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ADP REVISION

Govt doing opposite of what's needed

It can fuel inflation, intensify balance of payment pressure

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

It seems the government is doing an about-turn from the austerity stance taken at the start of the fiscal year.

Take the case of the annual development programme. As part of the belt-tightening measures, the finance division in a notice on July 3 last year pared back the programme.

Projects were classified into A, B and C categories. The A-category projects will go on as normal, while up to 75 percent of the allocation for the B-category projects can be spent. All C-category projects were put on hold.

Now, the government is walking back from that position.

As is practice, the ADP project invariably gets revised down during the course of the year, with the chop coming from the amount allocated from foreign aid.

Given the foreign exchange reserves crunch and the narrow fiscal space, the calibration in the ADP budget was expected to be different: the foreign aid portion

would stay intact, while the government's own fund is pared back.

But it is business as usual. The original ADP is expected to be trimmed down by about 6.1 percent to Tk 231,000 crore, The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials involved with the exercise.

The foreign fund portion would be slashed by about 16.4 percent to Tk 76,954 crore.

The fiscal coordination council has decided to go for an expansionary fiscal policy, according to the finance ministry officials.

This would revive economic activities and generate employment.

"So, we have been asked not to cut down the government's own fund portion in revised ADP," said one of the officials, who insisted on anonymity to discuss private conversations.

In the ADP budget for fiscal 2022-23, Tk 149,016 crore has been allocated from the government's own fund.

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A MOTHER'S WILL ... With two-year-old Surya in her arms, Shefali Das polishes a shoe in her husband's shop on the footpath in front of Sena Kalyan Bhaban in the capital's Motijheel. A mother of three, Shefali had to take over the cobbler's job after her husband's sudden paralysis three years ago. She makes ends meet with an earning of Tk 500-600 per day. The struggles she endures to keep her family alive and well are a testament to her strong will.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Kamal unveils list of top 20 defaulters

Usual suspects missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal yesterday disclosed the names of the top 20 defaulters who together account for Tk 16,588 crore of soured loans.

As of September last year, the total defaulted loans in the banking sector stood at Tk 134,396 crore, which is the highest yet, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank. That is 12.3 percent of all outstanding loans.

Kamal placed the list of the top 20 loan defaulters in parliament in a scripted response to a query from ruling Awami League MP Shahiduzzaman Sarker.

CLC Power Company tops the list of defaulters with its bad loan of Tk 1,649 crore, followed by Western Marine Shipyard (Tk 1,529 crore), Remex Footwear (Tk 1,077 crore), Rising Steel Company (Tk 990 crore) and Mohammad Elias Brothers (Tk 965 crore).

Rupali Composite Leather Wire, Crescent Leathers Products, Quantum Power Systems, Saad Musa Fabrics, BR Spinning Mills, SA Oil Refinery, Maisha Property Development, Radium Composite Textile, Samannaz Super Oil, Manha Precast Technology, Asian Education, SM Steel Re-Rolling Mills, Apollo Steel Complex, Ehsan Steel Re-Rolling and Siddiqui Traders are the other big defaulters.

Kamal said the total number of defaulters in Bangladesh is 786,065.

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Keep economy in mind

PM tells DCs on opening day of their conf'ce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the deputy commissioners to cut their use of public funds and rein in non-essential projects.

She asked them to keep the global economic situation in mind and take measures to increase food production to be ready for a possible food crisis.

She also directed them to reduce their use of electricity.

These were among the 25 directives Hasina gave to the chief administrative and revenue officers of the districts while inaugurating the three-day DC Conference-2023 at the Shapla Hall of her office.

"While undertaking a project, you... should keep an eye on how effective it would be for the area, how many people would benefit from it, and ensure that there is no wastage... I don't like taking up projects everywhere indiscriminately. I want to implement projects that are immediately needed," reports UNB, quoting the PM as saying.

The government is not buying the electronic voting machines (EVM) because the priority now is to maintain food security, healthcare services, and people's welfare, she said.

"Why would we implement projects that are not needed now?" she asked.

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- PM for stern action against rumour spreaders, drugs, militancy and terrorism
- Action to ensure law, order and communal harmony
- DCs for allowing video calls for inmates and their families
- Tough provisions in Human Organ Transplantation Act
- Health allowance for the DCs and increase in the educational stipend for their children

House passes bill to ensure pension for all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill was passed in parliament yesterday, aiming to bring the country's growing elderly population under a universal pension scheme.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal placed the Universal Pension Management Bill-2023, which was passed by a voice vote.

All citizens aged between 18 and 50, including expatriate Bangladeshis, are eligible for this scheme.

The bill seeks to bring the growing elderly population under a sustainable social safety net so they can better cope with the fallout from unemployment, disease, old age complications, or extreme poverty amid the high life expectancy rate.

In order to come under the scheme, one has to pay a fixed amount of premium for at least 10 years. After completing 60 years, the

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STUDENT INFORMATION FORM Mother's name too will do

Declares HC in landmark verdict

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

From now on, students can also mention the names of their mothers or legal guardians while filling out a student information form for examinations if their fathers' names are not available.

The High Court yesterday declared this in a landmark verdict on a 14-year-old writ petition, removing a gender discriminatory practice that has been a hurdle for many in pursuing education.

Using the father's name in the form was mandatory when the writ petition was filed in 2009. Now students need to name both the father and mother in the SIF form, said Prof Tapan Kumar Sarkar, chairman of Dhaka education board.

Delivering the judgement, the HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Md Khairul Alam declared illegal and unconstitutional the refusal to provide admit cards to SSC and HSC candidates who have not used their fathers' names in the student information form (SIF).

The court said students may have difficulties in mentioning father's name in the form, and if they are not allowed to fill in the form for omitting father's name, they will be deprived of education which is contrary to their fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution.

Details of the HC verdict will be known after the release of the full text of the judgment.

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Logs piled up after being cut to make room for a depot of the mass rapid transit line-1 in Pitalganj village of Narayanganj's Rugganj upazila. More than one lakh trees will have to be felled in the village to build the metro depot. Nearly 700 households will also be affected by the construction work. Inset, labourers knocking down a building in the area. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



From slumber to whirr of machines

A Narayanganj village braced for a sea change to make way for MRT-1 depot

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Pitalganj, next to the Shitalakkhya and located around 1.5km south of Kanchan Bridge in Narayanganj's Rugganj upazila, is like any other village across the country.

Quiet and serene, it has almost the same socio-economic situation like the rest, where people earn their living mostly by farming or doing small businesses.

However, that scenario is about to change completely as the government is to build a depot of the country's first ever underground metro rail line there.

Though the place will witness new heights of development, it is the villagers who will have to pay a price for it, as at least 698 households will be affected due to the construction of the depot in a major portion of the village.

While a mosque, two temples, a madrasa and more such establishments will have to be relocated, over one lakh trees would have to be chopped down for the work, according to the resettlement action plan for MRT Line-1.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the physical work of the project on February 2, setting off a flurry of activities for the second biggest infrastructure project in Bangladesh, after the Rooppur nuclear power plant project.

The civil works of the Tk 52,561.43 crore project, the biggest one in the transport sector, will start with land development for the depot on 92.97 acres in Pitalganj.

- 4,632 people will be affected, of which 2,770 from Pitalganj
- 1,119 households, including 698 of Pitalganj, will be affected
- 1,376 structures on 67,098 square meters will be affected
- 1,25,562 trees, including 73,830 large ones, mostly in Pitalganj, have to be chopped down

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Framed by DB, two men have their names cleared at last

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two men, framed by the Detective Branch of police for the possession of fake bank notes, won the legal battle they have been fighting for six years to clear their names.

Judge Tahsin Iftikhar of the Metropolitan Special Tribunal-15 in Dhaka today acquitted Hasan Majumdar, manager of a city hotel, and Soheli Rana, chef of the same hotel, as charges brought against them could not be proved beyond doubt, said court sources.

During a raid at Hotel Bondhu in the capital's Paltan on November 6, 2016, plainclothes detectives detained the duo. The event was recorded in the hotel's security camera.

A sub-inspector of the DB then filed a case against them with Motijheel Police Station under the Special Powers Act.

The first information report, prepared by the police, depicted a completely different story.

According to this document, the DB arrested the duo in the Fakirapool area around 4:15pm on November 6, 2016, while they were fleeing with fake bank notes worth Tk 25 lakh.

Hasan, however, alleged that the false FIR was written because he refused to give the detectives Tk 3 lakh in bribe during the raid.

The next year, Sub-Inspector Dewan Uzzal Hossain, one of the officers who conducted the raid and also the investigation officer of the case, pressed charges against Hasan and Soheli.

After the incident, the victim Hasan and his brother Hossain Majumdar also filed several complaints against nine DB men with the Police Headquarters, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Prime Minister's Office and the home ministry, seeking a remedy.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina poses for a photo with deputy commissioners at Shapla Hall of the Prime Minister's Office after addressing the inaugural ceremony of DC conference as the chief guest yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

LEOPARD TANKS FOR UKRAINE

Germany promises swift answer

Encourages allies to start training Ukrainians; Kyiv purges officials in biggest shake-up of war

AFP, Berlin

Germany yesterday said it would decide "shortly" whether to authorise the export of powerful German-made Leopard battle tanks long sought by Kyiv and encouraged allies to start training Ukrainian forces to use them.

While Western nations have pledged ever more sophisticated military hardware in recent weeks to help Ukraine repel Russia's invasion, all eyes in Kyiv are on the battle tanks.

Berlin yesterday stopped short of granting permission for the transfer but underscored that a decision was imminent, provoking a defiant response from the Kremlin.

Poland also urged the ante by putting forward a formal application for the delivery of the German-made tanks from its stocks to Ukraine.

But in Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was battling a deepening corruption scandal within his government, sacking several officials over graft while others resigned.

Ukraine and several of its allies have been urging Germany for weeks to allow the delivery of the Leopards, but a US-led

meeting of Kyiv's allies in Germany last week failed to yield a decision.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius indicated that the moment of truth could be imminent, saying he had "expressly encouraged partner countries that have Leopard tanks that are ready for deployment to train Ukrainian forces on these tanks".

"I expect a decision to be made shortly," he added following talks with Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in Berlin.

Stoltenberg welcomed the "clear message" from the minister because it "will take some time" to ready the tanks and train Ukrainian soldiers to use them after a decision on their delivery.

"We must provide heavier and more advanced systems to Ukraine, and we must do it faster," Stoltenberg said, adding that he expected a decision by Berlin "soon".

Moscow shows no signs of changing course in its invasion, Stoltenberg added, noting that Russia has mobilised more than 200,000 troops and is acquiring new weapons from countries like North Korea or Iran.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the delivery of the tanks would "bring nothing good to the future relationship" between Berlin and Moscow.

"They will leave a lasting mark," he warned.

Under Germany's war weapons control rules, countries using German-made armaments are required to seek Berlin's permission if they wish to transfer them to a third party.

Poland, one of the loudest voices calling for permission to send Leopard tanks, said earlier this month it was ready to deliver 14 of them to Kyiv within the framework of an international coalition of countries.

Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak on Tuesday said the country had now sent in a formal request.

Confirming receipt, a German government spokesman said it would be examined "with necessary urgency".

Meanwhile, local media reports in Ukraine last week accused the ministry of having signed a deal at prices "two to three times higher" than current rates for basic foodstuffs.

Several officials resigned yesterday over the allegations, including a deputy defence minister, two deputy ministers of development of communities and territories, and a deputy minister of social policy.

Five sent to jail over fraudulence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A Dhaka court yesterday sent five men to jail on charges of fraudulence after they were arrested by Rab from the capital's Mirpur on Monday.

Acting on a tip-off, a Rab team arrested Shohel Rana, 37, Moinul Islam Mithu, 28, Hafizur Rahman, 40, Ibrahim, 30, and Al-Amin, 23. The arrestees, who posed as government officials, were accused of promising jobs to unemployed individuals in exchange for money, said Major Alamgir Hossain, company commander of Rab-4 CPC-I.

Fake appointment letters, identity cards, and uniforms of different law enforcement agencies were recovered from their possession, he added.

A case was filed with Mirpur Model Police Station in this regard.

12 brick kilns fined Tk 69 lakh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday fined 12 brick kilns in Jamalpur Sadar upazila a total of Tk 69 lakh for violating DoE guidelines.

The errant brick kilns were fined during multiple drives in different areas of the upazila led by Rubel Mahmud, executive magistrate and deputy director of Mymensingh DoE.

DoE also demolished Kakoli Brick Kiln and ordered it to cease operations as they were found to burn plastic and wood instead of coal, said Masud Rana, assistant director of DoE's Jamalpur office.

The drives were part of an anti-pollution campaign to promote environmental conservation efforts.

One killed, two injured in Nepal quake

AFP, Kathmandu

One person was killed and two were injured after an earthquake struck western Nepal yesterday, a local official told AFP, with authorities still searching for damage.

The 5.6 magnitude quake's epicentre was in hilly Bajura district, 400 kilometres (250 miles) west of Kathmandu, according to the US Geological Survey.

The jolt hit at around 2:43 pm (0858 GMT), with tremors felt as far away as India's capital New Delhi, where buildings briefly shook.

One woman was reported dead, two people were injured and up to 40 houses damaged, district chief Pushkar Khadka told AFP.

Govt doing opposite of what's needed

FROM PAGE 1

There is also no reason to assume all ADP expenditures are equally employment generating, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

Expenditure austerity is needed particularly in domestically-financed ADP projects to contain domestic demand growth, Hussain said.

But that does not appear to be the case.

"This is strange because if the idea is to protect employment while alleviating pressure on foreign exchange reserves and inflation, it is the externally funded projects that should get high implementation priority. The proposed ADP revision is in the opposite direction."

In the current macroeconomic context, inflation reduction and alleviation of foreign exchange shortage have to be the top policy priorities, according to Hussain.

Inflation averaged 8.76 percent in the first six months of the fiscal year, up from 5.7 percent a year earlier, according to data from the

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

As of January 18, foreign currency reserves stood at about \$32.5 billion, down 28.1 percent year-on-year, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank. This is enough to cover about three-and-a-half months' import bills.

"It's all good that the government wants to invigorate economic activities by using more of its own funds towards ADP, but from where would they get the dollars? In domestic-funded projects, I have to pay for the imports," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute.

In foreign-funded projects, the imports are made using the dollars coming in, leaving some surplus dollars in the central bank's coffers.

"They cut foreign funds because they can't utilise it -- that is their ineptness. The original strategy was the right one -- this is the time to accelerate the utilisation of foreign funds and minimise the domestic-funded projects."

The move will heap pressure on

the balance of payment, said Mansur, also the chairman of Brac Bank, adding that there will be a drain on dollars.

"The import pressure is already high now and we are not getting the dollars for that. Imagine what will happen if the dollar crunch intensifies. This is a short-term vision."

The move will fuel inflation further, said Mansur, a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

Under the current circumstances, the government has to borrow much for public expenditure and deficit financing, and that is already having an adverse impact on the economy, said Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The reason being the borrowing is from the BB, which is always inflationary.

Foreign-funded projects and projects will fewer imports must be given priority, he said, adding that a bigger cut in the ADP budget would be beneficial for the economy.

Kamal unveils list of top 20

FROM PAGE 1

The idea of publishing such a list of defaulters is good as they will be punished socially due to the disclosure, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

"But the names of notorious habitual defaulters were absent from the list, so it has raised a question," he said.

The disclosure has not reflected the actual scenario of the defaulted loans, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute.

"I think those who might have faced closure of their businesses were revealed by the finance minister in parliament."

The politically-backed defaulters have rescheduled their defaulted loans under a central bank's relaxed rescheduling facility just before the pandemic, he said.

In May 2019, the central bank allowed defaulters to reschedule their classified loans by making a down payment of only 2 percent instead of 10-50 percent.

Besides, the tenure for repayment was 10 years with a grace period of one

year.

The central bank also allowed all borrowers in banks to avoid the default zone in 2020 even if they did not pay any instalment of their loans throughout the year.

Borrowers enjoyed the relaxed repayment facility until last year as the central bank allowed them to avoid being classified as a defaulter if they cleared 50 percent of their instalments payable in the final quarter of 2022.

"The habitual defaulters have bagged the advantages of the relaxed policies to avoid the default zone. But they should not be allowed to do so," said Mansur, also a former official of the International Monetary Fund.

He suggested the government take strict measures against the defaulters to bring back discipline in the banking sector.

The relaxed rescheduling and loan repayment facilities have facilitated the delinquent borrowers to avoid the list, said Salehuddin Ahmed, a former BB governor.

He recommended the central bank take action against all defaulters to recover the classified loans.

Classified docs found

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contain sensitive or classified information interspersed throughout the records," Jacob wrote in the letter.

With agreement by the former vice president, FBI agents came to his Indiana home at 9:30pm on Jan. 19 to collect the documents stored in the safe, Jacob said.

Biden, whose documents dated from his time as vice president, and Trump, who resisted turning over the items, leading to an FBI raid, are both facing special counsel investigations by the Justice Department over improper handling of classified materials.

Sources familiar with the process say Pence's discovery of classified documents after the Trump and Biden controversies would suggest a more systemic problem related to classified material and the Presidential Records Act, which requires official records from the White House to be turned over to the National Archives at the end of an administration.

From slumber to whirr of machines

FROM PAGE 1

The authorities, however, said they will plant three times more trees than whatever will be felled for building the depot and have already paid compensation to almost all the households that need to be relocated.

The 31.24km rail line will have two parts -- a 19.87km part from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Kamalapur (Airport route) will be underground, while an around 11.36km part will be elevated from Notunbazar to Purbachal (Purbachal route).

The airport route will have 12 stations and the Purbachal route will have nine, seven of which will be above the ground.

Two stations on the Purbachal route -- Nadda and Notunbazar -- will be underground and used as a transit for passengers to switch routes.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council approved the project in October 2019. Of the total cost, the government will provide Tk 13,111 crore and Japan Tk 39,450 crore as soft loan.

The physical work was supposed to begin in December 2020, but was delayed mainly due to a hold-up in completing the detailed design and the tendering process because of the pandemic.

For this, the authorities are unlikely to meet the fresh deadline

set for December 2026.

Once completed, the rail line will be able to carry eight lakh passengers daily.

Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), the implementing agency of the metro rail project, already signed a contract with a Japan-Bangladesh joint-venture firm Shahjalal International Airport to develop the depot. The firm of Japan's Tokyu Construction Co Ltd and Bangladesh's Max Infrastructure Ltd will do this within 910 days for Tk 607.65 crore.

SPOT VISIT

Upon visiting Pitalganj on January 17, this correspondent saw the area acquired by DMTCL for the depot was marked by concrete pillars and all the big trees in the area were marked with different numbers.

Around 11:30am, five to six people were seen chopping some of the marked trees down.

Fifty-year-old Abdul Mannan was one of them.

Abdul already received the compensation money as his 12.5 decimal land fell into the area acquired by the DMTCL.

"The trees are owned by one of my relatives. We were asked to clear the land, so the trees had to be sold out.

"I was born and brought up here. But now I have to leave the area." Abdul has bought four decimals of

land in Gausia area for his relocation, he told this correspondent.

A few yards away, three people were seen dismantling a house, while two others were taking apart another one.

Mazharul Islam, another villager, said that 25 decimals of his land was acquired for the project but he is yet to receive compensation.

"There are some disputes over the land's ownership, for which the payment is being delayed."

He, however, said the poor are not being adequately compensated as they have to pay at least 10 percent of it to local brokers, who have developed a strong syndicate, allegedly with the involvement of some local land office staffers.

Two staffers of Max Infrastructure Ltd were seen conducting surveys there to install instruments for monitoring purposes.

Asked, MAN Siddique, managing director of DMTCL, said they have paid all the compensation money to the district administration and most of the affected people have received their shares.

Asked about those who did not receive it, he said there may be some problems regarding land ownership, but those are only a few cases.

He added that, as per the law, they have paid thrice the existing price of land and twice the existing price of

physical structures.

EFFECTS ON HOUSEHOLDS, TREES

At least 4,632 people have been identified as affected as they will lose their residential and/or commercial structures, trees, ponds and other minor infrastructures, reads the project document.

It added that 513 households will be displaced, while 404 households will lose their commercial structures, 21 will lose both homestead and commercial or business establishments, and 181 will lose their trees and other minor structures.

Moreover, 42 establishments like mosques, temples, educational institutions, graveyards, and offices will be affected, it said.

The project will require the felling 1,25,562 trees of various sizes and categories. Of those, 73,830 are large, 8,751 are medium, 5,507 are small and 37,474 are saplings.

Asked about the cutting down of so many trees, MAN Siddique said they will plant three times what will be chopped down.

"You can see how many trees we have planted in the Diabari MRT Line-6 depot. We will do the same here," he told this correspondent on January 22.

He added that almost all the trees in the area have to be cut down as there are barely any of them along the metro rail alignment.

Five injured as explosive goes off in Moghbazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people were injured when an explosive kept in a garbage container went off in Dhaka's Moghbazar area yesterday morning.

The injured were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment. Four of them took primary treatment, while Atiqul Islam alias Akhil, 15, was still being treated till yesterday evening.

The explosion occurred immediately after Akhil, staffer of a metal scrap shop, started taking out garbage from a plastic container kept on the footpath in front of a drug store at Wireless Gate area.

A staffer of the pharmacy asked him to take the garbage out. The explosion occurred at 10:15am, said Officer-in-Charge of Ramna Police Station Abul Hossain.

The other injured are Saiful Islam, 36, Tareque,

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As the nearest foot-over bridge is under construction, pedestrians have no other option but to cross this busy road in Farmgate area in a risky manner, as cars, buses and trucks zoom by. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

DNCC bowing down to police's wants?

Officials ditch drive to evict police box due to 'resistance, threats' from law enforcers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation was forced to abandon a drive to evict a traffic-police box in the capital's Asad Gate intersection yesterday allegedly due to resistance from police and threat of arrest.

Mafizur Rahman Bhuiyan, deputy chief waste management officer (additional charge) at DNCC, said he along with four other officials started the drive, as the police box was being built on the road's median without getting permission from DNCC.

Soon after they reached the spot at 6:30am, four policemen tried to resist them. Later, around 30 officers joined, he claimed.

They rebuked and even threatened the city corporation officials, Mafizur alleged.

Mafizur then informed the matter to DNCC zone-5 Executive Officer Mutakabbir Ahmed, who after talking to police high-ups, asked the drive team to leave the spot.

The city corporation officials left the area after an hour, Mafizur said.

Contacted, Mutakabbir said the police box was constructed without permission. Police cannot do this.

Deputy Commissioner Traffic (Tejgaon division) Shahed Al Masud denied that police misbehaved and threatened to arrest the officials. "If DNCC had informed us beforehand, police would have dismantled it on their own initiative."

"Traffic boxes are common on roads around the world," he said.

AL seeks to keep BNP at bay

Holds programmes in the capital today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League will hold counter programmes today as the BNP and like-minded parties will stage protest rallies in the capital and other divisional headquarters.

The BNP, at its January 16 rally, announced that it will hold the protest programmes today, as the Baksal rule was introduced on January 25, 1975.

The party termed the day "democracy killing day".

The rallies are also aimed at drumming up support for the party's 10-point demand, including the resignation of the ruling AL government, dissolution of parliament and formation of a neutral caretaker government.

Although the AL leaders say they will hold the rallies to mark the Mass Uprising Day and not to counter the BNP's protests, insiders say the AL programmes will be held to "take control of the streets".

Earlier, the AL organised its programme marking Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Homecoming Day on January 11 during the BNP's mass sit-in programme. The actual date of the homecoming, however, is January 10.

This time as well, the party is observing Mass Uprising Day today - one day after the actual date.

AL, its associate bodies and other pro-AL organisations will stage rallies at five different places in the capital.

The party's two Dhaka city units will organise two separate rallies - one in front of the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue at 11:00am and another at the Banani Model School field at 3:00pm.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, is likely to attend the events.

Dhaka South Jubo League will organise a rally at the Jatrabari intersection and the while the Dhaka North unit will hold one in Mohakhali Kachabazar area.

Meanwhile, Dhaka University Chhatra League will stage a rally in Shahbagh.

Leaders and activists of AL's two Dhaka city units held several meetings and instructed their activists to stay on the streets from morning.

Wishing anonymity, several leaders told this newspaper

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Swallowing yaba for a living

Smuggling drugs inside human stomach on the rise, say DNC officials after arresting 5 carriers

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

It takes around 4 hours to swallow 54 small packets of yaba for 41-year-old Josna Khatun. Each packet contains 50 pills.

"I gobbled those packets with Banana. I was about to vomit when I tried to swallow those. But I managed somehow, thinking of the payment that was promised to me," Josna told this correspondent after a team from the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrested her from Dhaka yesterday.

Hailing from Pabna, Josna said she still bears the pain of carrying the yaba pills inside her stomach. The smugglers offered to pay Tk 10,000 for carrying a thousand pills from Cox's Bazar to Dhaka.

For the successful delivery of the 54 packets, Josna was supposed to get a payment of Tk 25,000. She went to Teknaf from Pabna two days ago after getting in touch with the syndicate.

Inside a house in Teknaf, she gobbled the packets along with four others - Selina Khatun, 27, Jony Sheikh, 21, Md Hasan, 40, and Babul Hossain, 32.

They reached Dhaka yesterday morning on a passenger bus. The syndicate members in Dhaka were supposed to receive the five from Sayedabad bus stand and take them to a hotel to bring out the tablets from their stomachs.

Based on a tip, the DNC team



We have recovered around 4.66 lakh yaba pills in 2022. The number was 1.80 lakh in 2021. Around 35 to 40 percent of the pills were smuggled inside human stomach, which was around 20 to 25 percent in 2021.

Md Rasheduzzaman
Deputy Director of DNC
(Dhaka north)

People will die from an "abnormal overdose" of the drug if any of these packets leak or burst inside their stomachs. It can be life-threatening if anyone carries a huge number of yaba pills in this manner.

Dr Shoebur Reza Choudhury
Chief Consultant of Central
Drug Addiction Centre

managed to arrest the five from the bus stand and recovered around 8,000 pills, Mehedi Hasan, assistant director of DNC, told The Daily Star.

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'Show austerity in energy use'

Ministers instruct deputy commissioners at conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deputy commissioners have been asked to show more austerity in energy consumption at district and upazila levels to tackle the upcoming challenges in the power sector.

They were also instructed to play a role in collecting due power bills from different government organisations at the field level.

They were given the instructions yesterday at the three-day DC conference, which is taking place at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium.



We've set priorities. Hospitals, irrigation, agriculture, fertiliser productions and industries, for instance, have been given top priorities. These sectors will be brought under strict monitoring to ensure uninterrupted power.

Nasrul Hamid
State minister for power

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the conference from the Prime Minister's Office.

In the afternoon sessions, DCs took part in meetings with different ministries, including those of power, finance, education, and disaster management. The ministers gave the directives at that time.

Talking with the media after a session, State Minister for Power Nasrul Hamid said, "Deputy commissioners and divisional commissioners are asked to keep regular communication with the power division to ensure uninterrupted power for irrigation."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

PRESIDENTIAL POLLS EC likely to announce schedule today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission is likely to announce the schedule for the presidential election today.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal came up with the announcement yesterday after holding a meeting with Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury.

It is a custom that the CEC meets the Speaker ahead of the announcement of the schedule for presidential election, Habibur told reporters at his EC office.

He said they had a discussion on the election and then it was decided that the EC will announce the election schedule soon.

"We [election commissioners] will hold a meeting in the morning tomorrow [today]. After that meeting, we will unveil the election schedule..." said the CEC.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Bangladesh must strengthen its diplomatic efforts

Say foreign policy analysts on regional cooperation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

As the world faces unprecedented geopolitical and economic challenges following the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, Bangladesh needs to ramp up its diplomatic efforts for regional cooperation in South and Southeast Asia and beyond, say foreign policy analysts.

The observations came at a seminar, titled "Strengthening Bangladesh's Foreign Relations with Neighbours in the Evolving Global Order", organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) yesterday.

Speakers said South Asia is one of the least integrated regions of the world. Its exports are mostly to the West and the supply chain was affected during the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, which should prompt the regional countries to redefine the approaches for promoting regional trade and investment.

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute President M Humayun Kabir said generally, all countries prioritise prosperity and security in their foreign relations.

Humayun Kabir, also a former ambassador, said Bangladesh has made significant improvements in socio-economic spheres but now faces challenges as it is graduating from LDC in 2026.

He suggested coordination among various

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Sharp rise in child deaths from road crashes, drowning: report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Significantly more children died in road crashes and drowning incidents last year, when compared to the previous one, found a report of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

The report, which used newspaper reports, revealed the finding during a press conference in the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

As per the report, 196 children died in road crashes in 2022. The death toll was 96 the previous year. The number of children who drowned to death stood at 1,419 in 2022, while it was 405 in 2021, mentioned the report.

Meanwhile, the report found that 560 children were raped in 2022, while 81 were subjected to gang rape, 288 got murdered and 317 died by suicide after rape.

Ninety-eight children faced an attempt to rape in 2022, mentioned the report.

Moreover, 14 house-holds were victims of rape, of whom, three were wounded and two died by suicide. Four of them were murdered, and two were reported



Speakers at the conference at Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

to have died under mysterious circumstances.

The report, "Condition of Bangladeshi Children 2022: Analysis on Newspapers", was based on the reports published in eight daily newspapers from 2021 to 2022. The newspapers are Prothom Alo, Daily Jugantor, Samakal, Daily Ittefaq, Kaler Kantho, The New Age, The Daily

Star and Dhaka Tribune.

Unfortunately, around 80 percent of victims do not get justice due to delays in trial, stated the report.

Mentioning the spike in child marriage during Covid-19, MJF coordinator Shahana Huda said the ratio decreased a little after the pandemic, but the actual number is yet to be estimated, as these are

not widely reported in media.

"Children aged 13 years and below are more prone to abuse, as they do not complain about such crimes, due to their lack of knowledge of where to seek help," she added.

In her welcome speech, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said as per the analysis of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Bangladesh must

FROM PAGE 3
ministries to maintain strong foreign relations with the countries.

BISS research director Mahfuz Kabir said Bangladesh's trade with Asian giants (India and China) has seen heavy deficits. Policymakers need to find ways of increasing exports to these countries.

BISS Senior Research Fellow M Ashique Rahman said Bangladesh needs to avoid the inclination to join any alliance as

the superpowers will be drawing the country towards them.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said, "We are working hard to improve regional connectivity meant for development, peace and stability. We also expect the same from others."

DU International Relations Department chair Prof Lailufar Yasmin, BISS DG Sheikh Pasha Habib Uddin, foreign ministry's DG (South Asia) ATM Rokebul Haque also spoke.

Swallowing yaba

FROM PAGE 3
During interrogation, Shahidul said it was his second time carrying yaba from Cox's Bazar to Dhaka. He has gobbled around 100 packets of yaba - each containing 50 pills.

Mitu swallowed around 55 yaba packets and the duo was supposed to deliver the packets in Rangpur.

Asked about the risks of carrying yaba pills in the stomach, Shahidul said he did it for the money and did not know anything about the health risks.

DNC AD Mehedi Hasan said in most cases, the smugglers use a female carrier to smuggle the pills without drawing attention from law enforcers.

There have also been incidents of the carriers dying after the yaba packets burst inside their stomachs.

On September 27, 2020, 31 packets of yaba were recovered from the stomach of dead yaba dealer Abdus Sukur, 38, in Rajshahi. Each packet contained 50 yaba pills.

On April 27, 2019, doctors of DMCH found 11 small packets containing yaba pills, while conducting an autopsy on one Md Julhas, 35, after his sudden death in Dhaka's Kamalapur area.

Dr Shoebur Reza Choudhury, chief consultant of the Central Drug Addiction Centre in Dhaka, said people will die from an "abnormal overdose" of the drug if any of these packets leak or burst inside their stomachs.

It can be life-threatening if anyone carries a huge number of yaba pills in this manner.

Sharp rise in child

FROM PAGE 3
the report, children are not safe even within the boundaries of their homes.

"We all have to work together to stop child abuse. Otherwise, it will keep on growing," she said.

Amran Khan, assistant director of social welfare ministry, said, "Child helpline 1098 helped a lot to reduce rape and early marriage of children. Besides, community-based child protection is being implemented at ward level."

MJF launched a "Child Safety Committee" to help disadvantaged children, who are being forced into child labour and tortured, and ensure their social security and human rights.

Raleza Shaheen, MJF coordinator of child development; Roksana Begum of Breaking the Silence; CPD Executive Director Moslema Bari; and Mamtaz Begum, executive director, Mukti Nari - O Shishu Odhikar Unnayan Shongstha, also spoke.

Show austerity

FROM PAGE 3
"We've set priorities. Hospitals, irrigation, agriculture, fertiliser productions and industries, for instance, have been given top priorities. These sectors will be brought under strict monitoring to ensure uninterrupted power," Nasrul said.

The power division has also sought assistance from the DCs to set up solar-power panels in districts, he added.

Replying to a question, the state minister said he is expecting gas supply from Bhola North Gas Field in two to three months.

Asked whether the power price will be increased, he said they will adjust the price every month, but it depends on fuel price. It is hard to tell whether the price will increase.

Earlier, Education Minister Dipu Moni said DCs made proposals for formulating code of conduct for MPO-enlisted teachers of private educational institutions. "We are considering it to be a good proposal. We'll work on it."

The Jhenidah DC proposed forming a policy to ban politics for MPO teachers and prohibiting their involvement in other profitable jobs in addition to their teaching duties.

Talking with journalists after the meeting, PM's Economic Affairs Adviser Dr Mashiur Rahman said that DCs have pointed out some incongruities in planning.

"In many cases, it is seen that infrastructures are built without appointing enough manpower. As a result, these infrastructures get damaged," he said.

"They also pointed out that bridges are built in places where they are not necessary," Mashiur said, adding that measures will be taken in this regard.

Majority not enrolled

FROM PAGE 5
services and we need to create an inclusive environment where they can thrive," said Sheldon Yett, Unicef representative to Bangladesh.

Data from the survey also shed light on the difficulties that children with disabilities face as adults. Only one-third of persons with disabilities of working age are employed, with women with disabilities far more likely to be unemployed compared to men.

While 90 percent of persons with disabilities

who are registered with the government receive disability allowances, the vast majority of them - about 65 percent - remain unregistered, the press release said.

Early identification and management of childhood disabilities are critical to maximising the potential of children. It is also critical to create an inclusive environment where families and service providers can support children with disabilities to participate actively in all spheres of life, read the release.

They issued 5,000

FROM PAGE 5
process and informed higher authorities.

While probing the activity, police traced the four and arrested them. However, law enforcers said they are just ground-level members of the gang who used to collect clients.

Asif Mohiuddin, additional deputy commissioner (CT), told

The Daily Star, "It is not clear whether the criminals hacked the server or managed an official's password and username. We are investigating the matter."

"We have informed the matter to the registrar general's office to take steps," he said. "We will grill the accused after taking them into remand through court."

AL seeks to keep BNP

FROM PAGE 3
that they want to be on the streets like they did on January 11 and January 16. The AL will hold "normal" rallies. However, if the situation is different, action will be taken as per central instructions, they added.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abu Ahmed Mannafi, president of Dhaka South

AL, said, "Leaders and activists of all levels will join the rallies and be watchful on the streets so that the BNP can't incite any violence."

During the last four demonstrations by the BNP, the AL also staged rallies at different places in the capital to keep watch on the BNP activists.

Earth's inner core

FROM PAGE 12
"We believe the inner core rotates, relative to the Earth's surface, back and forth, like a swing," they told AFP.

"One cycle of the swing is about seven decades", meaning it changes direction roughly every 35 years, they added.

They said it previously

changed direction in the early 1970s and predicted the next about-face would be in the mid-2040s.

The researchers said this rotation roughly lines up with changes in what is called the "length of day" - small variations in the exact time it takes Earth to rotate on its axis.

EC likely to announce

FROM PAGE 3
On April 24, 2018, President Abdul Hamid took oath as 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.

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

Five injured

FROM PAGE 3
20, Md Shaheen, 30, and Abul Kalam, 25.

Injured Saiful said he was heading towards his office in Moghbazar from his Sabujbagh residence at the time of the explosion.

"I fell on the road and saw blood oozing from my body. I don't know how the explosion took place," he said.

Harun-or-Rashid, additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan

Police's Detective Branch, and Md Asaduzzaman, chief of DMP's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, visited the spot right after the incident.

Harun told journalists on the spot that they found a large number of splinters.

He said they were working to know why the explosive was kept there. The CTTC's bomb disposal unit is examining the splinters, he added.

CCC to allocate

FROM PAGE 5
being a good decision to keep the city clean.

Abdul Aziz, a banker, said, "In the late 1990s, late ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, then mayor of CCC, took such an initiative and dedicated some spots for pasting posters. It worked only for a few months."

Contacted, ATM Shahjahan, assistant professor of urban and regional planning department at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, said, "In fact, there is a prohibition for pasting posters without

dedicated areas in the local government act, but the law is not followed strictly." Shahjahan, also former general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said, "Mass awareness is a must to successfully implement the rule."

Contacted, CCC Mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said, "We want to bring this [putting up posters indiscriminately] under control, and so, we are going to dedicate spots for pasting posters and impose fines against those who violate the rule."

Navana Pharmaceuticals Limited				
Statement of Financial Position (Un-audited)				
As at 31 December 2022				
(Amount in BDT)				
Particulars	Notes	As at		
		31-Dec-2022	30-Jun-2022	
Assets				
Non-Current Assets:				
Property, Plant and Equipment	3.00	3,708,051,685		3,421,837,366
Intangible Asset	3.01	660,000		770,000
Capital Work in Progress	4.00	199,027,819		403,007,534
Right-of-Use Asset	5.00	187,384,430		204,018,990
Investment in Marketable Securities (Fair Value)	6.00	169,427,247		159,028,097
Total Non-Current Assets		4,264,551,181		4,188,661,986
Current Assets:				
Inventories	7.00	1,134,199,016		1,009,145,823
Trade and Other Receivables	8.00	589,172,658		547,819,881
Advances, Deposits and Prepayments	9.00	1,851,955,753		1,204,469,458
Goods In Transit	10.00	261,902,280		67,575,600
Cash and Cash Equivalents	11.00	650,489,616		66,427,585
Total Current Assets		4,487,719,322		2,895,438,346
Total Assets		8,752,270,503		7,084,100,333
Equity And Liabilities				
Equity:				
Paid-up Share Capital	12.00	1,074,162,170		802,301,500
Share Premium	13.00	450,209,562		-
Revaluation Reserve	14.00	1,966,271,633		1,966,271,633
Capital Reserve		605,590,148		605,590,148
Unrealized Gain/ (Loss) Reserve	6.00	(76,189,889)		(95,356,927)
Retained Earnings		229,642,054		204,242,971
Total Equity:		4,249,685,678		3,483,049,324
Liabilities				
Non-Current Liabilities:				
Loan from Directors	15.00	30,000,000		30,000,000
Lease Liabilities	16.02	104,350,155		100,720,006
Long Term Loan	17.02	25,820,495		141,390,720
Deferred Tax Liability	18.00	46,927,303		42,362,502
Total Non-Current Liabilities		207,097,953		314,473,228
Current Liabilities:				
Short Term Loan	19.00	3,602,714,114		2,682,055,890
Lease Liabilities (Current Maturity)	16.01	24,691,658		29,254,646
Long Term Loan (Current Maturity)	17.01	5,845,498		28,125,222
Trade and Other Payables	20.00	544,077,764		547,142,023
Dividend Payable		118,157,839		-
Total Current Liabilities		4,295,486,872		3,286,577,781
Total Liabilities		4,502,584,825		3,601,051,009
Total Equity and Liabilities		8,752,270,503		7,084,100,333
Net Asset Value (NAV) Per Share		30.00		39.56
				43.41

Annexed notes are integral part of these financial statement.

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income (Un-audited)

For the period from 01 July 2022 to 31 December 2022

(Amount in BDT)

Particulars	Notes	Half Yearly		Second Quarter	
		July-Dec'2022	July-Dec'2021	Oct-Dec'2022	Oct-Dec'2021
Net Sales	21.00	2,731,985,726	2,437,458,065	1,395,860,103	1,232,261,592
Less: Cost of Good Sold	22.00	1,475,493,092	1,356,630,333	747,501,671	694,774,789
Gross Profit		1,256,492,634	1,080,827,732	648,358,431	537,486,803
Less: Operating Expenses					
Administrative Expenses	23.00	100,786,936	82,384,963	59,288,682	44,692,136
Selling & Marketing Expenses	24.00	616,649,993	614,865,227	332,820,480	328,509,489
Distribution Expenses	25.00	188,586,128	148,947,190	95,129,309	72,697,585
Total Operating Expenses:		906,023,057	846,197,380	487,238,471	445,899,210
Operating Profit		350,469,578	234,630,352	161,119,961	91,587,593
Less: Finance Expenses	26.00	142,607,229	95,052,933	77,309,339	42,273,407
Add: Other Income/(Loss)	27.00	(15,041,693)	70,129,296	(3,675,944)	59,675,686
Profit before WPPF & Tax		192,820,655	209,706,715	80,134,678	108,989,872
Contribution to WPPF		9,181,936	9,808,223	3,815,937	5,012,182
Profit before tax		183,638,719	199,898,492	76,318,741	103,977,690
Less: Income Tax		40,081,797	76,062,807	5,392,244	41,516,859
Current Tax	28.00	35,516,996	76,311,579	18,993,226	45,951,686
Deferred Tax Expense/(Income)		4,564,801	(248,773)	(13,600,983)	(4,434,828)
Profit after Tax		143,556,922	123,835,685	70,926,497	62,460,831
Other Comprehensive Income					
Unrealized Gain/(Loss) on Marketable Security		19,167,038	17,238,872	7,460,356	17,238,872
Total Comprehensive Income		162,723,960	141,074,557	78,386,853	79,699,703
Earnings Per Share (EPS)		29.00	1.57	1.54	0.77

Annexed notes are integral part of these financial statement.

Statement of Changes in Equity (Un-audited)

For the period from 01 July 2022 to 31 December 2022

(Amount in BDT)

Particulars	Share Capital	Share Premium	Liability against Share	Revaluation Reserve	Capital Reserve	Unrealized Gain/(Loss) Reserve	Retained Earnings	Total
Balance as at 1 July 2022	802,301,500	-	-	1,966,271,633	605,590,148	(95,356,927)	204,242,971	3,483,049,324
Profit after Tax	-	-	-	-	-	-	143,556,922	143,556,922
Received from IPO Share Subscription	-	-	-	750,000,019	-	-	-	750,000,019
Allocation of Shares for IPO	271,866,670	478,139,948	(750,000,019)	-	-	-	-	-
13% Cash Dividend for FY 30 June 2022	-	-	-	-	-	-	(118,157,839)	(118,157,839)
Less: Adj. with IPO Expense	-	-	-	(27,929,786)	-	-	-	(27,929,786)
Add: to Unrealized Gain/(Loss) on PPOC	-	-	-	-	-	19,167,038	-	19,167,038
Balance as at 31 December 2022	1,074,162,170	450,209,562	-	1,966,271,633	605,590,148	(76,189,889)	229,642,054	4,249,685,678

Annexed notes are integral part of these financial statement.

Statement of Cash Flows (Un-audited)

For the period from 01 July 2022 to 31 December 2022

(Amount in BDT)

Particulars	Notes	Half Yearly	
		July-Dec'2022	July-Dec'2021
Cash Flows from Operating Activities:			
Cash Received from Customers		2,675,574,518	2,355,297,392
Cash Received from Other Income		35,607,023	3,358,433
Cash Paid to Operational & Others		(2,631,526,234)	(2,311,379,331)
Net cash flows from operating Activities:		79,655,306	47,276,493
Cash Flows from Investing Activities:			
Cash Paid for Purchase of Property, Plant & Equipment		(846,628,977)	(701,072,623)
Realized Gain/(loss) from Sale of Marketable Securities		(21,762,449)	66,770,864
Cash received from Dividend Income		671,590	-
Cash Received/(Paid) from Investment in Marketable Securities		8,767,888	(331,934,982)
Net cash from/(used in) investing activities:		(858,951,949)	(966,236,741)
Cash Flows from Financing Activities:			
Cash Received from IPO Proceed		750,000,018	-
Payment for IPO Expenses		(16,036,0	

Amend road safety act or make new law Demands Road Safety Coalition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must either incorporate a new chapter on road safety issues into the Road Transport Act 2018 or make a new law to ensure road safety, demanded Road Safety Coalition Bangladesh yesterday.

The coalition, a platform of nine organisations working on road safety issues, made the demand at a press conference at the capital's Jatiya Press Club, as according to it, the existing law and rules are not enough to ensure road safety.

Ilias Kanchan, chairman of Nirapad Sarak Chai, a member of the coalition, read out the keynote paper at the press conference.

Kanchan said the road transport act and its rules are not enough to ensure safety on the roads.

Many important issues like safety related to road infrastructure and vehicles, post-crash rescue and treatment, seat-belt use and safety of children do not get due importance, Kanchan added.

In this regard, the coalition demanded the government either incorporate a new chapter into the existing act or enact a separate "Road Safety Act" to deal with all such issues.

Representatives of other member organisations were also present at the press conference.



For those taking the train from Kotchandpur station to get to places, Fatema Begum is the familiar face who greets them with a smile and offers them papadums. Fatema has been selling papadums for 12 years at this station, earning around Tk 200 per day. This photo was taken in Jhenidah recently. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

'They issued 5,000 birth certificates breaching server' Four of racket held in port city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chattogram police yesterday arrested four people over issuance of birth certificates illegally by breaching the government server.

Members of the counter-terrorism division of Chattogram Metropolitan Police arrested them during a drive in the port city's Patenga and EPZ areas.

Collaborating with several organised, tech-savvy criminals, a gang has issued around 5,000 birth certificates across the country, by using false information and taking huge amounts of money from people, said police.

The arrestees are Md Mostakim, 22, Md Delwar Hossain Saimon, 23, and Abdur Rahman Arif, 35. The other arrestee is a juvenile, they said.

Over 500 birth certificates were issued illegally under five wards of CCC from January 8 to January 20, using addresses of different districts. Noticing the unusual activity, Chattogram City Corporation had temporarily suspended the birth registration

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Many important issues like safety related to road infrastructure and vehicles, post-crash rescue and treatment, seat-belt use and safety of children do not get due importance.

Ilias Kanchan, Chairman of Nirapad Sarak Chai

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES Majority not enrolled in formal education

Says national survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than half the children with disabilities in Bangladesh are not enrolled in any formal education, according to new national-level data.

The findings come from the recently-published National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (NSPD) 2021, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) with technical support from Unicef, said a press release issued by Unicef yesterday.

The survey reveals that among children with disabilities (aged 5-17 years), only 65 percent are enrolled in



SCHOOL ENROLMENT

- ▶▶ 65pc enrolled in primary school
- ▶▶ 35pc enrolled in secondary school
- ▶▶ 60pc not in any stream of education

"We need to do more for these children. We need to provide the support and services and we need to create an inclusive environment where they can thrive."

SHELDON YETT
Unicef Representative to Bangladesh.

primary school and only 35 percent are enrolled in secondary school. In total, 60 percent of children with disabilities aged 5-17 years are not in education.

The survey also found that children with disabilities who do attend formal education lag academically by over two years for their age on average.

"The data from this national survey

— the first of its kind by the BBS — highlights the challenges children with disabilities face growing up. The findings will support the government to formulate policies and initiatives to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh," said Iftekhairul Karim, BBS project director.

According to the survey, 1.7 percent of children in Bangladesh live with one of twelve types of disability defined in the Persons with Disability Rights and Protection Act 2013, while 3.6 percent of children face functional difficulty in at least one of the domains of seeing, hearing, walking, motor skills, communication, learning, playing or controlling behaviour.

"The new data highlights just how many children with disabilities in Bangladesh are losing out on education. We need to do more for these children. We need to provide the support and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Chief Engineer
Health Engineering Department (HED)
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
105-106, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
www.hed.gov.bd E-mail: hedhq@yahoo.com

Memo No. 45.02.0000.001.14.087.22-07 Dated: 24/01/2023

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description of work	Last date & time of selling tender document	Tender closing date & time
1	781890	WP-13740/SDP-4-GOB-HED	Construction of Naria 50 Bed Upazila Health Complex in Shariatpur Dist (2nd Contract).	22.02.2023 16:00	23.02.2023 14:00

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

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches.

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

Brigadier General Bashir Ahmed, ndc, psc
Chief Engineer
E-mail: hedhq@yahoo.com

GD-117

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
College Education Development Project (CEDP)
IDG Sub-Project: Rajshahi College, Rajshahi
E-mail: rajshahicollegebd@gmail.com, Website: www.rc.gov.bd
online news portal: rcbarta.com, Fax: 0721-771511

Memo No. 37.02.0000.CEDP/IDG/Rajshahi College/OTM/Goods/G-7/05 Date: 24/01/2023

e-Tender Notice-01/2022-2023

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

SL No.	Tender ID No.	Description of works	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time	Opening date and time
01	781955	Supply and Installation of Laptop & Desktop for CEDP Office & Departments for Rajshahi College, Rajshahi (OTM Package No. G-7)	14/02/2023 15:30	15/02/2023 12:00	15/02/2023 12:00

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 (<https://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 14-February-2023 15:30.

Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Principal
Rajshahi College, Rajshahi

GD-119

Office of the Superintending Engineer
Market Construction Cell
Dhaka South City Corporation
Level-11 (East Block), Nagar Bhaban
Fulbaria, Dhaka-1000

Ref. No. 46.207.007.09.00.001.2023

Tender Notice

Tenders are hereby invited through e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, Market Construction Cell, Dhaka South City Corporation for the procurement of following packages, which will be available at e-GP website (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) from date: 25/01/2023 22:00.

Sl No.	Tender ID, Ref No. & Package No.	Name of works	Tender last selling date and time	Tender opening date & time
01.	Tender ID-772796 Invitation Ref. No.: 46.207.007.09.00.02.2022-2023 Package No. Hazaribagh Kacha Bazaar P-01	Construction of One Basement with 5-Storeied Kacha Bazar at Hazaribagh Dhaka South City Corporation up to 3rd Floor (Package-1)	28-Feb-2023 17:00	01-Mar-2023 14:30

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

Mohammad Towhid Siraj
Superintending Engineer
Market Construction Cell
Dhaka South City Corporation
Room No. 1022, Level-11 (East Block)
Nagar Bhaban, Fulbaria, Dhaka
Phone: 01709-900567
Email: xenmarket.dscc@gmail.com

ডিকমসিসি/পিআরবি/১৯৪/২০২২-২০২৩
GD-120



14 more hospitalised with dengue

STAR REPORT

At least 14 dengue patients were hospitalised across the country in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

Of them, nine are from outside Dhaka, according to the DGHS.

With the new cases, the total number of dengue patients rose to 503 while total number of deaths this year remains at six.

Some 58 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment, of which, 29 are from outside the capital.

The total number of deaths from dengue fever was 281 last year while the total number of cases was 62,382.

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 25

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

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Chattogram City Corporation

মহলা আবর্জনা নালা
নর্দমায় ফেলকেন না

Tiger Pass Chattogram
www.ccc.org.bd

শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
শ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

Memo No. 46.11.1600.002.39.23.78 Dated: 24/1/2023

Tender Notice

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of following packages from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to particular date specified on tender notice.

Sl No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tender ID	Last date & time of selling documents	Last date & time of submission documents
1	PPFRSP-00306	Supplying Furnitures for Councilor Offices (Ward No. 31-40) of Chattogram City Corporation.	781745	12-Feb-2023 11:34	12-Feb-2023 13:34
2	PPMSSP-00401	Supplying ½" down size stone ¾" down size stone, Sylhet Sand (F.M.-2.20), Cem-II Cement and 1st Class Bricks at Sagarika Store of Chattogram City Corporation	781220	12-Feb-2023 12:26	12-Feb-2023 14:26
3	PPMSSP-00201	Supplying ½" down size stone, ¾" down size stone, Sylhet Sand (F.M.-2.50), Cem-II Cement and 1st Class Bricks at Sagarika Store of Chattogram City Corporation	781211	12-Feb-2023 12:17	12-Feb-2023 14:17

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

CCC/PRD-107/22-23
Size: 7'x4 col

Engr. Biplab Das
Superintending Engineer
and
Controller of Stores
Chattogram City Corporation

GD-121

CCC to allocate 115 spots for posters, set fees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) will designate 115 specific spots in the port city where people can put up posters for a fee.

This decision has been taken in a bid to keep the city neat and clean, said CCC sources.

However, instead of managing the system itself, CCC will go through a tender process to select a private company for management, they said, adding that the decision was made in an internal meeting of CCC's conservancy department on Monday.

Contacted, CCC Chief Conservancy Officer Abul Hashem said the tender would be floated by publishing a circular in newspapers in a day or two.

"The highest bidder would be selected through the tender. The selected company would set up steel structures of 10 feet by 6 feet in the dedicated spots and realise fees from individuals or organisations putting up posters," he said.

"The fee would be fixed by CCC," he added.

Hashem said a fine would be imposed on those who paste posters beyond the specific spots.

A part of the revenue from the fees will go to CCC, officials said.

Many city dwellers are, however, doubtful whether this initiative will bear any fruit despite it

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Meet the man behind 'OBAK BHALOBASHA'

Warfaze's Babna Karim opens up to The Daily Star

"It was inspired by seeing how wonderful life can be, mostly when you see something enormous and beautiful like Cox's Bazar. At the end of the day, I am extremely humbled by people's love for this song. When I was writing it, I could never have imagined it would get to this level."

AAQIB HASIB

Legacy. It's often an arbitrary word that is thrown around. But very few can truly say that their legacies have been solidified in the stars.

Babna Karim is one such individual. The original bassist of Warfaze, Babna Karim has been the man behind some of the band's most iconic songs.

While Babna *bhai* currently resides in the US, he visited Bangladesh for a short trip this January. Having loved his Warfaze songs for years, I had to sit down for an interview with the man himself.

How did you start out composing songs for Warfaze?

While I joined the band in 1986, I was not really composing music at that time. In 1987, Warfaze was really taking off. However, in the same year, my immediate older brother—who was in the air force—passed away in an

accident. At this time, I took a break from everything. I was only 18 at that point.

During this period of seclusion, I began composing music. However, I was not really composing for Warfaze, rather for myself.

Bicchunno Abeg was my first composition. After that came songs like *Ekti Chele* and *Boshe Achi*. Back then, I did write a lot of songs for Warfaze, but it was how the band came together, arranged the songs and added their own flavours to it that made them such great hits.

Is it true that you composed 'Obak Bhalobasha' on a BUET batch trip?

I had the tune for *Obak Bhalobasha* already, but I don't think I had the lyrics. At that time, 17 of us from BUET had gone to Cox's Bazar. This was my first time there. When my friends went to the beach, I stayed back because I wanted to work on the song.

Funnily enough, I had not taken my own guitar, because I was a little embarrassed about

what people would think. Thankfully, my friend Shuvo had brought his guitar. So, I continued writing the song that evening with his guitar.

It was on the roof of that Tnt resthouse that my friends heard the first version of *Obak Bhalobasha*, fresh out of the oven.

How do you feel about the fact that 'Obak Bhalobasha' has become such a phenomenon in Bangladesh? To this day, it is a song that resonates with people of all ages.

Every song has a statement, but I think some people might like it because they think it is a love song. But really, the song is about the love of existence. How we have been given this gift of life. I am extremely grateful to God for giving me this life, where in some ways every moment is a gift.

It was inspired by seeing how wonderful life can be, mostly when you see something enormous and beautiful like Cox's Bazar. At the end of the day, I am extremely humbled by people's love for this song. When I was writing it, I could never have imagined it would get to this level.

Could you tell us about your upcoming projects?

Romel Ali and I have many compositions in the pipeline for RBR's next album. Right now, we are shortlisting songs for the album. I have also worked on something with Warfaze, which should be released soon. Personally, I want to continue working on my flamenco playing skills.



'Black War' to release in Australia

Arifin Shuvoo starrer *Black War*, which was released in theatres on January 13 locally, is all set to screen in Australia on February 10. Bongoz Films Australia, will be distributing the film across the country.

Director Sunny Sarwar said, "The international release of *Black War* is going to start with the release in Australia on February 10. I really hope the film will win the hearts of Bangladeshi audiences there."

The film has been jointly directed by Sunny Sarwar and Foysal Ahmed. It also stars Taskin Rahman, Sadia Nabila, Jannatul Ferdous Oishee, Raisul Islam Asad, Sumit Sengupta, Fazlur Rahman Babu, Misha Sawdagar, Shatabdi Wadud, Manoj Pramanik, Iresh Zaker and Maznun Mizan.

Ben Affleck's sports film on Nike to release on April 5



AIR, an upcoming sports drama starring Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, will premiere in theatres worldwide on April 5, prior to its release on Amazon Prime Video.

Amazon Studios, Skydance Sports, and Mandalay Pictures are financing the drama about popular sports brand Nike.

The film revolves around the story of Nike's long shot campaign to recruit emerging superstar basketball player Michael Jordan, for a shoe contract in the mid-80's.

Damon portrays former Nike executive Sonny Vaccaro, while Affleck plays Nike co-founder Phil Knight.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

NEWS

New outfit planned entry with a bang

FROM PAGE 12

of the activities of the outfit and role of its military wing chief Mashukur Rahman, arrested on Monday.

According to Rab, Mashukur was an employee of a post office until 2007. He then started committing robberies.

In the following years, he was arrested several times on charges of robbery and sent to jail, where he came in contact with some leaders of militant group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

According to Rab, he was radicalised in prison. After being released on bail, he became a JMB militant.

In 2017, he joined the Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya, which was not known to law enforcers at the time.

Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's legal and media wing director, revealed Mashukur's descent into militancy at the press conference.

On Monday, after a gunfight between a Rab team and militants, officers arrested Mashukur, who goes by the alias Ronobir, and another militant named Abul Bashar Mridha near Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar.

Moin said Rab found the video on Mashukur's smartphone.

Mashukur, an expert on improvised explosive devices, became the military wing chief of the outfit a year ago, Moin said.

Under the direction of the ameer, he organised several "shura committee" meetings in Cumilla and different

other places.

The Rab official said Mashukur along with the other shura members was present at the signing of an agreement between Jama'atul Ansar and insurgents in the hills in 2021, regarding training of the military wing members.

"He visited the hill tracts on several occasions and supervised the training of the outfit's military wing members," Moin said.

The other arrested, Bashar, who goes by the alias Alam, was an operative of Harkat-ul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh before joining the Jama'atul Ansar in 2016 or 2017. He was on Rab's list of 55 youths who left their home in the last two years to become militants.

BNP plans to get back

FROM PAGE 12

will be staged to protest these counter programmes.

Three senior leaders told The Daily Star that they are likely to make an announcement at the February 4 rally about programmes like marches in Dhaka.

BNP standing committee members are also considering whether to announce similar programmes in the districts.

The standing committee, the highest policy-making body of the BNP, sat in a meeting on Monday night and discussed how the coming protest programmes can be diversified.

The top leaders also discussed how the simultaneous movement lacked pace and it may frustrate the activists, sources said.

"There was an excitement over the divisional rallies that was unprecedented. It is difficult to take the movement to that stage. But we are trying to find a way to bring back that excitement," said a standing committee member.

Some of the programmes they

talked about included a long march towards Dhaka, a road march, laying siege to the Secretariat and the Prime Minister's Office. None of the events were finalised.

Contacted, standing committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku said before the BNP started holding protest rallies in divisions, it organised rallies in upazilas.

"There was momentum in the Dhaka rally and it was successful. It was our plan to bring a large crowd and to announce the next phase of movement. At the Dhaka rally, we announced a 10-point demand and started an agitation programme," he said.

"Every movement has phases and every phase has characteristics. So, it is not true that the movement lost pace. Rather, the strategy is set that way."

The BNP started holding divisional rallies in October protesting the price hike of daily essentials, electricity and fuel and killing of the party men.

The party later launched a simultaneous movement with 38 like-minded political parties.

Govt to form 2 probe bodies

FROM PAGE 12

She said the expert committee will also review whether science was reflected correctly in textbooks and if there were any objections to the uses of photos.

The minister said students would get all textbooks by the end of this month.

Speaking at the briefing, State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Zakir Hossain said they have already announced scrapping of the Primary Education Completion Examination for class V students.

He said they have arranged scholarship exams for the fifth graders to encourage the meritorious students.

Many errors in the new school textbooks were reported earlier this month after books were distributed among students. An allegation of plagiarism in the seventh-grade science textbooks was also raised.

Climate change makes Bangladesh more vulnerable

FROM PAGE 12

"disproportionally" affected poor farming, fishing and other communities mainly relying on the extraction of natural resources for their livelihoods, the report said.

Once "deprived of their means of subsistence and forced to flee their community," people were becoming easy prey for traffickers, Fabrizio Sarrica, the report's main author told a press briefing.

In 2021 alone, climate-related disasters internally displaced more than 23.7 million people, while many others fled their countries altogether.

As entire regions of the world are at risk of becoming "increasingly uninhabitable," millions will face "high risk of exploitation along migration routes," the UN report said.

For the first time since data collection began in 2003, the number of victims detected worldwide fell in 2020, dropping by eleven percent compared to 2019, the Vienna-based UNODC said.

Keep economy in mind

FROM PAGE 1

She directed the DCs to ensure safe use of information technology and the internet and prevent the misuse of social media.

Ensure law and order and be vigilant so that no one can disrupt communal harmony by spreading rumours, she said.

Hasina asked the DCs to conduct regular mobile courts to prevent child marriage, sexual harassment, food adulteration and manufacture of counterfeit goods.

Work towards building a developed, prosperous and Smart Bangladesh by 2041, she said.

Referring to a speech of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Hasina told the DCs to serve the public as their salary and benefits come from taxpayers' money.

"Devote yourself to the people and you will get the mental satisfaction."

The DCs presented 245 proposals that include demands for more power and benefits.

However, government officials from different departments said some of those proposals, if approved, may aggravate them.

The Gopalganj DC proposed forming of a coordination committee to identify new sources of revenue in districts and upazilas. Before the Covid pandemic, this particular proposal was made by a DC at the annual conference and it aggrieved

the customs officials.

The DC also proposed formation of upazila-level health committees to ensure that the health department is properly doing its activities, said sources.

The job of maintaining buildings constructed by the public works department should be decentralised and funds should be directly allocated to the deputy commissioners, the DC demanded.

The Jhalakathi DC said development projects in an upazila should be implemented by the upazila parishad.

The DCs of Pirojpur and Jhalakathi said the DCs should be given the power to spend the development budget allocated by the public administration ministry to ensure efficient use of government resources.

The Khagrachhari DC proposed that the local administration be allowed to make inquiries in firearms use by the border guards eight kilometres away from the border.

The Barishal DC proposed that DCs be allowed to recommend individuals to be appointed as public prosecutors.

The Joypurhat DC said organ trafficking could be tackled by increasing the punishment for violations of the Human Organ Transplantation Act.

The Cumilla DC recommended

recognition of Cumilla city as an expensive area to live in.

The Mymensingh DC said executive magistrates conducting mobile courts should be empowered to deliver sentences under the Bangladesh Water Act in order to tackle pollution and encroachment.

The Moulvibazar DC said prison inmates should be allowed to make video calls to their families.

The Narsingdi DC proposed increasing of the health allowance for government officials and educational support stipend given to their children.

He also recommended construction of studio apartment complexes in each district for officers who live alone.

They treat us

FROM PAGE 12

brought the current junta to power.

"They (the army) don't think of us as people and treat us like animals," said Thi Da, a 35-year-old ethnic Chin.

Her husband disappeared in September, following the 2021 army coup.

The 215-page complaint alleges the military "systematically killed, raped, tortured, imprisoned, disappeared, persecuted, and committed other acts that amount to genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes," the campaign group Fortify Rights, which is leading the legal case, said in a statement.

Power returns to Pakistan after outage

AFP, Islamabad

The national power grid was restored in Pakistan, the energy minister said yesterday, a day after a nationwide breakdown left most of the country's 220 million people without electricity and caused tens of millions of dollars in industry losses.

The outage started around 7:30 am (0230 GMT) on Monday, a failure linked to a cost-cutting measure as Pakistan grapples with an economic crisis.

Energy Minister Khuram Dastgir Khan said the grid was repaired at around 5:15 am but load-shedding would continue over the next two days as coal and nuclear plants were brought back online.

"There is a need to invest in the energy sector, especially to improve the distribution system, which has long been neglected," he told reporters in Islamabad.

PM Shehbaz Sharif expressed "sincere regrets" for the inconvenience.



People pay their respects in front of a makeshift memorial for victims of a mass shooting outside the Star Dance Studio in Monterey Park, California, US, on Monday. US President Joe Biden yesterday called for Congress to act quickly to ban assault weapons, as California reeled from two deadly mass shootings in less than 48 hours.

PHOTO: AFP

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA Seven dead in new mass shooting

AFP, Half Moon Bay

A suspected gunman was in custody Monday over the killing of seven people in a rural community in northern California, just two days after a mass shooting at a Lunar New Year celebration near Los Angeles.

The latest bloodshed occurred at two farms around Half Moon Bay, a coastal community south of San Francisco.

San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus said seven people were killed and one wounded in the twin shootings, and that a 67-year-old Half Moon Bay resident named Chunli Zhao had been taken into custody.

Reports said the dead were Chinese farmworkers, and that Zhao had worked at one of the farms.

Corpus said deputies had been dispatched to two nurseries around Half Moon Bay, a rural spot known for surfing contests and a pumpkin festival, around mid-afternoon on Monday.

Four people were dead at one of them and one was critically wounded, while three more fatally wounded victims were found at a second location.

Corpus said children were present at one of the sites. "It was in the afternoon when kids were out of school and for children to witness it is unspeakable," she said.

Corpus said Zhou then drove to a sheriff's substation in Half Moon Bay, where ABC7 crews captured dramatic footage of him being pulled to the ground by armed officers.

At the second shooting location, a short distance from the mushroom farm where four people were killed, sheriff's deputies' cars packed a roadside business plaza, home to shops offering party rentals, landscaping supplies and other services.

Ardern makes last bow as NZ PM

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern said yesterday she was grateful for her time in office, insisting that a sustained barrage of online abuse was not the reason for her shock resignation.

The 42-year-old said last week she no longer had "enough in the tank" after a turbulent five years, during which she steered the country through natural disasters, its worst ever terror attack and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chris Hipkins, who will take over as prime minister, has said Ardern experienced "utterly abhorrent" abuse while leading the country. Ardern however said she would not describe it that way.

While on her last public engagement as prime minister, visiting the Maori settlement of Ratana in the North Island, she said she would "hate" for her departure to be seen as "a negative commentary on New Zealand".

"I leave feeling gratitude for having this wonderful role for so many years," she told reporters from the birthplace of one of the country's most influential indigenous political movements.

The popularity of Ardern's Labour government has soured in recent months, hampered by a looming recession and a resurgent conservative opposition.

Hipkins will be sworn in as prime minister on Wednesday, saying it was "bittersweet" to replace his friend of 20 years.

"I'm really honoured to take on the role, but Jacinda is also a very good friend of mine," he told reporters yesterday.

Hipkins, 44, admitted there were "moments when it sinks in, and moments when it doesn't feel quite real".

Ardern said she would now be stepping back from domestic politics, and offered some advice for Hipkins.



China offers debt aid to crisis-hit Sri Lanka

Colombo sources unclear if Beijing's letter will be enough for IMF

REUTERS, New Delhi/Colombo

The Export-Import Bank of China has offered Sri Lanka a two-year moratorium on its debt and said it will support the country's efforts to secure a \$2.9 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, according to a letter reviewed by Reuters.

Regional rivals China and India are the biggest bilateral lenders to Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million people that is facing its worst economic crisis in seven decades.

India wrote to the IMF earlier this month, saying it would commit to supporting Sri Lanka with financing and debt relief, but the island nation also needs the backing of China in order to reach a final agreement with the global lender.

However, China's January 19 letter, sent to the finance ministry, may not be enough for Sri Lanka to immediately gain the IMF's approval for the critical loan, a Sri Lankan source with knowledge of the matter said.

According to the letter, China EximBank said it was going to provide "an extension on the debt service due in 2022 and 2023 as an

immediate contingency measure" based on Sri Lanka's request.

At the end of 2020, China EximBank had loaned Sri Lanka \$2.83 billion which is 3.5 percent of the island's debt, according to an IMF report released in March last year. "You will not have to repay the principal and interest due of the bank's loans during the above-mentioned period," the letter said.



"Meanwhile, we would like to expedite the negotiation process with your side regarding medium and long-term debt treatment in this window period."

Sri Lanka owed Chinese lenders \$7.4 billion, or nearly a fifth of its public external debt, by the end of last year, calculations by the China Africa Research Initiative showed.

"The bank will support Sri Lanka in your application for the IMF

Extended Fund Facility (EFF) to help relieve the liquidity strain," China's letter said.

One Sri Lankan source, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the confidential discussions, said the island nation had hoped for a clear assurance from Beijing on the lines of what India provided to the IMF. "China was expected to do more," the source said. "This is much less than what is required and expected of them."

In a letter directly addressed to the IMF, India said last week that the financing or debt relief provided by Export-Import Bank of India would be consistent with restoring debt sustainability under the IMF-supported program.

Another government source told Reuters that Sri Lanka would likely share China's letter with the IMF and seek their opinion on its contents.

"That may be the best way to understand if this is in line with the IMF's expectations or stronger assurances are needed," the source said. It is unclear what debt relief major lenders such as China - the world's largest bilateral lender - and India are willing to make further down the line.

BBC SERIES ON MODI Top Indian univ bans screening

AFP, New Delhi

A top Indian university has banned the screening of a BBC documentary about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role during deadly 2002 sectarian riots, after his government attempted to block its spread online. The programme alleges that the Hindu nationalist Modi, premier of Gujarat state at the time, ordered police to turn a blind eye to an orgy of violence there that left at least 1,000 people dead, most of them minority Muslims. Students at Jawaharlal Nehru University had planned to screen documentary yesterday.

'Doomsday Clock' moves closest ever to midnight

AFP, Washington

The "Doomsday Clock" symbolizing the perils to humanity moved its closest ever to midnight yesterday amid the Ukraine war, nuclear tensions and the climate crisis.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, which describes the clock as a "metaphor for how close humanity is to self-annihilation," moved its hands from 100 seconds to midnight to 90 seconds to midnight.

A decision to reset the hands of the symbolic clock is taken each year by the Bulletin's science and security board and its board of sponsors, which includes 11 Nobel laureates.

Mother's name too will do

FROM PAGE 1

Deputy Attorney General Amit Das Gupta represented the state during the hearing on the petition yesterday.

Rights organisations Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, and Naripokkho filed the writ petition as public interest litigation to the HC in 2009 challenging the refusals by different education boards to issue registration cards to the SSC and HSC candidates, who could not fill out the SIFs with the names of their fathers and mothers.

In the petition, they said candidates born in brothels could not name their fathers and they would be deprived of education if they were not allowed to fill in the forms.

Following the petition, another HC bench on August 3, 2009, issued a rule upon the government to explain why the refusal to give admit cards to such SSC and HSC candidates should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, the HC also asked the government authorities concerned to show cause as to why they should not be directed

to amend the student information form to include identification information regarding the name of the father, or mother, or guardian of the candidates.

In her reaction, Barrister Sara Hossain said, "We are delighted that the High Court has delivered this significant judgment to remove a gender discriminatory practice and to take forward recognition of the right of every person to an identity and to education."

"It is an overdue step to take forward the promise of gender equality enshrined in our constitution, especially to make sure that Digital Bangladesh is gender inclusive."

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad General Secretary Maleka Banu said the landmark verdict would pave the way for establishing the rights to education of all children, and end discrimination regarding guardianship, according to a statement of BLAST.

In the same statement, lawyer Aynunnahar Siddiqua Lipi said the constitutional rights of education of the children, who don't have their

parents' identities, will be protected through this verdict.

She also demanded immediate implementation of the judgment.

Supreme Court lawyer Nahid Mahtab, also a former deputy attorney general, said the significance of this judgment is that a single mother can be a guardian and a parent and the father's name shall not be the only measure of identity when his presence is never there.

"This will support single mothers to raise their children independently in a patriarchal society like ours," said Nahid.

Tasmiah Nuhya Ahmed, another SC lawyer, said, "It is expected that through this verdict we shall be able to break the glass ceiling, and mothers' right to guardianship of their children shall soon become a reality."

Ishrat Hasan, another SC lawyer, said the HC verdict is a landmark decision in upholding the dignity of human beings, and it will bring a positive change in the society.

Dhaka education board Chairman Prof Tapan said they would implement the HC verdict.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS UN aid chief raises concerns with Taliban

REUTERS, Kabul

The United Nations' aid chief visited Kabul on Monday and raised concerns over women's education and work with the Taliban administration's acting minister of foreign affairs, an Afghan ministry statement said.

The Taliban-run administration last month ordered NGOs not to allow most female employees to work, prompting many aid agencies to partially suspend operations in the midst of a humanitarian crisis unfolding during a bitterly cold winter.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths raised the issue of women's education and work and how this affected the UN's operations, according to a ministry of foreign affairs statement.

Speaking about Griffiths's visit, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Griffiths would engage the Taliban administration "with the same message that we've been delivering since the beginning on the need to rollback the policies that were put in place" on women.

শতাব্দে জাতির পিতা, সুবর্ণে স্বাধীনতা
অভিযানে আনবো মর্যাদা ও নৈতিকতা

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Wage Earners' Welfare Board
Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE):
Reintegration of Returning Migrants
Prabashi Kallayan Bhaban
71-72 Eskaton Garden, Ramna, Dhaka-1000.
www.wewb.gov.bd

No. 49.04.0000.022.00.057.2023-26 Date: 23.01.2023

Amendment of e-Tender Notice-05

Amendment has been done in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following Tender ID

Sl	Package No. & Tender ID	Name of Scheme	Tendering Method	Previous Last Selling Date & Last Submission Date of Documents	Amended Last Selling Date & Last Submission Date of Documents
01	GD-09 & 734859	Supplying of Computer, Laptop, Printer, UPS and Scanner for PMU in Dhaka.	OTM (NCT)	24-Jan-2023 13:00 & 24-Jan-2023 15:00	01-Feb-2023 13:00 & 01-Feb-2023 15:00
02	GD-09(A) & 734862	Supplying of Computer, Printer, UPS and Scanner for PMU at Welfare Center of 30 Districts.	OTM (NCT)	24-Jan-2023 13:00 & 24-Jan-2023 15:00	01-Feb-2023 13:00 & 01-Feb-2023 15:00

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 and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Abdul Wadud)
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GD- 116

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

The vulnerable need food support

Why cut back on public food distribution programmes when they are needed the most?

That ordinary people in Bangladesh are struggling with a cost of living crisis seems like an obvious statement to make. In recent months, this daily has, many times, reported on the soaring prices of essentials, energy and fuel price hikes, and growing food insecurity for households struggling to deal with economic shocks.

However, it seems that this struggle is not so obvious to our policymakers. Why else would they, instead of scaling up public food distribution programmes for the poor, be cutting back on them instead? Yet, according to the food ministry's own data, that is exactly what has happened. The amount of rice given out in this fiscal year so far – 15 lakh tonnes – is down by six percent compared to the previous year.

Just a cursory look at the numbers demonstrates how misguided this is. In December, inflation stood at 8.71 percent (8.86 percent in rural areas), and economic forecasts suggest it is likely to go up further. During the same period, the wage rate grew at 7.03 percent, meaning even less disposable income in people's hands. And, in a report released in the same month, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) listed Bangladesh as one of 45 countries that require external assistance for food – a result of severe localised food insecurity, created by a perfect storm of economic constraints, climatic upheavals, and high prices of important food items.

In such a situation, ensuring food security should be a top priority for the government. In fact, in November last year, the prime minister said as much, and instructed Bangladesh Bank to intervene if any bank faced a dollar shortage while opening letters of credit for importing food, fertiliser, and other agricultural inputs. All of these measures were meant to ensure uninterrupted food supply; yet, a top official of the Directorate General of Food cited supply chain disruptions, brought on by the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, as one of the reasons behind reduced food distribution.

However, this excuse does not hold up when we consider that the government currently has 19 lakh metric tonnes of food stock, whereas 12 lakh is considered adequate. While it is true that wheat stocks have been disrupted, and it may explain why the government has scaled back wheat distribution by 27.5 percent, why hasn't this been replaced with rice instead?

In fact, the same official also said that the government saved about 75,000 tonnes of rice after getting rid of "fake beneficiaries" who were taking advantage of food distribution programmes. So, why has this surplus not been given to the people who really need them?

Whenever the issue of food insecurity has come up, government officials have provided reassurances of having sufficient food stock in hand. So it is beyond our comprehension why, in this time of need, authorities have failed to expand social safety nets and provide adequate food support to vulnerable populations. It is imperative that the government expand public expenditure and implement pro-poor policies. While long-term policies must be there to ensure uninterrupted food supply, in the short run, authorities must provide immediate food support to the people who need it the most.

Will Nadia's tragic death change anything?

Road safety remains a neglected issue

More than four years after the Road Safety Movement, where the death of two students in a road crash led to mass protests and pushed authorities to formulate the Road Transport Act (RTA) 2018, we are deeply saddened to witness the same kinds of unjust and tragic deaths continue to occur on our roads. The latest victim is Nadia Sultana, a 19-year-old student of Northern University, who was killed on January 23 when a bus of Victor Paribahan hit the motorbike she was on near Jamuna Future Park in the capital's Bhatara area.

After her death, hundreds of students blocked roads with their demands, which included arrests of the driver and helper, and compensation for the victim's family. The question is, how many more times will we have to see the same events be repeated? Why are people still needlessly dying in road crashes?

Despite government promises to seriously and urgently deal with the issue, the country continues to witness an alarming surge in road crashes and deaths, year after year. According to Jatri Kalyan Samity, 9,951 people were killed in 6,749 road crashes in 2022, while the number of deaths and crashes, reported by the Road Safety Foundation, were 7,713 and 6,829 respectively. Last year's numbers were much higher compared to 2021.

What have our transport authorities done to check the rising number of road crashes? Apparently, nothing noticeable. They have not only failed to check the number of unfit and unregistered vehicles on the roads, but have also been largely unable to take underage and unlicensed drivers off the roads. Although the driver and helper of the bus that killed Nadia have been apprehended, we are yet to know any details regarding the driver's license, his ability to operate the bus, and the fitness of the vehicle itself.

However, the issue here is not just the culpability of one driver or the fitness of one vehicle, but the fact that the entire transport industry is highly undisciplined and mostly unregulated. It is unacceptable that, this entire time, the RTA has been practically defunct in the absence of necessary rules, which were formulated only last month. How can there be change if the laws to bring about change are not enforced properly? The last four years of inaction have cost the country dearly, and have brought into serious question the government's ability and will to hold those responsible to account.

We urge the authorities to bring the alleged killers of Nadia to justice and to compensate her family according to the RTA 2018. We are also keenly aware that, to this day, the authorities have more or less failed in carrying out their responsibilities in upholding said law. Will the government finally take action, or will we only continue to witness history repeat itself?

'Special train' for Awami League, 'transport strike' for BNP



Golam Mortoza is the editor of The Daily Star Bangla.

GOLAM MORTOZA

Public property mean's the "public's" property – it doesn't belong to any individual or political party. But recent examples tell a different story. The ruling Awami League is going to create an extraordinary example in a soon-to-be-held rally in Rajshahi, where a special train has been earmarked for this occasion. The question is: can a political party use a national asset in this way?

It must be clarified that even though we criticise politicians and the parties they represent, at the end of the day, we have to – or want to – go to them for solutions. It's a proven fact that when politicians lead a country through a political process, the country benefits the most. There are ample examples of how non-political forces steer a nation, with Pakistan being a prominent example; a country that is on the verge of bankruptcy. Comparatively, India has no fewer internal problems. But as they are ruled by a politician-led democratic process, they have still managed to create a strong footing.

Our everlasting hope is that political parties will govern Bangladesh through a proper, acceptable and independent election. Unfortunately, as time goes by, a gross lack of equality, justice and good governance is gaining institutional acceptance.

The Daily Star Bangla reported that the Awami League will hold a rally in Rajshahi Madrasa Public Speaking Ground on January 29. This is a rally organised by the political party AL, and not by the AL government. Still, a special train has been arranged for this "political party's" rally.

Now, why is this a problem? What harm is there in arranging a special train for those attending a specific party's rally?

Well, firstly, why should there be a special arrangement for this, when there aren't even enough trains to service the general populace, and when the passenger to train ratio is quite low?

Secondly, can we recall what the ruling party's attitude and the transport situation were like when the BNP tried organising a rally in Rajshahi? Last year, on September 28, BNP announced that they would organise a rally in Rajshahi on December 3. Before it, a transport strike was called in eight districts of the division, and enforced from 6am on December 1. In fact, the strike was

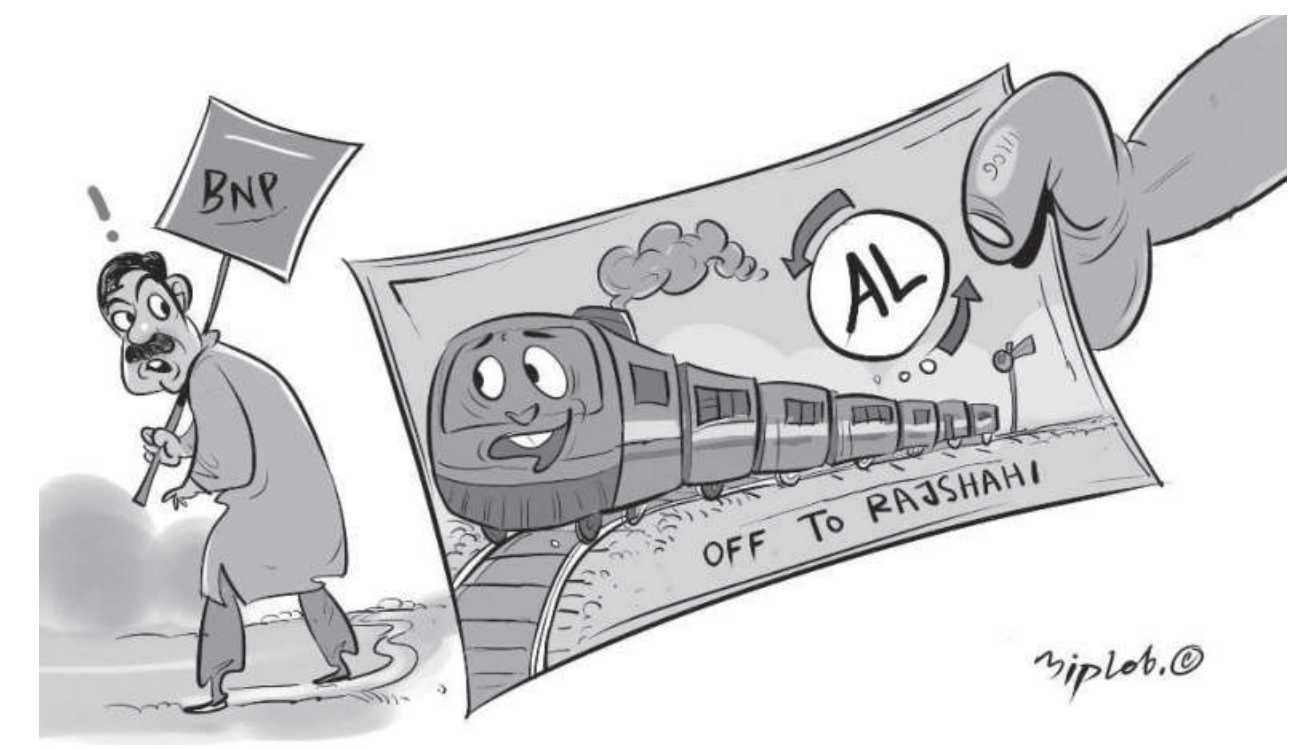


ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

underway even before its stipulated starting time.

This strike saw the ceasing of movement for all kinds of vehicles, including buses, trucks and three-wheelers. Rajshahi was virtually cut off from all adjacent districts. Thus, it became very hard for BNP leaders and activists to join the rally from neighbouring districts. It was evident that the transport strike was devised in order to impede BNP supporters from attending. Although the government announced that the strike was called by transport owners and that they had nothing to do with it, any conscious being can gauge that the reality was the contrary.

At one end, we see people being actively prevented from attending a BNP rally using transport strikes, police checkpoints being put up every couple of kilometres, and BNP leaders/activists' homes being raided, and them being arrested. On another end, special trains are to be arranged for the AL's rallies. Why should two political parties of the same nation receive polar opposite treatments?

We take for granted that the ruling party will get some added benefits. But does that mean they can misuse public resources? Can they act against another political party in this way?

What of the tall talks on equality and justice we hear so often?

When there's a BNP rally, 3G and 4G services for mobile networks are usually halted around the venue. But the government doesn't even bother to explain the reasons behind this. On December 3, 2022, Rajshahi did not have 3G and 4G services. Queries revealed that the BTRC had given a

networks are disrupted? Do transport strikes serve the people? What does "serving the people" actually mean to the ruling party? Does it mean only serving their own leaders, activists and supporters? Aren't opposition party affiliates a part of this country, too? Don't they also deserve to be served by the government?

People are losing voting rights, they

"directive" to carry this out.

Did the BTRC's directive only harm and deprive BNP leaders and activists? Did not the general population also suffer? When the transport strike prevented BNP supporters from travelling between districts, were they the only ones affected? Did the whole region consist of BNP supporters, leaders and activists? Is there any explanation for such government actions, which cause the people to suffer?

It can be uncomfortable to have these pointed out, but even when we do, the government pays no heed. When a political party is elected by the popular vote, but then becomes an authoritarian regime, getting re-elected via night votes and voter-less polls, the general people start feeling bitter towards said party. People start comparing such political governments with military dictatorships, which is by no means a positive sign for our politics, or for politicians in general.

The ruling AL's politicians claim they have no aspirations of holding on to power and that they do not want any personal achievements, either – they simply want to serve the public.

Undoubtedly, serving the public is a good deed. But what kind of "service" do people get when their mobile

cannot cast votes during polls, the prices of essentials are skyrocketing – and the government seems to be taking no notice. Ignoring the public's pleas, it is instead increasing the prices of fuel, gas and electricity. Each development project is seeing a cost increase, which is affecting the economy. We are experiencing an acute US dollar crisis and yet, money laundering persists. The government is not even taking effective steps against people who have been found responsible for causing these issues.

I want to end this piece with an example. Back when the military dictator HM Ershad was in power, the 15-party alliance led by the AL, seven-party alliance led by the BNP, and the five-party leftwing alliance, participated in a unified protest. Then, Ershad, who lost all popular support, stopped production in Adamjee Jute Mill and brought in 20,000 to 30,000 workers to join his rallies. That initiated the eventual doom of Adamjee Jute Mill. Later, the BNP came to power and shut down this mill, which once was bursting with potential.

Bangladesh Railway is already riddled with injustice, anomalies, and corruption. Have we considered what ill fate might befall the BR if such political usage of trains, as mentioned above, becomes a recurring trend?

After the deluge



Milia Ali is a Rabindra Sangeet exponent and a former employee of the World Bank.

MILIA ALI

Now that we have stepped into a new year, it may be time to take a brief pause from our hectic schedule. Not to reminisce about the beach vacation in Thailand or the shopping spree in India, but to take a peep into a post-Covid world. Personally, I would like to assess whether or not I have made the life choices that I thought I would once the tsunami subsides. Am I at a place that I visualised I would be in – a less frenzied pace, a sharper awareness of our blessings, and a deeper appreciation of "others" and their needs?

Covid has not just been a deadly virus that spread in our bodies, but much more. It crept into our souls and shook our inner core, giving us a chance to closely examine the technology-driven world we created with the idea that it will make us, humans, invincible. The pandemic extracted a high toll, especially from the underprivileged. Towns and megacities of the world shut businesses and sent working class citizens back to jobless uncertainty. The top few sat in the comfort of their homes, maybe not worrying about the next meal, but counting the minutes and days of unstructured time in the absence of social interactions and family reunions. Barred from hugging an

old friend or kissing a grandchild, our material possessions, closeted in lonely houses, became meaningless. And we realised how we are all interconnected and cannot live our dreams in a bubble. Many thus reflected on the value of compassion and sharing, with the resolute intention of severing their ties with the past and creating a more inclusive and equitable world.

But once Covid somewhat abated, did we succeed in crossing the mental Rubicon? If anything, 2022 indicated that the spiritual lessons learnt lost out to the allure and the glitter of a hardcore material world. We are witnessing the revival of heartless capitalism and conspicuous consumption: opulent wedding celebrations and dinner parties have rebounded, there is a crazy demand for consumer goods, the influx of vacationers in flights and hotels is unrelenting. The extravaganza does not give us much hope that we are ready for a reset in our priorities and lifestyles to create a more humane society. On the contrary, it appears that people have gone back to their pre-Covid lifestyles with renewed frenzy, as if they are making up for the two years lost in forced isolation.

A recent photograph on the front page of The Daily Star caught my

attention and rekindled my thoughts on how little difference the Covid experience has made to our psyche. The evocative picture was captioned: "A woman living on a footpath in the capital...shares her blanket with a street dog she takes care of..." The description may be self-explanatory, but the photo conveyed so much more

Covid has not just been a deadly virus that spread in our bodies. It crept into our souls and shook our inner core, giving us a chance to closely examine the technology-driven world we created with the idea that it will make us, humans, invincible.

– the homeless woman was half asleep, there was neither anger, nor sorrow, but a hollowness in her expression that spoke volumes.

The poignant photo triggered a thought: can empathy, sharing, and selflessness be acquired – and learnt through life's experiences – or are these innate qualities dictated by an inner calling? And is compassion dependent on wealth and resources, or can it flow spontaneously in the way the homeless woman shared her blanket with the dog?

I, for one, believe that kindness and empathy have no race, frontiers, and borders, and can surmount most

obstacles. It's an inner choice we make: a moral choice, because there are no sanitizers or tests that can cleanse our minds or measure our moral compass. We and we alone are responsible for the path we choose. However, at some critical junctures, life does offer us a rare opportunity to choose the "road less travelled" that leads us to a shared humanity.

Alternatively, we can choose the trodden course and become a part of the prejudice, hate, greed, and injustice that prevails! I sincerely believe the pandemic was one such fork in our lives, where each individual could have opted to act on one's best instincts.

Unfortunately, people find it hard to change mental attitudes and their deeply entrenched lifestyles. But it's not impossible. According to "Sapiens" author Yuval Noah Harari, Homo sapiens began to dominate the earth not because of their scientific and technological advancements, but because of their ability to imagine things that didn't exist (religions, nations) and build communities based on shared beliefs. Actually, Harari goes a bit further in arguing convincingly that if we, human beings, collectively decide to alter the myths that dictate our thinking today, we can relatively quickly and dramatically alter human behaviour and change the pattern of history. The question is: shall we?

My head says that men and women are creatures of habit and resistant to change, especially if it means stepping out of their comfort zones and making sacrifices. But my heart says there may be hope, because the human race has the resilience to recreate itself with the very force that breaks it into pieces.



ILLUSTRATION: NAHFIA JAHAN MONNI

The stock market-real economy 'disconnect'



Dr Sharjil Haque
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SHARJIL HAQUE

The stock market went through yet another sluggish year in 2022, with the broad market index declining by around 10.4 percent. It would be easy to blame global economic uncertainties, but recent reports in this daily suggest that, while markets in neighbouring countries have somewhat rebounded, Bangladesh remained an outlier. For example, India's BSE Sensex or Nifty 500 has risen during the same time. This trend raises important questions.

Why has Bangladesh's stock market remained depressed for so long, despite its economy having a GDP of more than USD 400 billion, which has grown consistently at a real rate of six percent or more? Why does the domestic stock market often appear to be disconnected from both domestic as well as global economic conditions? Unfortunately, the answer is weak regulations. Weak regulations have prevented high-quality companies from becoming listed, stunted the growth of institutional investors, and bred a toxic culture of market manipulation.

Nearly 70 years since its inception, the day we see a Dhaka Stock Exchange where investors – local and foreign, retail and institutional – are gathering in masses remains elusive. Our recent history is tainted by two calamitous market crashes: one in 1996, and the other in 2010. Both crashes were characterised by excessive stock price manipulation and the luring in of naive investors who were hoping to make "easy" money. The idea of long-term investment, backed by careful assessment of a company's fundamental potential, has never really taken off in Bangladesh. Speculation and "share trading" is still the norm. Nearly every year, we hear regulators claiming to have taken steps that will reduce the toxic culture of price manipulation. And every year, we turn away disappointed.

One of the key takeaways from the 2010 crash was the excessive leverage provided by banks, non-banking financial institutions, brokerage firms, and merchant banks to uninformed and unsophisticated investors, without any regard for fundamentals. This type of financial intermediation

needs to be carefully overseen. Regulators could consider using financial covenants that prevent debt-to-equity from exceeding reasonable thresholds. Otherwise, easy and unregulated access to margin loans will continue to fuel moral hazards and excessive risk-taking, leading to overvalued shares. And we all know how that works out.

One must wonder if regulators are too busy focusing on short-term remedies, rather than bringing in long-run improvement. Take, for example, the initiative to reintroduce price floors in 2022. Regulators could argue this prevented naive investors from buying undervalued stocks. But there were unintended consequences. The artificial price floor created a huge mismatch between buyers and sellers of stocks, ultimately drying up market liquidity. This is a cost that should not be underestimated. A persistent reduction in stock trading activity can translate to lower economic consumption, to the extent that it creates a binding financial constraint for a household. These effects are likely to be more pronounced for relatively lower-income families.

Rather than focusing on these temporary initiatives, regulators should focus on changes that will reduce the stock market-real economy "disconnect." The biggest factor behind the disconnect is that the largest companies with stable profitability refuse to come to the market. Large and mature companies with a track record of generating high cash flows will stabilise the market, raise confidence, attract more foreign capital, and allow institutional asset managers to flourish. Over the years, economists and analysts observing the market have repeatedly called on regulators to bring large multinational companies (MNCs) such as Nestle, Unilever, Chevron and MeLife to the market. These firms have been utilising our low-cost resources for many years and paying themselves exorbitant dividends without sharing this wealth with ordinary citizens. Only when they share their profits with the common people by going public will economic prosperity occur more broadly.

Unfortunately, as things stand now, MNCs are more likely to generate, rather than reduce, income inequality in Bangladesh.

Intriguingly, some of these same MNCs are listed in equity markets of other countries such as India. So how are the incentives offered by other countries different? An obvious strategy is to expand the tax-differential relative to private firms. The existing tax gap stands at only 7.5 percent, which is not nearly enough to encourage private firms, given that there are additional costs of going under public scrutiny. On top of that, MNCs likely have good long-term relationships with domestic banks, further reducing their need to enter the equity market.

Finally, I suspect an additional reason has to do with financial reporting. Since private firms have greater leeway to hide their true income, mere widening of the tax gap may not be a sufficient incentive. Regular and more thorough audits could help create a more level-playing field between public and private firms.

Another key reason behind the stock market-real economy disconnect is the dearth of institutional investors, such as mutual funds. The size of the mutual fund sector in Bangladesh is less than one percent of our GDP. Mutual funds are an important source of financial intermediation, which provides households with access to a diversified portfolio of stocks at low cost. In the US, for example, households often invest their retirement money in mutual funds. In fact, mutual funds can serve as a vital source of financial inclusion by giving relatively less experienced and lower-income households access to public equities that are managed by professionals. Greater presence of professional fund managers will reduce the importance of "rumour-based" trading, and bring greater harmony between real economic conditions and equity prices.

Regulators in Bangladesh should take notes from best practices around the globe to help develop this sector further, particularly in terms of the ease with which new funds can be opened, simplifying existing rules, and providing fund managers greater discretion in their investment decisions.

A vibrant financial sector requires both banks and a stock market to efficiently intermediate capital and accelerate financial inclusion. Unless policymakers address these structural issues, the stock market-real economy disconnect will become a perennial problem. Ultimately, ordinary citizens pay the price of an undeveloped stock market.

Is global governance failing to deliver climate commitments?



MACRO MIRROR

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FAHMIDA KHATUN

TO deliver on the climate commitments made by global leaders at the historic COP21 and COP26 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), several institutions will have to be reformed and improved to benefit the Global South, where people are facing economic, social and environmental challenges, and are most vulnerable to impacts of climate change. One of the reasons for international environmental and climate governance not delivering on the aspirations of the world is that they are very complex, and not only includes several organisations, but also agreements and treaties, policies and measures, rules, procedures, financing frameworks, and technology mechanisms. Environmental governance also connects with other areas of global governance, such as international trade.

Unfortunately, despite all these initiatives, environmental degradation continues. Deforestation, desertification, air and water pollution, and biodiversity loss are increasing, with the most dangerous threat being that of climate change.

One of the key global governance mechanisms for addressing this is the UNFCCC, which provides the framework for international action for the Paris Climate Agreement 2015. In line with the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, commitments of greenhouse gas emissions were made at COP26 in December 2021. More than 150 countries have set deadlines for achieving net zero emissions by the middle of the century, and submitted their plans on how to do so and by how much with their target periods.

However, it did not take even a year after COP26 for some advanced countries to move away from their

climate pledges. In the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war, even the champions of net zero have moved backwards and resorted to coal for energy. This gives an ominous signal to the world. Such retreat from climate commitments is not going to fulfil the global ambition for net zero by 2050. Indeed, the Glasgow targets were not enough to meet ambitions for emission reductions. According to UN emissions gap estimates, despite these commitments, the world will see a 2.5 degrees Celsius temperature rise by the end of the century. Hence, enhanced commitments are needed, which must be stronger than what was set at COP26.

While commitment is the first step, finance is the most important means for implementation of climate commitments. But in this case, there are huge gaps, as pledges remain unfulfilled.

There are other examples of how global governance for the environment is not functioning well. While commitment is the first step, finance is the most important means for implementation of climate commitments. But in this case, there are huge gaps, as pledges remain unfulfilled.

In 2009, at COP15, developed countries committed to USD 100 billion per year by 2020 for vulnerable climate-affected countries, which was later extended till 2025. However, till 2020, about USD 83 billion has been mobilised. Moreover, the distribution of funds is biased towards mitigation activities, which comprise 58 percent of total climate funds. But the Global South needs

more adaptation funds to cope with environmental challenges to lives and livelihoods. Climate vulnerable, small island, least developed and developing countries need funds for early warning systems of natural disasters, floods and cyclones, as well as funds for food security.

There is also demand for separate financing facilities exclusively for loss and damage in climate vulnerable countries. For a long time, developed countries refused to recognise even the concept of loss and damage, which is the compensation to be paid by them for historical actions towards causing climate change. Recently, there has been a recognition of this responsibility by some developed countries, and a few also made commitments at COP27 to pay for loss and damage.

There is also a commitment by developed countries to support climate action in LDCs and developing countries through technology transfer under the trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS) agreement. But one observes slow progress in this case, too.

Several global organisations are part of climate governance, as they have linkages with environmental and climate issues. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is one example. International trade has impacts on climate change, and vice versa. Countries can also address climate challenges through trade cooperation and trade policy measures. However, due to the slow progress of WTO negotiations, countries are not able to benefit from climate supportive trade measures.

Given that there are already so many institutions that deal with environmental and climate issues, there is no need for new ones. Rather, the existing ones should be strengthened and made more effective and functional. Countries in the Global South can work together to make this happen. There is a need for a thorough assessment of measures for each organisation to avoid and resolve any conflicting measures between multiple organisations. Therefore, a major task of the Global South is to ensure more transparency, comparability, compatibility, and harmonisation of environmental and climate measures. This will facilitate smooth implementation of climate promises.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department, Sylhet
www.eed.sylhet.gov.bd

Tender Notice No. 11/e-Tender/Non-Govt.College/EED/Syl/2022-2023 Date: 23/01/2023

Invitation for e-Tender (LTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works mentioned below under Education Engineering Department, Sylhet District.

Sl. No.	Tender/Proposal Package No.	Tender ID	Name of works/package description	Last date & time of selling documents	Last date & time of submission documents
1	e-Tender-01/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782024	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Dakshin Surma Degree College, Dakshin Surma, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
2	e-Tender-02/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782025	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Bishwanath College, Biswanath, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
3	e-Tender-03/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782026	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Manikkona High School & College, Fenchugonj, Sylhet (2 nd Call).	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
4	e-Tender-04/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782027	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Salutikor College, Goainghat, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
5	e-Tender-05/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782028	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Malik Nahar Memorial Academy, Kanaighat, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
6	e-Tender-06/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782029	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Barohal College, Zakigonj, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
7	e-Tender-11/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782034	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Balagonj Degree College, Balagonj, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
8	e-Tender-09/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782036	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Kushiara College, Golapgonj, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
9	e-Tender-10/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782037	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Dhaka Dakshin Multilateral High School & College, Golapgonj, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
10	e-Tender-12/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782038	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Blue Bird High School & College, Sadar, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
11	e-Tender-13/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782039	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Tajpur Degree College, Balagonj, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
12	e-Tender-14/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782041	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Hafcha Mazumder Mohila College, Zakigonj, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
13	e-Tender-16/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782043	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Doyamir College, Balagonj, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00
14	e-Tender-17/Non-Govt.College/XEN/EED/Syl/2022-2023	782044	Construction of RCC Internal Approach Road at Fenchugonj Degree College, Fenchugonj, Sylhet (2 nd Call)	12/02/2023 Time: 16:00	13/02/2023 Time: 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of said packages from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 12/02/2023 at Time 16:00pm. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

23/1/23
Md. Nazrul Hakim
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GD-118



PITCHING THE POLOS

The centuries-old Polo Bawa festival is one deep-rooted into the Bangalee culture. Every year during winter, beginning from the Bangla month of Poush till Maagh, when the water levels of various water bodies go down, fishermen and villagers across the country gather near various water bodies in their respective districts to catch fish together. Celebrated for over 200 years, the month-long festival is announced a week earlier with tin drums to invite everyone. The biggest gathering of this kind, however, takes place in Sylhet districts due to the abundance of waterbodies there. While many different apparatuses are used for fishing, the most popular one is the Polo -- a bamboo-made fish trap -- thus, the name Polo Bawa. Each day, the participants visit different water bodies. Once they all are gathered with their fishing tools, they jump into the water to catch their loads. Meanwhile, hundreds of men, women and children enjoy the competition between those in the water. The photos were taken in Sylhet's Jaintiapur upazila.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH NASIR



Azarenka beats 'fears of failing'

AFP, Melbourne

Victoria Azarenka reached her first Australian Open semi-final since winning the title in 2013, then opened up Tuesday about overcoming "anxiety" and "fears of failing" on court.

The Belarusian, who won back-to-back Australian Opens in 2012 and 2013, knocked out third seed Jessica Pegula 6-4, 6-1 on Tuesday.

The 24th seed outlasted her American opponent in a marathon 64-minute first set before running away with the second to set up a last-four encounter against Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina at Melbourne Park.

Asked about her battles with nerves and anxiety, Azarenka detailed what she had been through in recent years and how it had held her back from winning another major.

"I don't think you recognise it right away. I think it builds up until you hit kind of a pretty bad spot where nothing kind of makes sense," she told reporters.

"You feel kind of lost. I was at the point where I couldn't find anything that I feel good about myself, not like even one sentence."

Asked what her biggest worries were, Azarenka gave a blunt answer.

"Fears of failing is a big one. To not be able to do what I want to do," she said. "I've had panic attacks before."

The Belarusian said she now has a process to cope when the nerves rear up, and she has cut a noticeably calmer figure at Melbourne Park this year.

"I kind of tried to take it more simple. Kind of working through it," said the 33-year-old Azarenka.



Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas celebrates his match point against Czech Republic's Jiri Lehecka during their quarterfinal fixture of the Australian Open at Melbourne Park on Tuesday. The third seed, who won the match 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4, will take on Karen Khachanov of Russia. PHOTO: AFP

Haller on right track

AFP, Berlin

Borussia Dortmund coach Edin Terzic said on Tuesday the club was taking it "day by day" with striker Sebastian Haller's return to the starting line-up.

Haller came off the bench in Dortmund's thrilling 4-3 home victory over Augsburg on Sunday, his first competitive game since battling testicular cancer.

The 30-minute cameo was Haller's debut appearance for Dortmund and his first competitive match since May 2022.

Speaking ahead of Wednesday's league visit to Mainz, Terzic said Haller would "play an important role tomorrow" but was as yet unsure about a starting berth.

"(Haller feels) better from day to day, but whether it is enough for the starting XI, we will see," Terzic said.

Terzic confirmed English teenage midfielder Jude Bellingham would miss the game, having picked up a yellow card in the Augsburg clash.

Dortmund captain Marco Reus returned to training on Tuesday, but Terzic did not confirm whether the forward would return for Wednesday's game.



"I'm pretty happy that the process that I'm going through makes me feel confident about myself, happy about myself, and helps me to be more open, be more accepting, be compassionate.

"Compassionate" was a very hard word for me to understand."

Pegula was in her third Australian Open quarter-final and had never reached the semi-finals of a Slam in four previous attempts, failing to win a set in any of them.

It was a sorry statistic that was to be extended under the roof at Rod Laver Arena.

"Well, it hurts to beat her because I always want her to do well," said Azarenka, who is close friends with Pegula.

"Today I knew I have to play fast, I have to not give her opportunity to step in, I have to mix it up because if you don't there's nobody better than Jess, she just doesn't miss."

Pegula was immediately put under the pump by the relentless groundstrokes of her opponent.

Azarenka sped into an early 3-0 lead then forced Pegula to save six break points in an attritional 10-minute fourth game. She saved two set points on her serve to get to 3-5, two more in the next game, broke back to 4-5 but eventually succumbed after 64 relentlessly physical minutes.

Early breaks were exchanged in the second set before Azarenka made the decisive move. She broke for 3-1 and held her own service game, with an increasingly frustrated Pegula complaining to her player's box.

"I don't know what to do. The ball's not going anywhere," she said.

Serving for the match, Azarenka brought up two match points but only needed one as she powered through in 1hr 33min.

Shanto answers his critics

SPORTS REPORTER

He is probably the most criticised Bangladeshi cricketer on social media, but Najmul Hossain Shanto has seemingly managed to deal with the situation and transform himself into a consistent performer in recent times, reflecting the player's strong character.

The left hander, who has been in good touch in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League, helped Sylhet Strikers clinch a crucial two-run win over Fortune Barishal with a brilliant unbeaten fifty under tremendous pressure yesterday.

Shanto has shown great consistency since finishing as Bangladesh's leading run-getter in the ICC T20 World Cup last year in Australia after scoring 180 runs.

With two fifties from seven games, Shanto is now the third-highest run-getter in this edition of the BPL, having scored 281 runs at an average of 56.20. However, despite his performance on the field, he has often been criticised on social media, which, Shanto conceded, affected him mentally at times.

"I think the trolling on social media is more difficult for my family [to deal with] because my family doesn't take it like I do. They get hurt and feel bad when they go out. I get upset about it at times and I have felt bad to be honest," Shanto told the media yesterday.

The 24-year-old clarified that he welcomed constructive criticism, but not attacks on his character.

In the match, Sylhet were tottering on 15 for three after being rattled by Barishal's Pakistani pacer

Mohammad Wasim and it never looked they would go on to post 173 for five after 20 overs.

But Shanto remained unbeaten on a 66-ball 89 that featured eleven fours and a six, finding the perfect blend of defence and aggression.

After absorbing the early pressure with great patience, Shanto ensured he kept his composure and remained calm,

an accurate assessment the pitch helped him keep his composure.

"I think I had to spent some time at the crease initially because we lost three quick wickets so I took my time. But once I had the partnership with Moores, I think we got a platform to open up. I was always given the role to play till the 14-15th over, even in the national team in T20s. General people or



adding 81 runs for the fourth wicket with Tom Moores, who departed after scoring 40.

Shanto let loose after reaching his fifty off 48 balls, scoring his next 39 runs off just 18 deliveries as Sylhet added 49 runs in the last four overs, a total that proved enough to clinch a close win over an in-form Barishal side.

According to Shanto, quick adjustments in the middle and

even journalists might not know the role given to me, but I try to play for my team," he said.

Under inspirational skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza Sylhet have appeared unstoppable in the tournament so far and recorded their sixth game from seven matches. According to Shanto, Mashrafe gave him the license and freedom to play his natural game, which was reflected in his batting.

Young Tigresses face a stiff challenge for semis berth

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh face a steep task as they need to win big in their final Super Six encounter against the UAE in Potchefstroom today in order to make it to the semifinals of the ongoing ICC Women's Under-19 T20 World Cup.

The Disha Biswas-led side stormed into the Super Six with wins in all three group stage matches, including a stunning victory against tournament favourites Australia in the tournament opener.

However, a five-wicket loss in a low-scoring affair against hosts South Africa in their first Super Six game saw Bangladesh drop down to number four in the six-team Super Six Group 1 table.

India and Australia are currently top of the table with six points each – both with much superior net run rate than Bangladesh. India finished their Super Six stage with 2.844 net run rate while Australia ended the stage with a 2.210 net run rate.

According to the tournament by-laws, the teams to progress to the semifinals will be the ones with the greatest number of wins in their Super Six Group.

With both India and Australia winning one of their two Super Six games, a win against the UAE for Bangladesh, which is very much expected, will see the young Tigresses accumulate six points and also equal India and Australia in terms of most number of wins in the Super Six stage.

However, with the current net run rate of 0.268, Bangladesh will definitely need more than just a win today.

Ucchash sends Police packing

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel exacted some revenge for their Bangladesh Premier League defeat at the hands of Bangladesh Police FC, handing them a single-goal defeat in the Federation Cup at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium yesterday.

Substitute Nihat Jaman Ucchash struck the all-important goal in the second half.

A maiden triumph in their first cup match saw Sheikh Russel progress to the quarterfinals from Group C. Yesterday's result also confirmed Abahani's quarterfinal berth while condemning Police FC, semifinalists of the Independence Cup, to elimination after two straight defeats.


Bangladesh Police rested all their foreign players, who played a key role in beating Sheikh Russel 2-1 in the BPL, but failed to replicate their win in the league as the Independence Cup runners-up dominated Police throughout.

Boosted by a full-strength side, Sheikh Russel got off to a fine start and enjoyed more possession. They created at least three chances to open their account but Mfon Sunday Udoh, Charles Didier and Timur Talipov squandered those opportunities in the first half.


After resumption, Sheikh Russel appeared to have broken the deadlock in the 51st minute when Mohammad Ibrahim drove home a rebound which ricocheted off the post from a Talipov free-kick, but the goal was ruled out for offside. Finally, Ucchash, who replaced Hemanta Vincent in the 68th minute, nodded home a Charles Didier free-kick from close range in the 77th minute.




Although there weren't many high-profile matches in Europe on Monday night, two special players achieved special feats in their respective matches. (L) French star Kylian Mbappe scored five goals -- the highest single-game haul in the history of PSG -- in a 7-0 rout of Pays de Cassel, a sixth-tier outfit, in a French Cup fixture. (R) Meanwhile, England captain Harry Kane became the joint-highest scorer for Tottenham, taking him level with Jimmy Greaves on 266 goals as his strike earned his side a 1-0 win over Fulham in a Premier League fixture. PHOTO: TWITTER/AFP




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New outfit planned entry with a bang

Says Rab about Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya, details journey of its military wing chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With an aim to "launch" itself as a militant outfit, the Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya made a video of firearms training over the last one year.

The plan was to release it online after conducting a large-scale attack somewhere in the country, Rab officers said.

Key leaders of the outfit, including Anisur Rahman who goes by the alias Mahmood, are seen in the video.

Anisur who is believed to be the ameer of the outfit is seen leading the militants' training that started in the hills of Bandarban in late 2021.

Their way of living in the forests are seen in the 8:43-minute video shown by Rab officers at a press conference in the capital yesterday.

The members, many in brown and grey camouflage outfit, are seen with assault rifles and sharp weapons.

At yesterday's press briefing, Rab also disclosed details

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A pipe, installed by Khulna Wasa across the Bhairab river to carry water from the Madhumati to a water treatment plant in Khulna, is obstructing the flow of the river and movement of boats in Mulghar area of Bagerhat's Fakirhat upazila. Bangladesh Water Development Board had excavated the Bhairab three years ago, but the soil, kept on the banks, slid into the river again during the rainy season, causing a loss of navigability. The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

PROTEST PROGRAMMES BNP plans to get back momentum

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Fearing that their programmes are losing steam, top BNP leaders are considering new programmes that would bring back the pace to the movement for national election under a non-partisan interim administration.

Excitement among the activists peaked ahead of BNP's December 10 rally in Dhaka, leaders said, adding that their plan now is to revive that momentum through different programmes in February.

The BNP and like-minded parties will hold rallies across the country as part of their simultaneous movement to mark the "democracy killing" day today.

The BNP will hold a rally in front of its Nayapaltan headquarters and is likely to announce a fresh programme for February 4 at the event, said a senior leader, wishing not to be named.

Whenever the BNP announces a programme, the ruling Awami League calls for a counter programme, said the leaders, adding that the February 4 rally

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AL SEEKS TO KEEP BNP AT BAY - PAGE 3

ERRORS IN TEXTBOOKS Govt to form 2 probe bodies

Website link to allow anyone to give feedback, point out mistakes in the books

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday said the government would form two probe committees to identify mistakes in textbooks and ascertain whether the errors were the result of any negligence by National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) officials.

One of those committees would consist of specialists in education, health and religion.

A website link would be made available so that anyone from anywhere can give opinions, file objections and make recommendations, Dipu Moni said at a press conference on the new curriculum at the capital's International Mother Language Institute.

"The expert committee will review all these and take best decisions. If any error is found, it will definitely be corrected," she added.

The minister said another committee would probe whether there was any negligence by NCTB officials.

"We will definitely take strict actions if there is evidence of negligence by anyone," she said, adding that the ministry would provide further details on the committees on Sunday.

Dipu Moni urged all to inform the government about mistakes in textbooks.

She said there are some people who are beating about the bush. "Those might not have read the textbooks at all."

"Being human beings, we can make errors. I think we should not be ashamed of apologising for making errors. But we will have to see whether any mistake was made deliberately, whether we tried to create instability in the society or whether we humiliated anyone."

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING Climate change makes Bangladesh more vulnerable

Says UN report

AFP, Vienna

Human trafficking cases in Bangladesh and the Philippines increased after devastating cyclones and typhoons displaced millions, the United Nations said yesterday.

"Climate change is increasing vulnerability to trafficking," the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report.

"While a systematic global analysis of the impact of climate change in trafficking in persons is missing, community level studies in different parts of the world point at weather induced disasters as root causes for trafficking in persons," it said.

The report is based on data from 141 countries collected from 2017 to 2020, and the analysis of 800 court cases.

Evidence is emerging that climate-related disasters are becoming a cause of human trafficking as criminal gangs exploit a growing number of uprooted people, the UN drugs agency noted.

Bangladesh acceded to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2019.

The continuing war in Ukraine is also another risk factor for increased human trafficking, the UNODC said in a report.

The Covid-19 pandemic limited the ability to detect cases, especially in low-income countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa, the report added.

Bangladesh acceded to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2019. The current legislation on trafficking in persons in Bangladesh - Section 3 of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (2012) - covers all forms of trafficking indicated in the Protocol.

In 2020, national authorities recorded 730 cases of trafficking in persons in Bangladesh. In 2017 and 2018, the Bangladeshi Police reported 778 and 561 cases of trafficking in persons for each year respectively.

The impact of climate change

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'They treat us like animals' Ethnic groups accuse Myanmar junta of war crimes

AFP, Bangkok

A group of people from Myanmar have filed a criminal complaint in Germany accusing their country's military of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, a rights organisation said yesterday.

The case was lodged with Germany's Federal Public Prosecutor General under the principle of universal jurisdiction, which allows the prosecution of certain grave crimes regardless of where they took place, and has been used to try Syrians over atrocities committed during the civil war.

The 16 complainants live in several countries, including Myanmar, and are drawn from a cross-section of the country's numerous ethnic groups - including Rohingya, the dominant Burman and minority Chin communities.

Their accounts date from 2017, when the country was run by a civilian government, to 2021, after the coup that

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Earth's inner core may have started spinning other way

AFP, Paris

Far below our feet, a giant may have started moving against us.

Earth's inner core, a hot iron ball the size of Pluto, has stopped spinning in the same direction as the rest of the planet and might even be rotating the other way, according to a research.

Roughly 5,000 kilometres (3,100 miles) below the surface we live on, this "planet within the planet" can spin independently because it floats in the liquid metal outer core.

Exactly how the inner core rotates has been a matter of debate between scientists.

What little we know about the inner core comes from measuring the tiny differences in seismic waves - created by earthquakes or sometimes nuclear explosions - as they pass through the middle of the Earth.

Seeking to track the inner core's movements, the new research, published in the journal Nature Geoscience recently, analysed seismic waves from repeating earthquakes over the last six decades.

The study's authors, Xiaodong Song and Yi Yang of China's Peking University, said they found that the inner core's rotation "came to near halt around 2009 and then turned in an opposite direction".

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Classified docs found at former US VP Mike Pence's home

REUTERS, Washington

Documents marked as classified were discovered at former US Vice President Mike Pence's Indiana home last week, and he has turned those classified records over to the FBI, his representative said in letters seen by Reuters.

Pence's representative sent a letter to the National Archives notifying them of the documents and in a separate letter said the FBI came to the former vice president's home to collect the documents.

The discovery puts Pence in the company of his former boss, former President Donald Trump, and President Joe Biden after documents with classified markings were found at their residences.

Pence's representative, Greg Jacob, said in a letter dated Jan. 18 to the National Archives that "out of an abundance of caution" Pence had engaged outside counsel to review records stored in his home after reports about the materials found at Biden's residence.

"Counsel identified a small number of documents that could potentially

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Beaming proudly amongst his cucumber plants, Abdur Rahim says he is confident that he would be able to sell the vegetable for Tk 100,000. The farmer spent only about Tk 7,500 to sow the seeds on his one bigha of land in the Alankari area of Biswanath, Sylhet.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Nominations for Oscars announced



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nominations for the 95th Academy Awards, better known across the world as the Oscars, were announced at yesterday, ahead of the ceremony slated for March 12.

Kicking off at 7:30pm Bangladesh time, the nominees, at an event held at the Academy's Samuel Goldwyn Theatre, were presented by 2022 Oscar Winner Riz Ahmed and Allison Williams, actress and producer of "M3gan".

The first nominations to be announced were for "Actress in a Supporting Role". Following this came the announcements for various other categories such as "Costume Design", "Sound", "Original Score" and more.

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