাংলাদেশ অ্যাক্রেডিটেশন কাউন্সিল (বিএসি)

বিএসএল অফিস কমপ্লেক্স- ২ (৩য় তলা)

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তারিখ: ২৬ শেখ ১৪২৯ বঙ্গাব্দ

১০ জানুয়ারি ২০২৩ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

দেশের উচ্চ শিক্ষার মান নিশ্চিতকরণে কোয়ালিটি অ্যাসুরেন্স ও অ্যাক্রেডিটেশন বিষয়ে গবেষণা প্রস্তাব আহ্বান

বাংলাদেশ অ্যাক্রেডিটেশন কাউন্সিল (বিএসি) দেশের উচ্চ শিক্ষার গুণগতমান নিশ্চিতকরণে কোয়ালিটি অ্যাসুরেন্স ও অ্যাক্রেডিটেশন বিষয়ে জ্ঞান আহরণ ও সৃষ্ণের জন্য গবেষণা কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা করছে। এরই ধারাবাহিকতায় দেশের উচ্চ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান এবং গবেষণা প্রতিষ্ঠানে কর্মরত শিক্ষক ও গবেষকগণের নিকট থেকে ২০২৩-২৪ অর্থবছরের জন্য গবেষণা প্রস্তাব আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে। গবেষণা প্রস্তাব প্রণয়ন ও দাখিলের ক্ষেত্রে নিম্নবর্ণিত প্রক্রিয়া অনুসরণ করতে হবে:

১. বাংলাদেশ অ্যাক্রেডিটেশন কাউন্সিল (বিএসি)'র ওয়েবসাইটে (www.bac.gov.bd) প্রদত্ত ফরমেট (বাংলাদেশ অ্যাক্রেডিটেশন কাউন্সিল গবেষণা নীতিমালা, ২০২২; পরিশিষ্ট ক) অনুসরণপূর্বক তিন (০৩) সেট গবেষণা প্রস্তাব (হার্ড কপি) ২৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৩ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ তারিখের মধ্যে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে সরাসরি অথবা ডাকযোগে নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর নিকট বাংলাদেশ অ্যাক্রেডিটেশন কাউন্সিল (বিএসি), বিএসএল অফিস কমপ্লেক্স- ২ (৩য় তলা), ১ মিন্টো রোড, রমনা, ঢাকা-১০০০ ঠিকানাে দাখিল করতে হবে। এক সেট সফট কপি (এস এস ওয়ার্ড) নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর ইমেইলে প্রেরণ করতে হবে।
২. গবেষণা প্রস্তাবের শিরোনাম, ক্ষেত্র এবং লক্ষ্য ও উদ্দেশ্য অবশ্যই 'বাংলাদেশ অ্যাক্রেডিটেশন কাউন্সিল গবেষণা নীতিমালা, ২০২২'-এর লক্ষ্য ও উদ্দেশ্যের সাথে সংগতিপূর্ণ হতে হবে।
৩. গবেষকগণকে এককভাবে গবেষণা সম্পাদনে উদ্বুদ্ধ করা হচ্ছে, তবে যৌথভাবেও গবেষণা সম্পাদন করা যাবে। ক্ষেত্রমতে, অবসরপ্রাপ্ত বা বিদেশে অবস্থানকারী কোনো গবেষক বাংলাদেশে কর্মরত কোনো গবেষকের সাথে যৌথভাবে গবেষণা প্রস্তাব প্রণয়ন ও দাখিল করতে পারবেন। এছাড়াও প্রকল্প চলাকালে গবেষক প্রয়োজন মনে করলে বিএসি'র অনুমতিক্রমে একজন সহযোগী গবেষক ও একজন গবেষণা সহকারী নিয়োগ দিতে পারবেন।
৪. বাংলাদেশ অ্যাক্রেডিটেশন কাউন্সিল গবেষণা নীতিমালা, ২০২২ -এর পরিশিষ্ট ক তে প্রদর্শিত Part-A-Project information; Part-B-Logical interpretation; Part-C-Budget; Part-D-Project completion plan; Part-E-Short CV of the Researcher(s) অনুসরণক্রমে গবেষণা প্রস্তাব দাখিল করতে হবে।
৫. গবেষণা প্রস্তাবসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট কাগজাদি অবশ্যই গবেষকের কর্মরত প্রতিষ্ঠান প্রধানের প্রতিপাক্ষরে প্রেরণ করতে হবে। তবে প্রতিষ্ঠান প্রধান কর্তৃক কমতাপ্রাপ্ত হলে উপ-উপাচার্য বা রেজিস্ট্রার বা পরিচালক (রিসার্চ)-এর প্রতিপাক্ষরে গবেষণা প্রস্তাব দাখিল করা যাবে। মহাবিদ্যালয়ে কর্মরত গবেষকগণের গবেষণা প্রস্তাব মহাপরিচালক, মাস্ট্রিক ও উচ্চ শিক্ষা অধিদপ্তরের প্রতিপাক্ষরে প্রেরণ করতে হবে।
৬. মুখ্য গবেষক হিসেবে একজন গবেষকের একাধিক গবেষণা প্রকল্প চলমান থাকলে তাকে গবেষণা প্রস্তাব দাখিলে নিরুৎসাহিত করা হচ্ছে।
৭. গবেষণা প্রস্তাব সংক্রান্ত যেকোন তথ্যের জন্য গবেষকগণ নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর সাথে যোগাযোগ করতে পারবেন।

কর্তৃপক্ষের নির্দেশক্রমে-

10.01.2023

(ফারজানা পারভীন)

উপপরিচালক (বহিঃসম্পর্ক, গবেষণা, মানদণ্ড ও প্রকাশনা)

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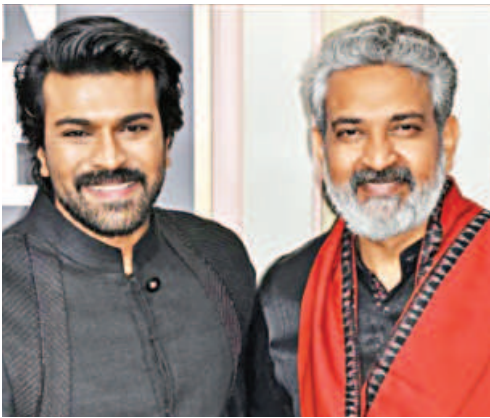
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(L) The crew of “The Banshees of Inisherin” (M) Michelle Yeoh won Best Actress in a musical or comedy. (R) India won its first Golden Globe, in the Best Original Song category, for “Naatu Naatu” from “RRR”.



80th Golden Globe prevails, correcting previous controversies

This year’s Golden Globes was also a glorious season for South Asian films, as Naatu Naatu from the South Indian film, RRR won the Best Original Song award. Our very own Bangladeshi movie, Hava had also been shortlisted for the prestigious event.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Netizens of Hollywood gathered on Tuesday for the first major award show of the season – Golden Globes 2023. Despite the scandals and the criticism faced by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association for its last outing, the ceremony was aired by NBC, despite its previous refusal to broadcast the ceremony in 2022.

The night’s biggest winners were *The Fablemans*, Steven Spielberg’s semi-autobiographical film which also won him the Best Director, resulting in a double win for the cast and crew. Cate Blanchett won the Best Actress in drama for *Tar*, marking her fourth victory and 12th nomination at the Golden Globes. Austin Butler took home the Best Actor in Drama, while Michelle Yeoh made everyone laugh with her hilarious cut-off speech, while she received her award for Best Actress in a musical or comedy.

This year’s Golden Globes was also a glorious

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(L) Austin Butler poses with his award for Best Actor in a Drama Motion Picture for “Elvis”. (R) “House of the Dragon” won the Best Television Series in Drama.



season for South Asian films, as *Nattu Nattu* from the South Indian film, *RRR* won the Best Original Song award, trumping over Rihanna and Taylor Swift. Moreover, it has also been revealed that our very own Bangladeshi movie, *Hava* had also been shortlisted for the prestigious event. Sadia Khalid Reeti, film critic and screenwriter – along with being the only Bangladeshi to vote for the Golden Globes – revealed this news. She added, “Usually we get to know about the rank of the movies after the nominations are announced. I was really surprised when I got to see *Hava* on the shortlist. It was a matter of pride and joy to see a

Bangladeshi movie’s name on the list.” Other winners for the evening included, Jeremy Allen White for *The Bear*, Evan Peters for Ryan Murphy’s controversial Netflix hit *Dahmer*, *Black Bird*’s Paul Walter Hauser, *Yellowstone*’s Kevin Costner and *The Dropout*’s Amanda Seyfried. Guillermo del Toro’s *Pinocchio*.

In a surprising yet well deserved victory, Jennifer Coolidge won the award for Best Supporting actress in a television limited-series, ending her speech on an emotional note, thanking the Hollywood insiders for keeping her career alive via ‘little jobs’.

Ishrat Nishat Natya Puraskar coming January 19

In memory of noted thespian, Ishrat Nishat, a new award for theatre actors has been established. On Tuesday, nominees for the Ishrat Nishat Natya Puraskar were announced at a press conference in Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. The award will be given annually, in eight categories.

The jury board has already completed evaluation for the first batch of awards by watching 17 new plays, staged between 2021 and 2022.

Now, winners of the award will be announced on January 19. The honourable State Minister of Cultural Affairs, KM Khalid, MP will be attending the award ceremony as the chief guest.



Amitabh Bachchan sends best wishes to Chanchal Chowdhury

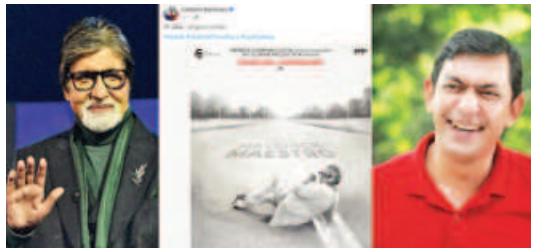
Prolific Bangladeshi actor, Chanchal Chowdhury will soon be playing the role of Mrinal Sen, in the great director’s biopic.

Directed by Srijit Mukherji, the biopic will also star Monami Ghosh opposite Chanchal.

After the poster of the biopic, which has been titled *Padatik*, was revealed, Amitabh Bachchan was one of the first to share it, sending his best wishes to Chanchal and the team of the film.

The two had previously met on the stage of the Kolkata International Film Festival.

Mrinal Sen was a pioneer in his craft. Coincidentally, he also gave Amitabh Bachchan one of his first ‘film work’, in the form of a voiceover in the 1969 film *Bhuvan Shome*.



NEWS

PM likely to visit Japan

FROM PAGE 12
Bangladesh in the month of independence, March.

As the visit was cancelled in November, both Dhaka and Tokyo want to make it happen at the soonest. The new Japanese ambassador also said finalising of the PM’s visit is his first job.

Hasina was scheduled to visit Japan from November 29 to December 1 last year, but it was later put on hold.

Bangladesh and Japan expect to elevate bilateral relations to “Strategic Partnership” level from “comprehensive partnership” level during the visit.

During his meeting with the PM, Kiminori said Japan and Bangladesh share a longstanding bond. He assured that he would work to take it to the next level.

Nazrul said Japan will extend all-out cooperation towards Bangladesh to materialise its aspiration of becoming a developed country by 2041.

The Japanese envoy said he would work to strengthen the existing Japan-Bangladesh framework for enhancing bilateral trade and

commerce.

“I will work to bring more Japanese investments to Bangladesh and strengthen economic and trade relations between the two countries,” he said.

Regarding the Rohingya repatriation issue, Kiminori said Japan through bilateral and ASEAN forums will pursue it.

He added that the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is working with UNHCR to intensify the humanitarian programme in Cox’s Bazar and Bhasan Char.

Some Japanese NGOs are also working in those areas, the envoy said.

Hasina thanked Japan for their cooperation in constructing the Metro Rail and sought cooperation for other metro rail lines.

She sought Japanese investments in Sabrang Tourism Special Economic Zone, which will be dedicated only for foreign tourists.

The premier assured that a Japanese company will manage the third terminal at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital.

20 killed in suicide blast outside Afghan ministry

AGENCIES

At least 20 people were killed as a suicide bomber detonated explosives outside the foreign ministry in Afghanistan’s capital Kabul yesterday, according to an information ministry official.

Ustad Fareedun, an official at the Taliban-run information ministry, said the bomber had planned to enter the foreign ministry but failed.

“Twenty people were killed and many others injured in the suicide attack,” he said.

Attempt to carry out

FROM PAGE 2

Contacted, OC Ataur Rahman of Sherpur Police Station said the law enforcers rushed to spot on information and dispersed the crowd. Additional police have been deployed in the area.

UNO Sanjida Sultana said she arranged the meeting on Tuesday and asked lawyers of both the groups to appear before her office within 10 days with valid documents in support of their ownership claim of the land.

“We have asked both the groups not to resort to violence. But they have created chaos again today. Police have been kept alert,” she told The Daily Star yesterday.

International brands

FROM PAGE 12

suppliers on favourable terms.”

German supermarket chain Lidl said it took the “accusations very seriously.”

It added that it “takes its responsibility towards workers in Bangladesh and other countries where our suppliers produce very seriously and is committed to ensuring that core social standards are complied with throughout the supply chain.”

Primark said that owing to the pandemic, it had taken “the incredibly difficult decision in March 2020 to cancel all orders which had not yet been handed over”.

Companies named in the report did not immediately return AFP requests for comment.

Furnish proof to support

FROM PAGE 1

the 2018 election halfway through the polling due to nomination business, and that it tried to make the polls questionable.

“The reality is that they have been able to make the election questionable through carrying out various propaganda. But people still have faith and confidence in the Awami League,” said the PM, also the AL president.

Fakhrul said there is no possibility that the country would witness another 1/11. In the supplementary question, he asked if the prime minister thought it was time now for all parties to reach a political understanding though.

Hasina said the BNP didn’t join the 2014 parliamentary polls as it won only 30 seats in the 2008 election, and the country witnessed an unprecedented development, thanks to the steps taken by the then AL-led grand alliance government. “So, the people put their trust in us and voted for us. They [BNP] boycotted the election.”

Pointing at Fakhrul, the PM said there was nothing to be afraid of. “Don’t be afraid. We’re still here.”

She said no force has emerged in Bangladesh yet which has the ability to unseat the AL government as its existence is deeply rooted.

In reply to another supplementary question from AL lawmaker Dharendra Debnath Shambhu, the PM said, “We are taking proper actions against the hoarders, black marketeers and those who are engaged in LC-related anomalies... If needed, we’ll take tougher actions and we will pay special attention so that people don’t suffer.”

11 POINT TARGET

Hasina yesterday placed in parliament an 11-point target for implementation if the AL could form the government again after winning the next general election.

In reply to a query from opposition Jatiya Party MP (Pirojpur-3) Rustum Ali Faraji, the PM said their vision would be transforming every village into a town and the country into Smart Bangladesh by 2041.

She said the detailed plans would be made public through the AL’s election manifesto ahead of the next general election.

In the scripted answer, the PM said Smart Bangladesh will be based

on smart citizens, smart economy, smart government and smart society.

The premier said Awami League’s “Election Manifesto-2018: Bangladesh on the journey to Prosperity” which was presented before the nation on the eve of the 11th parliamentary elections outlined plans for building a ‘prosperous and developed Bangladesh by 2041’ and a ‘safe delta’ by 2100.

As the first step in the journey of a developed Bangladesh, the country has already become a developing one from a least developed country, she said.

Hasina said in order to accomplish the vision, different short-, medium- and long-term plans will be taken.

She said the overall living standard of the people of Bangladesh will be improved by ensuring the basic needs of people – clothing, shelter, education and healthcare.

2 Pakistan teen

FROM PAGE 12

“It isn’t a surprise that two teenagers took this risk because ‘stans’ are capable of doing this for their idols,” said culture journalist Rabia Mehmood, using a colloquial term for loyal fans. “But if we had more safe organised fan-girling spaces, younger fans could engage openly and freely with each other about their favorites instead of taking such risks.”

K-pop has a huge following all over the world, including Pakistan, with fans spanning age groups and genders. BTS posters and albums are sold all over the South Asian country, while Korean dramas are gaining popularity as well.

The seven-member Korean sensation BTS took a hiatus late last year, as its oldest member began mandatory military service last month. Jin, 30, started his military service on December 13, a commitment expected to last 18 months.

BTS is set to be kept apart until at least 2025 as other members of the group come of age to enter military bootcamps. The band has said they will use this time to pursue solo projects.

Cost-of-living crisis

FROM PAGE 12

experts, policymakers and industry leaders.

The report described the cost-of-living crisis as the “biggest short-term risk” by 2025, followed by natural disasters, extreme weather events and “geo-economic confrontation”.

“The short-term risk landscape is dominated by energy, food, debt and disasters,” said Saadia Zahidi, a managing director at the World Economic Forum (WEF).

“Those that are already the most vulnerable are suffering – and in the face of multiple crises, those who qualify as vulnerable are rapidly expanding, in rich and poor countries.”

The WEF study called “on leaders to act collectively and decisively, balancing short- and long-term views”. And it concluded on the need for cooperation on strengthening “financial stability, technology governance, economic development and investment in research, science, education and health”.

Carolina Klint, a risk management leader at Marsh, said this year will be marked by “increased risks” related to food, energy, raw materials and cyber security that will further disrupt global supply chains and impact investment decisions.

“At a time when countries and organisations should be stepping up resilience efforts, economic headwinds will constrain their ability to do so.”

Many analysts warn that the global economy will suffer a recession in 2023 as inflation remains elevated.

Three killed

FROM PAGE 12

The identity of the other deceased, a woman aged about 30, could not be known till the filing of this report last evening.

The three dead were passengers of the auto-rickshaw, said Assistant Sub-Inspector Fazlul Haque of Tangail Railway Police Outpost.

Parvez Ahmed Porag, emergency medial officer at the upazila health complex, said the child was brought dead to the medical facility while five other people, injured in the accident, were referred to Tangail Sadar Hospital after primary treatment.

Sub-Inspector Yakub Ali of Bhupapur Police Station said the level crossing is unauthorised and there was no gateman when the Jamalpur-bound train hit the auto-rickshaw around noon.

Taiwan independence will be ‘punished’

China renews threat; New US House creates committee focused on competing with China

AGENCIES

China has renewed its longstanding threat to attack Taiwan and warned that foreign politicians who interact with the self-governing island are “playing with fire”.

A spokesperson for China’s Taiwan Affairs Office yesterday said that Beijing was recommitting in the new year to “safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity” and “smashing plots for Taiwan independence”.

“The malicious support for Taiwan independence among anti-China elements in a few foreign countries are a deliberate provocation,” the spokesperson, Ma Xiaoguang, said at a biweekly news conference.

“We call on the relevant countries to ... cease sending the wrong signals to Taiwan independence separatist forces and cease playing with fire on the question of Taiwan,” Ma said.

China views Taiwan – a self-governing democracy that separated from mainland China in 1949 – as Chinese territory that must be brought under Beijing’s control, and by force if necessary.

High-profile visits to Taiwan in recent months by foreign politicians, including

then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and numerous politicians from the European Union, have angered Beijing and spurred huge military exercises around the Island by Chinese forces, which Taipei views as a rehearsal for invasion.

This week, Taiwan’s military is staging its own military drills intended to reassure the public of its ability to counter China’s threats. The defence drills coincided with a visit to Taiwan by German and Lithuanian legislators.

Meanwhile, the US House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly on Tuesday to create a select committee on China, using one of its first votes since Republicans took control to stress members’ desire to counter Beijing’s growing international influence.

The House voted 365 to 65 in favor of a resolution establishing the Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, which will investigate the issue and make policy recommendations.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said the committee would address issues such as bringing jobs back from China to the United States, securing intellectual property and bringing supply chains back to the country.



A woman, *inset*, reacts as Israeli troops stand guard while Israeli machinery demolish a Palestinian house in Hebron in the occupied West Bank yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

SYSTEM OUTAGE US halts all domestic flight departures

AFP, Washington

The US Federal Aviation Authority yesterday ordered a temporary halt to all domestic flight departures, after a major system outage that disrupted air traffic across the country.

Airlines and airports were left scrambling with news of the nationwide pause, as the White House said there was no immediate evidence of a cyberattack.

The FAA halted flights until 9:00 am (1400 GMT), but said it expected departures to resume at that time and that takeoffs had already begun at Newark and Atlanta airports due to air traffic congestion.

A key process, it said, had been “impaired” in an outage of its Notice to Air Missions system (NOTAM), which provides information to flight crews about hazards, changes to airport facilities and other essential information.

The pause, it said, would allow “the agency to validate the integrity of flight and safety information.”

Speaking to reporters, President Joe Biden said that he had been briefed by the transportation secretary and that “aircraft can still land safely, just not take off right now.”

“They don’t know what the cause of it is, they expect in a couple of hours they’ll have a good sense of what caused it and will respond at that time,” Biden said.

There were at least 3,700 flights delayed in the United States by 8:30am US Eastern time.

The halt comes in the wake of a large-scale aviation meltdown in the United States over the Christmas holiday, as a storm brought unseasonably cold temperatures to the majority of the country and caused chaos, with thousands of flights delayed or canceled.

Oceans were hottest in 2022

AFP, PARIS

The world’s oceans, which have absorbed most of the excess heat caused by humanity’s carbon pollution, continued to see record-breaking temperatures last year, according to research published yesterday.

Climate change has increased surface temperatures across the planet, leading to atmospheric instability and amplifying extreme weather events such as storms.

Oceans absorb about 90 percent of the excess heat from greenhouse gas emissions, shielding land surfaces but generating huge, long-lasting marine heatwaves that are already having devastating effects on underwater life.

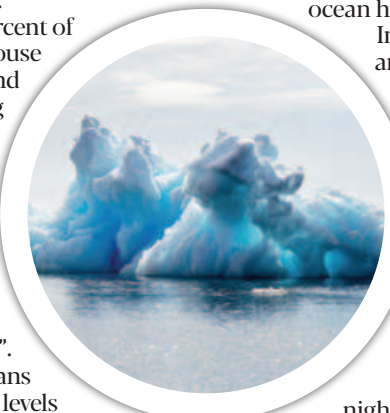
The study, by researchers in China, the US, Italy and New Zealand, said that 2022 was “the hottest year ever recorded in the world’s oceans”.

Heat content in the oceans exceeded the previous year’s levels by around 10 Zetta joules – equivalent to 100 times the electricity generation worldwide in 2021, according to the authors.

“The oceans are absorbing most of the heating from human carbon emissions,” said co-author Michael Mann, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

“Until we reach net zero emissions, that heating will continue, and we’ll continue to break ocean heat content records, as we did this year,” he said. “Better awareness and understanding of the oceans are a basis for the actions to combat climate change.”

Records going back to the late 1950s show a



relentless rise in ocean temperatures with almost continuous increases going back to around 1985.

Scientists have warned that climbing temperatures have wrought major changes to ocean stability faster than previously thought.

The research, published in the journal Advances in Atmospheric Sciences, was based on observations from 24 scientists across 16 institutes worldwide.

It also found other indications suggesting that ocean health is deteriorating.

Increasing water temperatures and ocean salinity – also at an all-time high – directly contribute to a process of “stratification”, where water separates into layers that no longer mix.

This has wide-ranging implications because it affects the exchange of heat, oxygen and carbon between the ocean and atmosphere, with effects including a loss of oxygen in the ocean.

“Deoxygenation itself is a nightmare for not only marine life and ecosystems but also for humans and our terrestrial ecosystems,” the researchers said in a statement.

Updated data released this week showed that average global atmospheric temperatures across 2022 made it the fifth warmest year since records began in the 19th century, according to Europe’s Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Countries across the world have faced a cascade of unprecedented natural disasters made more likely and deadly by climate change.

Many of these impacts can be linked to a fast-warming ocean and the related changes in the hydrological cycle.

MYANMAR CRISIS Junta raid near Indian border kills 5

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar’s junta has carried out air strikes on an ethnic armed group’s base near the border with India, the rebels and media said yesterday, with one bomb landing close to the international boundary.

The military coup almost two years ago has sparked renewed fighting with long-established ethnic rebel groups, as well as with dozens of “People’s Defence Force” groups that have sprung up to oppose the junta.

The bombing by five jets on Tuesday evening killed five fighters at the headquarters of the Chin National Front (CNF), which claims to represent the mainly Christian Chin minority in western Myanmar, spokesman Salai Htet Ni told AFP.

“They dropped seven bombs... Some of our houses were destroyed from their air strike... One bomb landed on the Indian side,” he said.

Canada bars Lanka’s Rajapaksa brothers

AFP, Colombo

Canada has issued a travel ban on former Sri Lankan presidents – and brothers – Mahinda and Gotabaya Rajapaksa for human rights abuses committed during the island nation’s civil war. Mahinda Rajapaksa was in office when a no-holds-barred military campaign wiped out the Tamil Tigers separatist movement in 2009, while Gotabaya helmed the defence ministry. International observers estimate that up to 40,000 civilians from the ethnic Tamil minority were killed during the war’s final months in an indiscriminate bombing and clearance campaign. Top Sri Lankan military commanders have since been sanctioned and handed travel bans by Western nations, but Canada’s decision is the first targeting the two members of the powerful political clan.

UN decries loss of 5m children in 2021

AFP, United Nations


An estimated five million children under the age of five died in 2021, the United Nations said Tuesday, urging health care investment in underserved communities around the globe to avoid this “immense, intolerable and mostly preventable loss of life.” Some 2.3 million deaths in 2021 occurred in the children’s first month, mostly due to being premature or from complications related to childbirth. After a child’s first month, infectious diseases, such as pneumonia, diarrhea and malaria become the biggest threats. Most deaths, however, can be prevented, the report said.



Only missiles with a range of more than 100 kilometres will allow us to significantly accelerate the de-occupation of the territories... We will not attack Russia. We are waging an exclusively defensive war.

Kyiv, Ukraine

Ukrainian presidential adviser
Mykhailiv Podolyak



Government of the people’s Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources
Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB)
153, Pioneer Road, Segunbagicha
Dhaka-1000.

TENDER NOTICE NO: 28.05.0000.231.07.022.22.49


Date: 11.01.2023

e-TENDER NOTICE

e-tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of the following goods

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Name of Goods	Tender last Selling Date & Time	Tender Closing/Opening Date & Time	Procurement Method
01.	764939	Supply of toner cartridges for printing machines and related services	26.01.2023, 15.30	29.01.2023, 11.00	LTM (NCT)
02.	764330	Supply of different spare parts for repairing computers and related services	29.01.2023, 15.00	30.01.2023, 11.00	LTM (NCT)
03.	773923	Supply of different books and related services	29.01.2023, 15.30	30.01.2023, 12.00	LTM (NCT)
04.	774939	Supply of different kinds of chemicals for different labs and related services	30.01.2023, 16.00	31.01.2023, 12.00	LTM (NCT)
05.	774475	Supply of various office stationary and related services	06.02.2023, 16.00	07.02.2023, 11.00	OTM (NCT)


for any information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) no offline/hard copies will be accepted.



(Minhajul Abedin Shaliki)
Assistant Director (Procurement)
For Director General
G.S.B., Dhaka.
Phone: 48314810.

“শেখ হাসিনার নির্দেশ
জলবায়ু সচিবকূ বাংলাদেশ”

Government of People’s Republic of Bangladesh
Office of The Divisional Forest Officer
Coastal Forest Division, Chattogram.



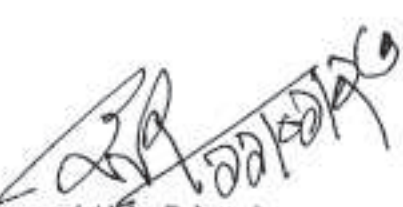
Date: 11/01/2023

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender are invited in e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Divisional Forest Officer, Coastal Forest Division, Chattogram for the procurement of:

Sl No	Description of goods & Package no	Tender ID No	Tender Publication Date	Last Selling Date & Time	Tender submission deadline & Opening Time
01	Supply of Poly-propylene bags for Mixed FGS nursery raising Ctg-CFD/SUFAL/2022-2023/GD-10	777877	12/01/2023 10:00	30/01/2023 16:00	31/01/2023 14:00
02	Supply of Decomposed Cow-dung and Loamy Soil for nursery raising Ctg-CFD/SUFAL/2022-2023/GD-11	777922	12/01/2023 10:00	30/01/2023 16:00	31/01/2023 15:00
03	Supply of Briala Bamboo, Bamboo Chatai, Sungrass and Temporary Shed Materials for nursery raising Ctg-CFD/SUFAL/2022-2023/GD-12	777946	12/01/2023 10:00	30/01/2023 16:00	31/01/2023 16:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender please on e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).



(Mohammad Abdur Rahman)
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Could DSCC be any more unrealistic?

Its AI-driven signalling system signals how out-of-touch with reality it is

If there ever existed an award for the most perfect example of someone putting the cart before the horse, the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) or those running it would be its top contender because of their move to install an artificial intelligence-driven signalling system in Dhaka. In one of the most congested cities in the world – where the rules of the jungle apply when it comes to traffic control – the idea would be comical if it did not mean the possibility of yet another bottomless pit for public funds to disappear in.

Our fears are substantiated by the fact that the DSCC has already spent Tk 119 crore of taxpayer's money to upgrade Dhaka's traffic signal system. This ambitious project was meant to give us digitised signal lights, solar-powered timer countdowns and digital display boards on major intersections – yet here we are, still depending on a largely manual traffic management system, and currently ranked as the third-worst country on the World Traffic Index.

Experts have warned that such projects are a waste of time when even the fundamentals of traffic management are missing from Dhaka's streets – with both motorised and non-motorised vehicles plying the same road, lanes not being followed, and the flow of vehicles generally being much higher than the capacity of the roads. The unplanned influx of newer vehicles landing on our already overcrowded roads, poor road conditions, and even poorer public transport networks are only making the situation worse.

Added to that is the fact that the government's own Strategic Transport Plan, which involves clearing footpaths, connecting roads outside Dhaka, improving public transport management and more, is not being followed. And we all know that even a little bit of rain can clog Dhaka's streets, and make the city come to a standstill. In this situation, it seems almost ludicrous to suggest that an AI-driven signalling system can suddenly solve our traffic woes.

What is even more concerning is that, in their misplaced idealism, the DSCC has already paid Tk 5 crore to a consultant firm to conduct a feasibility study for running 53 of its designated traffic signal points with AI technology. Could this money not have been put to better use in a city that still depends on hand gestures from traffic police, as well as ropes, cones and bamboo fences on major roads, to regulate traffic?

The current government has pledged to make this country a Smart Bangladesh by 2041, and we can only assume that this ill-informed plan is the DSCC's attempt to keep up with this promise. But what it really shows is just how out-of-touch the city corporation truly is with reality. Perhaps, before taking this project any further or before any more similarly unrealistic projects are taken up to solve Dhaka's traffic nightmare, making the relevant authorities slightly more familiar with ordinary people's everyday reality should be made the first priority. We urge the authorities to undertake initiatives that actually deliver results on the streets.

Failure to address sexual abuse unacceptable

Education authorities must abide by HC verdict on sexual harassment cells

We find it deeply troubling that the High Court, yet again, had to remind education authorities to form committees to combat sexual harassment at all educational institutions. This is not the first time that the court issued such reminders to the education ministry and the University Grants Commission (UGC) to implement its 2009 verdict on forming such committees. On Tuesday, it also sought an explanation from the authorities for their inaction or rather refusal to adhere to the directive, and ordered the government to pass legislation based on its guidelines in this regard.

It should be noted that some sexual harassment cells have been established since the passing of the 2009 verdict. As a deputy director of UGC has recently told this newspaper, 45 out of 53 public universities, and 71 of 109 private universities, established anti-sexual harassment cells. These cells, however, appear to exist only on paper. After conducting a poll among students from 15 public and private universities, this paper discovered that although almost all of them had experienced sexual harassment or knew someone who had, 31.5 percent of students didn't know where to register complaints. When asked if they were aware of any cell where reports of harassment were filed, 77.4 percent gave a negative response. According to 59.1 percent of respondents, their universities don't hold any seminars, workshops, or other awareness programmes about where and how to file complaints in accordance with the HC regulation.

But even when a complaint is filed with a cell, abusers are not often brought to book, especially if they are connected with influential quarters. For example, on July 17 last year, a female student of Chittagong University filed a complaint after an attempted rape, but the authorities didn't take it into account even after protests erupted on campus. The abusers continue to receive the patronage of powerful parties and university authorities. This paints a dismal picture of the state of our educational institutions, one that must be corrected. No case of sexual harassment should go unpunished. The authorities must investigate all complaints of harassment and take proper action. As well as forming complaint cells and making them functional, it is vital that students are made aware of their existence and encouraged to seek redress.

But we must ask: why has the HC directive not been implemented in full yet? What's stopping the higher authorities from taking action that could really help rid their campuses of the scourge of sexual harassment? And what does it say about the rule of law in this country when an express directive of the court is disregarded year after year? We urge the higher authorities to take immediate action to resolve this issue. They must also pass legislation making the establishment of Anti-Sexual Harassment Cells mandatory at all educational institutions.

What's eating away at AL's bedrock?



THE STREET VIEW

Mohammad Al-Masum Molla is deputy chief reporter at The Daily Star.

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Eminent writer Humayun Azad wrote a novel in 1995 titled “*Shob Kichhu Bhenge Pore*,” which roughly translates to “everything falls apart.” As if keeping with the literal spirit of the words, many things have fallen apart or collapsed in Bangladesh since then.

We have seen a bridge collapse even before its inauguration. We have seen factory buildings collapse like houses of cards. We have even witnessed the walls of houses built under the prime minister's Ashrayan Project start to crack within days of people moving into them. But most recently, we saw a stage, laden with budding Awami League leaders, collapse.

It was a grand event marking the 75th anniversary of the ruling Awami League's student wing, the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), and they had invited the party's spokesperson, Obaidul Quader, to address the ceremony. Just as the AL general secretary, surrounded by Chhatra League leaders, began his speech as chief guest, the stage caved in under the weight of the dignitaries gathered atop it.

It was not, however, the first time that such a thing has happened in Bangladeshi politics with too many people on the stage. It has happened before, notably in Anwara of Chattogram when a BNP policymaker, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, was delivering his speech.

Obaidul Quader recovered soon to stand up and resume his speech. He said, given the recent context of events, that the collapse was only inevitable. “But I'll have to say we don't need so many leaders on the stage. Actually, we don't need so many leaders. We need more activists. We don't need so many leaders. Instead of sitting in the front row, people are crowding the stage during programmes. Why? Why do we need so many leaders? We don't need to produce leaders. We need to produce party workers.”

But Quader's call for more activists than leaders comes as a surprise. We all know that the ruling AL, one of the country's oldest political parties, finds its strength in its strong organisation



PHOTO: SUVRA KANTI DAS/PROTHOM ALO

that stretches all the way to the grassroots of the country, where they have an army of dedicated activists and supporters. Grassroots leaders are the heart of the party.

So, what has changed that the party now feels the need for more activists? Isn't it an ominous sign for a party, which has been in office for three terms, to call for more activists?

After assuming office in 2009, the AL started establishing its dominance in politics. Due to its strength, and elimination or weakening of opposition forces, opposition activists started joining the ruling Awami League. The party's senior leaders, on several occasions, warned about such “hybrid” leaders or infiltrators. Seasoned party leaders alleged that the dedicated and tested leaders had been sidelined by the hybrids.

nominations were given to persons who had very little or no connection to politics, let alone to Awami League's politics. Around 62 percent of the lawmakers in the current parliament are from the business community. This indicates that politics is dominated by businessmen, not by politicians.

The dominance of bureaucracy is also noticeable. The influence of bureaucracy on Bangladeshi politics is nothing new, but its dominance is rising. The situation has reached such an extent that senior lawmakers, including former ministers, have expressed their grievances regarding this in parliament.

But again, it is the ruling party that paved the way for bureaucrats to meddle with politics. That's why we see that, from elections to relief distribution, bureaucrats are at the fore

Committee, there was a rumour that a former government official may take charge in his stead. But people have little idea about who it will finally be.

The recent outgoing cabinet secretary, Kabir Bin Anwar, went to Awami League president Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi office a few days after beginning his post-retirement leave. Although party leaders are tight-lipped, inside sources say he might become the next head of the party's election steering committee.

When bureaucrats keep getting billed for the top election job in the most political of exercises, it is bound to turn away the party's seasoned, tested and dedicated leaders – along with their support base at the grassroots. An embarrassing stage collapse could well be an ominous sign of the party's bedrock caving in.

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

Russian Muppets or American Puppets?



Nina L. Khrushcheva is a Russian-American professor of International Affairs at The New School, New York City.

NINA L. KHRUSHCHEVA

Westerners have spent two decades wondering why the Russian people have fallen under the spell of Vladimir Putin. Diplomats, historians, economists, and pundits have all failed to provide a satisfying explanation. But where academics and strategists have failed, perhaps the denizens of Sesame Street, from Kermit the Frog to Elmo, might succeed.

It was 1996. My homeland was in the midst of “shock therapy” – the rapid liberalisation and privatisation of its economy by decree, after the Soviet Union's fall – and I was at Princeton working on my doctorate. One day, a report about Russia on CNN caught my attention. Unusually, it was not about a killing or business takeover or an oligarch's rise or fall – negative coverage delivered with a holier-than-thou tone that never failed to rankle. Instead, it is a seemingly positive story: the Muppets were headed to Moscow.

But listening to the CNN host's arrogant commentary, my relief quickly gave way to frustration. The establishment of a Sesame Street in Russia was not, apparently, an example of cultural cross-pollination, enabled by the country's opening. Rather, Miss Piggy and Big Bird would ensure that American democratic sensibilities took root in the hearts and minds of children across the vast post-Soviet space. I changed the channel.

A children's television show, defined

by its positive messages about learning and sharing, was being twisted into propaganda, and used as yet another declaration of America's Cold War victory. But Russia had its own rich culture, which included not only Tolstoy and the Bolshoi, but also “Good Night, Little Ones!” – a Soviet children's show as clever and warm-hearted as Sesame Street.

Fortunately, the team behind Sesame Street did not succumb to the attitude of moral superiority and cultural contempt that pervaded US news reports. On the contrary, according to a new book by Natasha Lance Rogoff – who, in the early 1990s, was an executive producer in charge of bringing the Muppets to Russia – the story of the show's formation for Russian audiences was one of genuine cultural cooperation, not condescension or conquest.

In “*Muppets in Moscow: The Unexpected Crazy True Story of Making Sesame Street in Russia*,” Lance Rogoff does not shy away from the story's political thread. She openly admits that USAID and then-Senator Joe Biden “spearheaded congressional support for an international Sesame Street,” touting the Muppets as “ideal ambassadors to model democratic values and the benefits of a free-market economy to children in the former Soviet Union.” But she also explains that “translating Sesame Street's ebullient

and idealistic outlook to Mother Russia was not only incredibly difficult, but also incredibly dangerous.”

Lance Rogoff's narrative includes bizarre, sordid, and all-too-human details about the morbid racketeering of the early post-Soviet years, when journalists and businesspeople were murdered on spec and Miss Piggy

A children's television show, defined by its positive messages about learning and sharing, was being twisted into propaganda, and used as yet another declaration of America's Cold War victory.

could be embraced as a role model for the utterly ruthless. Her rationalising, normalising, and modernising of the post-Soviet system reminded me of David Remnick's insights, in his 1994 book “*Lenin's Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire*,” into how Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika transformed Russia.

Perhaps most important, Lance Rogoff shows that, even if Russia's Sesame Street was fundamentally an American show, it was not about America. It certainly was not designed to serve as American propaganda. Instead, it depicted basic human values like friendship and communication – as much for the Russians and Americans who put the show together as for viewers across the former Soviet Union.

Watching Sesame Street while on a visit to Moscow in 1996 – not long after

seeing that CNN report – I was pleased to encounter a generous, sweet, and very well-produced show, which contained tie-in stories from the American original as well as unique stories with Russian puppets. The show's creators had clearly worked hard to develop characters that would resonate with Russians, from the problem-solving orange monster Kubik to the imaginative pink Muppet Businka. Zeliboba – a fuzzy, red-nosed house spirit, dressed in a leaf-covered cloak – was probably the most interesting (and certainly the most polarising).

The key was to show, not tell – to act in good faith, with decency and humanity, rather than delivering contemptuous, self-aggrandising lectures. In the 1990s, Russians were mimicking all things American. But they were also deeply conflicted, as reflected in the debates Lance Rogoff describes over Rachmaninoff and rock and roll. Russian culture is marked by extremes, and the oscillation between imitating Western models and violently rejecting them is no exception.

Russian children watched Sesame Street for nearly 15 years – until 2010. Lance Rogoff says it was taken off the air because Putin no longer saw any use for it. The fact that many other cultural collaborations also ended at around the same time supports her case. Putin had decided that Russian culture must be of and by Russians – and only he could decide what Russianness meant.

In the 1990s, Russian society was so shattered by the breakdown of the communist order that it lost touch with its own values. But that did not mean it was going to become an American knockoff. Sesame Street worked because it embodied universal values. One wonders whether the Russian reality would be different today if more Americans had understood this.

The decision to implement Bangla

foreign influence in the training of English teachers and a spread of specific pedagogical models. What is more tragic is that the government itself joined the bandwagon by introducing the English version of

The education system may focus on a minimum level of performance

We have identified the various segmented markets for English in Bangladesh and the “level” of English

A “medium” level of English education is required when working in administration or working as a primary school teacher. And finally, “specialised” training in English is required when becoming a specialist professional (in medicine, engineering, science, etc); working in the ICT sector; working in international trade and

In our view, an economic cost-benefit analysis of English education will lead to the right amounts of expenditure in English, Bangla and STEM education. To this end, we recommend that the government creates an effective English curriculum to meet the basic needs of the population, leaving medium and high levels of skills outside the regular curriculum. Public and private sectors should also act together to collect and analyse data and information on the costs and benefits of acquiring an above-basic level of English education when working under different segments of the economy.

MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

It is imperative to bring voters to conversations pertaining to the 2023 general elections. Both the Awami League and the BNP should recalibrate their political focus away from events of the yesteryears, and drive forward alternative policy visions for the country. One has doubts over whether these parties

Given the extensive use of rigid digital security rules to selectively suppress dissent, it is not a stretch to contend that Dhaka

On the other hand, 2018 was a debacle of another kind. The



The country's regulatory regimes, including the DSA, have been used to suppress political dissent.

The problem with holding one-sided elections, irrespective of how well the country may be performing on the economic front, is that it moulds a serious deficit of public trust towards the government and its institutions. Given that the AL has been in power since 2009, and in admitting that Sheikh Hasina's tenure has been a game-changer in setting a policy tone for tangible investments in infrastructure, the liability of engineering a disengaged voting base (within the purview of an infant democracy in decline), must also be attributed towards the

An increasingly hardline Awami League has aggressively leveraged its regulatory regimes, including the DSA, to suppress individual and collective forms of political

The Bangladeshi public deserves to vote in free, fair and credible elections – and it is the moral and constitutional duty, predominantly of the ruling party, to facilitate this. Otherwise, for the third time in a row, Bangladeshis will be denied the chance to exercise their voting rights, and the country's liberal democratic aspirations will be overshadowed by a natural transition towards an alarming brand of digital authoritarianism.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District: Noakhali
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No-46.02.7500.000.07.007.23-141

Dated: 11/01/2023.

Invitation for Tenders (IFT for Works) e-Tender Notice No-40/2022-23

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of work as stated as below:

Sl No	Tender ID No	Procurement Method	Name of Works	Last Selling Date & Time	Last Date & Time of Tender Security Submission	Closing & Opening Date & Time
1	786152	OTM	All Improvement of Taper pit to middle Nalakeri road road Ch.68-130m, Road ID No-4758932(A) Providing Protective work 20m, B) improvement of Nalakeri Road Road Nalakeri to Gogon Up Pipers pur road Ch. 68-145m, Road ID No-4758945(B) Providing Protective work 110m, C) Construction of 1 No. 3.00m x 3.00m RCC Box Culvert at Ch. 717m (Value of Recovered Material Tk=45155.00) C) Improvement of Mulla-Sengar road (Mulla-Sengar) IP Road-Road side Roadside road, (Mulla-Padrata road) Ch.267-500m, Road ID No-4758958(C) Providing Protective work 94m, D) Construction of 1 No. 2 feet 4.00m x 4.00m RCC Box Culvert at Ch. 347m, E) Pavement & Surface work of Nalakeri road (Sonmury-Chandri road) (Nalakeri-Tahmuri road) Ch.300-377m Road ID No-4758944(D) Providing Protective work 50m, under Sonmury Upazila District, Noakhali. (Package No: GPR-3NCA/SO23-23W-44)	06-02-2023 12:00pm	06-02-2023 14:00pm	06-02-2023 15:00pm
2	786151	OTM	All Improvement of Nalakeri Road Road Road to Kazi Company Road Side Culvert road Ch. 80-190m, Road ID No-4758925(A) Providing Protective work 30m, Value of Recovered Material Tk=1,681,028(B) Improvement of Sonmury Upazila C & F road via Nalakeri Dist. Govt. School, Mianhat High school via Beer shandha Rural Area Connecting road Ch.38-710m, Road ID No-4758933(B) Providing Protective work 10m, C) Improvement of Protection Nalakeri Road Road Janki Masjid - Chowdhury - Chatterjee Connecting road Up to Mar Bara Ch.30-195m, Road ID No-4758947 (C) Providing Protective work 110m, C) Construction of 1 No. U-Shape culvert at Ch. 211m, D) Improvement of Road IP Dhargha Chatterjee Begun Road East side to Nalakeri pur, School road Ch. 1725-2720m, Road ID No-4758916(D) Providing Protective work 274m, under Sonmury Upazila District, Noakhali (Value of Recovered Material Tk=1,14,044.00) (Package No: GPR-3NCA/SO23-23W-44)	06-02-2023 12:00pm	06-02-2023 14:00pm	06-02-2023 15:00pm
3	774576	OTM	All Improvement of R/D (Bapadi) Sonmury CC-Zamdar via GC via Khatpur GC road Ch.330-395m, Road ID No-47589307(A) Providing Protective work 60.00m, (Value of Recovered Material Tk=211,886.00) B) Improvement of Nalakeri IP - Gokarnali - Gogonpur Up road via Sonmury-Gogonpur Up to Bangladesh road Ch.50-550m, Road ID No-47589303(B) Providing Protective work 55.00m, C) Construction of 1 No. U-Shape culvert at Ch. 110m, D) Improvement of Chulapara GP's police road Chulapara Gola Mahabir Camla Road road Ch.855-1310m, Road ID No-47589297(C) Providing Protective work 270.00m, D) Improvement of Nalakeri-Chatterjee road (Pota Nalakeri-Chatterjee Road) Road Ch. 65-190m, Road ID No-47589110(C) Providing Protective work 155.00m, under Sonmury Upazila, District Noakhali (Value of Recovered Material Tk=52,213.00) (Package No: GPR-3NCA/SO23-23W-44)	06-02-2023 12:00pm	06-02-2023 14:00pm	06-02-2023 15:00pm
4	773944	OTM	All Improvement of East Nalakeri Road Road East side road Ch.330-375m, Road ID No-47589327(A) Providing Protective work 11.00m, B) Improvement of DC Road East Nalakeri Road Pyl School via Nalakeri Nalakeri Road Ch.330-990m, Road ID No-47589326(B) Providing Protective work 97.00m, C) Improvement of Sonmury District Chulapara to District Govt. Pyl School road Ch. 24-900m, Road ID No-47589472(C) Providing Protective work 355.00m, D) Construction of 1 No. 2x4.00m x 4.00m RCC Box culvert in Dhargha-Edul Chatterjee road at Ch. Road ID No-4758912(C) Providing Protective work 300m, under Sonmury Upazila, District Noakhali (Package No: GPR-3NCA/SO23-23W-44)	06-02-2023 12:00pm	06-02-2023 14:00pm	06-02-2023 15:00pm

This is an entire Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

(Signature)
11.01.23
(Md. Ekramul Haque)
Executive Engineer
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GD-61

INTERVIEW

Three literary walks



COLLAGE: MAISHA SYEDA; PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

That Booker-winner Shehan Karunatilaka is approachable has been the topic of conversation among most DLF visitors this past week. At his suggestion, upon my asking for a quick chat, we make a silent beeline for the parking lot and find two chairs in an abandoned, parrot green book stall.

SARAH ANJUM BARI

‘Should a Books page be apolitical?’

“Can I be really blunt? Features sections by and large are handed out to women. That’s the only reason it is seen as ‘soft.’”

Nilanjana S Roy has authored three novels, *The Wildings*, *The Hundred Names of Darkness* and this year’s *Black River*, but it is *The Girl Who Ate Books*, her collection of essays on reading, which told me we would have much to talk about if we ever met. The hunch was right—as a columnist of books at the *Financial Times’* Life and Arts section, she tells me that “a book review gives a book a home, a place.”

We have this conversation as she begins to leave the Bangla Academy on the penultimate day of the Dhaka Lit Fest. She had said something in her session on ‘Culture Wars’ a day earlier which struck me—how Books pages are (incorrectly) expected to be the “unpolitical” part of a newspaper. Could we talk about it? She suggests we take a walk.

“In India and in the UK, the moment people started to realise that Books pages are the ‘ideas’ pages, they started to be passed back to male editors. And then again you have to fight for your space”, she says as soon as I bring the issue up.

We delve deeper: “What you’re doing with a Books page is creating a running history of the ideas and the parallel history or the imagination of a country. You’re not looking to question and knock the book out of attention as much as you’re trying to say, What kind of creature is this? Of what family? What tradition?”

It’s a challenge. You have 52 weeks in the year, and if you have a monthly or weekly Books page, that’s 12 or 52 chances to identify not just the most popular books—as important as that is—but also the books in your time that are going to last for another generation.”

How do you pair books with the right reviewer? And how do you decide who your readers are?

“[With reviews] I look for something that is seen as non defensive expertise”, she responds. “Somebody who is generous with their expertise and yet is dispassionate enough to not get carried away.

With the *FT*, readership is global. You can’t write a review of one of the great London authors with in jokes and references. If you can simultaneously write for the reader in Dhaka and a reader who is out in one of the smallest villages you can think of but who picks up *The Daily Star*, somewhere in there is your sweet spot.”

We talk some more about the intense process of writing book reviews—the art that goes into crafting each of its sentences, but the snarl of Suhrawardy Udyan’s traffic takes over as she exits Bangla Academy, and I turn back.

‘Like sourdough, Tomb of Sand continues to expand’

Another day, another hectic exit from the Bangla Academy auditorium. There is daylight this time, so the interruptions are more energetic, as hordes of readers want their copies signed by Daisy Rockwell, the American translator of Geetanjali Shree’s 2022 International Booker Prize-winning *Tomb of Sand*—the first novel in a Hindi language to win the prize.

Daisy Rockwell hasn’t stopped smiling for days. She tells me she doesn’t care if we run late, or if we stop to talk to people, as long as her daughter walks with us. “She must be exhausted because she’s heard me talk endlessly about the same book.”

But the text certainly merits it—written first as *Ret Samadhi*, Shree’s novel follows Maa as she freezes shut upon her husband’s death, and rises open again to revisit the spaces she left behind during Partition, finding, along the way, love, friendship, a new voice.

What brought you to translating Hindi and Urdu?

“I started studying the languages in college and just fell in love with first Hindi—I felt a strong urge to translate it”, Daisy Rockwell says as we wade through the walkway bordering the Bangla Academy pond.



Nilanjana Roy

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

“I took a course with AK Ramanujan, the famous translator, and he encouraged me to do more translations.”

Since then, she has gotten a PhD in South Asian literature and translated iconic works of literature written in Hindi and Urdu, alongside painting under the alias of Lapata (missing).

One can’t help notice the difference in size between Ret Samadhi and Tomb of Sand. What has it gained in translation?

She laughs and holds up the two paperbacks—one double the size of the other.

“Part of the reason is that for the first English edition, they do all of the books in the same page size at that publisher. So it’s a shorter page than the Hindi and that makes it go longer. The Hindi publishers are trying to save money on paper. For the English I put in page breaks.

So it’s the same book, but our book is very expensive. When it came into English it expanded and then it got the Booker prize and our lives expanded. It’s like sourdough, it’s growing and growing.”

In your session with Rifat Munim,

Geetanjali Shree spoke about how some of the objects in the book (the door, the wall) had turned into characters. But the characters, like Maa, had also turned into objects. How did you work with that as a translator?

“It’s actually very tricky because sometimes you’re not sure if it’s the door or the person that Geetanjali is writing about. In Bangla and Hindi, you can leave out the subject of the sentence. It’s somewhat clearer in English, but I still had to maintain that ambiguity in English as to whether it is a door, or a back, or a person thinking. Sometimes even I myself wouldn’t realise that it was the door until a few drafts in. If you as a translator are surprised, you have to try to surprise the reader.”

You talked about how tedious the process of translating and editing was. What helped retain the pleasure of it?

“It’s like going through a forest until you suddenly come to a clearing. You just have to keep slogging and then suddenly it starts to come alive, and then you interact with it very differently when it becomes an English text that you’re editing.

The beginning is joyful and the end is joyful. Translators have to be very patient people”, Daisy Rockwell concludes before she, too, is lost in the crowd.

‘Until you have a voice, the writing doesn’t exist’

That Shehan Karunatilaka is approachable has been the topic of conversation among most DLF visitors this past week. We’ve seen him unwind on the grass, stroll through the stalls, signing copies of his 2022 Booker-winning novel, *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*, and posing for photos with fans even when the queues seemed to become unending. And so there I was at the exit to the auditorium again, after sunset this time, hoping to score a hatrick with these literary walks. The Sri Lankan author of fiction and children’s books—who by day works in advertising—decides to change things up. At his suggestion, we make a silent beeline for the parking lot and find two chairs in an abandoned, parrot green book stall.

Seven Moons splits the protagonist from his own voice, gives his ghost the power to whisper into ears, hovering over people’s shoulders. Why do voices interest you so much?

“For work I write websites, feature articles. I can have a plot, or I might have an idea and I can keep writing around it, but until I find a voice I don’t consider it a project.”

You’ve talked about how writing the book as a ghost story was a safe choice. Did you orchestrate it in any way that it reflects more contemporary issues of Sri Lanka?

“There is a character called Rajapaksa. This is a delicious fact that I found—that in ‘89, Mahendra Rajapaksa was a human rights activist who was going to Geneva with the mothers, holding up photographs, saying that these are the atrocities my government is doing. And I put that in because it was historically accurate. One of the characters says, Let Rajapaksa run a war, let’s see how he does. It’s ironic that I’m looking from the future talking about this.

I was very clear about my novel *Chinaman*, that it was based in 1996–1999. Purposely I didn’t watch any modern cricket when I was writing that. Same with this—I kept it to 1990. Now it’s going to be read in 2023 and people are going to look for parallels, but I don’t know if I planted any clues on purpose.”

The tug between remembering and forgetting drives the novel forward. For you as the author, was it also about remembering these events in Sri Lanka or processing them and moving on?

“It was supposed to be an amnesia tale, like Jason Bourne. Maali remembers bits of it and it comes to him in bodily aches. But then it also became a revenge tale and a love story. It was also about how much Sri Lanka remembers and forgets.”

Do you have any advice for independent writers to navigate censorship in South Asia, since you were able to do that with your book?

“Someone asked me, why don’t your detective stories have any detectives? And I thought that in our part of the world, our detectives are useless. Our cases, our murders are unsolved or repressed. So it seemed fake for me to invent a Poirot or Sherlock Holmes for Sri Lanka. It seemed more realistic that it’s the journalist who unearths the truth, puts themselves in danger and sometimes pays the price. So my self-preservation technique is that I hide behind fiction.”

Finally, any literary ghosts that you think are or should be hovering over your shoulder?

“Uncle Kurt Vonnegut is always the ghost that is in my ear. So the great writers perhaps. But other than that, no, I don’t want to hang out with ghosts!”

Sarah Anjum Bari is editor of *Daily Star Books*. Reach her at sarahanjum.bari@gmail.com or [@wordstintecal](https://www.instagram.com/wordstintecal) on Instagram and Twitter.

FEATURE

Local publishers, sales, AND THE 2023 DHAKA LIT FEST

SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

The leafy Bangla Academy compound teems with Bangladeshis and foreigners throughout the duration of Dhaka Lit Fest every year. Book stalls, pop-up artisan stores, and food stands line the periphery. Such an arrangement seems favourable for business owners to attract customers. In this light, how did local publishers fare at the 2023 Dhaka Lit Fest?

The event has been a resounding success for some publishers like Cosmos Books. They usually specialise in coffee table books that are of visual interest and pertinent to areas of arts, archaeology, architecture, travel, and photography, among others. Ali Sina, in-charge of Business Development at Cosmos, says, “We gather a decent number of customers through such events; our target audience is typically found among the crowds there because our books tend to be quite expensive. Not everyone is interested in spending on such books with the exception of some passionate customers.”

The same observation holds true for Nymphaea Publication, a publishing house that has been working for the past 23 years to showcase Bangladesh to an international audience. The publisher’s 2021 hit title, a collection of 50 Bangladeshi short stories, *When The Mango Tree Blossomed* (edited by Niaz Zaman), is a glaring testament in this regard. Karunangshu Barua, the publisher, says, “This was our first time at Dhaka Lit Fest. We saw that foreigners have an immense interest to learn about Bangladesh. The sales we achieve at Ekushey Boi Mela throughout a month, we almost achieved the same figures at Dhaka Lit Fest in only 4 days. Our sales were lower



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

than expected at Boi Mela because our target audience was absent. Our collection of coffee table books interests foreigners a lot. We are trying to build a platform to showcase the Bangladeshi success story via various angles—economists, historians, journalists, archaeologists, and other specialists are our primary authors.”

For some publishers, the scenario hadn’t been as rosy.

Zakir Hossen, Manager at Prothoma, says, “Other years, it was open for all. This year a ticketing system was imposed. As such, sales were lower than expected.”

The dismay is shared by Journeyman Books, Writers.ink, ULAB Press, and Agami

Prokashoni.

Nazneen Haque Mimi from Journeyman says, “We didn’t sell much even though we publish books in the English language. I think one significant reason was the introduction of fees. However, we were able to showcase our work to many people.”

The complaint about fees was also

evident in Agami Prokashoni’s experience. Jannat, assistant publication officer, said, “We publish books by prominent intellectuals of the country, and yet, we couldn’t gather customers due to the fees.”

Niaz Zaman from Writers.ink, who is a renowned professor, author, and editor, gives a different perspective regarding the lukewarm response some publishers received. “People mostly flock to stores that sell prominent, especially international, books, like Bookworm Bangladesh. They don’t have the same level of interest in buying from local publishers”, she stated.

As for how the festival could accommodate some low-budget local publishers with ease, Nazneen Haque says, “Paying 30,000 BDT for a stall for 4 days wasn’t feasible for us. It would have been understandable if the program was held at a five-star hotel like the Radisson. But Bangla Academy is public property, and charging so much slows us down. Moreover, we have four-five teams dedicated to producing and selling each book. From editing to designing to printing, the investment is already high.”

This perspective strikes a chord with the dilemma surrounding the idea of monetising literature in a country like Bangladesh, where the financially well-off have relatively more avenues to enjoy the arts industry. On one hand, small local publishers find themselves in financial constraints owing to the fees. On the other hand, a high-profile literature festival cannot sustain itself financially without commercialising certain aspects in the face of a global economic crisis.

Shah Tazrian Ashrafi is a contributor.

Shakib finds some positives in BPL at last

SPORTS REPORTER

“Everything is on a break,” Bangladesh’s Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan said when asked about his reaction to umpiring in the BPL at an event organised by Yamaha, only a day after he had made headlines for getting into the field of play before his side Fortune Barishal’s innings.

The all-rounder has already made headlines for his criticism of the BPL since the ninth edition of the tournament began, stating he could do a better job than the current organisers if he were CEO. At another commercial event a little later, he said it would be better to be board president than CEO.

Shakib accepted the fine for a level 1 breach of the BCB’s code of conduct



for entering the field, but it remains to be seen whether the all-rounder has had enough of going after the BPL’s organisation.

Despite the shortcomings of the BPL this time around, Shakib found some positives from a cricketer’s perspective, not getting into the logistical challenges left unmet. Yet, he reminded of difficulty playing T20s in Mirpur.

“The pitch is very good this year. Getting such pitches in Mirpur is unexpected. You have to credit the curator for that. That’s why runs are being scored and games are going well. It’s exciting,” Shakib said.

While the night games have produced runs, it still remains a bit difficult during the afternoon games for batters. A few local batters, a majority from the Sylhet Strikers, have started the BPL on the right foot.

[Nazmul Hossain] Shanto, Towhid Hridoy and Zakir [Hasan] have done well. The best thing is that local batters are doing well and the pitch deserves credit,” he said.

However, Shakib also pointed out that local bowlers are yet to really make a case for themselves. “Bowlers are not doing well. We have to learn how to bowl on these pitches now,” he said.

While any fiery remarks have been put on hold, when the action takes to the field at Chattogram, it remains to be seen whether Shakib will go from ‘break’ to action again.



Rafael Nadal battled back from regular injuries to lift the Australia Open last year for a record 21st Grand Slam title before adding the French Open crown to his collection. Yet, there are concerns whether he has lost a step after losing six of his past seven matches. What he still has in spades, however, is his star power, with Maria Sakkari (L) and Marta Kostyuk rushing to take a selfie with the 36-year-old after a charity match yesterday ahead of the Australian Open in Melbourne.

PHOTO: AFP

Chattogram leg promises greater entertainment

SPORTS REPORTER

The first Dhaka leg of the ninth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) witnessed quite a bit of action both on and off the field before the tournament shifts to Chattogram for the second phase from Friday. There have been some highlighting aspects during the Dhaka leg from the teams and individuals that certainly promise for an exciting tournament moving forward.

Sylhet shine bright under inspirational Mashrafe

Although Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is no more in contention for the national team selection, the inspirational cricketer made his mark with his leadership quality as Sylhet Strikers completed the Dhaka leg with an unbeaten run, winning all four games to remain on top of points table. The 39-year-old led from the front and remained instrumental with his medium pace and is among the top wicket-takers in the tournament so far, with seven wickets at an economy of 7.46. The charismatic cricketer led the side with utmost authority right from the start of the BPL, and a mixture of youth and experience made Sylhet one of the biggest title contenders for this BPL edition. Also, the presence of another experienced cricketer in Mushfiqur Rahim has provided a lot of assurance in the batting line-up, and alongside some talented young local and foreign players,



Sylhet remain a balanced unit.

Locals make their presence felt

The BPL has always been expected to be a huge platform for the local cricketers to exhibit their skills and share the limelight, and the Dhaka leg has certainly proved fruitful from that aspect. This time, some of the uncapped local cricketers have displayed great consistency and caught the eye with their performances. Among them, Sylhet’s young Towhid Hridoy stands out. The member of the Bangladesh Under-19 World Cup-winning side has emerged as the revelation in the Dhaka leg of the BPL. The right-hander is currently the leading run-scorer of the tournament, with 194 runs in four games, where he struck three consecutive half centuries. More importantly, Hridoy seems to have

matured as a batter, which has already started to pay dividends for the 22-year-old, but he is likely to miss out the entire Chattogram leg due to finger injury. Apart from Hridoy, Sylhet’s Zakir Hasan, Najmul Hossain Shanto, pacer Rejaur Rahman Raja, and Jaker Ali from Comilla Victorians also impressed with their outings so far.

Entertaining cricket

Over the years, the lack of entertaining cricket especially in the first part of the BPL has always remained one of the major concerns, but the Dhaka leg of this edition has certainly provided a great start. However, the first two games of the days’ opening fixtures churned out low-scoring encounters, where the slow and low nature of Mirpur pitch yet again raised more than a few eyebrows, even though it was a different story with the night games offering some competitive totals on the board. The first leg has already witnessed the third-highest successful chase in the history of BPL as Sylhet chased down a huge total of 194 runs posted by Fortune Barishal. The tournament also featured two centuries in the same match. Pakistan’s Azam Khan struck the first ton for Khulna Tigers but it eventually went in vain after his fellow countryman and Chattogram’s opener Usman Khan smashed a blistering century to clinch the victory for his side. The Dhaka leg also witnessed a 200-plus total posted by Sylhet against Dhaka Dominators, and it is expected to be the first of many as the tournament shifts to Chattogram where the pitch historically offers big totals.

Bangladesh reach Junior AHF Cup final

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh U-21 national hockey team stormed into the final of the Men’s Junior AHF Cup with a 3-0 win over Thailand in the first semifinal at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat yesterday.

Bangladesh will feature in today’s final against the winners of the other semifinal between Uzbekistan and hosts Oman.

The margin of victory may paint the impression of an easy win for Bangladesh, who had qualified as Pool B champions with an all-win record. In reality, they faced a stiff challenge from Pool A runners-up Thailand, who had come into the semifinal on the back of one win and one draw.

Thailand kept Bangladesh at bay for the first three quarters with in-form scorers like Amirul Islam, Joy, Tahsin Ali and Rokibul Hasan Rocky struggling to break the deadlock.

However, they collapsed under the pressure of a brilliant performance from the boys in red and green in the fourth and final quarter.

Rashid Hasan Jibon broke the deadlock three minutes into the fourth quarter from open play before Huzaifa Hossain converted a penalty for his first goal of the tournament in the 56th minute.

With Bangladesh on the cusp of the final, Rokibul Hasan Rocky sealed the victory in the 56th minute with his sixth goal of the tournament.

‘The artist has arrived’

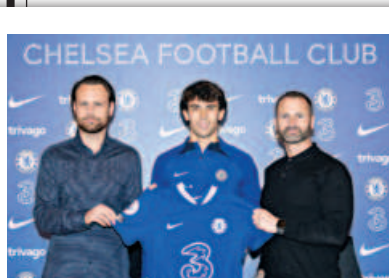
AFP, London

Atletico Madrid forward Joao Felix has joined Chelsea on loan for the rest of the season, the Premier League club announced on Wednesday.

The 23-year-old will bolster the attacking options for manager Graham Potter, whose squad is currently hard-hit by injuries and languishing in 10th spot in the table.

Chelsea tweeted “the artist has arrived”, welcoming the Portugal international, who had also been linked with Arsenal and Manchester United.

“Chelsea is one of the great teams in the world and I hope to help the team reach their objectives, so I am very, very happy to be here and very excited to play at Stamford Bridge,” Felix said in a club statement.



Felix joined Atletico from Benfica in 2019 for 126 million euros (\$135 million), making him one of the biggest transfers of all time, and has scored 34 goals in 131 appearances

for the club.

He also featured in Portugal’s run to the World Cup quarter-finals in Qatar last month, scoring in the 3-2 victory against Ghana in the group stage.

Atletico confirmed on Wednesday that Felix had extended his contract with them for one more season, until June 2027.

“From Atletico Madrid we wish Joao Felix every success in this new professional stage,” the Spanish club said in a statement.

Rashford hitting the right notes at the right time

REUTERS

While most players ease their way back into their club side after a gruelling World Cup, Manchester United’s Marcus Rashford has not wasted any time, scoring in every match since his return to take his season’s tally to 15 goals.

The 25-year-old has scored seven times in six games in three different competitions to lead United back to the top four in the Premier League, the fourth round of the FA Cup and the semi-finals of the League Cup.

Rashford also became the first player since the club’s top scorer Wayne Rooney in 2010 to net in eight home games in a row for United with a late double in Tuesday’s 3-0 win over Charlton Athletic.

Not bad for a forward who was woefully out of form last season and scored only five times in all competitions.

“If he keeps the focus and keeps putting the effort in, he will keep on scoring,” coach Erik ten Hag said.

“What you see now with Rashy, that is quite obvious. It wasn’t at the start of the season, but now he is in the right moment.”

Rashford’s turnaround in form is no



coincidence and two major factors have contributed to his renaissance – the departure of hero-turned-villain Cristiano Ronaldo and the appointment of Ten Hag.

But even as Ronaldo added to his burgeoning goals tally with 24 strikes, the rest of the team suffered as United struggled to their worst-ever Premier League points total last season.

Enter Ten Hag, who laid down the law very early on and benched the ageing Ronaldo and changed their style of play to get the best out of all players on the pitch.

Disciplinary issues marked the end for Ronaldo, who left games early after being upset at being benched, but Rashford has graciously accepted punishment and come out the better for it.

Since losing 6-3 to Manchester City in October, United have won 15 of their 18 games, losing only once.

With games coming thick and fast, their eight-match winning streak will be put to the test when City visit Old Trafford on Saturday.

And in Rashford, Ten Hag has a determined and dependable forward as United look to consolidate a top-four spot and return to the Champions League.



Robert Lewandowski led the Barcelona contingent as they arrived in Riyadh ahead of their Spanish Super Cup semifinal against Real Betis at the King Fahd International Stadium tonight.

PHOTO: BARCELONA



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PM likely to visit Japan in April

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Japan visit, which was postponed in November last year, is likely to take place early April.

The visit was discussed when newly appointed Japanese Ambassador Iwama Kiminori paid a courtesy call on her at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PM's speechwriter M Nazrul Islam said this while briefing reporters on the meeting, reports UNB.

Kiminori also discussed the matter with Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen in a meeting with him on Tuesday.

Japan wants the prime minister to make her trip in late March or early April during the season of cherry blossoms, a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said Dhaka is considering early April as many events take place in

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With the Bishwa Ijtema just a day away, devotees from Dhaka and its adjacent districts have started pouring into the Ijtema ground in Tongi. This picture taken yesterday near the capital's Basila bridge shows a boat carrying devotees in the Turag river. The first phase of the Ijtema will be held on January 13-15.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

LEVEL CROSSING Three killed as train hits auto-rickshaw



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three people, including a child, were killed and five others injured after a train hit an auto-rickshaw at an unmanned level crossing in Tangail's Bhuapur around noon yesterday.

Two of the victims died on the spot while the child passed away on the way to Bhuapur Upazila Health Complex, police and doctors said.

Two of them were identified as Lovely Begum, 25, wife of Alamgir Hossain of Agterila village in Bhuapur, and eighteen-month old Jannati, daughter of Sanjab Ali of the same village.

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BUSINESS

Forex volatility continues

In a desperate attempt at collecting the greenback to meet immediate requirements, a good number of banks are ignoring directives of two lenders' organisations to not offer over Tk 107 for each US dollar coming in as remittance. The directive was a part of a consensus reached between Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers' Association (BAFEDA) and the Association of Bankers Bangladesh (ABB) in September to follow multiple exchange rates.

STORY ON B1

Cost-of-living crisis biggest global risk

Warns WEF survey as global inflation remains at sky-high amid Ukraine war

AFP, London

The cost-of-living crisis will be the biggest global risk over the next two years, a survey by the World Economic Forum warned yesterday ahead of its Davos meeting next week.

Global inflation remains at sky-high levels after energy and food costs rocketed last year following the invasion of agricultural powerhouse Ukraine by major oil and gas producer Russia.

Supply constraints caused by the Covid pandemic have also contributed to decades-high consumer prices.

"Conflict and geo-economic tensions have triggered a series of deeply interconnected global risks," said the study ahead of the WEF's annual meeting of global elites in the Swiss Alpine village of Davos.

"These include energy and food supply crunches, which are likely to persist for the next two years, and strong increases in the cost-of-living and debt servicing."

It added that such "crises risk undermining efforts to tackle longer-term risks, notably those related to climate change, biodiversity and investment in human capital".

The survey, produced with consultants Marsh McLennan and Zurich Insurance Group, took into account the views of more than 1,200 global risk

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International brands exploiting RMG workers

Finds study on 1,000 Bangladeshi factories

AFP, London

Major international fashion brands are operating unfairly toward Bangladesh clothing suppliers, with some allegedly paying for items below the cost of production, according to a study published yesterday.

The study's compilers, Aberdeen University and the advocacy group Transform Trade, surveyed 1,000 Bangladeshi factories making garments for global brands and retailers during the Covid pandemic.

More than half of the factories experienced at least order cancellations or refusal to pay or price reductions or delayed payment for goods.

"This research highlights reports of unfair trading practices encountered by manufacturers during Covid-19," the report found.

Such practices resulted in lower wages for the factories' workers, job losses, and high staff turnover, it said.

One in five factories revealed they

had struggled to pay the legal minimum wage as a result.

The report also uncovered incidents where some companies demanded reductions for clothing ordered before the pandemic erupted in March 2020.

And some fashion firms refused to budge on price, despite soaring costs and rampant inflation.

The study called for the creating of a fashion industry regulator in importing nations to improve purchasing practices.

Respondents told researchers that the "highest proportion" of unfair business

practices included major brands such as H&M, Next, Primark and Zara owner Inditex.

The responses of some companies to the claims were included in the report.

Inditex said it has "guaranteed payment for all orders already placed and in process of production and worked with financial institutions to facilitate the provision of loans to

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



2 Pakistan teen girls ran away to meet BTS

CNN, online



Two teenage girls reported missing in Pakistan last week have been found more than 750 miles from home after attempting to travel to South Korea to meet K-pop super band BTS, police in the South Asian country said.

The two girls, aged 13 and 14, went missing on Saturday from Korangi in Karachi city, said Abraiz Ali Abbasi, a senior police superintendent of the area.

During a search of their homes, police found a diary that revealed their plans to travel to South Korea to meet the supergroup BTS, Abbasi said in a video statement.

"From the diary we saw mentions of train timetables and that they had been planning to run away with another friend of theirs ... who we then interviewed," Abbasi said.

"We started tracking them aggressively and found out they were in custody of the police in the city of Lahore where they had travelled by train."

Abbasi said arrangements for the girls to be taken back home to Karachi have been made in coordination with police in Lahore.

And he made an appeal for parents to "please monitor their children's screen time," so they're more aware of what their children are viewing online.

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B'BARIA COURTS Lawyers' boycott adds to plight of justice-seekers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Justice-seekers were deprived of services as Brahmanbaria lawyers continued their court boycott for six straight working days yesterday.

Judicial activities at the district judge and chief judicial magistrate's courts have been suspended since January 4, following an altercation between lawyers and court employees over the alleged misbehaviour with a judge.

The District Bar Association started boycotting the court, demanding withdrawal of two judges, including Brahmanbaria district judge, and a court staffer.

On January 2, a group of lawyers reportedly misbehaved with Judge Mohammad Faruque of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-1 in Brahmanbaria and created chaos in the courtroom.

The next day, court employees started a work abstention, protesting the lawyers' actions, but withdrew it later that day.

On January 5, the High Court summoned Brahmanbaria Bar Association President Tanbir Bhuiyan, Secretary (administration) Akkas Ali and lawyer Zubayer Islam to appear before the bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil on January 17 to explain their conduct.

Sohel Mia, who hails from Brahmanbaria but works

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A pickup truck driver on his mobile phone while driving in the capital's Shewrapara, completely oblivious to the danger he is posing to himself, other vehicles and pedestrians. Though the Road Transport Act-2018 made it a punishable offence, this kind of irresponsible behaviour goes unabated as the authorities concerned hardly take action. According to the law, the punishment for using mobile phones while driving is maximum one month of imprisonment or a fine of Tk 5,000 or both. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

NIPAH VIRUS Don't drink raw date juice

Warns IEDCR as country reports this year's first death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health experts yesterday advised people to not drink raw date juice, the main source of the Nipah virus in the country, following the recent death of a woman.

At an event yesterday, the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) told reporters that the 35-year-old woman died from Nipah-induced encephalitis in Rajshahi last week.

Last year, the IEDCR recorded three Nipah virus cases, two of which led to death – one in Naogaon and the other in Faridpur.

"We don't know much about this deadly virus yet. So far, we know that it has around 71 percent fatality rate and raw date juice is the main source of contracting it. So, we must refrain from consuming it," said Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the IEDCR, while sharing data on the viral infection.

She, however, said consuming the

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