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'Action will be taken against corrupt judges'



Senior US gen warns of looming war with China



Tsitsipas in way of Djokovic's historic 22nd



Paint makers hit by dollar shortage

Reserve forest defiled, defying court order

SIFAYET ULLAH

A tea company is digging a lake in the middle of a reserve forest in Fatikhkhari, Chattogram, in what environmentalists say is a crime that's causing irreparable damage to the environment.

Also, by felling hundreds of trees in the Ramgarh-Sitakunda reserved forest, the company, Halda Valley, is violating a court order to maintain status quo on the land.

On December 29, 2022, the Forest Department sued four employees of Halda at the Forest Court in Chattogram.

The complaint said Halda authorities were digging the land for the man-made lake on 135 acres of land in the Badurkhal area of the reserve forest in violation of a status quo order, according to the case statement.

The status quo order prevents parties involved in affecting change until the matter at hand is resolved. A man-made lake of 600 feet in length and 60 feet in width has been excavated, the complaint added.

During a visit to the area in December, this correspondent found an excavator by the side of the lake and large piles of logs on the banks.

A mid-level employee of the company, who requested to be unnamed for fear of losing his job, said the area was covered by a lush green forest. He said he often saw wild cats, foxes and many other animals in the place.

"None of them can be seen there anymore. I felt bad for them. I hope they fled when they started using the heavy machinery to clear the area," he said.

Mozammel Hoque Shah Chowdhury, divisional



forest officer (Chattogram north), said the company was ruthlessly encroaching on the forest lands and obstructing reforestation efforts by the department.

The 72 square kilometre Ramgarh Sitakunda reserve forest is one of the oldest and richest protected forests in the country. It is home to 25 species of mammals, 123 species of birds, eight species of reptiles and 25 species of trees, according to data from the Forest Department.

Disputes between the Forest Department and Halda began in 2003 when the Chattogram district administration leased out 1,052 acres of land to the company, mentioning it on documents as khas land.

The Forest Department officials say 134 acres of the leased-out land belonged to the reserved forest. They filed a case with a Chattogram court, seeking an amendment to the land record, saying that the land was mistakenly recorded as khas in the Bangladesh Survey (BS).

In June 2016, a court issued a status quo order on the disputed property.

According to data from the Forest Department, the land in question was recorded as forest in the Revisional Survey 1927-28.

The Calcutta gazette issued in 1893 by the then Assam-Bengal Forest Department also recorded it as forestland, said the documents.

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From left ... Fahad Ifaz, co-founder and CEO of iFarmer; Hosne Ara Jasmine, senior vice president of BJIT Group; Moynul Haque Siddiqui, chairman of Fiber@Home; Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun, minister for industries; Azmal Haque Azim, director of Digicon Technologies Limited; Sadia Haque, CEO and co-founder of ShareTrip Limited; and Reem Shamsuddoha, daughter of late Luna Shamsuddoha, founder of the Dohatec, pose for a photo at The Daily Star ICT Awards ceremony at Le Meridien in the capital yesterday. Two individuals and four IT firms were awarded for their outstanding contributions to the ICT sector in Bangladesh. PHOTO: STAR

Tech trailblazers feted

Speakers at The Daily Star ICT Awards ceremony urge stakeholders to do more so that the sector hits \$20b in exports by 2031

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four companies and two individuals were recognised at the seventh edition of The Daily Star ICT Awards yesterday for their outstanding roles in taking the sector forward.

Luna Shamsuddoha, founder of software firm Dohatec New Media, was posthumously awarded the ICT Pioneer Award, and Moynul Haque Siddiqui, chairman of Fiber@Home, was recognised as the ICT Business Person of the Year at the event organised in association with Brac Bank, Daffodil International University, and Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services.

Digicon Technologies won the ICT Solution Provider of the Year in the local market focus category and BJIT Group in the international market focus category.

Online travel aggregator ShareTrip got the Digital Commerce of the Year award and agro-tech platform iFarmer start-up of the year.

Siddiqui, Reem Shamsuddoha, daughter of Luna Shamsuddoha; Sadia Haque, co-founder of ShareTrip; Fahad Ifaz, chief executive officer of iFarmer; Hosna Ara Jasmine, BJIT's head of

finance; and Azmal Haque Azim, director of Digicon Technologies, received the awards from Industries Minister Nurul Majid Humayun at the ceremony held at Le Meridien Dhaka, the hospitality partner for the event.

"Bangladesh made a lot of progress in

A lot of initiatives were taken to develop the ICT sector, but Bangladesh could not reach its destination, said Sabur Khan, chairman of Daffodil International University.

For instance, the duties and value-added tax were withdrawn for IT products

companies, said BASIS President Russell T Ahmed, adding that 350 members of the association are exporting IT services.

If the local ICT companies are given adequate support, the sector's export target can be achieved.

"We should do an analysis of the targets we have already missed. We need to set a comprehensive and consolidated approach for our new targets," he said, adding that by 2031, the sector's exports would hit \$20 billion.

The ICT industry is constantly evolving and growing, and it is important to recognise and honour those who have made significant strides in this field, said Selim RF Hussain, managing director and CEO of Brac Bank.

This is also an exciting time for financial institutions, as they have significantly upgraded themselves with their digital-first strategies to serve the customers.

The adoption of digital banking channels; implementation of digital onboarding processes (eKYC); use of advanced analytics; development of digital products and services; and automation of back-office processes are taking place with significant momentum in the sector.

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"Bangladesh made a lot of progress in ICT, but it is still lagging behind. There is a gap between policy and implementation in the sector. We must work together to fill up the gap."

Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun Industries minister

ICT, but it is still lagging," Humayun said.

There is a gap between policy and implementation in the sector, which needs to be sorted out in consultation with the industry's stakeholders.

"We must work together to bridge the gap. I assure you from the government that we will work together," Humayun added.

25 years ago.

"Still, the country could not reach the destination. We tried to find the destination but we failed," he said, adding that those who are contributing to taking the sector forward must be recognised and feted.

Every single government digital and IT project was implemented by the local

It's a 'death march' for the BNP

Says Quader about the party's 4-day agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the BNP's four-day programme a death march, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the opposition party would face "political death" in the next general election.

"The BNP's road marches have become backward marches. I would say they are now on a march towards their death. They will certainly face political death in the next national polls, and be defeated," he added.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, made the remarks while addressing a rally in the capital's Uttara to protest the BNP's "terrorism and anarchy".

Dhaka city north unit of the ruling party organised the rally, where warm clothes were also distributed among the cold-hit people.

Hundreds of leaders and activists of AL and its associate bodies joined the programme.

Meanwhile, as part of its four-day

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BNP leaders and activists march through Uttara Badda in the capital yesterday to press home their 10-point demand, including a general election under a non-party caretaker government. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Quit now or there will be no escape

BNP warns govt during 'silent march'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At its "silent march" yesterday, the BNP once again asked the government to step down without wasting time.

Issuing a note of warning, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said if the ruling Awami League does not resign from office, its leaders will not be able to manage an escape route.

He made the remarks before inaugurating the march to press home their 10-point demand, including a general election under a non-party caretaker government.

As part of the BNP's four-day programme, its leaders and activists yesterday marched from the capital's Badda to Malibagh, around a four-kilometre journey.

The party took an hour and half to complete the march, which started around 2:30pm in front of Badda's Suvastu Nazar Valley market.

"We have initiated a new type of movement. We will compel the government to step down by waging a movement against its tyranny," Fakhrul said.

In a message to the government, he said, "Don't waste time. Hand over power to a caretaker government to pave the way for people to exercise their voting rights."

Thousands of leaders and activists of the BNP and its associate bodies took part in the programme, carrying banners, national and party flags, festoons and portraits of the party's top leaders.

Fakhrul asked the party people to march peacefully

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THE DAILY STAR ICT AWARDS 2022

Bangladesh has made great strides in the ICT sector in the last two decades thanks to the exponential growth achieved by the country's IT professionals and entrepreneurs riding on the favourable policy support. Now, nearly 2,000 IT firms and thousands of youths and IT experts are engaged in the sector to cater for local and international markets through their innovations, creativity and excellence. To raise awareness about the role of ICT in nation building and to encourage innovation and excellence among ICT talents and enterprises, The Daily Star has been recognising and celebrating extraordinary achievements by IT entrepreneurs since 2016. This year, six trailblazers in the ICT sector were honoured with The Daily Star ICT Awards 2022 for their works in the sector and their contribution to the development of country's IT sector and the society.



Sadia Haque, CEO and co-founder of ShareTrip Limited

DIGITAL COMMERCE OF THE YEAR 2022
Winner: ShareTrip Limited

Anyone planning to go for a trip looks for the best packages to explore the best destinations. ShareTrip is there to help travellers.

The online travel aggregator provides travel services through its dynamic app that allows a traveller to book flights, hotels and find suitable holiday packages around the globe.

ShareTrip has a business to business portal to serve the business travel segment.

The online platform claims to occupy 12 percent of the entire travel market.

Backed by state-owned venture Startup Bangladesh, ShareTrip is expected to grow by 2.5 times by the end of next year.

In 2014, the company started its journey as Travel Booking Bangladesh (TBBB).

In 2019, it officially rebranded TBBB to ShareTrip as an end-to-end tech-based travel solution provider.

ShareTrip has grown from a small company of three people to employing 180 plus people in Dhaka and all across the country.

The company currently has more than 24 lakh users.



Hosne Ara Jasmine, senior vice president of BJIT Group

ICT SOLUTION PROVIDER OF THE YEAR 2022 (INTERNATIONAL MARKET FOCUS)
Winner: BJIT Group

BJIT Limited began its journey in 2001 as a software solution provider founded by JM Shwakat Akbar, who moved to Bangladesh in his early 20s after getting a scholarship.

BJIT is an award-winning global IT company offering high-end IT solutions, including outsourcing, remote development, and 360 degree project management.

BJIT has 750+ skilled engineers and operating in 7 global offices located in Japan, Finland, Singapore, The USA, Sweden, Bangladesh and The Netherlands.

BJIT has worked on more than 2,000 projects, including artificial intelligence, fintech, blockchain, mechanical design and other customised services.

The company is currently working with renowned organisations such as Sony, BMW, Qualcomm, Kyocera and NTT Docomo.

BJIT continues its successful journey in providing high-quality services to the global IT industry and providing employment to hundreds of national graduates.

Leading American IT review platform Clutch gave BJIT a 5-star rating for its outstanding performance in delivering quality offshore software products across the globe.



Azmal Haque Azim, director of Digicon Technologies Limited

ICT SOLUTION PROVIDER OF THE YEAR 2022 (LOCAL MARKET FOCUS)
Winner: Digicon Technologies Limited

Digicon Technologies Ltd, an outsourcing organisation, has been working for more than 11 years in Bangladesh.

One of the leading business process outsourcing companies of Bangladesh, Digicon extends various services, including customer interaction services, back office services, skill development trainings and IT solutions.

It serves various public and private sector organisations in the fields of consumer electronics, banking and finance, healthcare, telecommunication utility and automobiles.

The company provided services for operations management of Dhaka-Chattogram highway's digital monitoring system, national emergency services, contact centre services of the land ministry, Sonali Bank, the Directorate General of Family Planning and Bangladesh Power Development Board.

The company is also the recipient of the Grameenphone's "The Service Excellence Award 2020".



Fahad Ifaz, co-founder and CEO of iFarmer,

ICT STARTUP OF THE YEAR 2022
Winner: iFarmer

iFarmer is a full-stack agriculture platform that is a one-stop solution for small holder farmers.

It facilitates retail and institutional funders to finance the farmers and enables them to access quality agri-inputs through partnerships with agri-input companies and retailers.

It also works to create better market access for the farmers by aggregating products from the farmers and selling them to institutional buyers, retailers, and wholesale markets.

Since its inception in January 2019, the company has facilitated 2.6 crore of smallholder farmers in Bangladesh.

iFarmer raised \$2.1 million in equity investment and secured a fund of \$500,000 from the United Nations.

iFarmer's revenue rose to \$47 million in 2022 from \$30,000 in 2019. It is now operating in 22 districts through a "Phygital" model.



Late Luna Shamsuddoha

ICT PIONEER
Winner: Late Luna Shamsuddoha

Late Luna Shamsuddoha was a leading software entrepreneur of Bangladesh, who breathed her last in February 2021.

The brilliant businesswoman was the chairperson of leading IT and software company Dohatec New Media, which has been developing solutions for enterprise clients in North America, Asia and Europe for over 25 years.

Luna started Dohatec New Media in 1992 along with a core team of engineering academics and professionals.

The former director of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services played an instrumental role along with Dohatec to create Bangladesh's digital public procurement platform.

Dohatec was also involved in the development of a voter enrolment solution in 2007-08.

The firm developed several e-governance projects and the electronic government procurement system that ensures transparency of government procurement.

She was also appointed as the first female chairperson of state-owned Janata Bank in 2018 as she had sound knowledge in finance and economics.



Moynul Haque Siddiqui, chairman of Fiber@Home

ICT BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR 2022
Winner: Moynul Haque Siddiqui, chairman, Fiber@Home

Prominent entrepreneur of ICT and textile sectors Moynul Haque Siddiqui completed his graduation from the business faculty of the Dhaka University in 1986.

He is founder director of Fiber@Home, a nationwide telecommunication transmission network operator that provides services to the telcos, cable television and internet service providers.

Siddiqui has been leading the Fiber@Home as managing director and chairman since 2009.

Apart from the Fiber@Home, he is also the founder of BDCOM Online Ltd, a company listed with Dhaka Stock Exchange and Chittagong Stock Exchange.

He also founded Norban Communications Ltd, an IT and telecom solutions provider.

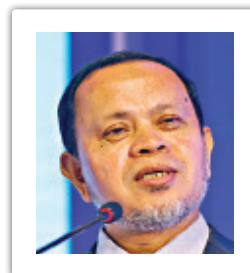
He is a founder director of Asia Pacific General Insurance Company Limited, which is also a listed company.



"ICT has empowered us with improved communication and collaboration. Our productivity and efficiency in various industries have gone up."
Selim RF Hussain,
CEO and Managing Director,
BRAC Bank Limited



"Globally, the most wonderful successes are now coming from the ICT and digital sector. ICT is also a great success story for Bangladesh and it could have been much greater."
Mahfuz Anam,
editor and publisher,
The Daily Star



"A lot of initiatives were taken to develop the ICT sector but Bangladesh could not reach its destination."
Md Sabur Khan,
chairman, Daffodil
International University



"Achieving IT export target of \$5 billion is challenging, but we will be able to pull off the target if local companies get adequate support."
Russell T Ahmed,
president, BASIS

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT Jerusalem attacks raise tensions

REUTERS, Jerusalem

The Israeli military was sending more troops into the occupied West Bank, a day after a Palestinian gunman shot dead seven people on the outskirts of Jerusalem and another shooting attack in the city yesterday wounded two people.

The attacks took place towards the end of a month of growing confrontation and follow an Israeli raid in the West Bank that killed nine Palestinians, including seven gunmen, and cross-border fire between Israel and Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new cabinet, which includes hardline nationalist parties that have called for stronger action against Palestinians and oppose Palestinian statehood, was due to meet later yesterday.

Friday's attack outside a synagogue was the deadliest in the city area since 2008. The gunman, Khair Alkam, was a 21-year-old Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem, according to police.

Alkam's father told Reuters his son had no links to any Palestinian

militant groups. He struck in an area that Israel annexed to Jerusalem after the 1967 war, a move not recognised internationally.

Police said he had tried to flee by car but was chased by officers and shot dead. Forty-two suspects, including members of the gunman's family, had been arrested, police said.

Yesterday, police said a 13-year-old boy from East Jerusalem opened fire at a group of passers-by, wounding two people, before he was shot and wounded by one of them.

That incident took place around Silwan, a Palestinian neighbourhood in East Jerusalem that lies below the Old City walls.

The attacks underlined the potential for an escalation in violence after months of clashes in the West Bank culminating in a raid in Jenin on Thursday that killed at least nine Palestinians, the deadliest such raid in years.

"Following an IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) situational assessment, it was decided to reinforce the Judea and Samaria (West Bank) Division with an additional battalion," the military said.

Reserve forest defiled, defying court order

FROM PAGE 1

But in the 1980s, the plots were mistakenly recorded as khas land in the BS, they said.

Mozammel said the district administration could lease out the land because it was wrongly listed as khas land. A reserve forest cannot be leased out unless the president changes its status of being reserved.

"We have taken legal steps and filed cases to protect the forest," he said, "Now Halda Valley is ignoring the court order and destroying the wildlife habitat."

Since 2006, the department has filed at least 21 cases accusing Halda employees of encroachment, land grabbing, felling trees and assaulting

Forest Department officials, according to court documents.

To protect biodiversity, the Cabinet on October 31, 2022, approved a proposal to extend the ban on cutting trees in the country's reserved and natural forests to 2030.

Contacted, Halda Valley Managing Director Nader Khan said, "We have the legal aspects in mind. I don't think there was anything inappropriate about digging the land."

He avoided giving a direct answer when he was reminded about the status quo order, and simply said, "I have enough documents."

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of the Bangladesh

Environmental Lawyers Association, said, "Digging the land of a reserved forest is a crime. I believe the Forest Department should try harder to stop this."

Mohammad Kamal Hossain, former professor of the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science at Chittagong University, said, "The government shouldn't have leased out the property. The Forest Department won't be able to save these historic woodlands if the administration doesn't play an active role."

Chattogram Deputy Commissioner Abul Bashar Mohammed Fakhruzzaman said whether or not the Forest Department has a legitimate claim

Tech trailblazers feted

FROM PAGE 1

Banks will continue to invest in and expand their digital banking capabilities such as greater adoption of artificial intelligence and machine learning to improve customer service, become cost-efficient and detect and prevent fraud, Hussain added.

Bangladesh has the opportunity to revolutionise by deploying IT in areas of education, health and governance, said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

"ICT is a great success story for Bangladesh, but it could have been a much bigger success story. You have done wonderful but it is not sufficient. You need to do more."

A lot of policies were made for the development of the IT sector but due to a lag in implementation, the results are not materialising.

"Now that we have the confidence, we need to work together for achieving the target of exporting IT products and services worth \$20 billion by 2031. We have the time and let us put our hearts and minds together to achieve the target," he added.

iFarmer facilitates retail and institutional funders to finance farmers, enables access to high-quality agri inputs through

partnerships with companies and retailers and creates better market access for farmers.

Fiber@Home built about 50,000km nationwide optical fibre-based transmission backbone, enabling a common connectivity platform for different service providers like mobile operators, cable TV operators and internet service providers.

Digicon Technologies is a leading outsourcing organisation in Bangladesh, with an industry-leading edge in the vertical of BPO and IT/ITES solutions.

BJIT Group has been successfully providing software solutions in the global market for more than 21 years.

In 1992, when the people of Bangladesh knew little about computers and the internet, a woman and young entrepreneur Luna founded Dohatec New Media to provide software solution designs and development services to institutions, government agencies and corporations globally.

Luna's vision and indomitable appetite for technological advancement helped the company to grow as a leading software company in Bangladesh that has also attained worldwide glory.

on the land will depend on the court decision.

When his attention was drawn to the ongoing excavation on the land, Fakhruzzaman said, "We have allocated the land to Halda Valley to plant tea sapling. Digging for a lake is illegal. I will look into the matter and take necessary action."

In a report submitted to a parliamentary body in February 2021, the Forest Department said over 1.60 lakh individuals and organisations grabbed 2.57 lakh acres of forestland across the country. Of the total grabbed land, 1.38 lakh acres of reserve forests were occupied by 88,215 individuals and organisations.

Quit now or there will be no escape

FROM PAGE 1

without responding to any provocation.

"We have so far held our all programmes peacefully and we will ensure their fall through peaceful agitations."

Terming their march a silent protest against the government, he said they will force the government to quit with the people on their side.

Protesting price hikes of daily essentials, the BNP leader said, "Prices of rice, egg, lentils, salt and other essentials have been skyrocketing. Labourers and rickshaw-pullers are not being able to lead normal lives. The situation is so grave that if anyone protests [against price hikes], they get arrested."

Slamming the government for arresting opposition activists, he said it has turned the whole country into a prison.

The leaders and workers of the BNP and its different associate bodies were seen thronging different areas of Badda since noon to join the

programme.

Dhaka North BNP Convener Amanullah Aman and Member-Secretary Aminul Haque repeatedly asked the party workers to ensure traffic is not hampered.

However, the procession caused serious traffic jams on their route, causing public sufferings.

Many commuters were seen walking to their destinations due to long tailbacks.

Meanwhile, a huge number of law enforcers were deployed from Badda to Malibagh to maintain law and order and avoid any untoward incidents.

Earlier on Thursday, the BNP announced the four-day march in the capital on January 28, 30, 31 and February 1.

Dhaka North BNP will hold a march from Gabtoli to Mirpur-10 intersection on January 31, while the Dhaka South unit will march from Jatrabari to Shyampur on January 30 and from Mugda to Malibagh on February 1.

It's a 'death march' for the BNP

FROM PAGE 1

march programme, BNP leaders and activists on the same day marched from the capital's Shahjadpur to Malibagh to press home their 10-point demand, which includes holding the next general election under a nonpartisan caretaker government.

Quader said, "The BNP's alliance is a mess and their movement will never be successful. Where is their uproar? Where is their mass upsurge? ... Awami League's roots run deep. So, there's no point in daydreaming."

The AL leader went on to say that BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir was now only making "hollow remarks and spreading lies".

"We have been compelled to reply to their remarks," he said.

AL leaders and activists will continue to take to the streets and

respond to every "conspiracy", the party general secretary added.

Meanwhile, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the next general election will be held as per the constitution.

If the BNP has trust in people, they should contest the election to test their popularity, he said.

"But the BNP will not join the election. Actually, the BNP-Jamaat doesn't want an election. They know it very well that the people will never vote them into power," he added.

Noting that AL is a party of the masses, Hanif said the party always stands by the people in their weal and woe.

The AL government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been leading the country towards development and progress, he added.

'Action will be taken against corrupt judges'

Says chief justice

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Chapainawabganj

Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique yesterday warned of taking



prompt action against judges if they are involved with corruption.

"I think any kind of corruption is like cancer. If a finger is infected with cancer, it is best to cut it off," he said.

"If any judge makes any compromise about ensuring justice, legal actions will be taken against them instantly," added the chief justice.

He was speaking as chief guest at an event organised by Chapainawabganj District Bar Association at its premises, marking its centenary.

Referring to recent incidents of boycotting courts, Foez said people will lose trust in the judiciary if such incidents continue to happen.

"With great sorrow, I have to say that lawyers in different parts of the country are boycotting courts and attacking judges personally, centring trivial matters. But I want to believe that these are isolated incidents. If such incidents recur continuously, confusion will arise among the people," he said.

Justice M Enayetur Rahim of the Appellate Division and Law Commission Member Justice ATM Fazle Kabir were present as special guests, while Chapainawabganj District and Session Judge Md Adeb Ali spoke as a guest of honour.

The event was chaired by Chapainawabganj Bar Association President Advocate Md Zobdul Hoque.

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 29

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
5:35	12:45	4:15	5:46	7:15
JAMAAT	6:10	1:15	4:30	5:50
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION				



Shomman Foundation recognised four individuals for their outstanding philanthropic work with the "Shomman Kindness Award". On behalf of National Prof Brig (retd) Abdul Malik, his daughter Prof Fazila-Tun-Nesa Malik received his "Shomman Lifetime Kindness Award" at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

One for empathy and kindness

Shomman Foundation recognises four persons with "Kindness Award"

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four distinguished individuals, including an Indian national, were recognised with the "Shomman Kindness Award" yesterday for their philanthropic acts that helped bring changes to countless lives.

Shomman Foundation, a philanthropic organisation, recognised the individuals during a ceremony at The Daily Star Centre in the capital, attended by eminent personalities from different professional backgrounds. The ceremony started with a couple of performances by a group of differently-abled children.

At the ceremony, National Prof Brig (retd) Abdul Malik was awarded the "Shomman Lifetime Kindness Award".

Prof Malik is the founding chairman of National Heart Foundation of Bangladesh. He is known as the architect of modern cardiac healthcare in Bangladesh.

Prof Malik, who is in his 90s now, could not attend the ceremony due to health-related

issues. On his behalf, his daughter Prof Fazila-Tun-Nesa Malik received the award.

Prof Fazila-Tun-Nesa said her father's motto while establishing the heart foundation in the 1970s was "service to humanity is service to God".

"You can achieve greatness and goodness through kindness and that is what he [Prof Malik] has done throughout his life," she added.

The foundation also recognised Indian national Subash Mani Singh with "Shomman Kindness Award (2020-2022)".

Subash is a social reformer in India's Darjeeling and Kalimpong, where he has been working for the distressed in the hills.

The organisers also recognised late development activist Zahin Ahmed and late physician Jogesh Chandra Ray with "Shomman Kindness Award (2018-2020)".

Zahin passed away in November 2018, after suffering from cancer and Jogesh died in November 2020 after being infected with Covid-19.

Rubaiul Murshed, founding chair of Shomman Foundation, said there was a time when people would only talk about the gross domestic product and forgot the concept of "gross happiness".

"Now, we have started to realise that GDP is not everything. We need happiness as well, which is directly linked to kindness," he added.

Quoting from a Dalai Lama verse, Valerie Ann Taylor, a globally-known philanthropist and founder of Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP), said, "Once you have a genuine sense of concern for others, there's no room for cheating, bullying or exploitation. Instead, you can be honest, truthful and transparent in your conduct."

Valerie said at CRP, one of their core values is compassion as Dalai Lama's teachings always ask people to be compassionate.

She hoped in addition to their specialities of treatment and rehabilitation such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and

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'Identify the culprit, ensure punishment'

Fifty-two eminent citizens denounce attack on Syeda Rizwana Hasan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty-two eminent citizens yesterday denounced the recent attack on Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), and urged the government to ensure justice.

In a joint statement, they called upon the government to identify and nab those behind the attacks.

"Such heinous attacks on the rights organisation is concerning and we denounce it," the citizens said in the statement.

They also placed a three-point demand, including the arrest and punishment of the perpetrators and their patrons through an impartial and fair investigation, and effective measures so that any hill and land-grabbers, and river encroachers no more dare to make such attacks.

On Thursday noon, a team from Bela was attacked, allegedly by Chattogram city ward-9 councillor Jahurul Alam Jashim and his aides, during a field visit in Chattogram's Lake City residential area, where hills were razed for a housing project, according to the statement.

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A recollection of dedication and integrity

Matiul Islam launches his second memoir



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"A hero of history - every page of his life is like that of a novel, full of stories," said actor and director Afzal Hossain, while introducing the first finance secretary of Bangladesh Md Matiul Islam.

A veteran of the Civil Service of Pakistan, the private sector of Pakistan, the government of Bangladesh, the World Bank, UNIDO, and Bangladesh's private sector, Md Matiul Islam, who is 92 years old now, launched his second memoir at a city hotel yesterday.

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ON THE HUNT FOR YOU

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- Head of Priority Banking
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Application Deadline: February 08, 2023



Tk 5 lakh to keep accused comfortable

Police SI demands money from family

STAR REPORT

To assure that an accused of a murder case would not be inconvenienced during remand, a sub-inspector of Jatrabari police station demanded Tk 5 lakh from the person's family.

SI Mukit Hossain – an investigation officer of the murder case of transport worker Imran Hossain – demanded the money from accused Uzzal Mollah's family, according to sources.

The Daily Star has obtained the audio and chat screenshots of a conversation between Mukit and the family members.

Uzzal was arrested and produced before the court for remand on Thursday, after Imran was killed on January 23 in Jatrabari's Kutubkhali area.

Popy Akter, the wife of the deceased, filed a case against Dhaka South City Corporation ward-50 councillor Masum Mollah and 22 others.

Masum, uncle-in-law of Uzzal, is currently on the run, while Uzzal is now on a three-day police remand.

In the audio conversation, Mukit, Uzzal and his mother-in-law were heard discussing the money required to keep Uzzal well taken care of. During the talk, Uzzal was heard telling the family to pay the officer.

At the time, Uzzal's wife was heard talking

about where and how to meet Mukit. Mukit was then heard saying, "You come when we call you."

The phone line was then disconnected.

Sources said Uzzal was brought to Jatrabari police station compound on Thursday at noon, where he got the scope to meet his wife and his mother-in-law.

The family then handed over around Tk 40,000 to the IO, but he demanded Tk 5 lakh, they added.

In the audio conversation, Mukit, Uzzal and his mother-in-law were heard discussing the money required to keep Uzzal well taken care of. During the talk, Uzzal was heard telling the family to pay the officer.

Asked about demanding money, Mukit told The Daily Star yesterday that it is Uzzal's family who tried to communicate with him to "keep him well" during remand.

"The claim about demanding money is baseless," he said. Mukit then asked who informed this newspaper about this.

"Once an incident happens, people try to do many things. The family wanted to meet, and I told them to follow the rules," the official added.



In order to ensure a secure environment for visitors of Boi Mela, Dhaka Metropolitan Police is installing CCTV cameras throughout Suhrawardy Udyan. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

One for empathy

FROM PAGE 3

speech and language therapy, compassion will also shine through their work.

Speaking at the ceremony, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam said the activities of Shomman Foundation are "a movement to change thyself".

He hoped that people will understand the message from the foundation's activities and instil good virtues within themselves.

Prof SK Sanyal, president of All India Harijan Sevak Sangh in New Delhi, hoped the foundation will be able to spread its activities all over Bangladesh.

He said across the region, the Covid-19 pandemic has unearthed a new layer of

kindness as many young volunteers have risked their lives to provide food to those in need, even amid the lockdown.

Sherab Dorji, second secretary at the Bhutanese Embassy in Dhaka, said his country has taken "gross national happiness" as a development philosophy, which was first articulated by the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck in the 1970s.

Since then, the idea of gross national happiness has significantly influenced economic and social policies in Bhutan, he added.

Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury, former vice-chair of Brac, said Shomman Foundation's effort to reach domestic helps, who are hard to reach, is a unique initiative.

Seven held

FROM PAGE 5

associate Billal Hossain, 36; Manjur Hossain Jiku, 38, owner of the sawmill depot; Nayeem Islam, 27; van driver Md Akash, 26, and helper Md Sumon, 30; and Farid, 38, a garment packaging worker.

A total of 26,995 pieces of garment were sent to Chattogram from a Gazipur factory for shipment in the covered van, Lt Col Abdur Rahman, commanding officer of Rab-4, told a press briefing yesterday.

Law enforcers seized the van, he added.

The Rab official said instead of taking the covered van directly to Chattogram, the driver and helper, on advice of the gang leader, parked the vehicle at the sawmill depot.

Then the gang broke the vehicle's bolt and started stealing the products.

Muhammad, Shirin Haque, Itekhazuzzaman, Shahdin Malik, and Shaheen Anam, among others.

Meanwhile, police arrested a person for allegedly throwing stones at Rizwana's car. Abu Noman, 41, was arrested from Chattogram's Bishwa Colony area yesterday.

A recollection of dedication

FROM PAGE 3

"Recollections of a Civil Servant-Turned Banker (2019-2022)", whose earlier instalment was published by Pathak Shamabesh, covers Islam's transition from civil service into the private sector, his creation of non-banking financial institutions and a credit agency, his pioneering of the first commercial bank in the private sector and his anecdotes and insights on these areas.

The book contains essays and articles that reflect on the role of public servants in good governance, the legacy of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the history of Sonali Bank's debut in 1972, and the author's role in helping reduce carbon emissions for the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB), among other milestones in the country's history. Some personal anecdotes in the books pay homage to the author's late wife, Zohra Islam, and offer glimpses of his 90th birthday.

"Past and present have been inextricably intertwined in this book," said Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad and chief

guest of the event, drawing parallels between the book's contents and that of the author's early career.

Just as this second memoir documents Islam's experiences as a bureaucrat and a banker during 2019-2022, a time of global turmoil wrought by Covid-19, so did Islam's tenure as Bangladesh's first finance secretary document the shaping up of the financial systems of a war-ravaged country, Shirin pointed out.

"I could never conceive that there would be anything about my life after I reached the age of 89. But it seems that I was grossly wrong," said Islam. Over the last four years, the author recalled that he has received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Alumni Association and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB), attended the University of Dhaka centenary as its senior-most alumnus, and celebrated the golden jubilee of Sonali Bank.

"These positions demonstrate unyielding dedication and integrity. Matul Islam's life can also be defined as the

chronological record of the past," said Shirin Sharmin.

Prof Rehman Sobhan, eminent economist and founder of Centre for Policy Dialogue, pointed out that these historic episodes recorded in the book need to be shared with the younger generations, particularly early and mid-career professionals who are working towards developing the country's current business and financial sectors.

Islam has dedicated the book to his wife, who passed away in 2021. Speaking at the ceremony, he noted that the event felt incomplete in her absence, alongside those of Brac founder Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, former finance minister AMA Muhiht, and Niloufar Manzur, the former principal of Sunbeams school.

The book launching ceremony was moderated by Afzal Hossain. Former finance secretary and former Bangladesh Bank governor Fazle Kabir, and Salman F Rahman, lawmaker and advisor to the prime minister, spoke at the event as special guests.

Tea workers worst

FROM PAGE 5

facing different kinds of discrimination from my neighbours," she added.

Around 1,400 tea workers residing in the colony live in an extremely unhygienic environment, said locals.

Another tea worker Nayon Induar, 55, said, "One day I saw a skin patch on my right great toe when I was working in the garden. A few days later, ulceration occurred on my both feet. I rushed to doctors, who diagnosed that I was infected with leprosy."

"As I am going through regular treatment, my disease is lessening day by day," he said.

Tea worker leader Sitaram Bin, also former member of Shamsheernagar union parishad in Moulvibazar, said, "Most tea garden workers are illiterate. They are not aware of leprosy. Furthermore, they have to live in a congested and unhygienic environment. That is why tea workers are among the highest infected."

GM Shiblee, chairperson

of Bangladesh Tea Association's Sylhet chapter, said, "Many tea workers, who have been infected with leprosy, don't want to pursue medicine and treatment properly due to social stigma and superstitions. Thus, the disease is spreading among them."

Civil Surgeon Chowdhury Jalal Uddin Murshud said malnutrition and unhygienic living conditions are the major reasons for the high rate of leprosy infection in Moulvibazar.

Dr SM Shahreer, civil surgeon in Sylhet, said there were 38 new leprosy patients in Sylhet in 2020, 93 in 2021 and 91 in 2022. There are a total of 144 new leprosy patients in Sylhet's tea gardens out of the total of 222 infected patients.

"We are working to control the disease in this district," he added.

Contacted, Dr Mohammad Noore Alom Shamim, assistant director of DGHS's Sylhet divisional office, and echoed him.

Identify the culprit

FROM PAGE 3

The team, along with journalists, first visited the housing project and later visited Kalrichara Khal, a waterbody filled up by grabbers.

"The attackers were carrying blunt weapons. Earlier, they blocked the vehicle carrying the team," read the statement.

Signatories of the joint statement include Sultana Kamal, Wahiduddin Mahmud, Hossain Zillur Rahman, Rasheda K Chowdhury, Khushi Kabir, Hamida Hossain, Ali Imam Majumder, ZI Khan Panna, Debapriya Bhattacharya, Rana Dasgupta, Shamsul Huda, Zafullah Chowdhury, Anu

Muhammad, Shirin Haque, Itekhazuzzaman, Shahdin Malik, and Shaheen Anam, among others.

Meanwhile, police arrested a person for allegedly throwing stones at Rizwana's car. Abu Noman, 41, was arrested from Chattogram's Bishwa Colony area yesterday.

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43rd Death Anniversary

29th January is the 43rd death anniversary of Advocate Zahiruddin, the father of Ex-banker Shabbir Ahmed Imtiaz. Zahiruddin was a former Central Education Minister, MNA, MP, Ambassador and a close associate and defence lawyer of Bangabandhu in the Agartala conspiracy case. He was also the general secretary of the Awami League and a recipient of the Swadhinota Dibash Puroshkar. Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for the salvation of his soul. D-10

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(SECURITY PRINTING SECTION)
HEAD OFFICE, DHAKA.

NOTICE FOR ENLISTMENT OF MICR SECURITY PRINTING COMPANIES

Applications are invited from reputed Bangladeshi Sole Proprietorship Firms, Partnership Firms, Private Limited Companies having business experiences in the fields of MICR Security Instrument Printing. The companies, who have been providing printing & supply of MICR Security instrument in any two reputed banks, may apply for enlistment as vendors. This enlistment will be effective for two-year from February 2023 for our Head Office.

The application has to be collected and dropped into the Tender Box kept at the Establishment and General Services Division, 12th floor of Head Office premises of the Bank within 7(seven) days from publication of this advertisement.

The suppliers, who are already enlisted with us, do not need to apply further but they should send a "Request Letter" mentioning their interest to continue working with the Bank.

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Mohammad Liton Miah FCA
GM, Division Head & CFO

VANGUARD AMB ID FINANCE MUTUAL FUND ONE				
Trustee: Bangladesh General Insurance Company Limited		Asset Manager: Vanguard Asset Management Limited		
As per rule 79 of Securities and Exchange Commission (Mutual Fund) Rule, 2009. The unaudited financial statements of Vanguard AMB ID Finance Mutual Fund One for 1st Quarter (Q1) ended on 31 December 2022 are reported below:				
1ST QUARTER (Q1) FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (PROVISIONAL & UNAUDITED)				
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION				
	31.12.2022	30.09.2022		
	Taka	Taka		
Assets				
Investments in securities at market	1,693,090,780	1,094,255,766		
Income and retention expenses	10,513,517	13,404,896		
Other receivables	13,886,704	8,663,795		
Deposit and prepayments	2,221,515	2,514,227		
Cash and cash equivalents	109,886,519	193,628,569		
	1,836,596,535	1,312,467,253		
Liabilities				
Accounts payable	6,799,937	6,099,840		
Dividend Tax payable	8,226,506	-		
Unclaimed dividend account	400,345	312,101		
	15,426,788	6,411,941		
Net Asset	1,821,169,747	1,306,055,312		
Equity				
Capital fund	1,892,208,000	1,892,208,000		
Unrealized gain	(66,038,253)	(86,152,688)		
Retained earnings	(105,000,000)	(180,050,600)		
	1,721,169,747	1,625,994,712		
Net Asset Value (NAV) Per Unit	18.97	17.30		
(-/- Cost)	18.21	17.62		
(-/- Market Price)	18.21	17.62		
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS				
FOR THE PERIOD FROM 01 OCTOBER 2022 TO 31 DECEMBER 2022				
	01.10.2022 to 31.12.2022	01.10.2021 to 31.12.2021		
	Taka	Taka		
A. Cash Flows from Operating Activities				
Interest income realized in cash	3,763,114	3,376,430		
Dividend income – received in cash	7,460,272	3,704,154		
Deposit & prepayments	(597,943)	(859,521)		
Payment made for expenses	(4,425,192)	(5,128,843)		
	6,200,251	1,192,219		
B. Cash Flows from Investing Activities				
Acquisition of shares from secondary market	(85,392,047)	(28,127,742)		
Investment in IPO	(3,611,000)	(2,107,820)		
Investment in IPO refund	6,162,310	-		
Proceeds from sale of shares in secondary market	-	7,794,167		
	(82,840,737)	(22,441,395)		
C. Cash Flows from Financing Activities				
Dividend paid	(83,745,253)	(139,603,230)		
	(83,745,253)	(139,603,230)		
Net Cash Flows (A+B+C)	(80,385,239)	(60,852,395)		
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	193,628,569	272,043,191		
Cash & Cash equivalents at the end of the period	113,243,330	211,190,796		
Net operating cash flows per unit during the period	8.86	0.91		
STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME				
FOR THE PERIOD FROM 01 OCTOBER 2022 TO 31 DECEMBER 2022				
	01.10.2022 to 31.12.2022	01.10.2021 to 31.12.2021		
	Taka	Taka		
Income				
Net gain on sale of marketable securities	-	8,09,443		
Dividend income	14,927,051	13,708,560		
Income from Dividend Tax return (Excess 5% Tax)	283,750	-		
Interest income	2,093,918	2,504,681		
Profit Income from Bond	1,168,000	-		
	18,372,719	14,212,684		
Expenditure				
Management fee	4,032,418	4,507,806		
Amortization of issue and retention expenses	891,469	891,469		
Trustee fee	382,419	384,959		
BEEC annual fee	305,053	303,960		
Commodities fee	122,713	131,462		
GMPL – annual fee, commission & direct and tax charges	43,660	47,480		
ISD annual fee	128,035	128,285		
CSE annual fee	128,205	128,285		
ISD – book building and IPO application fee	8,000	15,000		
Publication & others fee	117,400	231,650		
Bank charges & other duty	117,550	56,227		
	5,287,822	7,645,187		
Net Income Before Tax	13,084,897	6,567,597		
Less: Income Tax Expenses	2,736,558	-		
Profit before provision for the period	10,348,339	6,567,597		
Add: Right bank/ (charge) of unrealized loss	9,331,735	11,899,577		
Net profit for the period	19,680,074	18,467,174		
Total Comprehensive Income	19,680,074	18,467,174		
Earning Per Unit during the period	0.89	0.81		
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY				
FOR THE PERIOD FROM 01 OCTOBER 2022 TO 31 DECEMBER 2022				
Particulars	Capital Fund	Unrealized gain	Retained Earnings	Total Equity
Balance as at 01 October 2021	1,892,208,000	-	247,052,566	2,139,260,566
Dividend declared	-	(156,083,880)	(156,083,880)	
Unrealized Gain	-	36,884,750	94,404,320	131,289,070
Net profit for the period	-	11,899,577	11,899,577	23,799,154
Balance as at 31 December 2021	1,892,208,000	32,800,870	185,162,983	2,108,171,853
Balance as at 01 October 2022	1,892,208,000	25,136,168	848,505,576	2,765,849,744
Dividend declared	-	(82,163,840)	(82,163,840)	
Unrealized Gain	-	852,145	852,145	1,704,290
Net profit for the period	-	9,331,735	9,331,735	19,680,074
Balance as at 31 December 2022	1,892,208,000	25,989,543	966,673,511	2,884,871,054
Break Down of Investment (Tk.) as at 31 December 2022:				
listed securities	Cost Price	Market Price	S/II, Member Trustee	
	924,088,185	962,738,211	Bangladesh General Insurance Company Ltd	
Open ended mutual	30,000,000	31,500,000	S/D, Managing Director & CEO	
Pre-IPO placement	40,000,000	40,000,000	Vanguard Asset Management Limited	
listed bond	20,000,000	17,000,000		
	1,014,088,185	1,051,238,211		

WORLD LEPROSY DAY

Tea workers worst-affected

MINTU DESHWARA

Tea garden workers in the country's northeastern region are at high risk of developing leprosy due to their unhygienic living conditions, malnutrition and lack of awareness.

Around 98 percent of leprosy-infected people in Moulvibazar, 62 percent in Sylhet and 72 percent in Habiganj, belong to tea worker communities, according to district civil surgeons.

The division includes four districts — Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Habiganj and Sunamganj.

Of them, Moulvibazar ranks top in leprosy-affected districts, with 660 patients currently, said the district's Civil Surgeon Chowdhury Jalal Uddin Murshed.

Amid such a situation, Bangladesh, along with other countries across the world, is going to observe World Leprosy Day today.

Tea worker Sagor Moin Bauri, 40, who lives at a tea garden colony in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila, has been suffering from leprosy for around five years.

"One day around five years ago, I found some hypopigmented skin patches on my face and body. It gradually spread further," she said.

"Initially, I did not get diagnosed as I was not aware of the disease. After diagnosis, doctors told me that I got infected with leprosy. I'm currently undergoing treatment."

"Since news spread in our colony, I'm

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



The regional round of season 3 of The Daily Star Newspaper Olympiad was held at University of Global Village in Barisal yesterday. A total of 398 students from Barisal participated in the event. Of them, 50 participants will be selected for the finale in Dhaka on March 20, where they will compete with 1,200 participants from across the country.

PHOTO: STAR

HIGHWAY ROBBERY Seven held for stealing garment worth Tk 5cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday arrested seven members of a highway-theft gang and recovered exportable garments worth Tk 5 crore from Langalbandh area in Narayanganj.

The elite force arrested them while they were stealing garment products from a covered van parked at a sawmill depot near Dhaka-Chattoagram highway.

The arrestees are Ripon alias Chhoto Ripon, 43, leader of the gang; his key

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Advertisement for PCH (Public Call Handling) services. It includes contact information for the Bangladesh government, a list of services with fees, and detailed instructions for applying via SMS and online. It also features a QR code and a signature.

'Self and Others': Rumky's mysterious and magical artistry

"The mood Rumky has created by the lines and colours is a mysterious and magical combination of buoyancy and sobriety."

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

The opening ceremony for Hasura Akther Rumky's first solo exhibition, *Self and Others*, took place at Alliance Francaise de Dhaka (AFD) on Friday, January 27.

The exhibition was inaugurated by prominent artist Shahabuddin Ahmed and actress Shomi Kaiser. After giving everyone a warm welcome, the guests opened the event with their individual speeches.

Shomi Kaiser spoke about how Rumky had to go against her parents' wishes to pursue a higher education in fine arts. After this, a short musical performance took place, after which Shahabuddin Ahmed cheered for the artist in a joyous voice. With the inauguration ceremony over, the exhibition was underway.

Hasura Akther Rumky



Legendary artist Shahabuddin Ahmed observes a painting by Rumky

PHOTOS: COURTESY

and bagging numerous awards, she set out to hold her own solo exhibition.

The Galerie of AFD was adorned with Rumky's portrait collection, most of which encapsulates her work over the last three years. She particularly enjoys painting portraits and has shown her skills through mediums of pastel, charcoal, acrylic, and oil.

The curator of the exhibition, Zahangir Alom said, "The mood Rumky has created by the lines and colours is a mysterious and magical combination of buoyancy and sobriety."

Upon asking about her paintings that feature rickshaw-pullers, the artist shares how rickshaws were the only mode of transport on her way to work and back home, becoming something of a constant in her life. So, whatever she observed during

those rickshaw-rides came alive through her art, such as the series 'Rickshaw Puller', 'Napping' and many more.

Due to her love for textures, Rumky has produced acrylic and mixed-media pieces. 'Fancy in the Twilight-1,2', 'Interlude-1,2',



'Pigeons in the Blue' portray the desired freedom of women that is not yet fully accepted by the society. The portrait of her mother, which is eye-soothing to say the least, shows the warmth

of affection in her heart. Rumky has also painted the image of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with much elegance.

Rumky's interest in folk motifs motivated her to do portraits of Bauls, especially well-known figures like Paban Das Baul and Parvathy Baul. The part and parcel of Bengali culture, Rabindranath Tagore's images are also seen on Rumky's canvas, accompanied by precise strokes and remarkable accuracy. Exploring the concept of duality in human souls, Rumky has created self-portraits where two of her images interlock gracefully.

The best part of this exhibition has been Rumky's brilliant versatility as an artist. AFD will run this open-for-all exhibition till February 1.



'Myself Allen Swapon' to hit Chorki soon

Shihab Shaheen's series *Syndicate* starring Afran Nisho, Nazifa Tushi, Tasnia Farin and Nasir Uddin Khan, was much loved by the audience. One of its character 'Allen Swapon' and his quirky dialogues became viral all-over social media.

Nasir Uddin Khan, who played the character of 'Allen Swapon' caught people's attention with his catchy punchlines in his native Chittagong-dialect. Due to the craze around Allen's character, Shihab Shaheen has decided to make its spin-off *Myself Allen Swapon* for Chorki.

The spin-off will star Nasir Uddin Khan, Rafiath Rashid Mithila, Sumon Anowar and Abdullah Al Sentu among others.

Nepal International Film Festival to screen three Bangladeshi films

For the sixth time, the Nepal International Film Festival is going to kick-off on March 16. The event is going to take place in Kathmandu.

Three Bangladeshi films that will be featured in the festival are—Jibon Shahadat's *Nameplate* in the 'Short Live Action' category; Noor Imran Mithu's *Patalghar* and Khandaker Sumon's *Saatao*, both of which will be competing in the 'World Panorama' category.

The festival will showcase 95 films, which were selected from a total of 250 submissions. In total, 60 countries across the world, participated by submitting films for the festival. The festival will conclude on March 20.



completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees from the department of Oriental Art, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka. After taking part in several group exhibitions

NEWS

Indian foreign

FROM PAGE 12

"My office will be able to tell you about the Indian Foreign Secretary's visit schedule, but we have various issues of bilateral relationship, including Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and of course G20 summit," Foreign Minister Momen told this correspondent last night.

"India has invited us to attend the G20 summit and we are honoured for this. India wants to be the voice of the global south and wants to take us onboard. We are very happy," he said.

The Group of Twenty or G20 is an economic cooperation which was formed on 26th September 1999. The G20 cooperation has 20 members -- the European Union (EU) and 19 other countries.

The G20 members include Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, Russia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, the US, the UK, the EU and Turkey. They cover more than 75 percent of global trade, 80 percent of the world's GDP and more than 60 percent of the planet's population.

The main agenda of the G20 is to ensure global financial stability and sustain sovereign debt.

Biden names new White House chief of staff

AFP, Washington

President Joe Biden on Friday named his former top Covid-19 aide Jeff Zients to White House chief of staff -- one of the most crucial positions in an administration gearing up for a likely re-election campaign.

Zients replaces Ron Klain, who saw Biden through the first two years of his term in the post, arguably the most powerful behind-the-scenes job in any US administration. The swap will take place on February 8, a day after Biden delivers his State of the Union address to Congress.

The departure of Klain, who has worked with Biden throughout his decades-long Washington career -- from senator to vice president, then victor over Donald Trump in 2020 -- will deprive the 80-year-old president of an especially close, trusted aide.

Slum women left to fend for

FROM PAGE 12

complications, nutrition imbalance, and delivery or family planning difficulties. Missing vaccines can lead to other health issues."

Pregnant mothers are also recommended to take iron and folic acid, calcium carbonate, and vitamin B supplements with a diet rich in nutrition-dense foods.

However, six-month-pregnant Rina, from Kalyanpur slum, said, "Sometimes, we have to skip meals. How will we afford milk, fruits or supplements?"

The government's Maternal and Child Health Training Centre provides free ANC and prenatal vitamins for the underprivileged, but most of the women in slums are unaware of this.

An overwhelming majority of the expectant mothers in slums, who were interviewed by The Daily Star, showed preference for home births, unless they experienced earlier pregnancy complications or suffered from any life-threatening conditions.

The BUHS survey also said almost half of all slum mothers prefer to deliver at home, even though facility deliveries has increased by 17 percent in 2021 from 2013.

Only two interviewees said they wish to deliver at hospitals as both of them had faced major complications during previous home births with untrained midwives.

About financial aid from the government or NGOs, they said people come to note down their names and promise money that never comes.

"Earlier, I saw NGO officials come to our slums, but during my pregnancy, there was none," said Sabina.

Health and nutrition experts say slum mothers must get priority in the government's nutrition programmes, especially after the pandemic largely affected their dietary patterns.

The BUHS survey also found that in children of urban slums, the rates of under-5 stunting is 34 percent, wasting is 16 percent and being underweight 28 percent. All three rates are the highest compared to other urban areas.

Slum mothers were even excluded from the women and children affairs ministry's programme titled "Maternity Allowance", initiated in 2010-11, for the poor and underprivileged pregnant women

to meet their increased nutritional demands.

Additionally, another ministry's project -- "Karmajibi Lactating Mother Sohayota Tobbil" -- provided training and a Tk 800 monthly allowance to 2,77,000 underprivileged lactating mothers for three years. However, only 133 women of the Kalyanpur slum received the money.

Both programmes were later merged and renamed as "Ma O Shishu Sohayota Kormosuchi".

In 2022-23 fiscal, 7,740 poor expecting and lactating mothers of Dhaka South and North are supposed to receive Tk 800 per month through this programme.

But this number represents only 0.62 percent of the mothers in the capital's urban areas compared to the total targeted beneficiaries (12,54,000).

"The total allocation for this year is Tk 12,43,000 crore, 98 percent of which will be disbursed as allowances," said Rubina Ghani, director of the new programme.

However, finalising the beneficiaries took time as the women's affairs division faced some delay in paying the Election Commission to verify their NIDs, as per a finance ministry directive.

The money has been paid now, she said.

"Slum mothers can now apply for the allowance but the NID verification and receiving the money will be a month-long process."

Sabalenska breaks

FROM PAGE 12

and change for Sabalenka, who had often appeared to let her emotions halt her progress on the big stage, as she dropped her sports psychologist in pre-season. Sabalenka also worked with a biomechanics trainer to improve her cannonball serve, which tended to fail her in big moments in the past, and the results were evident before the year's first Grand Slam as she won the Adelaide International 1 title.

After finally securing her first Grand Slam on Saturday, she dropped to the floor in delight and then walked up to Rybakina's side of the court to hug her before embracing her emotional entourage in the players' box. Her coach Anton Dubrov was seen crying with joy at one point.

Last two JS polls

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The ongoing crisis about the election-time government is not a constitutional problem, rather a political issue, he added.

Badiul said almost all members of the 104-member special parliamentary committee on constitutional amendment recommended keeping the caretaker government system in the 15th amendment. "But the committee's recommendation changed after a meeting with the prime minister."

The 15th amendment was brought before parliament following the Supreme Court verdict that announced the 13th amendment to the constitution illegal. The 13th amendment incorporated the caretaker government system in the constitution.

The supreme court also ignored the recommendations of amici curiae, Badiul added.

Jurist Shahdeen Malik said the judgement revoking the 13th amendment was the "most damaging verdict" in the last 50 years. He termed it a "predetermined judgement".

"The amendment to the constitution was hastened. It destroyed the process of peaceful transfer of power and political settlement," he said.

Shahdeen said whenever a national election was held under a partisan government, the ruling party won it.

The 15th amendment was tabled in parliament so that ruling party can stay in power, he said.

Ridwanul Hoque, senior law officer at Charles Darwin University of Australia, said it is necessary to involve both the ruling and opposition parties in the process of any constitutional amendment. "But in reality, only the ruling party controls everything [in Bangladesh]."

No referendum was held in the country on most of the constitutional amendments, including the 15th, meaning the people were ignored, he said.

Researcher Adeeba Aziz Khan said successive ruling parties brought changes to the constitution in their own interests. Both the Awami League and BNP were against the caretaker government system during their time in power, she added.

It contains oldest

FROM PAGE 12

belt between Mars and Jupiter and contain some of the oldest material in the solar system.

'Big attacks'

FROM PAGE 12

Abdullah Al Mamun, 23, Din Islam, 25, and Abdullah Al Mamun, 46.

A Dhaka court yesterday placed each of the six arrestees on a three-day remand.

Addressing a briefing yesterday, CTC Chief Md Asaduzzaman said Fakhru, an active member of Huji-B, was a security guard at a Gazipur madrasa in 1988.

Later that year, he went to Karachi from Bangladesh and met Mufti Zakir Hossain, a Bangladesh-born madrasa principal in Karachi and also the military commander of the Al-Qaeda.

Under Zakir's guidance, Fakhru received training, travelling between Pakistan and Afghanistan several times, said Asaduzzaman.

He received training on different types of firearms at Shamshad hill of Kandahar. He even worked as security staffer at the hill for four hours daily, armed with an AK-47, said the official.

At the end of the training, Fakhru returned to Pakistan in 1995 and then went to Tehran, where he stayed for three years. In 1998, he returned to Pakistan, got an Indian visa from there, and returned to Bangladesh through India.

CTTC officials said Huji-B became an outfit without leaders due to many top leaders being arrested in drives by law enforcers.

Fakhru started taking part in

Huji-B activities after his return to the country but was arrested in 2005. He, however, managed to secure bail within six months.

Recently, he took charge of the outfit and was working to revive its activities.

He used to communicate with his associates and supporters of the outfit through encrypted apps. Fakhru also maintains connections with other Huji-B members staying abroad and was hatching a plan for big attacks, said investigators.

As part of training the members, he shared a 10-page document to teach them how to make bombs and time-bombs at home, said the CTC chief.

During the press briefing, the CTC showed a bomb-making video tutorial made by the outfit, in which they tried to lure people into the path of militancy.

He claimed that Fakhru and his son Saiful, along with other Huji-B members, donated a huge amount of money to Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar to recruit members from there.

"We have come to know that they have managed to recruit some Rohingyas," he said, without elaborating on the number and the amount Huji-B donated.

"We are now trying to verify the source of funding and conducting drives to arrest the absconding members of the outfit."

Rajshahi all set to welcome PM

FROM PAGE 12

to the city to greet Sheikh Hasina as she has initiated unprecedented development in the region.

"We have nothing to ask for. She is already doing what the people of this region need."

Law enforcement agencies have taken tight security measures. Flying drones in the city have been prohibited since Friday, and there is a ban on carrying weapons or explosives.

Hasina last visited Rajshahi on February 22, 2018, to address an electoral rally at the same venue.

TRAINS HIRED

Apart from buses and trucks, the AL

hired at least seven local trains.

The trains, with a total of 10,306 seats, were hired for Tk 1,290,007, Ashim Kumar Talukhder, general manager of Bangladesh Railway (west zone), told The Daily Star.

"Railway headquarters decided to rent out the trains upon applications from the party," he said.

Two trains were allocated for Chapainawabganj district -- one from Chapainawabganj station and another from Rohonpur station.

The other trains will start from Panchbibi station of Joypurhat, Santahar of Bogura, Natore, Sirajganj, and Arani station of Rajshahi.



US-China war in 2025!

AFP, Washington
A four-star US Air Force general has warned of a conflict with China as early as 2025 — most likely over Taiwan — and urged his commanders to push their units to achieve maximum operational battle readiness this year.

AFTERMATH OF WEST'S TANK PLEDGES
Fighting rages in Ukraine



Local resident Serhii stands next to his car destroyed by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kostiantynivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine, yesterday.

AFP, Near Bakhmut
Ukrainian troops were locked in a "fierce" confrontation with Russian fighters for control of the town of Vugledar southwest of Donetsk as the two sides battle along the southern front.

had already pledged.
A total of 321 heavy tanks have been promised to Ukraine by several countries, Ukraine's ambassador to France, Vadym Omelchenko, said on BFM television on Friday.

their attacks in the east, particularly on Vugledar and Bakhmut.
And Moscow was preparing for a new offensive on February 24, the first anniversary of the Russian invasion, said Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's national security and defence council.

Cold snap kills 166 in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul
At least 166 people have died in a wave of bitterly cold weather sweeping Afghanistan, an official said yesterday, as extreme conditions heaped misery on the poverty-stricken nation.

'Stop the hate' online: UN chief

AFP, United Nations
The UN secretary-general warned of social media's role in spreading violent extremism around the globe as he marked Holocaust Remembrance Day on Friday, urging policy makers to help stop online hate.



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
উপজেলা স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকল্পনা কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়
কানাইঘাট, সিলেট।
E-mail: Kanaighat@uhfpo.dghs.gov.bd
স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়
এম. এ.স. আর দরপত্র বিক্রয়

Two Indian military jets crash, one pilot killed

AFP, New Delhi
Two Indian Air Force fighter jets crashed yesterday, killing one pilot and injuring two others, in an apparent mid-air collision while on exercises south of the capital New Delhi.

Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Divisional Forest Officer
Sundarban East Forest Division
Bagerhat.
e-Tender Notice
This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Narail
e-Tender Notice
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of:

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Save Sundarbans from plastic pollution

Microplastics ingested by fish and humans posing serious health risks

Amid concerns over the impact of what many have dubbed a "plastic pandemic" in Bangladesh, with tonnes of plastic waste ending up in our rivers every day, scientists have revealed how this is harming marine life in the Sundarbans. According to data collected by a research team, at least 17 species of fish and three species of shellfish from three rivers flowing through the Sundarbans have been found to be contaminated with microplastics. Microplastics are tiny pieces of plastic that, once swallowed by fish, can end up in the human food chain as well.

The study report, published in an environment journal, has also revealed varying amounts of harmful microplastics found in the muscles and gastrointestinal tracts of the fish analysed. It concluded saying that an adult individual consuming 300g of fish muscles per week will ingest 74,282 particles of microplastic annually. On the other hand, a child eating 50g of fish per week will end up consuming about 12,380 particles annually. This can result in various health complications. As an expert told *The Daily Star*, "If it [microplastic] continues to pile up in the stomach, the digestive system will gradually cease to function. If it enters the blood circulation system, the liver and kidney will bear the brunt."

Clearly, the risks are huge, even if their effects may not be felt immediately. The discovery about the presence of microplastics in fish and thereby in humans is nothing new, however, nor is the picture that has been given complete by any means, as only 141 specimens from 20 species were analysed (the Sundarbans is home to over 300 species of fish). But it does confirm doubts about the upward trend in plastic debris accumulation in rivers which has reached far-flung corners of the country. Reportedly, about 25,000 registered fishing boats harvest fish from the Sundarbans and the adjacent bay, with the annual catch from its water bodies estimated to be 3,000 tonnes of fish and 18,150 tonnes of crustacean. It's daunting to think how this huge pile, as well as those from other parts of the country, is impacting the health of consumers.

The time has come to take a critical look at why the authorities, despite a ban on single-use plastic, are failing to prevent its use or discharge into rivers. One may recall a 2020 court directive to the Department of Environment to stop use of single-use plastic in coastal areas by 2022. But as it transpires from the study cited above and various media reports, not only has the department failed to stop it, it has even failed to make any sort of progress in this regard. The lack of political will is largely to blame for that. But we must also address the lack of accountability for institutions in charge of preventing the use of plastics and their unsupervised disposal.

We urge the government to take immediate steps in this regard. As well as increasing supervision, raising awareness and undertaking more research on microplastics, it must hold to account those in charge of stopping river pollution. The plastic ban must be implemented urgently.

Bede girls robbed of their childhood

Govt must protect them from early marriage, early pregnancy

We are quite shocked to learn about the alarming rate of child marriage among the Bede people living on the bank of Savar's Bangshi river. According to a report by this daily, a majority of the girls from this community are married off before they can reach 15 years of age, and by 18 most have about two or three children. Life is hard for this community, especially girls who, robbed of their childhood, have to search for a livelihood at a young age but still cannot earn enough to ensure proper meals for their family. In the absence of any support or income-generating activities, they often resort to begging.

One such girl is 16-year-old Shohagi, who was married off at the age of 10 to a boy only two years her senior. By the time she has turned 16, she has become the mother of two children. Since her unemployed husband cannot support the family financially, Shohagi has to take care of their children and also earn to bear family expenses. Moreover, she has to take care of her elderly mother who has speech impairment. Reportedly, most of the girls in the community have to face similar struggles. Our reporter has interviewed at least 50 girls and found that almost all of them were married off before 15, some well before that even.

We must ask, why are the families marrying off their daughters at such a young age? How can these marriages take place right under the nose of the administration? Equally importantly, how can a community in modern-day Bangladesh still be so vulnerable?

Clearly, young children were deprived of a healthy childhood because the state failed to play its due role. Reportedly, the people of this community, settled in Savar municipality under ward 1, do not have any land or permanent source of income. In the past, they used to make a living through different kinds of activities such as snake charming, selling herbal medicines, etc. But due to rapid urbanisation, their traditional way of life has been challenged, making them more vulnerable. Sending children, particularly girls, to school is a distant dream for most.

The government needs to help this community urgently, especially by creating income-generating opportunities for them and ensuring education for their children. And the local administration must answer for such high rates of child marriage. It must also explain why it couldn't stop a single case of child marriage over the years. As far as we know, there is a committee under the local administration for creating awareness on child marriage and collecting information on the number of child marriages taking place, which, however, remains only on paper. We urge the authorities to make the committee effective so that it can do its job. Children of the Bede community must be protected from the curse of child marriage.

No justice in paying tea workers' arrears



Phillip Gain is researcher and director at the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

PHILIP GAIN

Foremost of the factors that determine the economic fate of tea workers in Bangladesh is the agreement that the Bangladesh Tea Association (BTA) and Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union (BCSU) sign every two years. While BTA represents owners of the tea gardens, BCSU is the only trade union for around 1,38,000 tea workers and their combined bargaining agent (or CBA).

However, this bi-annual agreement is never signed on time. For instance, the agreement effective for January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2020 was signed on February 25, 2021. The tea workers got their additional pay for 26 months in arrears in four instalments. Additional cash pay for these 26 months was Tk 18 per day.

More baffling is the fact that no agreement has yet been signed for the period from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022. Such payment of arrears has become part of the culture in Bangladesh's tea gardens.

Extremely dissatisfied with this delay and the stubbornness of BTA in



PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUI

Even though workers started receiving the daily cash pay of Tk 170 from August 28, 2022, there has been no headway for signing the January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022 agreement. This situation contravenes the tradition regarding payment of arrears.

not increasing wages, the tea workers went on an unprecedented strike from August 9 to 27 in 2022. Finally, the prime minister stepped in and fixed the daily cash pay at Tk 170, which is an increase of Tk 50 and Tk 130 less than what workers had demanded.

Still, they went back to work from August 28 in hopes that they would get the increased wage from January 2023. A registered worker who had worked all days during the 20-month arrear period would get Tk 30,000, a good sum for the impoverished tea workers.

Dr Kazi Muzafar Ahmed, secretary of the BTA, said in an interview with *The Business Post* last August, "The permanent workers will get arrears, and we will set the number of

instalments in a meeting with the BCSU. The association will not facilitate any arrears for casual workers, as they are out of our purview." Some gardens were preparing to roll such payment as well.

But the owners' fickleness about signing of the agreement has come as a big shock to tea garden workers.

The BTA and BCSU had already had 15 meetings before the August 2022 strike, to reach an agreement. After the strike ended, they held several meetings. The tea workers' representatives were shocked to find that owners were now reluctant to even pay part of the arrear, let alone the full. So, even though workers started receiving the daily cash pay of Tk 170 from August 28, 2022, there has been no headway for signing the January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022 agreement. This situation contravenes the tradition regarding payment of arrears.

And common tea workers are reluctant to compromise: "The agreement between the owners and workers is signed late and we get the increased pay in arrears from the first day of the following agreement period," says Sreemati Bauri (40), a tea worker and vice president of BCSU's Juri Valley committee. "We want our full arrears at the rate of Tk 50 per day for the full agreement period."

"If the owners do not sign and

execute the agreement starting from January 1, 2021 and do not pay our arrears in full, we will go on strike again," said tealeaf picker Bisakha (40) of Madhobpur Tea Estate in Kamalganj upazila.

The leaders of BCSU are having a hard time negotiating with the owners. Helpless, they have sent an appeal to the PM dated November

current wage board, set up in October 2019, has not even published the gazette finalising the wage structure.

In any industry, the responsibility of fixing wages is bestowed upon the minimum wage board. However, the tea industry is entirely exceptional. The workers in this industry live within the boundaries of the tea gardens. They do not have homesteads of their own. The

state owns the land of the tea gardens, excluding those in north Bengal.

Therefore, the current proposal of the BTA to the government to "let the minimum wage board fix the wage" is not acceptable without elaborate discussion with workers.

According to Rambhajan Kairi, the workers' representative, another BTA proposal is that the agreement between the BTA and BCSU be signed every three years. BTA also suggests if the agreement is signed every two years following the long tradition, it should deal with all other issues except wages. But Kairi's reasonable argument is that the owners, tea workers, and the state must have open and elaborate discussions before bringing any change to the current tradition. And the workers' interest must get the right consideration in such discussions.

For an exit out of the current stalemate, the BTA should immediately accept the legitimate demand of tea garden workers and sign the agreement for the period from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022. Then, the negotiation would be due for the following agreement period starting on January 1, 2023. On another note, if the minimum wage board is regularised in the tea industry, it must grant pragmatic consideration to the living costs of tea workers and other factors that section 141 of the labour laws mentions.

14, 2022 in which they pointed out that the owners are now reluctant to pay the increased daily wage starting after the expiration of the last agreement period. BCSU alleges that the arrogance of the owners is causing delay in the signing of the agreement even after the agreement period ended on December 31, 2022.

Three days before the end of the 2021-22 agreement period, a 10-member team of seven vice presidents of seven valleys and three central committee members of BCSU met the Director General of the Department of Labour (DL) in Dhaka. A number of the labour leaders have said that they have learned from an official of the Department of Labour that the owners were willing to pay the arrears at the rate of Tk 17 a day, not Tk 50. Some BCSU leaders were reportedly ready to compromise and accept arrears between Tk 25 and Tk 30. But the majority of leaders rejected this and the meeting ended with no positive outcome.

The three minimum wage boards set up so far for the tea industry have fixed much lower wages compared to other industries. First, the minimum wage board is irregular in the tea industry as it is not formed every five years. Second, the latest minimum wage board interfered in affairs beyond its jurisdiction and the outcome turned out to be unpredictably sad. The

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

How not to fight inflation



Joseph E. Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics, is University Professor at Columbia University and a member of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.

JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ

Despite favourable indices, it is too soon to tell whether inflation has been tamed. Nonetheless, two clear lessons have emerged from the recent price surge.

First, economists' standard models – especially the dominant one that assumes the economy always to be in equilibrium – were effectively useless. And, second, those who confidently asserted that it would take five years of pain to wring inflation out of the system have already been refuted. Inflation has fallen dramatically, with the December 2022 seasonally adjusted consumer price index coming in just one percent above that for June.

There is overwhelming evidence that the main source of inflation was pandemic-related supply shocks and shifts in the pattern of demand, not excess aggregate demand, and certainly not any additional demand created by pandemic spending. Anyone with any faith in the market

economy knew that the supply issues would be resolved eventually; but no one could possibly know when.

After all, we have never endured a pandemic-driven economic shutdown followed by a rapid reopening. That is why models based on past experience proved irrelevant.

Policymakers continue to balance the risk of doing too little versus too much. The risks of increasing interest rates are clear: a fragile global economy could be pushed into recession, precipitating more debt crises as many heavily indebted developing economies face the triple whammy of a strong dollar, lower export revenues, and higher interest rates. This would be a travesty.

The US has knowingly adopted a policy that will likely sink the world's most vulnerable economies. Worse, it is not even clear that there is any upside to this approach. In fact, raising interest rates could do more harm than good, by making it more expensive

for firms to invest in solutions to the current supply constraints.

In retail and other markets, higher interest rates can actually induce price increases as the higher interest rates induce businesses to write down the future value of lost customers relative to the benefits today of higher prices.

To be sure, a deep recession would tame inflation. But why would we

to suggest that it would be costly to the economy if inflation were to vary between, say, two percent and four percent. On the contrary, given the need for structural changes in the economy and downward rigidities in prices, a slightly higher inflation target has much to recommend it.

Some will also say that inflation has remained tame precisely because central banks have signalled such resolve in fighting it. My dog Woofie might have drawn the same conclusion whenever he barked at planes flying over our house. He might have believed that he had scared them off, and that not barking would have increased the risk of the plane falling on him.

A careful look at what is going on, and at where prices have come down, supports the structuralist view that inflation was driven mainly by supply-side disruptions and shifts in the pattern of demand. As these issues are resolved, inflation is likely to continue to fall.

Yes, it is too soon to tell precisely when inflation will be fully tamed. And no one knows what new shocks await us. But I am still putting my money on "Team Temporary." Those arguing that inflation will be largely cured on its own still have a much stronger case than those advocating measures with obviously high and persistent costs but only dubious benefits.

We have never endured a pandemic-driven economic shutdown followed by a rapid reopening. That is why models based on past experience proved irrelevant.

invite that? Not only is inflation falling, but wages are increasing more slowly than prices (meaning no spiral), and expectations remain in check. The five-year, five-year forward expectation rate is hovering just above two percent – hardly unanchored.

Some also fear that we will not return quickly enough to the two percent target inflation rate. But remember, that number was pulled out of thin air. It has no economic significance, nor is there any evidence

Can increased gas prices fix anything?



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KALLOL MUSTAFA

Within a week of the electricity price hike, the government raised the retail price of gas for industries, power plants, and commercial establishments – which account for 78 percent of gas use in Bangladesh. Although the average price increase is 82 percent, the rate of price increase in power and industrial sectors is 150 to 179 percent. Only in June 2022, gas prices were increased by an average of 23 percent. This time, although the price of gas has not been increased for residents, transport, and fertiliser production, the tripling of the price of gas in industrial sectors means there will be a massive increase in the price of daily necessities.

More than 50 percent of the country's electricity generation comes from gas-based power plants. Now, raising the per unit price of gas from Tk 5.20 to Tk 14 for public and private power plants will increase the generation cost of gas-based electricity, as a result of which the deficit of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) will increase due to buying electricity from these power plants, thus creating more pressure to further increase the price of electricity.

Due to lack of proper initiative from the government to explore gas from the country's onshore and offshore blocks, a significant part of the gas required for power, industry, commercial, and residential sectors has to be imported from abroad in the form of LNG, spending huge amounts of foreign currency. According to Petrobangla's report from January 5, 2022, the cost of gas produced by state-owned companies from domestic gas fields is Tk 1.27 per cubic metre. Although 80 percent of the demand is met from gas produced

in the country, the remaining 20 percent is met by importing LNG from abroad. And due to the high price of imported LNG, the average cost of gas per cubic metre stands about Tk 20. For this reason, as the import of LNG and the price of LNG in the international market increases, the pressure to raise the price of gas in Bangladesh also increases.

At present, Petrobangla is supplying about 2,700 million cubic feet per day (MMcf/d) of gas, including 500 MMcf/d of imported LNG, against a demand of 3,800 MMcf/d. To meet the demand of the industrial and power sector, if the government wants to import 350 MMcf/d from the spot market, then an additional USD 3.3 billion will be

During the planning of the power and energy sector of a country like Bangladesh (which has a huge trade deficit), emphasis should be placed on locally-sourced and relatively less environmentally damaging energy (gas, in our case) and renewable energy sources.

required, considering the current LNG price of USD 22 per million British thermal units (MMBtu). If LNG price increases further, foreign currency requirement to import LNG will also increase.

At a time when opening LCs for daily necessities has to be curtailed, imported edible oil and sugar could not be unloaded from ships due to



VISUAL: STAR

non-payment in dollar terms, and when the Rampal power plant was shut down for not being able to import necessary coal due to the forex reserve crisis, there are doubts as to whether an additional USD 3.3 billion could be made available for LNG imports. Earlier, gas prices were hiked twice (in 2019 and 2022) with a promise to increase supply by importing LNG. But due to the dollar crisis, LNG imports were instead reduced.

If the gas crisis could be solved by merely increasing gas prices, why has no impact been visible after previous gas price hikes? During the 13 years, the government has increased retail gas prices six times. According to *Samakal*, the average gas price increase was 11.22 percent in July 2009 and 22.78 percent in June 2022. In the name of solving the gas crisis, the price of gas has been increased from Tk 4.34 per cubic

metre in 2009 to Tk 21.67.

The solution to the gas crisis lies not in increasing the price of gas, but increasing gas production within the country.

Independent experts have been advising the government for many years to prioritise gas exploration onshore and offshore. But, to serve the interests of the LNG lobby, the government focused on importing LNG. Although the two privately owned LNG terminals in the country have a total regasification capacity of 1000 MMcf/d, currently only 550 MMcf/d gas is being processed. But because of the Speedy Supply of Power and Energy (Special Provision) Act 2010, the government is making capacity payments worth around USD 202,500 daily even without regasification. On top of this, the government is considering signing similar kinds of contracts with the private operators to build two more

LNG import terminals.

If we compare the investment and achievements of state-owned gas exploration company Bapex with those of the LNG import regime, the opportunity cost of not exploring local gas becomes more evident.

After the gas crisis intensified in 2022, Bapex discovered 723 BCF (billion cubic feet) of gas reserves through an investment of Tk 812 crore, as per a report by *Bonik Barta*. To import this much in LNG, foreign currency equivalent to Tk 96,000 crore would have been spent on a long-term contract and, to buy it from the spot market, Tk 1,70,000 crore would have been needed! However, as the government has been emphasising on importing LNG from abroad without increasing the capacity of Bapex, it spent Tk 85,000 crore on importing LNG from abroad between 2018-19 and 2021-22.

If an investment of Tk 812 crore in

domestic gas exploration can save us billions of dollars, how much could have been saved if just a tenth of the amount spent on LNG imports was invested for the exploration of gas in onshore and offshore areas of the country?

Energy security cannot be achieved if we continue to depend on importing energy from abroad. The price of LNG, coal, or oil in the international market is always unstable. That is why, during the planning of the power and energy sector of a country like Bangladesh (which has a huge trade deficit), emphasis should be placed on locally-sourced and relatively less environmentally damaging energy (gas, in our case) and renewable energy sources.

The sooner the country's power and energy plans shift from foreign dependency to local capacity development, the sooner we will be rid of the gas crisis.

On the book that got Adarsha banned from Boi Mela



Anupam Debashis Roy
is an editorial assistant at *The Daily Star*.

ANUPAM DEBASHIS ROY

The recent fiasco surrounding three books published by Adarsha has caught the public eye after the publisher was refused a stall at the Ekushey Boi Mela of this year. One of the books, *"Bangaleer Mediocrity'r Shondhane"* (2022) by Faham Abdus Salam, has received special attention as Bangla Academy has flagged it as vulgar. The book itself is essentially a collection of philosophical polemics, which sometimes take the form of politically charged rhetoric. I object to the book, too, but on entirely different grounds than Bangla Academy.

There is no reason that this book should be restricted, but I have serious concerns about some key points made in the book and their underlying philosophy.

Salam says that Bangalis – though I assume he really means Bangladeshis – became a state before they could become a polity. Their place in that state has become that of subjects and not citizens.

But is that a failure of the people? Or were they denied the opportunity to become citizens by the colonial power structures that remain undisturbed even today? When supreme sacrifices have been made repeatedly, how can one deny that the people of this land have fought to become citizens?

It is a matter of great misfortune that we have been forced into being subjects of the ruling class for centuries. Once the foreigners left, it was local politicians who took up that mantle. But that doesn't mean we want to be subjects or that this life satisfies us. Our fight against it is still going on. Fulbari, Chunarughat,

Rampal, the quota protests, the road safety movement – they all point towards that fight.

The author has pointed out other flaws in Bangalis, but his explanations suffer from a lack of depth. According to him, Bangalis don't understand that the legal code has a purpose beyond punishments. But what is the reason behind that? They are driven towards a punitive understanding of the legal system by the socio-political realities surrounding them.

When they see that the justice system in their country is against them, when they see governments using the police and administration against the common people, they are forced to become vindictive. The system is a ghost of our colonial past, not the fruit of our own democratic process.

Another problem apparent in Salam's writing is his love for the West. In his book, he has put the liberal thoughts of the West on a pedestal. His discussions convey the idea that there is nothing better than Western liberalism, and that we should copy that liberalism ourselves.

Our collective coordination, our culture, our history – they all help us as tools in our fights. This minimal coordination has been what has allowed us to revolt time and again. We can stand with each other in times of trouble, we can fight for each other because we are communitarian.

Regarding the distance between society and the state, the author has tried to say that the collective unity of Bangalis runs into obstacles in society, not at the level of the state.

He has also said that Bangalis gained a state before they could grasp the idea of collective ownership. These claims have historical flaws.

Collective ownership was definitely a familiar concept to the farmers of Bengal. If that weren't the case, they wouldn't have fought for land rights or against indigo farming. The fact that they could do it proves that they were conscientious not only about their individual benefit, but also about collective and societal benefits. In any case, society must be stronger than the state, so that it has the ability to pull the reins of the state. The state is only an instrument meant to serve society. It is natural that society will mean more to an individual than the state. In fact, it's natural for a state to contain more than one society.

The author's most problematic statement is perhaps: "He can't live without freedom, but he doesn't deserve a state." A state isn't something so great that a person needs to earn it. If colonisation had not happened, then we would have come upon a liberal state by ourselves. The state is only an institution that is supposed to safeguard the interests of society.

Some of Salam's discussions in the book definitely deserve praise. He has successfully captured the importance of revolution. Freeing society from a particular party isn't revolution; it is the natural course of change, he points out. Revolution can only take place when a party's journey towards becoming a dictatorship is stopped collectively.

His discussion captures a love for the West, but at the same time, it has surprisingly postcolonial sentiments. He tells us we need to be more like the West, but also gives us the indication that we need a proper revolution of our own. I would have agreed with him if he hadn't put the blame of this reality on Bangalis, inadvertently absolving the structures of state and power.

Translated by Azmin Azran.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
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website : www.waqf.gov.bd

স্মারক নং- ১৬.০২.০০০০.০০১.৩৪.০০০.০০/ ৩৮৬ তারিখ ১০ মাস ১৪২৯ বঙ্গাব্দ
২৪ জানুয়ারী ২০২৩ খ্রিস্টাব্দ

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ ওয়াক্ফ প্রশাসনের স্বার্থ সংরক্ষণ এবং ওয়াক্ফ এজেন্টের পক্ষে ও বিপক্ষে মামলাসমূহ পরিচালনার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় সংখ্যক দক্ষ ও অভিজ্ঞ আইনজীবী নিযে ০১ (এক)টি আইনজীবী প্যানেল গঠন এবং ওয়াক্ফ এজেন্ট এর বিভিন্ন বিষয়ে মতামত প্রদানের জন্য ০১ (এক) জন আইন উপদেষ্টা নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে নিম্নোক্ত শর্তে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:

- ১। আইন উপদেষ্টা বা প্যানেল আইনজীবী কোন পদের জন্য আবেদন করা হচ্ছে তা উল্লেখপূর্বক আবেদন করতে হবে। প্যানেল আইনজীবীদের বিভাগভিত্তিক নিয়োগ দেয়া হবে। আবেদনকারী কোন বিভাগের জন্য প্যানেলভুক্ত হতে আগ্রহী তা উল্লেখপূর্বক আবেদন করতে হবে;
- ২। আবেদনপত্রে আবেদনকারীর নাম, পিতা/স্বামীর নাম, স্থায়ী ঠিকানা, বর্তমান ঠিকানা, বয়স ও অভিজ্ঞতা ইত্যাদি উল্লেখপূর্বক সঠিকভাবে দিতে হবে;
- ৩। আইন উপদেষ্টা এবং ঢাকা বিভাগের জন্য আবেদনকারীদের ঢাকায় নিয়মিতভাবে বসবাসরত হতে হবে এবং অন্যান্য বিভাগের ক্ষেত্রে যে বিভাগের জন্য আবেদন করা হবে সেই বিভাগে নিয়মিতভাবে বসবাস করতে হবে;
- ৪। আবেদনের সঙ্গে সদ্য তোলা ০২ (দুই) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের সত্যায়িত ছবি সংযুক্ত করে দিতে হবে।
- ৫। আবেদনকারীর বয়স ২৮/০২/২০২৩ তারিখে ৫৫ বছরের মধ্যে হতে হবে।
- ৬। আবেদনের সঙ্গে আত্মীয় পরিচয়পত্র, বার কাউন্সিলের সনদপত্র, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার সকল সনদপত্র এবং হাইকোর্ট বিভাগ ও আপিল বিভাগের তালিকাভুক্তির সনদপত্রসহ সকল সনদপত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি সংযুক্ত করতে হবে;
- ৭। আইন উপদেষ্টা এবং ঢাকা বিভাগের প্যানেল আইনজীবীর ক্ষেত্রে আবেদনকারীর বাংলাদেশ হাইকোর্ট বিভাগ ও আপিল বিভাগে আইনজীবী হিসেবে মামলা পরিচালনার কমপক্ষে ১০ (দশ) বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে। বিভাগীয় পর্যায়ে ঢাকা বিভাগ ব্যতীত অন্য বিভাগের জন্য আবেদনকারীর ক্ষেত্রে অত্র কোর্টে মামলা পরিচালনার কমপক্ষে ১০ (দশ) বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে;
- ৮। ওয়াক্ফ প্রশাসকের পক্ষে মামলায় স্বাধীনভাবে প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতা, মানসার আরজি তৈরি, মানসার জবাব তৈরি এবং নথিতে আইনপত্র মতামত প্রদানের দক্ষতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
- ৯। আবেদনকারী অন্য কোন সরকারি/বেসরকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের আইনজীবী হিসেবে নিয়োজিত থাকলে তা উল্লেখ করতে হবে;
- ১০। নিযুক্ত আইনজীবীদের সিডিউল অনুসারে ফি প্রদান করা হবে;
- ১১। সম্পূর্ণ অস্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে উক্ত নিয়োগের মেয়াদ হবে ০১ (এক) বছর।
- ১২। আবেদনপত্র আশাশুভ ১২/০২/২০২৩ তারিখ বিকাল ৪.০০ টার মধ্যে ওয়াক্ফ প্রশাসক, বাংলাদেশ, বাংলাদেশ ওয়াক্ফ প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ৪ নিউ ইন্সটান রোড, ঢাকা বরাবরে পৌঁছাতে হবে;
- ১৩। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন এবং
- ১৪। আইনজীবী নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।

স্বাক্ষরিত
২৪ জানুয়ারী ২০২৩
ডে. খান মোঃ মুন্সিল আমিন
ওয়াক্ফ প্রশাসক, বাংলাদেশ

GD-137



Consider your child's exposure to indoor air pollution

DR NUR-A-SAFRINA RAHMAN

Indoor air pollution is a serious problem in developing nations because of stoves, secondhand smoke, dust mites, mold, bacteria, cleaning products, and more. These sources release volatile compounds. The most studied indoor air pollutant is nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). These pollutants can harm women and small children who spend most of their time at home.

Exposure to these components can cause

- According to nationwide population-based research in Bangladesh, NO₂ decreases oxygen to the growing foetus, causing respiratory issues. It also causes low birth weight.
- NO₂ raises harmful compounds in the blood and affects the immune system, weakening the placenta and causing premature delivery.
- Prenatal NO₂ exposure may impede cognitive development and memory in children. High NO₂ levels may disrupt the blood-brain barrier, allowing hazardous chemicals to enter the brain.
- NO₂ weakens the immune system, making children more prone to infections and diseases.

Measures to be taken

- Make your house smoke-free. Ventilation is the simplest approach to reducing indoor pollution.
 - Use High Efficiency Particle Arresting (HEPA) filters, which remove extremely small airborne pollutants. Use active units too. Air filters use filter media to purify air. Scrubbers use liquids or chemicals to remove pollutants from the air.
 - It is also recommended to use an electric stove instead of a gas stove for cooking.
 - Dusting, vacuuming and using a moist cloth or mop frequently can remove dust and other debris.
 - To prevent mold, fix leaks and water damage immediately.
 - Open windows and doors for airflow.
 - Indoor plants remove pollutants and release oxygen. Plant leaves and roots absorb atmospheric pollutants and transform them into nourishment. They release oxygen, which improves room air.
- It is important to note that the effectiveness of these methods will also depend on the pollution sources and surroundings.

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Urgent action is needed as acute malnutrition threatens the lives of millions of vulnerable children

STAR HEALTH REPORT

United Nations agencies are calling for urgent action to protect the most vulnerable children in the 15 countries hardest hit by an unprecedented food and nutrition crisis.

Conflict, climate shocks, the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, and rising costs of living are leaving increasing numbers of children acutely malnourished while key health, nutrition and other life-saving services are becoming less accessible. Currently, more than 30 million children in the 15 worst-affected countries suffer from wasting or acute malnutrition and 8 million of these children are severely wasted, the deadliest form of undernutrition. This is a major threat to children's lives and to their long-term health and development, the impacts of which are felt by individuals, their communities and their countries.

Wasting or acute malnutrition is a form of undernutrition caused by a decrease in food consumption and/or illness that results in sudden weight loss or oedema. Children with acute malnutrition have low weight for height.

Children with acute malnutrition have weakened immune systems and are at higher risk of dying from common childhood diseases. Those that survive could face lifelong growth and development challenges.

Child wasting defined as low weight for height is the most dangerous form of undernutrition. Severe wasting is the deadliest form, as severely wasted children are 12 times more likely to die than a well-nourished child.

In response, five UN agencies are calling for accelerated progress on the Global Action Plan on Child Wasting. It aims to prevent, detect and treat acute malnutrition among children in the worst-affected countries.



The Global Action Plan addresses the need for a multi-sectoral approach and highlights priority actions across maternal and child nutrition through the food, health, water and sanitation, and social protection systems. In response to increasing needs, the UN agencies identified five priority actions that will be effective in addressing acute malnutrition in countries affected by conflict and natural disasters and in humanitarian emergencies. Scaling up these actions as a coordinated package will be critical for preventing and treating acute malnutrition in children and averting a tragic loss of life.

"We must ensure availability, affordability and accessibility of healthy diets for young children, girls, and pregnant and lactating women" said Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

"The UN Global Action Plan on Child Wasting is our joint effort to prevent, detect and treat wasting globally. At UNHCR we are working hard to improve analysis and targeting to ensure that we reach children who are most at risk, including internally displaced and refugees populations." Filippo

Grandi, High Commissioner, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

"Today's cascading crises are leaving millions of children wasted and have made it harder for them to access key services. Wasting is painful for the child, and in severe cases, can lead to death or permanent damage to children's growth and development." Catherine Russell, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"It is critical that we collaborate to strengthen social safety nets and food assistance to ensure Specialised Nutritious Foods are available to women and children who need them the most." David Beasley, Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP).

"The global food crisis is also a health crisis, and a vicious cycle: malnutrition leads to disease, and disease leads to malnutrition," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organisation (WHO).

Urgent support is needed now in the hardest hit countries to protect children's lives and health, including ensuring critical access to healthy foods and nutrition services, especially for women and children."

HAVE A NICE DAY

Living in a toxic society

DR RUBAUL MURSHED

Once a wise man said, "One fake friend is more dangerous than 100 enemies." True friends will always find a way to help, but toxic and fake friends will always find an excuse. Today, a toxic social environment causes more harm to our health, happiness, and wellbeing. People who make us feel bad, or insecure about ourselves can create a toxic environment.

Toxic people do not like to forget and forgive and end up taking revenge. Medicine or other advancements cannot solve this issue alone. Sometimes unkind group behaviour is encouraged in our society and in time, it becomes normalised. Toxic associations create mental trauma and may contribute such a poison to an atmosphere that can lead to stress, anxiety, depression and even suicide. It is important to recognise the warning signs and find ways to avoid them. It is especially true for the mentally ill or people recovering from a history of abuse or unkind incidents.

But, why are people becoming more and more toxic? Although it is not easy to explain, we can say, these behaviours may manifest from underlying feelings of low self-esteem and mental health conditions such as narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), childhood or adolescent trauma, or other deeply rooted personal issues. Sometimes, people who are toxic are dealing with their own traumas and stresses.

Unfortunately, some people with toxic personalities don't realise that their behaviour impacts others. One may have toxic traits that the person does not know about! It is believed that these people can change. But, it is better to be careful and remind ourselves of Aesop's famous saying, "If you choose bad companions, no one will believe that you are anything but bad yourself." That's why! Growing up means realising a lot of our friends are toxic and cutting ties with them can be an act of self-care.

"It is critical that we collaborate to strengthen social safety nets and food assistance to ensure Specialised Nutritious Foods are available to women and children who need them the most." David Beasley, Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP).

Urgent support is needed now in the hardest hit countries to protect children's lives and health, including ensuring critical access to healthy foods and nutrition services, especially for women and children."

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Understanding testicular cancer

DR OPURBO CHOWDHURY

The testes are a pair of male reproductive organs in the scrotum. Testicles can vary in size, shape, and position from person to person. However, it is usual for one testicle to be slightly larger or suspended lower than the other. The scrotum is a bag of skin that surrounds and protects the testes. It is located outside the body because the optimal temperature for sperm production is slightly lower than the average body temperature.



Symptoms
Symptoms of testicular cancer may include a painless swelling in the testicle, a change in the size or form of the testicle, a feeling of heaviness in the scrotum, or a dull ache in the lower abdomen or scrotum. If you have any of these symptoms, it is essential to see a doctor as soon as possible, as testicular cancer is most treatable when it is caught in its early stages.

Tests
Some steps may be involved in diagnosing testicular cancer: physical examination, blood tests, ultrasound, and biopsy.

Treatment
Treatment for testicular cancer may include surgery to remove the affected testicle, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy. The type of treatment will vary depending on the cancer stage and the patient's overall health. Surgery is usually the first line

Cancer types
Testicular cancer is a type of cancer that develops in the testicles. Testicular cancer is relatively rare, but it is most common in men between the ages of 15 and 35. There are two main types of testicular cancer: seminoma and non-seminoma. Seminoma is a type of cancer in the cells that produce sperm, and it is more common in older men. Non-seminoma is a type of cancer that occurs in other cells in the testicle and is more common in younger men.

Cause
The cause of testicular cancer is unknown, but several factors have been identified that may increase a man's risk of developing the disease. These include: Undescended testicles, family history, personal history, Klinefelter syndrome, HIV infection.

of treatment for testicular cancer. Radiation therapy uses high-energy beams of radiation to kill cancer cells. Chemotherapy uses drugs to kill cancer cells.

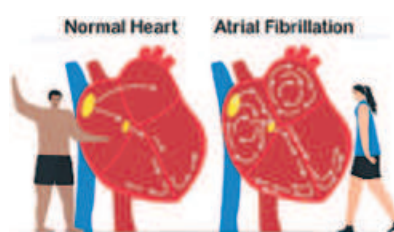
Complications
Some possible complications of untreated testicular cancer include spreading to different parts of the body, difficulty breathing, and lymphedema.

The outlook for patients with testicular cancer is generally excellent. The 5-year survival rate for testicular cancer is over 95% when the cancer is detected and treated at an early stage. However, it is essential for men to be aware of the signs and symptoms of testicular cancer and to seek medical attention if they have any concerns. Early detection and treatment are critical to a successful outcome.

The writer is a physician in the UK.
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Warning signs of atrial fibrillation

Atrial fibrillation (AFib) is a condition that disrupts your heartbeat. A glitch in the heart's electrical system makes its upper chambers (the atria) beat so fast they quiver or fibrillate. This causes the lower chambers (the ventricles) to beat out of sync. AFib can be dangerous because it raises your risk of stroke and heart failure.





- Warning signs**
For many people, AFib symptoms are not obvious. But when there are, they will often include:
- An uneven pulse
 - A racing or pounding heart
 - A feeling that your heart is fluttering
 - Chest pain
 - Feeling short of breath

- Lightheaded or dizzy
- When it is an emergency
AFib is not always a cause for alarm. But you should call for ambulance if you have:
- Chest pain
- Uneven pulse and feel faint
- Signs of a stroke, such as numbness or slurred speech

• And let your doctor know whenever something doesn't feel right.


Prevention
The same healthy habits that protect against heart disease will protect you against AFib:


- Eat a nutritious diet that includes fish.
- Exercise regularly.
- Control your blood pressure.
- Don't smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Decrease or avoid alcohol.
- To catch an irregular heartbeat early, the National Stroke Association recommends you check your pulse once a month, especially if you are over 40 or have other risk factors for stroke.


Appointment
02 22 22 62 486
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Save Your Heart!






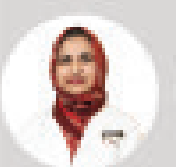
Dr. Sayedur Rahman Khan



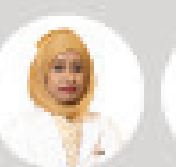
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Can Tsitsipas upend Djoker's monopoly?

AGENCIES

As Novak Djokovic steps on court to face Stefanos Tsitsipas in Sunday's championship match in Melbourne, one specific statistic from his career may well put him at ease – nine Australian Open finals played, nine Australian Open finals won.

To increase that record to 10 from 10, Djokovic will look to pull through any difficult moments as calmly as he did against Tommy Paul in Friday's semifinal, where he recovered from losing four games in a row in the opening set to seal a 7-5, 6-1, 6-2 victory.

"I'm of course very satisfied and pleased to be in another Grand Slam final," said Djokovic after riding out his rough patch to reach his 10th championship match at the hard-court major. "I mean, this is exactly what I've imagined and hoped that would happen when I came to Australia, with the intention to be in a position to fight for another Australian Open trophy."

"I think that the experience of being in this particular situation and circumstances before helps. I also think the fact that I never lost the Australian Open finals definitely serves as a great confidence booster prior to Sunday."

With a perfect record in Australian Open finals,



DJOKOVIC	HEAD TO HEAD	TSITSIPAS
10		2
59	Aces	69
35	Break pts won	25
50	Games dropped	80
1	Sets dropped	3

Djokovic's confidence will be soaring – more so as he bids to equal Rafael Nadal's Grand Slam record and return to world number one.

While Djokovic is into a record 33rd Grand Slam final and eyeing to equal Nadal's 22 major crowns, the Greek third seed will play only his second.

Adding spice to the showdown, the winner will become world number one, dethroning Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz.

That is added incentive for Djokovic, who last held the top ranking in June.

"Winning Grand Slams and being the number one in the world are probably the two biggest peaks that you can climb as a professional tennis player," the 35-year-old said.

"I know his [Tsitsipas] game pretty well. He knows my game well. I know what's ahead of me, and I'm excited. Fortunately for me at this stage of my career, because of all the achievements, it is always basically every match or every tournament there is always something on the line, particularly when the Grand Slams are played," Djokovic said.

In Tsitsipas's only previous Grand Slam final, at Roland Garros in 2021, he fell to Djokovic in five sets after holding a 2-0 lead.

But the 24-year-old believes he has matured as a player and a person and is now better suited to the big stage in his quest to become the first Greek player to win a Grand Slam title.

"I couldn't be more ready for this moment," said Tsitsipas, the youngest man to reach the Melbourne final since a 23-year-old Djokovic in 2011.

"This is a very humbling opportunity for me, being in the finals here means a lot. Having started here as one of my first junior Grand Slams and being now in the finals of the men's event is as important as my very first steps that I took on the tennis court. I'm going to grasp this opportunity."



Aryna Sabalenka bludgeoned her way to a maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over Kazakh 22nd seed Elena Rybakina on Saturday in a thrilling final. Sabalenka's 11th straight win of the year propelled the Belarusian back to her career-high ranking of No. 2 behind Iga Swiatek.

PHOTO: AFP

'Need few more days to realise what happened'

AFP, Melbourne

An emotional Aryna Sabalenka said it will take a "few more days" to sink in after battling back from a set down to win a maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open on Saturday.

The hard-hitting Belarusian collapsed to the court in tears after winning 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 against Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina in a high-quality 2hr 28min arm-wrestle on Rod Laver Arena.

The 24-year-old Sabalenka wiped away tears before getting a warm hug from Moscow-born Rybakina, who played a full part in a thrilling match between two of the most powerful hitters in the women's game.

Sabalenka, the fifth seed and form player in 2023, then ran to her player's box to celebrate with her team.

"Thank you, my team, the craziest team on the tour. We've been through a lot of, I would say, downs last year," Sabalenka said after receiving the trophy. "Thank you so much for what you are doing for me. I love you guys."

Turning to 22nd seed Rybakina, she added: "You're such a great player and of course we are going to have many more battles, hopefully in finals of Grand Slams."

Sabalenka will now rise to second in the world rankings behind Poland's Iga Swiatek, equalling her career high, having triumphed in her first Grand Slam final.

"I need a few more days to realise what just happened," Sabalenka told Australia's Channel Nine. "Oh my god, I'm speechless. I was super emotional at the end."

The final – a fitting ending to two weeks of drama and shocks at Melbourne Park – was a match of brutal groundstrokes, precision serving and wonderful rallies from two players at the top of their game.

Rybakina cruised through the first set in 34 minutes but Sabalenka scrapped her way back in a 57-minute second set to take it to a nervy decider.

It was then a case of which of the big servers would blink first in a toe-to-toe battle.

At 3-3 Rybakina – who represents Kazakhstan – could not find enough first serves and though she saved two break points, a third was too much, and Sabalenka had the finish line in sight.

Another ace took her to 5-3 but the 23-year-old Rybakina held to force Sabalenka to test her nerves and serve for the championship. She was up to the challenge, but needed four nerve-shredding match points after a display where she hit 51 winners and 17 aces.

"I just kept telling myself that nobody said this is going to be easy. She's going to fight, this is the final, just work for it," Sabalenka said afterwards, describing how she got through those four match points. "Take a deep breath and just work," added Sabalenka, who had reached three Grand Slam semifinals before this year but never gone farther.



'The game dictates how I coach the players'

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Sylhet

Julian Wood is known as somewhat of a pioneer in coaching T20 power-hitting. This time, he is enjoying a stint with Chattogram Challengers as head coach. His overall work with England furthered his reputation as a pioneer in the industry. The current Chattogram coach spoke to *The Daily Star's* Abdullah Al Mehdi about his work with England, his philosophy and the evolution taking place in cricket through T20s.



The Daily Star (DS): What entails the power-hitting philosophy?

Julian Wood (JW): Everybody is different but it was quite hand-dominant back in the day. If you look at the grip, it's tailored to roll the wrist, then you lead with the head to get on top of the ball and it's all tailored to keep the ball down. Then T20 came along and there was more emphasis on ball stroking and the language changed. The language I used changed in the way I coached. I had to be more aggressive because the game is dictating how you coach. The way I see it, you won't have batting coaches, you will have hitting coaches.

You still have to bat, but you have power players and then skill players. I look at the player first. I see Afif [Hossain] as a brilliant player, he's classy with skill and touch. He's got

enough power but what he must not do is what he did a few games ago when he tried to power it.

DS: Your take on England's philosophy and evolution?

JW: They made a decision in 2015 when they were knocked out of the World Cup [by Bangladesh]. I worked with England before 2015 and I was in no doubt they would be knocked out because they had red-ball players playing white-ball cricket. They got Trevor Bayliss and Eoin Morgan, who I think is fantastic as a leader. Then they started getting the right personnel and I was lucky to be part of it. I was there only for power-hitting, not batting coach, because they had Graham Thorpe, who is very good.

DS: How can Bangladesh or other nations replicate that?

JW: You have to look at your players

and that's why the BPL is so good for local players because it's like a shop window. It's an opportunity to see these guys and say 'this guy can do a job here' and then you need the right personnel working with them.

DS: Your thoughts on working with the Bangladesh team?

JW: Last year there was a lot of talk about whether I would work in Bangladesh. Of course, I would. I am open to every role, but I think what they need to improve on is power-hitting.

DS: Does Bangladesh have that potential?

JW: They are not big guys but that doesn't matter because it's how you use your body that matters. Small guys can hit big sixes and there are certain mechanics and technical aspects you need to teach differently compared to guys who are 6 feet four inches. The smaller guys need more skill.

DS: How was your experience working with Punjab in the IPL?

JW: Jonty [Rhodes] is a top Punjab man and he called me when I was here. He asked if I was in the IPL and when I said I wasn't, he said that Punjab would pick me. He got me to Punjab. The quality of the IPL is unbelievable due to the players' quality. You win games you thought you could never win. They also have a lot of data to use, like measures of bat speed. It's information. If you change the angle just four degrees with your bat, suddenly the impact is 12 percent quicker.

Kings make it 7 in 7

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings extended their winning streak to seven BPL games, breezing to a 3-1 win over Sheikh Russel at the Bashundhara Kings Arena while newcomers Fortis FC played out a 1-1 draw against Bangladesh Police at the Shaheed Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

Kings consolidated their lead at the top of the table with 21 points – six more than second placed Abahani – while Police FC and Fortis raised their tally to nine and seven points respectively.

Kings were held to a stalemate for 65 minutes before their star, Brazilian forward Robson De Silva, broke the deadlock from the spot before Asror Gafurov doubled the margin in the 73rd minute.

Sheikh Russel's Nigerian forward Sunday Udoh raised hopes with an 82nd-minute strike but Robson sealed the match with a stoppage-time strike from a free kick.

Koly shoots her way into historic final

SPORTS REPORTER

Kamrun Nahar Koly became the first Bangladeshi shooter to qualify for the finals of the women's 10m Air Rifle event in the ISSF World Cup, but the promising shooter had to be content with an eighth-placed finish in the shootout in Jakarta yesterday.

Koly – who had made history by recording the best score by a Bangladeshi shooter in the qualification round of the same event by scoring 629.2 out of 654 during the ISSF World Championships in Cairo in October 2022 – scored 228.4 in the qualification round to finish sixth among 53 shooters.

However, the 22-year-old from Narayangaj could not shine quite as brightly in the eight-shooter final round and was eliminated from the third round. Eszter Meszaros from Hungary and Aneta Stankiewicz from Poland qualified for the gold-medal match, where Meszaros triumphed.

Koly's teammates – Shaira Arefin, Nafisa Tabassum and Sajida Haque – finished 15th, 16th and 31st in the qualification round of the same event, scoring 626.5, 626.5 and 623 respectively.



Both England skipper Grace Scrivens and India captain Shafali Verma wear broad smiles as they pose with the ICC Women's Under-19 T20 World Cup at Senwes Park in Potchefstroom on Saturday. The two sides will battle it out in the final of the inaugural edition of the tournament at the same venue today.

PHOTO: ICC



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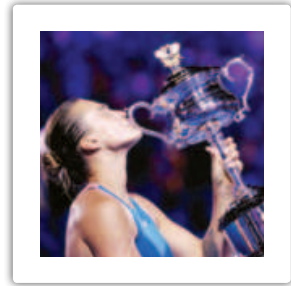
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Sabalenka breaks thru



REUTERS, Melbourne

Aryna Sabalenka powered her way to a maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over Kazakh 22nd seed Elena Rybakina on Saturday in a thrilling final. With Russian and Belarusian players only allowed to compete as individual athletes without national affiliation at Melbourne Park due to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, fifth seed Sabalenka also became the first neutral athlete to win a major.

Success has followed a period of introspection

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After work in Bhola town, people cross the Tentulia river on foot to get to their home in Majher Char of Sadar upazila. As the water levels of the Meghna-Tentulia have gone down and trawlers are unable to operate, the char inhabitants have to wade through the knee-deep water to get to the town and back. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MONIR UDDIN ANIK

'Big attacks' on key installations were their aim

Say cops after arrest of Huji leader, 5 aides

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fakhrul Islam went to Pakistan in 1988 to join the Afghan war when he was only 24.

He returned to Bangladesh after 10 years, but before that he spent several years in Pakistan, Iran, and received training in Afghanistan's Kandahar on operating AK-47 rifles, submachine guns (SMGs), and even rocket launchers.

He became an expert in assembling SMGs, able to complete the task in just 30 seconds.

During those 10 years, Fakhrul, now 58 years old, met Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Omar, and held several meetings with them.

Since his return, he had joined Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh (Huji B) and till his arrest on Friday, was working to revive the outfit's operations by collecting funds and conducting activities through social media. He even visited Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar to recruit new members.

He was planning to carry out "big militant attacks" on major establishments in Bangladesh to show that Huji B was not yet wiped out.

This was the information that the cybercrime investigation division of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit said it gathered, following the arrest of Fakhrul and five others of the outfit from different areas of the capital on Friday.

The five others are Fakhrul's son Saiful Islam, 24, Suruzzaman, 45,

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INAUGURATION OF 25 PROJECTS Rajshahi all set to welcome PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi is all set to welcome Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today for her first public rally in the district in five years.

Following a month-long preparation for the programme, a 5,000sqft stage has been set up, with a black boat as the base and white scaffolding on top, at the Madrasa Maidan in Rajshahi, now known as Haji Muhammad Mohsin Government High School ground.

Hasina, also the Awami League president, will address the rally in the afternoon. The venue will open to visitors in the morning. Local artists will sing songs of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra.

AL Presidium Member AHM Khairuzzaman Liton said they were expecting that about seven lakh people would throng the city centring the rally.

Some 12 LED screens and 220 loudspeakers have been installed at some important city points so that people can watch the rally without going to the venue, he said.

More than 500 volunteers have been deployed to serve the people while 1.5 lakh water bottles will be kept at different places, other than two water tanks to quench people's thirst.

The city streets have been covered with PVC posters, banners, and festoons have been put up on city streets showcasing the development activities of the government.

Organised jointly by AL Rajshahi city and district units, the rally will attract people from across the eight districts of the division.

Liton said, "People from far-flung areas will rush

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



MATERNAL HEALTHCARE Slum women left to fend for themselves

NILIMA JAHAN and TAHIRA SHAMSU UTSA

Eighteen-year-old Julekha Begum, of Tejgaon slum, was married off at 15 and is currently in the ninth month of pregnancy.

Even with a history of stillbirths, throughout this pregnancy, she visited a local private hospital only once at the cost of Tk 1,500.

A 2016 WHO guideline recommends a minimum of eight visits to reduce perinatal mortality -- the number of stillbirths and deaths in the first week of life -- and improve the expectant mothers' care.

Despite suffering from sharp abdominal pains, Julekha is reluctant to make further visits due to the cost, and is instead opting for a home birth with an untrained midwife.

Even with considerable development in the country's maternal healthcare, there is visible ignorance when it comes to mothers in city slums.

Compared to mothers in non-slum areas, those in slums don't receive the required antenatal or postpartum healthcare, nor have access to essential prenatal micronutrients or a trained birth attendant.

Sabina Begum*, 20, gave birth to her firstborn recently, after having

suffered from severe water breaking, long before her expected delivery date -- without any antenatal care (ANC), the care mothers get from health professionals during their pregnancy.

A 2021 Bangladesh Urban Health Survey (BUHS), conducted by the National Institute of Population Research and Training, shows that only 40 percent of pregnant women

An overwhelming majority of the expectant mothers in slums showed preference for home births, unless they experienced earlier pregnancy complications or suffered from any life-threatening conditions.

in slums received over four antenatal care checkups.

Dr Ferdousi Begum, president of the Obstetrical and Gynecological Society of Bangladesh, said ANCs ensure the routine care of mothers and unborn children to detect possible problems, prevent maternal deaths and birth immaturities, and prepare mothers for childbirth.

"Inadequate ANCs can cause major

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Indian foreign secretary to visit Dhaka next month

PORIMOL PALMA

Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra will visit Dhaka

in mid-February to discuss the preparations for the upcoming G20 summit, which will be held in Delhi on September 9-10.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is the only South Asian leader invited by India to the summit of the world's most powerful economies.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen will visit Delhi to attend the G-20 foreign minister's meeting in mid-March and Kwatra's visit will be part of preparations for the meeting, diplomatic sources said.

"Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan is likely to visit Dhaka on February 14," a diplomatic source in Delhi said.

He is likely to call on Prime Minister Hasina, Foreign Minister Momen and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen.



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METEORITE IN ANTARCTICA It contains oldest material in solar system

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Researchers in Antarctica have discovered one of the largest meteorites ever found on the continent. The space rock found in December 2022 weighs 7.6kg.

Antarctica is a favourite spot for researchers hunting for meteorites. While the continent is not hit by meteorites any more often than anywhere else on Earth the continent's cold dry weather helps preserve those that do land. Active glaciers also churn up ancient meteorites buried beneath the ice.

Helpfully the uniform white background makes spotting the dark rocks easier. The team that found the asteroid also used satellite data about Antarctica's surface and machine learning tools to predict where meteorites would most likely be found.

Finding a meteorite this large is very unusual. Over the past hundred years, more than 45,000 meteorites have been found in Antarctica - but the majority have been micrometeorites, which weigh at most a few hundred grams.

The meteorite appears to be made of chondrite, the most common type of meteorite material. These meteorites likely originated in the asteroid

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Last two JS polls were devastating Eminent citizens call for consensus on polls-time govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 15th constitutional amendment, which abolished the caretaker government system allowing national elections under partisan government, had devastating impacts on the last two parliamentary polls, eminent citizens said yesterday.

The last two elections held in 2014 and 2018 were examples of "failed and one-sided elections", they said, adding that a free, fair, participatory, and credible election is a must to put an end to the ongoing political crisis.

Speaking at a webinar, the eminent personalities called for a consensus on election-time government, and constitutional and administrative reforms.

The event titled "Shongbidhan Shongshodhoner 'Opo'rajniti" was organised by Forum for Bangladesh Studies, a platform of researchers, academics and analysts. Delivering the keynote address, Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik, said the caretaker government system was a politically settled issue, and it was introduced following a movement and based on political consensus. The national elections held in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008 under the caretaker government system were free, fair and acceptable.

He said scrapping of the system created a lack of democracy and good governance in the country, and the ineffectiveness of check and balance in parliamentary democracy.

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Traders have stacked large bags full of discarded plastic bottles right under electricity transformers at Islambagh in the capital's Lalbagh, putting the area at risk of fire. Some of the bags are in direct contact with electricity cables connected to the transformers. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Digital Security Act needed in present context Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said the Digital Security Act is required in the present context.

"No one talks about the reasons why the Digital Security Act was formulated," he said, adding that people keep saying that the law was enacted to curtail the freedom of speech and freedom of press, but that is not correct.

Misuse of any law is not unusual, the minister told a seminar organised by the Post and Telecommunications Division at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

He further said the Data Protection Act will have to be enacted after discussions with the stakeholders and there is no room for confusion about it.

The controversial Digital Security Act was enacted in 2018 amid widespread criticisms from the civil society members and journalists.

