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Ramadan items already get costlier



As the age-old Kalurghat bridge on the Karnaphuli becomes too risky for large vehicles, the authorities are making arrangements for ferries to carry buses and lorries between the Chattogram city and Boalkhali upazila. The government will officially inaugurate three ferries at the end of this month.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

JAMA'ATUL ANSAR Secretariat, jail on shortlist of targets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Secretariat, Kashimpur jail, the premises of a court or law enforcers – new militant outfit Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya had planned to launch a major attack on either of these targets.

Amid the attention the attack would get, the militants would “launch” itself by releasing a video made over the last one year featuring their members and leaders receiving firearms training.

Investigators have learnt about this plan after interrogating arrested military wing chief of Jama'atul Ansar, Mashukur Rahman.

With the help from the Kuki Chin National Front (KNF), an armed group in the hill tracts, six members of the militant outfit learned how to make explosives, said a Rab officer who interrogated Mashukur.

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DC CONFERENCE

Stay alert to curb market manipulation

Ministers ask deputy commissioners about prices of essentials during Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The deputy commissioners have been asked to remain alert to corruption in their districts and take strict measures against manipulation of commodity prices during Ramadan.

The directives came at the DC conference held at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday.

In seven sessions that took place on the second day of the three-day conference, ministers and state ministers discussed various issues with the DCs.

Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah directed the DCs to inform the authorities concerned about any form of corruption as soon as possible.

“The DCs have many sources to learn about corruption. We've told them to inform the appropriate authorities about any corruption taking place and take necessary legal action in this regard.”

He said corruption stands as an obstacle in the country's path to becoming a developed nation.

“We have asked them to work sincerely to prevent corruption and help the country progress,” he said at a press briefing after a session.

The ACC chairman also said they will take action against anyone involved in corruption, irrespective of their identities.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

- Guidelines underway for battery-run rickshaws on highways
- Legal action must be taken against bike riders without helmets
- Action must be taken to stop selling rice in plastic bags
- Monitoring on commodity price manipulation needed

AL yet to swing into action

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader has said his party is only rehearsing and the BNP's movement would be gone once the “game” begins in full swing.

“We are yet to start the game; this is just the beginning. What would happen to their mass movement when the game will be played?” said the AL leader.

He said the BNP now have leaders and activists with them, but not the people. “They also don't claim of having the people's support.”

Quader made the comments while addressing a rally, organised by the Dhaka city south AL, in front of the party headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday.

Though the rally was organised to mark the Mass Uprising Day yesterday, senior AL leaders in their speeches talked about the BNP as the ruling party held rallies in the city apparently to counter the opposition's programmes.

The BNP held rallies in the capital and other divisional cities and district towns

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BNP goes for fresh agitation

To hold rallies at divisional headquarters on February 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday announced that it would hold divisional rallies on February 4 as part of the ongoing simultaneous movement by the party and its like-minded political platforms.

The opposition party made the announcement from a rally in front of its Nayapaltan headquarters in the capital. The Dhaka north and south city units of the party organised the event marking the “democracy killing day”.

Traffic was disrupted on one lane of the road in front of the BNP office as the other lane was blocked during the rally.

Speaking at the programme, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir announced that the party will stage divisional rallies on February 4 protesting the “killings and repression” by the Awami League government, and demanding the prices of essentials and electricity be cut.

“The incumbent government has restored Baksal [one party rule] in disguise of democracy. Now it is plotting to hold an election of mockery and drama, but people will not allow such an election this time,” he said.

Fakhrul alleged that the AL killed democracy, and it was destroying people's hopes and dreams every day. “This Awami League government must be unseated through a movement.”

Criticising the ruling party for announcing counter-programmes on the day of BNP's demonstrations, he said the AL was doing this out of “fear of losing power”.

About the coming presidential election, the BNP leader said, “Which presidential election is going to be held? The president doesn't have any power. The president cannot do anything without having the opinion of the prime minister. That's why we have put forward a proposal for state

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

‘Please point out my failures, I'll correct them’
PM asks Jatiya Party in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the main opposition in parliament to point out if there was any failure on her part and said she would correct herself accordingly.

The premier was replying to a question from Jatiya Party lawmaker Fakhrul Imam.

“People will judge the successes and failures, it is not my responsibility to judge that. Why would I fail if I work with honesty and specific goals for the welfare of the people?” she said.

Hasina also asked the Jatiya Party to find out her failures saying, “When you are so interested, please point out my failures, and I will correct them.”

The premier said she has worked for the welfare of the grassroots people after the formation of the government.

“People are getting the benefits now. Elderly people will know the radical changes in Bangladesh in the last 14 years,” she said.

But, today's generation will not know that, she added.

In response to a question from ruling party lawmaker AKM Rahmatullah, the PM said after the killing of Bangabandhu, Ziaur Rahman seized power illegally and freed the war criminals.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



BNP leaders and activists turn up in droves at a rally in front of the party's Nayapaltan headquarters in the capital. The opposition party organised rallies in Dhaka and other divisional cities and district towns yesterday to mount pressure on the government to accept its 10-point demand, including national election under a non-party caretaker government.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

EC not upset by suspension of EVM project
Says CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday said they were not disappointed over the suspension of a proposal for buying two lakh electronic voting machines.

“An election commissioner already made comments on the issue; we don't want to reiterate this,” he said while talking to reporters at his Election Commission office.

“It's not my personal matter; there's nothing to lose hope or become disappointed. A decision has been made by the government that it will not be able to provide EVMs due to the overall economic condition. There is nothing to react,” the CEC said.

The Planning Commission on Sunday returned to the EC the project proposal of

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Presidential election on February 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next presidential election will be held on February 19.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal announced the schedule after holding a meeting with election commissioners at the Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital's Agargaon yesterday.

The nominations will be submitted on February 12. The nomination papers will be scrutinised on February 13. The deadline for withdrawal of candidature will be February 14, he said.

The election will take place from 2:00pm to 5:00pm on February 19 at the parliament house if there is more than one candidate, Awal added.

Three hundred and forty-three members of parliament have been enlisted in the voters' list this year to elect the head of the state. Seven posts of MPs were vacant.

According to the Presidential Election Act, 1991, the president shall be elected by the members of parliament by open ballot.

An MP shall sign the nomination paper for the presidential election as the proposer and another MP shall sign as the seconder. No MP shall sign more than one nomination paper as a proposer or seconder.

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

Hamid's first five-year tenure 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 60 to 90 days before the expiry of each five-year term.

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



A Ukrainian service member fires a RPG-7 anti-tank grenade launcher during offensive and assault drills, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Zaporizhzhia Region, Ukraine. The photo was taken on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

DOMINANCE OF ONLINE AD MARKET US sues Google

AFP, Washington

The US Justice Department has sued Google for its dominance of the online advertising market, launching a fresh legal battle against the California-based tech giant.

The case was the second federal lawsuit against Google over alleged antitrust violations and the first since US President Joe Biden took office two years ago.

The earlier case targeted Google's world-dominating search engine and is expected to go to trial later this year.

In this latest suit filed on Tuesday, prosecutors took aim at Google's extremely profitable advertising business, asking that it be broken up to level the playing field for other companies.

Google's ad dealings generated more than \$200 billion in sales in 2021 and is parent company Alphabet's biggest moneymaker by a wide margin.

The US said the revenue was unlawfully

maintained by a monopoly that had "corrupted legitimate competition in the ad tech industry."

"Google has used anticompetitive, exclusionary, and unlawful means to eliminate or severely diminish any threat to its dominance over digital advertising technologies," the suit added.

The case was launched by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in conjunction with eight US states: California, Colorado, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Central to the case is Google's dominance of the ad tech business, the technology that companies rely on for their online advertising needs.

The prosecutors said Google "now controls" both the buy and the sell side of the crucial sector, meaning website creators earn less and advertisers pay more, all while innovation is choked by the lack of rivals.

Dhaka, Delhi seek stronger energy ties

Says Indian envoy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India are working together to build stronger energy connectivity, said Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pranay Verma yesterday.

Mentioning the example of Rampal Power Plant, he said both units of the coal-fired plant were expected to be in operation this year.

Once the units start operating, it will ensure much-needed energy security in Bangladesh, he added.

He made the comments while talking at an event organised by the Bangladesh India Friendship Society (BIFS) at the Samson H Choudhury Centre of Dhaka Club.

More power plants are being constructed to supply power to Bangladesh, he said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Two killed in clash over land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaajpur

Two people died while six others were injured in a clash over land dispute in Dinaajpur's Ghoraghat upazila yesterday morning.

Monwar Hossain Mim, 24, and Rakib Hossain, 25, both of Khodatpur village, had a long-standing feud with Omar Ali over 28 decimals of land, said Abu Raihan Kabir, officer-in-charge of Ghoraghat Police Station.

A clash broke out between them in the morning, after Omar and his men went to the location to claim the land.

They attacked each other with sharp weapons, leaving eight people injured.

Monwar and Rakib died on way to Ghoraghat Upazila Health Complex while the others were sent to hospitals in Bogura and Dinaajpur for treatment, added the OC.

Man gets death penalty for rape, murder of minor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday sentenced a man to death for raping and murdering a minor girl in the district's Rupganj upazila in 2006.

Judge Nazmul Haq Shaymol of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal delivered the verdict.

According to the case statement, Mukmina, 10, of the upazila's Birabo Bazar area, went missing on January 13, 2006, on her way to a tailor. The next day, her body was found in a bamboo bush near her home.

The victim's mother filed a case with Rupganj Police Station following the incident.

During primary investigation, police confirmed that the girl was raped before being murdered.

On June 15, 2009, the Criminal Investigation Department submitted charge sheet accusing three men.

Of them, Nazim Uddin, 40, now into hiding, was convicted yesterday. The other two accused were acquitted.

No Covid deaths in 24 hours, positivity rate 13.37

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No Covid death was reported in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, while nine others were infected with the virus during this period.

The total number of Covid-19 deaths in the country remains at 29,441 while the mortality rate is 1.44 percent, according to Directorate General of Health Services.

A total of 1,924 samples were tested across the country during this period.

The current positivity rate is 0.47 percent while the total positivity rate stands at 13.37 percent.

Meanwhile, 211 patients recovered from the infection during this period.

Stay alert to curb market

FROM PAGE 1

In the afternoon session, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi told the DCs to ensure no one takes advantage by manipulating prices during Ramadan.

"You are the hands of the government. You must take strict measures so that no one can take advantage."

He also asked the DCs to help make consumers aware of their rights.

The minister then asked them to make an effort to ensure fair prices for traders of animal rawhide during Eid-ul-Azha.

Road, Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader directed the DCs to monitor whether motorcycle riders wear helmets in the sub-urban areas.

"Though motorcycle riders in Dhaka wear helmets, the practice is not seen in sub-urban areas."

The fatality rate in road accidents has increased due to the plying of motorcycle, easy-bikes, Nasiman and Kariman on the highways, he

said, adding that the government is working to form a policy to bring discipline to this sector.

"Ensuring discipline in the transport sector is my top most priority. Lots of roads are being constructed ... But if discipline cannot be ensured, all these constructions will be of no use."

About any directives given regarding the upcoming national polls, he said, "I am talking about discipline. And discipline is applicable everywhere."

Earlier, Jute and Textile Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi instructed the deputy commissioners to operate mobile courts against the use of plastic bag in rice packaging.

"Imported rice is packaged in plastic bags. Some businesses are taking advantage of that and selling local rice in plastic bags."

The DC conference was inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday and is expected to end today after eight sessions on separate issues.

AL yet to swing into action

FROM PAGE 1

yesterday to press home its 10-point demand, including resignation of the AL government and national election under a non-party caretaker government. The BNP's like-minded opposition parties also staged rallies across the country simultaneously.

Blasting BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir for his recent remarks on Baksal, Quader said, "Please explain what does Baksal stand for. It is Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League. Baksal is not a single party, rather a national party comprised of all parties, all opinions."

"Ziaur Rahman applied to Bangabandhu in writing to become a member of Baksal. There is evidence. The founder of your [Fakhrul] party joined Baksal through applying, and you call Baksal a one-party government."

Speaking at the rally, AL Presidium Member Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya said, "The Awami League has not taken the field yet. We are only rehearsing, and the BNP is nowhere to be found. What will happen to BNP if Awami League takes the field? People's involvement is needed to stage a mass uprising. But the BNP has no involvement with the people."

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbub Ul Alam Hanif said the party leaders and activists would be in the field with the law enforcement agencies if any attempt was made to foil the next general election.

He alleged that the BNP was

hatching conspiracy ahead of the election as they knew that they would lose it.

The ruling party and its associate bodies and pro-AL organisations held four other rallies at different venues in the capital yesterday marking the Mass Uprising Day.

Speaking at another event at the Banani Model School ground, Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, reiterated that the caretaker government system would not be restored and the next parliamentary polls would be held in due time following the constitutional provisions.

The Dhaka city north AL hosted the programme marking distribution of warm clothes among low-income people.

Jubo League's two city units staged two rallies at the capital's Jatrabari intersection and Mohakhali Kancha Bazzar area while the Chhatra League's Dhaka University unit staged another rally at Shahbagh.

AL insiders said the party leadership do not want to see the BNP's programmes getting exclusive media coverage, and that's why the ruling party has adopted the strategy of holding counter-programmes.

AL leaders also think that holding such programmes on the day of the BNP's events help develop a positive feeling among the party leaders and activists. The ruling party is not likely to reverse this strategy anytime soon, they added.

Rising input cost

FROM PAGE 1

Even though Aman production was good last year, the price of rice has not fallen, and it indicates that hoarders are waiting for the price of rice to increase further in the coming days, he said.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), last year's average Boro paddy production cost in Rangpur and Dinaajpur regions was Tk 14,900 per bigha of land and in Rajshahi and Bogura regions Tk 17,450. Each region consists of four districts.

The DAE estimates that Boro will be cultivated on 13.25 lakh hectares of land in the 16 northern districts this year. It is 26.5 percent of the total Boro cultivable land in the country, officials said.

Kanchi Karmaker, a farmer in Birol upazila of Dinaajpur, said ever since the government raised the prices of diesel and fertiliser, everything related to farming has become more expensive.

Last year, the price of diesel rose by 42.5 percent while the price of each kg of urea fertiliser leaped to Tk 22 from Tk 16 in 2021.

BNP goes for fresh agitation

FROM PAGE 1

reforms in which we have mentioned about bringing a balance of power to the prime minister and the president."

Coming down hard on the government for errors in new school textbooks, Fakhrul demanded corrections as some contents which were not in keeping with the country's history and culture were included in those.

Painting a gloomy picture of the country's economy, he said the situation has become so grave that the economy is "on the verge of collapse".

"The main problem is that Awami League considers the country to be its parental property, and that no one has any say about the country. That's why the ruling party men have indulged in massive corruption."

The BNP secretary general said time is running out for the government and it has to step down now.

Party leaders Khairul Kabir Khokon, Fazlul Huq Milon and Sheikh Rabiul Islam joined the rally hours after walking out of jail on bail. The programme was chaired by Dhaka South city BNP Convener Abdus Salam.

Breaking down the expenses, Shamsul Haq of Takeyarpur area of Rangpur said the average cost for preparing a bigha of land has gone from Tk 900 to Tk 1,300, sowing from Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,500, irrigation from Tk 1,200 from Tk 1,600, different fertilisers from Tk 2,000 to Tk 3,500, pesticide and other expenses from Tk 800 last year to around Tk 1,200 this year.

Making a profit of Tk 6,000 per bigha of land would be a challenge this year, said a farmer in Naogaon, adding that making that much profit would depend on a lot of things including the weather.

Prof Nazrul Islam Hakkani, president of Jatiya Krishak Samiti in Rangpur, said, "The vast majority of underprivileged farmers do not have enough money. Most of them can't get a low-interest bank loan and have to turn to loan sharks just to be able to farm. The government should provide them with cash support right now."

Mohammad Shah Alam, additional director of the DAE in Rangpur, said mechanisation in farming can be a way to cut down the costs.

Party leaders and activists from different wards of the capital took part in the rally. Many were seen wearing colourful caps, carrying banners and posters. They chanted anti-government slogans and demanded release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

A large number of law enforcers were deployed in and around the rally venue to avert any untoward incident.

Also yesterday, Gonotantra Moncho, an alliance of some opposition political parties, held its rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Speaking at the event, top leaders of the alliance reaffirmed that the unity of its components was intact and it would remain so in future.

After the formation of the alliance, there was a rumor that its leaders became divided, and the combine could split anytime.

From the rally, alliance leaders also announced the same demonstration programme for February 4.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami didn't observe any programme simultaneously with the BNP and its like-minded parties. The party, however, in a press release yesterday claimed that it held the programme indoors.

Secretariat, jail on shortlist

FROM PAGE 1

Khandaker Al Moin, director (legal and media) of Rab, said the video found on Mashukur's smartphone shows how trained and disciplined they are.

A Rab team arrested Mashukur and another suspect named Abul Bashar after a gunfight near Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar on Monday.

Bashar has the expertise in using explosives, Moin said.

The militant outfit members worked on the video until September last year, but they could not complete it as law enforcers started a crackdown on the hills.

Key leaders of the outfit, including its ameer Anisur Rahman, are seen in the video. The members, many in brown and grey camouflage, are seen with assault rifles and sharp weapons.

Militant leaders from Ansar Al Islam, Harkatul Jihad Al Islami and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh

made plans of forming Jama'atul Ansar while they were in prison years ago.

However, it finally came into being in 2019. One of the key planners, Shamin Mahfuz, a former JMB leader, has been its adviser from the beginning.

Shamin, a former student of Dhaka University, has been a friend of KNF chief Nathan Bawm, who also studied in DU.

Top Jama'atul Ansar leaders and KNF chief Nathan made a three-year deal at the beginning of 2021 at a hotel in Cox's Bazar. The latter agreed to provide shelter, training on firearms and explosives and other support to the militants in exchange for Tk 3 lakh a month.

Rab also had information that the militants gave Tk 17 lakh to KNF to buy weapons. It came to know that the militants purchased an AK-22 and an AK-32 rifle to train the young recruits.

Please point out my failures

FROM PAGE 1

By changing two clauses of the constitution, Zia allowed them to do politics.

"Many war criminals, including Ghulam Azam, were brought back from Pakistan and given citizenship. Zia made war criminals advisors and ministers."

She said Khaleda Zia also gave war criminals places in her cabinet.

"Patronising war criminals like this is disgraceful for a nation. Genuine freedom fighters who did not agree to join hands with Zia were dropped from the list of freedom fighters ... and non-freedom fighters were included in the list. They did not want to honour the real freedom fighters."

In response to a query from ruling

party MP Benazir Ahmed, Hasina said the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war have affected the economy.

"Bangladesh is no exception. This has affected the prices of essentials alongside other economic and social impacts."

In reply to the supplementary question from AL MP Mozaffar Hossain, the leader of the House said Bangladesh's garment industry has expanded widely, but there are difficulties finding technical persons there.

"Many people are brought from abroad and given jobs."

In this connection, she said, the government has established textiles universities and colleges to create a skilled workforce.

Israel forces kill Palestinian in alleged knife attack

AFP, Nablus

Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank yesterday, the Palestinian health ministry said, in what the army described as a "stabbing attack".

The ministry said that Arref Abdel Nasser Arref Lahlouh, 22, was killed "by Israeli gunfire," near the Palestinian city of Qalqilya.

The Israeli army said that Lahlouh "attempted to carry out a stabbing

attack" near the Jewish settlement of Kdumim.

"The assailant, armed with a knife, arrived at an IDF military post and attempted to stab an IDF soldier at the scene."

Lahlouh was "neutralised by the soldiers in the area," the army added.

Lahlouh is the 19th Palestinian killed in the West Bank this year, the majority of whom were shot dead by Israeli forces.

Train every student as a scout: PM

UNB, Gazipur

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked authorities concerned to impart scout training to students in the country's educational institutions to develop them as capable citizens for building "Smart Bangladesh".

The premier made the remarks while inaugurating the 32nd Asia-Pacific and 11th National Scout Jamboree at National Scout Training Centre in Gazipur's Mouchak.

Bangladesh Scouts is hosting the 9-day regional and national scout jamboree from January 19-27.

At the event, the PM unveiled a commemorative postage stamp marking the regional and national jamboree.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Sterilisation of dogs begins in DSCC areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has started sterilising stray dogs to control their population. A total of 10 dogs were brought under the sterilisation programme yesterday, the first day of the programme.

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh inaugurated the "Dog Sterilisation Programme" in Wari's Fakir Chan Community Centre.

"According to the information we have, there are more than 50,000 stray dogs in the areas under DSCC's jurisdiction. So, we need a permanent solution to control the breeding of stray dogs. That's why, like the rest of the world, we are starting sterilisation," he said.

According to DSCC, 10 dogs will be sterilised every day. To identify the sterilised dogs, their ears will be pierced and a permanent blue colour will be sprayed on their necks.

15 to get Bangla Academy award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen authors and writers were announced as the winners of the Bangla Academy Sahitya Puroskar-2022 yesterday.

They are Farook Mahmud and Tarik Sujat (poetry), Tapash Majumder and Parvez Hossain (novel), Masud Uzzaman (essay/research), Alam Khorshed (translation), Milon Kanti Dey and Farid Ahmed Dulal (drama), Dhruva Esh (children's literature), Mohammad Shamsul Haq (Liberation War research), Suvas Singho Roy (research on Bangabandhu), Mokaram Hossain (science/science fiction/environmental science), Ikhtiar Chowdhury (biography/travelogue), and Abdul Khalek and Muhammad Abdul Jalil (folklore).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will hand over the awards at Amar Ekushey Book Fair.

PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 26					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 5:35	12:45	4:15	5:46	7:15	
JAMAT 6:10	1:15	4:30	5:50	7:45	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

KAYETTULI SHAP MANDIR

Century-old temple crumbling away

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The century-old Manasa temple of Old Dhaka, popularly known as "Kayettuli Shap Mandir", is on the verge of extinction due to neglect and lack of maintenance by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and the archaeology department.

For a newcomer, it would be a struggle to find the historic temple even if they receive the right directions, as the establishment -- situated on BK Ganguly Road -- is flanked by high-rise buildings and other structures from all sides.

Around 300 Hindu devotees from Old Dhaka's Kayettuli neighbourhood come to Manasa temple to worship. Despite its fading beauty, the establishment attracts hundreds of visitors every day from the surrounding districts of Dhaka.

According to the temple's broken down nameplate, after the death of businessman Sashanka Mohon Basu in 1937, his four sons -- Moti Lal Basu, Hira Lal Basu, Ranjit Lal Basu and Ram Lal Basu -- built the establishment in honour of their father.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found that the structure stands with the help of seven pillars.



The temple is one of the very few establishments that feature the exclusive "chinitikri mosaic", as the establishment had been decorated with imported china clay tiles. The structure requires urgent repairs to preserve it for future generations.

Sufi Mostafizur Rahman
Professor of archaeology at Jahangirnagar University



Half of a 15 foot tall pillar had collapsed. Almost 50 percent of the tiles on the ground have been damaged. There are numerous cracks around the foundation, which is almost 20 feet tall. There is no empty space around the structure and the nameplate has also collapsed.

Sufi Mostafizur Rahman, professor of archaeology at Jahangirnagar University, said the temple is one of the very few establishments that feature the exclusive "chinitikri mosaic", as the temple had been decorated with imported china clay tiles. "The structure requires urgent repairs to preserve it for future generations."

Rina Nandy, president of the temple committee, said miscreants looted and vandalised the temple during the political turmoil of 1990. "The establishment has not been repaired since then."

"We are trying to manage the establishment as it's our family tradition, but financially it's not possible for us to repair it," she added.

Shawon Nandy, vice president of the temple committee, said he had talked to the former DSCC mayor about repair, but no progress was made.

"This is the only temple of the goddess Manasa in Bangshal thana. There's no other



structure with such a design in Dhaka," he said. "If the temple isn't repaired within the next seven to eight months, it will collapse."

Local resident Shilpi Datta said, "Not only is this establishment a unique shrine, it also preserves records of Old Dhaka's ancient richness."

Architect Taimur Islam, chief executive of Urban Study Group, an organisation working for the conservation of architectural and urban heritage of Old Dhaka, said, "Manasha temple is one of two such temples that we have in Dhaka."

The actual history of the establishment is not known, but it is quite obvious that the patron was an elite from the late 19th century or early 20th century, he said.

"The structure is now in a dilapidated state due to lack of proper maintenance. The government should immediately take steps to repair it," he added.

Awal Hossain, councillor of DSCC's ward-33, said, "The establishment preserves the history of Old Dhaka. Steps will be taken to repair it."

Contacted, Halima Afroj, assistant director of the Archaeology Department, said, "We don't know about this temple. We are looking for information in this regard."

Eleven teachers honoured for their impact

DU CORRESPONDENT

Eleven teachers were accorded a reception for their outstanding contributions to education and morals.

Ethics Club Bangladesh honoured them while celebrating its 12th anniversary at a programme held at the auditorium of the capital's National Museum.

Education Minister Dipu Moni was present as chief guest at the programme.

MA Chowdhury Shamim, president of Ethics Club Bangladesh, chaired the programme.

Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam handed over the awards to the teachers.

The honoured teachers are Emeritus Professor Arun Kumar Basak of Rajshahi University; Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed of Dhaka College; Pratibha Mutsuddi, former principal of Bharateswari Homes; Prof Hayat Mamud of Jahangirnagar University; Emeritus Prof Ainun Nishat of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet); Prof Fakrul Alam of Dhaka University; Nurul Alam, former head teacher of Khulna Zila School; Sabera Khanam, principal of Sonakanda Government Primary School; Milton Mankhin, teacher of Mymensingh Dhalaupara Primary School; Minti Rani, principal of Narayanganj Kalsindur Government Primary School; and Pai Nu Marma, principal of Bandarban Buddhist Orphanage Government Primary School.

The club's chief executive Dilara Afroz Khan Rupa read out the announcement.

Among others, Professor Sadeka Halim, dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Dhaka University spoke at the programme.

At least 109 DU students to be punished

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least 109 students of Dhaka University (DU) and its affiliated institutions are set to be punished by being expelled or suspended for using unfair means in examination and indiscipline.

The recommendation came from a disciplinary board (DB) meeting yesterday at Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban. The meeting was presided over by DU Vice Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman.

The decision will be placed before the university syndicate committee -- the highest decision-making body -- for approval.

Of the 109 students, one is set to be expelled permanently. Two students are to be suspended for two years and one for a year for violating the university's discipline.

Jim Nazmul, a resident student of Masterda Surja Sen Hall of the university, was permanently expelled for his inappropriate behaviour with a female student of a private university.

To fight the blight of poverty

JS passes zakat bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Zakat Fund Management Bill 2023 was passed in parliament yesterday, aiming to make zakat (obligatory charity in Islam) an important tool to eradicate poverty in the country.

The proposed bill also aims to enable zakat receivers to adopt any profession and make them self-reliant.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Md Faridul Haque Khan placed the bill which was passed by voice vote.

The proposed "Zakat Fund Management Act, 2023" will replace the Zakat Fund Ordinance, 1982.

The bill said there will be a "Zakat Board" of 13 members. The religious affairs minister or the state minister will be the chairman of the board.

Secretary of the religious affairs ministry, an

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

BNP's Milon, Kokhon walk out of Keraniganj jail

STAR REPORT

BNP leaders Fazlur Huq Milon and Khairul Kabir Khokon got released on bail from Keraniganj jail yesterday.

The High Court granted them bail on Monday, said HC sources.

Milon, former organising secretary of the party, and Khokon, BNP's joint secretary general, walked out of jail around 2:30pm, said Sayrul Kabir Khan, an official of BNP's media cell.

On December 7 last year, a Swetchasebak Dal leader was killed and around 50 others were injured in a clash between police and BNP activists in front of the party's Nayapaltan central office.

The clash took place ahead of the party's December 10 rally.

Following the incident, police arrested 470 activists and leaders of the party in connection with the clash.

The arrested BNP leaders and activists were sued in two cases filed with Paltan and Motijheel police stations. Khokon and Milon were arrested the same day.

Australian mission lauds women athletes

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Australian High Commission in Dhaka has celebrated the accomplishments of women in sports, who can serve as role models for millions of girls across the country.

"We celebrate their achievements as they are champions of women's empowerment, and can inspire women and girls across Bangladesh," said Australian High Commissioner Jeremy Bruer at the Australia Day event in the Australian High Commission Recreation Centre on Tuesday evening.

Champion players

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Metro rail will now stop at Pallabi station

UNB, Dhaka

Nearly one month after the inauguration of the metro rail service in Dhaka, Mirpur's Pallabi Station was opened to commuters yesterday.

Now, commuters can travel from Uttara North station to Pallabi, Pallabi to Uttara, and Agargaon to Pallabi, said Managing Director (MD) of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL) MAN Siddique.

A new timing has been set for metro rail. It will run from 8:30am to 12:30pm instead of 8:00am to 12:00pm, considering the demand of the passengers.

The government has fixed Tk 30 as fare for Uttara North Station to Pallabi, Pallabi to Uttara and Agargaon to Pallabi, said Siddique.

When the government started the operation of the metro rail service on December 28 last year on a limited scale, there was no stoppage from Uttara North station to Agargaon station. But now, the metro rail will also stop at Pallabi station.

According to Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL), the rail operation to Motijheel may start by the end of 2024, and Kamalapur by 2025.



Near the capital's Shahbagh police station, a seized human haulier gathers rust, blocking a portion of the road. For some years now, this space has been turned into an unofficial impound, contributing to gridlock on the busy road. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

BANK EXAM QUESTION LEAK IO explains why Buet professor was relieved of charges

STAR REPORT

The investigation officer (IO) for the case filed over the question paper leak of recruitment exams for bankers appeared before a Dhaka court on Tuesday and explained why he excluded Buet Prof Nikhil Ranjan Dhar from the charges.

IO Md Shamim Ahmed, a sub-inspector of the police's Detective Branch (DB), placed his submission as the court recently asked him to show causes why and how he relieved Prof Nikhil from the charges of the case filed with Badda Police Station in November 2021.

After his submission, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Shahidul Islam directed detectives to submit a supplementary charge sheet by February 5.

The IO told the court Prof Nikhil did not receive any copies of the printed question papers from accused Delwar Hossain, who implicated the professor in his

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

'False, baseless allegations'

NRCC protests reports of deleting encroachers' name from database

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) has protested the reports of four national dailies that mentioned that the organisation has deleted names of river encroachers from its database and decided not to reveal the names to public.

The commission has termed these reports baseless.

NRCC protested the reports published in Banik Barta, The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and Protindiner Bangladesh in a press conference held at

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Workshop on div river affairs held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A comprehensive and integrated action plan and participation of all stakeholders can save the rivers of Chattogram division, which are facing extinction due to encroachment, grabbing and pollution, said speakers yesterday.

Besides, political will and institutional reform are mandatory to revive grabbed rivers from the hands of influential people, they said.

They said this at a workshop titled “Chattogram Divisional Rivers Affair Workshop”, organised by Bangladesh Environmentalist lawyers Association (Bela).

The workshop was presided by Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela; Prof Shafiq Haidar Chowdhury, former professor of Chittagong University’s (CU) zoology department; Prof Manjurul Kibria, coordinator of Halda River Research Laboratory (HRRL) of CU; Shuvash Barua, vice president of Planned Chattogram; journalist Aliur Rahman.

To fight the blight

FROM PAGE 3

official from the ministry of the minimum rank of a joint secretary, an official of the finance ministry of the minimum rank of a joint secretary, an official of the minimum rank of a joint secretary from the legislative and parliamentary affairs division, five eminent Islamic scholars selected by the government, two representatives from the country’s trade-body organisation, and the director general of Islamic Foundation will be the other members of the committee.

The committee’s tenure will be of three years and it will hold at least two meetings every year.

The voluntary zakat contribution of eligible Muslims will be accumulated in the zakat fund, which will be kept in non-interest-bearing accounts of government-scheduled banks. After the law is enacted, anyone from home and abroad will be able to contribute to the fund through any such scheduled bank.

Although the zakat system has been in operation at the individual

level for a long time in this country, the desired benefits were not being obtained from it, according to the objective of the proposed bill.

Therefore, the government formed the zakat board by enacting The Zakat Fund Ordinance, 1982, to properly utilise zakat money to ensure the welfare of destitute Muslims, according to the provisions of Islam.

The Zakat Fund Management Bill-2023 was placed in parliament to repeal the military regime ordinance in line with a verdict of the High Court.

4 held over

FROM PAGE 5

5:30am on Tuesday. They dragged Mohiuddin Ahmed Sifat and GM Fahad out of their rooms and attacked them with hammers and sharp weapons, according to an eyewitness.

The injured were being treated at a Barishal hospital.

At present, there is no committee of Bangladesh Chhatra League at Barishal University, Mainul Islam, joint convener of Barishal BCL said earlier.

Traders ruining

FROM PAGE 5

Andolon, Habiganj unit, general secretary Tofazzal Sohel said the country’s cultivable land is declining rapidly every year.

Dr AHM Mahfuzul Haque, chairman of Plant Pathology and Seed Science Department at Sylhet Agriculture University, said soil fertility states the ability of soil that sustain growth of the plant.

Up to six inches upper layer of the soil provides nutrients and help the plants

grow, he said, adding that production has declined because plants are not getting required nutrients due to cutting of topsoil.

Nabiganj Upazila Agriculture Officer AKM Maksudul Alam said if illegal removal of topsoil continues like this vast cropland will turn unfertile in near future.

Nabiganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Imran Shahriar said after investigation they will take necessary action in this regard.

Train every student as a scout

FROM PAGE 3

PM’s former principal secretary Md Abul Kalam Azad, who is also the president of Bangladesh Scouts, also spoke at the event, while Dr Mozammel Haque Khan, chairman of Jamboree Organising Committee and chief national commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts, delivered the welcome speech.

About 11,000 scouts, including 8,000 scout

members, 1,000 unit leaders and international service team (IST) members from the Asia Pacific region – Bangladesh, India, Nepal, the Maldives, the Philippines, China, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, the USA, Canada and Germany – participated in the jamboree.

“Everyone will have to keep a liberal mind and stay free from all sorts of corruption, superstition,

Death anniv of Shahidul Islam

STAR REPORT

Today is the 14th death anniversary of Md Shahidul Islam Pannu, director of Sara Advertising Ltd, said a press release.

His family members have requested all to pray for the salvation of his departed soul.



False, baseless allegations

FROM PAGE 3

its office yesterday.

NRCC Chairman Manjur A Chowdhury read out the statement, in which he claimed that the list prepared under a project to study 48 rivers only had the number of illegal structures on these rivers; it never published the names of encroachers. He claimed to have sent the list to the

deputy commissioners across the country. After their feedback, NRCC will make it public.

The commission also contested the statement of Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, and Mujibor Rahman Howlader, former chairman of NRCC, who alleged that the

commission was siding with the encroachers.

“The commission published the names of 57,000 illegal structures on its website. As per NRCC’s instructions, deputy commissioners have demolished 19,000 structures as of now. Such comments are embarrassing for the commission,” he added.

Australian mission lauds women

FROM PAGE 3

Quamrun Nahar Dana [badminton], Mbia Akhter [weightlifting], Mahfuza Khatun Shila [swimming], Diya Siddique [archery], Sharmin Akhter Ratna [shooting], and women cricket team of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Pratishthan (BKSP) were among the athletes present at the

event. Bruer described Australia Day as an occasion that celebrates a modern and multicultural Australia. Besides, it is a day to reflect upon the country’s 60,000-year old history and to acknowledge indigenous Australians’ fundamental place in Australia’s story.

Education Minister Dipu Moni was chief guest at the event, which was also attended by members of parliament, diplomats, senior officers from the Bangladesh Armed Forces, other ministries, leaders from business, development, humanitarian, political, civil society, and media.

IO explains why Buet Prof

FROM PAGE 3

confessional statement.

The police official said he scrutinised the confessional statement of Delowar but did not find any truth to the allegations brought by him against Prof Nikhil over the question leak.

On November 16 last year, he submitted two charge sheets, excluding Prof Nikhil as an accused.

The name of Prof Nikhil came up in Delowar’s confessional statement. A

few days later, on November 21, 2021, Nikhil was relieved of the chairman post of Buet’s industrial and production engineering department and exam-related duties.

Following the question leak in recruitment tests of five state-owned banks on November 6, 2021, the detectives have so far arrested 11 people.

Eight of them, including Delowar, gave confessional statements before

magistrates on different dates.

Photos of the question papers with answers went viral on social media even before the exam ended.

Initially, Bangladesh Bank ignored the question leak complaints and did not make any immediate inquiry.

Later, it cancelled the examination as several media outlets carried reports suggesting the question had been leaked.

LOST
I've lost my original certificate & mark sheet of
1. S.S.C Roll- Chatto-1 No.105873, SL-590736 from Cumilla Board.
2. H.S.C Roll- Ctg-1 (180)- No. 100651, Reg. No. 002623/1994-95 from Chittagong Board.
3. Bachelor of Engineering Degree from Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded, M.H. India.
A GD has been lodged at Kotwali Thana Ctg. No. 1939, Dated: 22/01/2023. **Rajesh Kanti Nath, Cell # +880-1712-770787** B-05

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Tender Notice for purchasing vehicle/s

**Social Marketing Company (SMC)**
Level 13, 33 Banani C/A, Dhaka-1213

SMC invites tender from the potential bidders for supplying the required vehicles. The Tender schedule for the procurement of vehicles is available on the SMC's website (<https://www.smc-bd.org/tenders>). Interested bidders having the relevant experience may submit their tender on or before February 12, 2023 by 3.00 pm at the tender box as stated in Tender schedule.

Sr. Manager, Procurement, SMC
Phone: +88-02-222275073-80, Ext: 1170

INVITATION FOR TENDER

Pubali Bank Limited, the largest online commercial Bank in Bangladesh is hereby inviting sealed Tenders from the eligible Tenderers, who can participate in any or all of the following tenders, but in separate envelope as defined in the tender documents of the under mentioned works as per terms & conditions stated below:


- Civil, Electrical & Networking works of our proposed **ECB Chattar Branch (New), Dhaka.**
- Civil & Electrical works of our proposed **Dhaka Medical College Collection Booth under Nazimuddin Road Branch, Dhaka.**
- Civil, Electrical & Networking works at proposed premises of our **Mohimagonj Branch, Gaibandha.**

Please visit our web site, <https://www.pubalibangla.com/tender.asp> for details. Interested Parties may purchase the Tender document by **02 February, 2023** duly filled up all requirements and submit their offer by **05 February, 2023** at **11.00 AM** which will be opened at **11.30 AM** on same day.

Dilip Kumar Paul
General Manager & Division Head

**পূবালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড**
PUBALI BANK LIMITED

Establishment & General Services Division
Head office, 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka.

**ADN Telecom Limited**
Red Crescent Concord Tower (19th Floor), 17, Mohakhali Commercial Area
Dhaka- 1212. Tel: +8802 222 261 234, IP Phone: +880961 000 8888
Fax: +8802 222 287 551 info@adnsl.net www.adntel.com.bd

In compliance with the Regulation 17(2) of the Dhaka and Chittagong Stock Exchanges (Listing) Regulations, 2015, we are pleased to publish half yearly (2nd quarter) Un-audited Financial Statements of ADN Telecom Limited as at and for the half year ended 31 December 2022 approved by the Board of Directors of the Company in its 130th Meeting held on Wednesday, 25 January 2023 at 3:00 PM. The following Financial Statements without the detailed notes/disclosures have been termed as "condensed" in line with the IAS 34.

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position As at 31 December 2022		Consolidated Statement of Profit or loss and Other Comprehensive Income (Un-audited) For the period ended on 31 December 2022				Consolidated Statement of cash flows (Un-Audited) For the period ended on 31 December 2022	
Particulars	Amount in BDT 31 December 2022	31 Dec' 2022	01 Jul to 31 Dec' 2022	01 Jul to 31 Dec' 2021	01 Dec' 2022	01 Jul to 31 Dec' 2022	
ASSETS							
Non-Current Assets	1,335,060,592	1,357,030,088					
Property, Plant and Equipment	1,246,813,267	1,264,659,194					
Goodwill	17,000,000	-					
Right of Use of Assets (ROU)	55,830,677	76,957,733					
Intangible Assets	454,609	505,121					
Investment in Associates	14,908,039	14,908,039					
Current Assets	1,355,134,748	1,198,274,156					
Investment in FDR	98,956,278	63,284,507					
Trade and Other Receivables	696,055,787	577,907,595					
Advance, Deposits and Prepayments	299,744,543	271,193,303					
Cash and Cash Equivalents	260,378,140	285,888,751					
Total Assets	2,690,141,340	2,555,304,244					
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES							
Capital & Reserves	1,848,805,735	1,781,794,077					
Share Capital	646,516,660	646,516,660					
Share Premium	413,704,659	413,704,659					
Non-Controlling Interest	2,000,000	-					
Retained Earnings	786,584,416	721,572,758					
LIABILITIES							
Non-Current Liabilities	289,033,593	276,238,157					
Long Term Loan	125,211,380	100,105,273					
Lease Liabilities	32,557,525	41,146,756					
Finance Lease	(2,696,120)	3,636,819					
Deferred Tax Liability	133,959,808	131,349,309					
Current Liabilities	552,302,011	497,272,010					
Current Portion of Long Term Loan	41,737,127	23,286,747					
Current Portion of Lease Liabilities	28,874,266	39,758,572					
Finance Lease	4,094,666	1,575,739					
Short Term Loan	17,881,480	28,474,475					
Provision and Accrued Expenses	135,184,422	133,997,507					
Provision for Workers' Participation and Welfare Fund	17,056,392	9,566,146					
Trade and Other Payables	196,011,052	211,332,990					
Provision for Tax Liability	46,199,609	28,668,503					
Dividend Payable	65,262,997	611,331					
Total Liabilities	841,335,605	773,510,167					
Total Equity and Liabilities	2,690,141,340	2,555,304,244					
Net Asset Value (NAV) Per Share	28.60	27.56					

ADN Telecom Limited
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Particulars	Amount in BDT 01 Jul to 31 Dec' 2022	01 Jul to 31 Dec' 2021	01 Dec' 2022
Net Revenue	668,888,606	576,174,731	336,885,675
Cost of Goods Sold & Services	(374,146,835)	(347,884,548)	(189,464,671)
Gross Profit	294,741,771	228,290,183	147,421,004
Operating Expenses	(89,070,305)	(82,950,190)	(46,730,772)
Administrative Expenses	(55,085,132)	(38,811,590)	(30,013,805)
Distribution and Marketing Expenses	(144,155,437)	(121,761,780)	(76,744,577)
Total Operating Expenses	(144,155,437)	(121,761,780)	(76,744,577)
Operating Profit	150,586,334	106,528,403	70,676,427
Other Non-Operating Income	4,271,069	1,947,850	2,207,524
Finance Expense	(2,437,772)	(7,859,462)	5,818,584
Provision for Workers' Participation and Welfare Fund	157,295,175	100,616,791	78,702,635
Share of profit/(loss) of associates	(7,490,246)	(4,791,276)	(3,747,745)
Profit before Income Tax	149,804,929	95,825,514	74,954,890
Provision for Tax	(17,531,106)	(12,912,120)	(9,377,798)
Deferred Tax	(2,610,499)	(3,631,771)	(1,417,364)
Total Provision for Tax	(20,141,605)	(16,543,892)	(10,795,161)
Net Profit After Tax	129,663,324	79,281,623	64,159,729
Basic Earnings Per Share (EPS)	2.01	1.23	1.00

Consolidated Statement of Changes in Equity (Un-Audited) For the period ended on 31 December 2022				
Particulars	Ordinary Share Capital	Share Premium	Retained Earnings	Non-controlling interest
Balance as at 1st July 2022	646,516,660	413,704,659	721,572,758	-
Dividend for the year 2022	-	-	(64,651,666)	-
NCI recognised during the period	-	-	-	2,000,000
Net Profit after tax for the period	-	-	129,663,324	-
Balance as at 31 December 2022	646,516,660	413,704,659	786,584,416	2,000,000
Balance as at 1st July 2021	646,516,660	413,704,659	618,589,572	-
Dividend for the year 2021	-	-	(64,651,666)	-
Net Profit after tax	-	-	79,281,623	-
Balance as at 31 December 2021	646,516,660	413,704,659	633,219,529	-

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Share Premium	413,704,659	413,704,659					
Non-Controlling Interest	2,000,000	-					
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LIABILITIES							
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Long Term Loan	125,211,380	100,105,273					
Lease Liabilities	32,557,525	41,146,756					
Finance Lease	(2,696,120)	3,636,819					
Deferred Tax Liability	133,959,808	131,349,309					
Current Liabilities							



For over a week now, authorities have blocked off an important road to build a bridge over a stream in the port city's Muradpur area. As a result, commuters have been facing many difficulties to go to Oxygen area. Many have to get off at Muradpur and go around the construction site on foot. However, as the area has no proper barriers, commuters risk falling into the ditch. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Man to die for killing two Tripura girls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chattogram court yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing two Tripura girls in Sitakunda upazila in 2018.

The death row convict is Md Abul Hossen.

Chattogram Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge Alim Ullah also fined Abul Tk 1 lakh and acquitted another accused Omar Hayat Manik, said public prosecutor Iftekhar Saimul Chowdhury.

The prosecutor said after the murder, the victims' families alleged that the two were raped before murder. However, the medical report could not confirm that.

That's why the court ordered the IGP to take strong departmental action against the IO, he said.

According to the case, Sukhloti Tripura, 13, daughter of Folin Tripura; and Chobi Rani Tripura, 15, daughter of Suman Tripura, were found dead at a house in Tripura Para on May 5, 2018.

The father of one of the victims then filed a murder case with Sitakunda Police Station accusing Abul, Manik and Rajib.

On May 30, police found Rajib's bullet-riddled body in a Sitakunda jungle.

Three-wheelers overrun Mymensingh city roads

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Traffic congestion has now become a nightmare for Mymensingh city dwellers, as battery-run auto-rickshaws, mostly unregistered, occupy almost all roads illegally.

While talking to this correspondent, many residents said they have to deal with severe traffic jams in Shambhuganj Bridge area and other important points even on weekends.

Abul Hashem, an apparel trader in Station Road area, said traffic congestion is now the norm due to the overwhelming number of auto-rickshaws and other vehicles, putting thousands of people in trouble.

To combat the huge pressure of traffic, Mymensingh City Corporation (MCC) had split three-wheelers into two categories -- on the basis of colour, red and green -- and instructed each category of vehicles to ply on alternate days.

Around two months ago, it introduced



Most of the roads in Mymensingh city remain under illegal occupation of auto-rickshaws every day, resulting in huge traffic congestion.

PHOTO: STAR

specific registration numbers for the same purpose.

But defying the instruction, most auto-rickshaws, regardless of the colour and registration number, ply daily.

Mati Mia, a tailor in Charpara area, said a huge number of unregistered

auto-rickshaws enter the city every day through different routes -- including Shambhuganj Bridge, Mymensingh-Muktagachha road, Mymensingh-Phulbaria road and Dhaka-Mymensingh highway.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

REMOVAL OF TOPSOIL

Traders ruining Habiganj cropland

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

Cutting, selling and using topsoil from cropland for different purposes is going on unabated at many places in Habiganj's Nabiganj upazila, defying laws.

This illegal activity is not only affecting fertility of the agricultural land, but is also leaving a harmful impact on the ecology and environment, said experts.

Environmentalists have demanded that the upazila administration take immediate action in this regard.

During a recent visit to Parkul, Syedpur under Aushkandi union, Haibatpur, Sultanpur, Ratanpur, Kurshi, Bajkashara under Kurshi union, Bashdor, Bausa, Rifatpur, Rustampur under Debpara union, Sataih of Ghaznaipur union, and Khagawra under Paniumda union, this correspondent excavators cutting topsoil in at least 50 places.

Unscrupulous traders involved in the business are mostly selling the soil to the brick kilns.

This correspondent also saw workers cutting soil from croplands with four to five excavators and filling up a nearby low land with those.

When asked, they said they were just workers hired to cut the topsoil.

Meanwhile, locals were also reluctant to point fingers at the perpetrators as they were politically connected.

Farmer Farhadul Islam said, "I used to get 10 maunds of paddy from my half-bigha land, but the yield has drastically fallen since I sold the topsoil to a local soil trader two years ago."



PHOTO: STAR

Defying rules, an excavator removes topsoil from a cropland at Bausa village in Habiganj's Nabiganj upazila.

According to Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, cutting of naturally created soil is completely prohibited. Moreover, changing the class of agricultural land, by cutting the surface soil, is also illegal.

Contacted, Bangladesh Paribesh

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Government bans sucker fish

BSS, Dhaka

The government has issued the final gazette notification banning Suckermouth catfish, locally known as sucker fish.

As per the directives of the president, deputy secretary of the fisheries and livestock ministry Mrinal Kanti Dey issued the notification on January 11, banning the catfish, a handout said yesterday.

As per the notification, no one can import, culture, transport, sell, supply and conserve Suckermouth catfish.

Earlier, the ministry issued a notification on September 25, 2022 to amend Section 18 of the Protection and Conservation of Fish Act 1950, aiming to ban sucker fish.

People were asked to submit their opinion before the ministry within two months if they had any objection or suggestions to this end.

Native to South America, the fish is well known for being invasive. The species is a threat to native fishes in waterbodies, as it fights for space and nutrients.

4 held over attack on 2 BU students

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Four people were arrested yesterday for attacking two students of Barishal University on Tuesday morning.

Three of the arrestees -- Alim Salehi, Reaz Mollah and Sheikh Refat Mahmud -- are current students of the university while the other, Shamim Shikdar, is a former student, said Md Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Bandar Police Station.

Mohiuddin Ahmed Sifat, one of the injured students, filed a case against seven current and former students of the university on Tuesday night.

The trio were arrested during drives in Banglabazar and Nabagram areas of the city after the case was filed, the OC added.

The complainant and arrestees are associated with rival BCL factions, campus sources said.

A group of 10-15 people entered Sher-e-Bangla Hall of the university wearing helmets around

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

**Rangamati Government College**
Rangamati Hill District
www.rangamaticollege.gov.bd

Memo No. rgc/rgcedp/325
Date : 25/01/2023

Corrigendum Notice-01

Due to unavoidable circumstances the amendment has issued in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of following package:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of Supply	Description	As per Tender Notice	As per Amendment Notice
1.	780525	Supply of Instruments of Physics, Botany and Zoology Labs and Related Services	Tender ID No.	682059	780525

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

Tushar Kanti Barua
Principal
Rangamati Government College, Rangamati
Phone: 02333372063
e-Mail: rgcchtd@gmail.com

GD-126

4 cops promoted to additional IG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four police officials with the rank of deputy inspector general have been promoted to additional inspector general.

The Public Security Division of the home ministry yesterday issued a circular in this regard, stating that the order will come into effect after they join their new posts.

The promoted officials are Jamil Ahmed, Humayun Kabir, YM Belal Rahman, and Mir Rezaul Alam.

TK 50 LAKH EMBEZZLEMENT ACC sues three BMDA staffers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday sued three officials of Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) over cheque fraud and embezzlement of over Tk 50 lakh.

The accused officials are -- GFM Hasnul Islam, 55, an assistant engineer; Matiur Rahman, 50, an assistant accountant; and Khobir Uddin, 45, a treasurer of BMDA.

Of them, only Hasnul Islam is still in service, while the other two were suspended.

ACC's Assistant Director Amir Hossain filed three cases with the commission's Rajshahi integrated district office.

In one of the cases, GFM Hasnul Islam and Khobir Uddin have been accused of embezzling Tk 37, 67,718 through cheque fraud between 2012 and 2016. They were working at BMDA's Godagari Zone-2 office in Rajshahi at that time.

Khabir Uddin alone was accused in a case of embezzling Tk 11,39,118 between 2011 and 2016, by vanishing the registrar books of collected VAT and taxes from deep tube well operators.

In the other case, Matiur Rahman was accused of embezzling Tk 1,21,322.

He embezzled the money the same way Khabir did.

Contacted, GFM Hasnul Islam, currently the assistant engineer of Mohanpur upazila, denied the allegations and claimed to be innocent.

Although the number of vehicles plying in the city has increased many folds, authorities have not undertaken extension work in the last 25 years.

SYED MAHBUBUR RAHMAN
Mymensingh traffic inspector

**Office of the Mirkadim Paurashava**
District: Munshiganj

Memo No. Mika/pau/Eng/10-45/23-11
Date: 25/01/2023

e-Tender Notice (OTM) No. 2/2022-23

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


Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of the work
1	779291	UIIP/BC/PCO/W-608	(A) Improvement of BC Road from Ramgopaiur Mosque to Rikabibazar Bridge (Ch. +00 to +770) under Mirkadim Pourashava, District: Munshiganj. (B) Improvement of BC Road from Rikabibazar Bridge to Ayna Cinema Hall (Ch.+770.00m to + 1340.00m) including RCC side Drain under Mirkadim Pourashava, District: Munshiganj.

This is 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 to the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Mohammad Ali
Executive Engineer
Mirkadim Paurashava
Munshiganj

GD-124

**বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড**
৮, রাজউক এভিনিউ, ঢাকা।
রিয়েল এস্টেট ডিপার্টমেন্ট

বাণিজ্যিক স্পেস ভাড়া বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড-এর নিম্নোক্ত ভবনসমূহের খালি স্পেস ব্যাংক/বীমা/আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠান/সরকারী/আধা-সরকারী/স্বায়ত্তশাসিত/সুপ্রতিষ্ঠিত বাণিজ্যিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট ভাড়া দেয়ার লক্ষ্যে প্রস্তাব আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে :

ক্রঃ নং	ভবনের নাম ও ঠিকানা	ভাড়াযোগ্য স্পেসের আয়তন
০১।	বিভিবিএল ভবন ৮ রাজউক এভিনিউ, হেড অফিস ঢাকা-১০০০।	লেভেল-১০ (সম্পূর্ণ অংশ) ১১২০০ বর্গফুট
		লেভেল-১২ (সম্পূর্ণ অংশ) ১১২০০ বর্গফুট
		লেভেল-১৩ (উত্তরাংশ) ৪৩২৬ বর্গফুট
০২।	বিভিবিএল ভবন-২, ১২ কারওয়ান বাজার বা/এ, ঢাকা।	লেভেল-১২ (পূর্বাংশ) ৪৫৬১ বর্গফুট
		লেভেল-১৭ (পশ্চিমাংশ) ৪৫৬১ বর্গফুট

০২। অগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠান নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তর হতে ভাড়া নেয়ার সিভিইল অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে সংগ্রহ করতে পারবেন।

(মোঃ আসাদুজ্জামান)
ডেপুটি জেনারেল ম্যানেজার
ফোন : ২২৩৩৫০৬৮৯

(৫' x ৩)



JAHAN

Reflecting on the dark side of human psyche

“I had to gain weight, which is time consuming, and our industry is not very flexible for such experiments.”

SHARMIN JOYA

Nazia Haque Orsha and Mostafizur Noor Imran will be seen together in the latest Chorki Flick, *Jahan*, which will hit the streaming platform today at 8 pm. The duo earned a lot of appreciation earlier for their performance in another Chorki project, *Shahosh*.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Orsha shared how she had to go through a drastic physical transformation for this role. “I had to gain weight, which is time consuming, and our industry is not very flexible for such experiments,” said the *Sabrina* actress.

It took her almost five months to get ready to play the titular character, Jahan. “Initially I did not want to do this role, as Jahan’s persona is very intricate, her psyche is dark and innocent at the same time. There were some subtle issues, that we had to be careful about, before bringing this character to life.”

Directed by Atiq Zaman, the women-centric plot revolves around Jahan—played by Orsha—who suffers from mental health issues. Her post-traumatic disorder becomes worse and she fails to balance her mind between reality and hallucinations. At one-point, Jahan loses her self-control, which leads to

an unprecedented event.

“Jahan has been a tough role to play, and we could not see anyone playing this character other than Orsha,” shared the director, who will be making his OTT debut with this project. “Orsha was perfect for the role, in terms of age-range and acting skills. So, despite her initial refusal, we managed to convince her and I hope the audience will know the reason why we decided to stick with her.”

According to the director, *Jahan* sheds light on mental health issues, and showcases why one should not ignore it. “This is a harsh reality. We still hide our problems, particularly the ones related to mental health. Such avoidance can lead to major accidents, or unavoidable circumstances,” shared the director, who is looking forward to his OTT debut.



The project has been produced by Methodica, a production company which had earlier produced the indie film, *Shahosh*. Founded by actor Mostafizur Noor Imran, he is also quite hopeful for this project.

“This is our first Chorki original project,” shared the *Mohanagar* famed actor. “Sharing the screen with Orsha is a treat for any actor. Since I am a reaction-dependent actor, it is very important for me to have a co-performer who reciprocates accordingly. Orsha is brilliant at her work, and she was perfect for the role of Jahan.”

The cinematography for *Jahan* has been done by Tanvir Ahsan, while the background score was handled by Jahid Nirob. The 45-minute film also features Shilpi Sarkar Apu, Naima Tasneem and Emel Haque, among others.

Kangana returns to Twitter



Bollywood actress and director Kangana Ranaut was quite an active voice on social media in 2022. The actress even got her Twitter account banned last year, due to being so outspoken. However, after having her account banned for nearly a year, the actress finally got it back yesterday.

Letting her fans and friends know of her return, Kangana took to her Twitter account, writing, “Hello everyone, it’s nice to be back here.”

Celebrities, fans, and friends flooded the comment section welcoming the *Tanu Weds Manu* star back. Tracing back to May 2022, Kangana had her account ‘permanently banned due to multiple violations’ on the social media platform, according to Twitter officials.

‘Birotihin Jatra’ starring Sabila Nur coming this Eid-ul-Fitr

Popular actress, Sabila Nur will be seen in a new avatar this Eid-ul-Fitr. Her new character, Sunaina, will be seen in a wheelchair, with a couple of books in her arms, in Anonno Emon’s upcoming drama, *Birotihin Jatra*.

Birotihin Jatra has been written by Ahmed Tawkir. The film features Sabila Nur, Saberi Alam, and Abdullah Rana, amongst others.

Sunaina is somewhat reclusive, reading book after book every day. In her wheelchair, she travels around, handing out books to the general people. Perhaps that is why many seem to be fond of her. However, this popularity causes the local chairman to fear her. Recognising her efforts, the local police honour Sunaina with an award. However, some hidden truths are unearthed at the award ceremony.



NEWS

Dhaka, Delhi seek

FROM PAGE 2

Bangladesh is the fourth or the fifth largest trade partner of India, he said, adding that there will be even more options for the countries to economically engage with each other.

“We are about to launch negotiation for the comprehensive economic productive agreement...”

“So, these are some ways we are trying to work together to meet each other’s requirements,” he explained.

Bangladesh has one of the biggest visa services that any Indian mission has anywhere in the world, he said.

“We are also working together on the international platforms... We have invited Bangladesh to be a special guest country to participate in the deliberation of the G-20.

“This is not only a reflection of the importance that we attach bilaterally to Bangladesh but also our belief that Bangladesh with its developmental experiences and socio-economic success has much to contribute to the global discussions in overcoming a particularly challenging time in our history that the global community is talking about.”

BIFS President Rashidul Alam, a valiant freedom fighter, chaired the reception.

Mahbubul Alam Hanif, joint general secretary of Awami League, Kazi Akram Uddin, member of the AL’s advisory council, and Muzzaffar Hossain Paltu, member of the AL’s advisory council, were present at the reception as special guests.

Saraswati Puja today

FROM PAGE 12

morning at temples, educational institutions and houses. Devotees will offer homage to the goddess by praying, distributing prashad among other rituals.

The students in particular seek the blessings of the goddess Saraswati in their pursuit of knowledge, art, music and culture.

On the day of Saraswati Puja, according to tradition, children are introduced to education and learning in a ritual called “Hatekhor”.

Puja will be arranged in temples across the capital including Ram Krishna Mission, Siddheswari temple, Ramna Kali Mandir and Maa Anandamayi Ashram.

The most decorative and gorgeous celebration of Saraswati Puja is usually arranged on the premises of Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University, where a huge number of people of all religions join the celebration.

Germany okays tanks

FROM PAGE 12

for Ukraine against Russia’s almost year-old invasion: providing arms that have a mainly offensive rather than defensive purpose.

“So the tank coalition is formed. Everyone who doubted this could ever happen sees now: for Ukraine and partners impossible is nothing,” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

“I call on all new partners that have Leopard 2 tanks in service to join the coalition and provide as many of them as possible,” he wrote on Twitter.

The Russian embassy in Berlin denounced Germany’s “extremely dangerous decision” which, it said, “destroys the remnants of mutual trust” and could draw Germany into the war. Scholz pledged that no such thing would happen.

Berlin’s move paves the way for pledges from other countries that field Leopards, which Germany made in the thousands and exported to allies in Nato.

Finland said it would send them, as did Poland, which has already sought Berlin’s approval. Spain and the Netherlands said they were considering it and Norway was reported to be discussing it. Britain has offered a company of 14 of its comparable Challenger tanks and France is considering sending its Leclercs.

“At a critical moment in Russia’s war, these tanks can help Ukraine defend itself, win and stand as an independent nation,” Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

Two sources in the United States said Washington would announce later yesterday that it would provide dozens of its own Abrams M1 tanks.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said he spoke with US counterpart Lloyd Austin yesterday, promising “more good news to be announced soon”. Reznikov said they discussed “further strengthening of (Ukraine’s army), including tank supplies and maintenance of the new armament.”

Moscow says supplies of modern offensive weaponry to Ukraine will only postpone what it says will be its inevitable victory. Anatoly Antonov, Russia’s ambassador in Washington, said deliveries of US battle tanks would be “another blatant provocation”.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said any US tanks sent to Ukraine would “burn like all the rest”.

In the past week, Russia has ramped up threats, including

comments from Dmitry Medvedev, an ally of President Vladimir Putin, that a nuclear state facing defeat could use nuclear weapons.

Western officials who support sending the tanks have dismissed Moscow’s threats, arguing that Russia is already waging war at full tilt and has been deterred from attacking Nato or using nuclear arms.

Last week, allies pledged billions of dollars’ worth of military aid including hundreds of armoured fighting vehicles and troop carriers. Those are seen as more effective for attacking enemy lines when used alongside tanks.

Ukraine sees the weapons as restoring its momentum in a war that has lately become a bloody, deadlocked slog.

Kyiv acknowledged yesterday its forces had withdrawn from Soledar, a small salt-mining town in the east that Russia had claimed to capture more than a week ago, its biggest gain for more than half a year.

The town is close to Bakhmut, a larger city that has been the focus of an intense Russian assault for weeks.

The Russian-installed governor of Ukraine’s Donetsk region said units of Russia’s Wagner contract militia were now moving forward inside Bakhmut, with fighting on the outskirts and in neighbourhoods recently held by Ukraine.

Reuters could not verify the situation there.

Bangladesh fall

FROM PAGE 12

in the group with a net run rate of +1.211. South Africa (+0.387) finished fourth.

The young Tigresses started the tournament on a high note, winning all three matches in the group stages, against Australia, Sri Lanka and the United States, to qualify for the Super Six.

However, Disha Biswas and Co. lost to South Africa in their opening Super Six game by five wickets, which hampered their net run rate and perhaps cost them a spot in the final four.

In their last Super Six game, Bangladesh restricted UAE to 69 for nine after 20 overs. Leg-spinner Rabeya Khan picked up three wickets while Marufa Akter took two wickets.

In reply, Bangladesh reached the target with five wickets and 10.5 overs to spare. Shorna Akter top-scored with 38 off just 19 deliveries, striking two sixes and four boundaries.

Committee there, but only on paper

FROM PAGE 12

as part of a regional agreement among five countries – India, Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The aim of the agreement is to ensure collective response in case of any major spill of hydrocarbon product being transported along shipping routes.

KM Shafiqul Kinjal, coast guard officer and supervisor of the rescue and oil removal operation, told The Daily Star that once they were informed about the spill by their patrol team, they rushed to the spot with the necessary equipment on their own.

“We did not get any instruction from any other organisations in this regard.”

Though the Coast Guard claims to have scooped up two lakh litres of oil, the SHR Navigation Company, which owns the oil tanker, tells a different story.

Mahtabur Rahman, executive director (finance and admin) of the company, told The Daily Star that only 615 litres (three barrels) out of 12.38 lakh litres of oil could be recovered.

Most of the oil had deposited into the riverbed, he apprehended.

Asked whether they had an emergency action plan approved by the DoE for tackling such spills, he said

he was not even aware that something like that exists.

Farhina Ahmed, secretary of the environment ministry and the central contact personnel of the NOCS, did not respond to calls or text messages for comments.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Sanjay Kumar Bhowmik, additional secretary (environment) of the ministry, claimed their works are ongoing.

Regarding the NOCS’s actions, he said they held a meeting recently after the Meghna oil spill.

“Though they [the NOCS] are supposed to hold meetings once every fourth months, they could not do that. But we [the ministry] are providing secretarial service to the committee. In the meantime, we have formed a separate 20-member committee to assess the damages in the Meghna.”

About the progress of the national contingency plan, which tasks the environment ministry with coordinating and mobilising resources, ensuring training and logistics, and establishing a dedicated cell to deal with such spills, he said these mechanisms could not be established yet.

“This will take time.”

Md Maruf Hossain, professor of Institute of Marine Science and

Fisheries in Chattogram University who drafted the final contingency plan, told The Daily Star that the key steps he suggested were omitted from the plan that the government gazetted.

“I suggested a Marine Pollution Control Authority, which neighbouring countries have established. We have many organisations but no action on the ground at all.”

After the massive oil spill in the Shela river near the Sundarbans in 2014, the UNESCO made 10 recommendations, including the formation of a dedicated marine authority to better manage spill incidents and strengthening of the inland vessel management, vessel spacing and navigational restrictions in line with the international practice.

With 90 percent of the country’s trade happening through the shipping routes, the coastal and marine areas of Bangladesh are always at a risk of marine accidents.

“We, however, seem to have no preparedness in that regard,” Maruf observed.

Meanwhile on Tuesday, another vessel carrying 500 tonnes of fertiliser sank in the Mongla river. And once again, the NOCS has remained ignorant and inactive.

ChatGPT bot passes US law

FROM PAGE 12

“bombed” at multiple-choice questions involving mathematics.

“In writing essays, ChatGPT displayed a strong grasp of basic legal rules and had consistently solid organization and composition,” the authors wrote.

But the bot “often struggled to spot issues when given an open-ended prompt, a core skill on law school exams”.

Officials in New York and other jurisdictions have banned the use of ChatGPT in schools, but Choi suggested it could be a valuable teaching aide.

“Overall, ChatGPT wasn’t a great law student acting alone,” he wrote on Twitter.

“But we expect that collaborating with humans, language models like ChatGPT would be very useful to

parties are also against the use of EVMs in the election.

Election commissioners had earlier said they would need the additional two lakh machines for holding polls in up to 150 constituencies with the EVMs in the next parliamentary polls.

The EC sent the proposal in October last year, as it could hold

law students taking exams and to practicing lawyers.”

And playing down the possibility of cheating, he wrote in reply to another Twitter user that two out of three markers had spotted the bot-written paper.

“(They) had a hunch and their hunch was right, because ChatGPT had perfect grammar and was somewhat repetitive,” Choi wrote.

election in 70 to 80 seats using the existing EVMs.

CEC Habibul yesterday said they planned to use EVMs in a maximum of 150 seats, subject to availability of the machine.

“We are checking quality of the existing EVMs. The decision as to how many seats gets EVMs will be made later.”

Iran slaps tit-for-tat sanctions on EU, UK

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday imposed sanctions on 34 individuals and entities from the European Union and Britain in reaction to similar measures taken over Tehran's response to months-long protests.

The measures come two days after the EU and Britain slapped another round of sanctions on Iran, which has been rocked by protests since the September 16 death of Mahsa Amini.

Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died in custody after being arrested for allegedly breaching the country's strict dress code.

The sanctions include financial measures – the blocking of accounts and transactions in Tehran's banking systems – as well as the “prohibition of visa issuance and entry” to Iran, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Tehran accuses the people and organisations of “supporting terrorism and terrorist groups, instigating and encouragement to terrorist acts and violence against Iranian people”.

It also accuses them of “interference in the domestic affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and fomenting violence and unrest”. Sanctions include 25 listed names from the EU, and nine from Britain.

France's Radio J, the group European Friends of Israel (EFI), and 22 individuals including six members of the European Parliament are among those targeted.

WEAPONS SUPPLY TO MYANMAR

Norway fund drops China, India firms

AFP, Oslo

Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's biggest, has excluded two companies from China and India for selling weapons to Myanmar, the Norwegian central bank said.

The fund said it had divested from AviChina Industry & Technology and Bharat Electronics due to the “unacceptable risk that the companies are selling weapons to a state that uses these weapons in ways that constitute serious and systematic breaches of the international rules on the conduct of hostilities”.

The fund – which was valued at 13.2 trillion kroner (\$1.3 trillion) on Wednesday – owned 0.37 percent of the Chinese group and 0.32 percent of the Indian company at the end of 2021, the most recent figures available.

It said AviChina had delivered light aeroplanes in December 2021 to Myanmar, which has been in turmoil since Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government was toppled in an army coup almost two years ago.

Bharat Electronics meanwhile delivered a remote-controlled weapons station to Myanmar in July 2021.

The decision to exclude the two companies was taken by Norway's central bank, based on a recommendation by an ethics board.

The fund, in which the Norwegian state's oil revenues are placed, is one of the biggest investors in the world with stakes in more than 9,000 companies.

It also has holdings in bonds and real estate.

It is governed by rules that prohibit it from investing in companies involved in serious human rights violations, those that manufacture “particularly inhumane” or nuclear weapons, as well as coal and tobacco products.

As a result it has previously divested from a number of companies, including Airbus, Boeing, Glencore, Lockheed Martin and Philip Morris.



A couple talks in front of a graffiti on a wall shop window, depicting a Ukrainian soldier firing a portable anti-tank missile system, in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US averted nuclear war between India, Pakistan

Claims former US secretary of state Mike Pompeo

AFP, Washington

Former US secretary of state Mike Pompeo wrote in a book published Tuesday that India and Pakistan came close to nuclear war in 2019 and that US intervention prevented escalation.

“I do not think the world properly knows just how close the India-Pakistan rivalry came to spilling over into a nuclear conflagration in February 2019,” the likely future presidential contender wrote in “Never Give an Inch,” his memoir of his time as Donald Trump's top diplomat and earlier CIA chief.

India in February 2019 broke precedent by launching airstrikes inside Pakistani territory after blaming a militant group there for a suicide bombing that killed 41 Indian paramilitary soldiers in the flashpoint Kashmir region.

Pakistan shot down an Indian warplane, capturing the pilot.

Pompeo, who was in Hanoi for a summit between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, said he was woken up with an urgent call from a senior Indian official.

“He believed the Pakistanis had begun to prepare their nuclear weapons for a strike. India, he informed me, was contemplating its own escalation,” Pompeo wrote.

“I asked him to do nothing and give us a minute to sort things out,” Pompeo said.

Pompeo said that US diplomats convinced both India and Pakistan that neither was preparing to go

nuclear.

“No other nation could have done what we did that night to avoid a horrible outcome,” Pompeo wrote.

Pompeo, who wrote that Pakistan “probably enabled” the Kashmir attack, said he spoke to “the actual leader of Pakistan,” then army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, in an allusion to the weakness of civilian governments.

Pompeo at the time publicly defended India's right to act. In his book, Pompeo spoke highly of India and, unlike officials in New Delhi, made no secret of his desire to ally with the South Asian democracy “to counteract Chinese aggression.”

India, followed by Pakistan, tested nuclear bombs in 1998, a watershed moment.


“



”

So the tank coalition is formed. Everyone who doubted this could ever happen sees now: for Ukraine and partners impossible is nothing.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister **Dmytro Kuleba** on Germany's decision to send tanks



মাওলানা ভাসানী বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

সন্তোষ, টাঙ্গাইল-১৯০২

তৃতীয় সমাবর্তন-২০২৩

সূত্র: মাতাবিশ্রবি/পিআরও/পত্রিকায় বিজ্ঞাপন প্রেরণ আদেশ-১৩/২০০৪

তারিখঃ ১১ মার্চ ১৪২৯
২৫ জানুয়ারি ২০২৩

মাওলানা ভাসানী বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের তৃতীয় সমাবর্তন আসামী ০৫ মার্চ ২০২৩ রবিবার সকাল ১০:০০ টায় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ক্যাম্পাসে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। সমাবর্তনে নিম্নে উল্লেখিত সালের গ্র্যাজুয়েট ও পদকপ্রাপ্তগণ রেজিস্ট্রেশনের মাধ্যমে অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন:

১। ২০১৪ (শুধুমাত্র একটিএনএস বিভাগ), ২০১৫ (অর্থনীতি, বিএমবি ও ফার্মেসী ব্যতীত অন্যান্য বিভাগ), ২০১৬ (বিএমবি ও ফার্মেসী ব্যতীত অন্যান্য বিভাগ), ২০১৭ (ফার্মেসী ব্যতীত অন্যান্য বিভাগ), ২০১৮ ও ২০১৯ (সকল বিভাগ) এবং ২০২০ (শুধুমাত্র ফার্মেসী বিভাগের জন্য; যেহেতু বিফার্ম প্রফেশনাল ডিগ্রি ৫ বছর মেয়াদী) সালের বিএসসি (অনার্স/ইঞ্জি.)/বিবিএ/বিএসএস (অনার্স)/বিফার্ম প্রফেশনাল ডিগ্রিপ্রাপ্তগণ।

২। ২০১৩ (শুধুমাত্র একটিএনএস বিভাগ), ২০১৪ (এফটিএনএস ও আইসিটি বিভাগ) এবং ২০১৫ (সিএসই, আইসিটি, ইএসআরএম, সিপিএস, বিজি ও একটিএনএস বিভাগ) সালের এমএস/এমএসসি (ইঞ্জি.)/এম.ইঞ্জি. ডিগ্রিপ্রাপ্তগণ।

উপরোক্তগণিত পরীক্ষাসমূহে উত্তীর্ণ গ্র্যাজুয়েট ও পদকপ্রাপ্তগণ সমাবর্তনে অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য ২৫ জানুয়ারী ২০২৩ থেকে ১৫ ফেব্রুয়ারী ২০২৩ পর্যন্ত convocation.mbstu.ac.bd ওয়েবসাইটে অথবা সশরীরে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ক্যাম্পাসে এসে রেজিস্ট্রেশন করতে পারবেন। উভয়ক্ষেত্রে পাসপোর্ট সাইজের রশ্মি ছবি (অনলাইনের জন্য JPEG ফরমেট) ও মূল/সাময়িক সনদপত্র আপলোড/জমা প্রদান করতে হবে। যে সকল গ্র্যাজুয়েটবৃন্দ সাময়িক/মূল সনদপত্র গ্রহণ করেননি, তাঁরা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সেনা-পাওনা ছাড়পত্র দাখিল সাপেক্ষে পরীক্ষা নিয়ন্ত্রক অফিসে এসে রেজিস্ট্রেশন করতে পারবেন।

সমাবর্তনের রেজিস্ট্রেশন ফিঃ

ক) শুধুমাত্র বিএসসি (অনার্স/ইঞ্জি.)/বিবিএ/বিএসএস(অনার্স)/বিফার্ম প্রফেশনাল ডিগ্রিপ্রাপ্তদের ক্ষেত্রে ৪,০০০/- (চার হাজার) টাকা।

খ) শুধুমাত্র এমএস/এমএসসি (ইঞ্জি.)/এম.ইঞ্জি. ডিগ্রিপ্রাপ্তদের ক্ষেত্রে ৪,০০০/- (চার হাজার) টাকা।

গ) বিএসসি (অনার্স/ইঞ্জি.)/বিবিএ/ বিএসএস(অনার্স)/বিফার্ম প্রফেশনাল এবং এমএস/এমএসসি (ইঞ্জি.)/এম.ইঞ্জি. ডিগ্রি প্রাপ্তদের ক্ষেত্রে একত্রে ৪,৫০০/- (চার হাজার পাঁচশত) টাকা।

ঘ) ইতোপূর্বে মূল সনদপত্র গ্রহণকারীদের ক্ষেত্রে ৩,০০০/- (তিন হাজার) টাকা।

আগামী ১৫ ফেব্রুয়ারী ২০২৩ তারিখের পর রেজিস্ট্রেশন করা যাবে না। সমাবর্তনে একজন অংশগ্রহণকারী তার সাথে সর্বোচ্চ দুইজন অতিথি (বাবা/মা/খামি/স্ত্রী) আনতে পারবেন। প্রত্যেক অতিথির জন্য অতিরিক্ত ৫০০/- (পাঁচ শত) টাকা রেজিস্ট্রেশন ফির সাথে জমা দিতে হবে।

অনলাইন রেজিস্ট্রেশনঃ যে সকল গ্র্যাজুয়েটবৃন্দ ইতিমধ্যে মূল/সাময়িক সনদপত্র গ্রহণ করেছেন, তাঁরা অনলাইনে পূর্ণাঙ্গভাবে সমাবর্তনের রেজিস্ট্রেশন সম্পন্ন করতে পারবেন। এক্ষেত্রে, গ্র্যাজুয়েটবৃন্দকে convocation.mbstu.ac.bd ওয়েবসাইটে একটি একাউন্ট তৈরি করতে হবে। অতঃপর বিভিন্ন ধাপে ব্যক্তিগত, পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত ও অতিথিদের তথ্যাবলীসহ সমাবর্তনের প্রয়োজনীয় ফি প্রদান করে রেজিস্ট্রেশন সম্পন্ন করতে হবে।

সশরীরে রেজিস্ট্রেশনঃ ২৫ জানুয়ারী ২০২৩ হতে ১৫ ফেব্রুয়ারী ২০২৩ তারিখ পর্যন্ত (বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত) সোনালী ব্যাংক লি., মাওলানা ভাসানী বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় শাখায় “মাতাবিশ্রবি ৩য় সমাবর্তন-২০২৩”, চলতি হিসাব নম্বর ৬০৩০১২০০০২৮৯; এবং অংশী ব্যাংক লি., টাঙ্গাইল শাখায় “MBSTU 3rd CONVOCATION-2023”, চলতি হিসাব নম্বর ০২০০১৯৮১০০২১-এ রেজিস্ট্রেশন ফি প্রদান করার পর প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সেনা-পাওনার ছাড়পত্রসহ পরীক্ষা নিয়ন্ত্রক অফিসে রেজিস্ট্রেশন করতে পারবেন।

আমন্ত্রণপত্র ও কন্সটিউম সঙ্গ্রহঃ আগামী ০২, ০৩ ও ০৪ মার্চ ২০২৩ প্রতিদিন সকাল ০৯:০০টা থেকে বিকাল ৪:০০টা পর্যন্ত মাওলানা ভাসানী বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সংশ্লিষ্ট বিভাগীয় অফিস হতে রেজিস্ট্রেশন ফরমের কপি অথবা/এবং টাকা জমা দেয়ার রশিদ প্রদর্শন করে আমন্ত্রণপত্র ও কন্সটিউম সঙ্গ্রহ করতে হবে। সমাবর্তনে অংশগ্রহণকারী গ্র্যাজুয়েটদের অবশ্যই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় কর্তৃক সরবরাহকৃত নির্দিষ্ট একাডেমিক কন্সটিউম পরিধান করতে হবে। সমাবর্তনের মূল অনুষ্ঠান শেষে কন্সটিউম ও সাময়িক সনদপত্রের মূলকপি স্ব স্ব বিভাগে জমা দিয়ে মূল সনদ সঙ্গ্রহ করতে হবে।

যোগাযোগঃ সমাবর্তন সংক্রান্ত যে কোন প্রয়োজনে সকাল ০৯:০০টা থেকে বিকাল ০৪:০০টা পর্যন্ত সমাবর্তন রেজিস্ট্রেশন উপ-কমিটির আহবায়ক অধ্যাপক ড. সাজ্জাদ ওয়াহিদ (মোবাইল ফোন নম্বর- ০১৫১১৭২৫৫২৩)/সদস্য-সচিব অধ্যাপক ড. মনির মোর্শেদ (মোবাইল ফোন নম্বর-০১৮১৭৪২৯২৬০)/প্রচার, জনসংযোগ ও টেকনিক্যাল উপ-কমিটির সদস্য-সচিব অধ্যাপক ড. মোঃ ফজলুল করিম (মোবাইল ফোন নম্বর-০১৭২৯০৩৪১৬৫) এবং সার্টিফিকেট উপ-কমিটির সদস্য-সচিব ড. মোঃ মোস্তাফিজুর রহমান (মোবাইল ফোন নম্বর-০১৫৩৫১৯৬৪১)-এর সাথে যোগাযোগ করা যেতে পারে। এছাড়াও সমাবর্তন সম্পর্কিত হালনাগাদ তথ্যাদি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ওয়েবসাইটে নিয়মিতভাবে প্রকাশ করা হবে।

রেজিস্ট্রার

টেলিফোন : ০২৯৯৭৭৫৩০১২

GD-125

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

পরিচালকের কার্যালয়

ডিএনসিসি ডেভিকেটেড কোভিড-১৯ হাসপাতাল, মহাখালী, ঢাকা

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স্মারক নং-ডিএনসিসি ডিএসিএ/সঙ্গ্রহ-১/২০২২-২০২৩/দরপত্র/০০২

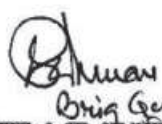
তারিখঃ- ২৬/০১/২০২৩ইং

“ উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি ”

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং- ০২/২০২২-২০২৩ অর্থ বৎসর

২০২২-২০২৩ ইং অর্থ বৎসরে ডিএনসিসি ডেভিকেটেড কোভিড-১৯ হাসপাতালে ভর্তিকৃত রোগীসহ অন্যান্য রোগীসহ চিকিৎসা সেবা প্রদানের স্বার্থে পদ্মা, এমএসআর পরিবহন (সগ্রহ ও সরবরাহ), মুদ্রা ও বাঁধাই এবং অন্যান্য যন্ত্রপাতি ও সরঞ্জামাদি সংগ্রহের নিমিত্তে দরপত্র আহবান করা হলো :

০১	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	ঃ	স্বাস্থ্য সেবা বিভাগ, স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।																				
০২	সমগ্র্যাহক সত্তার নাম	ঃ	পরিচালক, ডিএনসিসি ডেভিকেটেড কোভিড-১৯ হাসপাতাল, মহাখালী, ঢাকা।																				
০৩	সমগ্র্যাহক সত্তার জেলা	ঃ	ঢাকা।																				
০৪	সমগ্র্যাহক পদ্ধতি	ঃ	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র।																				
০৫	অর্থের উৎস	ঃ	জিওন্ট রাঞ্চস ব্যাজেট।																				
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ট্রিজারিয়ার জেনারেল এ কে এম শফিকুর রহমান, এমপিএইচ

পরিচালক

ডিএনসিসি ডেভিকেটেড কোভিড-১৯ হাসপাতাল।

GD-123

Poor choices in ADP revision

We need policies designed to reduce inflation and alleviate the foreign exchange crisis

Every year, the budget for the Annual Development Programme (ADP) is revised in line with the economic needs of the hour – and this year is no exception. According to a report by this daily, the ADP is expected to be trimmed down by about 6.1 percent to Tk 231,000 crore. However, what has come as a surprise is not the revision itself, but the way it is being done, which signals a dramatic U-turn on the government policy of fiscal austerity.

At the start of the current fiscal year, the finance division had issued details of the austerity measures to be implemented. In fact, only last month, while issuing guidelines and directives to ministries and divisions regarding formulating estimations of revised budgets, it suggested cutting expenditures in the revised budget in accordance with the prime minister's austerity directives. Yet, the fiscal coordination council has now reportedly decided to step back from austerity policies, and instead opt for an expansionary policy supposedly to revive economic activities and generate employment. It has also been decided that the government's own funds in the ADP will not be revised down. Instead, the foreign fund portion will be slashed – just like every year – by about 16.4 percent.

At a time when dwindling foreign exchange reserves have created a great deal of macroeconomic stress, we find it extremely difficult to understand this decision. Were economists and other experts consulted before embarking on this business as usual approach, instead of coming up with policies tailored to reduce inflation and alleviate the foreign exchange crisis? Reportedly, inflation averaged 8.76 percent in the first six months of the current fiscal year, and experts have warned that an expansionary policy now would only make the situation worse. More importantly, they have pointed out that this policy may not necessarily have the intended effects, since all ADP expenditures are not equally employment-generating. This becomes evident when one looks at the current fiscal year's development budget. For example, the power and energy sector is receiving the second highest proportion of funds – a large portion of which is lost to energy subsidies and capacity charges, without any opportunity to generate employment or revive the economy.

It seems obvious that the current ADP revision has been made for the same reason that it is every year – the inability to utilise these funds properly. One may recall that in the previous fiscal year, only 36 percent of the development budget was spent by the government in the first eight months. Clearly, the key issue here is one of governance. In recent years, we have seen how cost overruns and delays have become the norm when it comes to development projects. The inefficiency, corruption and sluggishness that characterised the implementation of such projects can no longer be tolerated.

Thus, while the authorities should immediately adapt any ADP revisions to suit our current economic needs, in the long run, the focus should be on the productive use of limited resources. If how the ADP is used every year remains unchanged, we are unlikely to see any changes in how we deal with economic challenges either.

Are schools suffering from ableist bias?

Authorities must ensure proper education of children with disabilities

Children with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable groups in our country. Unfortunately, often not only are they not given preferential treatment to ease their struggle, but the system is somehow designed to deprive them of opportunities that others take for granted. A recent survey, for example, has found that more than half of such children are not getting any formal education – with 65 percent of them enrolled in primary schools, and only 35 percent enrolled in secondary schools. By contrast, 70.25 percent of eligible children are enrolled in secondary education, while the net enrolment ratio for primary education is 97.42 percent, as per the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics.

Clearly, a vast number of disabled children are falling through the cracks as they try to move up the education ladder, ending their dream of building a meaningful life. Even when they do get an education, they lag behind their peers by over two years on average, according to the survey. This is despite a 2009 government directive for mainstream schools to enrol children with special needs, which many are still refusing to follow. Add to that the unfriendly infrastructure, the lack of a proper support system, and the constant discouragement and ableist slurs from the wider society. Together, they make life extremely difficult for the disabled and neuro-diverse community in the country.

Clearly, we have a long way to go in terms of ensuring a proper environment for them. As citizens, members of this community have the same rights as any other. The government is also obligated to show improvements in this regard, after having ratified a number of international agreements and treaties aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination. But such commitments haven't translated into better interventions or results given the country's centralised government mechanisms, limited financial resources, and perhaps most importantly, a lack of understanding of the potential of this community.

With proper care and supportive infrastructure, people with disabilities can be valuable members of society, contributing to the development of the country and fulfilling their potential. For that, we need a critical rethink of the existing system. Mainstream educational institutions – schools, colleges, and universities – must be willing to enrol, support and enable students with needs. The recruitment sector must also see the value in engaging them once they have graduated. Unfortunately, only one-third of disabled individuals of the working age are currently employed. The employment rate for disabled women is even worse.

This must end. The ableist worldview of the state must change. It is the responsibility of the government to take a leading role in this regard by ensuring their inclusion through making services/opportunities easily available to them. The authorities must protect the rights of this vital section of society and help them grow and thrive.

How the energy sector shut its doors to the public



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MOSHAHIDA SULTANA

Earlier this month, the five percent electricity price hike and 78.2 percent gas price hike by the Energy and Mineral Resource Division raised concerns about the accountability of the government, and consumer rights. The December 2022 amendment of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (Berc) Act 2003 empowered the government to set power and energy tariffs on its own under “special circumstances,” without a public hearing by the Berc. Before the amendment, any price hike proposals used to be considered by the Berc after a public hearing, during which residential consumers, businesspeople, bureaucrats, civil society members and rights-based organisations could express their opinions. Hence, there was at least a mechanism to invite public opinion. Now, the door has been closed to any discussion.

The amendment bill was placed in parliament on January 22 to be vetted, and will be placed in the next few days. The government is justifying the amendment by citing the present situation as an emergency period or special circumstance.

I would call this a textbook example of “regulatory capture.” George Stigler first introduced this term in the 1970s. Stigler argued that governments do not create a monopoly in industries unintentionally. Rather, they deliberately protect the interests of producers who capture the regulatory agency, and use regulations to inhibit competition. The result of such monopolies – in the name of liberalisation and competition – is often a transfer of public resources to private producers through price hikes, and at the expense of exorbitantly high social costs.

When electricity liberalisation began in the 1990s, electricity regulatory bodies were created in many countries to protect public interest. Regulatory bodies were seen as safeguards against uncontrolled market price hikes as private electricity producers intended to maximise profit. Following the global neoliberal trend, Bangladesh also established the Berc in 2003.

In the past, Berc, bestowed with the regulatory power to act in the public's interest, set the tariff in ways that may have benefitted private power producers in different ways. But there was at least a mechanism of accountability, no matter how ineffective the role it played in protecting public interest. The recent decision of taking the power away from



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Berc and empowering the Energy and Mineral Resource Division to set prices reveals that the government does not feel the need to hear the public's voice anymore. Even if they claim they care about public opinion, this is a sham statement.

Before the gas price hike in the industrial and commercial sectors, the media was flooded with the information that businesspeople were ready for a price hike because of the desperate need for gas to continue production. It may seem that the government has actually heard their voices and decided to increase gas prices so that LNG can be imported with the additional revenue. In reality, we are still in limbo about understanding how the government will pay the dollar amounts for imported LNG. Dwindling forex reserves have already brought up so many examples of our inability to pay for imported energy that it is difficult to understand how it will be used to meet essential import demands.

Because of dwindling forex reserves, not only has the import of LNG become uncertain, but so has the import of coal for Rampal and Matarbari power plants. Unless potential avenues are opened up to ensure an inflow of foreign currency, how will the government pay? The absence of new dollar-earning sources worries us. If there had been a public hearing regarding the recent gas and electricity price hikes, this question could have been discussed in public. Concerned citizens could have asked about the government's plans.

how can we ignore the potential effects of the gas price hike on the power sector, which will ultimately impact the whole population?

Gas price hikes in the power sector will eventually put further upward pressure on electricity prices. Sooner or later, residential users will be affected. Besides, existing inflation will soar as a result of increased costs of production in industries. Eventually, all will be affected. But where and to whom do we pose this question?

Berc is no longer functional, although its functionality in the past was already questionable. Despite having the capacity, why was Bapex not given the responsibility to drill wells, and why was the Russian company Gazprom appointed to construct wells instead, at a cost three times higher than what Bapex had offered? Why were “gas funds” – created with revenue generated from previous price hikes and intended to be used for the development of local gas – loaned out to import LNG? Why did the government not utilise the gas funds to extract onshore and offshore gas?

For these answers, we used to wait for public hearings where activists, politicians, experts, and the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) could question the concerned authorities.

Now, with the excuse of a crisis, the government has decided to take decisions that are more non-transparent, more controversial, and less justifiable than ever before. Slamming the door on our queries is what the government has decided to do instead, with its December 2022

crisis as its excuse, the government facilitated IPPs.

In the last three years, IPPs were paid nearly 60 percent of the capacity charges from the revenue earned from selling electricity. Similarly, when the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act 2010 (QEEES) was enacted, rental and quick rental power plants started operating by bypassing competitive bidding and selling electricity at exorbitantly high rates. Over the last 10 years, the capacity charges for private power plants has become so high that it exemplifies how private producers misused the QEEES Act to transfer public money in favour of private gains for rentals and quick rentals.

There is a sharp difference between past examples of regulatory capture (through the QEEES Act 2010 and Berc Act 2003) and the new form of regulatory capture (the December 2022 Berc Act 2003 amendment).

In previous instances of regulatory capture, preventing competition used to be justified with the excuse of crises and for “protecting the interest of the public”. The present “special circumstance” rationale does not recognise the social costs of price adjustment at all. The new form of regulatory capture only ensures producers' interests by preventing public hearings.

How can the government ensure that a handful of people will take right decisions on behalf of thousands of inflation-affected people? How will we know what is happening behind closed doors?

Special treatment for AL is the new norm



THE STREET VIEW

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Daily Star.

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The Awami League is set to hold a public rally in Rajshahi on January 29. Party leaders and activists have been taking preparations to ensure that it will be a mammoth one. As the national election is just a year away, such public rallies will basically turn into election campaign rallies. So, aspiring candidates will try to get as many bodies as possible on the streets to reflect the range of their strength and support.

In all of this, one piece of news caught my eye. A special train is set to take Awami League leaders and activists to Rajshahi from Nature to attend the rally on January 29. State Minister for Information and Communication Technology, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, told journalists that the special train will not affect the schedule of regular trains. He also said that the AL men would pay for the ride.

But another report stated that AL lawmaker Habibe Millat Munna of

Sirajganj has rented a special train of 15 coaches for the Rajshahi rally.

Can a political party – regardless of whether they are in power or in opposition – use public property to attend a party rally? And is this option available to any citizen, for any political party?

In September last year, the main opposition camp, BNP, announced divisional rallies protesting the killing of BNP men, hike of electricity and fuel prices, and to demand the release of party leader Khaleda Zia. Almost all their rallies were obstructed by the ruling party, directly and indirectly. The same thing happened when the BNP held its rally in Rajshahi. A transport strike was “called” across the entire division on the morning of December 1. Rajshahi city was practically cut off from the rest of the country.

At the time, ruling party leaders and ministers said that transport

owners and workers had enforced strikes and that they had nothing to do with them. But we also witnessed the transport strike being withdrawn soon after the BNP rally ended. We also found that mobile internet services were disrupted around the venue on the day. We saw how BNP activists were obstructed and, perhaps more importantly, how the general people

Can a political party – regardless of whether they are in power or in opposition – use public property to attend a party rally? And is this option available to any citizen, for any political party?

suffered as a consequence.

As a journalist, I covered some of the BNP rallies and found the same narrative to be true. I saw how a single-day rally turned into a three-day rally. For the BNP, there were transport strikes so that its supporters and sympathisers could not join. For the Awami League, there were arrangements of special trains so that party faithfuls could join the rally in droves.

Our political culture has taken such a turn that we take for granted that the ruling party will get some special treatment when they hold rallies, and the opposition is bound to face obstruction for doing the same. What happened centring on BNP's rallies is actually normal and, it appears, so is what's about to happen on January 29 in Rajshahi (that is, the special train for Awami League's rally).

This new normal is currently the most pressing problem in Bangladeshi politics. We used to hear the phrase “level playing field,” but when the caretaker government system was abolished following a court order, opposition parties and many civil society members said there wouldn't be a level playing field anymore. And a free and fair election would not be possible if a level playing field is not ensured. But ever since the 2014 election, the term “level playing field” appears to have evaporated from our political vocabulary, speeches, discussions, and even from rhetoric. *That* is the new normal.

As distrust, fuelled by intolerance, widens among the two major political camps, and the path towards mutual understanding is basically shunned, this new normal will push the whole nation into an abyss of political uncertainty that is far from normal.

When health(care) comes at a high price



A CLOSER
LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb
is a columnist for The Daily Star.
Her Twitter handle is
@tasneem_tayeb

TASNEEM TAYEB

Out-of-pocket (OOP) healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh has been growing at a steady pace, despite the government's decade-old promise to bring it down to 32 percent by 2032. According to Bangladesh National Health Accounts (BNHA) 1997-2020 data, from 62 percent in 2012, OOP healthcare expenditure in Bangladesh rose to 68.5 percent in 2020, which comes out to be Tk 77,734 crore and is equal to 2.8 percent of the GDP. Concerningly, data from the World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that the figure was 74 percent. Over 64 percent of this expenditure pie accounts for drugs, followed by lab fees (at 11.7 percent), and then doctors (at 10.8 percent). This indicates that primary healthcare is still not fully accessible for all. A 2021 report from the Health

these figures give critical insights into the lack of understanding of lawmakers about the sufferings of the common people. While only 5.43 percent of the total budget for FY 2022-23 had been allocated for the health sector – a consistent move by policymakers of staying below the six percent threshold in health budget allocation, despite expert suggestions that this should be around 15 percent –, much of it is being focused in the secondary and tertiary sector, facilitating specialised treatment, and building hospitals and medical colleges. But, with inflation rising and the purchasing power of people coming under significant stress, it is primary healthcare that the budget should be spent on. A WHO estimate suggested that in 2016, more than eight percent of Bangladeshis had



VISUAL: STAR

Over 64 percent of the out-of-pocket (OOP) expenditure pie accounts for drugs, followed by lab fees (at 11.7 percent), and then doctors (at 10.8 percent). This indicates that primary healthcare is still not fully accessible for all. A 2021 report from the Health Economics Unit of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare suggested that around 16.4 percent of patients did not – or could not – choose to avail healthcare services despite needing them, as OOP expenditure as percentage of the total health expenditure continued to witness an upward trend.

Economics Unit of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare suggested that around 16.4 percent of patients did not – or could not – choose to avail healthcare services despite needing them, as OOP expenditure as percentage of the total health expenditure continued to witness an upward trend. Read in the context of the government budget on health,

to spend more than one-fourth of their income on healthcare. Given the current scenario, things are only going to get tougher for the general populace to meet their medical expenses. What is unfortunate is that unethical practices of pharmaceutical companies – of pushing their products into the market by rewarding doctors for

prescribing them to the patients – is causing OOP healthcare expenditure to rise. Pharma company sales representatives are often spotted outside doctors' chambers, bearing "engagement packages," often monetary in nature, and/or high-value goods and services to encourage doctors to prescribe medicines from their respective companies to their patients. As a result, except for a few bigger healthcare facilities, most doctors prescribe specific brands of medicines. Similarly, the pharmacies are also made offers by these companies, pushing patients to buy specific brands of medicines. And given that regulation is lax in this sector, pharma companies are also able to play around with the pricing. While ordinary people are already having trouble availing much-needed medication due to the greedy nature of pharma companies, the government itself hiked the prices of 19 generic drugs from 53 brands last year, much to the shock of middle and lower-middle class consumers. Prices of essential medicines,

including paracetamol, have been increased by at least five percent. Some of the prices are almost double of what they used to be before. For instance, one paracetamol tablet now costs Tk 1.20, while its price before the hike was Tk 0.70. And to add to that, pharma companies themselves have increased the prices of many medicines on multiple occasions. Increased costs of raw materials had been cited as the reason behind the price increase by the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA). But given that people's consumption ability has decreased in recent years due to galloping inflation, was it really the right time to increase medicine prices? Under the Drugs (Control) Ordinance, 1982, the "government may, by notification in the official

gazette, fix the maximum price at which any medicine may be sold." This means that the government can set the maximum prices for all drugs. So why is it not intervening? The differing prices of various tests at different healthcare facilities also bring into question the control of the government over the cost of such tests. From a simple CBC test to an MRI scan, the prices vary between healthcare facilities, brand names, and their locations. Why don't government agencies intervene and set a standard range within which everyone can afford these tests? It is highly unfortunate that, while OOP healthcare expenditure is one of the highest in the region in Bangladesh, little is being done by the so-called regulators, policymakers, or the government to alleviate the sufferings of citizens.

It is high time authorities looked into the situation and made healthcare affordable for all. While increased budgetary allocation would be an essential component, its effective and exhaustive utilisation is also key. In the past, we have seen inadequate and misutilisation of even this meagre healthcare budget allocation. Regulators need to take a serious look into the misdeeds of the country's pharmaceutical companies and healthcare facilities, and take punitive actions, where required, so that they cannot exploit people's healthcare needs to make unethical and illegal gains. Access to affordable healthcare is a basic human right, and the relevant authorities should make sure that it is so in Bangladesh, too.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Memo No. BGC/CEDP/2022-23/13

Date: 25/01/2023

e-Tender Notice: 02/2022-2023

e-Tender is invite in the National e-Gp System portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package;

Sl. No.	Tender ID. No.	Name of Package	Last Date and Time of Tender Security Submission	Tender Closing Date & Time
01	781962	G-12: Procurement of Desktop for different Department for Bandarban Govt. College, Bandarban Hill District	13- February-2023 01:00 PM	13- February-2023 02:00 PM

This is an on line 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 13-February-2023, 1:00 PM

Further information and guideline are available in the National e-Gp System portal and from e-Gp Help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).



(Professor Md. Nuful Absar Chowdhury)

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GD- 127



Bangladesh Election Commission

Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase)

Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-8), Agargaon, Dhaka-1207

Invitation for Tenders

1	Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Election Commission.		
2	Agency	Election Commission Secretariat.		
3	Procuring entity name	Represented by Project Director, Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase), Bangladesh Election Commission.		
4	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.		
5	Invitation for	Purchasing of Microsoft System Support Software.		
6	Invitation Ref. No. & date	17.14.0000.240.07.100.2022/-265 Dated: 24 January, 2023		
KEY INFORMATION				
7	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM).		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
8	Budget and source of funds	GoB (Development Budget).		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
9	Project/program code (if applicable)	224331200		
10	Project name (if applicable)	Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase).		
11	Tender Package No.	GD-34		
12	Tender package name	Purchasing of Microsoft Support Software.		
		Date	Time	
13	Tender publication date	26 January, 2023		
14	Pre-tender meeting date and time	8 February, 2023		11:00am
15	Tender last selling date and time	22 February, 2023		04:00pm
16	Tender closing date and time	23 February, 2023		11:30am
17	Tender opening date and time	23 February, 2023		12:00pm
18	Name & address of the office(s)	Address		
Selling tender document (principal)		Assistant Director (Finance), Room No. 818, (Floor-8), Nirbachan Bhaban, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.		
No conditions apply for sale, purchase or distribution of tender documents				
19	Pre-tender meeting	Conference Room No. 721, Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-7), Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.		
20	Receiving tender document			
21	Opening tender document			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
22	Eligibility of tenderer	1. Tender shall have the legal capacity to enter into the contract under the applicable law. 2. Tenderers shall be enrolled in the relevant professional or trade organization registered in Bangladesh. 3. Tenderers shall have to fulfil its obligation/obligations to pay taxes under the provisions of laws and regulations of Bangladesh. 4. Detail information has been provided in the document.		
23	Brief description of services	Purchasing of Microsoft System Support Software (M365 F3 FUSL Sub Per User, SQL Server Enterprise Core 2019 SLng 2L, Win Server DC Core 2022 SLng 2L, System Center DC Core 2022 SLng 16L, System Center DPM 2022 SLng OSE, Visual Studio Professional 2022, Visio LTSC Professional 2021, VisualSVN Server Enterprise Multinode License 25 user + Unlimited VDFS Repositories, Server, Server Farm Switch, Network Access Control (NAC) Installation (One-time Deployment) with 3 (three) Year's Service Support, Training) As specified in the Tender Document.		
24	Price of tender document (Tk)	BDT 4000.00 (Four thousand Taka only) non-refundable.		
25	Package No.	Identification of package	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)
	GD-34	Single	Dhaka	Microsoft System Support Software Tk. 24,00,000 (Twenty-four lac Taka only) as Pay Order/Bank Guaranty.
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
26	Name of official inviting tender	Brigadier General Abul Hasnat Mohammad Sayem.		
27	Designation of official inviting tender	Project Director.		
28	Address of official inviting tender	Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase), Nirbachan Bhaban (Floor-8), Agargaon, Dhaka-1207.		
29	Contact details of official inviting tender	Telephone: 00-88-02-55007594; e-mail address: pd.idea2.bd@gmail.com		
30	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.			



Abul Hasnat Mohammad Sayem

Brigadier General

Project Director

GD-122

FEATURE

CENSORSHIP IN BOI MELA

A cause for concern?



PHOTO: STAR

This year, the concerned authorities have decided to form a taskforce that will decide which books are against the policies of the fair's organising body. KM Khalid, State Minister for Cultural Affairs, has said that the formation of the taskforce will not curb freedom of expression and free-thinking.

HRISHIK ROY

Bangla Academy has recently banned Adarsha publishing house from participating in the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela. A press release signed by Mohammad Akbar Hossain, Deputy Director of the public relations sub-division of Bangla Academy, stated that the publication was barred from having a stall on the grounds of one of their books containing political obscenity.

The press release by Bangla Academy stated that the book in question, *Bangalir Mediocrityr Shondhane* by Faham Abdus Salam, contains obscene and distasteful comments about Bengali nationalism, about the country's justice system, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his March 7 speech, and about the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Reacting to the news, Mahabub Rahman, Chief Executive Officer of Adarsha, has said to *The Daily Star*, "We do plan to take legal actions against this issue. In terms of our defence, we are unsure as to why a book which is not banned in Bangladesh can be banned from the Boi Mela. We believe that this is not justified."

As we know, the Boi Mela originated through an informal initiative by Chittaranjan Saha, the founder of Muktohdhara, who sought to celebrate the Language Movement in February of 1972. What began as a three day endeavour, with a single stall set up at the Bangla Academy's southern gate, has evolved to become an integral part of the nation's identity. It resonates with a value omnipresent in our nation's founding: freedom.

These humble origins of the Boi Mela reflect freedom in two iterations—freedom of speech as it manifests in book publishing, as well as the freedom to occupy space for these books without requiring permission from policies that can be subjective. Most importantly, its ties with our Language Movement make freedom of speech and expression an inherent aspect of the Boi Mela.

Are these recent incidents of censorship, then, an antithesis of the original spirit of Boi

Mela, or has the book fair always been at the intersection of political censorship?

"We had never come across censorship in Boi Mela back in the days. Everyone used to freely participate in the Boi Mela", Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Chowdhury of University of Dhaka tells *Daily Star* Books.

"But, in more recent times, we have seen examples of censorship when Avijit Roy and his publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan were violently murdered [in 2015]. Censorship causes disorganisation and takes away the reader's right to read freely," he added.

Publisher and editor of *Shuddhashar*, Ahmedur Rashid Chowdhury, who was attacked for publishing materials written by atheist and secular writers and is currently in exile in Norway, offers an adjacent viewpoint. Echoing how censorship takes away the reader's right to read, he says, "There was always some hidden censorship. I remember during the government of 1/11, I suspended publication of a few books."

This year, the concerned authorities have decided to form a taskforce that will decide which books are against the policies of the fair's organising body. KM Khalid, State Minister for Cultural Affairs, has said that the formation of the taskforce will not curb freedom of expression and free-thinking.

Daily Star Books wanted to find out how the taskforce plans to preserve freedom of speech in the book fair. However, Boi Mela Convener Dr AKM Muzahidul Islam declined to make any further comments about the issue concerning Adarsha, beyond what has already been explained in their press release.

And so the question remains, what defines "obscenity" in books that are banned from the book fair?

"People say that regulations can be present in dealing with obscenity. However, the bigger challenge is to define obscenity itself", commented Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Chowdhury. "Given how debatable the issue itself is, I don't think such regulations should exist".

"If anyone thinks that a particular book is wrong or that a particular book is problematic, then they should come forward and write another book or essay showing the faults of the writer in question, resulting in productive and fruitful discourse. It is futile to simply censor or ban authors", he adds.

Shuddhashar publisher Ahmedur Rashid Chowdhury points out that Bangladesh needs to formulate a national book policy, as well as a comprehensive bibliography policy, alongside guidelines for the rights of authors and publishers, for contracts, and higher standards for editing and translating.

"However, until the democratic sense of the state is awakened, it is hopeless to expect such a book policy," he warned.

For most publishing houses, including Adarsha, Boi Mela is an essential platform for annual sales, that too at a time when rising paper prices are nearly destroying the industry. Adarsha is publishing about 60 books this year, including the autobiography of Monjurul Ahsan Khan, the former President of the Communist Party of Bangladesh. There is also a book on the Liberation War by renowned journalist and freedom fighter Ajay Dasgupta.

"We will not stop the publication of books in the face of such adversities; we have also published books during the pandemic", Adarsha CEO Mahabub Rahman tells us.

A lot of these books are still stuck in the press due to the uncertainty over how many copies can now be sold. The volume of books to be published will have to be reconsidered. "I am still hopeful that Bangla Academy, being a public institution founded on the values of the language movement, will reconsider their decision and allow us to have a stall at the Boi Mela", Rahman says.

"But, even if that does not happen, we are trying to make up for it by trying to widen our distribution channels. Currently, we are trying to reach out to book shops across Bangladesh, and our marketing team has already begun to contact booksellers and is trying to get our books available in these shops within the shortest possible period of time. So, my team is prepared to deal with the situation regardless of how it turns out."

"After the assassination of Avijit Roy", Ahmedur Rashid Chowdhury recalls, "the books published by *Shuddhashar* created a huge interest among readers. This seemed to us to be a symbol of solidarity with free intellectual practice. However, the booksellers were afraid to sell our books, and this had a detrimental effect on our business. Also, the reaction of other publishers after the killing of a writer on the premises of the book fair was very disappointing."

It is more than evident how the Boi Mela has strayed farther away from its initial goal of making books and literature more accessible to the general public. With strict censorship measures—as was seen when Shrabon Prokashani was banned from the Boi Mela back in 2017—alongside the lack of subsidies or financial support offered to the struggling book trade, we are gradually witnessing an ever-shrinking space for creative and intellectual spaces to operate in the country, starting with the Boi Mela.

Hrishik Roy is an intern at *Daily Star Books*. Reach out to him at hrridibo@gmail.com.

BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

Spare us the drivel, please

Prince Harry rallies against the Paparazzi in Spare (Transworld, 2023), his new 'tell-all' memoir

SHAHRIAR SHAAMS

Fighting through Prince Harry's memoir *Spare*, one is tempted, after each paragraph, to call it quits. You can only endure so much, but perhaps it is self-hatred or the morbid curiosity of *how worse can it get* that had me waging on. If anything, I wanted to know as a fellow human the extent of the prince's pains. Under all the decorative glitz and glamour, he is apparently just like us, as he so convincingly tries to tell: he relates to Stewie from *Family Guy*. He doesn't read books. Though somehow, in Eton and later at Sandhurst, he clearly has done it through the hard work of never hitting the books, as he claims. He does his own shopping and laundry, and even though every year he "receive[s] from Pa an official clothing allowance", those are just for "suits and ties, ceremonial outfits." Truly, he is just like us.

Harry's dig at the paparazzi is the underlying theme of his life-story. It is them that the book vilifies. And perhaps it is not that wrong to do so. The tabloids are not saints after all and do deserve criticism for all their law-breaking and immorality.

Yet, Harry's appeals for us to join him in condemning these "ghouls" of the media are not reassuring. For a hundred or so pages, he rallies against the lies and trickery of the paparazzi (Paps, as he calls them) and tells us how a pap tried to blackmail him by terming him an addict. One almost starts to sympathise with the innocent prince until the next page when he casually reveals, "Of course...I had been doing cocaine around this time."

Such is his antipathy with the tabloids that, at one point, he describes them as "emboldened, more radicalised, just as young men in Iraq had been radicalised. Their mullahs were editors..." Surely, equating journalists (even the lowliest entertainment correspondents) with "radicals" is absurd, let alone the baseness of his worldview that comes to light through this uninformed comparison.

Harry is unambiguous. The paps have killed his mother, the Princess Diana. The paps have ruined his childhood, his relationships, and now they are hell-bent on ruining his marriage with Meghan Markle. The Royal family is too scared of fighting back, too used to the parasitical tabloids that bring them relevance as much as intrigue. But it is hard to understand Prince Harry's direction with his memoir. He rallies against the Paps' crude caricature of him being "lazy" and "thicko" and then proceeds to write pages upon pages on himself going to clubs and parties. He hates it that no one understands him to be the thoughtful,

intelligent person he is but then, almost without thought, writes about how he dressed up as a Nazi for Halloween or called a fellow soldier "a Paki." Both events did end up with him apologising, but one wonders to what extent he is the kind of person he is marketing himself as.

Because, if

we're honest, this

is just that: marketing.

Harry, therefore, must walk a fine line. He is the rebel Prince, but a Prince nevertheless. He is not against the monarchy (he goes ahead and even writes a high school level defence of the institution in one chapter). He writes of being impressed with the work ethic of his father and grandfather. These princes, of course, do labour away night and day with their ribbon-cutting and handshaking.

Two-thirds of the book in, Meghan arrives and Harry is smitten with her. Understandably, she is described through-out as an angel, to the point where one wonders if she is human at all. Harry, bless his heart, feels insecure because Meghan is cultured. She reads books. She has read *Eat, Pray, Love*, he says. Isn't she great?

Finding Meghan completes Harry. He may be the spare to William as heir, but he need not be sad any longer. He will have his own family. The little brother syndrome he undergoes all throughout the book, finally, does not matter anymore. But the Paps! They are to ruin him again.

But Harry makes it hard for us to take him seriously when he treats Meghan and Kate rowing over lipstick as a monumental event, or when he worries over his livelihood and in the same breath casually mentions reaching out to Rihanna, Tom Hardy, or Tyler Perry, something the common man would also relate with.

After Harry and Meghan, married with a child, are cut out of their allowance by the Prince of Wales, Harry, frustrated, starts to make sense: "After decades of being rigorously and systematically infantilized, I was now abruptly abandoned, and mocked for being immature?" It is the only time one genuinely gets him.

It is not hard to see that Harry's problems will never go away until he stops being royalty for good. He may be a literal prince but he cannot have everything he wants. Commenting on an essayist comparing the Royals to Pandas, he says "I knew as a soldier, that turning people into animals, into non-people, is the first step to mistreating them, in destroying them." But is the Prince ready to admit that one prevents this not by complaining or changing one's terms of service, but through ending, completely, the institution he belongs to and hates?

Shahriar Shaams has written & translated for SUSPECT, Adda, Six Seasons Review, Arts & Letters, and Jamini. Find him on twitter @shahriarshaams.

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

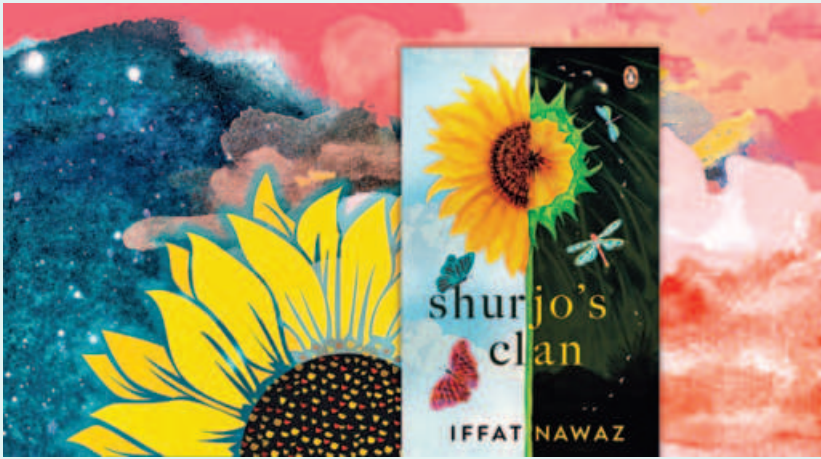
Family of feelings

Iffat Nawaz makes a heartrending debut with 'Shurjo's Clan' (Penguin India, 2023)

SABRINA FATMA AHMAD

As an 'elder millennial', I was born a full decade after the Liberation War, coming of age around the time that a military dictatorship was giving way to a nascent form of democracy. A middle-class girl, attending an English Medium school in a time before the system had figured out its curriculum for Bangladesh studies, I always felt a little rootless in my own homeland. Less 'authentic' for not having witnessed firsthand the horrors of 1971, not quite as jaded as my Gen X cousins who bought into the 'bottomless basket' analogy and fled for fairer shores.

Iffat Nawaz explores those feelings of longing and unbelonging in her debut novel, *Shurjo's Clan*. Shurjomukhi is the daughter of a freedom fighter who lost both his brothers to the war. She lives in an 'asymmetrical' house in Gendaria with her family, spending her days in the 'Known World' of everyday life, and her nights in the 'Unknown World', where her dead uncles (and maternal grandmother, who drowned) come back to share their stories and reunite with the family. Every night is a repeat of the night before, literal ghosts telling the same stories and singing the same songs. Shurjo's maternal grandparents had fled from Calcutta during the Partition, a fact that earned



DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI

the girl the racial slur of 'ghoti' from her school bullies.

Part memoir, part magical realism, this is a story about identity and the idea of home. "They had always been united by their unborn journey across the border", she writes, "but now they had developed separate identities. They looked at the blossoming cherry trees with different understandings of beauty, they interpreted the blue jay's spring songs in separate dialects. They stored and melted disappointments in their own ways."

Using magical metaphors of ghosts and fireflies, Iffat explores the many

ways in which grief and trauma impacted a whole generation, and the generations that followed. Shurjo feels the burden of a family legacy, struggling to understand her role in this narrative. The adults in her life are torn between wanting to shield her from the truth and enlightening her about things like national and familial pride. There is that desperate flight to foreign shores, the subsequent push-pull of homesickness and assimilation. Through it all, those unspoken questions: *Who am I? Where is my place?*

Despite the way it begins, the book is not another story about the Liberation

War; rather, it talks about why we cannot stop talking about it. Halfway through the novel, you realise that this is probably the only way one can tell a story like this, the only way to relate to the complexities of the emotions. The prose is poetic and heavy with the kind of language that makes great Instagram posts. Writing on the emerging generational disparities after relocation, Iffat's narrator reflects, "Even if their parents gave them names like Shurjomukhi, the children born after the liberation war were taught to bloom in the depth of night. Too young to understand these complexities, they held on tightly to the rhythms of the saddest songs when they were awake, as they slept, and even more intimately in their dreams."

Is it an entirely new story? Probably not; Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* explored some of these themes more than a decade ago. But is it a completely fresh take on the Bangladeshi diaspora? Absolutely. A wrenching, heartbreaking, but ultimately hopeful story about new ways to be Bangladeshi, this is not an easy read, but this reviewer at least, is glad she read it.

Sabrina Fatma Ahmad is a writer, journalist, Deputy Editor of MW magazine, and the founder of the *Sehri Tales* annual creativity challenge.

Performance review far from an ideal solution

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) released its list of centrally-contracted players for 2023 on 21 January with the caveat it was set to introduce a 'six-month review' clause for those with central contracts. But the BCB are yet to reveal what action may be taken if a centrally-contracted player underperforms.

News had previously surfaced that the BCB was yet to decide whether a contract would be scrapped if a players was performing below par, with the possible motive behind such a move being to keep the players on their toes and foster a competitive environment.

After a review of the past year, Mahmudul Hasan Joy and Yasir Ali were dropped from the list of centrally-contracted players while Zakir Hasan impressed enough with a debut Test ton against India to be included. This year's review will be done on a more official basis.



"We can't talk about how it will be implemented. We have done performance reviews before. That's how we make the central contracts. Yes, there will be a review after six months as has been clarified," chief selector Minhajul Abedin told The Daily Star a few days back.

Asked whether the contracts may be scrapped in case of poor performance, he said: "We can only talk about that when it happens."

Youngsters such as Shadman Islam and Mohammad Naim have failed to retain central contracts and performances in the domestic circuit remain the most viable way of making the list in the future. Joy has been in and around the national side, but it remains to be seen whether programmes with the A team and Bangla Tigers can help his case.

It was learned that the BCB would alert the players to review their performances following the review but whether just getting a talking could provide impetus for performance remains to be seen.

While it also heats up the competition for places, could the review process also put pressure on players that are already underperforming? "Why would that happen. This is not about pressure," the chief selector said. Whether a half-yearly performance review imposes any discrepancies in the system or whether it impacts the contract itself is anyone's guess for the time being.



Bangladesh players celebrate the dismissal of a UAE batter during their ICC U-19 Women's T20 World Cup fixture in Potchefstroom yesterday. The Young Tigresses won the match by five wickets, chasing down a 70-run target with 65 balls to spare. However, the effort was not enough to see them through to the last four as India and Australia advanced due to a superior run-rate. PHOTO: ICC

An American resurgence in Melbourne?

AFP, Melbourne

American men's tennis is witnessing a resurgence with an unlikely trio reaching the Australian Open quarter-finals, and they are thriving off each others' success.

Ahead of the Grand Slam, world number nine Taylor Fritz and 17th-ranked Frances Tiafoe were the names on everyone's lips after they led the United States to glory in the inaugural mixed teams United Cup.

But it has been lesser-known players Ben Shelton, JJ Wolf, Sebastian Korda and Tommy Paul who have grabbed the spotlight in a sign of renewed strength and depth in the men's game.

Two of them, former college standouts Shelton and Wolf, surged into the last 16 on their tournament debut, while Korda and the more experienced Paul have enjoyed their best Grand Slam ever.

While tennis is an individual sport, Paul said there had been an element of group mentality in Melbourne, with each of them feeding off the other.

"Absolutely. I think we see people that we've played our whole lives, kind of felt like we've been around the same level as them our whole lives, and we see them doing big things in big tournaments," said the 25-year-old. "We're like, 'OK, I can do that.'"

"At the same time I think we push each other, not just from results-wise, but when we're talking to each other, we help each other, we push each other, we want each other to do well."



"It's a good group coming up."

The last time three American men reached a Grand Slam quarter-final was the 2005 US Open, led by Andre Agassi, James Blake and Robby Ginepri.

You need to go back 23 years for the feat at Melbourne Park, when Agassi, Pete Sampras and Chris Woodruff made the grade.

Incredibly, no American man has won a Grand Slam since Andy Roddick in 2003 after the golden era of Agassi

and Sampras, as Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray dominated.

But with nine Americans now in the top 50, and Shelton and Wolf surging up the rankings, optimism is high that the glory years could be revisited.

Most of the them, who also include Jensen Brooksby, Reilly Opelka and Paris-born Maxime Cressy, are 25 or under and just starting their careers.

"I think with how many great athletes coming out of States, it was just a matter of time," said Wolf, whose penetrating forehand took him into the last 16, where he was beaten by Shelton, a 20-year-old on his first trip outside the United States.

"The level of tennis worldwide is so high I think it's kind of hard for anyone to make that next jump, but I think we all have a good chance at it now."

"Having a lot of Americans seeded and a lot of rivalries like that I think will be really good to push each other... It's good to feel like we've kind of got a team out here."

John Isner, one of the older cohort inside the top 50, said last year it would not need an American to win a Grand Slam to be able to say that men's tennis in his country was back.

"The bar has been set pretty low since 2003, probably," he said. "I think getting two guys in the top 10 would be a good starting point, then you go from there."

Paul defeated Shelton in the quarter-finals on Wednesday to become the first American man into the last four of the Australian Open since 2009.

SAFF C'ship in BFF's sights

SPORTS REPORTER

Although the details of the next edition of the SAFF Championship are yet to be ironed out, Bangladesh are thinking of preparing the national team for the regional football extravaganza by playing friendly matches during March's FIFA window.

The revelation came following a meeting between National Teams Committee chairman and BFF vice-president Kazi Nabil Ahmed and head coach Javier Cabrera yesterday, during which they discussed several aspects including the preparation of the national team and possible opponents for the friendlies.

"We discussed how we can prepare for the upcoming March window and who our opponents could be. We want to play friendly matches at home during the FIFA window to prepare the national team for the SAFF Championship, which will possibly be in June-July," Nabil told reporters after the meeting.

Since the 2009 SAFF Championship, Bangladesh have failed to make it out of the group stage five times in a row. The closest the boys in red and green got was in the 2021 SAFF Championship in Maldives, when they were on the verge of making the final after a five-team round robin phase.

However, Nepal broke their hearts by notching a come-from-behind 1-1 draw that left Bangladesh fourth in the five-team table instead of getting a taste of a first final in 16 years following a 2-0 loss to India in the 2005 final in Islamabad.

It has been learnt that the SAFF Championship is likely to be held in India from June 20.

Cabrera, who guided Bangladesh to one win, two draws and five losses during last year, was ecstatic after being handed another one-year contract.

"It was fantastic experience from beginning to the end with the Bangladesh team. The results could have been better, but we showed improvement in our performances match by match. Now our challenge and mission is to improve in terms of results," Cabrera said. "We need to compete, progress and improve and we are eager to put up a good performance in front of home crowd. We have to work on the field to get ready for the March window," Cabrera said, adding that they did not have 'any specific target'.

BD to play in Special FIDE Olympiad

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take part in the inaugural FIDE Olympiad for People with Disabilities, to be held in Belgrade from January 29.

The Bangladesh team, comprising Khorshed Alam, Syed Ejaz Husain, Bappy Sarkar and Ali Newaz Sarker will take part in the six-round Swiss-League tournament.

106 countries applied for participation, but FIDE selected only 24 countries and two teams from host nation Serbia. "FIDE will bear the air fare while the hosts will bear the cost of accommodation and food," Bangladesh Chess Federation general secretary Syed Shahabuddin Shamim informed at a press conference yesterday.

"We hope to finish between 10th and 15th in the tournament, and we believe participating will enhance Bangladesh's image since FIDE included only six countries from Asia," said Shamim.

The players will be accompanied by FIDE instructor Masudur Rahman and are scheduled to leave for Belgrade on January 28.

'Bale is so good at golf, it's not fair'

REUTERS, London

Former Real Madrid forward Gareth Bale has made no secret of his passion for golf and his game has received a ringing endorsement from one of the world's best ahead of his debut at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am in California next month.

The 33-year-old Bale ended his glittering soccer career this month leading to speculation that the Welshman might try to become a professional golfer.

Spaniard Jon Rahm got a close up view of Bale's golf game when partnering him at the Pro-Am ahead of this week's Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines and was clearly impressed.

"I told Gareth you can't be so good at professional football and golf at the same time, that doesn't seem fair," Rahm, the 2021 U.S. Open champion said. "You can't be dedicated to one thing and have this much talent for golf."

Bale's love of golf often led to criticism while he was in Madrid, especially after



once posing in front of a banner which read: 'Wales. Golf. Madrid. In that order'.

World number three Rahm said there was not much advice he could offer Bale on his golf swing.

"He didn't ask for anything, nor should he be asking, he's already good enough," the 28-year-old said. "He has no business being that good when he's a professional football player."

"When he can actually practise more, he's going to get a lot better. He got two strokes in the Pro-Am, which I think is already wrong. He should be giving strokes back to the rest of the amateurs because he is a very, very good player."

Bale has constructed three iconic golf holes -- the 17th at Sawgrass, the Postage Stamp at Royal Troon, and the 12th at Augusta -- in the back garden of his Cardiff home.

Last year the five-time Champions League winner, a two-handicap golfer, became a global ambassador for the Royal and Ancient (R&A).



Lazio midfielder Mattia Zaccagni (L) celebrates with forward Felipe Anderson after scoring his side's second goal during a 4-0 thumping of defending champions AC Milan in their Serie A fixture at the Olympic stadium in Rome on Tuesday. The win lifted the capital side to third position, a point behind Milan and 13 points adrift of leaders Napoli. PHOTO: AFP



Clears way for allies to send more

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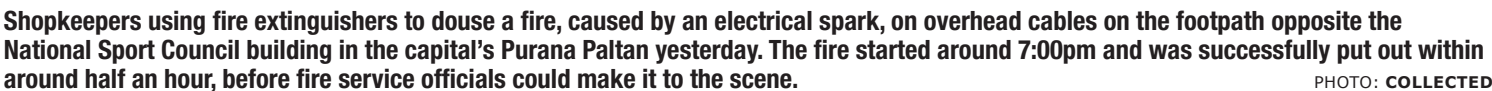


PHOTO: COLLECTED

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Trucks illegally parked on Mayor Annisul Huq Road have narrowed the street outside the Tejgaon truck stand in the capital. The Dhaka North City Corporation had set up a separate lane for rickshaws and other non-motorised vehicles, but they cannot enter the lane due to the illegal parking. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

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