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135 illegal brick kilns in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram



New Zealand PM Ardern announces shock resignation



'Netflix curse' hits Australian Open



\$8.37b injected into market so far in FY23

"We are right now in Davos where (there are) basically the people who are mostly fuelling the destruction of the planet."

Climate activist Greta Thunberg slams attendees of WEF in Davos



EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Anti-bullying policy in sight

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is at the final stage of introducing a policy to stop bullying and aggressive ragging at educational institutions to ensure that students learn in a safe environment without fear.

A draft prepared by the education ministry will soon be finalised with provisions to form a bullying prevention committee at public and private secondary schools, colleges, universities, madrasas, and technical educational institutions. Qawmi madrasas and English medium schools are not included in the policy.

The draft contains definitions of verbal, physical, and cyber bullying with a proposal for punishing students, teachers, and members of the governing body for indulging in any form of aggressive behaviour that leaves a negative impact on the victims.

Considering the degree of bullying and ragging, criminal cases can be filed against the individuals responsible, according to the draft.

Prof Nehal Ahmed, director general of Directorate of Secondary and Higher

Education, said officials discussed the draft yesterday and will need one or two more meetings to finalise it.

The draft needs some language-related changes, he told The Daily Star after yesterday's meeting at the education ministry.

Several officials proposed at the meeting that English medium schools and Qawmi madrasas should also be included in the policy, two officials told this correspondent.

Educationists say bullying is prevalent at schools, but it goes unreported due to stigma and fear that the victim would not get remedy from authorities. It often leads to devastating consequences that include trouble concentrating on the study, absenteeism, or even dropout.

A Unicef study in 2019 said one in every four students were bullied by their peers in Bangladesh.

Children who are frequently bullied are nearly three times more likely to feel like an outsider at schools, and twice more likely to miss classes compared to those who are not frequently bullied, said the

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Residents of many areas in the capital are suffering an acute gas crisis due to an inadequate supply of piped gas. In poor homes where up to 50 families share a single kitchen and must get in line to cook their meals, waiting for gas pressure to rise in the evening is agonising. The photo was taken yesterday at a slum in the capital's Begunbari.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

EQUIPMENT FOR ROOPPUR Russian ship sailing back

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project faces a fresh setback as the Russian ship carrying equipment for it is now sailing back instead of offloading the tools at West Bengal's Haldia Port.

"The Russian embassy in Dhaka has informed the authorities that the ship is returning to Russia after being unable to offload equipment at Haldia Port," a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

Russian flag carrier URSA MAJOR was supposed to reach Mongla Port on December 24. However, the US embassy in Dhaka informed Bangladesh on December 20 that the vessel was not URSA MAJOR, but Sparta 3, a ship on which the US slapped sanctions over Russian invasion of Ukraine.

After confirming the matter, the Bangladesh authorities refused to let the ship anchor at Mongla Port. The authorities cooperated fully with the shipping agent concerned to make sure that the goods are offloaded in West Bengal and then transported to the power plant in Pabna.

Officials could not say why Sparta 3 could not offload equipment at Haldia Port after waiting there for two weeks till January 16.

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AL abuzz with names for country's next president

Hasina yet to discuss the matter with party high-ups



MASHUR RAHMAN



SHIRIN SHARMIN CHAUDHURY



ABM KHAIRUL HAQUE



AKM MOZAMMEL HUQ



MOSHARRAF HOSSAIN



OBaidul QUADER

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The most discussed question within the ruling Awami League at the moment is -- who will be the 22nd president of Bangladesh?

This is because a general election is slated for January next year, and the AL rank and file believe someone trustworthy should be holding the president's office during that crucial period.

Though the post of the president is mostly ceremonial -- they are to act as per the advice of the prime minister, except when appointing the premier and the chief justice -- it takes on some significance during polls-time given his say in issuing directives to help the Election

Commission function effectively.

According to section 5 (2) of the Representation of the People's Order, 1972, all executive authorities of the government shall assist the EC in the performance of its functions, and for this purpose, the president may, after consultation with the commission, issue such directions as they may deem necessary.

As of now, there has been no indication from the AL high command about who might succeed Abdul Hamid. Party President Sheikh Hasina is yet to discuss the issue with her colleagues.

This is why several names have come up in the discussions among the AL leaders, activists and beyond. That the matter will have to be

settled during the current session of parliament, set to conclude on February 9, only accelerated the discussion.

An AL candidate will be elected as Hamid's successor, as the party holds the absolute majority in parliament, whose members elect the president.

Out of 350 parliamentary seats, the AL currently has 302, while main opposition Jatiya Party has 26. The Workers Party has four seats; Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh and Gono Forum have two each; Bangladesh Tarikat Federation and Jatiya Party (Manju) have a single seat each; and three remaining seats are occupied by independents.

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Humanity was all she believed in

First organ transplantation from brain-dead patient makes history

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-year-old Sara Islam's consent to donate her organs after her death has given new life to four, two with completely damaged kidneys and two without eyesight, in the country's first successful transplantation of organs from a brain-dead patient.

The transplants took place at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, National Kidney Foundation and Sandhani Eye Hospital.

Sara Islam, a rare tumour patient, was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit at BSMMU on Monday as her health deteriorated after undergoing a surgery on her brain tumour in India recently.

Sara had been suffering from tuberous sclerosis, a rare genetic condition that causes mainly non-cancerous tumours to develop in different parts of a patient's body since early childhood.

As her mother consented to donate Sara's organs, surgeons started the transplantation surgeries, known as cadaveric transplantation, after she was declared clinically dead on Wednesday.

"It is a milestone in the medical history of our country. We honour the sacrifice of Sara and her family," Prof Sharfuddin Ahmed, vice-chancellor of BSMMU, told journalists while briefing them on the transplantation yesterday.

The kidney and eye receivers were selected from the databases of eligible patients at BSMMU, the National Kidney Foundation and Sandhani Eye Hospital in Dhaka, authorities said.

Surgeons transplanted the kidneys into Shamima Akter and Hasina Akter at the BSMMU and National Kidney Foundation. Both patients were in their 30s.

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Sara Islam

Padma Bridge to get costlier Bridges Division seeks Tk 2,682.13cr more

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The long-cherished Padma bridge is set to cost more after the bridges division sought more funds and time to complete the structure even though it is open to the public since June last year.

At the time of inauguration on June 25 last year, some works, especially river training, a major component of the project, were incomplete.

Now, the bridges division has sought Tk 2,682.13 crore more and an additional year, according to the revision proposal sent yesterday to the Planning Commission for approval.

If the proposal is approved, the bridge, which established a direct connection between the capital and the country's southwest, will end up costing Tk 32,875.51 crore -- more than three times the original estimate.

Project Director Shafiqul Islam cited the increase in the cost of construction materials, depreciation of taka against the dollar, the need for additional money to build power transmission towers and increase in value-added tax and income tax rates due to changes in legislation as the main reasons for the latest round of cost escalation.

The project authorities would need Tk 3,444.89 crore extra but they are clawing back Tk 762.76 crore from several components, including Tk 368.09 crore allocated for resettlement.

Of the sum, Tk 1,665.60 crore would be required for the main bridge, Tk 877.53 crore for river training and Tk 450.29 for consultancy services.

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A mahout makes his elephant stop a three-wheeler in the middle of the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar to extort money from the driver and passenger. Using elephants for extortion is common and has been known to be a traffic nuisance for long. However, it is the elephants that suffer the most. Due to their ability to train fast and their friendly nature, people use them for illegal acts and often torture them during training.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Tambru tense as Rohingya groups clash

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Tension has been high along Tambru border in Bandarban as gun battle between two Rohingya militant groups resumed yesterday morning at a refugee camp on the no-man's-land.

Some of the Rohingya people and intelligence officials said a fierce gun battle took place on Wednesday morning between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), both of which were trying to take control of Konarpara Rohingya Camp.

The violence has caused the entry of at least 500 Rohingyas to enter Bangladesh and take refuge at a school in Tambru area of Naikhongchhari upazila, said Muhammad Alam, a member of Ghumdhum Union Parishad.

Panicked Rohingyas also entered Myanmar during the gunfight, he added.

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SKELETON RECOVERY 2 more arrested; prime suspect identified

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

The Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) arrested two more people, and identified a BCL leader as the prime suspect in the Rajeev murder committed six years ago.

The murder came to light last week after Rajeev's skeletal remains were found inside a drum buried in a septic tank of an office building in Jashore town's Puraton Kasba Kazipara.

The identity of the victim Rajeev Hossain Kazi, 32, of Chandoli Mahal village in Khulna's Digholia upazila, was found using a DNA test, said PBI Superintendent of Police Reshma Sharmin on Tuesday.

On the same day, the murder case was filed with Jashore's Kotwali Police Station.

Police identified Sajibur Rahman Sajib, liberation war affairs secretary of Jashore District unit Chhatra League, as the prime suspect in the murder case, she added.

Sajib is currently in jail over the murder of BCL leader Riyad, a student of Jashore University of Science and Technology, who was hacked to death on July 14, 2014, she also added.

PBI SI Ziaur Rahman said, "We will ask the court to show Sajib arrested in the Rajeev murder case and subsequently place him in police custody for interrogation."

Meanwhile, PBI arrested Ibrahim Molla, 33, of Puratan Kasba Lichutola area and Zainal Howladar, 30, of Niribili area in Jashore Town on Wednesday night.

They were sent to jail via a court order yesterday, said SI Ziaur, who is also the case investigation officer.

Earlier on Monday, rickshaw puller Salam Hossain, 55, of Mangalghata village under Lohagarh upazila in Narail, was arrested in Jashore's Kismat Nawapara in connection with the murder.

During primary integration, Salam said, in 2016, four people killed Rajeev and placed his body inside a drum and disposed of it in the septic tank of an office building, where the victim used to work at the time, said police sources.

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Farmers push their bicycles with earthen pots full of the date palm juice in a foggy morning at Sabdarpur village of Jhenaidah. The delicious juice is sold raw and also used to make gur.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

WEST'S HEAVY WEAPONS PLEDGE TO UKRAINE

Russia warns of escalation

US, Germany head for showdown over tanks for Kyiv

AGENCIES

The Kremlin yesterday warned of escalation in Ukraine if the West gives the pro-Western country more weapons capable of striking Russia, as Kyiv intensified pressure on Western allies to provide heavier weapons to step up fight against Moscow.

"Potentially, this is extremely dangerous, it will mean bringing the conflict to a whole new level, which, of course, will not bode well from the point of view of global and pan-European security," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

The warning comes on the eve of a key donor meeting as Western countries consider sending more powerful weapons to Ukraine.

The United States is set to convene the meeting of around 50 countries -- including all 30 members of Nato -- at the US military base of Ramstein in Germany today to discuss military aid to Ukraine.

Addressing the annual World Economic Forum gathering in Davos yesterday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky singled out Germany for its hesitance to supply its modern Leopard tanks -- unless the United States also gives tanks, reports AFP.

"There are times where we shouldn't hesitate," Zelensky said via video-link. "When someone says 'I will give tanks if someone else will also share tanks'... I don't think this is the right strategy to go with."

Anti-bullying policy in sight

FROM PAGE 1

study titled "Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying".

WHAT IS IN THE POLICY?

Hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing, punching, and spitting on others are included in the definition of physical bullying. Cyber bullying and ragging means demeaning someone by writing or posting indecent content about them on social media.

Deliberately touching or attempting to touch one's private parts, offensive signs and gestures, forceful stripping of clothes are considered sexual bullying and ragging.

Insulting and humiliating someone based on their race, caste, tribe, religion, profession, skin colour, and region are racial bullying.

"If bullying and ragging are not prevented, society will see a scarcity of good leadership and good citizenship," it reads. "In this context, this policy has been formulated to prevent bullying and ragging in educational institutions."

MONITORING AND PUNISHMENT

The policy proposed setting up security cameras at educational institutions, having complaint boxes, and observing anti-bullying and anti-ragging day on campuses. Both bullies and victims should be counselled.

The teachers, managing committee members and others will play a vital role in preventing bullying.

A bully can be suspended and expelled. If a teacher or employee of an institution is found to be a bully, actions will be taken in line with the Government Employee Discipline and Appeal Rules 2018.

Monthly Payment Order (MPO) benefits can be cancelled permanently or temporarily for them through issuing show-cause notices.

If a committee member is involved, they will be removed from their position.

Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education, said if the policy comes into effect, the children will remain safer.

Prompt steps should be taken against the bullying, she added.

"In the case of a departmental investigation, it should be done with transparency," she said.

The extreme cases can be tried under the Cyber Security Act or the Women and Child Repression Prevention Act, she said.

AL abuzz with names for country's next president

FROM PAGE 1

There were seven MPs from the BNP, but they have recently resigned from the Sangsad.

The tenure of Hamid, the longest serving president of the country, will expire on April 23, and according to the constitution, there is no scope for his re-election.

Article 50 (2) of the constitution reads that no person shall hold office as president for more than two terms, whether or not the terms are consecutive.

Hamid was appointed acting president of Bangladesh on March 14, 2013, while then president Zillur Rahman was in hospital in Singapore. Zillur died six days later.

Hamid was then elected unopposed as president on April 22, 2013, and was sworn into office two days later. On February 7, 2018, he was re-elected unopposed for a second term.

Meanwhile, six names are being discussed among the party leaders and activists.

Sources said there are high possibilities of Mashiur Rahman, an advisory council member of the party, becoming the next president.

Mashiur, also the PM's economic affairs advisor, who was always active in public events, hasn't been seen much lately. He also has refrained from making any public comments, AL insiders said.

He was vocal against World Bank's allegations of corruption in the process of building the Padma bridge, after the bank backtracked on its \$1.2 billion money-lending deal for the bridge's construction.

The allegations were later rejected

by a Canadian court.

Mashiur even went on a month-long leave as it was one of the WB conditions for reviving the loan during the probe into the graft allegations.

Hailing from Khulna, Mashiur was a former bureaucrat and was assistant private secretary to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from 1972 to 1975.

The name of Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury is also being discussed.

Shirin, an MP from Rangpur-6, became the youngest Speaker of the House and has been serving since April 2013.

She started her career as a lawyer of the Supreme Court and also served as the state minister of the women and children's affairs ministry.

Besides them, the name of ABM Khairul Haque, who was the 19th chief justice and is currently the law commission chairman, is being discussed as a presidential candidate.

Khairul came into the limelight after delivering the verdict that declared the 13th amendment illegal and unconstitutional. The amendment had enabled the caretaker government system.

His verdict on the fifth amendment declared the regime of Khondoker Mostaque Ahmed, Justice Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem and Major General Ziaur Rahman unconstitutional.

As a judge of the High Court, Khairul also confirmed the death penalties of 15 in the murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Huq is also being discussed as a probable candidate for

DB arrests four senior bankers over defaming S Alam owners

3 of them Islami Bank's senior officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested four senior bankers including three Islami Bank officials in connection with a case filed over plastering posters and making social media posts to defame the owners of Chattogram-based S Alam Group.

The arrestees are Islami Bank's executive vice-presidents Sayeed Ullah and Shahidullah Majumder, Habibur Rahman, an official of the bank's security department, and Mosharraf Hossain, a former deputy managing director of Islami Bank who is now working at Social Islami Bank as the chief remittance officer.

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Padma bridge site's unused land to be leased out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) is set to lease out 180 acres of unused land of the Padma Bridge project to the government-owned North West Power General Company for setting up a solar power plant.

The land of the Padma bridge site on the bank of the river is unused, so it is being leased out as per the relevant guidelines, Obaidul Quader, the road transport and bridges, told the media after the BBA board's 112th meeting yesterday.

The decision to lease out the land got the nod at the meeting, which was chaired by Quader.

The board also decided that only the president of the country will get an exemption from tolls on the bridges under BBA.

The prime minister always pays the toll while using the bridges, Quader said.

"Although I was exempt from toll, I used to pay. However, from now, even I am not exempt," he added.

Several organisations and individuals have sought exemption from paying the toll but the board yesterday decided not to entertain the applications, said a BBA official.

In another decision, the board asked the BBA authorities to negotiate with the lowest bidder for collecting the toll of the Bangabandhu bridge.

BBA has been collecting tolls in the last few years after the previous toll operator filed a case against the bidding process for selecting a new toll collector.

But a court has already disposed the case in favour of BBA, he said wishing not to be named.

Quader said they have asked the authorities to negotiate with the lowest bidder and take a decision in this regard. A Bangladesh-South Korea joint venture company was the lowest bidder, said a BBA official.

Pritom gets bail in DSA case, finally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Pritom Das, a leader of left-leaning organisation Rashtra Sangskar Andolan, was freed from jail on bail yesterday, 131 days after he was arrested in a case filed under the Digital Security Act for "hurting religious sentiment".

Moulvibazar Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court-2 granted him the bail after a petition was submitted to the court, said Pritom's lawyer Abul Hasan.

Earlier, he was denied bail by the lower court and the High Court.

Abul said Pritom had been in jail since September 10 last year after the case was filed with Sreemangal Police Station by Mahbub Alam Bhuiyain, a BCL activist.

Pritom walked out of Moulvibazar jail at 6:00pm.

Tambru tense

FROM PAGE 1

He added that firing between the two groups resumed yesterday morning and continued until around noon, he added.

Contacted, Naikhongghari Upazila Nirbahi Officer Romen Sharma said he was aware that "some Rohingya families have entered Bangladesh".

He added that the situation on the Bangladesh side of the border was normal, but people felt scared hearing the gunshots.

Around 6:28am on Wednesday, at least 100 RSO men laid siege to a meeting place of ARSA and started shooting, intelligence officials said.

The ARSA men then started shooting and the gunfight went on for around two and a half hours, said a Rohingya community leader, wishing not to be named.

The bullet-hit body of a Rohingya man named Hamid Ullah, 27, was found later. Doctors at an MSF-run hospital in Kutupalong confirmed the death.

Another man named Mohib Ullah, 25, was admitted to the facility with bullet wounds.

Both of them were wearing beige camouflage tops, said Sheikh Mohammad Ali, officer-in-charge of Ukhia Police Station.

A Rohingya leader, who was at the camp during the clash, said gunshots were again heard between 2:00pm and 3:00pm.

After that, the ARSA members set fire to their meeting place "possibly because they ran out of ammunition. ARSA strategy is to set fire to be able

to escape from a spot," added the community leader.

Rohingya leader Dil Mohammad said, "The gunfights were taking place over establishing supremacy."

ARSA members also set fire to several huts, which caused widespread panic among people. Many Rohingyas fled their houses and took shelter near Tambru Bazar.

Several Rohingya sources from the camp said RSO members took control of Konarpara yesterday morning and found a number of bunkers believed to be used by ARSA men.

The Daily Star received five photos of the bunkers sent by the local sources. RSO members in their camouflage shirts were also seen in the photos, which were not verified.

Neither of the two groups claimed to be responsible for the violence.

Officials said the Border Guard Bangladesh was asked to stay alert.

The Konarpara camp on no-man's-land hosts at least 4,232 Rohingyas who arrived there in 2017. Over a dozen refugees were injured during the clash over the last two days, said witnesses.

The ARSA and RSO have been rivals for years. The RSO was most active in the 1990s but lost its appeal to the people later. It reemerged last year while ARSA came into the spotlight in 2016.

ARSA is the group that launched deadly attacks on Burmese military and police outposts in Myanmar's border state of Rakhine in August 2017. [Our Bandarban correspondent contributed to this report.]

Padma Bridge

FROM PAGE 1

"The US dollar traded at Tk 78.3 in the foreign exchange market when we started the works but the rate has escalated since then. We had to spend an additional Tk 500 600 crore for this reason alone," Islam said.

The government on many occasions has changed VAT and income tax rates.

In the case of foreign contractors, the VAT and income tax have been increased to 15 percent from 10.5 percent, so the project authorities have to provide the additional 4.5 percent as per the contract, he said.

This cost the project authorities an additional Tk 687 crore, according to officials.

Besides, the project authorities have to spend about Tk 400 crore more for the detailed design and construction of foundations of seven 400KV transmission towers on the Padma.

They will also have to procure some equipment for the operation of the bridge, which will take about Tk 300 crore, he said.

Approved in August 2007, the project was supposed to be implemented at the cost of Tk 10,162

state-owned corporation Rosatom is the main contractor of the project, for which Russia is providing \$11.38 billion as loan.

The project was going to miss the December 2023 commissioning deadline as German company Siemens AG refused to supply the gas-insulated switchgear for the project's substation due to German and US-led western sanctions on Russia.

Project officials said the authorities have decided to procure equipment from a Chinese company -- an issue which somewhat delayed the project.

A project official yesterday said the equipment weighing about 50 tonnes, which was being carried by the Russian ship, would be delivered in alternative ways in a few months.

Another project official said every component of the project is crucial for starting the operation of the power plant. One of those remaining incomplete means the whole project would suffer.

Raise own funds for development

PM urges public univs

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon public universities to raise their own funds through alumni associations for development and welfare programmes.

“Every university has an alumni association, and through this they can raise their own funds for the development of universities and the implementation of projects for the welfare of students,” she said.

The premier said this when members of the standing committee of Bangladesh University Parishad (Bangladesh University Council), alongside vice chancellors of various public universities, called on her at Gono Bhaban.

After the meeting, prime minister's deputy press secretary KM Sakhawat Moon briefed the reporters.

“Students of Bangladesh are very talented. If they are given a little chance, they can bring a higher degree from abroad after completing their university studies,” the PM said.

To this end, she called upon university teachers to be more responsible and attentive to make students capable.

Hasina said university students should be involved in sports, and cultural and creative activities in addition to studies, so that they stay away from militancy.

For this purpose, she urged everyone to initiate inter-university sports competitions again.



A mother and son viewing the sculptures at Swadhinata Sangram Bhaskarja Chattar in Dhaka University yesterday. Due to a lack of maintenance, the busts had been in a dilapidated condition for a long time and were rarely visited, inset. But after the authorities renovated the spot recently, it became one of the frequently-visited places in the area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Metro rail to run till 5pm on Sunday for Ijtema

2nd phase of Ijtema begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The metro rail will run from 8:00am to 5:00pm on Sunday to facilitate the movement of commuters for Akheri Munajat in the second phase of Biswa Ijtema.

Mohammad Abdur Rouf, company secretary of Dhaka Mass Transit Company, confirmed it to The Daily Star.

The metro rail currently runs for four hours daily from 8:00am.

The sale of MRT pass will be suspended from 3:00pm to 9:00pm on the day.

Currently, the metro train runs from Diabari to Agargaon, with a stop in Pallabi.

On December 28, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated MRT Line 6, which opened to the public the following day.

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Fake visa syndicate in town

Six members of racket held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A syndicate has been trapping people and embezzling huge sums of money with a false assurance of providing fake US visas from Bangladesh.

They first make a deal with the applicant of Tk 10 lakh to Tk 15 lakh for visa processing.

The syndicate then put some fake visit visas on the applicant's passport, as well as the immigration seals as proof of visiting the country. Later, they schedule an appointment between the applicant and the US embassy to get a real US visa.

The cyber and special crime (north) division of the police's Detective Branch claimed to have found the details following the arrest of six people from different areas of the capital on Wednesday night.

The arrestees are Palash Chandra Das, 39; Mahabubur Rahman Khan, 36; two applicants Wahid Uddin, 38, owner of Travelers Diary agency and his associate Shahiul Islam Sumon, 37; Arifur Rahman, 36, owner of Happy Holiday agency, and his associate Abu Jafar, 25.

Detectives conducted the drive and arrested the six after one Michael Lee of the US embassy filed a case with Gulshan Police Station on the day.

According to the FIR, applicant Palash went to the embassy for a visa interview on November 13 last year. He confessed to the visa officials that the stamps on page 13

The syndicate put some fake visit visas on the applicant's passport, as well as the immigration seals as proof of visiting the country. Later, they schedule an appointment between the applicant and the US embassy to get a real US visa.

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From hope to horror

Man who got out of new militant outfit recalls ordeal in confession

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Kazi Ziaul Haque Tuhin had lost all hope. Amid family troubles, his business was facing losses, and brokers who promised to send him abroad ultimately cheated him.

Out of frustration, he left his home in Cumilla's Langolcoat in November 2021. After that, the first man Ziaul met was Habibullah, the imam of Quba Mosque near his home, who was little known to the former.

Ziaul, 32, gradually got close to Habibullah, who then inspired him to go to Bandarban, saying that the imam and others have a madrasa there, and some of them have bought land in the hills.

Habibullah told Ziaul that in the hills, the troubled man can earn a livelihood by farming and concentrate fully in worship amid a peaceful environment.

Motivated, Ziaul closed his business and took out Tk 4 lakh.

Habibullah assigned an associate, Tamal, to send Ziaul to Bandarban, and finally on December 19 or 20, 2021, he and Nahid, another youth from Cumilla, went to Bandarban.

Eventually, they ended up at the camp of the newly-surfaced militant outfit Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya in the deep forest of Bandarban.

Ziaul had to undergo military training with many others at the facility of an armed group in the hills

— known as Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF).

After two failed attempts, he eventually managed to escape the camp and surrendered before a Dhaka court.

He gave a confessional statement before the court recently as a victim. In the statement, he narrated how he was misguided to go to the hills and cheated by the militants, how difficult the journey was, the terrible days at the camp, and the outfit's training activities at KNF facilities.

While the young man kept insisting to leave, at one point the militants tied Ziaul's hands and feet and kept him blindfolded. He was untied after two days, after they were assured that he would not flee. They, however, had their eyes on him.

He also narrated how he was tortured after trying to escape.

According to Rapid Action Battalion, around 55 youths left their homes for so-called “hijrat” and were trained in explosives and firearms at the KNF facilities. Around 12 of them have so far been arrested, and two others have died, said Rab Director (Legal and Media) Khandaker Al Moin.

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Publish gazette asking Tarique, wife to appear on February 6

Court directs govt

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed the government to publish a gazette asking BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman and his wife Zubaida Rahman to appear before it on February 6 in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Judge Md Asaduzzaman of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after getting reports from Cantonment Police Station on execution of property attachment issued against the couple.

If the couple fails to comply with the court order, the trial against them will continue in their absence, said Dhaka Additional Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal.

The same court on January 5 ordered the officer-in-charge of Cantonment Police Station to confiscate moveable (bank accounts) and immovable (land-related) properties of Tarique and his wife Zubaida in the case.

The court also directed the OC to submit a

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We vow to ‘restore democracy’

Says Mirza Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka



BNP has vowed to make the ongoing anti-government movement for “restoring democracy” a success, marking the 87th birth anniversary of its founder Ziaur Rahman.

BNP leaders and activists took the oath after placing wreaths at the grave of former president and the party founder at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city yesterday.

Talking to reporters, party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the people of the country have woken up to thwart the plot of Awami League to reestablish one-party rule.

“We hope that we'll be able to organise people with a new pledge and win the movement of restoring democracy, protecting the multi-party democracy, protecting Bangladesh and saving independence and sovereignty of the country,” he said.

No need for BNP to ‘save democracy’

Says Obaidul Quader

UNB, Dhaka



Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP should be banned for lying and conspiracy.

He said this during an exchange of views with reporters after a meeting at Setu Bhaban in the capital. Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said BNP does not need to “save democracy”, as democracy was freed long ago under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

He said Awami League does not call counter-programmes, as his party has no desire to clash with BNP.

Before the view exchange, the board meeting of Bangladesh Bridge Authority was held at Setu Bhaban. In the meeting, it was decided that toll will only be exempted for the president on all bridges including Padma Bridge.

MEDICAL EDUCATION

HC summons DG over non-compliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summoned the director general of Directorate General of Medical Education (DGME) to appear before it over non-compliance of its order for producing some documents regarding admission of a medical student.

The DG has been ordered to appear along with the original record of admission of Md Shariful Islam, a student of Chattogram BGC Trust Medical College, before the HC bench of Justice Zafar Ahmed and Justice Md Bashir Ullah on January 24.

The bench issued the summon order during the hearing of a writ petition filed by Shariful, a third-year medical student, challenging a decision of Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council that refused to register him as a student.

Shariful's lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir told The Daily Star that the HC on November 24 last year first directed the office of DG to submit the record of his client's admission as medical student to this court.

16 more hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 16 dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new figure, a total of 454 dengue cases and five dengue deaths have been recorded so far this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Some 75 dengue patients are currently under treatment, 40 of whom are from outside Dhaka.

Meanwhile, 374 dengue patients were released from hospitals.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Seeing that there's traffic up ahead, a rickshaw-puller gets on the footpath, hampering the safety of pedestrians. Often times, bikers do the same due to a lack of monitoring by the authorities concerned. This photo was taken on Dhanmondi-2 yesterday.

Fake visa syndicate

FROM PAGE 3
for the Maldives and on page 20 for Malaysia were fake. Similarly, another applicant Mahabubur went to the embassy for a visa interview on November 3 last year and admitted to officials that the stamps on page 9 for Cambodia and on page 11 for the Maldives were fake.
On September 18, 2022, applicant Md Milon, 40, went to the embassy for a visa appointment and admitted to the officials that the stamps on page 20 and page 22 were fake seals of the Maldives visa, reads the FIR.
Junaed Alam Sharker, DB's additional deputy commissioner, told The Daily Star that they first arrested Palash and Mahabubur for obtaining the fake visas.
During primary interrogation, Palash admitted to taking

assistance from Happy Holidays Agency and Mahabubur admitted to taking assistance from Travelers Diary Agency to get US visas, said Junaed.
As a part of the initial payment for the application, the duo paid the agency around Tk 1 lakh. The deal was to pay the full amount upon receiving the visas from the embassy, said Junaed.
“The agency owners and their associates admitted during the interrogation that they are involved in such illegal activities for the last two to three years,” he said.
Junaed also said they are now investigating to know details of the other members of the syndicate.
Detectives advised US visa seekers to provide authentic information in the application as false travel history does not assure one of acquiring visas.

Publish gazette

FROM PAGE 3
the progress report on the implementation of the order by yesterday.
Tarique and Zubaida have been in London since 2008.
On September 26, 2007, the anti-graft body filed the case with Kafrul Police Station against Tarique, his wife Zubaida and her mother Syeda Iqbal Mand Banu for amassing assets worth Tk 4.82 crore through illegal means and concealing the information of Tk 2.16 crore in their

wealth statements. The investigation officer of the case pressed charges against the three with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, on March 31, 2009.
However, the trial proceedings against Iqbal Mand Banu were rescinded.
Earlier, Tarique was sentenced to life in jail in the August 21 grenade attack cases.
He was also sentenced to different terms in two other cases, including the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

Selling govt land

FROM PAGE 5
on the purchased khas land, while others had either erected houses or are running small businesses in makeshift tin-shed shops on the illegal plots.
Sohrab Sardar, one of the locals, said during the dry season, Quddus cuts soil from the bank of the canal to make illegal plots and sell those to others.
Local union parishad chairman Mainul Hossain Sikder said Quddus has lured many innocent people with illegal plots and made a huge amount of money.
They have already informed the upazila

administration about his misdeeds, he said.
Earlier, Jotsnya Begum, a homemaker, filed a case with a Patuakhali court against Quddus when the latter forcibly tried to grab her land a year ago.
Contacted, Quddus said as a landless person, he was allotted one and a half acres of khas land in the 2006-07 fiscal. He denied the allegations against him.
Galachipa UNO Mohiuddin said Quddus had been illegally occupying and selling the khas land. They are preparing to take legal action against him soon.



Multifabs Limited signed a collaboration partnership with The Daily Star. The company's director, Salman Faruqi, and The Daily Star Head of Marketing Imran Kadir signed the agreement on behalf of the respective parties. The photo was taken at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

From hope to horror

FROM PAGE 3
“Hijrat” is an Arabic word, derived from “hijr”, which means “to depart”.
In his statement, Ziaul said after being instructed, he left with Tk 4 lakh, a backpack and some necessary clothes and his smartphone. But Tamal seized Tk 3 lakh and the phone from him, due to “security reasons”. Ziaul then received a feature phone, which had only one number in the contact list.
After getting down from a bus at Bandarban around 6:00am the next day, he called the number as per instruction, and two men arrived. Around 4:00am the next day, After several hours of riding on motorbikes and walking through forests, canyons and mountains for 12 hours, Ziaul reached the camp, he added.
After another eight-hour walk, he met three people, one of whom Ziaul later found out was Shamin Mahfuz alias Sir, chief of the militant outfit. The three then took the feature phone away from Ziaul.
Ziaul said there they found two batches – the older one had 12 members, while the new one 30. The monthlong commando

training for the old batch started the day he reached the camp. The training included running and physical exercise.
He was told that the training is necessary for defence, as various insurgent groups in the mountain area may attack them.
“Our training started 15 to 20 days after the senior group finished training. I trained for a few days in February last year. But soon I got sick, so I could not complete the 45-day course,” Ziaul said.
The training was divided into three parts – the first being physical preparation, then war tactics with firearms, and finally patrolling in the hills with arms.
He said at the end of February, Tamal, which is an alias of the outfit's ameer Anisur Rahman, went to the camp, and Ziaul asked him about the land purchase, but the latter brushed the query aside.
“I realised at this time that they had cheated me. I, however, didn't have any direct conflict with them,” he said in the statement.
Ziaul said he requested the people there to allow

him to leave the camp, but they indirectly let him know that there is no way to leave, he added.
While the young man kept insisting to leave, at one point the militants tied his hands and feet and kept him blindfolded. He was untied after two days, after they were assured that he would not flee. They, however, had their eyes on him.
Ziaul wasn't the only victim. The outfit members tied up and blindfolded six others from Sylhet, as they also wanted to leave, Ziaul said. Three of them are Saiful Islam Tuhin, Sayed and Suman from Sylhet's Osmani Nagar upazila.
During Ziaul's stay there, one member of the outfit, Dr Ahmad alias Zaheer, was shot dead when a separatist group attacked their camp. Ahmed was buried there a day after.
Rab later came to know that Ahmed is actually Zohaer Md Rahman from Noakhali's Sonaimuri.
On the morning of July 14, Ziaul fled the militant camp. After walking through the hills for six hours, he reached an indigenous village. With the help of a local there, he

went to Rowangchhari and then to Bandarban town. Then, he went to a relative's home in Cumilla and finally reached the capital.
Ziaul said initially he didn't contact anyone, including law enforcers, as those in the camp had warned of severe punishment if anyone discloses anything.
ANOTHER YOUTH SPEAKS
Saiful Islam Tuhin of Osmaninagar was arrested on December 22 last year by officials of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime.
After dropping out from a Qawmi madrasa, he took a job as a night guard of a community centre at Osmaninagar's Dayamir area to help his financially-strained family.
The 21-year-old youth was slowly motivated to go on hijrat, to the hills of Bandarban, by one moulana Sayeed. Tuhin was told to stand by the side of Arakan people, he said in a statement given to police.
Tuhin said outfit members had seized their phones, NID cards, birth certificates and passports. Then the militants gave the new recruits fake NIDs.

Savita Bhaban

FROM PAGE 5
The building was inaugurated by Adhyaksha Swami Purnatmanandaji Maharaj, secretary of Matri Mandir and Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama, and Swami Jnanalokananda Maharaj, secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House & Cultural Centre and member of the Board of Trustees Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, were present as special guests.
President of Ramakrishna Mission's managing committee Justice Soumendra Sarker presided over the programme.

and its interpretation. Adhyaksha Swami Jyotirmayanandaji Maharaj, secretary of Matri Mandir and Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama, and Swami Jnanalokananda Maharaj, secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House & Cultural Centre and member of the Board of Trustees Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, were present as special guests.
President of Ramakrishna Mission's managing committee Justice Soumendra Sarker presided over the programme.

135 brick kilns

FROM PAGE 5
Ulipur upazila, said although there are several illegal brick kilns in the area, construction of another brickfield is going in full swing.
The illegal brick kilns are eventually pushing hundreds of farming families of the village towards uncertainty, he added.
Contacted, Kurigram DoE Assistant Director Rezaul Karim, said 90 out

of the 111 brick kilns in the district are operating their business without any valid licence. They have prepared a list of those illegal brick kilns and sent those to the district administration to take legal actions in this regard, he said.
Kurigram DC Saidul Arif said they will conduct mobile court drives against the illegal brick kilns soon. Lalmonirhat DC Mohammad Ullah echoed the same.

Need cultural centres

FROM PAGE 5
the government should put more emphasis on highlighting the importance of culture. However, the amount of funds the Ministry of Cultural Affairs receive is very low compared to the other ministries.
Attending as the chief guest, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said the Nirmul Committee is actively working to combat fundamentalism and militancy. The government is also supporting its efforts, he added.
State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid


said the government has taken several steps to promote cultural activities in the country. The cultural affairs ministry has been allocated a budget of around TK 600 crore for the current year.
Shahriar Kabir, president of the Nirmul Committee, presided over the event, where Shaheedjaya Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, vice-president of the Nirmul Committee, also spoke.
Marking the anniversary, the committee also started their committee wing, named Jagaran Sangskritik Squad.

Saline land now

FROM PAGE 5
Dhaka, but now farmers have to pay about Tk 20,000 for the same due to increased fuel prices, he added.
Abul Bashar of the village said he opted for vegetable farming because it is more profitable than paddy cultivation.
“Instead of any chemical fertilisers or pesticides, we apply natural manure in the field which helps the

plants grow well,” Bashar said.
Taltali Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer Sumon Howladar said around 200 farmers of Saudagarpura village are engaged in producing various seasonal vegetables on about 700 acres of land. The coastal village now produces vegetables worth Tk 5 crore every year, he said.

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স্মারক নং-বঙ্গবন্ধুশেখমুজিবুরবিজ্ঞান/নিয়োগ/২০২৩/২৬-২৯/১০৩ তারিখঃ ১৯/০১/২০২৩

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ-এর কম্পিউটার সায়েন্স এন্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং, ইলেক্ট্রিক্যাল এন্ড ইলেক্ট্রনিক ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং, এ্যাপ্রোডেজ কেমিস্ট্রি এন্ড কেমিক্যাল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং, সিভিল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং, পরিসংখ্যান, রসায়ন, পরিবেশ বিজ্ঞান ও দূর্যোগ ব্যবস্থাপনা, ব্যবস্থাপনা শিক্ষা, একাউন্টিং এন্ড ইনফরমেশন সিস্টেমস, মার্কেটিং, ফিন্যান্স এন্ড ব্যাংকিং, বায়োকেমিস্ট্রি এন্ড মলিকুলার বায়োলজি ও বায়োটেকনোলজি এন্ড জেনেটিক ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগে সহকারী অধ্যাপক/প্রভাসক পদসমূহে শিক্ষা ছুটির বিপরীতে নিয়োগের জন্য বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত ও স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের নিকট থেকে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

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রচনা প্রতিযোগিতা ২০২৩

যশস্বী বিজয়ী
ক বিজয়ী: দক্ষতার পট, দক্ষতার পট ● রচনা ১৫ থেকে ৫০ বছরের মধ্যে যার হাত (৫৩ ডিসেম্বর ২০২২ খ্রি. তারিখ)
ব বিজয়ী: নির্ভরশীল পট, দক্ষতার পট ● রচনা ১৫ থেকে ৫০ বছরের মধ্যে যার হাত (৫৩ ডিসেম্বর ২০২২ খ্রি. তারিখ)

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GD-99

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, RHD
Gopalganj Zone, Gopalganj
Phone/Fax: 0266-81965/026681966
acegopalganj@gmail.com

Memo No. 35.01.3532.016.07.016.09-190 Date: 19-01-2023

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in e-GP System (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Additional Chief Engineer, RHD, Gopalganj Zone, Gopalganj for the procurement of following works:

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Tender Reference No.	Description of work	Tender publication date	Tender last selling & opening date
1.	780803	e-GP/06/GZ/2022-2023 (OSTETM) (WP-01)	Improvement of Ghonapara to Mausoleum of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Including Sheikh Lutful Rahman Bridge Approach) Road at Ch. 41+600 to Ch. 49+064 (2-7704) Portion to appropriate standard and width including construction of 2.0 Nos. New Culvert, 7.0 Nos. Culvert Extension, 4517.00m Retaining Wall, 4.00 Nos. Intersection, 2.0 Nos. Parking Zone, 9.0 Nos. Bus Bay & Ancillary Work under Road Division Gopalganj during the year 2022-2023. (Package No. WP-01)	22-01-2023 14:00	22-02-2023 16:00 & 23-02-2023 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>)

Md. Suruz Mia
ID No. 007001
Additional Chief Engineer (C.C) RHD
Gopalganj Zone, Gopalganj

GD-96

‘Elections will be free, fair’

EC Rasheda on C'nawabganj by-polls
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Election Commissioner Rasheda Sultana yesterday encouraged voters to exercise their franchise at the by-polls in Chapainawabganj 2 and 3 constituencies, promising free and fair elections.

She made the remarks while addressing journalists following a meeting held at the deputy commissioner's office in the presence of the contesting candidates and law enforcers.

The election to the constituencies will be held on February 1.

The EC urged law enforcers to ensure a secured and fair elections, and called upon all the political parties to freely participate in the by-elections, making it a competitive one.

She ordered law enforcement agencies to take necessary steps in this regard.

France eyes closer ties with Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

France wants to enhance cooperation with Bangladesh and plans to have "ever-closer" ties with countries of the Indo Pacific, to address major challenges in terms of climate change and security, said a visiting senior French official.

"It gives us a golden opportunity to review the common works we pursue together, and decide new projects and initiatives across the board," Bertrand Lortholary, director for Asian Affairs (General Political Directorate) at the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs told reporters yesterday.

France and Bangladesh share the same vision for a "free, open, peaceful, secure and inclusive" Indo-Pacific region, based on international law, with shared prosperity for all.

Responding to a question, Lortholary said there is a lot the two countries can do, and military-to-military cooperation is part of that defence and security collaboration.

Earlier, the French official had a political consultation with the Bangladesh side led by Director General (West Europe and EU) Kazi Russel Pervez and discussed issues of mutual interest.

TIB to get Tk 4.25cr from Netherlands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) will receive Tk 4.25 crore from the Netherlands for a project aimed to support the social movement against corruption.

The grant agreement was signed by Dutch Ambassador to Bangladesh Anne Van Leeuwen and Executive Director of TIB Dr Iftekharuzzaman at the Embassy of Netherlands in Dhaka.

Under the grant, TIB will implement a 5 year project -- Participatory Action Against Corruption: Towards Transparency and Accountability (PACTA) -- which has been ongoing since January 2022, said a press release.

The PACTA project aims to contribute to promoting better governance and curbing corruption towards a more inclusive, equitable, and non-discriminatory society consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



This illegal brick kiln, built on agricultural land at Jirampur village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, has been running its operation for a couple of years now.

PHOTO: STAR

Saline land now a green landscape

Coastal village in Barguna yearly produces vegetables worth Tk 5 crore

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Farmers of a remote coastal village in Barguna's Taltali upazila have not only become solvent by producing seasonal vegetables but also turned the salty land into a green landscape.

For the last couple of years, vegetable cultivation seems to be more profitable than growing paddy for the farmers of Saudagarpara village, about five-kilometre from the upazila headquarters, due to high soil salinity.

However, switching to another crop was never easy for local paddy farmers, thanks to Shahadat Matubbar for his leading role in producing different vegetables around the year.

Shahadat used to run a readymade garment shop in Taltali town. In 2015, he went to Dhaka with a huge sum of money to purchase some goods for his shop, but unfortunately, he was robbed on the way and returned home empty-handed.

After that incident, he could not continue the business due to the financial crisis and soon became homeless.

The idea of vegetable farming came to Shahadat's mind after watching a programme on a private television channel.

Inspired by the idea, he started cultivating different seasonal



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer and his family members are putting beans in a sack. The photo was taken from Saudagarpara in Barguna's Taltoli upazila recently.

vegetables on a small scale, by raising his low paddy land.

Now Shahadat produces various vegetables that include gourd, pumpkin, beans, eggplants, green pepper and watermelon all year round.

Seeing his success, many farmers of the locality raised their lowlands and started cultivating seasonal vegetables.

Apart from paddy cultivation, more than 200 farmers of the village are now engaged in producing various types of vegetables around the year.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent saw field after field covered with winter vegetables.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Need cultural centres to counter extremism

Say speakers at event marking 31st anniv of Nirmul Committee
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should put more effort in developing and promoting cultural activities in the country. Not only should it allocate more budget in this regard, but also take steps to set up district-based model cultural centres, which will help combat fundamentalism and militancy in the country, said speakers at an event yesterday.

They were speaking at a programme marking the 31st founding anniversary of Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee at the Capital's Bangla Academy.

Freedom fighters, educationists, historians and cultural activists participated in the event, among others.

Prof Muntassir Mamoon, president of 1971-Genocide-Torture Archive and Museum Trust, said, "The government should construct model cultural centres in 64 districts to counter extremist ideologies."

Ramendu Majumdar, president of International Theatre Institute, said

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

LALMONIRHAT, KURIGRAM

135 brick kilns operating illegally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

There are 135 brick kilns operating illegally in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram, posing serious threats to public health as well as the environment.

According to Department of Environment (DoE), there are at least 174 brick kilns in the two districts.

Of those, only 16 out of 63 in Lalmonirhat, and 21 out of 111 brick kilns in Kurigram have clearance certificates from the DoE.

The rest of the 135 brickfields, mostly built on agricultural land and close to human habitat, are operating illegally without a licence.

Local people alleged many illegal brick kilns, built on agricultural land, have been running their business for years but the local administration seems quite reluctant to take any legal action.

Many farmers in the two districts said they are not getting the expected crop production from their lands as most of the brick kilns are built either in the middle or close to croplands.

Moreover, despite submitting written complaints to local administration and DoE, they are yet to get any remedy for their losses, farmers said.

Farmer Nityananda Barman of Ghanoshyam village in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila said he is not getting the desired production from his fruit trees due to the brickfield's impact, built on agricultural land, close to his house.

The toxic smoke emitting from the brick kiln is also polluting the environment of the village, he said.

Badiar Rahman, a resident of Hamirbazar in Kurigram's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

TURAG, KERANIGANJ

Work to reframe DPPs continues

State minister for housing and public works tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajuk is continuing its work to reframe development project proposals (DPPs) to develop two townships in Turag and Keraniganj as part of reducing the growing pressure of population in Dhaka, said State Minister for Housing and Public Works Sharif Ahmed.

He made the remarks in parliament yesterday while replying to a tabled question from Awami League MP Mohammad Habib Hasan from Dhaka-18.

In the scripted answer, Sharif Ahmed said the initiatives were taken for two projects, titled "Conservation of Flood Flow Zone of Turag River and Compact Township Development Project" and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

Savita Bhaban inaugurated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"I feel incredibly fortunate to have fulfilled my late wife's dream."

These were the words of industrialist Subal Chandra Saha during the inauguration of Savita Bhaban in Ramakrishna Mission, named after his late wife Savita Rani Saha, who was a devotee of the mission.

The building was inaugurated in its newly built auditorium yesterday. The expenses of the building have been financed by Subal himself.

Savita Bhaban is a multipurpose building with an auditorium, a library and a publishing and information centre.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Selling govt land as plots

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A local influential has been selling government land by dividing it into plots along Kharijama canal in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila.

Nizamul Haque alias Quddus Shikder has been involved in this illegal business for the last couple of years.

The matter came to light when Galachipa Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohiuddin Al Helal raided the area in the middle of December last year and stopped the labourers working for Quddus while they were cutting soil from the bank of the canal to make a new plot.

Quddus, who was present on the spot during the drive, somehow managed to flee.

Locals alleged that Quddus sold many plots verbally and also handed over possession of several plots to several buyers.

They said Kharijama canal had been gradually filled up due to loss of navigability, creating vast khas land along the canal.

Afterwards, Quddus gradually grabbed parts of the khas land and sold the plots to many in the area.

With over 300 makeshift shops and dwelling houses, Kharijama Bazar has now turned into a commercial hub, where a weekly market is held every Friday.

Like many others, grocer Saidul Islam bought purchased a plot, measuring four decimals, from Quddus for Tk 20,000 about three years ago.

Quddus also sold several other plots to Babul Chowdhury, Zafar Howladar, and Suman Shikdar.

Of the buyers, Babul has built a one-storey building

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



A local influential has continued selling government property by dividing khas land into plots in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

“Who gave Hansal Mehta the right to make ‘Faraaz’?”

Abinta Kabir’s mother retorts to Holey Artisan film

“

Can you imagine the pain of witnessing your daughter’s last moments on the big-screen?

Ruba Ahmed, Abinta Kabir’s mother



The poster for ‘Faraaz’.

TRAILER OUT TODAY

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

“I have lost my only daughter in the most gruesome way possible. When I met with Hansal Mehta and asked him what gave him the right to make the movie, he told me that he wanted to tell the people of Bangladesh why this kind of tragedy should be avoided. Who gave him the right to judge? Is he Bangladeshi? How come an outsider gets to make a business out of a movie that ruins the image of our country?” said Ruba Ahmed, mother of Abinta Kabir, who was killed by militants in the Holey Artisan Attack on July 1, 2016.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Yesterday, a press conference was held by the Abinta Kabir foundation, on the release of the Indian film *Faraaz*. 20 people, including Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain, Abinta Kabir, Tarishi Jain and Ishrat Akhond, among others, lost their lives in the incident.

Two movies were made on it, including Bangladeshi filmmaker Mostofa Sarwar Farooki’s *Shonibar Bikel*, and Hansal Mehta’s Hindi film *Faraaz*. While Farooki’s project has been in limbo at the censor board for years, its Indian counterpart is set for release on February 3.

Recently, the trailer of the movie was released which received mixed responses from Bangladeshi audiences. People questioned the filmmaker for capitalising on a country’s personal tragedy, and making it in Hindi, which is not their native language.

The *Scam 1992* director was faced with severe criticism over the movie, but he defended the movie stating that it will “shine light on the immense courage and talk about the importance of humanity over violence.”

When the poster of the *Faraaz* was released last year, both Abinta and Tarishi’s family sent a legal notice to the Delhi High Court. However, the court dismissed it, stating that falls under public domain.

“I don’t understand the point of dragging a tragic incident from 2016, and making a movie about it. In the past 6 years, India has experienced many tragedies. Can’t they make a movie about them? We first got to know from sources back in 2019, that Mahesh Bhatt wanted to make a movie about the incident and that he might have come during that time to research the film,” said Ruba.

“However, he didn’t contact me. We sent him a letter to him, and he replied that he respects my decision, and won’t proceed with it. And then, suddenly in August, we got to see the poster for *Faraaz*, which greatly hurt us,” she said, visibly in anguish. “We were able to restrict the film for about 6 months, but then due to India’s ‘public domain’ clause, we couldn’t stop it. However, I have appealed to the Delhi High Court decision, and I will even go to Supreme Court. I will fight to ensure that the film doesn’t get to come to Bangladesh.”

“They changed Abinta’s name to Ayesha, Tarishi’s name to Tari, and my name to Rabeya. They have even used Tarishi’s father as well, but I can’t seem to remember his character’s name. They showed a riot scene where my daughter’s picture was also visible. Who gave them the right to invade our privacy,” she said.

While Ruba Ahmed reflected a lot

of anger towards the Bollywood film, she remained fairly tightlipped about Farooki’s *Shonibar Bikel*.

“I actually got to know about Farooki’s *Shonibar Bikel* while I was researching about the Hindi film. I have also sent a legal notice to Farooki, to which he sent me a reply. The movie is currently stuck at the censor board and so now it’s completely upon the Bangladeshi government as to what they want to do with the film,” said Ruba Ahmed.

The Abinta Kabir Foundation head pleadingly told the media that although she can’t stop the release of the film, she will request everyone to not allow the movie to come to OTT.

“Can you imagine the pain of witnessing your daughter’s last moment on big-screen. This movie should not come in OTT for the sake of our country and for my child. Please don’t let this movie come to Bangladesh. This type of personal tragedy should not be screened on Netflix or Amazon.”

Recently, Bangladeshi journalist Nuruzzaman Labu claimed that *Faraaz* has been adapted from his book *Holey Artisan: A Journalistic Investigation*, which was published in 2017.

When asked about the authenticity of the book, Ruba Ahmed was shocked, as she didn’t even hear of it.

“Was he there during the actual attack, did he witness the killings? In order to write an account of a tragic attack, you need to ask questions to the victim’s family. He didn’t contact me. When I asked Ishrat’s brother whether he was contacted by anyone regarding the incident, he said no as well,” said an enraged Ruba Ahmed. “I have even sent letters to the Italian Embassy, Japanese Embassy, and even Bangladeshi Embassy in India, but nobody came to them to ask about the actual facts. Then, how can people make a movie with no actual authentic facts?”

NEWS

Govt organs can’t interfere

FROM PAGE 12

In the verdict, the top court scrapped the tribunal judgement that on April 12, 2010, directed the EC to reinstate 85 upazila election officers who were appointed during the tenure of the then alliance government led by BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

The EC had terminated them during the regime of the military-backed caretaker government on the grounds that they were appointed on political consideration and they could not pass the suitability test.

In the full text of the verdict, the SC said, “The respondents [85 terminated upazila election officials] could not

bring any materials on record from which it could be manifested that there was no allegation of misconduct against them, and an inquiry was held behind their back in pursuant to which they had been terminated from service during the probation period.

“Therefore, we are of the view that the Election Commission Secretariat was in right stand to arrange for a suitability test during the probation period of the respondents and on being unsuccessful in the suitability test the respondents had been terminated from service which we hold to termination simpliciter not stigmatic,” the apex court said.

APBn not harassing

FROM PAGE 12

reports after visiting and collecting more information,” he said.

On January 17, the HRW, in its report, alleged the APBn was committing extortion, arbitrary arrests, and harassment of Rohingya refugees with impunity.

The rights watchdog based its statements on interviews with over 40 Rohingya refugees, including 10 alleged victims who said they were

detained on apparently fabricated grounds of trafficking yaba.

Talking to reporters, the home boss said the Rohingyas have turned out to be a major headache for the country.

“Staying in the camps, they are involved in yaba dealing. They are involved in gunfights and killings... They brutally killed a DGFI official. There was a gunfight between two Rohingya groups even yesterday [Wednesday],” he said.

Humanity was all

FROM PAGE 1

Similarly, surgeons transplanted Sara’s eyes into Suzon, 30, and Ferdous Akter, 56, at the BSMMU and Sandhani Eye Hospital. One of them had acquired blindness while another had blindness since birth.

All the recipients are doing well, according to physicians.

Prof Habibur Rahman Dulal, a renal transplantation surgeon at the urology department at BSMMU, headed the kidney transplantation team at the BSMMU.

Speaking at the press conference, Habibur highlighted the misconception about cadaveric organ transplantation in the country.

“If cadaveric transplantation can be done on a big scale, thousands of lives can be saved. But we have a religious misconception which should be addressed,” he said.

Kidney transplantation from living donors began in the country in 1982. But taking a kidney from a clinically dead patient was legally restricted.

In 2018, the organ donation law was amended allowing collection of

organs from the clinically dead with consent from relatives.

Calling for normalising cadaveric organ donation, Prof Dr Harun Ur Rashid, chief consultant in nephrology at the National Kidney Foundation, said, “This is a very good start to the cadaveric kidney transplantation.”

He said that around 2,000-2,500 kidneys can be collected from around 5,000 deceased who die in road crashes each year. “If we can do this, we would be able to transplant 1-2 kidneys daily.”

He also praised the sacrifice of Sara and her family.

Speaking at the occasion, Sara’s mother Shobnom Sultana, a schoolteacher in the capital, said her daughter was a divine child to her and everyone closest.

“Sara wished that I would donate her organs for research... She believed in humanity,” Shobnom said.

Sara’s first namaz-e-janaza was held on the BSMMU mosque premises yesterday morning while the second one was held at Taqwa Mosque in Azimpur.

She was laid to eternal rest in the Azimpur graveyard.

Why can’t govt

FROM PAGE 12

vote is a fundamental aspect of the constitution; prohibiting government employees from voting in the parliamentary election right after retirement or resignation violates both the basic principles and the right to equality guaranteed by Article 27 of the Constitution.

A government official or a member of the armed forces becomes a regular citizen after leaving the service and preventing them from running for national elections through the RPO’s Section 12(I)(f) contradicts Article 27 of the Constitution, he said.

He went on to say that the right to vote and participate in elections to be elected as a representative of the people is at the core of the democratic process, as Article 11 of the Constitution guarantees people’s participation in administration at all levels through their elected representatives.

Don’t enrol students

FROM PAGE 12

University, City University, The Millennium University, and Bangladesh University.

The notification also mentioned that the six universities could not admit new students if they fail to move to their permanent campuses by April 1.

Six more universities were given until June 30 for their relocation to permanent campuses. The UGC made the decision as the universities made visible progress in building their permanent campuses and also made written commitments on relocation.

They are Brac University, the University of Development Alternative, Green University, Uttara University, Presidency University, and The People’s University of Bangladesh.

The universities will face similar restrictions if they cannot move to their permanent campuses by July 1.

Earlier, the UGC decided that private universities who would fail to shift to permanent campuses by December 2022 would not be allowed to enrol students from January 2023.

Torture marks found on Gazipur trader’s

FROM PAGE 12

phone number was written there, but it was switched off yesterday.

Police said Rabiul was hit by a truck on a road in Bhogra area.

Meanwhile, this correspondent talked to at least 10 people in Bhogra area about the accident but all of them said they did not hear anything.

“Normally, we pass most of our time on roads in this area. We did not get any news of such an accident on Tuesday night,” said Sajib, a rickshaw-van puller.

“Pedestrians are usually the first responders to accidents in most cases. In our area, such news passes

from one to another swiftly. However, we did not hear anything of this sort,” said a shopkeeper.

Several shop owners too echoed him.

Our correspondent in Rangpur reported that the entire Shahdatpur village in the district’s Pirganj upazila was engulfed by shock and sadness as Rabiul’s body reached yesterday morning.

The body was buried around 10:30am amid tight security. Many villagers gathered there to see Rabiul for the last time.

The correspondent tried to talk to several members of the victim’s

family over the phone. But none agreed to talk to the media.

“Now, we cannot talk over this issue,” said Rabiul’s cousin Sawapan over the phone.

At least 12 people, including two cops, were injured as a mob clashed with police in Gazipur city’s Bhogra bypass area on Wednesday over the death.

The mob vandalised at least 20 vehicles, torched two motorbikes, and blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh and Joydevpur-Jamalpur highways for about one and a half hours.

[Our Dinajpur correspondent contributed to this report.]

DB arrests four senior bankers

FROM PAGE 2

S Alam Group is well-represented on the board of Social Islami Bank.

They were arrested from different areas in the capital on Wednesday, said Harun-or-Rashid, the chief of the Detective Branch, at a press briefing yesterday.

The arrestees have been spreading false information about Islami Bank.

“Islami Bank is a reputed bank. Few individuals have been attempting to destabilise the country’s financial sector by spreading false information about banks and financial institutions through social media and other means,” he added.

The arrestees are associated with Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir, according to DMP’s news portal dmpnews.org.

Earlier on January 8, DB arrested five people, including a 70-year-old businessman and two minors, in connection with the case.

They are businessmen Mohammad Nur Un Nabi, Afsar Uddin Roman and Abu Sayeed Saju. The two minors are aged between 17 and 15.

Abdul Kuddus, a deputy manager of S Alam group, filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on January 5 under the Digital Security Act.

In the case, Kuddus accused Nabi and Golam Sarowar Mia, and Mazharul Islam alias Rasel, Saju and Roman had not been mentioned.

Police arrested Rasel on December 27 in another DSA case filed by an S Alam Group official with Double Mooring Police Station in Chattogram. Nabi and Mia were

accused in this case too.

Kuddus said he found posters demeaning S Alam Group on walls and pillars behind Nafi Tower in Gulshan-1 and its adjacent areas on December 22, according to the case statement.

Founded in 1985 by Muhammad Saiful Alam Masud Chowdhury, S Alam Group is one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh.

It has been in the news recently for its alleged borrowing of over Tk 30,000 crore from Islami Bank, where it has 26.73 percent stakes. The amount was way beyond the group’s entitled quota, prompting the High Court to order an investigation.

Nazi gold sparks

FROM PAGE 12

gold coins, believed to be worth 11 million euros (\$11.9 million) at current value.

“That means that all kinds of people have come to Ommeren to search for it,” says Tammes, 74, the former local mayor, inside his home built on the remains of a former Nazi headquarters.

“But it hasn’t been found.”

The Nazis allegedly looted the treasure after the bombing of a bank in Arnhem in 1944, but are then believed to have buried it after the Allied “Market Garden” offensive near the town.

A few steps from his home there are muddy holes from the excavations, along a tree-lined path and a shallow ditch consistent with the drawings on the map.

Rapid scale-up

FROM PAGE 12

also limit potential.

“If warming continues – and all signs say it will – then it will be even harder to maintain current levels of conventional CDR because they will be affected by droughts, storms, pests and other impacts,” said co-author Oliver Geden, a senior fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs and an IPCC lead author.

That means novel CDR methods have to pick up the slack.

To keep warming under 2C, deployment of these nascent technologies must be ramped up 30-fold by 2030, and by more than 1,000-fold by 2100, according to the report, led by the University of Oxford.

2 more arrested

FROM PAGE 2

His skeletal remains were recovered while the office space was being demolished to construct a new building.

Later, the landowners and locals informed the police.

On March 29, 2016, around 8:00pm, Rajeev called his father and told him that he was coming home to Khulna. Half an hour later, his phone was found switched off.

A few days later, his mother, Mabia Begum, came to Jashore in search of her son and filed a general diary with the local police.

Rajeev’s father, Farooq Hossain and his brother, Hasmat, later filed a general diary with PBI’s Jashore office.

India FM in 2-day Sri Lanka visit

REUTERS, Colombo

India's foreign minister arrives in Colombo yesterday following his country's backing of Sri Lanka for a \$2.9 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan.

India has told global lender IMF that it strongly supports Sri Lanka's debt restructuring plan, with Colombo owing around \$1 billion to its nearest neighbour.

But Sri Lanka requires the backing of both China and India - its biggest bilateral lenders - to reach a final agreement with the IMF on the loan that is essential to help the country of nearly 22 million people emerge from its worst financial crisis in seven decades.

During his two-day visit, his third to Sri Lanka since 2021, minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar will look to strengthen India's ties with its debt-ridden neighbour and sign several key deals.



Women of the Miao ethnic minority prepare decorations ahead of the Lunar New Year of the Rabbit in Danzhai county, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, in China's southwestern Guizhou province, yesterday. The number of Covid patients needing critical care in China's hospitals has peaked, health authorities said yesterday, as millions travelled across the country for long-awaited reunions with families, raising fears of fresh outbreaks.

PHOTO: AFP

EU mulling terror label on Iran Guards

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday condemned a European Parliament call to blacklist the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist group, which would pave the way for sanctions against the powerful military force. Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian "strongly criticised the emotional approach of the European Parliament and labelled the move inappropriate and incorrect". The parliament had Wednesday urged "the EU and its member states to include the IRGC on the EU's terrorist list in the light of its terrorist activity, the repression of protesters and its supplying of drones to Russia."

Two killed in WB

AFP, Jenin

Two Palestinians were killed by gunfire early yesterday during an Israeli army raid in the flashpoint West Bank city of Jenin, the Palestinian health ministry said. The ministry said Jawad Farid Bawaqna was killed by a bullet to the chest, while Adham Mohammed Bassem Jabareen, 28, was hit in the upper abdomen by Israeli fire. The Israeli army said that during "counterterrorism activity in the Jenin (refugee) camp, armed Palestinian gunmen fired heavily at the security forces, who responded with live fire. Hits were identified". At least 17 Palestinians have been killed in the occupied West Bank this month, according to an AFP tally.

Spanish woman tipped to be 'world's oldest person' at 115

AFP, Barcelona



A Spanish great-grandmother who was born in the United States has likely become the world's oldest living person at 115, a Guinness World Records consultant said Wednesday. Maria Branyas Morera is believed to have assumed the title following the death on Tuesday of French nun

Lucile Randon aged 118. Guinness World Records must still make the official decision after carrying out document checks. Branyas Morera, who has lived through the 1918 flu, two world wars and Spain's civil war, was not available for interviews.



New Zealand PM Ardern to resign

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, a global figurehead of progressive politics, shocked the country yesterday by announcing she would resign from office.

The 42-year-old -- who steered the country through natural disasters, the Covid pandemic, and its worst-ever terror attack -- said she no longer had "enough in the tank".

"I am human. We give as much as we can for as long as we can and then it's time. And for me, it's time," she said at a meeting of members of her Labour Party.

Ardern said she would step down no later than February 7, less than three years after winning a landslide election to secure her second term in office.

Since that 2020 peak of "Jacindamania", Ardern's government has struggled -- its popularity hampered by soaring inflation, a looming recession and a resurgent conservative opposition.

New Zealand will choose its next prime minister in a general election held on October 14, Ardern announced.

Davos elite 'fuelling destruction of planet'

Says Greta Thunberg as business and political leaders attend the World Economic Forum

DAVOS, Switzerland

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg slammed business and political leaders attending the World Economic Forum in Davos yesterday, saying it was "absurd" to listen to them while they fuelled "the destruction of the planet".

Two days after police briefly detained her at a protest against a coal mine in Germany, Thunberg and other young campaigners took part in a debate on the sidelines of the summit of global investors, CEOs and political leaders in the Swiss Alps.

"We are right now in Davos where (there are) basically the people who are mostly fuelling the destruction of the planet," the 20-year-old said, explaining that the world should not rely on them "for solving our problems".

She added that it was "absurd ... we seem to be listening to them rather than the people who are actually affected by the climate crisis".

"Without massive public pressure from the outside, these people are going to go as far as they possibly can... They will continue to throw people under the bus for their own gain," she said.

The Swede spoke on the sidelines of the WEF with fellow activists Helena Gualinga of Ecuador, Vanessa Nakate of Uganda and Luisa Neubauer of Germany at a CNBC panel that included International Energy Agency head Fatih Birol.

The Swede made a splash when she attended the forum as a teenager in January 2020, warning that "our house is still on fire" and complaining that her demands had been "completely ignored".

Then-US president Donald Trump used his speech at the same forum to bash "the perennial

prophets of doom" as Thunberg looked on stony-faced from the audience.

This week, she and Gualinga, Nakate and Neubauer launched an online petition demanding that energy firms stop any new oil, gas or coal extraction projects -- or face possible legal action.

More than 900,000 people had signed the petition by yesterday.

"It's completely insane that we are allowing this and we have people here in Davos that are enabling that, through government, through investing in fossil fuel and at some point there needs to be a stop. This is criminal behaviour," she said.

The IEA said in a report that the energy crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine was causing changes that could hasten the transition to a "more sustainable and secure energy system".

Climate change is a major topic at the World Economic Forum, where businesses and governments have come under pressure to do more to ensure that the world meets the increasingly elusive goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

In a speech on Wednesday, UN chief Antonio Guterres drew a parallel between the actions of oil companies and those of tobacco firms, which were eventually hit by costly lawsuits over the harmful effects of cigarettes.

Guterres pointed to a study published in the journal Science last week that said ExxonMobil had dismissed the findings of its own scientists, who had accurately predicted global warming due to fossil fuels as far back as the late 1970s.

"Some in Big Oil peddled the big lie," he said. "And like the tobacco industry, those responsible must be held to account."



Demonstrators march with banners and flares during a rally called by French trade unions in Nantes, western France yesterday, as workers go on strike over the French President's plan to raise the legal retirement age from 62 to 64.

PHOTO: AFP

The defeat of a nuclear power in a conventional war may trigger a nuclear war. Nuclear powers have never lost major conflicts on which their fate depends.

Former Russian president
Dmitry Medvedev

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department

Office of the Upazila Engineer

Sadar, Noakhali

www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.7587.000.07.002.22.49

Invitation for Tender (Works)

e-Tender Notice No. 02/2022-2023 (LTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works, details are given below.

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of work	Tender last selling (date & time)	Tender closing (date & time)	Tender opening (date & time)	Tender ID No.
01	ADP/NKL/ SAD/2022- 23/W-01	1. Construction of Post palisading Wall on Purbo Newazpur Monir Uddin Bari Graveyard side Under Newazpur Union, 2. Improvement of Hasan Ali Road - Faruq Driver Bari Near Zabaly Nur Jame Mosque Road by Brick Flat Soling Under Newazpur Union, 3. Improvement of Azizul Huj Bari Front- Subur Bari Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Purbo Charmatus Union, 4. Construction of Post palisading Wall on South Jogalthpur-Udaysadurhat Road side Under Purbo Charmatus Union, 5. Construction of 1 No. Drainage (U Drain) Culvert at Char Bancharan - Abudogri GPS Road Under Purbo Charmatus Union Sadar Noakhali.	06-02-23 12:00	06-02-23 14:00	06-02-23 14:00	780502
02	ADP/NKL/ SAD/2022- 23/W-02	1. Improvement of Badarpur Rajob Ali Munshi Bari Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Astwadia Union, 2. Improvement of Badarpur Basu Member Bari Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Astwadia Union, 3. Improvement of Uttar Lakshampur Mukter Khan Pandeth Bari Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Binodpur Union, 4. Construction of Post palisading Wall on South Lakshampur Bagari Bari Mosjed Pond side Under Binodpur Union, 5. Improvement of Seraz Uddinpur Sohed Muktejjudha Khorshed Alamer Bari Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) & Construction of Post palisading Wall on Same Road side Under Kadirhanif Union, 6. Improvement of 1 No. Ward Mazi Bari Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Kadirhanif Union, 7. Construction of Post palisading Wall on Purbo Razarampur Dapder Bari Pond side Under Kadirhanif Union, Sadar, Noakhali.	06-02-23 12:00	06-02-23 14:00	06-02-23 14:00	780503
03	ADP/NKL/ SAD/2022- 23/W-03	1. Improvement of Hakimpur Sarbojonin Sotho Narayan Monder Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Dadpur Union, 2. Improvement of Goripur Hugel Kali Monder Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Dadpur Union, 3. Improvement of Sibpur Salehpur Azizia Muslem Etemkhana Road by Cement Concrete (CC) Under Noanail Union, 4. Construction of Post palisading Wall on Santenhal High School Near Road side at Underchar Union, 5. Construction of Post palisading Wall on West Majchara Chowkidhat - South Khalpar Road at Underchar Union, 6. Construction of Galla at Islamia Saidia Madrasa Pond at Underchar Union, Sadar, Noakhali.	06-02-23 12:00	06-02-23 14:00	06-02-23 14:00	780505
04	ADP/NKL/ SAD/2022- 23/W-04	1. Construction of 1 No. Drainage (U Drain) Culvert at Major Monnan High School-Bhuyan Kandi Road Near of Kalu Mazir Bari Under Ewazabalia Union, 2. Construction of Post palisading Wall on Hazri Pozar Ali Painjegana Zame Mosjed Pond side Under Ewazabalia Union, 3. Improvement of Purbo Ewazabalia Primary School Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Ewazabalia Union, 4. Improvement of Muktejjudha Abul Hasem Bari Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Kaladarap Union, 5. Construction of Public Toilet at Nuru Patawary Bazar Under Kaladarap Union, 6. Construction of Public Toilet at Noyar Hat Under Kaladarap Union, Sadar, Noakhali.	06-02-23 12:00	06-02-23 14:00	06-02-23 14:00	780506
05	ADP/NKL/ SAD/2022- 23/W-05	1. Improvement of Overampur Muktejjudha Samsul Kabir Chowdhury Ledu Mia Road by Cement Concrete (CC) at 3 No. Ward Under Charmatus Union, 2. Construction of Galla at Dharmapur Bangla Bazar Pond Under Dharmapur Union, 3. Improvement of Ismail Mia Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Dharmapur Union, 4. Improvement of Murtuja Huzurer Bari Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Dharmapur Union, 5. Improvement of Purbo Sullakia Jhangir Khalila Road by Brick Flat Soling (BFS) Under Dharmapur Union, 6. Construction of Galla at Purbo Sullakia Adarsha Somaz Mosque Pond Under Dharmapur Union, Sadar, Noakhali.	06-02-23 12:00	06-02-23 14:00	06-02-23 14:00	780507

This is an online 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. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 12.00pm on 06-Feb-2023. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) or egp@lged.gov.bd.

Abul Mansur Ahmed
Upazila Engineer, Sadar, Noakhali
Phone No. 02334433734
u.noakhali-s@lged.gov.bd

GD-97

Textbook errors belie bigger concerns

NCTB must be held accountable for the never-ending cycle of controversies

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is no stranger to controversy. Year after year, it has allowed mistakes and compromises in the textbooks it printed. The problem seems to extend beyond the structural to the ideological. As a government body, it is vulnerable to the same structural issues – inefficiency, mismanagement and irregularities – that other government bodies are, frequently resulting in error-laden books. But often it has also been a pawn in a bigger game where political biases or demands from far-right groups led to undue additions or omissions. And the fact that there is no real accountability for any mistake or compromise makes this a self-repeating cycle.

Against this backdrop, the recent controversy over NCTB textbooks comes as no surprise. The NCTB has introduced new textbooks under the new curriculum for classes I, VI and VII this year, with the aim to prepare students for the contemporary world. But far from being a joyous occasion, it has turned into a sombre one with errors of all kinds, poor translation, and even plagiarism detected in the books. As an analysis by this newspaper shows, there are many mistakes in the English book for class VI. Similarly, plagiarism was detected in the science textbook for class VII. As an analysis by another daily shows, contents from the website of the National Geographic were translated verbatim, using Google Translate, and without citing the source. Mistakes were also found in three textbooks for the ninth and tenth grades. For example, in lessons on history, well-known facts related to the formative days of Bangladesh were incorrectly presented.

Although the NCTB has issued some corrections in three of the books – and two editorial board members responsible for the 7th-grade science book have acknowledged the occurrence of plagiarism – it was only after those were pointed out by the media, not as a result of any institutional review process. One wonders how many more blunders are there hidden in the textbooks. The air of inevitability around such blunders occurring, or repeating, is impossible to ignore.

Are authentic, error-free textbooks too much to expect? Why is the NCTB so slow or reluctant to address concerns over the quality and authenticity of textbooks? One may recall that, in 2017, writings of famous authors were excluded because they were either non-Muslim or their contents were disapproved by Islamist forces, allegedly upon instructions from the political authorities. The NCTB is yet to rectify this situation, despite widespread condemnation of its decision. It seems totally unwilling or unable to address the grave moral and material consequences of such omissions, mistakes and compromises, which should worry us all.

The importance of textbooks at the early stage of the school system cannot be stressed enough. The kind of blunders we have witnessed can confuse and even misguide students, and create a crisis of trust in them in the future. We urge the authorities to urgently launch an institutional review of all new and old textbooks to identify errors and cases of quality/ideological compromises. Also, given how NCTB has been operating, it is time for a systemic overhaul of this vital institution.

Rabiul’s ‘death in custody’ unacceptable

Police officers involved must face justice after impartial investigation

It is most unfortunate that death and torture in police custody allegedly continue to occur in the country, despite concerns raised frequently in this regard as well as the existence of a law designed specifically to prevent such incidents. The latest incident – coming off the back of another alleged custodial torture last week – involves Rabiul Islam, a trader in Gazipur. Reportedly, he was picked up by police from his tailoring accessories shop in Pearabagan of Bhogra area in Gazipur town on January 14 on charges of gambling. On January 17, police from Basan Police Station informed his wife that Rabiul died in a road crash while on his way home. We cannot help but ask: what happened during the three days Rabiul was in police custody? Accounts of his wife, brother, relatives and neighbours contradict the police version of events, making it quite likely that he died in police custody.

However, police still appear to be trying to clear their name in the incident. We are told that a probe body has been formed by the Gazipur Metropolitan Police to investigate the incident. We hope it will be able to hold a fair and impartial investigation. However, we would like to raise some questions that must be looked into while carrying out the investigation.

Reportedly, after two assistant sub-inspectors – Mahbubur Rahaman and Nurul Islam – of Basan Police Station arrested Rabiul, they demanded bribes from his wife for his release. As she went to the station with some cash, the police officers in question took it but then demanded more. Reportedly, they even took her signature on a blank paper before letting her know that her husband was released. Then, later at night, they called to inform her about her husband’s death in a road crash.

The question is: Why did the police arrest Rabiul in the first place? Was it to take bribes from him? Why did they take his wife’s signature on a blank paper? Why did they not hand him over directly to his family? Also, why is there no CCTV footage of them handing Rabiul over to his family or even releasing him? Why is there no evidence of any road crash happening in that area during the night of January 17, when police claim he died in the crash? These questions are vital and must be answered by the investigating team.

We want our police force to be accountable to the public for the work they do. And for this, such incidents taking place in police custody must be investigated with fairness. The state must take these incidents more seriously and ensure accountability of those in the police force. We demand a proper investigation into Rabiul’s death, followed by proper legal action to hold anyone responsible accountable.



Today, the Buriganga is nothing more than an oversized drain, with metres of plastic waste making up its bed.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

In ‘Smart Bangladesh,’ how smart is it to kill our rivers?



THE THIRD VIEW

Mahfuz Anam is the editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

MAHFUZ ANAM

Dhaka was made the capital of the Mughal Empire's Bengal province in 1610, on the bank of Buriganga. As we entered the modern era and the city expanded, we realised that, compared to other cities, we were four times as lucky as greater Dhaka was also surrounded by three other rivers – Turag, Balu, and Shitalakkhya, and a fourth one if we include Tongi Khal, making a necklace of five rivers. It was virtually a “sweet water island” – if not the only one then definitely one of the very few in the world. The city was further replenished by the life-generating annual monsoon rains. Its underground water reservoir almost burst at the seams as its rain-fed recharge was far more than needed.

Like the nerves in our body, 200 canals, hundreds of lakes and water bodies, including thousands of ponds, kept Dhaka among the richest cities in the world in terms of its sweet water supply. Few cultures celebrate water, rivers, and rain as we do through our literature, song, poetry, dance, culinary specialties, festivities, and life in general.

All that has changed now. As if in vengeance we have been ferociously and relentlessly destroying this water resource in, what can only be termed as, a suicidal streak. In our so-called development-focused mindset, nothing seems to matter except concrete structures, with practically no concern for our natural resources – the most vital of which is water and which we misuse, overuse, recklessly waste, and mindlessly pollute.

Of the Dhaka rivers, Buriganga has become so polluted that it can nurture no aquatic life. Today, it is nothing more than an oversized drain with metres of plastic waste making up its bed. One expert light-heartedly commented that the Buriganga's water has such high levels of toxic and life-threatening chemicals that even germs cannot survive in it. Turag and Balu are on the brink of dying of chemical, industrial, and household waste. The Tongi khal is physically disappearing as the land around it is considered to be “gold.” Shitalakkhya is desperately sending out an SOS with no one to hear it. Our Department of Environment (DoE), in a report from as early as 2009, declared these four rivers as Ecologically Critical Areas (ECAs), signalling the need for urgent action to save them.

As if to mock nature and our future, nothing has been done in the last 13 years. In fact, pouring pollutants into them continues with official sanction.

According to the National River Conservation Commission's report of 2021, there are 258 discharge points on the Buriganga, 269 on Turag, and 104 on the Balu river. These “discharge” points are purveyors of the rivers’ death as they allow thousands of tonnes of toxic chemicals and household waste daily into them. In addition, the thousands of launches, steamers, and goods-carrying cargo vehicles also pour thousands of tonnes of used engine oil and other waste into the rivers. There is no control and no concern.

As greater Dhaka became

Bangladesh's centre for its drive towards growth – 35 percent of our GDP is produced in and around the capital city, according to an ADB paper submitted at a BIDS seminar in 2021 – more of its natural ecosystem declined leading to the mindless cutting of trees, filling up of drainage canals, but most importantly, tragically destroying our water resources.

One particular project illustrates successive governments’ inexplicable lack of concern, understanding of the depth of the problem, and foresight in handling one of our most precious resources – our rivers.

The project is the relocation of our tanneries from Hazaribagh to Savar. What was meant to be an attempt

toxic and chemical discharge greatly damaging the ecology of the river. Meanwhile, the local residents faced all sorts of health hazards, not to mention the destruction of the livelihood of the local fishermen and others dependent on it.

According to the World Bank, there are four types of river pollutants in and around Dhaka: domestic waste water (including sewage), industrial effluents (over 10,000 industries discharge huge amounts of untreated effluents into rivers daily), biochemical waste (from hospitals, laboratories, and healthcare facilities), and pollutants related to river encroachment.

The countrywide picture is not too dissimilar, either. Once we had 700 rivers, all with regular flow. Now, according to the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), we have 230 rivers that flow round the year and another 310-405 with only seasonal flow. While those with seasonal flow are increasingly being eaten up by private land grabbers and official projects, even those with regular flow are being significantly encroached upon, with the connivance of local administration.

Khulna is 1.56 metres and that in Barisal is 2.9 metres while for Dhaka – in Tejgaon area, for example – the average depth of the water level is 65.92 metres, comparable to the height of a 20-storey building. That is how much we have abstracted groundwater in Dhaka, and this continues unabated. Today, 67 percent of Wasa's water supply comes from underground water,

According to the World Bank Country Environmental Analysis 2018, we lose USD 2.83 billion annually due to river pollution. This will amount to USD 51 billion in the next 20 years. The time has come for us to take a serious look at the usage of both groundwater and surface water.

just to consider one figure.

The above picture was only of Dhaka city. According to a World Bank report from 2021, countrywide abstraction of groundwater by farmers is about 32 cubic kilometres in the three months of the dry season. With this volume of water, a three-storey “water building” could be built spanning the entirety of Bangladesh.

In the early 1970s and 1980s, the logic behind massive abstraction of underground water was the need to produce more food and also to prevent diarrhoea, which was a major cause of child mortality. We used groundwater as if there was no tomorrow and polluted the surface water by giving a free hand – totally unmonitored – to the industries for their unfettered growth.

According to the World Bank Country Environmental Analysis 2018, we lose USD 2.83 billion annually due to river pollution. This will amount to USD 51 billion in the next 20 years. The time has come for us to take a serious look at the usage of both groundwater and surface water.

Why are we neglecting – in fact, destroying – our precious reservoir of surface water? Rivers are not only sources of water, but of life in general. Dumping toxic agents into our rivers is akin to injecting poison into our bloodstreams.

The over-extraction of our groundwater, that has taken millions of years to accumulate, is nothing short of stealing water from our future generations. No development is worth even the paper it is written on if we destroy for it the very element on which life depends.

Akbar, the greatest of the Mughal emperors, while epitomising greatness in many fields, committed the fatal error of building Fatehpur Sikri (City of Victory) as his capital (in 1571-73) which he had to abandon within 10 years because it had run out of water. Modern cities like Dhaka need not be abandoned because technology helps us to transport water from afar. But do we need to destroy what we have? After all, water is a finite resource and we already suffer from its acute shortage in many cities, in many areas, and not only during the dry season. With climate change, things will only become worse.



Meant to be an attempt to restore a semblance of ecological balance in Buriganga, the tannery relocation project became one of passing a “death sentence” on the life-enriching Dhaleshwari river in Savar.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

to restore a semblance of ecological balance in Buriganga became one of passing a “death sentence” on the life-enriching Dhaleshwari river in Savar. Nothing has been done to restore the ecological balance of the former and everything is being done to destroy the latter.

The first tannery was established in Dhaka, during the British Raj, in 1940. By the time we became independent in 1971, after 23 years of Pakistani rule, we had 270 tanneries in the vicinity of Dhaka, nearly all located in a place called Hazaribagh on the bank of the Buriganga, with all the tanneries’ toxic waste being dumped into the river.

By the year 2000, the pollution became so extensive and protests of the public, media, and civic society protest so incessant that the government – goaded into action by a High Court verdict – undertook a project titled Savar Tannery Industrial Estate (STIE), for which it promptly acquired 200 acres of land. Not unsurprisingly, that's where the promptness stopped.

Starting with a budget of Tk 175 crore in 2003, it ended up spending Tk 1,078 crore by 2016 with the project's most important element – the Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) – remaining unfinished. Since 2017, when 154 tanneries were finally relocated via a court order and punitive measures, the Dhaleshwari is now being polluted, with

According to a report published in 2016 about the state of our rivers by the DoE, 29 rivers in the country have been heavily polluted, with hardly any aquatic life left in them. The National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) published, in 2021, a list of 63,000 river grabbers in the country.

As we pollute the rivers and make surface water unusable, we turn more and more to underground water for cultivation and for human and industrial use. Here, the picture is just as dangerous.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Dhaka Wasa, in separate reports, said that presently, the underground water table is declining at a rate of two to three metres annually. This is due to excessive abstraction and inadequate rain water recharge. This may reach five metres annually by 2030. Momoko Tada, a senior urban specialist with the ADB, in an article in 2021, warned that, “The groundwater depletion could potentially lead to widespread land subsidence, which, combined with climate change, could lead to floods in wider areas. To add to this, there is a severe shortfall in safe drinking water for the people of Dhaka.”

Just to gauge the danger in Dhaka in comparative terms, the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) reported in December 2022 that the depth of groundwater in

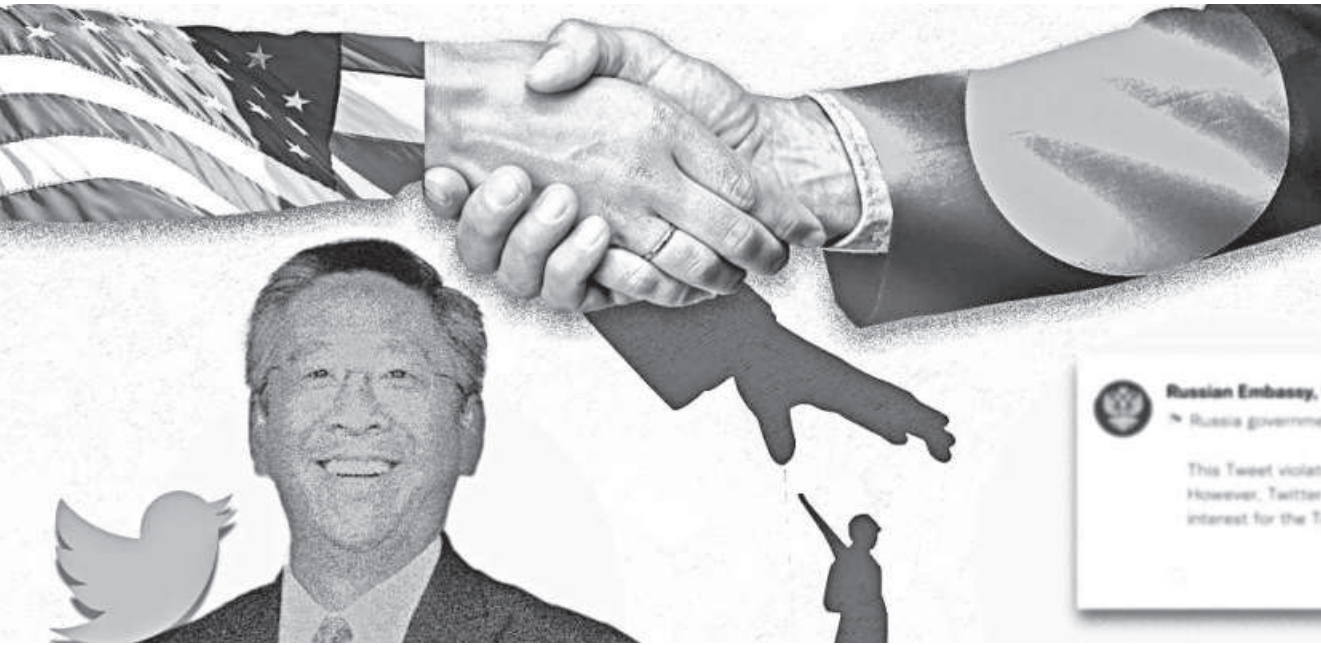


ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

DONALD LU’S VISIT

Old message, only louder



Ali Riaz is a distinguished professor of political science at Illinois State University in the US, and a non-resident senior fellow of the Atlantic Council.

ALI RIAZ

US Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Donald Lu's two-day visit to Dhaka has drawn significant attention in the media in Bangladesh, which continues to reverberate even after the visit is done with. What message did Lu bring? And has the government of Bangladesh succeeded in making its points?

Although it was Secretary Lu's second visit to the country, discussions surrounding the visit spilled over to politics, transcending the usual diplomatic circles.

When Secretary Lu visited Bangladesh in March last year, as a part of the US delegation to attend the partnership dialogue, he wasn't featured much in the media. The Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland, led the team. In the formal sense, the agenda for Lu's visit was nothing different from the visits of high-level US diplomats last year. From the US side, the agenda included the concerns regarding human rights situations, absence of political space for the opposition, dwindling freedom of speech, and the fairness of the upcoming election insofar as domestic politics is concerned. Other important issues were Bangladesh's position on the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), two outstanding proposed defense agreements – the Generalised Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition and Cross-section Agreement (ACSA). Bangladesh's agenda was to reiterate its request to rescind the sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), reinstatement of GSP privileges, and more support for the Rohingya refugee situation. In some measures, throughout 2022, two parties were coming to the table with two sets of priorities.

However, Lu's visits came against two backgrounds, involving domestic and international dimensions. Of the domestic developments, the most prominent was the one involving US Ambassador Peter Haas' visit to the home of a victim of enforced disappearance. It brought the latent tensions between these two countries to the fore. During his visit to the victim's house on December 14, 2022, the US envoy was confronted by a group of people demanding justice for those who were executed after military trials, allegedly for engaging in coup attempts in 1977

during Ziaur Rahman's rise to power. The actions of the group erred the envoy and were considered a security threat. This led to uncomfortable exchanges between the Bangladesh government and the US State Department, and a phone call from Wendy Sherman the Deputy Secretary of State. An already tense relationship, due to the imposition of sanctions on the Rab in December 2021, and Bangladesh's criticisms of the ambassador's comments on the human rights situation, aggravated the situation.

This issue gained an international dimension when the Russian embassy in Dhaka and its foreign ministry in Moscow interjected and made disparaging comments about the ambassador's visit and the US' insistence that there is a lack of democracy in Bangladesh. Exchanges between the two embassies took place over the internet, largely on Twitter. But ahead of Secretary Lu's visit, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang's surprise stop in Bangladesh at midnight on January 11 and meeting his counterpart AK Abdul Momen at an airport in Dhaka added to this international dimension.

The second background was the growing discontent in Bangladesh in the past few months, thanks to the economic crisis in the country and demonstrations by the opposition parties, especially the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Until last summer, the government was harshly dealing with any attempt to organise rallies and demonstrations by the BNP and was arresting its leaders. But in the face of criticisms, the government has allowed the BNP to organise rallies, although persecution of its workers and leaders have continued unabated. The government's move is strategic as it wants to show the world, particularly the US, that the allegations of the BNP of an environment not conducive for an inclusive fair election next year are unfounded, and that, therefore, the ball is in the court of the BNP regarding participation in the election. No wonder Home Minister Asaduzzaman and Foreign Minister Momen have repeatedly referred to the BNP's rally of December 10 as an example of its tolerance to the opposition. But they have forgotten that the violence ahead of the rally in front of the BNP office on December 7 was well covered by the international media, and that the US embassy, as well as the White House, had reacted to it.

Secretary Lu's visit, against these backgrounds, reiterated the message of the past year that the US would like to see a fair and inclusive election in Bangladesh and that it is concerned about the shrinking civic space. In meetings with government officials and members of civil society on two separate occasions, the message was repeated.

One might ask why a trip was necessary to communicate a message which has been delivered so many times. Looking at Lu's itinerary, it can be safely assumed that it was to gauge the depth of the commitment of the incumbent on these issues. It is not surprising that the trip itinerary was overwhelmed with meetings with government officials. One may recall the comments of Ned Price, the State Department spokesperson, on January 7, that the US welcomes "the words of Sheikh Hasina and her government that they want free and fair elections," but that the US is "going to be watching that those words are ultimately matched with corresponding actions." How much the government has succeeded in making a convincing case will be seen in the coming days, but Lu's statements during the trip have not indicated any shift.

The government can take comfort that Donald Lu has referred to the Human Rights Watch's report about the decline of extrajudicial killings by the Rab and then praised its work on "carrying out counterterrorism efforts and important functions while respecting human rights." Home Minister Asaduzzaman said the US side did not discuss anything on the reform of Rab but described the Rab's current activities as "satisfactory." This diplomatic language only indicates that the sanctions are working. A subsequent statement by the US embassy in Dhaka reaffirms the US position. It said, "We applaud the government of Bangladesh's efforts in these continued reforms and encourage the Bangladesh government to conduct independent investigations of alleged extrajudicial killings." But it is also worth noting that, after the trip, the foreign minister has acknowledged that the Rab has done "bad things" in the past. The once belligerent tone of the minister seems to have mellowed a bit.

While Donald Lu's trip has received lots of attention, it will be a mistake to consider this as a stand-alone visit, or a trip that will have a decisive result regarding the unresolved issues between these countries. Instead, it should be seen as a part of the continued engagement of the US administration with the Bangladeshi government. In the past two years, at least 12 officials have visited the country to drive home one message: it would like to see Bangladesh have an open, inclusive, and democratic process going forward and be a part of the Indo-Pacific Strategy. Lu's visit has made this message sound louder.

To catch a plagiarist



NO STRINGS ATTACHED
Aasha Mehreen Amin is joint editor at The Daily Star.

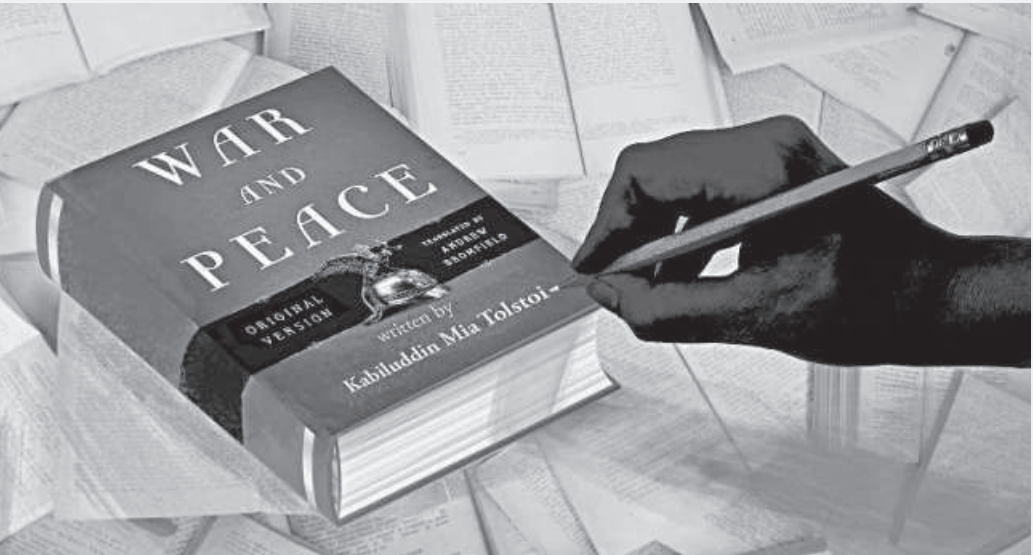
AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

It goes without saying that editors of texts have a thankless job. They laboriously go over content – no matter how badly written it is – correct spellings, reconstruct sentences, sometimes even completely rewrite the script, and make it palatable, only for the writer to receive all the applause. It's a behind-the-scenes job that remains invisible. And yet, without it, everything would fall apart. Which is why when we editors get an engaging, well-written, well-argued, and error-free piece, we get a kind of high from the sheer joy of reading something for the pleasure of reading, without the constant hiccups of all the decoding and deconstructing.

Then, we feel dread. If the language is too flawless and the writer unknown, if the nit-

be to write to NatGeo and get their permission, which may or may not have been procured. By not acknowledging the source, however, the writer broke the trust placed on them by the editors and made them take the flak for their own dishonesty. The worst part is that it is unlikely that the person in question will get any more punishment than an exclusion from future textbook writing, which is hardly a deterrent for the next plagiarist.

What is mind-boggling is that certain writers feel no compunction about just lifting whole paragraphs from others' texts and inserting them in their own pieces. The most common culprits are students who need to hand in many essays and papers in their academic life. Despite all the warnings of dire consequences if they are caught, some students will take the risk of stealing content from other papers, sometimes even buying entire papers written by someone else and handing those in as their own work. The incidents of university professors submitting papers with plagiarised sections is perhaps the most shocking. When teachers – who are responsible for imparting knowledge to



VISUAL: BIPOLOB CHAKROBORTY

picking editor cannot put a single mark on the script, chances are that it is too good to be true.

In the newspaper industry especially, among the tsunami of outside contributions, only a handful turn out to be in the category of the brilliant and excellent, and even those will have at least one or two minor errors – dashes and dots mainly, or a silly typo. Otherwise, it is most likely someone being too clever and passing off someone else's work as their own.

The recent hullabaloo on social media about a section of a Class 7 science textbook being allegedly plagiarised from the National Geographic website shows how insidious this practice is and how often it can go undetected. In this particular case, the section was Google-translated to Bangla, which is what really clever plagiarists do and often get away with. Professors Zafar Iqbal and Haseena Khan, the editors of the book, have admitted that they checked and, indeed, the text had been plagiarised, conveying that they were very embarrassed that it had gone unnoticed.

While people are ranting against the editors, they really should stop to think how difficult it is to suspect a Bangla text to be plagiarised if the original content is in another language. The person who first made the discovery must have really gone deep in his investigation, because he would have had to re-translate the Bangla piece to find out that it was a translation of an English script, because Google translate is not always very reliable and can come up with the most bizarre results. So kudos to the person who exposed the theft and also to the editors for quickly acknowledging that it had occurred – although they were not involved in writing that particular section – and assured that this was not the final version of the book.

But what about the particular writer who took the section and glibly passed it off as his own work? The obvious thing to do would have been to admit their own laziness and give credit to NatGeo. The most ethical thing to do would

others – resort to such deception, what message will their students get?

Ironically, Google, which has provided a limitless supply of such perfect writing to steal from, can track most such intellectual robbery with just a simple search of a sentence from the text. These days, there are special plagiarism trackers that can track sentences and paragraphs that have not been cited or attributed properly. Imagine how much material had been stolen all those years before Google!

Apparently there is also a thing called unintentional plagiarism when someone "forgets" to cite content taken from somewhere else or when one presents an idea thinking it to be their own when in fact it was, say, Milan Kundera's. These unintentional plagiarists mean no harm and are either somnambulant when they steal or just scatterbrained, though they are still committing a crime. There are also "plagiarists-in-denial" who, no matter how many times you send them the piece with highlighted sentences that they have clearly "taken" from other texts and inserted into their own articles, will still insist that it was just coincidence!

Shabby plagiarists are those who forget to change the font of the parts they stole, or forget that their own language skills are quite poor and the beautiful sentences they have lifted stand out like precious stones in a pile of garbage. Meanwhile, "accidental plagiarists" diligently attribute the paragraph or idea to the source they had found online, but it so happens that the very source is fake and the attributed paragraph has actually been lifted from somewhere else. Talk about rotten luck!

But most plagiarists are well aware that they are stealing stuff from someone else's hard work and feel no remorse about it. Thus, for editors, no matter how gruelling their hours and how brain-numbing their work, checking for plagiarism is really worth the trouble. It will not always be foolproof but in many cases will expose this intellectual poaching and help one avoid a lawsuit or zealous public shaming on social media.

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CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Luminous rings
7 Says further
11 Halloween hue
12 Aerobatics feat
13 French soup
14 Olympics sled
15 Radiates
16 "Return of the Jedi" villain
17 Hamlet, for one
18 Waco school
19 Isn't well
21 Print units
22 Blue hue
25 Take in
26 Coffee dispensers
27 Deodorant

target
29 Reckless
33 Horse sound
34 Racer
Andretti
35 Possess
36 Truck fuel
37 Midmonth day
38 Smitten
39 Silent okays
40 Grimacing, perhaps

DOWN

1 Had aspirations
2 Bakery come-on
3 Caesar's language
4 Running wild
5 Quiche base
6 Spot

7 Soothe
8 Tennis game
9 Treat for a terrier
10 Harpoons
16 Argo captain
18 Say without thinking
20 Poor sport's cry
22 Transport to Oz
23 Dry-eyed
24 Tel Aviv native
25 Redeem
28 Printer's need
30 Fiery crime
31 Colander's kin
32 – up (hid out)
34 "Dracula" girl
36 Brief drop

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4-23

TUESDAY'S ANSWERS

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MUTT
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IDEAL
STALE
TODAY

PULP
AFIRE
COCOA
AWE
DID
LEN
MORONIC
VIDE
HEM
ORR
OZZIE
DOZED
SOARS

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



PHOTO CREDIT: HRW.ORG

RIGHTS WATCH

Need for regulating recruiting culture of domestic workers

In 2015, the government formulated the Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy, which is not legally binding; hence, no provision has yet been implemented to protect domestic workers' rights.

SIFAT AIMAN

Domestic workers (DWs) are one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in our society, largely made up of women and children. Although they suffer harassment, physical torture and verbal abuse, they play an important role by contributing to the country's household income and labour.

There is, however, no law to protect DWs, except the Domestic Servants' Registration Ordinance of 1961, promulgated to compel domestic workers in five metropolitan areas of Dhaka to register with the police. In 2010, the National Child Labour Elimination Policy, while classifying child labour, included 'domestic works' as part of the informal sector. Later, in light of human rights activism, domestic work was recognised as a profession in the Labour Act 2013. However, it also placed domestic work into the informal sector. Thus, DWs are not entitled to have the benefits of formal sector workers. In 2015, the government formulated the Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy, which is not legally binding; hence, no provision has yet been implemented to protect DWs' rights.

Several groups – including NGOs and INGOs, government officials, DWs representatives, the Bangladesh Labour Foundation, the Domestic Worker Association, and others – have advocated for a long time to enact a comprehensive law to protect the rights of DWs. Their key emphasis is on recognising domestic work as a profession, protecting DWs' labour and social rights (ensuring minimum salary, welfare, education, training, safety, and security), establishing a monitoring cell and so forth. The following analysis addresses yet another justification for enacting a law: to regulate the recently developed recruiting agencies.

Most DWs in Bangladesh get employment via referrals from other DWs, family members,

or the family they serve. However, there has been a dearth of DWs over the last several years, primarily for two reasons. Firstly, economically disadvantaged children now have access to education due to policies and actions the government has adopted. Secondly, the garment industry attracts more female workers for better wages with weekly holidays. Thus, some recruiting agencies (mostly Dhaka-based) have emerged, intending to provide DWs quickly.

Although Bangladesh is yet to ratify the Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers of 2011, adopted by the International Labour Organisation, its provision is relevant to the current analysis. Article 15 prescribes that member states must determine the conditions governing the operation of private employment agencies recruiting DWs following national laws, regulations and practices to safeguard DWs from abusive activities. The 2015 Policy, as mentioned above, lacks recruiting agency provisions. It recommends that if a verbal contract, understanding, or agreement exists, it is preferable to conclude the discussion in the presence of a third party acceptable to both the DW and the employer. Therefore, these growing agencies' legal status, responsibility and obligations are left undefined.

In the absence of any specific law, if these agencies are functioning based on practice prevalent in the country, there is, unfortunately, no authority to monitor whether they are operating in conformity with the current practice. Moreover, 'practice' varies from city to city, area to area. Even across the whole country, there is no fixed wage for any specific work. Salary varies by working hour, nature of work and place. In the 2015 Policy, the policymakers did not declare the minimum wage for the DWs. Even if one assumes that the recruiting agencies fix the wage based on practice, a question comes whether the recruiting agencies are

predominantly targeting upper-class families and unreasonably increasing the remuneration of DWs and making it a new practice. Moreover, the ILO Convention prohibits deducting the fees charged by private employment agencies from the salary of DWs. Although some recruiting agencies claim to take separate fees as their service charge, there is no standard fee that all agencies charge. And the overall result is a scenario where employment practices are dissimilar and inconsistent.

In the global community, the term 'maid' has gained pejorative connotations. Unfortunately, the majority of these recruiting companies refer to DWs as "maids", and some of them use the terms "maid" and "domestic worker" interchangeably. Using such a derogatory term directly influences how DWs are seen and abused. Hiring a DW is being compared to renting a car using E-app by some of these agencies. Hence, these agencies fail to treat DWs with the respect and dignity they deserve and instead, they are promoting a contemporary form of slavery.

Additional reasonings as to why recruiting agencies should be governed by legal regulation include: providing a list of safety and security measures they must take, describing adequate procedures for investigating complaints, specifying respective obligations of and fraudulent practices concerning recruiting agencies' activities, determining the agency's role in sexual or verbal harassment allegations against the employer and alleged theft accusations by the employer.

Despite these factors, it is hard to disregard altogether the initiative to digitise this platform. However, the absence of legislation and proper authority to regulate the operations would undermine noble intentions and lead to arbitrariness.

The writer is an Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

RIGHTS ADVOCACY

Dealing with air pollution to protect human rights

AFSANA SADIA

The right to life is a fundamental human right enshrined under article 32 of the Constitution of Bangladesh. But this right requires other supplementary elements associated with it to be fulfilled, like a healthy environment. Due to rapid industrialisation in urban areas, the quality of air is however worsening now-a-days. Dhaka has recently been ranked 4th for having the worst air quality.

Anybody can now easily feel the air quality of any place. For example, Gazipur, a metropolitan city situated in Dhaka, is well-known for having many factories for ready-made garments, medicines, etc. While writing this piece, the Air Quality Index (AQI) of Gazipur was 8, indicating high percentage of PM 2.5 and PM 10, respectively, referring to 'particulate matter less than 2.5 microns and 10 microns'. Not only this, even the quantity of Ozone was 154.04 micrograms per cubic meter. In 1979, the WHO registered the average natural concentrations of ground-level ozone as around 30-100 micrograms per cubic meter. Needless to say, the health impacts of these exposures are horrifying.

Article 18A of the Constitution of Bangladesh states that 'the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment, and to preserve and safeguard the natural resources... for the present and future citizens.' Though this fundamental principle of state policy is not judicially enforceable, the State has a moral obligation to



respect this provision during administration. Further, article 32 upholds right to life. Right to healthy environment has been recognised as an element of right to life under article 32 in *Dr. Mohiuddin Faruque v Government of Bangladesh* (1996). Right to life has also been recognised by various international instruments including article 6 of the ICCPR. The continued pollution of the environment as a threat to human life has paved the way to use this right to life aspect in our country.

Apart from this, the 1972 Stockholm Declaration in its first principle states that, 'Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being'. Also, the Rio Declaration of 1992 reaffirmed this by enunciating that 'human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with the nature'. Further, the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment was declared an important human right by the United Nations Human Rights Council on October 8, 2021.

The severe river pollution caused by factories in the name of industrialisation is known to everyone but the slow poisoning happening through this process is still unnoticed or fundamentally ignored. Furthermore, these polluted areas are densely populated as well. If proper clinical tests are conducted on the inhabitants of these areas, we can perceive the actual scenario. Over the years, Bangladesh has adopted a number of laws to minimise pollution. What we now need is the proper administration of laws to protect natural environment and human beings.

The writer is a Law Graduate from the University of Dhaka.

LAW LETTER

Impact of global food crisis on women's rights

JULIAN RAFAH,
ABIR NAJMUJJAMAN SIKDER

According to an annual study report published in July 2022 by the USAID Care Bangladesh, 21% of women and girls experienced violence at the household level due to price hikes in Bangladesh. The growing global food insecurity has become a contributing factor to gender-based violence in households. The soaring food crisis and price hikes in essential commodities are worsening the already fragile women's rights situation in Bangladesh. Domestic violence has been a silent human rights abuse for a long time and is expected to be worse when the IMF is projecting a one third of the world economy to be in recession in 2023.

Domestic violence is recognised as a human rights violation in international law. According to article 3 of the UDHR, everyone has the right to life; and security of the person is also reflected in articles 6 and 9 of the ICCPR. Right to the highest standard of physical and mental health



has also been guaranteed under article 12 of the ICESCR. According to article 2 of the CEDAW, the state parties must agree to condemn discrimination against women in all its forms including domestic

violence. The monitoring body of the CEDAW in 1992 had also adopted General Recommendation No. 19 which specifically addressed domestic violence as a form of discrimination covered by the CEDAW.

CEDAW Recommendation No. 19 also mentioned that violence against women is also a violation of the right to protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment guaranteed by article 5 of the UDHR and article 7 of the ICCPR. This has also been affirmed by the Committee Against Torture responsible for monitoring the Convention Against Torture (CAT) which prohibits any form of torture. Bangladesh is a signatory to the CEDAW and has ratified UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR and CAT, legally bound to take steps to prevent domestic violence.

Section 3 of the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act, 2010 defines domestic violence as 'physical, psychological, sexual or economic abuse against women or children of a family by any other person of that family with whom the victim is, or has been, in family relationship'.

Domestic violence also violates other constitutional and legal rights of the victims. Domestic violence is a

gender-based offence which violates the fundamental right of equality before law under article 27 of the Constitution and further violates article 28(l) of the Constitution which protects women and children from discrimination based on gender. Domestic violence also includes economic abuses. Not providing the wife with dowry and maintenance, depriving women from inheritance can be treated as economic abuse which violates the right of women protected by sections 9 and 10 of the Muslim Family Law Ordinance, 1961.

As the global food crisis has a direct nexus with increased domestic violence in households, it is a direct contributor to violation of international human rights covenants and domestic laws of the country. Domestic violence has now become the worst form of human rights violation which is to some extent invisible and needs to be addressed immediately.

The writers are Students of Law, University of Dhaka.

New music and rainy stroll lifts Swiatek’s spirit

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Iga Swiatek is not scared to change things up. It's a rare admission from a top tennis player given the sport's penchant for routines and superstition. But the World No.1 is into the third round without dropping a set.

After a physical effort to defeat Jule Niemeier in the first round, Swiatek flew through her second-round match against Camila Osorio, winning 6-2, 6-3.

Having played the first match on Rod Laver Arena on Wednesday, Swiatek's clinical performance opened up a host of opportunities for her to spend her day.

"I'm actually trying to break the routine sometimes because Grand Slams are so long that it's impossible to stay in the rhythm for the two weeks," Swiatek told Jelena Dokic. "Also playing sometimes night session, sometimes day session is really messing up the rhythm."

"Tonight for sure I'm going to have a free evening and it's going to be nicer than yesterday because I was already thinking about the match. So I'm going to try and enjoy it."



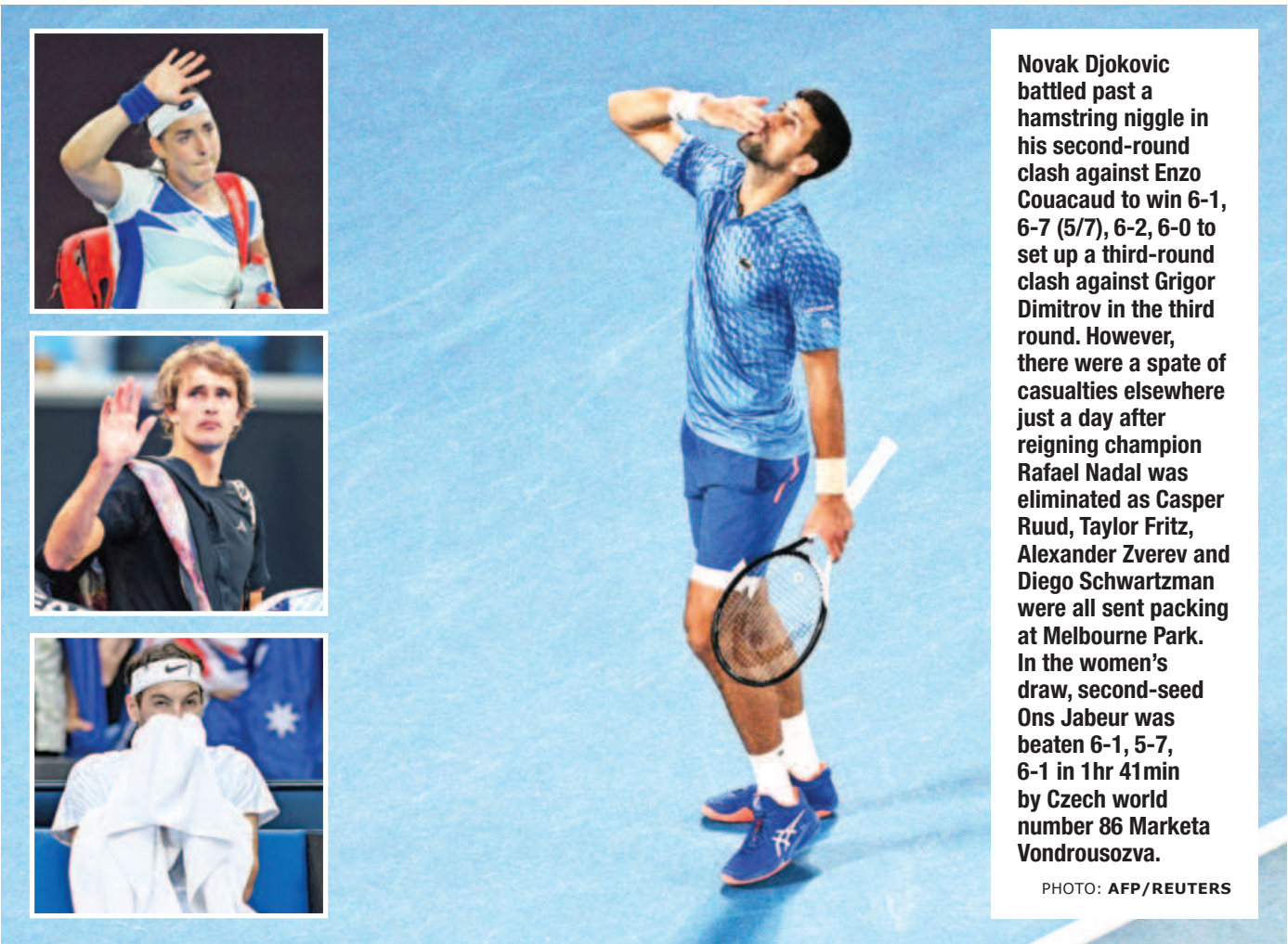
"But I'm not superstitious. I actually changed my playlist before the match. I was listening to the same songs for two years. It's working, so hopefully these songs are not going to mess up my head."

After switching her playlist over to more rock like The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Black Sabbath, AC/DC and Led Zeppelin, Swiatek is feeling as relaxed as ever as she competes at her fourth straight Slam as the World No.1.

Adaptation has been a key element of Swiatek's mental training over the past three years, and her ability to problem solve and go with the flow has been the bedrock of her rise to the top of the women's game. Because for Swiatek, rigidity and routines can easily morph into a mental crutch.

"In Melbourne it's usually sunny, except today and yesterday. So I need to change my plans. Yesterday I went for a walk at 7 p.m. and then it started raining and I was just hiding under a tree waiting for like 30 minutes. So if anyone sees me tonight walking in the rain, please save me and give me an umbrella."

"But maybe tonight maybe a nice dinner because I've been eating sushi the whole week and I can't look at it anymore. It wasn't superstition. It's the only thing you can take away from here so it just happened."



Novak Djokovic battled past a hamstring niggle in his second-round clash against Enzo Couacaud to win 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-0 to set up a third-round clash against Grigor Dimitrov in the third round. However, there were a spate of casualties elsewhere just a day after reigning champion Rafael Nadal was eliminated as Casper Ruud, Taylor Fritz, Alexander Zverev and Diego Schwartzman were all sent packing at Melbourne Park. In the women's draw, second-seed Ons Jabeur was beaten 6-1, 5-7, 6-1 in 1hr 41min by Czech world number 86 Marketa Vondrousova.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

Soumya’s misery continues

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

Right from the start of their international careers, the two batters who were once rated as one of the brightest talents in Bangladesh cricket and were expected to become the next big thing were Liton Das and Soumya Sarkar.

While Liton did manage to prove his worth in recent times, having had developed himself as a consistent batter for the Tigers, Soumya unfortunately is struggling to live up to expectations and has certainly turned out as a big disappointment.

Soumya burst into the scene with his lazy elegance and the ability to tackle the world class bowlers with ease at the top-order for the Tigers, but the southpaw's current batting form reflects a sheer lack of confidence.

The 29-year-old continued to struggle for Dhaka Dominators in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League, where he was dismissed for a second consecutive duck in the tournament against Comilla Victorians yesterday.

With scores of 16, 6, 4, 0, and 0 in five games, Soumya's place at the moment seems to be in danger with the Dhaka side, who have lost four out of the five games so far after their 33-run defeat to Comilla.

Apart from Soumya not being able to score significantly, the manner in which the left-hander has been getting out recently is also alarming for the cricketer on his road to recovery from the lean patch.

When things are not going well for batters, coaches prescribe them to spend more time at the crease to gain confidence and return to basics. But in Soumya's



case, he appeared in some sort of hurry, as if taking things too easy, after coming in to open the innings against Comilla yesterday.

After facing just three deliveries while chasing 185 runs, Soumya went for a square-drive to Pakistani pacer Hasan Ali's delivery, one that was shaping away from his body. But with hardly any foot movement, Soumya handed a simple catch at point to leave without troubling the scores.

The pattern of dismissal remained pretty similar for Soumya throughout the

tournament as he never looked confident in constructing his innings. He batted at number three in the first three games before being promoted to open the innings in the last two matches, but his fate remained unchanged.

"I think Soumya knows how to overcome such a situation as he has played a lot of cricket over the years. I am sure he is talking to his coaches over his game, but it's up to him now. I think it's more of a mental adjustment rather than technical," Dhaka skipper Nasir Hossain told The Daily Star.

The cricketer from Satkhira did score 71 in one of the two innings that he played in the Bangladesh Cricket League, a first-class competition, and scored 19 in the other game before the start of the BPL.

Soumya was lacklustre in the BCL fifty-over competition too. There, he managed to score 19, 0, and 11 since losing his place from the Tigers T20I side in the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia last year.

The stylish batter managed to score 14, 15, 0, and 20 in the T20 World Cup, where he batted at number three and also opened the innings on occasions.

Soumya's inclusion in the World Cup was more of a wild card entry despite having under-performed in New Zealand ahead of the mega event, scoring 23 and 4 in two games. Before that tour, Soumya was sent to West Indies with the A team to regain confidence but he managed to score 30 in a rain-curtailed fifty-over competition, following up with scores of six and 15.

It will be interesting to see whether Soumya overcomes from the lean patch, or else things look very difficult for him to make a comeback in the national team anytime soon.

‘Netflix curse’ rampant in Melbourne

AGENCIES, Melbourne

Tennis players can be particularly superstitious, so it does not bode well that there is one thing that links a whole bunch of withdrawals and upsets from this year's Australian Open.

In a continuation of what has famously been dubbed the 'Netflix curse' on social media, Taylor Fritz followed fellow 'Break Point' documentary co-stars Matteo Berrettini and Casper Ruud out of the 2023 Australian Open yesterday.

In the women's draw, Tunisian star Ons Jabeur, the second seed, dropped out in the second round as well after being featured in the same series, which follows emerging stars behind the scenes as the sport moves on from a golden era.

Among those featured in the series, which follows one player's journey per episode, are top 10 stars Casper Ruud, Taylor Fritz and Maria Sakkari as well as the likes of Matteo Berrettini, Paula Badosa, Nick Kyrgios and Thanasi Kokkinakis.

Three players -- Badosa, Kyrgios and fellow Aussie Ajla Tomljanovic -- picked up injuries in the lead-up to the Slam that resulted in them withdrawing their names.

Matteo Berrettini was the first casualty of those who played, losing an epic first-round tie against three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray.

Casper Ruud was the next to fall as he went out in four sets against American youngster Jenson Brooksby in the second round in the second-biggest upset of the tournament ranking-wise.

American Taylor Fritz had rubbished suggestions of a curse after beating Nikoloz Basilashvili in the first round, saying: "I noticed people pulling out of the tournament, but I didn't know it was a thing. I'm not going to lose my first-round match because I'm in the Netflix show."

He was right, but unfortunately, the world No. 9 became the latest chip to fall yesterday, going down against home hope Alexei Popyrin in front of an ecstatic Rod Laver Arena crowd in the second round.

Dzeko inspires Inter to Super Cup win

AFP, Riyadh

Inter Milan retained the Italian Super Cup on Wednesday after Edin Dzeko inspired his team to a 3-0 victory over local rivals AC Milan.

The damage was done in the opening 21 minutes in Riyadh thanks to Dzeko, who played a defence-splitting pass for Federico Dimarco's 10th-minute opener and doubled Inter's lead 11 minutes later. Lautaro Martinez then added a brilliantly taken third in the 77th minute.

"We put in a great performance, the boys were brilliant from the first minute until the final whistle," Dzeko told Mediaset. "We won the Super Cup last season so we knew how great it is to win it... I'm really happy that we're bringing home another trophy, and I hope there will be more in the future."

Without the raucous soundtrack of a packed San Siro, Wednesday's match in Saudi Arabia was an unusual Milan derby but that won't stop Inter fans claiming local bragging rights as well as the Super Cup for the seventh time.

"We weren't up to the task in the first half, we made too many mistakes and from there it was difficult to turn the match around," Milan coach Stefano Pioli said.



Former footballers urged to become referees

SPORTS REPORTER

Refereeing has long been an issue among the clubs in domestic football and there was no exception yesterday when the working sub-committees for BFF's professional league management committee sat with club representatives of the Bangladesh Premier League.

Abahani manager Satyajit Das Rupu, along with other club officials, were vocal over the performance of referees who are giving out varying decisions over apparently similar offenses. The club representatives requested the committee to appoint a separate referees' assessor for each match to find out the mistakes. The clubs also asked the committee to consider grooming match commissioners and referees' assessors from outside the pool of former referees.

Currently the match commissioner is performing the responsibilities of the referees' assessor apart from his own duties.

"The meeting was dominated by discussion over refereeing. We got some new proposals regarding the referees, and we are going to send the proposals to the referees' sub-committee and hope those will be implemented in future," BFF vice-president and sub-committee convenor

Ataur Rahman Bhuiyan Manik told media after the meeting.

"We have already appointed a referees' consultant from India and will try to resolve the issues regarding the referees. We are hoping the issues will be solved soon," he added.

In the last edition of the BPL, one particular referee conducted most of the matches of a big club while the game's governing local body refrained from appointing him in matches of another big club. Manik, however, claimed that they did not receive any such allegation.

The referees' committee has also kept a couple of good referees and assistant referees away from conducting the ongoing league matches, raising questions over the fairness of the committee.

"The issues were discussed at the meeting. Our referees' consultant noted those down and promised us to wipe out these types of issues. The consultant also suggested to increase the number of referees to a minimum of 500 from the existing 70," Manik said, adding that they would invite former footballers to become referees, match commissioners and the referees' assessors.



Fortune Barishal batter Iti Khatun smashed nine sixes and six fours, powering his way to a maiden T20 century against Rangpur Riders yesterday to become the third centurion in the ongoing edition. He forged a 192-run stand with Shakib Al Hasan, the third-highest partnership in terms of runs in BPL. Skipper Shakib also reached a landmark as he scored his highest-ever T20 score, smashing a 43-ball 89 to set the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram alight. The duo smashed 15 sixes between them, propelling Barishal to 238-4, the joint second-highest team total in BPL history with Chattogram Challengers.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Govt organs can’t interfere with EC functions: SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in the full text of a verdict observed that none of the government organs, including the executive, can interfere with the Election Commission’s functions as the commission is independent under the constitution.

“From examination of the aforesaid provisions of the constitution, the cumulative effect is that the Election Commission is independent while exercising its power under Article 119 of the constitution, which does not include the power of appointment and terms and conditions of service of the employee under the Election Commission Secretariat,” the apex court said in the 29-page full text of the verdict which was released yesterday.

“According to Article 119, all deputy commissioners, superintendents of police and other officials concerned are placed under the control of the Election Commission during election for the purpose of holding election. Undoubtedly, none of the organs of the government, including the executive, can interfere with the functions of the Election Commission.”

On September 1 last year, a six-member full bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique, delivered a short verdict on this issue after filing of four appeals by the government challenging a judgement of the Administrative Appellate Tribunal.

Other five members of the apex court bench are Justice Md Nuruzzaman, Justice Obaidul Hassan, Justice Borhanuddin, Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Krishna Debnath (now retired).

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Torture marks found on Gazipur trader’s body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, GAZIPUR

Police yesterday handed over the body of a yarn trader, allegedly tortured to death in police custody in Gazipur, to his family without performing an autopsy.

“Around 9:00pm Wednesday, we received the body from Dhaka Medical College Hospital without an autopsy,” said victim Robiul Islam’s brother-in-law Rafiqul Islam.

“We saw bloodstains on Robiul’s face, nose and soles of feet. His ankles were cracked. Usually, the bodies of road-accident victims do not bear such marks. Instead, such marks are created due to torture.”

The whole family is now shocked and panicked, and they do not have any courage to legally fight the police, Rafiqul further said.

Contacted, Abu Toraf Md Shamsur Rahman, deputy commissioner (crime) of Gazipur Metropolitan Police, said the body was handed over to the family without performing an autopsy following the victim’s family member’s application with Shahbagh Police Station.

“Police prepared the body’s inquest report. Evidence suggests Robiul died in a road accident. The bloodstains and injury marks on his body were caused by the accident.”

DMCH doctors, in their primary examination, also found evidence of a road accident, the police officer added.

Meanwhile, Robiul’s brother filed a case with Basan Police Station over the accident, he further said.

Robiul and three others were arrested on Tuesday evening for gambling, said Malek Khasru, officer-in-charge of Basan Police Station, on Wednesday.

“Robiul’s relatives received him from police around 10:00pm after the law enforcers discharged him. He was then hit by a truck on the way in Bhogra area,” he added.

According to the official register of deaths at DMCH, Robiul was brought dead to the hospital at 2:50am by a person named Sagar Miah.

Sagar’s address was not found on the record. A mobile

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Robiul Islam

APBn not harassing Rohingyas

HRW report not based on facts, says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Human Rights Watch’s allegation against APBn of arbitrary arrests and harassment of Rohingya refugees is not based on facts, said Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday.

“The Rohingyas indulge in killings in the camps and the APBn [Armed Police Battalion] officials have been deployed there to do routine work. What HRW is saying is not based on facts,” he said while talking to reporters after attending a programme in the capital.

“I think they [HRW] should prepare such

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Impounded vehicles left haphazardly on the street in front of the Adabar Police Station disrupt traffic flow. As the vehicles have taken up the entire footpath, pedestrians are forced to walk on the road.



A Common Kingfisher displays its plumage on a bamboo in the capital’s Botanical Garden. Resident to much of its range, across Eurasia and North Africa, they tend to migrate during colder seasons where rivers are not frozen. Kingfishers are known to fly low and straight like bullets – reaching up to 25 mph. However, scientists are more excited by their beaks than their speed. Sharp, pointy and long, these beaks can silently slice through water without alerting fish. Japanese engineers have even designed high-speed bullet trains like the beak to prevent sonic boom upon entering a tunnel. Kingfishers are generally solitary birds and not quite fond of one another – an aversion they have to overcome during breeding season. While these birds are generally shy, they take advantage of human-made canals and waterways to fish and nest. Though Common Kingfishers are classified as “Least Concern” on the IUCN Red List, their numbers are still threatened by human activities like deforestation.

PHOTO: SHABBOSACHI DAS

3-YRS AFTER RETIREMENT

Why can’t govt officials run for MP?

HC asks govt, EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the provision that prohibited former government officials from contesting Jatiya Sangsad elections in the three years after retirement.

The court issued a rule asking the government and Election Commission to explain in four weeks why the provision of section 12(1) (f) of the Representation of People Order, (RPO), 1972, should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

The bench of Justice Zafar Ahmed and Justice Md Bashir Ullah issued the rule following a writ petition filed by Md Shamim Kamal, brigadier general (retd), challenging the provision’s legality.

His counsel, Hassan MS Azim, told The Daily Star that the right to

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Don’t enrol students

UGC asks 4 pvt univs for not moving to permanent campuses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Grants Commission has directed four private universities not to enrol students, as they failed to shift to permanent campuses.

The apex regulatory body overseeing public and private universities also gave 12 other universities time for their relocation to permanent campuses.

In a notification yesterday, the UGC said the four universities – Prime Asia University, Stamford University Bangladesh, Asha University, and Victoria University – failed to show any progress in construction of their permanent campuses within the stipulated time.

Besides, the UGC decided that State University and Manarat International University can only enrol students in their permanent campuses, said the notification.

Six other universities were given time till March 31 to completely shift to their permanent campuses, as they made progress in constructing permanent campuses.

They are Dhaka International University, Royal University, Southeast

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Nazi gold sparks Dutch village treasure hunt

AFP, Ommeren



Muddy holes dot the ground in a Dutch village where a map allegedly showing the location of Nazi loot buried in World War II has triggered an invasion of treasure hunters.

“It really fires up the imagination,” smiles Klaas Tammes, president of the foundation that owns the land in Ommeren in eastern Gelderland province at the centre of the search.

The Dutch National Archive unveiled the hand-drawn map in early January, featuring a tell-tale red ‘X’ believed to mark the spot where German soldiers stashed their hoard.

Documents held along with the map include testimony that the Nazis buried four ammunition boxes filled with jewellery, precious stones and

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CORRECTION

In our report run on page 12 on January 19 under the headline “37,000 River Grabbers: NRCC decision to withhold names draws flak”, we inadvertently misquoted Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, as saying, “The chairman of a constitutional organisation can’t act in a way that benefits the encroachers.” In fact, Rizwana didn’t say the commission is a constitutional organisation. We regret the error.

INDIA’S MOVE ON ‘FAKE NEWS’

Proposal akin to censorship: editors

REUTERS, New Delhi

A major Indian journalist group urged the government to reject a proposal to police fake news on social media, saying such a change to the country’s information-technology rules would be akin to censorship.

The proposal would bar social media platforms from hosting any information that the authorities identify as false, the latest in a slew of measures by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government that are being seen as efforts to rein in big tech firms.

Information deemed “fake or false” by the Press Information Bureau or by any other agency authorised for fact-checking by the government would be prohibited under the draft amendment issued on Tuesday.

The government will hold a consultation with stakeholders to discuss the amendment

on January 24, and has also invited “comments from stakeholders and general public” until January 25.

The Editors Guild of India, in a statement yesterday evening, urged the government to scrap the proposal and begin “meaningful consultations” with stakeholders on the regulatory framework for digital media.

Saying the “determination of fake news cannot be in the sole hands of the government”, the guild warned that the amendment would “make it easier to muzzle the free press” and “force online intermediaries to take down content that the government may find problematic”.

“This will stifle legitimate criticism of the government and will have an adverse impact on the ability of the press to hold governments to account, which is a vital role it plays in a democracy,” it said.

It also said that already multiple laws exist to deal with content that is found to be factually incorrect.