

P3
Boi Mela to kick off on February 1



P7
China logs 13,000 Covid deaths in a week



P11
'Embarrassed' Rizwan hails Liton



B1
RMG export to Russia drops sharply

PATIENT REFERRAL SYSTEM

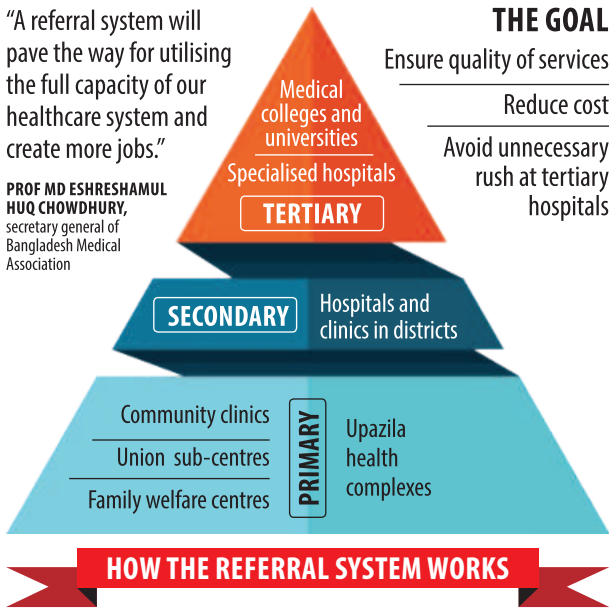
Still elusive after all these years

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

In 2014, then health minister Mohammad Nasim at an event in Rangpur Medical College Hospital officially announced the inception of a patient referral system for Rangpur division.

"A referral system will pave the way for utilising the full capacity of our healthcare system and create more jobs."

PROF MD ESHREHAMUL HUQ CHOWDHURY, secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association



There are well-defined and established practices of referral systems in many countries. But the policymakers fail to understand it when they speak about the referral system.

MUHAMMAD ABDUS SABUR, adjunct faculty at the IHE of DU

It, however, fell flat due to inadequate logistic support and unavailability of qualified physicians and auxiliary workforce at primary healthcare centres.

Two more attempts to get the referral system going in 2016 and 2019 too failed. Both fizzled out after discussions among high-ups.

Under a referral system, a patient first goes to a nearby primary healthcare centre, public or private. If need be, that healthcare centre will send the patient to hospitals that are better equipped to treat them.

Major hospitals, on the other hand, will not see any walk-in patient, unless the patient is in critical condition. They will treat only patients referred by the smaller hospitals and healthcare centres.

The larger hospitals can send patients back to smaller hospitals for follow-ups.

The system creates a link between the hospitals of three tiers – primary, secondary and tertiary – to ensure quality of services, reduce cost, and avoid unnecessary rush at tertiary hospitals.

For years, the government could not prepare a protocol for the referral system, let alone introduce it, resulting in anarchy in the country's health sector, health experts said.

Currently, patients bear on average 68.5 percent of all healthcare costs. If the referral system was in place, this cost could be slashed as they would not be paying for the inefficiency of the healthcare system, they said.

Health officials said if the system were in place, pressure on large tertiary hospitals could be halved. Presently,

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HOT ASHES FOR TREES? ... Hills being razed to make way for a brick kiln in Bandarban's Lama upazila. While brick kilns are a major contributor to the debilitating air pollution in the country, hill cutting, according to Bangladesh Environment Preservation Act, is a punishable offence if done without the approval of the authorities concerned. Despite growing concerns among the locals, the authorities concerned remain silent.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

Avoid middle-income trap at all costs

Advises Word Bank MD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh should be careful about falling into the middle-income trap, said Axel van Trotsenburg, the World Bank's managing director of operations.

"Middle-income status is a hard struggle and in fact, it is a difficult task to go to the higher-income status," he said, citing the case of Argentina and Greece, which fell into the trap.

Some Latin American countries went the reverse direction after reaching the middle-income status, van Trotsenburg said in an event to mark 50 years of partnership between Bangladesh and the World Bank.

From this perspective, Bangladesh needs to look at how countries like Korea and Singapore succeeded in levelling up to the higher income

bracket.

He liked the country's vision to double its per capita income by 2031 and in this way become an upper middle-income country.

But the country needs to continue with its reforms to strengthen its institutions so that they can serve the needs of a higher-income economy.

"We will support Bangladesh as it navigates through challenging and uncertain economic times brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the heightened climate challenges," he said.

Bangladesh can achieve long-term growth by strengthening reforms in the areas of macro-fiscal management, export diversification, financial sector, energy and climate resilience.

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There can be falling-out in a family

Says WB MD on Padma Bridge issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank's withdrawal from the Padma Bridge project over allegations of corruption was just a minor blip in what has so far been a smooth-sailing relationship, said its managing director of operations yesterday.

"If at one stage, one of your family members has a different view on something, that doesn't mean that you don't get along with him -- you are basically family," said Axel van Trotsenburg, the WB's managing director of operations, at a programme to mark 50 years of partnership with Bangladesh.

In 2011, the Washington-

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

TRANSPORT SECTOR PROJECTS

When coordination authority fails to coordinate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, also at the helm of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority, yesterday admitted the government agencies implementing transport sector projects in the capital lacked coordination.

The problem appears to be so serious that the DTCA governing council had to form a committee to coordinate the transport sector projects.

Quader's admission came after the 16th meeting of the council yesterday. The previous meeting was held almost one and a half years ago.

The committee is led by LGRD Minister Tazul Islam, and the other members include representatives from the Road Transport and Highways Division, two city corporations, Rajuk, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, shipping ministry, Water Development Board and DTCA.

Transport experts have repeatedly pointed out how the lack of coordination among project implementing agencies often became an impediment to implementation, necessitated changes in plan, and escalated cost.

The construction of the Hanif flyover was the main obstruction to the original route of Mass Rapid Transit

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Court bins BNP's case against DB, CTTC chiefs

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A BNP leader's case against top police officers was summarily dismissed by a Dhaka court yesterday.

A BNP executive committee member filed the case accusing the chiefs of Detective Branch and Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of police and others of vandalising the party's Nayapaltan office and looting valuables on December 7, 2022.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Rajesh Chowdhury dismissed it hours after Nazim Uddin Alam filed it in the morning, said a court employee, adding that the magistrate found no grounds to take cognisance of the case.

Accused in the case are DB chief Mohammad Harun-Or-Rashid, CTTC chief Md Asaduzzaman, DMP Additional Commissioner K Mohid Uddin, joint commissioners

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

An elderly man weeps during prayers as the second and final phase of the Biswa Ijtima ended on the banks of the Turag yesterday. Tens of thousands of Muslims attended and prayed together for the peace of the Ummah. The photo was taken on the Tongi Station Road. Story on page 3.

7YR-OLD MURDER MYSTERY

Turns out it's honour killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) has solved the mystery surrounding the murder of a young girl seven years ago.

Law enforcers recently arrested the girl's father, Kuddus Kha, as well as the man who aided him in the murder of Parul Akter, then a 10th grader.

PBI chief Banaj Kumar Majumder shared the findings during a press conference at the its headquarters yesterday.

In 2012, Parul left her Tangail home to get married to Nasir Uddin, 19. The newlywed couple moved to Ashulia on the outskirts of Dhaka and started working as garment workers.

However, Parul's father Kuddus never accepted this marriage.

As time went on, Parul started getting into fights with her husband. She would tell her father about this.

Kuddus then began trying to get his daughter to leave her husband. He told her that he would arrange her marriage again and that she would have a better life.

On July 18, 2015, Nasir went to see his grandmother. Parul called his father and as per his instructions, went to Tangail the next day, the PBI chief said.

On July 19, 2015, Nasir filed a general diary with the local police station, saying his wife was missing.

Kuddus also filed a case with a Tangail court accusing Nasir, his uncle, and his mother over her daughter's disappearance.

After failing to locate the girl, four investigation agencies, including PBI's Tangail unit, submitted a report to the court stating that the incident occurred in Dhaka.

Kuddus filed a no-confidence petition after the final report was submitted.

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Presidential election by February 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday said the presidential election will be held sometime between January 23 and February 23.

EC Secretary Jahangir Alam, after a meeting at the EC office, said the election process has already begun.

"We will contact the Parliament Secretariat and fix the date of a meeting between the chief election commissioner and the Speaker. The election will be held sometime between January 23 and February 23."

On April 24, 2018, President Abdul Hamid took oath as the head of the state for the second consecutive term, which will expire on April 24 this year.

Hamid's first five-year tenure had expired on the same date in 2018, after he took office in 2013.

According to article 123 of the constitution, the presidential election must be held 90 to 60 days before the expiry of the five-year term.

And as per the constitution, Hamid cannot become president for another term, as he was elected for two terms.

Speaking to reporters at her Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban office yesterday, SEE PAGE 6 COL.1

Bill to allow govt adjust power, gas prices placed in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The amendment to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission act that empowers the government to adjust the gas and electricity tariffs without hearing has been placed in the parliament yesterday.

Nasrul Hamid, the state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, placed the bill, which was then forwarded to the parliamentary standing committee on the power ministry for vetting.

The parliamentary watchdog has been asked to submit its report within five working days.

Earlier on January 5, Law Minister Anisul Huq placed the "Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (amendment) Ordinance, 2022" in the

SEE PAGE 6 COL.1



A car driver parks the vehicle on freshly installed paving slabs near Tejgaon Government High School in Farmgate area yesterday. This was done when workers were on the spot installing the tiles, disrupting their work too.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BIDEN'S HOME SEARCH

Six more classified docs found

AFP, Washington

Officials from the US Department of Justice found six more classified documents during a search of Joe Biden's family home in Delaware this week, the president's personal lawyer said in a statement Saturday.

The new disclosure served up another embarrassing twist for Biden in an affair dogging him just as he gets ready to declare whether he will run for another term in 2024.

Biden insists he has done nothing wrong and has downplayed the situation as an innocent mistake.

Documents from his time as vice president and marked as classified first turned up in an office at a Biden-affiliated think tank in Washington last year, and then again at his home in Delaware. Altogether they are about a dozen documents.

After the second find, the White House offered to let the Department of Justice search the Delaware home – the search was carried out on Friday and is now concluded, Biden attorney Bob Bauer said.

"DOJ took possession of materials it deemed within the scope of its inquiry, including six items consisting of documents with classification markings and surrounding materials," Bauer said.

The search lasted more than 12 hours and covered "all working, living and storage spaces in the home," Bauer said.



"DOJ had full access to the President's home, including personally handwritten notes, files, papers, binders, memorabilia, to-do lists, schedules, and reminders going back decades," he said.

Some of the new papers seized were from Biden's time in the Senate and some were

from his tenure as vice president, according to Bauer.

The White House has said the earlier batches of documents were turned over to the Justice Department and National Archives, which handles presidential records, as soon as they were found.

On Thursday, Biden dismissed the furor over the discovery of the old classified documents.

Asked by reporters during a trip to California about the issue, he said: "I think you're going to find there's nothing there."

"I have no regrets. I'm following what the lawyers have told me they want me to do. It's exactly what we're doing."

"We found a handful of documents... were filed in the wrong place. We immediately turned them over to the Archives and the Justice Department. We're fully cooperating and looking forward to getting this resolved quickly," he added.

Attorney General Merrick Garland earlier this month appointed a special counsel, former government lawyer Robert Hur, to act as special counsel for the investigation.

Still elusive after all these years

FROM PAGE 1

many go straight to those hospitals with minor illnesses, deterring the hospital's ability to properly treat critical and emergency patients.

They said a solid patient referral system could connect around 18,000 public and 16,000 private healthcare facilities with all other high-level hospitals countrywide.

NO TRUST IN PRIMARY CARE

About 5,000 union healthcare centres countrywide are supposed to be the first place for patients to go to. But none of them work 24/7 due to a lack of doctors and other support staff, health officials said.

Most of the upazila health complexes also fail to properly serve patients due to shortages of doctors, support staff, logistics, and inefficiency in hospital operations.

Without options, people rush to large hospitals in cities.

Joyal Abedin, 62, of Cumilla, had been suffering from chest pain for six months. He had no confidence in the upazila health complex or the medical college hospital in Cumilla. "There's no proper treatment there," he said.

He travelled 70km to Dhaka and stood in a queue of 500 patients at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD).

The NICVD doctor, Nurun Un Nobi Khandaker, said Abedin could have had treatment in his locality. "This is a specialised hospital that handles complex heart-related illnesses. But we have to handle a large number of patients with minor illnesses every day," he said, adding, "The rush could have been halved if these patients had visited primary healthcare hospitals first."

If there had been a patient referral system, Abedin would have been seen by a primary healthcare doctor first, who would have sent him for an ECG. After going through the results, the doctor, if needed, would have sent the patient to a better equipped hospital like NICVD. This would have saved travel costs and ensured timely treatment of the patient and reduced overcrowding of NICVD.

Prof Ahmedul Kabir, additional director general (administration) at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said poor services in primary healthcare facilities make for a great barrier to the referral system.

"Until we are able to provide quality services at the primary level and gain public trust, no matter what we say, the referral system will not be a reality."

WHY IT FAILS

Health experts believe that budget constraints, inefficiency, and a lack of commitment from policymakers to ensure quality healthcare have been the biggest impediments to the

introduction of the referral system.

Regarding the 2019 initiative to introduce the system in Manikganj and Chapainawabganj, Mohammad Zaved, deputy programme manager at hospital service management of the DGHS, said, "We only had two consultation meetings with healthcare staff in Manikganj, and could not progress further due to the pandemic."

But the 2016 initiative in Nilphamari and Rangpur, long before the pandemic, suffered a similar fate.

POLITICAL WILL

Experts say that developing a system to manage this massive network requires a political will and a proper budget that can ensure skilled workforce and necessary logistic support at the grassroots.

But keeping medical professionals in rural areas has been a big challenge.

The health and family welfare ministry issued a circular on August 27, 2021, proposing to extend the year-long internship programme for MBBS graduates to two years.

If the proposal had been adopted, the interns would have had to spend the second year at union-level healthcare centres.

The government, however, backtracked amid protests from interns and medical students.

"This was a very good move. But I don't know why the government retracted. It exposes a lack of political commitment," Gonoshasthaya Kendra Founder Zafarullah Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

He, however, said the rural healthcare centres were not suitable for interns and doctors to stay.

Currently, doctors under the government healthcare service are required to spend the first three years of their job in rural areas. In many cases, they do not stay the full three years, citing poor lodging facilities and a lack of other amenities.

"Healthcare professionals serving in rural areas are incentivised in developed countries. Unless the government incentivises medical students and professionals, they will not like to stay in rural areas. There are security issues too," Zafarullah said.

Syed Abdul Hamid, professor at the Institute of Health Economics (IHE) at Dhaka University, said secondary and tertiary hospitals need to be simultaneously readied before introducing the referral system.

"There are well-defined and established practices of referral systems in many countries. But the policymakers fail to understand it when they speak about the referral system," said Muhammad Abdus Sabur, adjunct faculty at the IHE of DU.

Prof Md Eshreshamul Huq Chowdhury, secretary general of

Bangladesh Medical Association, said the country's doctors would happily comply with any initiative to introduce a referral system.

"A referral system will pave the way for utilising the full capacity of our healthcare system and create more jobs," he said.

In India, there is no nationwide referral system, but many provinces have their own system that connects healthcare facilities at different levels, according to Shariful Haque, deputy programme manager (hospital service management) at the DGHS.

In England, the NHS e-Referral Service (e-RS) is a national digital platform through which patients are referred from primary care to elective care services. The e-RS allows patients to choose their first hospital or general practitioner.

WHAT NEXT

Currently, the hospital service management at the DGHS is working on a referral system, involving public and private facilities, in Manikganj and Gopalganj.

There will be a round-the-clock referral desk at each hospital where the staffers will connect patients to upper-level hospitals, said Borsha Jhinta Soren, deputy programme manager for the structural referral system at the DGHS.

"We have been designing this in a way that hospitals will stay ready with proper treatment arrangements so that patients don't struggle to get treatment in time," added Borsha.

Five die on roads

FROM PAGE 12

In a separate incident in Gazipur, a security guard of a garment factory died after a truck ran over him at Kaliakoir's Chandra area yesterday morning.

The deceased is Azadul Haque, 35, who hailed from Gaibandha's Govindaganj upazila, used to work for Mahmud Jeans Ltd.

The factory's security in charge Abu Taher Faruki said, the accident happened Azadul was trying to help the factory's workers cross the road in front of the factory around 7:50am.

Agitating workers set fire to the truck. The driver managed to flee the scene.

Vehicular movement on Dhaka-Tangail highway was suspended for nearly four hours as thousands of workers blockaded it. They also vandalised at least 30 vehicles, said Nitai Chandra Sarker, inspector, Gazipur Industrial Police.

Vehicular movement resumed around 12:00pm, he added.

Doctors can run private practice in workplace

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announcement as the government struggles to rein in private practices of the physicians.

To tackle the issue, the government had earlier formed a committee, headed by the Prof Md Sharfuiddin Ahmed, vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

The committee submitted a set of recommendations at yesterday's meeting, where leaders of Bangladesh Medical Association were also present, sources said.

Speaking to The Daily Star about yesterday's meeting, Sharfuiddin said, "We have told the government that stopping private practices will not be possible. But the health infrastructure can be used for institutional practices."

Under the institutional practice system, doctors of the public hospitals will be available to serve patients at the outdoor facilities until 6:00pm by rotation. It, however, will not be mandatory for them.

Besides, the laboratory service units will also remain open during that period, the recommendations said.

Patients will have to pay a fixed amount for taking services from the physicians, a portion of which will be given to the staffers working beyond regular hours. Any remaining amount will be deposited to the hospital's revenue account.

Sharfuiddin said, "We have asked the government to start piloting before introducing it countrywide."

The meeting also decided that a six-member high-level committee will fix a standard operating protocol in this regard.

The secretaries of the health services division, and the medical education and family welfare division of the health ministry, along with the director general of the health directorate, among others, were included in the committee as members.

Md Ehteshamul Huq Choudhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association, said, "We cordially welcome the government move. It will ensure efficient use of the resources at public hospitals. Many physicians will also benefit from it."

When coordination authority

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Line 6 in Sayedabad while Mouchak-Moghbar flyover was an obstruction to the planned Bus Rapid Transit Line-3 between the airport and Keraniganj.

Yesterday's DTCA meeting was held at its new building.

The DTCA is tasked with providing regular supervision and coordination for planning for all transportation infrastructure development work in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Manikganj, Gazipur and Narsingdi.

After the meeting, Quader said undertaking and implementing of different projects in Dhaka city lacked coordination, and other participants of the meeting made similar observations.

Quader did not directly answer when he was asked whether the new committee was formed because the DTCA failed to play its role as a coordinator.

"He [the LGRD minister] is a vital part of the DTCA ... We are not going beyond our jurisdiction. We have formed it [the committee] for better coordination ..."

Quader said. "This [lack of coordination] is a disease that requires better treatment."

There can be falling-out

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based multilateral lender committed to providing \$1.2 billion to build the Padma Bridge.

But in June 2012, it declined to sanction the loan after it found "credible evidence corroborated by a variety of sources" that pointed to a high-level corruption conspiracy among Bangladeshi government officials, SNC Lavalin executives and private individuals in connection with the project.

It imposed conditions for the continuation of loan talks with the government.

The conditions were: place all public officials suspected of involvement in the corruption scheme on leave from government employment until the investigation is completed; appoint a special inquiry team within the Anti-Corruption Commission to handle the investigation; and agree to provide full and adequate access to all investigative information to a panel appointed by the WB comprised of internationally recognised experts so that the panel can give guidance to the lenders on the progress, adequacy and fairness of the investigation.

The government refused the conditions and went ahead to build the bridge with its own resources.

In the meantime, the corruption

It was also decided at the meeting that construction works would be done before monsoon, and the city corporations would get prior notice before roads are dug and projects undertaken. However, similar decisions were made on earlier occasions as well.

Besides, it was decided that the prime minister's opinion would be sought regarding the expansion of DTCA jurisdiction.

The minister once again admitted the roads and transport sector lacked discipline. Referring to the construction of Padma Bridge, metro rail, six-lane roads, flyovers, he said, "All these developments will come to nought if we fail to bring discipline on roads," he added.

LGRD Minister Tazul Islam, Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, State Minister for Housing and Public Works Sharif Ahmed, Narayanganj City Corporation Mayor Salina Hayat Ivy, secretaries of different ministries and divisions, top police officials, chief of different government agencies and leaders of transport associations took part the closed-door meeting.

allegations were thrown out in a Canadian Court on a technicality and the prosecution decided not to pursue the case further.

At the time of the Padma Bridge tussle, the Washington-based multilateral lender was annually committing to \$1 billion, said the Dutch-Austrian national who is in Dhaka on a three-day tour. In recent years, the WB has been committing to more than \$2 billion a year.

"In IDA19 that just concluded, we committed to \$4.5 billion in two years. Sometimes you find stones in your shoe and you take the stones out and you walk on. You walk together and do more – that is our philosophy," van Trotsenburg said.

In 50 years, the WB has committed about \$42 billion for 365 projects.

"If there is one project where you don't continue, you need to put that into perspective. You need to take a long view."

The WB believes passionately in the development of Bangladesh and improving the prosperity of the nation, he said.

"We have always said that we are going to be a long-term partner. In some topics there can be ups and downs and differences – I think one needs to see in the spirit of cooperation."

1 dead after being hit by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A young man was killed, and two others were injured, after being hit by a train at the Brahmanbaria Railway Station in Poniout area on Saturday.

They were playing games on their mobile phones while sitting on the railway tracks with their headphones on.

The dead was identified as Rimjhim, 20. The injured are Arafat Mia, 22, and Al-Amin alias Dipu, 25.

Hatem Ali Bhuiyan, SI and in-charge of Brahmanbaria Railway Police Outpost, said, "The three were on the tracks around 11:30pm. As they had their headphones on, none of them heard the incoming Surma mail train."

"Rimjhim was crushed under the wheels and died on the spot. The others were critically injured ... Locals rescued them and took them to Brahmanbaria General Hospital."

No Covid death in 24hrs, positivity rate 0.41pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No Covid-19 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, said a press release by the Directorate General of Health Services.

This means, the total number of Covid deaths in the country remains at 29,441, with the mortality rate at 1.44 percent.

Meanwhile, at least 11 new cases were reported during the same period after testing 2,674 samples across the country, raising the total number of cases to 20,37,444, the release added.

At least 199 patients have recovered during this time, with the number of recoveries now at 19,90,960.

1 killed, 2 hurt after sand pile collapses on them

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A worker was killed and two others were injured after they were crushed under a sand pile at a sand unloading station in Tangail's Bhuanpur upazila yesterday.

The dead was identified as Rashedul Islam, 25.

Masudul Haque Masud, chairman of Nikrail union parishad, said the incident occurred at Sarpolshia area around 4:00am, when the sand pile collapsed on the three while they were working.

Rashedul died on the spot and the two others were sent to the local hospital.

Faridul Islam, OC of Bhuanpur police, said Rashedul's body was handed over to his family after autopsy.

Boi Mela to kick off Feb 1 after 3 years

Last minute preparations underway at venues

DIPAN NANDY

In the last two years, Amar Ekushey Boi Mela has been marred by fears, delays, and uncertainties caused by the pandemic. However, Bangla Academy hopes that this year's book fair will return to its former glory with life getting back on track.

Bangla Academy has decided to hold this year's Boi Mela from February 1, the usual date, after three long years, sending a message to bookworms that this edition will be a special one for them.

The 2022 edition was held between February 15 to March 28 with strict Covid-19 restrictions in place, as the country was coming off fresh from the enforced lockdown due to Covid-19 in the first two weeks of February. In 2021, it started on March 18 due to the pandemic and also ended early — on April 12, instead of April 14 — due to a countrywide lockdown.

Although the fair starts on February 1 every year, the tradition was first broken in 2020 because of the Dhaka City Corporation elections. That year, the event started on February 2.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will be present in person and inaugurate this year's book fair on February 1. As the event is knocking at the door, Bangla Academy and publishing houses are currently busy with last minute preparations. The construction of stages and book stalls are going on in full swing at the premises of Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan.

This year, 858 stalls and 38 pavilions of 609

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Last-minute preparations are underway for this year's Ekushey Boi Mela at the Suhrawardy Udyan. After three years, the largest congregation of bookworms will kick off on February 1. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

War, sanction must not affect food

Agriculture minister urges developed countries at Berlin conference

UNB, Dhaka

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque has urged developed countries to keep food and agricultural products out of the purview of wars and sanctions.

Developed countries should be more responsible and proactive in ensuring global food security, the minister said at the 15th Berlin Agriculture Ministers Conference in Germany on Saturday.

Bangladesh is a victim of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, he said, adding that as a result of this war, price of fertiliser has quadrupled, and price of food grains has increased significantly — impacting food security.

"I call upon the developed world to take flexible, unbureaucratic,

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Second phase of Ijtema ends with prayer for peace

STAR REPORT

Tens of thousands of Muslims raised their hands seeking forgiveness and blessings for mankind as the second phase of Biswa Ijtema on the banks of Turag concluded yesterday with the final supplication — Akheri Munajat.

Yusuf bin Saad Kandhalvi, the eldest son of Maulana Saad Kandhalvi of Delhi, conducted the final prayers, which lasted for 29 minutes starting from 12:16pm. The gathering of devotees of all ages spilled onto the adjacent roads during the prayer. A pin-drop silence prevailed in the virtual sea of humanity, with the prayers being offered through loudspeakers.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Many people joined the prayers from rooftops of vehicles and buildings, from open fields and from nearby houses and roads.

Devotees who could not reach the venue joined the prayers through cell phones and electronic media. The first phase of the Ijtema ended on January 15.

Religious scholars from home and abroad also delivered sermons on Islamic philosophy in light of the holy Quran and Hadith.

Since yesterday morning, devotees from the surrounding areas started gathering at the venue in

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DU regular master's now open for all

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

From now on, students who have completed their bachelor's from Bangladeshi universities will be able to enrol into the regular master's programmes of Dhaka University.

The students will be able to enrol in any academic year of their choice, regardless of when they completed their bachelor's.

But only students who have passed bachelor's with a CGPA of 3.25 will be able to apply for the DU master's programmes, said a recent syndicate-approved admission guideline.

Students will also need to meet the minimum requirements for SSC and HSC results set for the DU admission test for undergraduate degrees.

And these aspirants will have to sit for a 100-mark written and viva test for empty seats available following the admission process DU students face.

Talking to The Daily Star, DU Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, "We are allowing students who have completed bachelor's from other public and UGC-approved universities to create lifelong learning opportunities for all and ensure inclusiveness."

Private universities are also approved by UGC, so students who have completed their undergraduate programmes will be eligible, he added. "Students will get the scope to study the subjects of their choice through this."

Currently, only students who have graduated from DU get the opportunity to pursue a master's, that too in only their respective departments.



AT A GLANCE

- Students with bachelor's from any Bangladeshi univ eligible
- They can enrol in any academic year of choice; min required CGPA 3.25
- Aspirants will have to sit for 100-mark written, viva test
- DU students can also enrol in different dept's master's courses
- Students with bachelor's degrees from overseas univs can also enrol

Some seats in master's programmes remain vacant since all regular students do not enrol after graduation. The fees for master's would remain the same for both outsiders and former DU students, said Prof Sitesh Chandra Bachar, dean of DU's pharmacy faculty.

There are 6,270 master's seats at DU's 83 departments and 13 institutes. A large number of seats remain vacant, as many drop out to go abroad or join jobs.

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2,605 posts vacant in govt medical colleges

Health minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque told parliament yesterday that there are 2,605 posts vacant in government medical colleges in the country, against approved cadre posts of 5,589.

He made the comment while replying to a query from a ruling Awami League lawmaker.

The minister said teachers are not appointed directly in the medical colleges. The medical officers are appointed subject-wise as lecturers.

Responding to another question from AL MP Didarul Alam, he said about twice the number of patients are currently receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, which has a bed-capacity of 2,600.

"The government has planned to raise the number of beds at DMCH to 5,000 to ensure better service," the minister said.

Responding to another query, he said the number of HIV patients currently detected in the country is 9,708. Of them, 6,075 are under treatment.

UTTARA GIRDER ACCIDENT Chinese company gives families Tk 1.4cr compensation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Chinese company that was found responsible for the accident at Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line-3 project site in August last year paid Tk 1.4 crore to the victims' families as compensation.

Three families received compensation around one and a half months ago, following negotiation between the company and family members, said Shafiqul Islam, managing director of Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company.

Five people, including two children, were crushed to death when a crane toppled over, making a box girder segment fall on a car on Dhaka Mymensingh highway in the capital's Uttara on August 15 last year.

A probe committee, led by Neelima Akhter, additional secretary of the road transport and highways division, held Chinese contractor China Gezhouba Group Co Ltd responsible for negligence.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

8 hospitalised with dengue in 24 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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

With the new figure, the total number of dengue cases rose to 475, while the total number of deaths this year stands at six, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Meanwhile, 65 patients are being treated and 403 have been released from hospitals so far.

Experts have urged authorities concerned to conduct extensive drives identifying clusters of Aedes mosquitoes since the beginning of the lean period.



A woman stares in horror as she stands close to a moving bus while crossing the road. Despite the fact that there's a footover bridge just a few yards away, time and again pedestrians choose to cross roads in such a dangerous manner, putting their lives on the line just to save a few seconds. This photo was taken in the capital's Shyamoli area yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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Boi Mela to kick off Feb 1

FROM PAGE 3
organisations have been allocated, confirmed Bangla Academy sources. **PREMISES DIVIDED INTO FOUR PARTS**
The fair premises at Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan have been divided into four parts. Those are Chittaranjan Saha Chattar, named after the owner of Muktaadhara Prakashani; Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Chattar; Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Chattar; and Sheikh Russel Shishu Chattar. While Chittaranjan Saha Chattar will be located at Bangla Academy, the other three will be at the Uddyan.

Stalls and pavilions that were set up towards the Institute of Engineers last year, would be brought to the Uddyan this year. There will be a writer's stage, an open stage, prayer place and food shops inside the Uddyan.

The entry point of the Uddyan, opposite to the

Bangla Academy entrance, which was in place last year, will only be there as an exit point this year.

Visitors can enter the Uddyan through the main gate located opposite to the TSC intersection of DU, and another gate in the middle.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid said, "Some rearrangements have been made to make the life of visitors even easier. We are happy with our preparations so far."

KM Muzahidul Islam, member secretary of the fair-management committee, said, "Due to the ongoing construction of the metro rail station located on the road between Suhrawardy Udyan and Bangla Academy, the stall decoration and style of the fair have been changed."

Besides, digital placards will be in place at the fair instead of banners and festoons.

"Stalls and pavilions

were allotted to the publications through a lottery on Sunday. The publishing houses will have to complete the work of their stall and pavilion by January 29," he noted.

TASKFORCE TO ENFORCE BOOK FAIR POLICY

For the first time ever, the authorities have decided to form a taskforce that will decide which books are publishable. The publications participating in the fair will have to follow that policy. A taskforce has been formed to enforce this."

KM Khalid said, "There is a policy on which books are publishable. The publications participating in the fair will have to follow that policy. A taskforce has been formed to enforce this."

"An office has also been set up at the fair for the taskforce members. They will take action as per rules," he mentioned. Khalid, however, added that formation of the taskforce will not curb freedom of expression and free thinking.

Tea estate ignites wildfire

FROM PAGE 5
their shelter. What's worse is that many animals have already died," he added.

Md Khalilur Rahman, forest range officer at Kalenga Range in Habiganj, told this correspondent that he saw the devastation himself. He said they will take action as per the instructions of high-ups.

Monirul H Khan, professor of zoology department at Jahangirnagar University, also an eminent wildlife expert, said, "Rema-Kalenga is the largest wildlife sanctuary in the greater Sylhet region, where many endangered species are spotted. If the fire is not

controlled, the biodiversity will be hampered."

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, divisional forest officer of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department in Sylhet, said, "These trees are being cut without permission from the Forest Department. Measures will be taken in this regard."

Moin Uddin, manager of the tea garden, declined to comment when this correspondent contacted him several times.

Terming the incident barbaric, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association,

said, "This is illegal and punishable. The government should set precedence by punishing the perpetrators. This goes against Article 18 A of the Constitution, which commits to protecting wildlife."

"If justice is not ensured against such gross violation, constitutional commitment becomes unfulfilled," she remarked.

Sylhet DFO Md Taufiqul Islam said, "I asked the tea garden authorities to stop cutting the trees. But they haven't obliged even after three days. I have sent our officer. Legal action will be taken if they fail to give proper justification."

DU regular master's now open

FROM PAGE 3
Besides, he said DU students will now be allowed to enrol into the master's programmes of departments other than the ones they did their bachelor's in.

Departments and institutes will hold admission tests separately and will enrol students from a merit list. Students who have undergraduate degrees from universities

overseas will also be allowed to enrol.

These students will not get residential facilities. But this provision can be relaxed for the foreign students.

"The number of seats available for fresh enrolment in masters courses can be increased or decreased considering the capacity of the departments concerned as well as national and global demand. In that case, the

authorities will have to take prior approval of the academic council following due procedure," added the guideline.

Departments will be able to enrol students outside Dhaka University in the master's programmes from the academic year 2022-23, said DU pro-VC Prof ASM Maksud Kamal.

Normally, master's admission goes on between February and March.

Second phase of Ijtema ends

FROM PAGE 3
processions to take part in the Akheri Munajat.

Various offices, educational institutions and factories had been declared closed for the day.

Devotees came to the Ijtema Maidan on foot as movement of vehicles from Tongi to Bhogra bypass on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, Kamarpura Road, and the Abdullahpur to Baipal section on Ashulia Road was suspended from 6:00am.

Ainuddin, a resident of Mulna village of Shariatpur, said like every year, he came to the Ijtema ground to participate in the Akheri Munajat with 13 others from his area.

Manzu Sikdar of Gazipur said he could not attend the Ijtema during the first

phase for which he came to attend the second one.

Meanwhile, five devotees have so far died at the Ijtema venue during the second phase.

At the end of the prayers, devotees were seen climbing on the roof of trains risking their lives to head back home. Devotees from Gazipur and Dhaka's surrounding areas left for home on foot instead of waiting for vehicles. Many returned in overcrowded buses and pickups.

Meanwhile, the metro rail provided services from 8:00am to 5:00pm yesterday for smooth movement of the devotees.

Security was beefed up ahead of the Akheri Munajat. Uniformed and plainclothes police and members of Rab and

intelligence agencies were deployed in and around the Ijtema ground to ensure devotees' security, said Gazipur Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mollah Nazrul Islam.

Deputy Commissioner of Gazipur Anisur Rahman expressed his gratitude to everyone for successfully completing the two phases of Ijtema.

Acting mayor of Gazipur City Corporation Asadur Rahman Kiran said around 600 cleaners were deployed round the clock during the time. Tablighi Jamaat has been organising Biswa Ijtema every year since 1946. In 2011, the organisers had split the congregation into two phases to deal with overcrowding and ensure better management and security.

Still no

FROM PAGE 5
Locomotive master Manik Islam said they have to slow trains down due to this situation. "Truly, we cross the bridge amid risk as the condition of the age-old bridge is so vulnerable that it may just collapse."

Lalmonirhat Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Western Railway Abdus Salam said, "The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council has yet not approved the project. So funds have not been allocated yet, hence the delay."

He, however, hoped that they will get necessary funds to implement the project soon, as the bridge is very important because it acts as a connecting point of two districts – Lalmonirhat and Kurigram.

Physical work now

FROM PAGE 5
Tokyu Construction Co Ltd, Japanese firm, and Max Infrastructure Ltd of Bangladesh is set to complete the work within 910 days for Tk 607.65 crore.

Once the MRT Line-1 is completed, it will be able to carry 8 lakh passengers daily. The official deadline

for the project is December 2026, according to the project documents.

The 31.24km rail line will have two parts – a 19.87km part from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Kamalapur will be underground, and around a 11.36km part will be elevated from Notunbazar to Purbachal.

War, sanction must

FROM PAGE 3
and fast steps to mitigate this negative impact," he told the conference.

Highlighting state measures to ensure food security in the future, Razzaque said the Bangladesh government is working to build a developed, sustainable, and climate-tolerant agricultural system, through which food security will be sustainable, nutritious food will be ensured, and farmers will have a better life.

The conference was held on the last day of the four-day (January

18-21) 15th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA), organised by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Agriculture ministers of more than 70 countries and representatives of 10 international organisations participated in this conference.

A "joint manifesto (communiqué)" titled "Food System Transformation: A Worldwide Response to Multiple Crises" was also announced by high-level representatives and agriculture ministers of the countries.

Govt served notice

FROM PAGE 5
transmission to a Magistrate, or to the scene of an enquiry, and also under-trial prisoners, shall not be subjected to more restraint than is necessary to prevent their escape. The use of handcuffs or ropes is often an unnecessary indignity".

That Article 35 (5) of the constitution of Bangladesh provides that no person shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment

or treatment and keeping an accused person under bar fetters while producing before the court is not allowed by the law, the lawyers said in the legal notice.

Advocate Asad Uddin told The Daily Star that if the notice receivers don't take necessary steps in line with the legal notice's requirement, a petition will be moved before the High Court seeking necessary directives on them.


Chinese company

FROM PAGE 3
A case was filed over the incident and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader in October last year said Gezhouba would not be allowed to work in Bangladesh after completion of the project.

Replying to a question, Shafiqul said the company

is ready to provide additional compensation if the court, where the case is now pending, imposes on it.

Meanwhile, authorities have already informed about the development regarding compensation to the Asian Development Bank, the major financier of the project.



বিসম
বাংলাদেশ এয়ারলাইন্স
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Biman BANGLADESH AIRLINES

Tender Notice

Ref. No: 30.34.0000.035.28.002.23.24 Date: 21 January 2023

BIMAN BANGLADESH AIRLINES LIMITED.		
01. Tender Invitation for	Performing Re-delivery C-Check Package on BOMBARDIER MODEL DHC-8-402 aircraft S2-AJW (MSN-4208).	
02. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method.	
03. Budget and Source of Fund	Biman Own Fund.	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
04. Tender Publication Date	23 January 2023	
	Date	Time
05. Tender Closing Date and Time	19 February 2023	1400 LT.
06. Tender Opening Date and Time	19 February 2023	1430 LT.
	Note: In case of opening date is declared as public holiday, Tender opening will take place on the next working day.	
07. Availability of Tender Documents	Download from Biman website: www.biman-airlines.com	
08. Submission of Tender at	(a) Tender may be sent by Courier to the Office of Director Engineering and Material Management, Biman Engineering Hangar Complex, HSIA, Dhaka-1229, or (b) Tender Box will be kept at entrance gate of Bangladesh Airlines Training Centre (BATC), Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka, or (c) Tender may also be sent electronically through e-mail: for Technical offer to <dash8-q400rdctch@bdbiman.com > & for Financial offer to <dash8-q400rdcln@bdbiman.com>	
09. Opening Place of Tender	Conference Room, 2 nd Floor, Bangladesh Airlines Training Centre (BATC), HSIA, Dhaka-1229, Bangladesh	
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER		
	The Tenderer shall provide following Information/Technical Documents and must agree with the following terms and conditions:	
	(a) Tenderer must be Airlines (having approved MRO) or approved MRO located in Asia/Europe having Certificate of Approval(s) from (i) FAA or EASA and (ii) local Regulatory Authority.	
	(b) Tenderer shall have minimum 05 (Five) years working experience for performing Re-delivery C-Check or equivalent check on Bombardier MODEL DHC-8-402 aircraft. Tenderer shall have an experience on C-Check or equivalent checks at least 03 (Three) of DHC 8-400 series aircraft within the last 05 (Five) years from 2018 to 2022.	
10. Tenderer Qualifications	(c) The Tenderer shall possess the necessary qualified & certifying staff for performing C-Check of BOMBARDIER MODEL DHC-8-400 aircraft including Engine Removal & Installation (R & I), Engine Ground run (EGR) & Video Borescope (BSI).	
	(d) The Tenderer shall have requisite facilities, necessary equipment for C-Check, tools, adequate maintenance supporting equipment, engine removal & installation tools & stand/dolly, spare parts, consumables & expendables for performing Re-delivery Check Package on Bombardier MODEL DHC-8-402 Aircraft as described in the work package.	
	(e) A Tender submitted by the Tenderer having Joint Venture, Consortium or Association is not acceptable.	
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
11. Name of Official Inviting Tender	Air Commodore Md. Moazzem Hossain	
12. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Director Engineering & Material Management	
13. Address of Official Inviting Tender	Biman Engineering Hangar Complex, HSIA, Dhaka-1229, Bangladesh.	
14. Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Phone: +880-2-8901313, Fax: +880-2-8901639 E-mail: debiman@bdbiman.com	
15. Biman reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders.		

Visit Biman website: www.biman-airlines.com

Director Engineering & Material Management

GD-103

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Land Administration Training Centre
Ministry of Land
277/5/A, Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam Sarani
Nilkhet, Katabon Dhal, Dhaka-1205
www.latc.gov.bd


Memo No. 31.04.0000.000.07.007.2022-81 Date: 22/01/2023

**Invitation for Tender
Open Tender Method
e-Tender Notice No.**


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.	Tender ID	Package No.	Name of work	Tender last selling (date & time)	Tender opening & closing (date & time)
1	780949	01	Procurement of Wifi Router, UPS, Printer Toner, Pendrive, Mouse, Anti Virus etc.	06-February-2023 17:00	07-February-2023 11:30


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. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal, e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) also interested persons can communicate with the undersigned during office hours.


Khan A. Sobur Khan
Assistant Director (Development & Service)
Land Administration Training Centre
Dhaka-1205
Phone: 58610596

GD-106



এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড
৩৯৫-৩৯৭, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা
ঢাকা-১২০৮।



দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ইডিসিএল নিম্নোক্ত আইটেম সমূহের প্রকৃত প্রস্তুতকারী/সরবরাহকারীদের (সংশ্লিষ্ট ব্যবসার সাথে জড়িত) নিকট হইতে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহবান করছে:-


ক্রমিক নং	দরপত্র নং ও তারিখ	বিবরণ	পরিমান
০১।	ইডিসিএল/ক্রয়/লোকাল/টেন্ডার/ ২০২৩/৫৪ তারিখঃ ২২/০১/২০২৩ইং	Magnesium Stearate BP (সিডিউল মোতাবেক)	২,০০০ কেজি
সিকিউরিটি/ আর্নেট মানি	দরপত্র শিডিউলের মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য)	দরপত্র গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়
২.৫%	টাকা ১,০০০.০০ প্রতি সেট	০২/০২/২০২৩ইং বেলা ১২-০০ ঘটিকা	০২/০২/২০২৩ইং বেলা ১২-১৫ ঘটিকা

সকল কার্যদিবসে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে উপরোক্ত কার্যালয় হইতে শর্ত ও নিয়মাবলীসহ দরপত্র সিডিউল ক্রয় করা যাইবে।
উল্লেখ্য যে, যাদের ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন নাই তাদের দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণ করার প্রয়োজন নাই।

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(সাইজ: ৫ ইঞ্চি X ৪ কলাম)

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e-Tender Notice

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

Sl. No.	Re-Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last Date and Time of Tender Security Submission	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	682059	Supply of Instruments of Physics, Botany and Zoology Labs and Related Services	09/02/2023; 3:00 pm	09/02/2023; 4:00 pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP 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 08/02/2023 at 4:00 pm.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP Held Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


Principal
Rangamati Govt. College
Phone: 02333372063
e-Mail: rgcchtd@yahoo.com

GD-105

Still no replacement for risky rail bridge

Construction of new one over Teesta in Lalmonirhat in limbo

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

It has been two decades since the longevity of Teesta Railway Bridge in Lalmonirhat's Sadar upazila expired. But till this day, hundreds of people cross the bridge daily, risking their lives.

Known as the gateway to Lalmonirhat and Kurigram from Rangpur, the structure was constructed as a 2,100-foot-long railway bridge over the river in 1901, with an expected lifespan of 100 years, according to officials of Lalmonirhat Railway Division, adding that at least 10 trains use the bridge every day.

Earlier, heavy vehicles like buses used to ply the wooden docks installed on the bridge. But a separate bridge was constructed beside the railway bridge in 2012 for vehicles, as the latter was in a vulnerable state.

Five years ago, the railway ministry said that a project was finalised to construct a new railway bridge over Teesta river considering the risks attached with the present dilapidated bridge.

Confirming the development, in 2019, then railways minister Nurul Islam Sujan visited the expired bridge and assured everyone that a new bridge with broad-gauge track would be constructed soon. The current bridge was built with metre-gauge track.

Design of the broad gauge railway is being prepared, railway sources confirmed. But even after five years, the construction is yet to begin.

The spans of Teesta Railway Bridge have become vulnerable. The bridge vibrates while the trains move. Conductors fear a terrible tragedy may occur any time.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



This bridge in Lalmonirhat's Sadar upazila was constructed in 1901, with an expected lifespan of 100 years. But even two decades after its expiration, authorities have done little to replace this structure, and so, commuters have no choice but to use this structure to cross Teesta river. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

UNDERGROUND METRO RAIL

Physical work now set to start on Feb 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The date for starting the physical work of country's first-ever underground metro rail line has been deferred to February 2 from January 26.

ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of Road Transport and Highways Division, and MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd, confirmed the date with The Daily Star last night.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was supposed to open the works on January 26, but she will be occupied with a prior programme on that day. Therefore, she will open the construction works on February 2, said Nuri.

DMTCL, the implementing agency of the metro rail project, has already signed a contract with Japan-Bangladesh joint-venture firm to develop the depot.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Ishraque gets bail in arson case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to BNP leader Ishraque Hossain after his surrender before it in an arson case filed in November 2020.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Arafatul Rakib passed the order after Ishraque, also a former mayoral candidate of Dhaka South City Corporation, appeared before the court and sought bail.

On December 5 last year, another Dhaka court cancelled his bail and issued arrest warrant against him as he remained absent and submitted a time petition through his lawyer.

Ishraque was arrested on April 6 last year in the same case while distributing leaflets protesting the price hike of essentials. He was released on bail on April 12 the same year.

The prosecution alleged that a group of leaders led by Ishraque gathered in front of Bangladesh Bank Colony intending to carry out subversive activities in the city's Motijheel area on November 12, 2020. Later a case was filed against Ishraque and 31 others.

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 23

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:30	12:45	4:15	5:43	7:15
JAMAAT 6:05	1:15	4:30	5:47	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Tea estate ignites wildfire, kills scores of animals



In an attempt to clear their leased land, authorities of Hatimara Tea Garden set trees in the area ablaze. Eventually, the fire spread over to Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary, killing dozens of wild animals. Despite such a devastating occurrence, the tea estate kept on setting trees on fire. Many of the burnt animals took shelter at local households while many that perished were buried. Some of the images obtained by this newspaper were too graphic to publish.

MINTU DESHWARA

Hatimara Tea Garden took lease of a land near Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila some years ago. The place was a safe habitat for wildlife and hosted century-old trees... up until January 19, 2023.

All hell broke loose on the day when the tea estate decided to expand their garden in the most heinous way possible, according to locals and environment activists.

To clear their leased area, authorities of the estate set the trees ablaze, basically igniting a wildfire that spread over to

the sanctuary – killing dozens of animals. The uprooted trees, helpless screams of wildlife, and burnt corpses of animals could not stop the tea company. It was still “clearing the land”, still setting trees on fire, as of filing this report yesterday evening.

As shocking as it may sound, local administrations have not intervened even though three days have passed since this started, signing the death warrants of countless wild animals in the process, locals alleged.

Visiting the area yesterday, this correspondent saw charred bodies of capped langurs, barking deer, Indian civets, hilly

mynas, squirrels, herons and countless other wildlife lying in different places of what was once their homes. Locals buried many of them in the last three days.

Besides, around three hectares of forestland have been burnt to ashes, while animals were spotted running here and there frantically.

“Some of the animals took shelter in our homes,” said Nanu Mia, a local. “A monkey entered my house on Sunday at noon. The animal was scared as its tail was burnt.”

Seeking anonymity, another local said, “We didn't see any official from the local administration or forest



PHOTO: COLLECTED

department at the spot in the last three days to douse the fire or take action against the perpetrators.”

The tea estate has uprooted at least 140 trees from the forest during this time, the locals added.

Biswajit Bhattacharjee Bapan, coordinator of Mita Foundation, an environmental organisation, said, “The abandoned land where Hatimara Tea Garden is expanding its estate was a sanctuary for barking deer. Deer love eating the fruit of a tree called aula. Trees of this species have also been cut down.”

“As 140 trees were cut down and set on fire, several species of monkeys, apes, deer and pigs lost

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Govt served notice to stop illegal use of cuffs, fetters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supreme Court lawyers yesterday served a legal notice on the government to ensure that suspects and convicts are not illegally handcuffed or bar-fettered.

It asked the government to formulate a guideline in 15 working days.

Md Asad Uddin sent the legal notice on behalf of nine other lawyers to the secretaries concerned of the ministries of home and law; and inspector generals of the police and prisons, saying that flagrant abuses of bar fetters and handcuffs are regularly and repeatedly occurring in the country. Those horrifying events have been reported by most of the electronic and print media.

“Precautionary measures can be taken only by keeping with handcuff if there is a visible chance of escape. Therefore, the recent flagrant abuses of bar fetters and handcuffs are beyond permissible in law,” they said in the legal notice.

In the legal notice, the lawyers said according to section 46 of the Prisons Act, of 1894, a prisoner can be kept under bar fetters and handcuffs, if he is guilty of any prison offences set out in section 45 of the said Act.

Sections 56 to 58 provide that bar fetters can be given to a prisoner for ensuring his security but that action must not be made mechanically. It needs to be informed and sanctioned by the Inspector General of Prisons, they said in the legal notice, adding that these provisions are applicable inside the prisons.

Section 330 (a) of the Bengal Police Regulation, 1943 says, “Prisoners arrested by the police for

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Article 35 (5) of the constitution of Bangladesh provides that no person shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment and keeping an accused person under bar fetters while producing before the court is not allowed by the law.

31 Jamaat, Shibir men held in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police arrested 31 Jamaat-Shibir men on charge of “subversive activities” in Dinajpur town yesterday morning.

Police also seized bus in connection with the incident.

Tanvirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Dinajpur Sadar Police Station, said a bus carrying the Jamaat-Shibir men came to Station Road area in the town around 7:00am. Getting off the bus, they gathered in the station area.

Being informed, a police team raided the spot and arrested them. Police produced them before a court yesterday afternoon, which sent them to jail.



A woman along with her child crosses the shaky bamboo-made bridge over the Kabodak river at Jalilpur village in Jhenidah's Moheshpur upazila, risking their lives.

PHOTO: STAR

Makeshift bamboo bridge only option for Jhenidah villagers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

People of six villages in Jhenidah's Moheshpur upazila have been suffering for years in absence of a permanent bridge over Kabodak river.

As there is no alternative, about 25,000 residents of the villages have to cross the river using a makeshift bamboo bridge in Jalilpur-Jughihuda area.

Locals said earlier, villagers used to cross on boats, but they have been using the bamboo bridge, built by the community, for the last 25 years.

In absence of a permanent bridge, farmers have been incurring losses, as they cannot carry their produce to nearby Jalilpur Bazar.

Mentionable, locals rebuilt the makeshift bridge last year, as it collapsed while authorities were re-excavating the river.

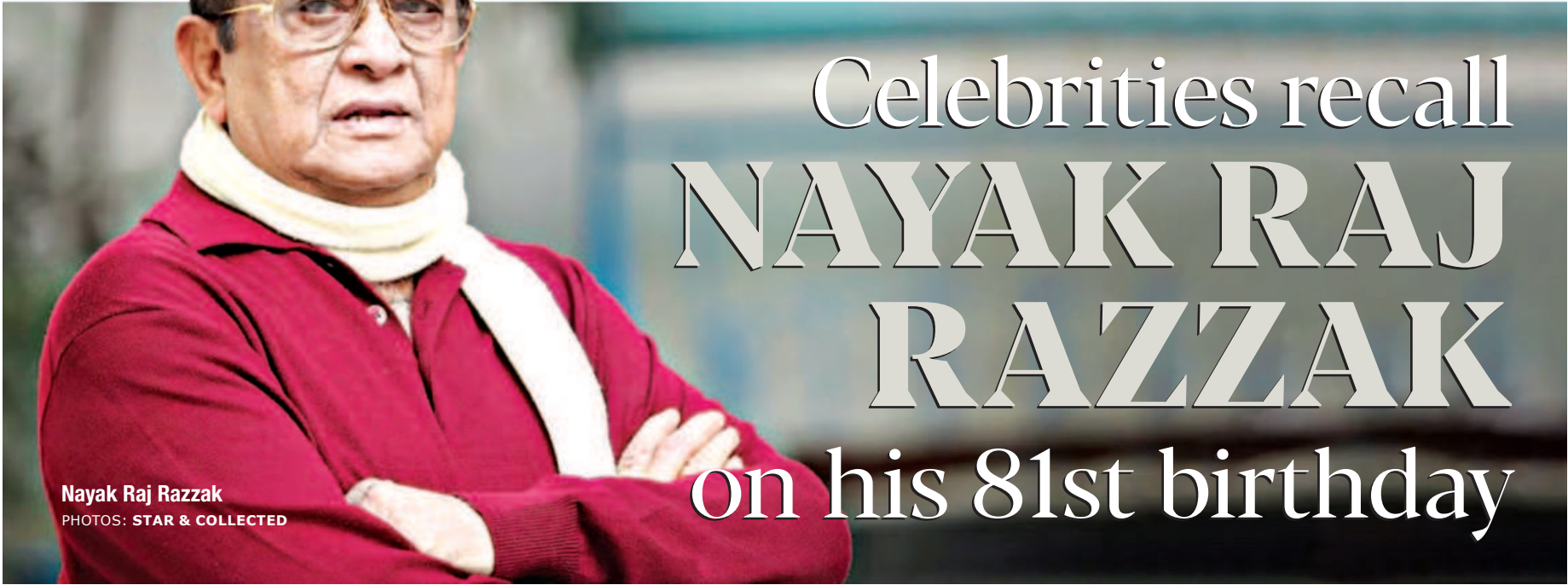
Thousands of people of Jalilpur, Jughihuda, Kadamtala, Saratala, Nimtala, and Berermath villages are compelled to use the unsafe bridge.

Hundreds of students also use the bamboo bridge every day as there is a college, a primary school, a secondary school and two madrasas in Jalilpur area.

MA Asad, a lecturer at Moheshpur Poura Women's College, said it is quite difficult for students to go to the institution during monsoon. Elderly Shefali Begum said she trembles in fear every time she uses the bamboo bridge.

Moheshpur Municipality Mayor Abdul Rashid Khan said the risky bridge often leads to severe accidents.

Moheshpur Upazila LGED Engineer Sayed Sahriar Akash said they have sent a proposal to the ministry concerned to build a 100-metre-long concrete bridge in Jalilpur area.



The legend passed away on August 21, 2017. Today would have been his 81st birthday. Even so many years later, renowned celebrities including Alamgir, Nutan, Babita, and Ilias Kanchan still remember the maestro fondly.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

The legendary Nayak Raj Razzak ruled over the silver screen and the hearts of audiences with his memorable performances. From *Rongbaaz* to *Behula*, the actor created an indomitable place in the film industry, with movies that can only be called classics. He wasn't just an actor, but also a fatherly figure to the entire film industry.

The legend passed away on August 21, 2017. Today would have been his 81st birthday. Even after so many years, renowned celebrities including Alamgir, Nutan, Babita, and Ilias Kanchan still remember the maestro fondly.



Babita

Razzak was a philosopher: Alamgir

Nayak Raj Razzak was a friend and philosopher, who guided me throughout my journey in the industry. I first got to meet him in 1972, when he was my co-artist on my first film, *Amar Jonmohumi*.

Although there was an age difference between us, we still shared a wonderful relationship. I took his passion and dedication for acting to heart.

Watching him, I learned that one should strive for any role, no matter how big or small. The character has to be properly captured in a performer's heart. Then, you have to

go in front of the camera and give your best performance.

I didn't learn acting through pen and paper, I learned it from the long and meaningful conversations with Razzak *bhai*.

Razzak bhai was my guardian: Nutan

I wouldn't have become an artiste if it wasn't for Razzak *bhai*. He was like a father figure to me and he acted as a guardian angel for the entire film industry.

Usually, I was cast as the second lead in

Later on, I got to work opposite Razzak *bhai* in a film, which was also directed by Zahir Raihan. This time, the movie had a romantic scene, which made me blush. How could I be romantic with someone who played my father on-screen? However, Razzak *bhai* was very supportive, and helped ease me into the situation.

He was great as an actor, as well as a person.

He loved me like his own son: Ilias Kanchan

Nayak Raj Razzak was a father figure in the



Ilias Kanchan



Nutan



Alamgir

many movies. However, Razzak *bhai* would cast me as the lead in most of the films he directed and produced.

People still talk about *Kabin*, *Malamoti*, *Mister Mowla*—where we acted together. He was a very down to earth person.

Razzak bhai played the role of my father: Babita

When I was in the sixth grade, Zahir Raihan *bhai* offered me a role in his film. Initially, I refused, but then I finally I agreed to play the role of Razzak *bhai* and Suchanda *apa*'s daughter in *Shongsar*.

industry. He was our film mentor. The current condition of the industry is not great. If Razzak *bhai* was alive, maybe we could have all rushed to him for support.

We worked together in *Chadh Suraj* and since then, we made countless, beautiful memories together.

He used to love me like his own son. When he was ill and I visited him, he began to cry and hug me, which ended up making me cry as well.

Nayak Raj Razzak is the only one who ruled over our film industry.

Jeremy Renner breaks over 30 bones in accident

At the beginning of the year, Jeremy Renner, who plays Hawkeye in Marvel's *Avengers* universe, was injured while clearing snow from his driveway.

At the time, Renner was hospitalized after he was run over by a snow plow—that was being used to dig out a car on his property.

On Saturday, the actor shared how he had broken over 30 bones during that accident.

Taking to Twitter, the actor wrote, "I want to thank EVERYONE for their messages and thoughtfulness. Much love and appreciation to you all. These 30 plus broken bones will mend."

The post was accompanied by a photo that showed Renner on a bed, undergoing physical therapy.

Roosha Chatterjee ties the knot

Last Thursday, Kolkata actress Roosha Chatterjee tied the knot, bidding farewell to her acting career. While the *Tomay Amay Miley* actress got engaged eight months ago, Roosha had kept the news a secret. Her husband Anuran Ray Chowdhury is a software engineer by profession.

Roosha chose to get married to Anuran as her parents had picked him. Now, pictures of their wedding have gone viral on social media. Fans of Roosha congratulated the newlywed couple as they set out on this new phase of their lives together.



NEWS

Russia sent that ship

FROM PAGE 12

of ships and they can send any ship except for those 69.

Russian flag carrier Ursa Major was not allowed to unload at Mongla Port on December 24. Before that, the US embassy on December 20 informed the foreign ministry that the ship was actually Sparta-3, which was sanctioned by the US.

Dhaka could face penalty if it unloaded the equipment in Bangladesh.

The ship was not allowed to unload its cargo.

The ship then went to Haldia Port of West Bengal for unloading, but after waiting two weeks to get permission from New Delhi, the ship left Haldia on January 16.

Despite US sanctions on Russia, India has been buying oil from Russia.

On December 29, Arindam Bagchi,

spokesperson for India's external affairs ministry, told the BBC in New Delhi that he did not have any information about the Russian ship being denied berth by Bangladesh, but it was okay if the ship arrived in India.

"But for the sake of our energy security, we will bring oil from wherever we get it. This is our policy. The same policy is applicable for other products too," he said.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam yesterday told reporters that there had been no guarantee that the Russian ship could offload cargo in India.

"The rules for sanctioned ships are applicable equally everywhere," he said.

Asked how the equipment for the power plant would be supplied, Shahriar said it is a commercial deal and the supplier company will do it in a way that is appropriate.

Bill to allow govt adjust

FROM PAGE 2

parliament.

The ordinance was proclaimed by President Abdul Hamid on December 1 last year, and on the same day, the law ministry issued a gazette announcing the amendment.

With the amendment to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) Act 2003, the power ministry will be able to decide the new tariffs for gas and electricity without any hearing. Previously, it could revise the prices of fuel oil including diesel, octane, kerosene and petrol without any hearing.

Before the amendment, BERC adjusted the prices of gas and electricity through hearings.

BERC is an autonomous body

that was established based on the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Act 2003 with the view to improving the power and energy infrastructure in the country. The law was amended thrice in the past.

Deploying the ordinance, the power ministry has so far increased the price of electricity at the consumers' end by 5 percent and the hiked the gas tariffs for industries and power plants by 14.5 percent to 178.8 percent.

The cabinet on November 28 last year approved the BERC Ordinance 2022 to empower the government to set fuel tariffs on its own under special circumstances without waiting for the commission's public hearing and decision.

Presidential election

FROM PAGE 2

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury said Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal communicated with her and they are likely to hold a meeting regarding the election this week.

"At the meeting, the CEC would come up with a draft schedule for the presidential election, which he will announce as per his convenient time."

The commission yesterday also finalised its proposal for the amendment of some clauses in the

electoral law for reserved seats for women in the Jatiya Sangsad.

Through a constitutional amendment in 2011, the number of reserved seats for women had increased from 45 to 50. But the number of seats in the electoral law still 45. So the EC has now proposed amending the law and changing the number to 50.

On the other hand, the deposit for candidates for the women's seats was proposed to be raised to Tk 20,000 from Tk 10,000, Jahangir said.

Turns out

FROM PAGE 1

On November 27, last year, Kuddus filed a case with a Dhaka court accusing Nasir of murdering his daughter for dowry.

The court charged the PBI Dhaka unit with conducting the investigation, and Sub Inspector Bishojith Biswas was assigned as the investigation officer.

The IO stated that during the course of the investigation, they discovered a phone number that was used to communicate with Parul before she went missing.

"Even though it was Kuddus's number, he always denied having it, which made me even more suspicious of his involvement in Parul's disappearance," the IO told The Daily Star.

At one point, Kuddus attempted to mislead the investigation by claiming his daughter was actually with his associate Moka Mondal, a convicted robber who served a 12-year prison sentence.

However, after being grilled, both Kuddus and Moka admitted to strangling Parul to death on the bank of the Tulshiganga river in Joypurhat's Panchbibi seven years ago.

They said they took Parul to Joypurhat and told her she had to stay hidden from Nasir. After a long journey and nearly an entire day without food, Parul was unable to put up much resistance when she was strangled to death.

"During primary interrogation, Kuddus admitted to PBI that he killed his daughter as she disgraced her family by eloping with a man that he did not approve of," the IO said.

Parul was the brightest among all siblings and her father had high hopes for her education and success, he said.

On Friday, the PBI chief said Kuddus made a confessional statement before a magistrate under Section 164 of Code of Criminal Procedure.

Peru closes Machu Picchu as protesters arrested in Lima

AFP, Lima

Peru closed the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu Saturday amid steady anti-government protests, stranding hundreds of tourists for hours, as authorities expelled protesters from a Lima university where they have been holed up as part of the crisis engulfing this divided country.

Help stop their fighting from spilling over

FROM PAGE 12

there following the massive influx of Rohingya in 2017.

More than a million Rohingyas are living in Cox's Bazar camps creating huge pressure on the country, and not a single Rohingya could be repatriated yet, despite several attempts.

Shahriar Alam said the Chinese ambassador said a high-level committee of Myanmar will come to Bangladesh to visit Rohingya camps soon, but did not specify the date.

He thanked China for its active role in a trilateral initiative among Bangladesh, Myanmar and China to provide a platform for dialogue to promote the early return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar.

Rohingyas passing days under open sky

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh, in schoolyards and rice fields of Ghumdum union.

A 46-year-old refugee named Mohammad Amin said, "When they burnt down our homes last Wednesday, we broke through the barbed-wire fences to seek shelter in Myanmar. But just one day later the Myanmar military forced us to leave and re-enter Bangladesh. I don't know what will happen to

us -- we have no food, no water, no homes."

Ghumdum Union Parishad Chairman AKM Jahangir Aziz said, "Almost all the Rohingyas from the no-man's-land camp are now inside Bangladesh. The authorities have been notified, the union parishad will execute whatever decision they take regarding these refugees."

Mohammad Alam, UP member of Tambru, said refugees are spending

their days in distress under the open sky. The host communities are helping with aid and a few NGOs donated tarpaulins for them to construct tents with, he said.

Abdul Karim, a trader of Tambru bazar, wondered whether the refugees would be relocated to their ward now that their camp is burnt down.

The camp had hosted over 4,000 Rohingyas and had 630 homes.

DCs want the quotas gone

FROM PAGE 12

will be land management, improving law and order, strengthening the activities of agencies under the local government division, implementing the social safety net programmes, and improving education quality.

The three-day conference will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at 10:00am at Shapla

Hall in the Prime Minister's Office, said Cabinet Secretary Mahbub Hossain while briefing reporters at the Secretariat yesterday.

He said there will be 26 sessions, including 20 working ones. The conference will end on Thursday.

Mahbub added that during last year's conference, the DCs made 242 proposals and 177 of them were implemented.

Sources said this year's DC conference is extra important since it will be the last conference before the national election slated for January next year. The DCs serve as returning officers during the polls.

Of the 245 proposals, the highest 23 are for the health ministry followed by 15 for the land ministry and 13 for the water resources ministry.

Curtains close on 21st DIFF

FROM PAGE 12

World Section", "Children Films Section", "Women Filmmakers Section", "Short and Independent Films Section" and "Spiritual Films Section".

The Best Film Award by the International Federation of Film Critic (fipresci) jury went to "Saatao", directed by Khandaker Sumon. Filmmaker Kazi Arefin Ahmed won

the Best Short Film award, for "Could You Be Free Yet Locked In?"

Mejbaur Rahman Sumon directorial "Hawa" received the Audience Award, whereas Fakhrul Arifeen Khan's "JK 1971" received the Special Audience Award.

"Martin and the Magical Forest" won Best Children's Film award. "Our Mother, Grandmother, Prime

Minister: Sirimavo", directed by Anomaa Rajakaruna, took the crown for Best Documentary in the Women Filmmaker's section, while "Akouse Me" by Maria D'souza won Best Feature Film in the same section. Katherina Woll from Germany won the Best Director in the women's segment for her film "Everybody Wants to be Loved".

LUNAR NEW YEAR SHOOTING

10 dead in California’s Asian city

10 others hurt

AFP, Monterey Park

Ten people have died and at least 10 others have been wounded in a mass shooting in a largely Asian city in southern California, police said yesterday, with the suspect still at large hours later.

The gunman opened fire at a dance venue in Monterey Park, as the local community were celebrating Lunar New Year, with witnesses saying he shot indiscriminately with a semiautomatic weapon.

Captain Andrew Meyer of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department said officers had responded to emergency calls around 10:20pm on Saturday and found people pouring out of the premises.

“The officers made entry to the location and located additional victims,” he said.



“The Monterey Park Fire Department responded to the scene and treated the injured and pronounced 10 of the victims deceased at the scene.

“There are at least 10 additional victims that were transported to numerous local hospitals and are listed in various conditions from stable to critical.

“The suspect fled the scene and remains outstanding.”

Police gave no description of the wanted man, and did not say what kind of gun he used.

Monterey Park, about eight miles (13 kilometers) east of downtown Los Angeles, is home to around 60,000 people, the majority of them Asian or Asian American.

Meyer said detectives were also aware of another incident in the neighboring city of Alhambra.

“It’s just too early in the investigation to know whether this incident was a hate crime or not,” he told reporters.



People take photographs next to lanterns in the Chinatown area of Yokohama, Japan yesterday, on the first day of the lunar new year. Lunar New Year is the beginning of a lunar calendar or lunisolar calendar year, whose months are moon cycles. The event is celebrated by numerous cultures in different ways and at different dates.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia pushing towards 2 towns in Zaporizhzhia

Putin ally says West’s deliveries of new weapons to Ukraine will lead to global catastrophe

AGENCIES

Moscow’s forces are pushing towards two towns in Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia region, where fighting intensified this week after several months of a stagnant front, Russian state media reported yesterday.

Russian-installed official in the region Vladimir Rogov said offensive actions were concentrated around two towns: Orikhiv, around 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Ukrainian-controlled regional capital Zaporizhzhia, and Hulyaipole, further east.

“The front is mobile, especially in two directions: Orikhiv and Hulyaipole,” Rogov was quoted as saying by the Ria Novosti news agency.

He said there was active fighting in those areas, according to the agency. “The initiative is in our hands.”

In its daily report yesterday, the Ukrainian army said “more than 15 settlements were affected by artillery fire” in Zaporizhzhia.

Earlier this week, Rogov

announced a “local offensive” around Orikhiv and said the Russian army had taken control of the village of Lobkove, near the Dnipro river, reports AFP.

He also said this week that fighting has “sharply increased” in the southern region.



On Saturday, the Russian army said its troops held “offensive actions” in the Zaporizhzhia region and claimed to have “taken more advantageous lines and positions.”

Meanwhile, a close ally of President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that deliveries of offensive weapons to Kyiv that threaten Russia’s territories will lead to a global catastrophe and make arguments against using weapons of mass destruction untenable.

Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the Duma – Russia’s lower house of parliament – warned that the United States and Nato’s support of Ukraine is leading the world to a “terrible war”, reports Reuters.

“If Washington and Nato countries supply weapons that will be used to strike civilian cities and attempt to seize our territories, as they threaten, this will lead to retaliatory measures using more powerful weapons,” Volodin said on the Telegram messaging app.

“Arguments that the nuclear powers have not previously used weapons of mass destruction in local conflicts are untenable. Because these states did not face a situation where there was a threat to the security of their citizens and the territorial integrity of the country.”

Western allies pledged billions of dollars in weapons for Ukraine last week, although they failed to persuade Germany to lift a veto on providing German-made Leopard battle tanks, which are held by an array of Nato nations but whose transfer to Ukraine requires Berlin’s approval.

ANTI-GOVT RIOTS

Brazil’s Lula sacks army chief

AFP, Brasilia

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva sacked the commander of Brazil’s army Saturday, two weeks after an election denying mob loyal to his far-right predecessor ransacked the halls of power in Brasilia.

The veteran leftist’s dismissal of Julio Cesar de Arruda came a day before Lula was to make his first trip abroad – to Argentina – as he moves to put the South American powerhouse back on the international stage.

Arruda had only taken up the post on December 30, two days before the end of outgoing president Jair Bolsonaro’s term, and was confirmed by Lula’s administration in early January.

On January 8, Bolsonaro supporters ransacked the presidential palace, Supreme Court and Congress in Brasilia, breaking windows and furniture, destroying priceless works of art, and leaving graffiti messages calling for a military coup.

GUARDS TERROR LABEL VOTE

Iran FM vows response to EU

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday warned the European Union it would take “reciprocal” measures after the European Parliament voted to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist group. “The parliament is working to place elements of European countries’ armies on the terrorist list” of the Islamic republic, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Twitter. Members of the European Parliament voted on Wednesday to include the Guards on the 27-nation bloc’s terror list in “light of its terrorist activity, the repression of protesters and its supplying of drones to Russia”.

COW SLAUGHTER IN INDIA

Court blames it for earth’s problems

NDTV ONLINE

A court in Gujarat has made some curious observations on cow slaughter while sentencing a man to life imprisonment for illegally transporting cattle. “All the problems of the earth will be solved if cow slaughter is stopped,” legal news website Live Law quoted the Principal District Judge of Tapi district court as saying while passing the order. Samir Vinodchandra Vyas also said that “houses made of cow dung are not affected by atomic radiation” and use of gaumutra (cow urine) is a “cure for many incurable diseases”.

Avoid middle-income trap at all costs

FROM PAGE 1

Higher and sustained levels of infrastructure investment, digitalisation and especially human capital will be a sine qua non for higher growth.

A vibrant private sector and export diversification will be central for staying on the course of a strong growth path, the Dutch-Austrian national said.

For this, rationalising the tariff system to reduce the nominal protection rate, removing non-tariff barriers and liberalising trade in services will be critically important.

To safeguard the country’s successful development outcomes and support sustained growth and poverty reduction, it is important that the country maintains stable macroeconomic conditions underpinned by sound macroeconomic-fiscal management.

“There should be no compromise in improving education as this is the key to improving human capital. Primary and secondary education needs long-term investment so that a child can get proper guidelines from a very early stage.”

Asked about the country’s macroeconomic challenges, he said the WB recently slashed the global growth projection from 3 percent to 1.7 percent, which is the lowest growth

projection in three decades.

The commodity prices, disruption in the supply chain and international food prices are challenges for all countries.

At the event, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said Bangladesh is the 35th largest economy now and the country’s per capita income is also rising thanks to contributions from development partners like the WB.

“We want more contributions from them,” he added.

While Bangladesh’s infrastructure has developed markedly in the last few years, more needs to be done to get the desired GDP growth, said Sharifa Khan, the economic relations division secretary.

“The development partners can do more here.”

In recent times, the country’s foreign exchange reserves are fast depleting and the cost of borrowing is rising as the interest rate has gone up, she said.

“But we are not solely responsible for this situation, so budget support can play a vital role in this regard,” Khan added.

The Washington-based multilateral lender is committed to working with the government in the upcoming months, said Martin Raiser, the WB’s vice-president for the South Asia region.

The present economic

situation of Bangladesh is mainly due to the global situation, so the government has already taken steps in the situation, said Ahmad Kaikaus, the WB’s alternate executive director.

The government ordered to bring down the demand, so that foreign exchange dependency is reduced.

Another order is not to keep any land unfarmed, he said in a panel discussion on ‘Celebrating Success: Exploring Possibilities’.

In the present supply chain disruption, Bangladesh is trying to improve connectivity with development partners and bilateral relationships, said Kaikaus, who is also the former principal secretary of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is going through macroeconomic challenges and it needs to take some steps to overcome these, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute.

It needs to make the interest rate and foreign exchange rate market-based, increased the tax-to-GDP ratio and restore good governance in the banking sector, he added.

The government should reduce the cost of doing business and increase competitiveness in the country so that the private sector can play a bigger role in the economy, said Nihad Kabir, a former president of

the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

She suggested giving more focus on skills, training and human capital.

Abdoulaye Seck, the WB’s country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, and Junaid Kamal Ahmad, vice-president for operations of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), also spoke at the event.

Court bins

FROM PAGE 1

Sanjit Kumar Roy, Biplob Kumar Das, Mehedi Hasan and Biplob Kumar Sarker, Deputy Commissioner Hayatul Islam Khan and Assistant Commissioner Golam Ruhani, Ansar member Al Amin and 200-300 unnamed policemen.

Nazim, also a former lawmaker from Bhola-4, said in the complaint that the accused broke into the BNP office and vandalised it to create fear ahead of the BNP rally.

They looted valuables worth Tk 47,30,000 and damaged properties worth Tk 3,52,500, it added.

On December 7 last year, a man was killed and over 50 others, including four journalists, were injured in a clash in the Nayapaltan area.

Police filed five cases with Paltan, Ramna, Motijheel and Shahjahanpur police stations the next day, accusing 885 BNP leaders and over 2,250 unnamed individuals.

শেখ হাসিনার নির্দেশ
জলবায়ু সহিষ্ণু বাংলাদেশ

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়
সামাজিক বন বিভাগ, ফরিদপুর।

তারিখ-২২/০১/২০২৩খ্রিঃ।

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং- ১৮ অব ২০২২-২০২৩ খ্রিঃ

এতদ্বারা সর্বসাধারণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ২০২২-২০২৩ খ্রিঃ আর্থিক সালে সামাজিক বন বিভাগ, ফরিদপুর এর অধীন পূর্বগণাবাদী, ফরিদপুর/রাজবাড়ী/গোপালগঞ্জ/মাদারীপুর ও শরীয়তপুর জেলায় রাজ্য সম্প্রসারণ, মেয়াদউত্তীর্ণ, ও বিভিন্ন উন্নয়নমূলক কাজের লক্ষ্যে বিভিন্ন সনে সৃজিত তহশীলে বণিত হ্রীপ বাগানের মার্কাকৃত তালিকাভুক্ত খাঁড়া গাছ, বিগত দরপত্রের অবিক্রিত, জন্মকৃত, বড়োপড়া, বিভিন্ন ভাবে আহরিত গাছ/কাঠ/জ্বালানী কাঠ লট আকারে বিক্রয়ের জন্য কাঠ ব্যবসায়ী/করাতকল মালিক/প্রকৃতিচান/টিকাদার/আগ্রহী ব্যক্তিবর্গের নিকট হতে নির্ধারিত ফরমে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে। দরপত্র আগামী ০৮/০২ /২০২৩ তারিখ বেলা ১২.০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর কার্যালয়সহ নিম্নোক্ত স্থানে গ্রহণ করা হবে এবং প্রাপ্ত দরপত্র এদিন অর্থাৎ ০৮/০২ /২০২৩ তারিখ বিকাল ৩-০০ ঘটিকার সময় সংশ্লিষ্ট দরপত্র মূল্যায়ন কমিটির সদস্যদের উপস্থিতিতে খোলা হবে। দরপত্রদাতা নিজে বা তার মনোনীত প্রতিনিধি দরপত্র খোলার সময় ইচ্ছা করলে উপস্থিত থাকতে পারবেন।

আগামী ০৭/০২/২০২৩ তারিখ বিকাল ৪-০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা, পূর্বগণাবাদী, ফরিদপুর/রাজবাড়ী/গোপালগঞ্জ/মাদারীপুর/শরীয়তপুর সামাজিক বনায়ন নার্সারী ও প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রের কার্যালয় হতে খাড়া গাছের জন্য প্রতিটি দরপত্র সিডিউল ক্রয় বাবদ ৪০০/- (চারশত) টাকা মাত্র (অফেরৎযোগ্য) এবং জন্মকৃত কাঠ/জ্বালানী কাঠের জন্য প্রতিটি সিডিউল ক্রয় মূল্য বাবদ ২০০/- (দুইশত) টাকা মাত্র (অফেরৎযোগ্য) মূল্যে ক্রয় করা যাবে।

দরপত্র সম্পর্কিত বিতরিত তথ্য এবং জাতাব বিষয়বলী প্রতিটি কার্যদিবসে ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা, পূর্বগণাবাদী, ফরিদপুর/রাজবাড়ী/গোপালগঞ্জ/মাদারীপুর /শরীয়তপুর সামাজিক বনায়ন নার্সারী ও প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রের কার্যালয় হতে দেখতে ও জানতে পারা যাবে। দরপত্রদাতাগণ দরপত্র দাখিলের পূর্বে গাছের অবস্থান, প্রজাতি ভিত্তিক সংখ্যা, কাঠ ও জ্বালানী কাঠের পরিমাণ সরেজমিনে দেখে নিবেন। পরে লটের অবস্থান, গাছের পরিমাণ/পরিমাণ ইত্যাদি না দেখার অজুহাতে দাখিলকৃত দরপত্র প্রত্যাহার/বাতিল ইত্যাদি করার জন্য আবেদন করলে তা মোটেও গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।

দরপত্র গ্রহণের স্থানঃ-

০১। বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, সামাজিক বন বিভাগ, ফরিদপুর।

০২। পুলিশ সুপার-এর কার্যালয়, ফরিদপুর।

০৩। ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা, পূর্বগণাবাদী, ফরিদপুর সামাজিক বনায়ন নার্সারী ও প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রের কার্যালয়, ফরিদপুর।

০৪। ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা, রাজবাড়ী সামাজিক বনায়ন নার্সারী ও প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রের কার্যালয়, রাজবাড়ী।

০৫। ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা, গোপালগঞ্জ সামাজিক বনায়ন নার্সারী ও প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রের কার্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ।

০৬। ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা, শরীয়তপুর সামাজিক বনায়ন নার্সারী ও প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রের কার্যালয়, শরীয়তপুর।

০৭। ভারপ্রাপ্ত কর্মকর্তা, মাদারীপুর সামাজিক বনায়ন নার্সারী ও প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রের কার্যালয়, মাদারীপুর।

২২/০১/২০২৩

মোহাম্মদ গোলাম কুদ্দুছ ভূঁইয়া
বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তা
সামাজিক বন বিভাগ, ফরিদপুর।
ফোন-০২-৪৭৮৮০০৮৩
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GID-104

Karnaphuli needs urgent policy attention

Saving rivers and people who depend on them should be a top priority

It's alarming to see the direction in which the Karnaphuli river in Chattogram is headed, with years of negligence, unbridled greed, and lack of protection reducing it to a cautionary tale of what not to do with rivers – both on individual and institutional levels. Just as it has been subjected to indiscriminate pollution and encroachment in many parts – creating a suffocating condition for its ecosystem – it has, in other parts, also been witness to unchecked erosion thanks to lack of efforts from the authorities. Karnaphuli, thus, never seems to be far away from something bad threatening its existence or that of those who depend on it.

The latest development, as reported by this daily, saw a crucial project that could protect its banks around Chattogram's Boalkhali upazila being stuck in limbo. The project, proposed by the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), involves constructing a 7.4km-long sustainable dam as well as 2.4km-long dams on both banks of the river. In addition, dams will be built to guard the banks of five branch canals of the river. There are, of course, questions over whether BWDB can actually pull it off to get desired results. But the long delay in approving the project shows its lack of priority to the higher authorities.

Reportedly, the project proposal is currently stuck at the planning wing of the water resources ministry, which is reviewing its estimated cost of Tk 144 crore in line with the government's cost containment policy. We understand the importance of prioritising important projects given the ongoing economic crisis, but this project, if implemented properly, will be tremendously beneficial for the at-risk communities. River erosion in Boalkhali upazila has been wreaking havoc on the lives of at least 120,000 people, a number that may rise if preventive action is not taken soon. Also at risk are 150 small industrial structures, 45 roads, 20 bridge-culverts, 3,750 homes, 140km electric lines, five markets, 12 schools, 2,500 hectares of agricultural land, etc.

The question is, why are we so slow or reluctant to act when it comes to saving rivers? Even when well-meaning initiatives are taken – to dredge, construct dams, evict encroachers, prevent pollution, etc. – often they are marred by mismanagement and irregularities by the relevant state departments. These attempts are also so poorly planned and uncoordinated that any resultant effect fizzles out before it can be visible. Chattogram itself has been the site of a number of such initiatives. Yet, 40 percent of the city's plastic waste is ending up in Karnaphuli, while the Rupsha river in the south-west is taking in 31.7 percent of such waste. As a result, a large number of aquatic species from the rivers have vanished. Karnaphuli's 40km-long banks, from Kalurghat to Patenga, have also been the subject of frequent grabbing attempts.

We urge the higher authorities to reverse this destructive trend. Rivers, in Chattogram and elsewhere in the country, are crying for proper policy attention. We must save our rivers and also save people and properties from the wrath of mismanaged rivers. BWDB, the National River Conservation Commission, and other relevant institutions must all do their part.

What's the point of a ceremonial ACC?

Red tape, non-cooperation remain major hurdles for its function

It's quite frustrating that even after two decades of its establishment, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) remains ill equipped to deal with money laundering cases. It is failing to make progress in such cases because of several factors including lack of cooperation from foreign countries, bureaucratic complexities, and a shortage of skilled lawyers. According to its director general for money laundering, the developed countries where a huge sum of money is laundered are not only reluctant to divulge information, but also make “unnecessary” queries to delay the process. While such an approach can definitely be a big problem for the ACC, lack of cooperation from relevant state agencies can also have a deterring effect.

Apparently, since 2018, the ACC has made 34 requests for information on the wealth of 24 persons to foreign countries, but it hasn't received any effective response till date. The question is, why? Apparently, the entire process of seeking and receiving information is very cumbersome, and is often mired in bureaucratic tangles. Reportedly, the ACC has to request the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) to confirm the information on wealth laundered abroad. But the information BFIU collects from abroad cannot even be used before court because of an embargo on its public disclosure. In such cases, the ACC has to file Mutual Legal Assistance Requests (MLAR) to the respective countries. But here, too, the ACC cannot file the MLAR directly. In all, there are 12 steps involved in obtaining information from foreign countries, indicating a very cumbersome process.

While these problems are surely slowing down the pace of ACC investigations, it is also a fact that the agency itself has failed to live up to its mandate due to the inefficiency of its officials, self-imposed limitations, as well as political influence. Over the years, its power has been curtailed significantly. Its recent decision to hand executive power to its secretaries to transfer and promote its deputy directors and assistant directors – who are mainly involved in investigation related tasks – also amounts to clipping its own wings.

The question is, what is the point of having a dedicated anti-graft body if it is not equipped to investigate corruption cases properly? According to the Global Financial Integrity report, Bangladesh is one of the top 30 countries in terms of illicit financial flows. A GFI report published in 2021 said that around Tk 5 lakh crore was laundered to different countries in the five years since 2015. Money laundering is evidently destabilising the country's economy. Can the ACC afford to be a “toothless tiger” in such a situation?

It is high time the government removed all the loopholes and barriers that the ACC faces while investigating money laundering and other corruption cases. If needed, the ACC law should be amended to properly empower it to carry out its mandated duty.

Ordinary citizens' vulnerability to custodial torture



ON THE SHORES OF (IN)JUSTICE

Dr CR Abrar is an academic and human rights expert.

CR ABRAR

Within a fortnight of celebrating Police Week, two incidents have brought to fore the question of extrajudicial excesses of the force. In one incident, a youth protestor was subjected to police brutality in custody in Chattogram, while in the other, a trader allegedly died due to custodial torture in Gazipur.

From a tender age, Mohammad Mostakim has faced the hard realities of life. After his father passed away years ago, the 22-year-old madrasa student has been the anchor of the family. Mostakim has to look after his 55-year-old mother 9a kidney disease patient requiring dialysis three times a week) and a 10-year-old physically challenged sister. He meets challenges with fortitude and as a conscientious citizen who is actively engaged in local efforts to combat the Covid-19 virus.

It is no surprise that Mostakim became part of the group of kidney patients and their relatives protesting the price hike of dialysis treatment and reduction in subsidies. On the fifth day of the protest, when protestors blocked the road in front of the Chattogram Medical College and Hospital, the police used force to disperse them. Subsequently, police filed a case in which alleged victims of police assault were charged with “obstruction of government work and attacking police.” Mostakim was arrested along with 50 to 60 others. Five days after his arrest, Mostakim was granted bail and the police's application for a five-day remand was denied by the magistrate.

The police's heavy-handed approach in dispersing a crowd that was peacefully protesting the price hike of a medical service, and its subsequent slapping of cases against a number of the protestors, has appalled citizens. The situation dipped to a new low as Mostakim was beaten in custody purportedly to get a lesson for “disrespecting” the officer-in-charge of the local police station. Photographs of his bruised left leg aptly conveyed the brutality Mostakim had to endure.

The treatment of Mostakim and his fellow protestors by the police raises the question of whether the state has effectively abrogated the constitutionally guaranteed citizens' right to protest. The administration also needs to make clear in what ways this group of aggrieved citizens violated the laws of the land, triggering such violent and disproportionate response from the police. Even if the group was impeding the flow of traffic, were there no non-violent and civilised ways of tackling them?

The vicious bodily harm inflicted on Mostakim in custody betrays the intensity of contempt that some members of the force hold against citizens who still dare to exercise their rights to express and assemble.

The second case of Rabiul Islam of Gazipur shed light not only on alleged custodial torture leading to the death of the victim, it also revealed how members of law enforcement agencies allegedly fabricated stories to cover up

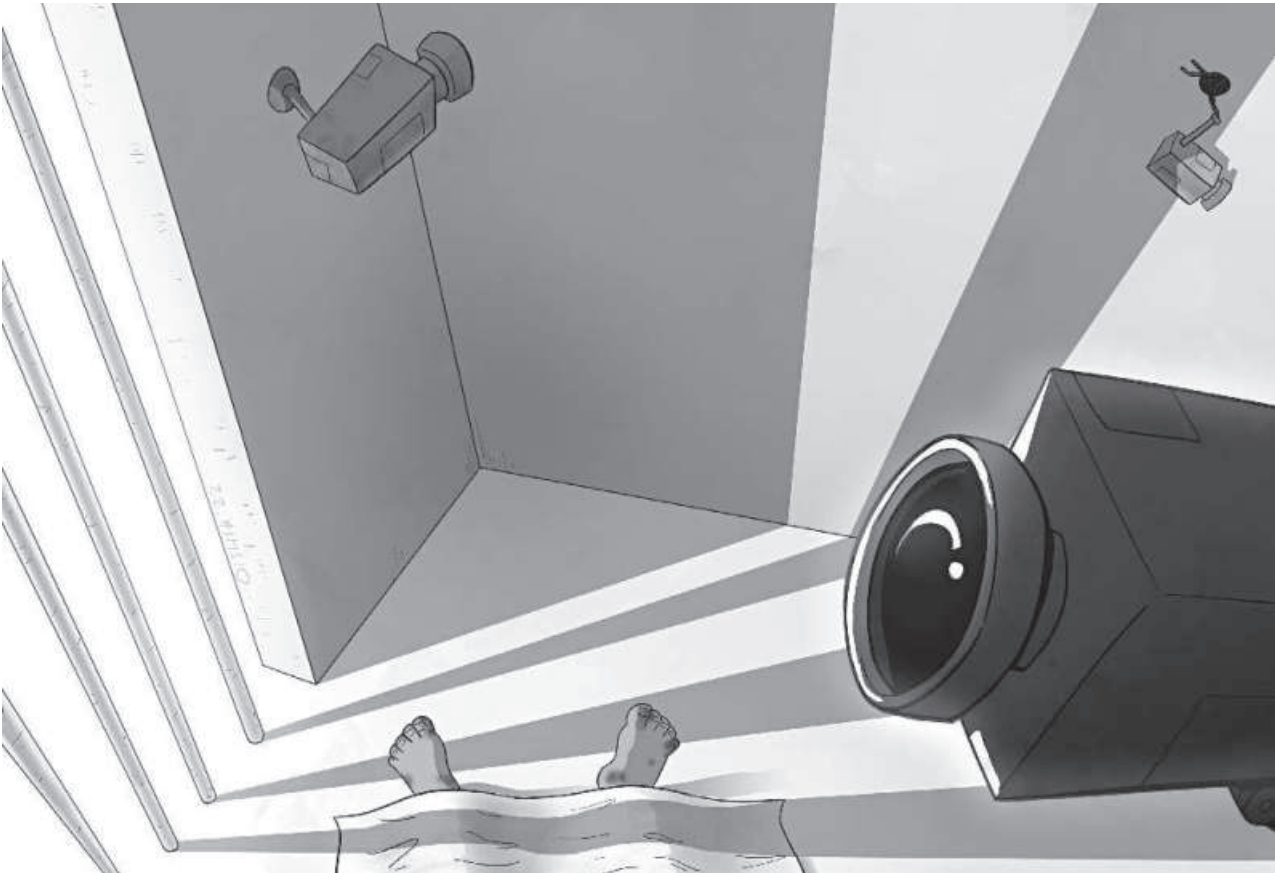


ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

their misdeeds.

On the evening of January 17, Nupur was informed by the police that her husband Rabiul had died in a road accident following his release from custody. Family sources inform that days earlier, along with three others, Rabiul was picked up by two assistant sub-inspectors of the local police station on charges of gambling. The 45-year-old victim was detained in the police station while the three co-accused were released. When police personnel demanded money for releasing Rabiul, on January 17, Nupur handed over Tk 35,000. After securing the amount, instead of discharging Rabiul from their custody, police demanded an additional sum of Tk 5 lakh. Subsequently, they promised to release the detainee when Nupur complied with their instruction to put her signature on a blank sheet. On the same evening, she was informed by the police that Rabiul had been hit in a road accident and shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). When the family arrived at DMCH, they found the body of deceased Rabiul. Refuting the police narrative, his family and people of the locality have asserted that Rabiul was tortured to death.

Rabiul's death, allegedly a result of police torture, triggered spontaneous protest in the area leading to road blockade, vandalising of police boxes, and torching of three police motorcycles. The police's claim that Rabiul's brother Mohidul had filed a case against the truck driver that allegedly hit Rabiul also turned out to be sham. Mohidul denied lodging the case, providing evidence that he was

gambling. Demanding and accepting money for releasing a detainee proves that extortion was the sole purpose of bringing the accused under custody. Securing the signature of a next of kin on a blank sheet also points to the covering up of the offence being planned. The family deserves an explanation as to why Rabiul was not handed over to them.

The cooked up police narrative of Rabiul's death also falls flat as the force failed to provide evidence of any such road accident in the area on the evening of January 17. Also, the police's inability to furnish any evidence, including CCTV footage, of Rabiul's release from custody further strengthens the argument that there was institutional complicity to cover up the custodial torture that led to the detainee's death.

Mostakim and Rabiul's experiences are not isolated cases. The media and rights organisations frequently report on cases of custodial torture, some of which lead to death of detainees. In many instances, the families of the deceased contested the police claim that the detainees had committed suicide in custody. Three cases from last year illustrate the pervasiveness of custodial torture.

On March 1 of 2022, Laboni Akhtar (23) had a miscarriage after she was brutalised by sub-inspector Ruma Akhtar in Kashimpur police station. On July 17, Abdul Salam of Sreepur, Magura was allegedly beaten up and kicked in the chest, which the family believes resulted in his death at Magura Sadar Hospital. On August 21, a video went viral that showed two 13-year-old boys tied to an iron pole in Kulshi,

Treatment and Punishment, and firm directives from the higher judiciary. At a time when policymakers are deeply concerned about the image of the country, they must acknowledge that every person has the right to be treated with dignity and only in accordance with the law. They ought to ensure that egregious violation of human rights, such as custodial torture, no longer takes place. There is also the need for impartial investigation into all allegations of custodial torture to hold the perpetrators to account. There is an urgent need for an unambiguous political commitment at the highest level of the government to not tolerate torture and ill treatment under any circumstances or against any person. In the past, demands have been made by vested quarters to amend the TCD (Prevention) Act and weaken its efficacy. The government must remain resolute and commit that it has no intention of limiting the applicability of the said Act and ensure that the Act is applicable to all forces. It must also commit that all officials engaged in acts of torture and ill treatment will be prosecuted and punished with penalties commensurate to the crime of torture – including those with superior or command responsibility – and that measures will be taken to ensure that confessions obtained from criminal suspects through torture or ill treatment are not accepted as evidence of guilt. There is also the need for the collection of systematic statistical data on the implementation of the TCD (Prevention) Act on the number of complaints, investigations, prosecutions, and trials and convictions.

Can air pollution affect our mental health?

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It is common knowledge that mental health issues can be products of a number of complex and often interconnected issues, ranging from traumatic events, intrusive thoughts, abusive environments, unhealthy relationships, and even spending too much time on social media. A lot of people, however, aren't aware of the fact that air quality can also affect our mental wellbeing.

Studies have confirmed that air pollution can lead to cardiovascular, respiratory, and neurovascular diseases. Examples include lung cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and pneumonia. When it comes to mental

illnesses, however, recent research has shown that air pollution and depression share a strong link. Air pollutants (specifically, particular matter) are said to increase oxidative stress and inflammation in the brain which can further lead to depression. Additionally, a cross-sectional study in the *International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health* has revealed that for each 10 µg/m3 increase in the nitric oxide level, the rate of depression would be twice as high. Multiple studies have also found that women who become exposed to particulate matter during pregnancy (or even after they give birth) are at a higher risk of becoming depressed. Additionally, research has also linked prenatal exposure to particulate matter (including traffic-related air pollution) with increased anxiety in children of 6 to 7 years.

Although limited studies have explored the connection between anxiety and air pollution, the results show that both short- and long-term

exposure to particulate matter can result in symptoms of anxiety. One study in the journal *Toxicological Sciences* found that air pollution contributes to heightened stress cortisol levels, which leads to anxiety. Another study found that people who were exposed to air pollution caused by traffic during early childhood are at a greater risk of developing anxiety later on.

Suicide ideation and deaths by suicide were also found to be associated with air pollution. In a case-crossover analysis from 2018 that investigated the link between suicide and air pollutants in 10 large cities in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, researchers found that higher levels of nitrogen oxide, sulfide dioxide, and particulate matters were associated with higher risks of suicide. A US study of 1,546 completed suicides in Salt Lake County, Utah also found that single-day and cumulative exposure to particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide was associated with an increased risk of suicide.

It must be noted, however, that suicide is very complicated. Several factors (such as genetics, lifestyle choices, and mental health conditions) typically have to play a role before an individual falls victim to suicide. Environmental factors alone don't cause people to contemplate suicide or go through with it.

Nevertheless, the immediate attention of the Bangladeshi government should be drawn to the seriousness of this matter because Bangladesh has been ranked first for having the worst air quality multiple times. A 2013 study titled “Air pollution by Fine Particulate Matter in Bangladesh,” published in *Atmospheric Pollution Research*, supports this claim as it was revealed that high concentrations of particulate matter were found in Dhaka. Hence, it is very possible that, along with other factors, such high levels of air pollution may be contributing to worsening the existing mental health conditions of Bangladeshi citizens.



It seems grossly inappropriate that in a country which has spent millions of its own funds in mega infrastructure projects, there are still people who are, essentially, dying from poverty.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



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SHUPROVA TASNEEM

One of my core memories as a child was of visiting my hometown in North Bengal, where my father would take me out onto a street and point to a space on the horizon. That was where, as a little boy, he had sometimes caught sight of the outline of the Kanchenjunga mountain on a clear day, and his grandmother swore that back when she was young, it was fully visible on winter mornings.

I'm still unsure if I had actually seen that famous outline or if my childhood mind had imagined it, but I can tell you for certain that it's no longer there – winter fog, building development, air pollution, and rising temperatures mean that sight is lost forever.

In fact, despite the mild cold wave the country has already experienced this winter, the truth is that temperatures in Bangladesh have steadily been rising due to the climate crisis. The fallout from this has been researched extensively, and vulnerable populations have already started to feel its impacts in the form of erratic rainfall, sudden floods, tidal surges, more regular cyclone cycles, increased water salinity, extreme temperatures, and more.

Be that as it may, it also cannot be denied that people have faced hardships this winter. This daily has printed some heartrending images of homeless people trying to fight the cold on the streets of Dhaka, with one person even curling up inside a sack in a desperate attempt to stay warm. We heard of how people lit fires to warm themselves and ended up with burn injuries, and how children crowded hospitals with winter-related diseases like pneumonia.

This is not exactly a new phenomenon. A joint research paper from Calgary University and KUET found that, every year, an average of 104 people die from cold and cold-related diseases in Bangladesh. The worst winter was that of 2011-2012, which saw 214 deaths, while the “best” was in 2016-2017, where only 18 people died. Unfortunately, the numbers rose again in 2020-21 with 52 deaths, the majority of which occurred in districts in Rangpur and Barishal divisions. And while we cannot yet ascertain this season's impacts, there have been multiple reports of similar cold-related deaths as well.

It seems grossly inappropriate that in a country on its way to achieving middle-income status, and which has spent millions of its own funds in mega infrastructure projects, there are still people who are, essentially, dying from poverty. The majority of people who die from cold-related issues are either homeless or can't afford to repair their homes for winter, and sometimes cannot even afford a blanket or shawl to protect

themselves at night. The rising costs of healthcare also exclude the poor from getting proper treatment for cold-related illnesses.

Even after a few decades of development, and especially given the fact that the temperatures experienced are not unusual events, why are we still failing to support vulnerable populations during winter? While every year we see programmes to distribute warm blankets, both from the government and community organisations, what is concerning is the lack of long-term solutions with regard to shelter and healthcare.

This is all the more worrying when you consider that Bangladesh is facing complex

In the National Adaptation Plan, it is heartening to see that the first goal is to ensure protection against climate change variability – and that extreme temperatures, including cold, are included among the climate risks we need to prepare for. The NAP also focuses on climate-resilient agriculture, climate-smart cities, and conservation and biodiversity. But we can no longer be satisfied with ambitious long-term plans and policies that run the risk of being confined to the paper they have been put down on.

and interconnected climate-related worries that can be intensified during certain seasons, but which cannot be dealt with on a “when we have to” basis.

Take, for example, our struggle with air quality during winters. In December 2022, Dhaka's air quality was worse than that of New Delhi's on two separate occasions. Winter smog has now become a common occurrence in South Asia – usually made up of a toxic concoction of vehicle exhaust, smoke from brick kilns, dust particles from construction sites, etc. Indoor pollution is

also exacerbated in winter, since the colder and drier air traps more harmful particles.

According to World Bank estimates, air pollution kills around 80,000 people a year in Bangladesh. In 2019, it was the second largest cause of deaths and disabilities in Bangladesh. Yet, there has been very little effort to seriously tackle the issue. While the Kathmandu Roadmap for improving air quality in the Indo-Gangetic Plain and Himalayan Foothills – which was drawn up last month in a meeting of delegates from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Pakistan – is a step in the right direction, only time will tell how serious the countries are about translating policy into action.

One study found that living in houses made of corrugated tin, especially on roofs, can drive temperatures up by as much as 12 degrees Celsius, since the material traps heat during the day. But when it's cold, tin has the opposite effect, acting as a poor insulator. This may explain why, despite the fact that cold waves have not visibly worsened, many vulnerable people in the country are less equipped to handle them than before.

At COP27, Bangladesh stressed on its need for USD 230 billion over the next 27 years to enhance adaptation capacity. In the National Adaptation Plan, it is heartening to see that the first goal is to ensure protection against climate change variability – and that extreme temperatures, including cold, are included among the climate risks we need to prepare for. The NAP also focuses on climate-resilient agriculture, climate-smart cities, and conservation and biodiversity.

But just how long will these steps take to become reality? Certain districts are already in the grips of another mild cold wave, and we will have to accept that erratic climates are now the new norm.

Are there initiatives being implemented right now to protect the most vulnerable members of society? Will there be more Ashrayan projects for the homeless – ones that actually deal with the (literal) cracks in the initiative? Will the capacity of local hospitals to deal with seasonal diseases increase? Will energy prices be affordable enough for people to accommodate seasonal needs? Will steps be taken against the country's worst polluters?

We can no longer be satisfied with ambitious long-term plans and policies that run the risk of being confined to the paper they have been put down on. On one hand, Bangladesh is known to be a climate leader. On the other, hill-cutting, land-grabbing and environmental destruction continue unabated, and there seems to be very little awareness of the far-reaching impacts such actions can have, whether on soil erosion, winter pollution or heat stress.

If the authorities can allow hotels to be built on Indigenous land, if water bodies can be choked by pollution from plastic factories and tanneries, and if even government bodies can plan to cut down trees in reserve forests to build roads – is it any surprise we need some reassurance about their intention to deal with seasonal climate issues that ultimately impact vulnerable populations the most?

Isn't it time we stopped running after the GSP?



RMG NOTES
Mostafiz Uddin is the managing director of Denim Expert Limited. He is also the founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE).

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

For decades, Bangladesh has benefitted from preferential trading arrangements with the European Union (EU) through the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP). The GSP provides trade “sweeteners” on international trade to developing and low-income economies. For apparel exports, this means that Bangladeshi-made garments can enter the EU market duty and quota-free, offering our manufacturers a significant cost advantage and ensuring that our exports are highly competitive.

The GSP has many advantages for developing countries like ours, such as helping expand our exports, accelerating GDP growth, and reducing unemployment. All of these laudable aims dovetail with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for instance relating to decent work, poverty alleviation, and women's emancipation.

The EU and the UK together account for about 60 percent of Bangladesh's exports, more than 90 percent of which consist of textile and clothing items. This indicates how valuable the EU's GSP has been for Bangladesh over the years.

Though Bangladesh's GSP status is set to expire in 2023, a similar scheme is expected to be in place to provide our country with duty-free access to the EU until 2029.

But will Bangladesh be able to move into the new regime automatically? There is good reason to pose this question.

Bangladesh needs a Plan B, surely. We cannot rely solely on the competitive advantages conferred by duty-free trade. We must start preparing for 2029 now.

One option which many are mentioning is that Bangladesh could make a case for GSP+. This is similar to the current GSP in some ways. For example, it cuts tariffs for vulnerable low and lower-middle income countries. But, to qualify for GSP+, countries must sign and ratify 27 international conventions related to labour and human rights, environmental and climate protection, and good governance.

So, would Bangladesh qualify for the GSP+? There are absolutely no guarantees for this, unfortunately.

Firstly, even where GSP is concerned, Bangladesh has had a bumpy ride at times. There have been occasions when the European Union has threatened to revoke our GSP status. This is because of accusations that our garment industry is not meeting stipulations laid down by the International Labour Organization (ILO) pertaining to labour and human rights.

There are always conditions attached to trade agreements. The EU increasingly lays a huge emphasis on labour rights (and rightly so). But, with Bangladesh always under such global scrutiny, there is a concern that sooner or later, we might risk losing the GSP – or the GSP+, if it is granted – due to a few “rotten apples” in our ready-made garments industry. As the saying goes, you are only as strong as your weakest link.

I am not ruling out the possibility of Bangladesh being granted a place in the GSP+. I would rather argue that we need to also prepare for a time when we can stand on our own two feet as far as international trade is concerned. To do this, I believe we now need to make faster moves on bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and also preferential trading agreements (PTAs) with some of our existing trading partners, where we can negotiate mutually gainful benefits and opportunities. It is a new game that our government and businesses must start preparing for.

FTAs will take us to a new world of

“survival” where “trade-offs” (read: give and take) will determine the game. It is much more than simply reducing and/or eliminating tariffs between trading partners. Such agreements these days are more complex and multi-layered and are often subjected to dominant geopolitics. They help address barriers that might otherwise restrict the flow of goods and services, and encourage inward investments. There is no choice but to improve and strictly enforce domestic rules, policies, and standards in regard to intellectual property, e-commerce, and public procurement.

As well as providing trading benefits for Bangladeshi RMG exporters, FTAs could give domestic businesses and consumers improved access to a wider range of competitively priced goods and services, technologies, and innovative practices. FTAs can also help to promote regional economic integration while building shared and mutually beneficial approaches to trade and investment between Bangladesh and its trading partners. Many opine that Bangladesh is still too slow to engage on FTAs and instead depends more on its GSP status to accelerate its garment exports to the EU.

Recently, Bangladesh's Commerce Minister, Tipu Munshi discussed the settlement of an omnibus trade agreement with India. A joint feasibility study on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) has now been carried out after the two countries agreed to explore a bilateral FTA+.

Under a CEPA, the two countries can either significantly reduce or completely eliminate customs duties on the majority of goods traded between them. A CEPA would also ease facilitating trade for services and attracting investments.

In recent years, Bangladesh's leaders have also considered adopting FTAs with China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Canada, and Malaysia. Bangladesh has also been mentioned as a potential member of the Eurasian Customs Union and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a regional trade agreement among the Asia-Pacific nations.

If one is specifically thinking about apparel production, there is a clear opportunity for Bangladesh to negotiate FTAs with raw material producers like cotton-producing African countries. Could reducing or removing import duties on cotton for such countries be agreed upon in return for the duty-free export of Bangladeshi garments? I see little reason not to consider so.

FTAs bring about a wealth of opportunities for Bangladesh. It all depends on how deftly, strategically, and futuristically Bangladesh can assess its present and possible future scenarios and negotiate accordingly. I see the steady implementation of FTAs as being symbolic of our country no longer being reliant on trading agreements with the huge EU block, and being ready to better negotiate in our own ways with partner countries from around the world.

To ensure that FTAs deliver, I believe, our companies in our garment industry will need to develop in tandem and move steadily away from low-value, staple products. We need to re-define and accept newer production functions and realities. Countries with better, more varied product mixes will invariably have a higher place at the negotiating table when it comes to FTAs.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**

11920s art style

5 Nursery rhyme start

11 Tennis star Lendl

12 Fred, Steve, and Tim

13 Suit piece

14 Winter showers

15 Tough wood

16 Source of bad luck

17 Support

19 Humor

22 Preside over

24 Anger

26 Red-ink amount

27 “Understood”

28 Similar

30 Chump

31 “Sure thing!”

32 Young pigeon
- 34 Took turns

35 Saloon supply

38 Game outing

41 Memo letters

42 “Understood”

43 Tag info

44 Apartment rule

45 Patella's place
- 9 Small worker

10 Braying beast

16 Pickle buy

18 Peril

19 Sink's kin

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21 Vincent's brother

22 Potter's stuff

23 Golf goal

25 Costa –

29 Morale

30 Nearest star

33 Calls it a day

34 Fill completely

36 Take it easy

37 Fencing sword

38 Immoral act

39 In the past

40 Dandy

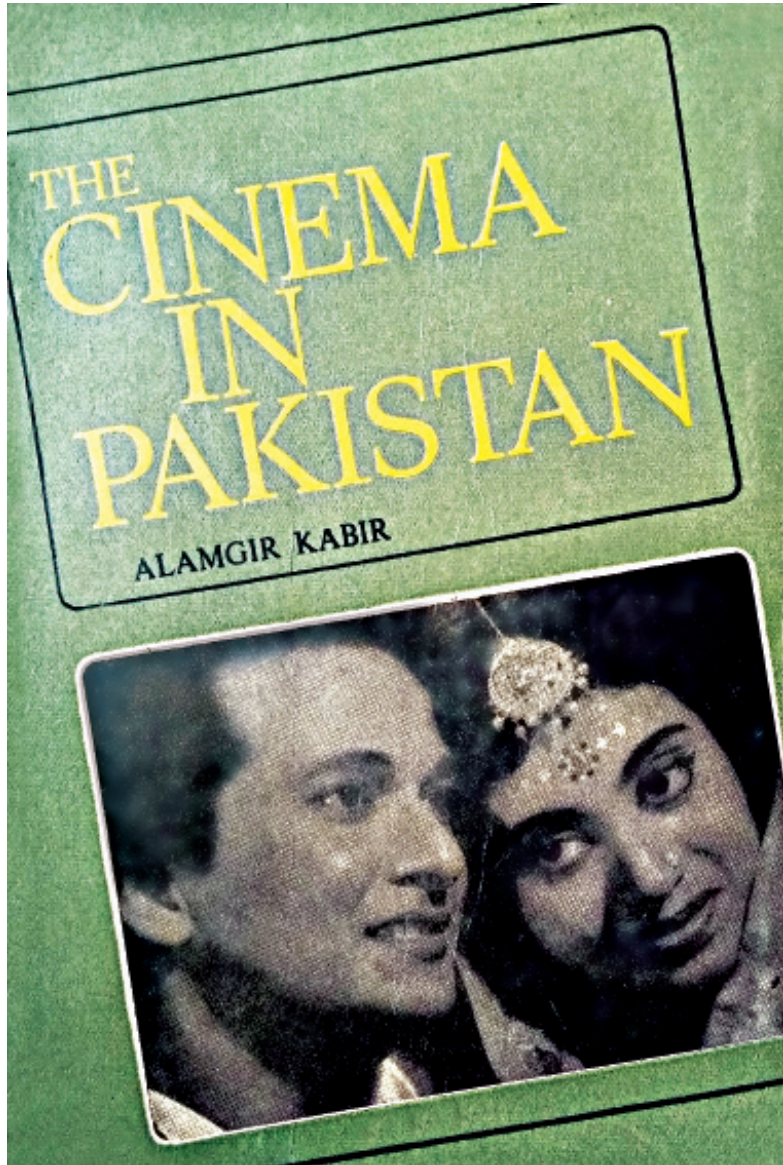
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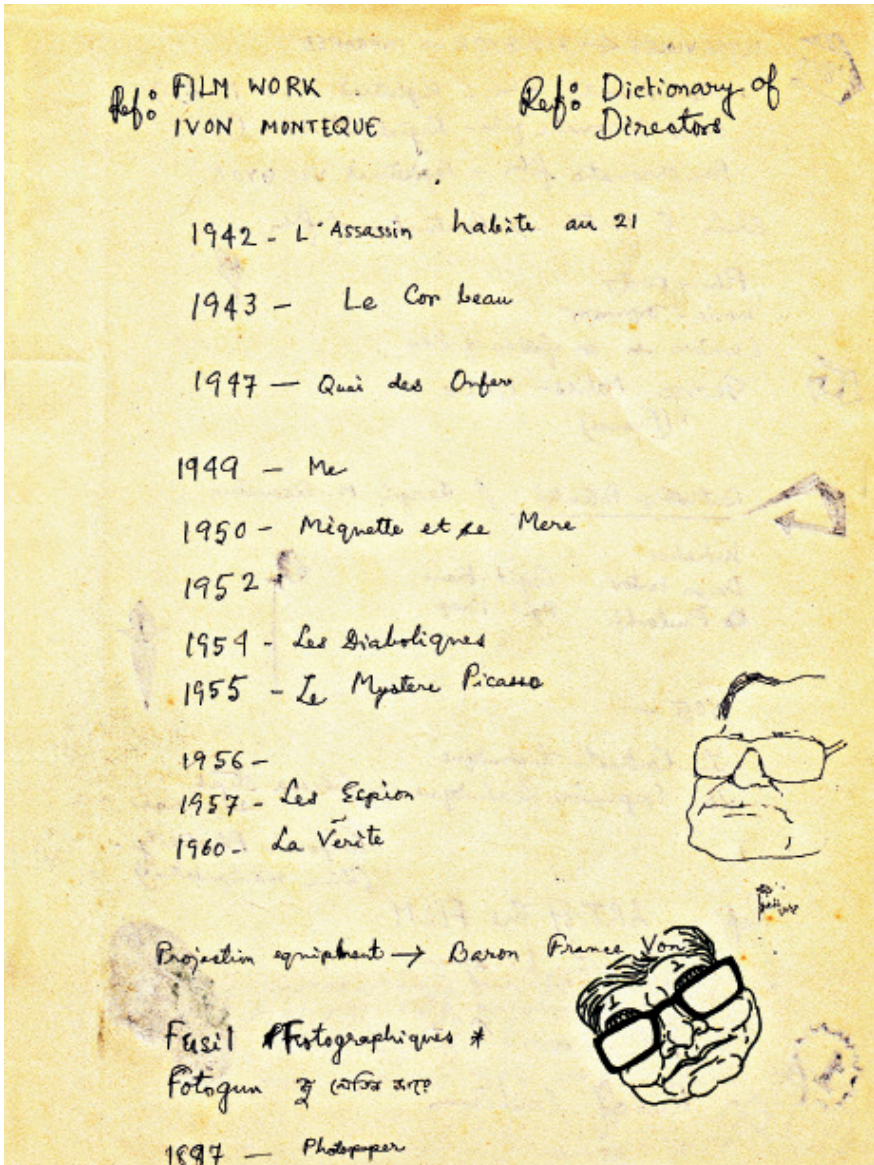


YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

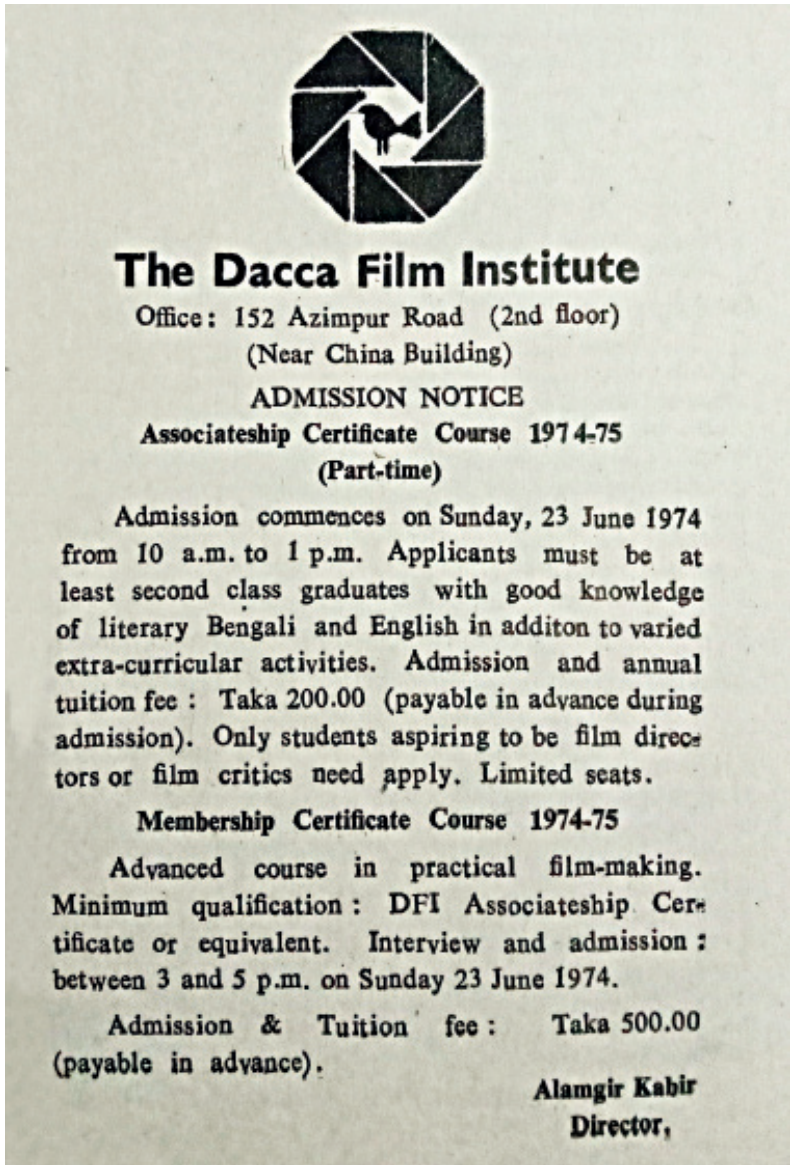




Cover of Alamgir Kabir's book 'The Cinema in Pakistan' (1969).



Handwritten notes taken during a class taught by Alamgir Kabir at NIMCO, 1987, with sketched portraits. © Catherine Masud, courtesy of Catherine Masud.



Advertisement for The Dacca Film Institute in The Holiday, 23 June 1974, Page 3.

ALAMGIR KABIR

The conscience whipper



Alamgir Kabir (13 December 1937 – 20 January 1989).

COURTESY:
ELORA KABIR

A central legacy of Alamgir Kabir's film work can be found in his efforts at public film education and criticism. His critical writing in newspapers and his teaching on film contributed to the way in which the formal language of cinema came to be understood and practiced as a politically progressive force allied to left-wing positions on art and aesthetics within East Pakistan.

LOTTE HOEK

Alamgir Kabir's death anniversary has been an occasion to celebrate and remember him as a prominent film director and tireless film society activist. But an important part of Alamgir Kabir's continuing influence in contemporary Bangladesh can be traced back to his film criticism and his approaches to teaching film. Kabir's extensive criticism and film education in the 1960s remains a significant foundation for cultural criticism, film movements, and formal film language in Bangladesh today.

In the early 1960s Alamgir Kabir spent a number of years in London, where he moved in left wing and revolutionary cultural and political circles. During this time, he became convinced of the power and possibility of the cinema. He saw film as a medium of transformative possibilities, its very formal or artistic language capable of galvanising change. Training in formal film language became, perhaps counterintuitively, a key aspect of Kabir's political aspirations. Kabir brought these convictions back with him when he returned to Dhaka in 1966.

The national popular of 1960s East Pakistan to which Kabir returned was deeply informed by leftist and anti-imperial motifs, rhetoric and themes that were inherited from the anti-imperial and revolutionary cultural movements of the 1940s as well as emerging in tandem with wider international artistic networks. Culture had become a site where underground workers and fellow travellers met and where cultural organisations were 'fronts' in the struggle towards social transformation and revolution in East Pakistan. In the course of the 1960s, cinema emerged as one of the art forms through which progressive and left political commitments could be expressed. Today aesthetic traces in the films of the period provides access to the broader alliances and commitments across political and artistic communities that imbued the atmosphere in 1960s East Pakistan.

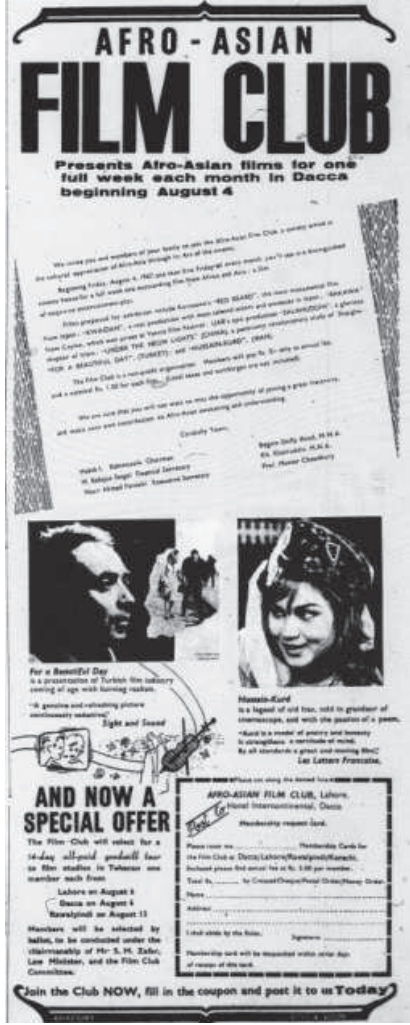
Surveying Alamgir Kabir's writings from the mid-1960s reveals his perspective on the cinema as a socially progressive force and the film critic as the vehicle through which it might be amplified. As he writes in the opening pages of his 1969 book *The Cinema in Pakistan*: "The cinema is probably the only art form whose political utility can be comparable to that of any political party, may be even more" (5-6). It was self-evident to him that "the aim of every art is ... to act as a catalyst in the process of social evolution"

(125). The film critic had a key role to play in catalysing such social change: "A concerted press campaign in favour of good films that try to tell sensible stories without forsaking the needs of the society ... and films that make honest efforts to exploit the resources of the cinema as vehicles of art as well as means of propagation of ideas [...] could act as an important conscience-whipper of audiences throughout the country" (184). Through publishing his critical evaluations of contemporary cinema in widely read newspapers and by initiating film educational initiatives, Kabir encouraged a reading and viewing public to be familiar with cinematic form, style, genre and convention. He believed that such knowledge would transform established ways of seeing and judging and that this would eventually generate political and social transformation. That is, Kabir understood formal or artistic literacy as a political position. To read Kabir's reviews and critical writing in the newspapers is to witness the ways in which he creates a public pedagogy of emancipation around the cinema. It is to witness the conscience-whipper in action.

Kabir's film criticism was focused on connecting the formal aspects of individual films to their political potential. In the year of his return, Alamgir Kabir reviewed Khan Ataur Raham's film *Raja Sanyasi* (1966) for the weekly *Holiday*. Kabir writes that "two elements of his direction impressed me. These are: a precise sense of proportion which is rare in this country and a potent sense of social consciousness. Obviously, he doesn't belong to the school of 'art for art's sake'... he didn't miss any opportunity of injecting as many social comments as he found possible." This is high praise for Khan Ata's second feature film. The significance that Alamgir Kabir attaches to cinema as an art that is not produced just for its own sake, and that is imbued with social conscience, can also be seen in his review of international cinematic trends, including the nouvelle vague and the Indian neorealists. His evaluations hinge on the question whether the abstractions in films "can make art really indispensable to the toiling millions," as he put it in the *Pakistan Observer* in 1966. He therefore expresses great appreciation for Chris Marker and Jean Rouch but does not hesitate to critique Satyajit Ray: "Ray is never found to portray the 'evil' or 'violence' that are the real by-products of any society" while "his social commitments are also too feeble, if not reactionary" (*Holiday*, 17-06-1966).

The realism and social commitment that Kabir finds so important in the films he reviews are directly linked to how he understands cinema's functioning as a medium. For Kabir, cinema is a provocation that

demands a response from its viewer. He suggests that the movement of the image produces alongside it a political velocity: its present-ness (happening *right now!*) has the force to move us, render viewers committed, engage their conscience. And this is what produces its political potency. The 'formally literate filmgoer could translate the film's galvanising movement into an understanding that settled into their consciousness where it would inspire action. A realist film containing social commentary would provoke its audiences in socially progressive ways, 'whipping up' their conscience. But a 'feeble' film would



Advertisement for the Afro-Asian Film Club in The Pakistan Observer, 7 July 1967, Page 3.

waste its progressive potential.

Film education was the second pillar in Kabir's project to realise cinema's political potential embedded in its formal qualities and animated by its physical movement. It was the trained or 'keen' viewer who would be best able to harness these qualities. Kabir was committed to produce such viewers not only through his prolific film criticism but also through his manifold initiatives towards film education. Like criticism, film education was a means of producing accessible links

between people and art forms that were premised on inviting people to pay close attention to the formal aspects of the cinema. And the way to invite people into this body of filmic knowledge was through cine-clubs.

The first film society in Pakistan was set up in 1963 in the mould of the film societies in India and Britain. By 1969 there were two clubs in Dhaka, one in Chittagong and one in Karachi. Not only did the film societies screen a variety of international films for its paying membership, they were linked to a history of radical and progressive political constituencies and put into practice their understanding of the cinema as socially transformative. By 1968, Alamgir Kabir was the General Secretary of the Pakistan Film Society. In 1969, Alamgir Kabir founded a parallel organisation, the Dacca Cine Club and was on the board of directors of the Dacca Film Institute set up at the same time.

Kabir taught a rigorous curriculum at the Dacca Film Institute. If, in 1970, you wanted become an associate of the Dacca Film Institute, you were required to sit four exams, each taking three hours. The four papers covered cinema history, international cinema, documentary, and, of course, film criticism. The exam papers from that time provide clear insight into the types of knowledge and practice Kabir expected of his students: close textual study, detailed technical knowledge, a good grasp of the political nature of film, extensive historical awareness with regard to cinema in Pakistan, a grasp of film theory and an intimate familiarity with the classic film texts of a recognizably international film canon.

Kabir's efforts in the 1960s were to ground film education in independent Bangladesh in crucial ways. But his socialist vision of a state-run film industry came to naught due to numerous circumstances. Instead, the aspirations for the radical transformation of cinema remained located among film society activists and film educational initiatives, many of which were spearheaded by Kabir. Alongside others such as Mohammad Khusr, Kabir remained a driving force of the movement around cinematic art that emerged after the Liberation War. The movement pushed for the state's support in developing film culture, leading to the establishment of the Bangladesh Film Institute and Archive. Kabir would continue to lead film appreciation courses at various institutes from 1979 into the 1980s and heading the efforts of the Short Film Forum, decisively shaping a new generation of filmmakers, film critics and film enthusiasts. His curricula have become the basis of the many film appreciation courses taught across the country today. Through these curricula, film appreciation, as the practice of evaluating film texts

through close reading and formal analysis, has remained the mainstay of film education in Bangladesh and continues to feed into film and media criticism today. It is here that the histories of politically progressive and left-wing cultural politics have sedimented and remain available for contemporary articulation in the film and media culture of Bangladesh.

Placing formalist aesthetic at the heart of the left political agenda of one of the key cultural activists of 1960s expands how we understand the place of the fine arts within this decade's political struggles. This is the time when film in East Pakistan is a site of experimentation drawing on the cultural and artistic ferment of the period. The contributions of urban artists and intellectuals to the language movement and political struggle have largely been read as bourgeois and nationalist in nature. Tracing what Sanjukta Sunderason and I have called 'the forms of the left' in the works and writings of these actors can identify additional artistic and intellectual orientations. Despite the ways in which we think of the cinema in the 1960s in East Pakistan as particularly concerned with family melodrama and folk features and as a steady build up to the nationalist triumph of *Nawab Sirajdaulla*, *Jibon Theke Neya*, and *Stop Genocide*, there is a social and aesthetic history of left political commitments of many of its key actors that can be easily recuperated through a closer engagement with these texts.

A central legacy of Alamgir Kabir's film work can be found in his efforts at public film education and criticism. His critical writing in newspapers and his teaching on film contributed to the way in which the formal language of cinema came to be understood and practiced as a politically progressive force allied to left-wing positions on art and aesthetics within East Pakistan. This has been inherited by filmmakers and critics in contemporary Bangladesh and its lasting impact can be discerned in films and cultural movements. Tracing the forms of the left in the work of filmmakers and critics such as Kabir provides a starting point to ask what has happened to that progressive cultural politics, in the cinema and elsewhere, after the independence of Bangladesh, and to recuperate its energies alongside the political movements that shape the contemporary moment.

Dr. Lotte Hoek is an anthropologist based at the University of Edinburgh. This article condenses her contribution to the volume *Forms of the Left in Postcolonial South Asia: Aesthetics, Networks and Connected Histories* (Bloomsbury 2022) that she has co-edited with Dr. Sanjukta Sunderason. She is the author of *Cut-Pieces: Celluloid Obscenity and Popular Cinema in Bangladesh* (Columbia 2014) and co-editor of the journal *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies*.

‘Liton is the superstar of Bangladesh’

SPORTS REPORTER

Comilla Victorians batter Mohammad Rizwan is one of the big foreign inclusions in the ongoing edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), and how he plays the anchor role, allowing his team to build around him, has come under the spotlight in Bangladesh too.

The Comilla opener divulged on what he thinks of the role, citing that he often finds it embarrassing.

“It is a very difficult role. Sometimes it looks very embarrassing but I do what I know. Because what the team requires from me, I will do those things. Because my coach, my skipper, my owners, and my whole team at Comilla are happy with my performance,” Rizwan, who is ranked second in the ‘T20I batters’ list, told reporters today and also informed that his ideal batter is AB de Villiers.

“Same in Pakistan and everywhere. Whenever someone comes and hires you they have demands from you. I assess the conditions and discuss these kinds of things. Sometimes it is embarrassing because in T20s they love sixes and 35 or 40-ball 70 runs. But for me it is important that we can win the match,” Rizwan added.

Liton Das, who plays alongside Rizwan, has been on song at the other end for Comilla, putting up big scores recently. The Pakistan star was full of praise for Liton and their coming together has been good for the other teammates too, according to Rizwan.



“Everyone knows Liton is the superstar of Bangladesh. For the last couple of years he has been performing well and he is in form now. Me and Liton are trying to communicate things, although it is a short time (playing in BPL). We are trying to make things easier for others as well,” he said.

Rizwan was joined by fellow Pakistan star Naseem Shah at Comilla yesterday although Naseem had initially been roped in by Khulna Tigers. Rizwan said that although Naseem arrived, the atmosphere the players try to create is to bond as a family.

“You will make your team like a family and Naseem is obviously in rhythm with the Pakistan team and we have a good combination in Pakistan as well,” Rizwan said further.

Players like Rizwan coming here help out youngsters wanting to learn from them. Rizwan reserved praise for spinner Tanvir Islam.

“The guys from Bangladesh are very keen to learn. I am looking at many guys in the future for Bangladesh and that’s good. Tanvir, the left-arm spinner, is very good. The Pakistani players sit together and we talk about the players and Bangladesh guys. They said, Bangladesh guys come to us and ask about the questions and pressures and those kinds of things. And we are trying here to explain what we know and share with the guys,” he added.



Bangladesh’s ace left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman was seen gearing up for a return at the Academy Ground in Mirpur under the supervision of former BCB physio Julian Calefatto, who has recently been appointed as head of BCB’s rehab centre. On Sunday, Mustafizur practiced for the first time since he had to walk out of the ground after bowling just a solitary over in their first Chattogram phase game against Fortune Barishal due to a hand injury. The pacer was also said to be suffering from a hamstring injury by the Comilla team management, forcing him to miss the rest of the Chattogram phase.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Swiatek, Gauff out, Tsitsipas soldiers on

AFP, Melbourne

Stefanos Tsitsipas battled into the Australian Open’s last eight on Sunday but women’s top seed Iga Swiatek and a tearful Coco Gauff became the latest big-name victims.

Swiatek’s defeat to Elena Rybakina made it the first Grand Slam since the Open era began in 1968 to lose the top two seeds in both the men’s and women’s draws before the quarter-finals.

That left Greece’s Tsitsipas as the highest remaining men’s seed at three, and he avoided the fate of Rafael Nadal and Casper Ruud with a dogged victory over Jannik Sinner.

Tsitsipas, who is pursuing a first major crown, defeated the Italian 15th seed 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 6-3 to set up a quarter-final with the unseeded Jiri Lehecka.

“It was a long match, I felt like I spent an entire century on this court playing tennis,” said the 24-year-old Tsitsipas, who has seen the draw open up for him with six of the top 10 seeds out.

“What a great night. That was superb, ‘a ripper’ as they say here.”

Czech world number 71 Lehecka defeated sixth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime in four sets in yet another surprise result.

The 21-year-old Lehecka was knocked out in the first round at the four majors last year but was



too hot for the Canadian, winning 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 7-6 (7/3).

“After losing in the first round last year, if someone had told me before the tournament that I would be playing like this, I wouldn’t have believed them,” said Lehecka.

“I’m super happy and excited.”

Giant-killer Sebastian Korda surged into a maiden Grand Slam quarter-final and faces 18th-seeded Karen Khachanov of Russia.

The American 29th seed came through a rollercoaster 10-point deciding tiebreak to beat 10th seed Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 (10/7).

Korda, whose father Petr won the title in 1998, produced one of the performances of his career to upset two-time Australian Open finalist Daniil Medvedev in the third round.

The women’s draw also has an unfamiliar look, after a day of shocks.

Wimbledon champion Rybakina swept past the 2022 French and US Open winner Swiatek 6-4, 6-4 in 1hr 29min at a stunned Rod Laver Arena.

Moscow-born Kazakh Rybakina, seeded 22, moves on to a last-eight encounter with Jelena Ostapenko.

World number one and hot favourite Swiatek admitted Rybakina deserved to win.

“I felt the pressure,” Swiatek, 21, said. “I felt that I didn’t want to lose instead of wanting to win.”

Swiatek, who dominated women’s tennis last year and is already a three-time major champion, added: “I felt today that I don’t have that much left to fight even more.”

She follows second seed Ons Jabeur out the Melbourne exit door, the Tunisian having gone out in the second round in another surprise.

Latvian 17th seed Ostapenko provided the second upset of a crazy few minutes by knocking out seventh seed Gauff 7-5, 6-3 on neighbouring Margaret Court Arena.

‘Perfect day’ for Cologne

AFP, Berlin

Fans of Bundesliga side Cologne were in full voice on Saturday, celebrating their 7-1 demolition of Werder Bremen, the team’s biggest Bundesliga win in 40 years.

The home fans sang “let’s take the lederhosen off those Bavarians”, a nod to Tuesday’s clash away at German champions Bayern Munich.

The win was the Cologne’s biggest in the league since they defeated Kickers Offenbach 8-1 in the 1983-84 season.

Playing their first game in 10 weeks after German football’s winter break, Cologne scored five goals in the first 36 minutes.

Bremen’s Germany striker Niclas Füllkrug pulled one back before the break, but Cologne added two more in the second half.

Former Borussia Dortmund striker Steffen Tigges and Tunisia international Ellyes Skhiri scored two apiece for Cologne, along with strikes from Linton Maina and Denis Huseinbasic.

An own goal from Bremen’s Marco Friedl completed the rout.

Napoli edge closer to the dream

AGENCIES

Following their 2-0 win over Salernitana on Saturday, Napoli moved closer to achieving the dream of winning the Serie A for the first time in 33 years.

Napoli further extended their grip on the Serie A title race by beating local rivals Salernitana to temporarily move 12 points ahead of the chasing pack.

Goals from Giovanni Di Lorenzo and Victor Osimhen immediately either side of half-time made sure that Napoli will be at least nine points clear at the halfway point of the season after a straight-forward win in soaking Salerno.

“I’m proud to be the captain of this team. We have a group of amazing players who have had a brilliant first half of the season. We need to keep going with the same mentality to achieve our goal,” Lorenzo said.

Luciano Spalletti’s side now have to wait until their closest rivals AC Milan take on Champions League-chasing Lazio in Rome on Tuesday to know just how far in front they will be after collecting 50 points in 19 matches.



Inter Milan are a further point behind their city rivals and will move provisionally into second place if they beat Empoli on Monday.

Napoli do not have to worry about Juventus who had been ahead of Inter on goal difference but were docked 15 points on Friday for illicit use of transfers to boost their balance sheet.

Save the ruling being overturned on appeal later this year, Juve are out of the race, making Napoli’s bid for a first league crown since 1990 that much simpler.



Dhaka Twelve players try to catch a Matlab Thunder raider during the first match of the second round of Corporate Women’s Kabaddi League at the National Kabaddi Stadium in Paltan yesterday. The Dhaka outfit lead the table with 12 points from six matches, five of those wins coming in the first round held earlier in the month. State Minister for Youth and Sports Zahid Ahsan Rasel had inaugurated the event in the evening.

PHOTO: BKF

FIFA bans Sri Lanka FA

AFP, Melbourne

Football’s governing body FIFA has suspended Sri Lanka’s national federation, it said Sunday, a month after issuing it with a “red notice” over governance issues.

That warning came after the Ministry of Sports introduced a raft of regulations that reportedly compromised the autonomy and independence of national sports bodies, including the Football Federation of Sri Lanka (FFSL).

This month the FFSL held an election, which reportedly fell short of standards agreed upon with FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), in which an ally of the sports minister became chair. In a letter Sunday, FIFA said the FFSL was suspended “until further notice”.

The suspension prevents Sri Lanka from taking part in international competitions.

Klopp’s unexpected swipe at Wenger

AGENCIES

Jurgen Klopp joked his 1,000th game in management went better than Arsene Wenger’s after Liverpool’s goalless draw with Chelsea on Saturday.

The Reds boss headed into the landmark game with his side in poor form, sitting well outside the top four following consecutive losses to Brighton and Brentford.

He would have fancied his chances of claiming victory at Anfield too, with opponents Chelsea doing even worse in recent times. However, Graham Potter’s team were able to hold the hosts to a 0-0 draw and were arguably the better team, creating clearer chances across the 90 minutes.

However, Klopp wasn’t too disappointed, saying his 1,000th match wasn’t that bad compared to Wenger’s, which also came against Chelsea and ended in a humiliating defeat.

“Arsene Wenger lost his 1,000th game 6-0 so I’m pretty happy,” the German said after the match.

All in all, he felt Liverpool took a step in the right direction by keeping a clean sheet against Potter and co.

“We had good spells but couldn’t keep it up,” he told BT Sport after the game. “We have to be ready for little steps, and this is a little step. We didn’t concede against Chelsea, which is good.”

“We didn’t create an awful lot of chances but we had them. We defended more with passion than clear organisation, so in the end I am OK with 0-0. You have to accept it.”



Russia sent that ship knowingly

Says Momen

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Russia knowingly sent the US sanctioned ship carrying equipment for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, something that is surprising and unexpected, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said yesterday.



"It is surprising that Russia knowingly sent a sanctioned ship by changing its name. We did not expect it. Now, we expect that Russia will send equipment by non-sanctioned ships," he told reporters at the foreign ministry.

Dhaka conveyed to Moscow that Bangladesh will not accept the 69 Russian ships, which are under sanctions, noting that Bangladesh has developed a good relationship with the US.

Momen said Russia has thousands

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A truck, set alight by a mob after it ran over and killed a security guard of a garment factory, is seen burning in Chandra area of Kaliakoir, Gazipur, yesterday morning. Demonstrating workers of the factory kept Dhaka-Tangail highway blocked for almost four hours demanding a foot bridge there.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

SCHOOLTEACHER RECRUITMENT

DCs want the quotas gone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the DC conference starting tomorrow, the deputy commissioners have made 245 proposals, including cancellation of quotas in the assistant teacher appointments at primary schools.

The DCs are the chief administrative and revenue officers of districts.

The Kurigram DC proposed abolishment of the quota system. He said even though there are more qualified candidates, many unqualified people get the job because of the quotas. Qualified candidates are likely to be overlooked. This could also obstruct the government from achieving the target of employment in every family.

According to the government primary schoolteacher recruitment policy for 2019, 60 percent of the vacancies are reserved for females, 20 percent for the children of current staff members and teachers, and 20 percent are reserved for males.

The Jhenidah DC proposed formulation of a policy banning politics for MPO teachers and their involvement in other profitable jobs in addition to their teaching duties.

She said this way teachers would be able to pay more attention to lessons, thereby enhancing the quality of education.

The Shariatpur DC recommended that upazila nirbahi officers be made presidents of upazila education committees instead of upazila parishad chairmen.

The Naogaon DC proposed that schools with a small number of students be closed and the students be merged with those of nearby schools. He believes that it will help reduce government spending.

The Narsingdi DC recommended the introduction of midday meals at primary schools in remote char areas, saying that it will help reduce dropouts and prevent children suffering from malnutrition.

The main issues for discussion in this year's conference

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Five die on roads, mobs torch vehicles

A university student among the dead; crashes, roadblocks trigger travel chaos on major highways

STAR REPORT

Three separate road accidents in Faridpur, Dhaka and Gazipur yesterday killed at least 5 people, causing travel chaos on key highways.

In Faridpur, a Dhaka-bound bus named Star Express hit a motorcycle near Monsurabad bus stand area in Bhanga upazila around 12:30pm, killing all 3 on the bike.

Witnesses said the motorbike was entering the Dhaka-Khulna highway from a local link road.

The deceased were identified as Mohiuddin Sheikh, 35, his brother-in-law Saurav Matubbar, 16, and his daughter Tabassum, 10.

According to locals and police, the accident took place when Mohiuddin was heading towards a relative's home at Hiyabolodia village in Nagarkanda upazila from his father-in-law's house at Majhardia village of Faridpur's Bhanga.

His daughter and brother-in-law were the pillion riders on his motorbike.

Mohiuddin and Saurav died on the spot. Tabassum died at the Bhanga upazila health complex where she was brought critically injured, said Taimur Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Bhanga Highway Police Station.

Immediately after the accident, a mob set the bus on fire. However, the driver, helper and supervisor of the bus managed to flee, said a witness. A fire service unit later doused the fire.

Meanwhile, in Dhaka, a female private university student yesterday died after a bus hit a motorcycle in Bhatara.

Deceased Nadia Sultana, 19, was a first-semester student of the pharmacy department of Northern University, said Rafiqul Haque, inspector (investigation) of Bhatara Police Station.

She got admitted to the university earlier this month. She was yet to start her classes, said Mahmudul Hasan, an official at the admission section of Northern University.

Nadia was the pillion rider of

her friend's motorcycle when a Malibagh-bound bus of Victor Paribahan hit the bike near Jamuna Future Park around 12:45pm.

She was taken to a nearby hospital where doctors declared her dead, Rafiqul said. Police seized the bus, but the bus driver managed to flee.

ABM Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Bhatara Police Station, told The Daily Star that the deceased was not wearing a helmet. "According to his friend, they were going to Jamuna Future Park for some shopping," said the OC.

Nadia's body was handed over to her father after an autopsy performed at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue.

A case was filed in this connection.

Several hundred students of the university blockaded a portion of the road near Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. They staged a demonstration for around one hour demanding punishment for the bus driver, said police.

Vehicular movement on the road became normal around 7:00pm when the students concluded their demonstration, said Kazi Shahan Haque, OC of Khilkhet Police Station.

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MYANMAR REBEL GROUPS

Help stop their fighting from spilling over

Dhaka urges Beijing

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has requested Beijing to pursue Myanmar among rebel groups do not spill over into Bangladesh.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam conveyed this to the newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen when the latter called on him at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Separately, he also called on Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen.

"There were conflicts among rebel groups on the zero line and the camp there has been burnt. We are hoping that the new Chinese ambassador, as he took charge, will work to help stop such incidents," he told journalists at the ministry.

At least two Rohingya were killed and a few others injured in clashes between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) on the zero line in Tambru near Naikhongchhari upazila of Bandarban last Wednesday.

Some 5,000 Rohingya refugees took shelter

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Curtains close on 21st DIFF

'Saatao' wins Best Film

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Ending the nine-day celebration of films and visual arts, the curtains for the 21st Dhaka International Film Festival fell yesterday, at the main auditorium of Bangladesh National Museum in Dhaka.

Organised by Rainbow Film Society, the event was also held at other venues like the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. The festival went on from January 14 to January 22.

The closing ceremony was arranged at the main auditorium of the National Museum.

The special guests included Matia Chowdhury, MP and deputy leader of the House; Shahriar Alam, MP and state minister of foreign affairs; Md Humayun Kabir Khandaker, secretary of the information ministry; Md Kamruzzaman, director general of Bangladesh National Museum; Mokammel Hossain, secretary of the civil aviation and tourism ministry, and Kishwar Kamal, chairman of the Festival Committee. Ahmed Muztaba Zaman Shovon, DIFF director, presided over the event.

Meanwhile, screenings at other venues continued simultaneously.

This year, the festival welcomed 252 films from 71 countries under 10 categories, including the "Asian Cinema Competition Section", "Retrospective", "Wide Angle", "Tribute", "Bangladesh Panorama Section", "Cinema of the

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E-ORANGE SCAM

Ex-Banani cop jumps bail in India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Indian police in West Bengal have enhanced security along the border with Nepal in a bid to stop suspended Bangladeshi police inspector Soheli Rana, a 'patron' of scam-hit e-commerce platform e-Orange, from escaping to the Himalayan nation, a senior police officer said last night.

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) of Cooch Behar district Amit Verma said Rana was given bail by a court in Mekhliganj in November following his arrest in September, 2021.

Rana's was granted bail on two conditions -- he would not move out of Mekhliganj and he would report to Mekhliganj police station once a week.

According to Verma, Rana complied with the conditions for three weeks till December 30. Since then, he has not reported to the local police station.

However, Rana has maintained e-mail communications where he claimed he could not report to the police station as he was ill and needed better treatment, he added.

The ASP said they are on the lookout for Rana and has alerted the police along the border with Nepal, where his sister reportedly stays, so that he cannot flee to that country.

Verma said the court in Mekhliganj, which granted him bail, has been apprised by the police of the latest updates relating to Rana's non-appearance before the police station.

Rana, former inspector of Banani Police Station in Dhaka, was arrested by the Indian police for illegally crossing into the country on September 3, 2021.



A Rohingya family resting at a primary school near the border in Tambru area of Naikhongchhari, Bandarban. The family entered Bangladesh from a camp in the no-man's-land amid last week's violence.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

TAMBRU BORDER

Rohingyas passing days under open sky

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rohingyas driven out of their homes near Tambru border in Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila have been spending the last five days under the open sky in a schoolyard in Konarpara.

Last Wednesday's violence broke out between two armed Rohingya factions at the border camp, leading to one refugee being killed.

The refugees claimed that Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) were behind the violence, both of which were trying to take control of Konarpara Rohingya Camp. The camp straddles the border on the no-man's land, run by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Following the shooting which lasted over two hours, Rohingya homes in the camp were set on fire, causing several hundred Rohingyas to cross the barbed-wire fences and flee to Myanmar. The Myanmar military pushed them back in response, leading them to take refuge again in

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