YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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"The Taliban cannot expect the respect and support of the international community until they respect the human rights of all Afghans."

US Secretary of State **Antony Blinken**

Graft is his middle name

Internal GCC enquiry upon directive of LGRD ministry exposes countless misdeeds of suspended mayor Zahangir Alam

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE *and* MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

He and his cronies spared nothing. Not even the funds meant for feeding the destitute on National Mourning Day.

Their hands reached into every cookie jar in Gazipur City Corporation.

Mohammad Zahangir Alam, the suspended Gazipur mayor, and associates left imprints of corruption everywhere -- from major public operations like distribution of GCC grants, sand-filling, widening of roads and cleaning of sewer lines to small-scale activities like catering for the devotees at Biswa Ijtema.

They did not sit out even when it came to the money earmarked for the celebration of Bangabandhu's birth centenary.

Myriad corruption allegations against Zahangir were meticulously detailed in an internal enquiry report of the GCC.

A probe committee, formed by the LGRD and cooperatives ministry, had the GCC prepare the report, which included observations alongside the findings. The Daily Star has the documentsthat were submitted to the ministry.

Zahangir, also the expelled general secretary of the Gazipur city Awami League, hogged headlines again after the ruling party granted him amnesty on January 21 following a mercy petition.

Gazipur City Corporation spent Tk 12.43 crore for clearing garbage in eight areas over three fiscal years: (2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021).

The bills were paid without any garbage being cleared in those areas.

The GCC investigation report chronicles how all laws were disregarded and corruption became all-encompassing on his watch.

Zahangir, also the expelled general secretary of the Gazipur city Awami League, hogged headlines again after the ruling party granted him amnesty on January 21 following a mercy petition.

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Tk 1.79cr not enough to buy a broom!

MS Shiuli Enterprise was paid Tk 1.79 crore for unclogging the drains in Kashimpur (Area-8), but the money was seemingly insufficient as nothing, not even a single broom, was bought.

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Even devotees' food not spared

Tens of thousands of Muslim devotees from home and abroad gather on the banks of the Turag every year for Bishwa Ijtema, the second largest Islamic congregation.

The devotees need food and water as they stay there for three straight

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Tk 2.60cr into thin air

A bank account was opened in the name of ex-mayor Zahangir Alam, and was later used for the transaction of Gazipur City Corporation's money.

The account was opened with Premier Bank LTD's Konabari branch on February 25, 2020.

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Underground metro another milestone

Says PM at inauguration of MRT Line-1 construction

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday inaugurated the construction of the country's first-ever underground metro rail, hailing it as another milestone in Bangladesh's journey towards progress.

"We've set another milestone in Bangladesh's development journey by opening the construction work of the underground metro rail today [Thursday]," she said.

The premier made the remarks while addressing a rally at Purbachal in Narayanganj's Rupganj, where she unveiled the inaugural plaque of the construction work of the 31.241-km MRT Line-1.

The MRT Line-1 having both underground and elevated facilities will be constructed at an estimated cost of Tk 52,561.43 crore by 2026.

The 20km Airport-Kamalapur part

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Govt commits to 20 IMF conditions

First tranche of $476.27m in BB vault now

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund has laid out 20 conditions for Bangladesh for its $4.7 billion loan programme aimed at restoring macroeconomic stability, accelerating overdue macroeconomic reforms and tackling climate change challenges.

Of the 20 conditions, two are quantitative performance criteria (QPCs), which are specific, measurable targets that must be met.

Four of the conditions are indicative targets (ITs), which are similar to QPCs in that those are quantitative indicators to assess progress in meeting a programme's objectives.

For Bangladesh, the QPCs are a floor on net international reserves (NIR) and a ceiling of 3.3 percent of GDP on budget deficit.

The ITs are: ceiling on reserve money and floors on tax revenue, priority social spending that comprises all expenditures on education, health, and social safety nets and capital investment that comprises all Annual Development Programme (ADP) expenditures in the budget.

As per the QPC set for June and December, Bangladesh's NIR cannot be below $22.9 billion in March, $24.5 billion in June, $25.3 billion in September and $26.8 billion in December.

"A modest buildup in NIR, as a QPC (floor), is targeted in the first year of the programme, with further increases programmed over the medium term, to cover four months of prospective imports. Greater exchange rate flexibility will help accumulate reserves, strengthen external buffers, and build resilience," said the staff report prepared for the executive board's consideration.

For program monitoring purposes, the NIR is defined as gross international reserves minus reserve-related liabilities.

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B'BARIA BY-POLLS

'Missing' candidate reappears

He went into hiding to avoid 'pressure'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Brahmanbaria*

Former BNP leader and a candidate in Brahmanbaria-2 by-polls, Abu Asif Ahmed, who was missing for six days before and during the election, reappeared yesterday and claimed that he went into hiding of his own accord.

"As the election came nearer, I felt a lot of pressure ... I couldn't bear it. That is why I went away. I came back once the election was over," he told The Daily Star at his home in Brahmanbaria's Ashuganj upazila around 6:45pm yesterday -- three hours after he reappeared -- in the presence of his wife Meherunnesa Meherun.

Asked about the pressure he was facing, he would not comment.

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Govt seeks revision of deal with Adani Power

Delhi says it is not involved

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has sought to revise its power purchase agreement with Adani Power in light of the skyrocketing price of coal.

The development was confirmed by multiple officials of the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB), who insisted on anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

The power purchase agreement signed with Adani in November 2017 stipulates that Bangladesh will pay the market price for coal that would be used to fire the power plant in Jharkhand, India, reports The Washington Post, which got three industry experts to review the confidential 163-page agreement.

Other agreements with foreign power suppliers, also seen by The Post, include clauses that would put a cap on the prices Bangladesh pays if the cost of coal skyrockets.

In December last year, the price per metric tonne of Australian coal was $379.2 on average, according to the World Bank commodity price data of January. In 2020, it was $60.8.

The coal for the power plant will probably be supplied by Adani's Carmichael mine in Australia, The Post said.

"Industry analysts say the coal will probably come on Adani ships to an Adani-owned port in eastern India, then arrive at the plant on a stretch of Adani-built rail. The electricity generated will be sent to the border over an Adani-built high-voltage line. Under the contract, shipping and transmission costs will be passed on to Bangladesh," the report added.

The request for the review of the power purchase agreement came after Adani Power sent a request to PDB, which would be buying all the power generated by the plant, to issue a demand note that it can present to Indian authorities to open letters of credit for the coal import.

In the letter, the coal price was quoted at $400 per metric tonne,

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SIX BY-ELECTIONS

Public apathy to blame for low turnout

Say experts

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The turnout of 16 percent voters on Wednesday's by-polls to Brahmanbaria-2 was the lowest in any by-election held in the last four years, excluding the ones held amid coronavirus restrictions.

Turnouts for Bogura-4 and -6, Chapainawabganj-2 and -3 by-polls held the same day were among the lowest, according to Election Commission (EC) data.

However, voter turnout in Thakurgaon-3 was one of the highest since the 11th national polls held on December 30, 2018.

Experts blame the absence of participatory and competitive elections and the erosion of people's trust in the EC because of its failure to hold the last two general elections in a free and fair manner for the people's apparent nonchalance towards voting.

However, the EC officials said BNP's absence in the elections and the lack of an Awami League candidate in three constituencies were the reasons why voter turnout was low. Besides, people are aware that the individuals elected in the by-polls will get to be lawmakers for less than a year.

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Cement factory workers handling bags of imported cement after unloading them from a ship in the port city's Sadarghat area yesterday. Working with cement means coming into physical contact with raw materials such as clinker, gypsum, limestone and fly ash – all of which are harmful for the human body and may lead to different kinds of chronic diseases. However, due to lack of awareness among the workers and the negligence of the authorities concerned, the people end up working with no safety gear or any other kind of precaution that may help shield them from the harmful material. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

PVT HAJJ PACKAGE

Cost goes up by Tk 1.5 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cost of performing hajj this year under a private agency will be at least Tk 6.72 lakh, about Tk 1.5 lakh more than the minimum cost last year.

Besides, a pilgrim will have to pay an additional sum to the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia for a sacrificial animal, said the Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB), which has around 1,500 members.

This year, 1,27,198 people will get to perform Hajj from Bangladesh.

Around 15,000 of them will perform hajj under the government management and the rest under private management, the association told a press conference.

The cost of pilgrimage under the government management reached Tk 6.83 lakh this year, the religious affairs ministry announced earlier.

Announcing the hajj packages yesterday, HAAB President M Shahadat Hossain Taslim said every pilgrim taking the base package will be accommodated at a maximum distance of 1.5km from the boundary of the outer premises of the Holy Haram Sharif.

Any additional fees imposed by the Saudi Government will be paid by the pilgrim, he said.

Hajj agents will be able to announce special packages on their own, but the

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Shop owner stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Munshiganj*

A man was stabbed to death by unidentified criminals in Sreenagar upazila of Munshiganj on Wednesday night, said police.

Satyaranjan Dutta, 64, owned an animal feed store, near the M Rahman shopping complex in the upazila.

Every evening, after closing his shop, he returned home around the same time. When he did not get home at his usual time on Wednesday night, his family started looking for him.

Satyaranjan was eventually found critically wounded next to the graveyard near his house in Jushurgaon area of Patabhog union around 9:30pm.

H was rescued and taken to the Sreenagar Upazila Health Complex, where the on-duty doctor declared him dead.

The victim's brother Adhir Dutta, also the general secretary of the Upazila Puja Celebration Committee, said, he was in Dhaka when he heard about the incident.

"By the time I reached the hospital, my brother was already dead!

"I suspect criminals planned the attack on my brother. But, I don't understand why they would kill him. We don't have enmity with anyone. We did not even have any recent quarrels with anyone," he added.

Police said the victim's body bore multiple stab injuries.

Speaking to this newspaper, Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of the Sreenagar Police Station, said, "An autopsy of the victim's body has been done. A case will soon be filed over the incident."

Contacted, Additional Superintendent of Police (Sreenagar Circle) Md Tofail Hossain Sarkar, said, "It appears as though the murder was a planned one. So far, we do not have a lead. But, we are investigating the incident from all angles.

"We will soon get a lead. We have some suspects. But no one has been arrested. A case has been drafted and will be registered soon."

Rescuers work at a site of a residential building destroyed by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kramatorsk, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: **REUTERS**

Russia keeps up pressure in eastern Ukraine

Three killed, 18 injured in missile strike on Donetsk apartments; Zelensky urges more sanctions against Moscow

REUTERS, *Kyiv*

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday urged EU leaders during talks in Kyiv to slap more sanctions on Russia, as Moscow's forces pressed their offensive in eastern Ukraine and fired missiles into the city of Kramatorsk near the front line.

One missile destroyed an apartment building late on Wednesday in Kramatorsk of Donetsk, killing at least three people and wounding 18, police said, while Russia said yesterday it had struck US-made rocket launchers in the area.

The head of the European Commission pledged more EU aid for Ukraine as she arrived in Kyiv by train along with more than a dozen other senior EU officials for two days of talks seen as key to Ukraine's hopes of one day joining the bloc.

"Russia is paying a heavy price (for the war) as our sanctions are eroding its economy, throwing it back by a generation. We will keep turning up the pressure further," Ursula von der Leyen later told a joint news conference with Zelensky.

The West has imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia since its invasion of Ukraine on February 24 last year, aiming to cripple its ability to wage a war that has devastated Ukrainian cities and towns, killed tens of thousands of people and forced millions to flee their homes.

Zelensky called for more sanctions, saying the pace had "slightly slowed" of late and that Moscow was adapting to them.

"This is a joint European task to reduce Russia's ability to evade sanctions. And the faster and better this task is accomplished, the closer we will be to defeating the aggression of the Russian Federation," he said.

Von der Leyen said the EU would have a new package of sanctions in place for the first anniversary of the war, the biggest armed conflict in Europe since World War Two.

But she avoided any commitment to fast-track Ukraine's EU membership bid, which is expected to take years.

Meanwhile, President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russia is being threatened by German tanks "again" as it was during World War II, warning that Moscow is ready to respond to aggression from the West.

Speaking at events marking the 80th anniversary of the Red Army's victory over Nazi Germany in Stalingrad, Putin drew parallels between the Soviet Union's fight in World War II and Moscow's intervention in Ukraine.

14kg gold seized at Dhaka airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials yesterday seized 120 gold bars worth around Tk 13.5 crore at the capital's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Following a tip-off, a team of customs officials raided a bus that was transporting passengers from an aircraft to the terminal area and found the gold bars, weighing around 14 kgs, taped behind a passenger seat, said Syed Mukaddes, deputy commissioner (preventive) of Customs House.

"We have detained the driver Harunur Rashid. We suspect he is involved in a smuggling ring."

A case is being filed in this regard, he added.

3 arrested for stealing copper wire from Rampal power plant

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bagerhat*

Ansar and VDP members early yesterday detained three men in Bagerhat and recovered nine kgs of copper wire from their possession near the Rampal Thermal Power Plant.

Mamun Akon, 23, Billal Sheikh, 20, and Imran Sheikh, 21, were apprehended near the main entrance of the plant, said Chandan Debnath, commander of 3 Ansar Battalion.

The detainees and the recovered goods were handed over to the Rampal Police Station. A case was also filed with the station.

Over the last 10 months, different teams of the battalion detained 38 smugglers and recovered goods worth around Tk 58 lakh in 52 raids conducted at the power plant, the commander added.

Body of a man recovered from his house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Chapainawabganj*

Police yesterday recovered the dead body of a man from his house in Chapainawabganj municipal area.

Golam Morshed Milon, 40, of Shiala- Gabtala Moholla, was found dead in his house around 9:30am. His throat was slit, said Alamgir Jahan, officer-in-charge of Sadar Model Police Station.

"During primary investigation, we found that the victim had a property-related dispute with his elder brother Elias Hossain, a lawyer."

One of their uncles had visited them the night before to mediate between the two. Elias disagreed with their suggestions. He killed Milon later in the night and fled the house, the OC said quoting family members.

The body was sent for an autopsy while police are trying to find and arrest Elias.

Public apathy

FROM PAGE 1

The previous two ECs were criticised for holding "one-sided" polls in 2014 and 2018. In the former, 153 out of the 300 MPs were elected unopposed. In the latter, there were widespread allegations of ballot stuffing the night before the polls.

"Questions about the acceptability of 2014 and 2018 national elections and many other polls have gradually eroded most of the people's trust in the Election Commission. The latest poor turnout was a result of that lack of trust," said election expert Abdul Alim, who earlier worked on behalf of the United Nations with an EC.

The recent resignation of six BNP lawmakers from parliament made Wednesday's by-polls necessary.

Since the last general election, the current EC had held 30 by-polls. Thirteen of those were held amid coronavirus restrictions between March 17, 2020, and August 19, 2021.

Five by-polls were held before the restrictions were imposed and 12 after they were lifted.

No voting was needed in four by-elections because only one individual ran for MP in each.

Voter turnout on Wednesday was 16.10 percent in Brahmanbaria-2, 22.33 percent in Bogura-6, 23.92 percent in Bogura-4, 29.07 percent in Chapainawabganj-3, 34.78 percent in Chapainawabganj-2 and 46.30 percent in Thakurgaon-3.

The Awami League did not nominate anyone in Brahmanbaria-2, Bogura 4, and Thakurgaon 3. However, the AL's support for independent runner Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan in Brahmanbaria-2 was obvious. The ruling party officially supported candidates in two other constituencies.

The previous lowest turnout, 21.29 percent, was recorded in October 2019 during the Rangpur-3 by-polls.

Late Jatiya Party leader HM Ershad's son Rahgir Al Mahi Saad Ershad won that election in which no AL nominee participated.

"The voters lose interest when elections are not participatory and competitive," said Abdul Alim.

Contacted, Election Commissioner Rashida Sultana yesterday said turnout was good in Thakurgaon and Chapainawabganj and comparatively lower in Brahmanbaria and Bogura.

Bogura is known as a BNP stronghold, she said. Since the party was not a part of the by-polls, the BNP supporters did not come to the polling stations.

"The tenure of these MPs is only eight or nine months. That's why the voters didn't feel much interest in these by-elections," she said.

Govt seeks revision of deal

FROM PAGE 1

reports UNB.

"In our view, the coal price they have quoted is excessive -- it should be less than $250 per metric tonne, which is what we are paying for the imported coal at our other thermal power plants," a PDB official told UNB.

The Adani power plant's coal price will be $346 per metric tonne, which is much higher than the amount paid by the local coal-fired power plants, according to a report prepared by the Power Cell in January.

PDB pays $245 per metric tonne for the coal used in the Payra power plant in Patuakhali, $254.38 for the S Alam power plant in Chattogram's Banshkhali and the Rampal power plant in Bagerhat, and $270 for the Barishal 307MW coal-fired power plant.

Save for Payra, all power plants are using coal that has the same 4600 calorific value, the report said.

"This is not an official analysis -- you cannot compare one power plant with another," Mohammad Hossain, director general of Power Cell, told The Daily Star.

One power plant's evacuation cost is high, while another would have high land development costs.

"Since the Adani plant would be importing coal and a dedicated transmission line was built to transport the power, the price is slightly higher than the local coal-fired power plants."

Hossain, however, declined to confirm whether PDB has sought to review the power purchase agreement with Adani Power.

The groundwork for the power purchase agreement was laid by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 2015 state visit to Bangladesh, reports The Post.

Modi asked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to "facilitate the entry of Indian companies in the power generation, transmission and distribution sector of Bangladesh," according to an Indian foreign ministry readout of their meeting.

"After Modi's trip to Bangladesh, that country's power authority contracted with Adani to build a $1.7 billion, 1,600-megawatt coal power plant," said the report published last month.

For Modi, it was an opportunity to bolster his "Neighbourhood First" foreign policy and promote Indian business, the report said.

But the Indian government now appears to be distancing itself from the deal.

Asked by an Indian journalist about the Bangladesh government seeking revision of the power purchase agreement, Arindam Bagchi, spokesman for the external affairs ministry, said: "I don't have anything on it. I understand you are referring to an agreement between a sovereign government and an Indian company. I am not aware of it. I don't even think we are involved in it."

Replying to a follow-up question by another Indian journalist on Adani Power vis-à-vis the Bangladesh issue, Bagchi said that as part of its larger "Neighbourhood First" strategy, India would like to see greater economic integration and inter-connection with its neighbours, "which assists our process of development".

India wanted its neighbouring countries to benefit from its economic growth through the strengthening of connectivity links and cooperation in the power and waterways sectors, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

"However, if some project is not working for financial or economic reasons, I don't think it is a reflection on the relationship and we will continue our efforts how to bring our two countries closer through greater investment and trade linkages."

'Missing' candidate

FROM PAGE 1

Meherunnesa said, "My husband was feeling insecure for at least three days before he went missing. That is why he went away during the polls and came back once it was over.

"He was so upset that he even forgot to take his mobile phone when he left that day [January 27]."

Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain, superintendent of Brahmanbaria police, around 2:00pm said Asif's family members found out that he was staying at a house in the capital's Bashundhara area.

He returned to his Ashuganj house around 4:00pm, the SP said quoting his family members.

"We will quiz him to know what really happened -- where did he go and why," he told The Daily Star.

Asif left home on January 27 evening and did not return.

On January 31, his wife filed a written complaint with the chief election commissioner through email demanding them to find her husband. She later filed a general diary with Ashuganj Police Station.

The Brahmanbari-2 by-election was held on Wednesday without presence of Abu Asif Ahmed.

His rival candidate, Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan won as an independent.

Tk 1.79cr not enough

FROM PAGE 1

This is just a tip of the iceberg.

Gazipur City Corporation's internal enquiry found bigger anomalies in different development projects taken up under the annual development fund/revenue.

The GCC documents also show that in many cases, either full or 80 percent of bills were paid, but progress rate of the work was zero.

Interestingly, in some cases, the bills were settled even before the work order was issued. Besides, the documents show that contractors submitted invoices on the same date the contracts were signed.

According to the findings, tenders were awarded singularly by the mayor in a show of nepotism, flouting the recommendations of the evaluation committees, and the mayor's favourites got the deal instead of the lowest bidders.

Even devotees'

FROM PAGE 1

days under tiny tents. The government spends a hefty amount to ensure all the arrangements are in place.

Accordingly, Gazipur City Corporation spent Tk 9.4 crore for the Bishwa Ijtema for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years.

Of the amount, Tk 1.34 crore was set aside for repairing tube wells at the venue. And around Tk 24.33 lakh was earmarked for the food supplied by Abul Kashem Gong, a leasing company that got the tender.

GCC made the payment, but the food never came, according to the corporation's enquiry documents. It also did not find any voucher in support of the money being spent for food.

What is more surprising is that the tube wells that were repaired were not installed at the Bishwa Ijtema ground. They were instead placed in different areas under the city corporation's project.

Tk 2.60cr

FROM PAGE 1

The money that was deposited into the account was collected as advance holding taxes and building plan penalties from four companies -- Ispahani Foods Limited, Fin-Bangla Apparels Ltd, Honeywell Garments Ltd and GMS Composite Knitting Ind Ltd -- in five pay orders amounting to Tk 2.60 crore.

The pay orders were supposed to be deposited into the city corporation's account instead of the mayor's personal account.

The money that was later withdrawn by the mayor's caretakers Polo Chakma and Shahidul never made it to the city corporation's fund.

The GCC documents state that the mayor personally embezzled the entire amount.

Govt commits to 20 IMF conditions

FROM PAGE 1

As per the lender's balance of payments and investment position manual (BPM6), gross foreign reserves calculation does not include the various funds that the Bangladesh Bank has formed from the reserves as well as the loan guarantees provided for Biman, the currency swap with Sri Lanka, the loan to Payra Port Authority and the below-investment-grade securities.

The fund and the associated reforms are expected to stabilise the public debt at 42 percent of GDP.

Bangladesh has also committed to 13 structural benchmarks (SBs) -- which are reform measures that often are non-quantifiable but are critical for achieving programme goals and are intended as markers to assess programme implementation -- for this year.

The SBs include tax revenue measures yielding an additional 0.5 percent of GDP in the fiscal 2023-24 budget and the National Board of Revenue staffs Compliance Risk Management Units in the customs and VAT wings by December for higher revenue mobilisation.

By December, the finance ministry must develop a plan to reduce net savings certificate issuance to below 1/4 of total net domestic financing by fiscal 2025-26 and the government must adopt a periodic formula-based price adjustment mechanism for petroleum products.

The Bangladesh Bank must adopt an interest rate corridor system by July. By June, it must also compile and report official reserve assets as per the BPM6 definition and use the market-determined exchange rate for official foreign exchange transactions on behalf of the government.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics must publish quarterly GDP by December.

The central bank has to complete the pilot risk-based supervision action plan by June and also publish banks' distressed assets in the annual financial stability report.

By September, the finance ministry must submit to the Parliament the Bank Companies (Amendment) Act 2020 and the Finance Companies Act 2020, drafted in line with best practices.

The government must also adopt a sustainable public procurement policy paper and an associated action plan to integrate climate and green dimensions by September.

"We believe that our commitments are adequate to achieve program objectives, but we are prepared to take additional measures, as appropriate, for this purpose," said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and BB Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder in the letter of intent to IMF.

Should the government meet its June targets, the IMF will release the second tranche of the loan in November.

The lender has already dispatched the first tranche of $476.27 million yesterday, which took the country's foreign exchange reserves to $32.69 billion, said BB Spokesman Md Mezbaul Haque.

Underground metro

FROM PAGE 1

will not cause suffering to people as its construction works will be done some 10-30 meters under the ground, she said.

The first underground metro line will have two parts -- a 19.872-km part from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Kamalapur (Airport route) and an around 11.37-km elevated line from Natun Bazar to Purbachal (Purbachal route).

The Airport route includes 12 stations, while the Purbachal route will have seven stations.

To implement the MRT Line-1, Japan International Cooperation (JICA) will finance Tk 39,450.32 crore, while the rest Tk 13,111.11 crore will be drawn from the government's fund.

Some 800,000 passengers will be able to travel through the MRT Line-1 every day. Passengers will take only 25 minutes to travel from Airport to Kamalapur with breaks at 12 underground stations and 21 minutes from Natun Bazar to Purbachal with breaks at seven stations.

Besides, passengers will be able to reach Purbachal from Kamalapur with an interchange in Natun Bazar station within only 40 minutes with breaks at 16 stations.

A total of six metro rail routes will be inaugurated in the capital city of Dhaka by 2030.

CASE AGAINST ROZINA

'A threat to independent journalism'

Eminent citizens concerned over health ministry's no-confidence petition

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Twenty eminent citizens yesterday expressed concern over the health ministry filing a no-confidence petition on the final report in a case filed against Prothom Alo's special correspondent Rozina Islam.

The final report had stated that the allegations against Rozina could not be proven.

They called for a fair and impartial investigation into the matter with respect to the law and court.

In a statement, eminent citizens said Rozina was confined to a room of the health ministry inside the Secretariat for around six hours and tormented there while performing her professional duties on May 17, 2021, before being handed over to Shahbagh police.

Later, the ministry filed a case against Rozina under two sections of the Official Secrets Act and the Penal Code. She was released on bail after languishing for six days.

"None of the sections under which the case was filed against Rozina Islam can apply to a professional

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AMAR EKUSHEY BOI MELA

A vibrant second day

DIPAN NANDY

Rafia Ahmed tagged her three-year-old son along with her on the second day of the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, who was seen following her around, wanting to buy some books on "cars".

Meanwhile, Kavya Binte Ananya, a teenager, came with her friends from Dhanmondi. "It's heaven for booklovers. I came with my friends to take a look at the new books published this year and we hope to come back again," said Kavya.

This was the picture on the annual fair's second day, a vibrant weekend with the presence of readers of all ages and walks of life.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Publishers were also happy with the turn-out of the crowd. Aditya Antor, publisher of Ittadi Gratha Prakash, said, "It's a good sign for the Boi Mela. We hope to see greater numbers of people tomorrow (today) as well."

The unveiling ceremony of poet Shaibal Talukder's first book of poetry "Ekaki Brikkher Gaan" (Biddyaprokash) was held at Bangla Academy's Kabi Shamsur Rahman seminar room yesterday. Professor Syed Manjurul Islam was the chief guest at the function, followed by a discussion on the book held by Mahjabin Ahmad Mimi, Farid Kabir, Obaid Akash and Shakira Parveen.

"Shaibal Talukder saw life and brought that life into poetry. He expressed his thoughts in poetic language," said Prof Islam.

According to Bangla Academy, 21 new books were published on the first day of the book fair.

Among them are President Abdul Hamid's "Amar Jibanniti Amar Rajniti" (Bangla Academy), Korean filmmaker Kim Ki-Duk's "Basonto, Grishma, Sharat, Sheet ... Abong Basonta" (Translated by Audity Falguni), Pias Majid's "Marble Faler Mousum" (Oitijjhya), Wahiduddin Mahmud's "Unnayanshil Desher Ganatantrik Somajtantro: Ekti Ruprekha", Scott MacMillan's "Hope Over Fate: Fazle Hasan Abed and the Science of Ending Global Poverty" (Baatighar), and Mohammad Mufazzal's "Manorath" (Somoy Prokashon).

In the afternoon, a discussion, titled "Bangla Lokoshaite Hature Kabita", was held on the main stage of the fair, where Bilu Kabir read an essay.

'DCs, UNOs running the show now'

AL lawmaker blasts govt officials in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling Awami League MP from Thakurgaon-2 M Dabirul Islam yesterday in parliament blasted government officials, including deputy commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers, saying that they are running their areas while the roles of lawmakers are being neglected.

He alleged that the attitude of government officials is that the country became independent through their words and the people's representatives are outsiders.

The AL MP made the allegations while participating in the discussion on the thanksgiving motion on President Abdul Hamid's speech.

Dabirul said currently, public representatives cannot even give a blanket using the government's relief fund. "We [MPs] are at the mercy of UNOs and government officials."

He said, "In my district and area, I have seen that UNOs are doing everything. The idea is that the country was liberated through their words. We are strangers to them."

He claimed that the situation is not very different in other areas.

"There are many MPs in this parliament whose areas are ruled by government officials. We are just elected. They are the owners of real power," he said.

Trees fall victim to dev, once again

DSCC fells 300 trees on Saat Masjid Road's median strip

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) felled around 300 trees planted on the median strip of Saat Masjid Road in Dhanmondi to expand the island, much to the dismay of environmentalists and locals.

The felling began over three weeks ago from Zigatola to Shankar's Saat Masjid road, a stretch of around 900 metres. Locals have held human chains over the last few days, demanding an immediate end to the mindless felling of trees.

DSCC cleared the area to expand the median strip without permission from the forest department. The cabinet division in February last year made it mandatory to secure permission to cut any trees even at one's homestead.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent saw that the space between the newly constructed strip does not have enough space for planting trees. Besides, another 400 metres of the existing strip have been removed, causing the trees to fall on the road.

Sajib Hossain, a local tea shop owner, said, "Two weeks ago the trees were cut down at night. Gradually, all the trees were cut down by a crane."

"These trees used to shade the entire road," he added.

Local Asad Hossain said, "Development work should not be done at the expense of trees. The trees have been here for almost 30 years. Now the entire road is barren."

"This is a short-sighted decision that will have long-lasting impacts. The city corporation should have consulted with the community before making such a drastic move," said Jinnat Begum, another local.

Sinthiya Begum, a teacher at a private school in the area, echoed the same and said, "This will have a significant impact on the local ecosystem by causing imbalances."

A private contractor has been given the work of construction of a road divider. This correspondent visited the site office on the road yesterday, but no official was found to speak on the issue on behalf of the company, whose name remains unknown.

Contacted, Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said, "Even if the trees were not cut down, DSCC could have made it work. It was necessary to talk with the residents about these things."

"Currently, the way the road dividers are being constructed, new trees will not grow there due to the lack of soil," he added.

Contacted, Marina Nazneen, zonal executive officer (zone-1) of DSCC, said there was a risk of accidents and that's why the trees were cut down.

"The median strip will now be expanded and made stronger. The trees that have been cut have little to do with environmental protection. Those were in place mainly for beautification," she said.

When asked about acquiring necessary approvals, she replied, "This work does not require the permission of the forest department or the Department of Environment."

"More trees will be planted where the trees were cut," added Marina.

2 get eyesight back from posthumous donation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-nine-year-old Nandita Barua's consent to donate her organs after her death has given back eyesight to two others after successful cornea transplantations.

The transplants took place at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University recently, said a press release.

Nandita, a resident of Basabo, died while undergoing treatment in the ICU of BSMMU on Monday. She was suffering from kidney complications for a long time along with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and brain stroke.

According to her family, Nandita expressed her will to donate her body posthumously. When she passed away, with the consent of the family, cornea specialists of BSMMU collected her cornea.

BSMMU Ophthalmology Department Associate

Sixty-nine-year-old Nandita Barua expressed her will to donate her body posthumously. When she passed away, with the consent of the family, cornea specialists of BSMMU collected the deceased's cornea.

Professor Dr Mohammad Shish Rahman and Assistant Professor Dr Rajashree Das transplanted cornea in the eyes of Abdul Aziz (50), a deed writer of Patuakhali, and Jannatul Ferdousi (23), an honours student at Kaukhali College in Jhalkathi.

Nandita was born on June 2, 1953 in Patia of Chattogram. Her husband Swami Babul Prasad Barua was a senior official of Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation. She left behind two daughters and a son. Her daughters Shapla Barua and Senjuti Barua are respectively a poet and writer.

At a programme on Wednesday at BSMMU, Nandita's two daughters also expressed their wish for posthumous body donation.

BSMMU VC Pro Md Sharfuddin Ahmed said, "Humanity will remember her contribution. In the past month, we have successfully transplanted corneas in the eyes of 12 people in this process."

Mujibnagar university bill passed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Mujibnagar University, Meherpur Bill, 2023 was passed in parliament yesterday.

Education Minister Dipu Moni moved the bill which was unanimously passed by voice vote.

The proposed university would be prototypes of other public universities.

There will be a business incubator to make the university students

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 3

	Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	5-30	12-30	4-15	5-52	7-15
JAMAAT	6-05	1-15	4-30	5-56	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

The campaign for administering the fourth dose of Covid-19 vaccines is currently underway. Many were seen taking the jab at the 250-Bed TB Hospital in the capital's Shyamoli yesterday. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Couple burnt to death in their home

Fire started from leaking gas cylinder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A couple was burned to death in Dhaka's Bhatara early yesterday, as their house caught on fire due to a leaky gas cylinder.

The deceased -- Abdul Majid Sikder, 65, and his wife Taslima Akter, 47 -- lived alone in a flat on the second-floor of a six-storey building.

Rakibul Hasan, duty-officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said the fire originated from a leaking gas cylinder. Two firefighting units rushed there, but neighbours had already doused the fire.

Shahidul Islam, owner of a nearby house, said he saw a blaze in the kitchen from

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

ARBITRARY ARREST

Hearing on review petition on Feb 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday adjourned till February 9 the hearing of a review petition filed by the government challenging its judgement against the arbitrary exercise of power by law enforcers.

In its 2016 judgement, the SC upheld the 2003 High Court verdict, which ruled against exercise of arbitrary power by law enforcers using some provisions of the CrPC, including Section 54.

Section 54 empowers police to arrest anyone on mere suspicion. A seven-member bench headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed the order.

In a written argument, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin mentioned some inconsistencies between the SC guidelines and relevant existing laws, said DAG Amit Talukdar without elaborating.

The HC delivered its verdict on April 7, 2003, responding to a petition filed by some rights organisations, including BLAST and individuals after the death of university student Shamim Reza Rubel in police custody on July 23, 1998.

TODAY IS THE 25th DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF FORMER SECRETARY M. AKHTAR ALI

Today 3rd February 2023, Friday is the 25th Death Anniversary of former Secretary Late M. Akhtar Ali. Relatives and well wishers are requested to pray for the departed soul.

Mrs. Akhtar Ali,
House # 14/A, Road # 95, Gulshan # 2, Dhaka-1212.
Phone: 01713069583

তৃতীয় মৃত্যু বার্ষিকী

বিসমিল্লাহির রাহমানির রাহীম
বিগত ০৩/০২/২০২০ইং তারিখে বলিয়াদী জমিদার পরিবারের বৌরানী খুরশীদ আজিম সিদ্দিকী আমাদের সকলকে ছেড়ে না ফেরার দেশে চলে গেছেন। তিনি একজন প্রখ্যাত রবীন্দ্র সংগীত শিল্পী ছিলেন। আজ ০৩/০২/২০২৩ইং তারিখ তাঁর তৃতীয় মৃত্যু বার্ষিকী। তিনি সাবেক মন্ত্রী এবং এফ,বি,সি,সি,আই ও ডি,সি,সি,আই এর সাবেক সভাপতি চৌধুরী তানবীর আহমদ সিদ্দিকী'র সহধর্মিনী ছিলেন। আমরা মরহুমার বিদেহী আত্মার প্রতি সকলের দোয়া ও মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি। **মরহুমার পরিবারবর্গ**

জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

স্মারক নংঃ ১৬(০১)জাতী:বি:/স্কিল বেইজড পিজিডি/২০২৩-২০২৪/৪৯৫৫

তারিখঃ ১৭ মাঘ ১৪২৯ বঙ্গাব্দ
৩১ জানুয়ারি ২০২৩ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

স্কিল-বেইজড পোস্ট গ্র্যাজুয়েট ডিপ্লোমা (পিজিডি) প্রোগ্রামে ভর্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তি

জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে ২০২৩-২০২৪ শিক্ষাবর্ষে এক বছর (দুই সেমিস্টার) মেয়াদী নিম্নবর্ণিত পোস্ট গ্র্যাজুয়েট ডিপ্লোমা (পিজিডি) কোর্সসমূহে শিক্ষার্থী ভর্তির জন্য দরখাস্ত আহবান করা যাচ্ছেঃ

- আইসিটি
- ল্যাঙ্গুয়েজ (ইংরেজি, আরবী)
- অন্টাপ্রেনারশিপ (শিল্পোদ্যোগ)
- ডিজিটাল মার্কেটিং
- আইসিটি ইন এ্যাকাউন্টিং এন্ড বিজনেস
- সাপ্লাই চেইন ম্যানেজমেন্ট

ভর্তি সংক্রান্ত বিস্তারিত তথ্য বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ওয়েবসাইট (www.nu.ac.bd/admissions) থেকে জানা যাবে।

১। ভর্তির আবেদনের যোগ্যতা ও শর্তাবলীঃ

জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়/ইউজিসি স্বীকৃত যে কোন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে ন্যূনতম স্নাতক (পাস)/স্নাতক (সম্মান)/সমমান ডিগ্রীধারী প্রার্থীগণ আবেদন করতে পারবে। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত নিয়ম ও শর্তানুযায়ী যোগ্য বিবেচিত হলে ২০২৩-২০২৪ শিক্ষাবর্ষে পূর্ণকালীন শিক্ষার্থী হিসাবে ভর্তি করা হবে।

২। ভর্তির সময়সূচীঃ

ক্রমিক	বিবরণ	তারিখ
ক)	অনলাইনে প্রাথমিক আবেদন ফরম পূরণের তারিখ	০১/০২/২০২৩ থেকে ২৬/০২/২০২৩
খ)	লিখিত পরীক্ষার তারিখ ও স্থান	১০ মার্চ শুক্রবার, ২০২৩ সকাল ১১:০০টা থেকে ১২:০০টা পর্যন্ত সরকারি টিচার্স ট্রেনিং কলেজ, মিরপুর রোড, ঢাকা।
গ)	মৌখিক পরীক্ষার তারিখ ও স্থান	১৮ মার্চ, শনিবার, ২০২৩ ৮ম তলা, ইসলাম টাওয়ার, ১০২, শুক্রাবাদ, ঢাকা
ঘ)	চূড়ান্তভাবে নির্বাচিত শিক্ষার্থীদের জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অনলাই গেটওয়ে (Gateway) অথবা পে-স্লিপ ডাউনলোড করে ভর্তি ফি জমা দেয়ার তারিখ	২২/০৩/২০২৩ থেকে ২৯/০৩/২০২৩ পর্যন্ত
ঙ)	ক্লাস শুরুর তারিখ ও স্থান	৩০ মার্চ, মঙ্গলবার, ২০২৩ ইসলাম টাওয়ার, ১০২, শুক্রাবাদ, ঢাকা।

বি:দ্র: স্কিল-বেইজড পোস্ট গ্র্যাজুয়েট ডিপ্লোমা (পিজিডি) প্রোগ্রামের প্রতিটির ০১ (এক) বছরের ফি সর্বসাকুল্যে ৬০,০০০.০০/- (ষাট হাজার) টাকা, যা দুই কিস্তিতে পরিশোধযোগ্য।

▶ ভর্তি সংক্রান্ত তথ্যের জন্যঃ হেল্প ডেস্ক, এনইউ স্কিল-বেসড পিজিডি, ৮ম তলা, ১০২, ইসলাম টাওয়ার, শুক্রাবাদ, ঢাকা।
ফোনঃ ০১৫৫৮০০৫১৮৮; ০১৭২৫১৭২০৩৩, ০১৬৭৩৮৩৬০৯৪
Email: pgdeanoffice@gmail.com, nuskillbasedpgdprograms@gmail.com

▶ ভর্তি কার্যক্রমের যে কোন নিয়মাবলী/ধারা/উপধারা সংশোধন, সংযোজন, বিয়োজন, পরিবর্তন অথবা বাতিল করার অধিকার জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করে।

প্রফেসর ড. মোহাম্মদ বিন কাশেম
ডিন (ভারপ্রাপ্ত)
স্নাতকোত্তর শিক্ষা, প্রশিক্ষণ ও গবেষণা কেন্দ্র
জাতীয় বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
ফোনঃ ০১৭৮০৪৫৫৬১৭
ই-মেইলঃ pgdeanoffice@gmail.com

GD-175

The Aga Khan Academy Dhaka is currently inviting applicants for the following positions

The Aga Khan Academies is an integrated network of residential schools in Africa, South and Central Asia and the Middle East, dedicated to expanding access to education of an international standard of excellence to exceptional young men and women, regardless of their ability to pay.

The Aga Khan Academy Dhaka is the fourth Academy in a global network of day and residential schools. It aims to develop meritorious young men and women into homegrown ethical leaders, offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum from the Primary Years Programme to the Diploma Programme and provides a rich opportunity for teachers and students to grow professionally and personally.

OPEN TEACHING POSITIONS

Learning Support Specialist
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055990)

Learning Support Specialist, English as an additional language (EAL)
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055989)

Performing Arts Teacher, Dance
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055992)

Performing Arts Teacher, Music
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055991)

Integrated Humanities and Environment System Teacher, Senior School
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055995)

Lead Science Teacher, Biology
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055987)

Mathematics Teacher, Senior School
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055996)

Science Teacher, Senior School
(https://the.akdn/careers/30025)

Tech Integration Teacher
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055988)

Bangla Teacher, Senior School
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055997)

Homeroom Teacher, Junior School
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055993)

Assistant Teacher, Junior School
(https://the.akdn/careers/2055994)

For further information and to apply, please visit www.the.akdn.org/careers

Experience with the IB programme and experience working in any of the Aga Khan Academies in similar roles will be an added advantage.

Closing Deadline: 22 February 2023

Couple burnt

FROM PAGE 3

his home around 5:30am and rushed there with several others to rescue the people.

"We broke open the door and saw the clothes of the two were still burning while they were on the kitchen floor unconscious. We immediately doused the fire," he told The Daily Star.

Shahidul said they found no gas left in the cylinder even though it was undamaged.

Bhatara police recovered the bodies and sent them to the morgue of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College for autopsy.

Morgue sources said the bodies have deep burns.

Deceased Majid's two sons live in Italy with their families. One of the sons was scheduled to arrive on February 12, said Imran, Majid's nephew.

Mujibnagar

FROM PAGE 3

entrepreneurs and give them all kinds of assistance at preliminary stage.

The university will also cooperate students or teachers to use their invention, intellectual property in processing, marketing, and its usage commercially.

As per the bill, the discipline committee will propose the syndicate to take appropriate steps for resisting and preventing sexual harassment, violence and ragging.

A threat

FROM PAGE 3

journalist. According to that law, taking any information from a secret place will be punishable. But the health ministry is not a secret place, and there is no legal bar on journalists taking information from there for professional work," read the statement.

On January 23, the court directed the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to further investigate the case following the complainant's no-confidence petition.

This was seven months after the Detective Branch of police submitted the final report, which mentioned that the charges against Rozina have not been proved, they said in the statement.

"The health ministry... continues to harass her with a no-confidence petition even though the allegations were not proved in the police investigation," it said.

"This behaviour is a threat to independent journalism," added the statement.

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Justice MA Matin, Prof Abul Kasem Fazlul Haque, Prof Anu Mohammed, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Moinul Islam, Rasheda K Choudhury, ZI Khan Panna, MM Akash and Mamunur Rashid are among the signatories of the statement.

Bedlam

FROM PAGE 5

At the meeting, former secretary general of Baira Ali Haider Chowdhury said the chaotic incident left him disheartened.

"Baira has become an institution over the years. However, today's incident has hurt me," he said, urging Baira members to keep patience and work for a common cause.

Among others, Baira Secretary General Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman, executive committee member Ruhul Amin Shwapon, and former president Benjir Ahmed spoke.

Abdul Haye passes away

STAR REPORT

Prof AHM Abdul Haye, founding director of the Institute of Modern Languages at Dhaka University, passed away on January 28. He was 84, said a press release.

He is survived by his wife, two daughters, sons-in-law, a grandson, and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

All are requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Khurshida Haque's death anniv today

STAR REPORT

Today is the 12th death anniversary of Begum Khurshida Haque, wife of late MA Haque, a former minister, top ranking police officer, founding president of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), writer and founder of Police Welfare Society.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil has been arranged. Besides, food items will be distributed among the destitute at orphanage and prayers will be offered at mosque, said a press release.

Death anniv of Hasina Begum today

STAR REPORT

Today is the 1st death anniversary of Hasina Begum, wife of late AKM Nurun Nabi, former district registrar, said a press release.

Hasina Begum, mother of the Financial Times Editor Anwarul Kabir Shahzada, died of a cardiac arrest on this day in 2022, aged 77.

Qurankhwani and a doa mahfil will be held after the Juma prayers at Gopibagh graveyard today.

A doa and milad mahfil will also be held today at Shah Saheb Bari Mosque, near her residence at Momembagh after the Juma and Asr prayers. The same programmes will be held simultaneously at the mosque adjacent to her Nijpanua village home in Chhagalnaiya upazila of Feni.

Besides, Qurankhwani and a doa mahfil will be held after Zohr prayers at the Gulbagh mosque tomorrow. He family members requested all to attend those programmes to pray for the salvation of he departed soul.

Habiganj

FROM PAGE 5

meeting that a designated space will be allocated for garbage dumping in the area. However, there was no follow-up on the matter. The river, as a result, has lost its navigability and turned into a canal," said ATM Mahmudul Islam Yusuf, president of Mirpur Byabsayee Samiti.

Prof Zahir Bin Alam of civil and environmental engineering at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust), said if the river is dredged properly, it will not be beneficial. "There remains a danger that the bottom will be filled up again," said Prof Zahir.

Contacted, Bahubol UNO Mohua Sharmeen Fatema said, "While digging this river, our people faced some obstacles and so, we could not continue the work. However, after I took office, no trader from the market came to me with any complaint regarding the issue."

Hero Alom

FROM PAGE 5

president of the proposed district Jubo League committee. "I hear that a misunderstanding occurred between journalists and Shipul," he said.

OC Noor-a-Alam Siddiqui of Sadar Police Station said they received a verbal complaint and legal action will be taken if a written complaint is received.

EXCLUSIVE FLATS FOR RENT

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তারিখঃ ১৯ মাঘ ১৪২৯ ব.
০২ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৩খ্রিঃ

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ক্রঃ নং	পদের নাম, কর্মস্থল ও বেতন স্কেল (জাতীয় বেতন স্কেল ২০১৫ অনুযায়ী)	পদ সংখ্যা	নিয়োগের ন্যূনতম শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতাসহ অন্যান্য যোগ্যতা
০১	**ফোরম্যান** বিটিআরআই, বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, শ্রীমঙ্গল, মৌলভীবাজার। বেতন স্কেলঃ ১২৫০০-৩০২৩০/- (গ্রেডঃ ১১)	০১ (এক)টি	প্রযুক্তি বিষয়ে সরকার অনুমোদিত কোন প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে ডিপ্লোমা প্রাপ্ত হতে হবে। ইলেকট্রনিক্স এন্ড ইলেকট্রিক্যাল/মেকানিক্যাল বিষয়ে ডিপ্লোমাসহ অভিজ্ঞ প্রার্থীদের অগ্রাধিকার দেয়া হবে।
০২	**সিনিয়র মেকানিক** বিটিআরআই, বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, শ্রীমঙ্গল, মৌলভীবাজার। বেতন স্কেলঃ ১০২০০-২৪৬৮০/- (গ্রেডঃ ১৪)	০১ (এক)টি	মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট পরীক্ষা পাশসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট বৃত্তিমূলক প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে সার্টিফিকেটধারী হতে হবে। ড্রাইভিং ও মেকানিক্যাল কাজে বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন প্রার্থীদের অগ্রাধিকার দেয়া হবে।
০৩	**অফিস সহকারী কাম কম্পিউটার অপারেটর** বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, প্রধান কার্যালয়, চট্টগ্রাম। বেতন স্কেলঃ ৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/- (গ্রেডঃ ১৬)	০২ (দুই)টি	বাংলা ও ইংরেজী টাইপিং এ যথাক্রমে ১৫ ও ২০ গতি সম্পন্ন (প্রতি মিনিটে) এবং এইচএসসি পাশ হতে হবে।
০৪	**গাড়ীচালক** পিডিইউ, বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, শ্রীমঙ্গল, মৌলভীবাজার। বেতন স্কেলঃ ৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/- (গ্রেডঃ ১৬)	০১ (এক)টি	সরকার অনুমোদিত কোন প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে ভারী/মধ্যম/হালকা ড্রাইভিং লাইসেন্স প্রাপ্ত। কোন সরকারী বা স্বায়ত্বশাসিত অথবা প্রতিষ্ঠিত বাণিজ্যিক প্রতিষ্ঠানে ড্রাইভিং কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
০৫	**কার্পেন্টার** বিটিআরআই, বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, শ্রীমঙ্গল, মৌলভীবাজার। বেতন স্কেলঃ ৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/- (গ্রেডঃ ১৬)	০১ (এক)টি	সরকার অনুমোদিত কোন প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে ছুতার কাজে সার্টিফিকেট এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজে বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
০৬	**কুক** বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, প্রধান কার্যালয়, চট্টগ্রাম। বেতন স্কেলঃ ৮৫০০-২০৫৭০ (গ্রেডঃ ১৯)	০১ (এক)টি	অবশ্যই এসএসসি পাশ/সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ে সমমানের কারিগরী প্রশিক্ষণধারী। রন্ধন কার্যে পারদর্শিতাসহ সুস্বাস্থ্যের অধিকারী হতে হবে।
০৭	**চেইনম্যান** বিটিআরআই, বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, শ্রীমঙ্গল, মৌলভীবাজার। বেতন স্কেলঃ ৮২৫০-২০০১০/- (গ্রেডঃ ২০)	০১ (এক)টি	৮ম শ্রেণী পাশ হতে হবে। স্বাস্থ্যবান ও কায়িক পরিশ্রম করতে ইচ্ছুক হতে হবে।
০৮	**মালী** বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, প্রধান কার্যালয়, চট্টগ্রাম ও বিটিআরআই, বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, শ্রীমঙ্গল, মৌলভীবাজার। বেতন স্কেলঃ ৮২৫০-২০০১০/- (গ্রেডঃ ২০)	০২ (দুই)টি	৮ম শ্রেণী পাশ হতে হবে। কোন সরকারী অফিস অথবা প্রতিষ্ঠিত বাণিজ্যিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের অধীনে বাগান পরিচর্যা কাজে বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।

O শর্তাবলীঃ

০১। চাকরির আবেদন ফরম বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ডের ওয়েবসাইটঃ www.teaboard.gov.bd-এ পাওয়া যাবে। প্রার্থীদের চাকরির নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফরমে নির্দেম অনুযায়ী প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্য-উপাত্ত প্রদান করতে হবে। অসম্পূর্ণ তথ্য সম্বলিত আবেদন বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে। আবেদনের সাথে সংযুক্ত কোন কিছুই ফেরৎযোগ্য নয়।

০২। চাকরির আবেদন ফরমের সাথে অবশ্যই নিম্নোক্ত কাগজপত্র সংযুক্ত করতে হবেঃ
(ক) চাকরি প্রার্থীর সদ্য তোলা ৪ (চার) কপি ৫x৫ সে. মি. সাইজের রঙ্গিন ছবি আবেদন ফরমের সাথে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে (প্রথম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড অফিসার কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত হতে হবে)। তৎমধ্যে ১ কপি ছবি আবেদন ফরমের নির্ধারিত স্থানে আঠা দিয়ে এবং অবশিষ্ট ৩ কপি ছবি ষ্ট্যাপল করে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।
(খ) সচিব, বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, চট্টগ্রাম এর অনুকূলে ০১ নং ক্রমিকের পদের জন্য ৩০০/- (তিনশত) টাকা, ০২-০৫ নং ক্রমিকের পদের জন্য ২০০/- (দুইশত) টাকা এবং ০৬-০৮ নং ক্রমিকের পদের জন্য ১০০ (একশত) টাকা মূল্যমানের ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার (অফেরতযোগ্য) আবেদনের সাথে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে। ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার এর নম্বর ও তারিখ এবং তা ইস্যুকৃত ব্যাংক শাখার নাম আবেদন ফরমে উল্লেখ করতে হবে।

০৩। নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কোটা সংরক্ষণ সংক্রান্ত সরকারি নীতিমালা যথাযথভাবে অনুসরণ করা হবে।

০৪। ০১ নং ক্রমিকের পদের জন্য সকল জেলার প্রার্থীগণ আবেদন করতে পারবেন। ০২-০৮ নং ক্রমিকের পদের জন্য ঢাকা, গাজীপুর, মানিকগঞ্জ, মুন্সিগঞ্জ, নারায়নগঞ্জ, নরসিংদী, শরিয়তপুর, কিশোরগঞ্জ, টাংগাইল, জামালপুর, নেত্রকোনা, চট্টগ্রাম, চাঁদপুর, কুমিল্লা, নোয়াখালী, জয়পুরহাট, পাবনা, সিরাজগঞ্জ, নওগাঁ, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ, দিনাজপুর, পঞ্চগড়, ঠাকুরগাঁও, খুলনা, যশোর, মাগুরা, নড়াইল, সাতক্ষীরা, চুয়াডাঙ্গা ও মেহেরপুর জেলার প্রার্থীগণ আবেদন করতে পারবেন।

০৫। প্রার্থীদের বয়স ২৫/০৩/২০২০খ্রিঃ তারিখ পর্যন্ত ১৮-৩০ বছর হতে হবে। তবে মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার পুত্র-কন্যা ও শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধীদের ক্ষেত্রে বয়সসীমা ৩২ বছর। বয়স প্রমাণের ক্ষেত্রে এফিডেভিড গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়।

০৬। প্রার্থীদের মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় আবেদনে উল্লিখিত সকল কাগজপত্রের মূলকপি সঙ্গে আনতে হবে এবং সকল শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে) এর কপি, প্রথম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড অফিসার কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত চারিত্রিক সনদপত্র, ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ এর চেয়ারম্যান/পৌরসভার মেয়র/সিটি কর্পোরেশনের ওয়ার্ড কাউন্সিলর কর্তৃক প্রার্থীর নিজ জেলা উল্লেখপূর্বক প্রদত্ত নাগরিকত্ব সার্টিপিকেট এর কপি, জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র অথবা জন্ম নিবন্ধন সনদপত্র এর কপি ও সকল সনদপত্র ও কাগজপত্রের কপি প্রথম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত কপি জমা দিতে হবে।

০৭। বিদেশি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে অর্জিত ডিগ্রির ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশন হতে ইস্যুকৃত সমমান সার্টিফিকেট অবশ্যই জমা দিতে হবে।

০৮। মুক্তিযোদ্ধা কোটা দাবীর ক্ষেত্রে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কার্যালয়ের পত্রসংখ্যা ০৩.০৭৭.০১.০৪৬.০০.০৪.২০১০-৩৫৬, তারিখ ৭-১১-২০১০ মোতাবেক প্রত্যয়নপত্র জমা দিতে হবে।

০৯। চাকরির আবেদন সচিব, বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড, প্রধান কার্যালয়, ১৭১-১৭২, বায়েজিদ বোস্তামী সড়ক, নাসিরাবাদ, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২১০, এই ঠিকানায় আগামী ০৫ মার্চ ২০২৩খ্রিঃ তারিখের মধ্যে অফিস চলাকালীন পৌঁছাতে হবে। উক্ত তারিখের পর প্রাপ্ত কোন আবেদন গ্রহণযোগ্য হব না।

১০। চাকরিরত প্রার্থীদের যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে এবং নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যেই তাদের আবেদন পৌঁছাতে হবে। কোন অগ্রিম কপি গৃহীত হবে না।

১১। আবেদনপত্রের খামের উপরে ডান পাশে পদের নাম এবং জেলার নাম স্পষ্টাক্ষরে উল্লেখ করতে হবে।

১২। এই বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের কারণে লিখিত/ব্যবহারিক/মৌখিক পরীক্ষা গ্রহণে কর্তৃপক্ষ বাধ্য নয়। এক্ষেত্রে কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।

১৩। বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তির শর্তাবলী সংশোধন/বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

১৪। লিখিত/ব্যবহারিক/মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য কোন প্রকার টি.এ./ডি.এ. প্রদান করা হবে না।

১৫। আবেদনকারীর নাম ও আবেদনপত্রে উল্লিখিত বর্তমান ঠিকানা লিপিবদ্ধ করে ১০/- টাকার ডাকটিকেট সম্বলিত ১০"x৪.৫" মাপের একটি ফেরত খাম আবেদনের সঙ্গে প্রেরণ করতে হবে।

১৬। যে কোন প্রকারের তদবির/সুপারিশ প্রার্থীর অযোগ্যতা বলে বিবেচিত হবে।

সচিব
বাংলাদেশ চা বোর্ড

জিডি-১৭৩

Bedlam at Baira over 'syndication'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chaos overshadowed a meeting of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) yesterday as attending members created chaotic situations on more than one occasions over alleged "syndication" in sending migrant workers to Malaysia.

During the incident, a journalist covering the event was allegedly manhandled by some of Baira members.

The apex trade body of recruiting agencies organised the meeting at a city hotel demanding opportunity for all of its members to send migrant workers to Malaysia, ahead of Malaysian Home Minister Saifuddin Nasution Ismail's upcoming visit to Bangladesh.

However, at the beginning of the meeting, when a Baira member took to the podium and alleged that several of its executive committee members are part of the "syndicate", a section of the members from the audience started to make noise.

This continued for several minutes as senior Baira leaders including its President Abul Basher, who was moderating the event, were forced to halt the meeting and calm down the audience.

The situation became normal following an on-duty police official taking to the podium and urging everyone to maintain discipline inside the venue.

Chaotic situation was created again towards the latter part of the event when Baira Joint Secretary Fakhrul Islam took to the podium and started to talk about the syndicate issue.

Amid the situation, some of Baira members allegedly manhandled and misbehaved with one of the journalists.

At the beginning of the meeting, when a Baira member took to the podium and alleged that several of its executive committee members are part of the "syndicate", a section of the members from the audience started to make noise.

Later, talking with reporters, Basher said he will take action against the culprits after identifying them going through video footage.

Asked about the chaotic situation, Basher said a section of "beneficiaries from the syndicate" might have demonstrated thinking of counting loss if the market is opened for all.

According to Baira members, only 100 recruiting agencies are allowed to send migrant workers to Malaysia at present, after the market was reopened last year following a four-year suspension.

Initially, 25 agencies were allowed to send migrant workers there, which was labelled by sector insiders as "syndicate".

According to the Baira website, it has more than 1,700 active members at present.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Habiganj's lifeline ceasing to exist

Jujnal river victim of encroachment, pollution

PHOTO: STAR

MINTU DESHWARA,
back from Habiganj

There was a time when the Jujnal river used to be the lifeline of Habiganj. Boats used to ply the river with goods and passengers, facilitating agriculture, trade and communication simultaneously.

However, this has ceased to be the reality in recent years, due to rampant encroachment, filling and pollution.

The river, which originated from Khowai river and is situated at Mirpur Bazar in Habiganj's Bahubol upazila, is currently nothing short of a garbage dump. Illegal structures stand on both sides of the river, while part of the river is the victim of constant filling, making it look like nothing more than a mere canal.

During monsoons, the slopes of the river are flooded with dirt and polythene, causing it to remain dead during the dry season.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found traders from the adjacent Mirpur Bazar, along with locals, throwing garbage on the riverside indiscriminately. The area emanates a horrible stench without a garbage disposal facility around.

Besides, there are houses and other establishments by the market's traders on both sides of the river. Many of the owners of these establishments have been illegally occupying the riverside for generations.

Minhaj Uddin, a resident of Mirpur area, said all kinds of garbage, including remains from slaughtered cows and goats, garbage from raw markets and business establishments, are being dumped into the river.

"No one can move through the space because of the smell. If the administration took appropriate measures, the river could be saved. We could be saved," he added.

Khowai River Waterkeeper Tofazzal Sohel said a certain section, fueled with greed, has been behind the dying state of the Jujunal.

"It is absolutely necessary to dredge the river and ensure its normal flow," he added.

Abdul Karim Chowdhury, member of the executive committee of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), said, "When I visited the river recently, I saw the market people setting up open toilets on the riverbank."

"According to locals, the filth in Jujunal eventually falls into different connecting rivers, including the Meghna," he added.

"A couple of years ago, it was decided in the Upazila Parishad

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Hero Alom's claims have no basis

Says EC Rashida Sultana on vote-rigging allegations; JL leader assaults journos

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bogura*

Election Commissioner Rashida Sultana yesterday rejected the vote-rigging allegations brought by Bogura-4 independent candidate Ashraful Hossain, alias Hero Alom, saying that those have no basis.

Rashida, while talking to reporters in the afternoon at her EC office in the capital, said the returning officer, as well as the district election officer, informed the commission that the results are 100 percent correct.

Hero Alom lost the Bogura-4 (Kahalu-Nandigram constituency) by-polls to ruling Awami League-led grand alliance candidate AKM Rezaul Karim Tansen, by just 834 votes, on Wednesday.

After the announcement of the results, Alom alleged that the results were rigged and he would go to the High Court to seek justice.

"We have seen the results sheets ourselves. There is no discrepancy there. When candidates lose, they make some allegations to make the elections questionable. This is the culture of our country, and Hero Alom is no exception," she said.

Mahmud Hasan, Bogura's district election commissioner and assistant returning officer, told The Daily Star that the chief election commissioner gave the order to take note of the allegations Alom made during a press conference and also on a talk show. "Later, we checked the results again and found that everything was fine," he said.

Meanwhile, a leader of Bogura District Jubo League unit has been accused of beating two journalists for covering Hero Alom's press conference on Wednesday night.

The victims are JM Rauf, district correspondent of Dainik Kaler Kantho and general secretary of Bogura Journalist Union, and Zahurul Islam, a senior journalist of a local newspaper Dainik Bogura. The incident happened at Bogura Town Club adjacent to the Bogura District Awami League office around 11:30pm on Wednesday, said the victims.

The accused Jubo League leader is Shariful Islam Shipul. "Police have been informed and will submit a written complaint," Rauf told The Daily Star.

The Daily Star repeatedly tried to reach Shipul for comments but could not reach him.

According to District Jubo League General Secretary Aminul Islam Dablu, Shipul is a vice

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী সওজ এর কার্যালয়
দোহাজারী সড়ক বিভাগ, দোহাজারী, চট্টগ্রাম
ই-মেইল নংঃ eedoh@rhd.gov.bd

সেতুর ইজারা কোটেশন আহবান বিজ্ঞপ্তি

০১।	ইজারা কোটেশন নং	:	০১/২০২২-২০২৩ইং (২য় আহবান)।
০২।	ইজারার বিবরণ	:	দোহাজারী সড়ক বিভাগাধীন পটিয়া-আনোয়ারা-বাঁশখালী-টইটং সড়কের ২৩তম কিঃমিঃ এ সাংগু নদীর উপর তৈলারদ্বীপ সেতুতে (দৈর্ঘ্যঃ ৫২১.২৩ মিঃ) টোল আদায় কোটেশন বিজ্ঞপ্তি।
০৩।	ইজারা চুক্তির মেয়াদ	:	২০২৩-২০২৪, ২০২৪-২০২৫ এবং ২০২৫-২০২৬ইং ৩ (তিন) অর্থ বছর (১০৯৫ দিন)।
০৪।	ইজারা কোটেশন তফসিল মূল্য	:	টাকা ৫,০০০.০০ (পাঁচ হাজার মাত্র)।
০৫।	বায়নার টাকার পরিমাণ	:	উদ্ধৃত মূল্যের ১০% (শতকরা দশ ভাগ) ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার আকারে।
০৬।	ইজারা কোটেশন বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	২৭/০২/২০২৩ইং বিকাল ৫.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
০৭।	মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় ইজারা কোটেশন গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	২৮/০২/২০২৩ইং দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
০৮।	ইজারা কোটেশন খোলার স্থান তারিখ ও সময়	:	স্থানঃ নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সড়ক বিভাগ, দোহাজারী, চট্টগ্রাম। তারিখঃ ২৮/০২/২০২৩ইং। সময়ঃ বিকাল ৩.৩০ ঘটিকা।
০৯।	ইজারা ডাকে অংশগ্রহণের যোগ্যতা	:	ভ্যাট ও আয়কর সনদধারী প্রতিষ্ঠান/নাগরিক, সরকারী/বেসরকারী/স্বায়ত্তশাসিত সকল প্রতিষ্ঠানের ঠিকাদার।
১০।	যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা কোটেশন বিক্রয় করা হবে	:	ক) বিভাগীয় কমিশনার, চট্টগ্রাম। খ) নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, দোহাজারী/চট্টগ্রাম/পিএন্ডডি বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম। গ) উপ-বিভাগীয় প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক উপ-বিভাগ, দোহাজারী/পটিয়া/ ১ম সারি কারখানা উপ-বিভাগ, দোহাজারী, চট্টগ্রাম।
১১।	যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা কোটেশন গ্রহণ করা হবে	:	ক) বিভাগীয় কমিশনার, চট্টগ্রাম। খ) তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, চট্টগ্রাম সড়ক সার্কেল, চট্টগ্রাম। গ) নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, দোহাজারী/চট্টগ্রাম।
১২।	ইজারা আহবানকারী যে কোন সময় যে কোন কোটেশন/সকল কোটেশন বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।		

সুমন সিংহ
পরিচিতি নং-৬০২১৬৩
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ
দোহাজারী সড়ক বিভাগ, দোহাজারী, চট্টগ্রাম

জিডি-১৭২

Nur Khan gets US human rights defender award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US Department of State has named Bangladeshi rights activist Mohammad Nur Khan as one of the 10 winners of its annual Global Human Rights Defenders award.

The State Department made the announcement on Wednesday.

In a statement, the State Department said over the past three decades, Nur Khan led two of Bangladesh's best-known domestic rights organisations -- Ain o Salish Kendra and Human Rights Support Society -- and partnered with international organisations to document human rights abuses and promote accountability in Bangladesh.

"His timely interventions, advocacy on behalf of families of victims of enforced disappearances, and leadership amongst the country's active civil society networks, have saved lives and cleared innocent victims of politically motivated charges," it said.

Nine other awardees are: Elaize de Souza Farias (Brazil), Chhim Sithar (Cambodia), Nino Lomjaria and Team (Georgia), Rosa Melania Reyes Velásquez (Honduras), Nasrin Sotoudeh (Iran), The legal team of the Badinan detainees, led by Bashdar Hassan (Iraq), Mohamed Ely El Her (Mauritania), Ding Jiaxi (People's Republic of China) and Ekoue David Joseph Dosseh (Togo).

Father challenges verdict to give Japanese mother children's custody

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh-born US citizen Imran Sharif yesterday challenged the family court's verdict that dismissed the case filed by him in February last year, seeking custody of his children.

Judge AHM Habibur Rahman Bhuiyan of Dhaka's District and Sessions Judge's Court fixed February 16 to decide whether it would admit the appeal.

On January 29, Judge Durdana Rahman gave the custody of the children -- Nakano Jasmine Malika, 11, and Nakano Laila Lina, 9 -- to their mother Eriko Nakano, who is a Japanese citizen. The court also dismissed the case filed by Sharif on February 28, 2022.

Meanwhile, Imran's younger daughter Laila told the court that she wants to be in her father's custody yesterday when she was produced before Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mamunur Rashid while placing submissions in support and against her custody.

জীবনের জন্য বিজ্ঞান
"শেখ হাসিনার দর্শন, সব মানুষের উন্নয়ন"

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www.bcsir.gov.bd

Invitation for Tender - OTM (International Competition)

1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Science and Technology.	
2.	Agency	Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (BCSIR).	
3.	Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (BCSIR), Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh.	
4.	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.	
5.	Invitation for	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Scientific Equipments. [Name of equipments: Item No. (1) Gas chromatography system with Biogas Analyzer, Item No. (2) Oligonucleotide synthesizer, Item No. (3) Inductive Couple Plasma Spectrometer (ICP-QES), Item No. (4) Total Organic Carbon Analyzer & Item No. (5) HPLC (Details will be found in the Tender Document)].	
6.	Invitation Ref No.	39.02.0000.022.35.278.23	
7.	Date	02/02/2023	
KEY INFORMATION			
8.	Procuring method	Open Tendering Method (International Competition).	
9.	Budget and source of fund	GoB.	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION			
10.	Tender last selling date	19.03.2023 during office hour.	
11.	Tender closing date & time	20.03.2023 at 1.00pm.	
12.	Tender opening date and time	20.03.2023 at 2.00pm.	
13.	Name & address of the office(s) selling tender document	Cashier, BCSIR, Secretariat Building (3rd Floor), Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.	
14.	Name & address of the office(s) receiving tender document	Office of the Secretary, Secretariat Building (4th Floor), BCSIR, Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.	
15.	Name & address of the office(s) opening tender document	Office of the Secretary, Secretariat Building (4th Floor), BCSIR, Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.	
INFORMATION ON AWARD			
16.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Science and Technology.	
17.	Eligibility of tenderer	* The tenderer shall have a minimum of 5 (five) years of overall experience in the supply of similar type of goods. * The satisfactory completion of supply of similar scientific equipments/ instruments of minimum 100% (hundred percent) of the total value of the item(s) quoted by the tenderer under maximum 5 (five) contracts in the last 5 (five) years. * Details will be found in the Tender Data Sheet (TDS) of the Tender Document.	
18.	Brief description of goods	As per attached specification in the tender document.	
19.	Brief description of related services		
20.	Price of tender document	Tk. 2,000.00 (two thousand) (non-refundable)	
21.	Evaluation will be done "**Item by Item**" basis.		
22.	Description of goods	Tender security (Tk)	Completion time in months/days
	Scientific Equipment (As per attached specification in the tender document)	The amount of Tender Security shall be at least 2.0% (Two percent) of the total value of the item(s) quoted by the tenderer in favour of Secretary, BCSIR by a tender security.	90 (ninety) days from the date of contract signing
PROCUREMENT ENTITY DETAILS			
23.	Name of official inviting tender	Shah Abdul Tarique.	
24.	Designation of official inviting tender	Secretary, BCSIR, Dhaka.	
25.	Contact details of official inviting tender	Secretary, Secretariat Building (4th Floor), BCSIR, Dr. Qudrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205, Tel: 58610717.	
26.	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.		

Shah Abdul Tarique
Secretary

GD-174

Becoming Tuni

Tasnova Tamanna wins National Film Award for 'Nonajoler Kabbo'

SHARMIN JOYA

Tasnova Tamanna has become the talk of the town, after she was announced as the winner of the 'Best Actress' category in the National Film Awards 2021—for her outstanding performance in Rezwan Shahriar Sumit's directorial debut, ***Nonajoler Kabbo***.

In the film, she portrayed Tuni, who hails from an environment that restricts women from raising their voices. "Tuni has a strong and resilient persona, and knows how to stand up for herself," shared the actress, who finds a resemblance of Tuni in her own personality.

Tasnova Tamanna was supposed to make her film debut with the Rasel Ahmed's feature film, ***Nree***, which was unfortunately cancelled after the sudden demise of the director on May 15, 2017. "I have to mention his name, because I am grateful to him as an artiste, and I have learnt a lot from him," asserts the actress, who recently had her first theatre performance in the play, ***Adom Surat*** at Aly Zaker Notuner Utshob 2023.

Later, Tasnova would be seen in Abdullah Mohammad Saad's ***Live from Dhaka***, marking her debut. Moreover, she has also acted and been an assistant director in numerous short films.

On the question of whether she wants to focus on being a director, she responded saying directing is a huge responsibility that she presently does not want to undertake. For now, she wants to concentrate on acting.

"I love exploring the roles which are realistic," she added, "They might seem easy, yet, they are challenging and connecting at the same time."

After achieving the most prestigious award in film industry, the actress feels the need to hone her skills even further.

After she donned the role of Rehana, an urban character in ***Live from Dhaka***, Tasnova had to go through both psychological and physical transformations to become Tuni from ***Nonajoler Kabbo***.

"Tuni was more challenging for me to adopt than Rehana," she claimed. "To bring colour to Tuni's personality on the screen, I had to stay with the fishing community and absorb their way of walking, talking and everything for quite a long time."

As an ending note, Tasnova shared that she aims to perfect her art in such a way, that she can ensure a place in the hearts of audiences.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Coke Studio Bangla back with season two

Coke Studio Bangla began their journey last year, creating a worldwide phenomenon with their intricate musical compositions.

This year, they aim to return with a new season, which they have already announced on social media—accompanied by a teaser for what's to come.

The programme unveiled their new logo, writing "After a long wait we are back with a new season and new songs. Are you ready for #CokeStudioBangla #Season2?"

Recently, streaming platform Spotify has come to terms with Coke Studio Bangla, allowing fans to stream the Bangla rendition of Coke Studio on the app.

'Saturday Afternoon' release delayed

On January 21, Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's ***Saturday Afternoon*** (Shonibar Bikel) finally received a verbal clearance from the Bangladesh Film Censor Board, after four years. However, the film has not received the official clearance certificate, which will let Farooki release the movie in theatres.

Yesterday, Farooki took to his official Facebook account to say that ***Saturday Afternoon*** will not be releasing on February 3, as they had not gotten the official certificate. However, the director stated that while those trying to stop the film releasing can delay it, they cannot crush his spirit.

NEWS

PM to attend LDC5 in Qatar next month

FROM PAGE 12

some of the trade privileges, which the country has been enjoying as an LDC member. Bangladesh is scheduled to graduate out of LDCs in 2026.

Hasina is likely to visit Japan in early April, after the trip was postponed in November last year.

"Foreign offices of Bangladesh and Japan are working to fix the date," Seheli said.

A foreign ministry official told this correspondent that Japan wants Hasina to visit in late March or early April -- the cherry blossom season. Dhaka is considering early April as many events centring Bangladesh's Independence Day take place in the country in March.

Seheli further said the PM is likely to attend the G20 Summit in New Delhi on September 9-10 at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Bangladesh is the only country from South Asia invited by India to attend the summit and will have the scope to voice out its national and regional concerns that need support of the G20 countries to be addressed.

Some of those include the Rohingya crisis, economic strains created by the Russia-Ukraine war, climate change-induced displacement, technology transfer for renewable energy, and funding for climate adaptation, ministry officials said.

Ahead of the summit, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen will be visiting New Delhi in March to attend the G20 foreign minister-level meeting, while the Indian foreign secretary will be visiting Dhaka in February as part of the preparation for the summit.

Meanwhile, Queen Mathilde of Belgium will be visiting Bangladesh on February 6-8.

She is one of the 17 advocates for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

During her visit, she is expected to call on President Md Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and to visit the Cox's Bazar Rohingya camps, a garment factory and some projects working on the mitigation of flood impacts.

Neanderthals hunted massive elephants

FROM PAGE 12

less mobile and formed social units "substantially larger than commonly envisaged."

"Neanderthals were not simple slaves of nature, original hippies living off the land," Roebroeks said.

"They were actually shaping their environment, by fire... and also by having a big impact on the biggest animals that were around in the world at that time."

The researchers determined the elephants had been hunted -- and not just scavenged -- because of the age and sex profile of the remains found in the quarry.

Most of them were males and there were few young or old ones.

"It's a typical selection made by hunters who went for the biggest prey," Roebroeks said.

Adult male elephants would have been easier to hunt than females, who tend to move in herds protecting their young.

The researchers said the Neanderthals were able to preserve the huge quantities of food provided by a single elephant and it would sustain them for months.

LPG price sees steep increase

FROM PAGE 12

Jakaria Jalal, head of the division at Basundhara LP Gas, earlier told The Daily Star that they had to spend Tk 250 more per cylinder from January because of the inflated rate in the international market.

"There was a disruption in the supply chain as we were unable to open letters of credit. The middlemen exploited the situation," he said on Wednesday.

As per the BERC decision, the price of LPG used for motor vehicles also increased to Tk 69.71 per litre, including VAT, from the previous Tk 57.41 per litre, up by Tk 12.3 per litre.

The new prices came into effect yesterday evening.

Intern nurses continue work abstention

FROM PAGE 12

on Tuesday.

Agitating nurses staged a protest rally in front of the hospital gate yesterday morning.

They demanded to make the hospital free from outsiders and brokers.

"There are over 500 nursing students who are getting training from the staff nurses as part of their academic activities. We are often harassed by outsiders and brokers. The students are now concerned about their safety," said Jahid Hossain, president of the BDSNU.

"We will continue our work abstention programme until the authorities concerned fulfil our eight-point demand," said Shahin Alom, secretary BDSNU.

Giving a 72-hour ultimatum, Shahin also said that they would go for a tougher movement if attacker Saddam and his men were not arrested immediately.

Contacted, Omor Faruk Meer, assistant director of Pabna 250-bed General Hospital, said they were trying to solve the issue.

"We have talked to police and local administration for arresting the culprits," he added.

Kripa Shindhu Bala, officer-in-charge of Pabna Police Station, said they were trying to arrest the culprits.

Meanwhile, the protest programme has been causing immense suffering to the patients for the last three days.

Staff nurses are not enough to manage the huge number of patients at the hospital, said Akhtar Banu Popy, nursing supervisor of the hospital.

"We are still trying our best," she said.

Cost goes up by Tk 1.5 lakh

FROM PAGE 1

cost will not be below the minimum rate, he added.

Last year, the minimum cost of hajj under the private agencies was Tk 5.22 lakh.

Shahadat said the cost was raised because of the current airfare, rent in Saudi Arabia, service charges, Muallem fees, and the prices of Zamzam water, food and other things.

The new exchange rate of Saudi Riyal, 15 percent VAT on all charges, and imposition of taxes by the Saudi authority are also the reasons why the minimum cost increased, he said.

Earlier on Wednesday, the government set the minimum cost at Tk 6.83 lakh under the government management, around Tk 1.61 lakh more than the previous year.

Depending on the moon sighting, hajj will be held on July 27. People aged 65 or more will be allowed to perform hajj this year.

The registration of private hajj pilgrims will start from February 6, Shahadat said, requestingthem to either deposit the entire amount to the bank accounts of the agents or directly pay the agency and save the receipt.

The pilgrims' passports should be valid until December 27, he added.

Health exams, meningitis and influenza vaccination certificates will be required for every pilgrim, he also said.

In 2019, around 1.27 lakh Bangladeshis were allowed to perform hajj. However, due to the Covid pandemic, the largest annual Muslim congregation was held on a limited scale in 2020 and 2021.

Hit by bike, JU student

FROM PAGE 12

from his home in Bogura, was crossing a road near Mowlana Bhasani Hall. The motorcycle hit him from behind, said a witness.

"He received serious injuries to his head. He was rushed to the medical facility on the campus immediately," he said.

Later, he was referred to Enam Medical College Hospital.

Contacted, Rakib Ahmed, chairman of the journalism department, who was attending Zahid at the hospital, said, "He received injuries in his skull. He is not out of danger.

"He is under supervision, and an MRI test will be performed on him soon. A CT scan has been done already and we are yet to get the report," he said.

According to witnesses, the motorcyclist was a student of the 45th batch of the philosophy department who fled the scene after the accident.

ASM Firoz Ul Hasan, proctor at the university, said he was going to visit Zahid at the hospital soon.

"Students need to be more careful while driving motorcycles," he said.

Students asked to leave campus

FROM PAGE 12

and boycotted classes and exams as the administration did not comply with their demand.

The institute's academic activities were suspended from then till January this year.

The CU administration held several discussions, while Education Minister Dipu Moni met with the protesting students. However, none of it brought forth any solution.

The students returned to classes on January 23 on some conditions. They, however, started demonstrating again from last Tuesday,

Conflict flares in Gaza

FROM PAGE 12

Israeli civilians, including a child, and one Ukrainian, killed last Friday.

Last year was the deadliest year in the West Bank since the United Nations started tracking fatalities in the territory in 2005.

Some 235 people died in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict last year, with nearly 90 percent of the deaths on the Palestinian side, according to AFP figures.

The Palestinian governor of Jericho on Wednesday accused Israel of putting the town under "siege" after a Saturday shooting at a restaurant, which had no casualties.

Jericho's ancient ruins have been a major tourism draw in the past.

"This is the fifth day of the siege on Jericho," governor Jihad Abu al-Assal told AFP.

Israel's army told AFP it had boosted its forces in the area and "inspections were increased at the city's entrances and exits".

An AFP correspondent said cars were backed up at entrances to the city, with checks to get in and out of the city often taking hours.

Meanwhile, in Gaza, activists rallied in support of women prisoners held by Israel after far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who oversees prisons, said he would push ahead with plans to toughen conditions for Palestinian prisoners.

Ben-Gvir has vowed a crackdown on "benefits and indulgences" offered to Palestinian prisoners and ordered amenities including prisoner-operated bread ovens in some prisons to be curtailed.

Hamas official Mushir Al-Masri, who attended the rally, told Reuters the latest Ben Gvir decisions "added fuel to the fire".

"The issue of prisoners has always been on the agenda of the Palestinian resistance, and the screams by female prisoners inside the jails of the Zionist enemy risk a tough confrontation in which the Palestinian resistance will not stand handcuffed," said Masri.

CHARGED UNDER ANTI-TERROR LAWS

Indian journo walks free after 2 years in jail

AFP, *New Delhi*

An Indian journalist held in custody for more than two years without trial walked free yesterday after being granted bail in a money laundering case.

Siddique Kappan was arrested in October 2020 in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, where he had travelled to report on a high-profile gang rape case.

He and three others were accused of belonging to an Islamist fundamentalist group and eventually charged with conspiracy to incite violence under anti-terror laws.

Kappan has maintained his innocence and says that he had only travelled from his home state of Kerala to do his duties as a journalist.

He was bailed in the case in September last year but remained behind bars for months longer because of a separate money laundering case against him.

"I will continue my fight against draconian laws. They kept me in jail even after I got bail," he told NDTV news network after his release from jail in the city of Lucknow.

PHOTO: AFP

Israeli bulldozers demolish a Palestinian owned house, built without a permit from the Israeli authorities in the occupied West Bank village of Duma yesterday.

PAKISTAN MOSQUE BLAST

Bomber 'was in police uniform'

AFP, *Peshawar*

The suicide bomber who killed more than 80 police officers at a mosque inside a sensitive compound earlier this week entered wearing a uniform and helmet, a provincial police chief said yesterday.

Hundreds of police were attending afternoon prayers inside what should have been a tightly controlled police headquarters in the northwest city of Peshawar on Monday when the blast erupted, causing a wall to collapse and crush officers.

"Those on duty didn't check him because he was in a police uniform... It was a security lapse," Moazzam Jah Ansari, the head of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial police force, said.

The suspect is shown in CCTV images arriving at the gates on a motorcycle before walking through a security checkpoint and asking officers where the mosque was located.

MYANMAR EMERGENCY EXTENSION

Move to prolong 'illegitimate rule': US

AFP, *Washington*

The United States on Wednesday denounced the Myanmar junta's extension of a state of emergency, saying it prolonged suffering two years after a coup toppled an elected government.

"The United States strongly opposes the Burma military regime's decision to extend the state of emergency, prolonging the military's illegitimate rule and the suffering it inflicts upon the country," State Department spokesman Ned Price said, using Myanmar's former name.

The junta on the coup anniversary said it was extending the emergency by six months, pushing back the date for elections under the constitution. Price said the United States was determined to work with other countries to "deny the regime international credibility."

He also denounced the junta's version of "so-called elections, which will exacerbate violence and instability and will not be representative of the country's people." US earlier announced sanctions against Myanmar's energy sector leadership as part of efforts to pressure junta further.

Australia to remove UK monarch from banknotes

AFP, *Sydney*

Australia will remove the British monarch from its banknotes, replacing the late Queen Elizabeth II's image on its $5 note with a design honouring Indigenous culture, the central bank said yesterday. The decision to leave her successor King Charles III off the $5 note means no monarch would remain on Australia's paper currency. The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) said it would consult Indigenous people on a new design that "honours the culture and history of the First Australians". Queen Elizabeth's death on September 8 last year was marked by public mourning in Australia, but some Indigenous groups also protested against the destructive impact of colonial Britain, calling for the abolition of the monarchy. Australia is a constitutional monarchy, a democracy with King Charles III as its head of state.

A referendum proposing a switch to a republic was narrowly defeated in 1999. The central bank said its decision was supported by the centre-left Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The new banknote would take "a number of years" to be designed and printed, it said, with the existing $5 note remaining legal tender even after new design is in people's hands.

Graft is his middle name

FROM PAGE 1

He was expelled from the AL on November 19, 2021, after a video clip went viral. In the video, he was seen making derogatory remarks about Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and expressing doubts about the number of martyrs in the Liberation War.

Seven days after his expulsion from the party, he was suspended asmayor on November 25.

The ministry at that time cited allegations of land grabbing and abuse of power and public money as reasons for the suspension.

Zahangir was sworn in as GCC mayor on July 27, 2018.

According to section 13 (1) of the City Corporation Act, 2009, a mayor can indeed be unseated for those offences.

Later, the ministry formed a three-member probe committee, led by its Additional Secretary Mustaqim Billah Farooqui.

Meanwhile, Zahangir getting party amnesty has had his followers upbeat. They now expect him to retrieve his mayoral reins, party insiders said.

But LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Md Tazul Islam said a decision regarding his suspension depends on the report of the ministry's probe committee.

"After getting the probe report, we will analyse it and then make a decision," Tazul told The Daily Star at his ministry on Monday.

The Daily Star approached LGRD probe panel chief Additional Secretary Farooqui to know about the status of investigation, but he would not make any comment.

Mohammad Johirul Islam, a member of the committee, told The Daily Star that the probe body was yet to turn in the report.

"We requested Gazipur City Corporation to furnish us with different documents, and the corporation obliged. Now we are analysing those documents. We will complete the report soon," he added.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Commission is also probing graft allegations against Zahangir.

GARBAGE GRAFT

The GCC has spent Tk 12.43 crore for garbage removal in fiscal 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

Of the amount, Tk 3.44 crore was spent for 2018-2019, Tk 3.67 crore for 2019-2020 and Tk 5.31 crore for 2020-2021.

But the government rules and regulations were not followed in paying the bills. More than Tk 10 lakh was paid through vouchers, going against the rules, said the report.

According to rules, a maximum of Tk 25,000 can be paid through avoucher.

It was shown on papers that a tender was floated for drains cleanupin eight areas, and bills were dulypaid. But in reality, no tender was invited, no committee formed and no tender paper collected. All this is tantamount to embezzlement, according to the GCC enquiry report.

Moreover, no drains were cleaned in those areasthough bills were paid, it said. Councillors of those wards also questioned what they said was phantom spending.

DARLING FIRMS

There are around 1,200 construction firms listed with the GCC, but only 16 implemented development projects worth Tk 128.71 crore in the three fiscal years.

The licences of all firms, except 23 including the 16, were not renewed, which, according to the report, was "motivated".

The report said that most of those who won the contracts were new firms, and 23 firms, including those 16, either got fresh licences or had their licences renewed even though the GGC did not issue any circular for fresh enlistment or renewal of firms in the three fiscal years.

Those 23 firms were given the work orders in secret, and the owners of those firms are very close to Zahangir, reads the report.

PAYMENT MADE, ZERO WORK

The report narrates an interesting way of embezzling public money through different small development works like sand filling, earth filling and widening of roads.

For instance, MS-ME (JV), owned by one Ruhul Amin, got a Tk 9.78 crore contract for sand and earth filling and road widening -- the stretch from Nayan's shop to Tapu member's house close to the Tongi-Kaliganj Road and from Bogartey Bridge on Joy Bangla Road to Meghdhubi bypass.

The company won the contract on April 26, 2021, as a lone bidder and received partial payment of Tk 3.07 crore in two cheques dated May 4, 2021, and August 21, 2021.

But after visiting the site on May 24, 2022, the investigation committee found zero progress in the development work despite a 31 percent payment being made.

In another case, Chowdhury Amin (JV) got a contract for widening four narrow roads near Tongi and Dhaka bypass.

Chowdhury was the second bidder with an offer of Tk 9.46 crore against the lowest bidder M/S Zaman Traders and Confidence infrastructure LTD (JV) offering Tk 9.38 crore.

But Zahangir directed the officials concerned to order NOA (notification of award) to the second bidder, bypassing the recommendation of the tender evaluation committee to award the work to the lowest bidder.

Chowdhury Amin (JV) also received partial payment of Tk 3.36 crore despite zero physical progress as of May 24, 2022, the report said.

The enquiry also found that a number of firms were paid only three days after the issuance of work orders. A few were paid their bills even before the sites were handed over to them.

It found firms received payments showing the same work several times, adding that bills were submitted multiple times after the same tube well was repaired several times. The same was done with water pipeline repair.

The GCC implemented some projects under the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) fund and paid bills of Tk 3.51 crore on December, 26, 2018, and April 2, 2019.

The spending was much higher than the maximum allocation of Tk 60 lakh annually under RFQ, and all the projects were implemented by only five firms, the report said.

HAAT-BAZAAR

The GCC investigation report found that Tk 12.35 crore was the leasing value of 104 permanent haat-bazaars (open marketplaces) under the GCC for three fiscal years (2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021), but the corporation only managed to collect Tk 6.44 crore.

The leasing value of a temporary haat-bazaar was Tk 1.80 crore for the same period, but the corporation got only Tk 56 lakh.

According to a 1959 ordinance, the city corporation was supposed to hand over the haat-bazaar to a lessee on the first day of the Bangla calendar only after receiving the contract money.

But in the last three years, the haat-bazaars were handed out to the lessees without receiving the full contract money. It has never been paid by the lessees and the GCC incurred a huge loss along the way.

Besides, the leasing value for both permanent and temporary haats for the last three fiscal years was shown far below the average price.

In many cases, as part of widespread irregularities, temporary haat-bazaars were shown as low-valued khas haat-bazaars. Even the money collected from khas haat-bazaars was not deposited in the GCC coffers.

For instance, on July 16, 17 and 19 of 2021, the then GCC executive officer of area-1 MD Soharab Hossain collected around Tk 1.01 crore under his signature from a temporary cattle market in Tongi.

He deposited only Tk 54.42 lakh to the GCC account through different memos but has yet to deposit the rest Tk 45.57 lakh to date, according to the report.

According to a policy, the employees of the corporation are responsible for collecting the leasing money from the khas haat-bazars.

But the report found that instead of city corporation officials, the mayor's personal assistant collected the lease money, and that money was never deposited in the GCC coffer.

BANGABANDHU BIRTH CENTENARY

The GCC spent Tk 2.11 crore from the city corporation fund for celebrating Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary from 2020 to 2021.

But the corporation's internal enquiry found that no such programmes were held on the date mentioned in the voucher.

For example, documents show that an event was held on Rajbari ground on March 17, the birth anniversary of Bangabandhu, and payments were made from the corporation account for the celebration.

But no such event took place as there were government restrictions on outdoor events on account of Covid pandemic.

The report also read that to celebrate the birth centenary, a Tk 46 lakh cheque was issued for the then GCC secretary Mostafizur Rahman and another cheque worth Tk 45 lakh for the then chief revenue officer Rezaul Bari.

But two GCC workers on muster roll, Nazmul Islam and Soaliman, cashed those cheques respectively using their personal mobile phone numbers.

Later, Rezaul Bari informed the GCC that he was not aware about the cheque issued in his name.

BISHWA IJTEMA

A total of Tk 9.4 crore was allocated for the Bishwa Ijtema for fiscal 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 -- Tk 3.74 crore for 2019-2020 and Tk 5.65 crore for 2020-2021.

Of the money, Tk 9.17 crore was spent on five sectors for the Ijtema, one of the biggest Muslim congregations, held in Tongi, an area under the GCC.

Of the sums, Tk 1.5 crore was spent on buying sacks, Tk 1.34 crore for repairing tube wells, Tk 5 crore for sand filling, Tk 24.33 lakh for hospitality and Tk 1.08 crore for purchasing LED lights.

But the GCC enquiry didn't find any voucher for purchasing (hessian) sacks.

The sand-filling done cost much less than what was allocated in the budget; LED lights were set up only on the road from Kamarpara Bridge to Station Road; and no LED bulbs were found on other roads.

FINANCIAL ANOMALIES

For 2018-19, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years, the GCC estimated the development cost at around Tk 400 crore, and of it, Tk 136 crore was paid out.

The GCC enquiry finds some interesting anomalies in the spending.

The bills were paid showing 80 percent to 100 percent progress, but no work was done in those projects, reads the report.

For instance, Ms Shiuli Enterprise, who won the contract for cleaning the drains in GCC area-8 (Kashimpur), was paid Tk 1.79 crore.

But not a single broom was bought or used for the work, said the report.

The GCC ex-mayor has widened streets by forcefully acquiring private land and without informing the district administration.

In the name of widening streets in 57 wards of the GCC, the mayor allocated a financial grant of Tk 72.37 crore for the victims from the revenue budget illegitimately. No committee was formed and no evaluation was done for spending the money.

The money was disbursed based only on applications from claimants.

There was a widespread mismatch between approval of grants and the applications.

Grants were approved based on assumption and there was nepotism in the disbursement, reads the report.

There is no provision to transfer money from the development fund to the revenue fund. However, the city corporation transferred Tk 100 crore from the development fund to the revenue fund in the three fiscal years.

The provision made it mandatory that the unexpended money will have to be deposited in the government treasury, but the probe body didn't find any trace of the unused money as the fund was transferred from the development fund to the revenue fund, the report said.

In 2021, the GCC gave a grant of Tk 1.11 crore to 31 persons and establishments outside its area, which is a violation of the rule.

Moreover, cheques were issued without the signature of the applicants while a single institution got a grant four times in a single year worth Tk 7.5 lakh.

ALLEGATIONS KEEP SURFACING

According to GCC sources, the city corporation spent around Tk 83 lakh in 2020 for the installation of a lift and an air conditioner at the Gazipur Nagar Bhaban.

But no lift or air conditioner bought with that money was physically found.

In fiscal 2020-2021, Zahangir issued two cheques -- one Tk 25 lakh and another Tk 26.19 lakh -- to a company named -- ATM identity, for feeding the destitute on the occasion of the National Mourning Day on August 15.

Eight separate cheques, worth Tk 35 lakh, were also issued to eight GCC councillors at the same time for the same purpose, according to officials.

But the GCC in another investigation found no signatures from the recipients in the city corporation registers against these issued cheques.

For this reason, the city corporation recently sent letters to the eight councillors and the company against which these cheques were issued and asked them to submit the expense voucher details.

But no one responded till February 1, said a highly placed source in the GCC.

BEGINNING THE INVESTIGATION

On June 15, 2022, Mohammad Johirul Islam, deputy secretary of the Local Government Division (LGD), also a member of the ministry probe body, sent a letter to Zahangir for explanations about the corruption allegations raised against him by one Abdus Sattar Mollah through the National Human Rights Commission.

LGD in the letter says, "The complaint termed you [Zahangir] as a corrupt person laundering money abroad, and master maker of different irregularities."

The corruption and irregularities include embezzling Tk 42 crore through fake tenders, crores by appointing 500 traffic assistants under muster roll, and Tk 13.50 crore through fake bill vouchers over Bishwa Ijtema.

On June 29, 2022, the LGD in another letter, signed by Deputy Secretary Johirul Islam, asked Zahangir to submit explanations regarding the corruption allegations by July 20 of that year.

ACC INVESTIGATION

Upon the complaints of financial irregularities against Zahangir, the ACC launched an investigation into the matter.

Its Deputy Director Ali Akbar is at the helm of the probe team.

On September 1, 2022, Md Ali Akbar, ACC deputy director, asked Zahangir to submit all information regarding his bank accounts and statements by September 11 that year.

The ACC asked Zahangir to submit information for an investigation into a complaint about embezzling of crores of taka of different development projects and transactions through fake bank accounts, the letter reads.

The same day, Ali Akbar also sent a letter to the chief executive officer of the GCC to send records and information on sand filling, installing light bulbs, and spraying mosquito repellant in the Bishwa Ijtema field, collecting revenue from haat-bazaars operated by the GCC, and tender invitation details of 2018-19.

The Daily Star obtained copies of these letters.

Contacted, Ali Akbar said they were enquiring a number of corruption allegations against the ex-Gazipur mayor and collecting supporting documents.

Asked about the progress, he said, "We are now scrutinising every finding and hopeful that we might able to bring charges against the irregularities."

'I'M A VICTIM OF FRAUD'

Zahangir Alam, however, refuted all the allegations against him and termed those baseless and fabricated.

"I'm a victim of fraud. Someone opened a bank account using my identity and claimed I have embezzled Tk 2.6 crore. But the reality is ... I did not go to the bank even," he told The Daily Star.

Regarding other allegations, he said, "A councillor, who is holding the mayor post for the last 14 months violating the rules, has forged some city corporation documents and is trying to publish those in different media. He is even spending money for this."

Zahangir also shifted the blame onto some city corporation officials for tender manipulation and irregularities in road construction.

"If I am corrupt, then the chief executive officer, engineer, and magistrate have got to be corrupt. But no one raised any question against them," he claimed.

The mayor is not supposed to understand a road's work progress, and it is the job of an engineer, he said, adding, "But no engineers were transferred, or their salaries deducted so far."

Zahangir questioned the legality of the ministry forming a probe body, saying if any complaints or allegations are levelled against the city corporation, then it should come to the city corporation first for investigation. "If the city corporation doesn't address the complaints, then the ministry can order a probe," he added.

"No one has even checked the background of the complainants." Zahangir said.

He further claimed, "I was suspended, but on which grounds? The action was taken against me without conducting any investigation.

"I was suspended from the Awami League and then immediately after from the mayoral post."

Asked about his expectation to get the mayor post back, Zahangir replied, "I have got the assurance from the government, and the minister also told me that it will be given back to me."

Contacted, Ashadur Rahman Kiran, acting GCC mayor, said Zahangir's claim is totally baseless. "Gazipur City Corporation only supplied documents."

The Daily Star
FOUNDER EDITOR: **LATE S. M. ALI**

Only reforms can reignite voter interest

Six by-polls proof that there is a lot to be done before general election

Coming a year before the general election, and nearly a year after the formation of the incumbent Election Commission, it is natural that the six by-polls held Wednesday would be viewed against the wider political backdrop. It was, therefore, frustrating to know how little things have changed, despite the relative lack of violence, which would have been something to look out for under different circumstances. It's quite evident now that any changes, or promises of changes, made over the past year or so only cemented the status quo, which doesn't bode well for our electoral future.

If we're to pick a word to summarise the by-polls, it would be "absence" – absence of voters, absence of interest from the wider society, absence of strong opposition, including BNP, whose lawmakers' resignation from parliament had led to the by-polls. Voter turnout was poor in all the six constituencies. As per an estimate, only about 28 percent of voters showed up, in a trend that has been persistent throughout all local elections and by-polls held over the last few years. The predictable nature of election outcomes, and the lack of trust about the neutrality of responsible state departments, seem to have caused ennui and despair among the people.

It seems almost futile to ask why the Election Commission is failing to address voter apathy despite repeated appeals from election observers. The EC, after the latest by-polls, again stuck to its "peaceful and well-organised" narrative, even though we have received reports of various election-related irregularities from a number of constituencies. The EC's failure to recognise that the mere appearance of elections is not enough is really alarming. We need fair and participatory elections. And we need the EC to restore the trust of all voters and opposition parties alike.

Another major concern about the by-polls is the "disappearance" of the key rival of the eventual winner in the Brahmanbaria-2 by-poll. This by-poll – which saw the lowest voter turnout of all – has been in the news ever since the winner, expelled BNP leader Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan, was backed by the ruling Awami League, which didn't field a candidate there. Abu Asif Ahmed, an independent candidate, has been missing for about a week now. Which makes us wonder: why is nothing being done to find him? What message does it send to the political opponents of the ruling party? And how long will the EC refuse to address the concerns of the opposition parties?

The culture of fear, distrust and criminality that still plagues our electoral system must be removed, and the ruling party must play a leading role in this. Lack of violence in one election offers little hope given how political violence and repression continue to occur in every other sphere. As the recent by-polls have shown, we have remained stuck in the same spot for too long, and the authorities must allow genuine reforms to break this status quo. They must help create a level playing field for all parties, and restore public trust in the function of the electoral system.

Stop sand extraction from rivers

It's increasing the risk of river erosion, endangering farmland and depleting soil fertility

Despite the fact that sand extraction from rivers is doing severe damage to our environment and local communities, this mindless act is going on unabated across the country due to lack of action from the authorities. According to a report by *Prothom Alo*, sand is being lifted illegally from the Padma river near the Baulikanda area of Shivalaya, Manikganj. Although locals fear that their homesteads and agricultural land along the river will be at risk of erosion by these acts, they do not have the means to stop these activities because of the involvement of influential people in this.

Reportedly, the local Union Parishad chairman, a UP member, as well as other politically connected sand traders are involved in extraction in the area, making the life of those dependent on the river more vulnerable. Sadly, the local administration is turning a blind eye to the issue.

This is no isolated incident, however. If we only look at the newspapers of the last one month, we will get plenty of reports on sand extraction as well as other types of environmental degradation. For instance, in January, this daily reported how influential locals were illegally lifting sand from the seabed along Chattogram's Sitakunda coast, increasing the risk of coastline erosion. Erosion is, however, just one example of the damage that results from sand lifting; other risks include loss of croplands and depletion of soil fertility.

We see such environmental degradation being carried out through countless other activities – such as polluting and encroaching rivers, cutting down hills, felling trees, destroying mangrove forests, polluting air, etc. Every day, something is being done somewhere to degrade our nature and thereby threaten our survival as a species. It is as if we are waging a war against nature. But it's not a war that we, or anyone, can win in the long run. Can we live a normal, healthy life by ruining the very environment of which we are just a part?

What is inexplicable is why the state is still doing little to stop such acts, despite having of several laws and regulations as well as dedicated administrative wings to address these issues. In many cases, we have seen that local administrations only conducted mobile court drives, which helped little to improve the situation. More often than not, after the drives are over, the unscrupulous people engaged in such activities get back to their work again.

Clearly, protecting our environment from harm will need greater efforts and coordination from all the government agencies concerned. No ad-hoc measure can stop sand traders or river grabbers and polluters. We have ample laws for environmental protection which should be used evenly and effectively. Most importantly, we must break the culture of impunity of the politically connected people who are often the ones harming our environment.

Calling the by-polls 'free and fair' dims hope for 2024

Kamal Ahmed
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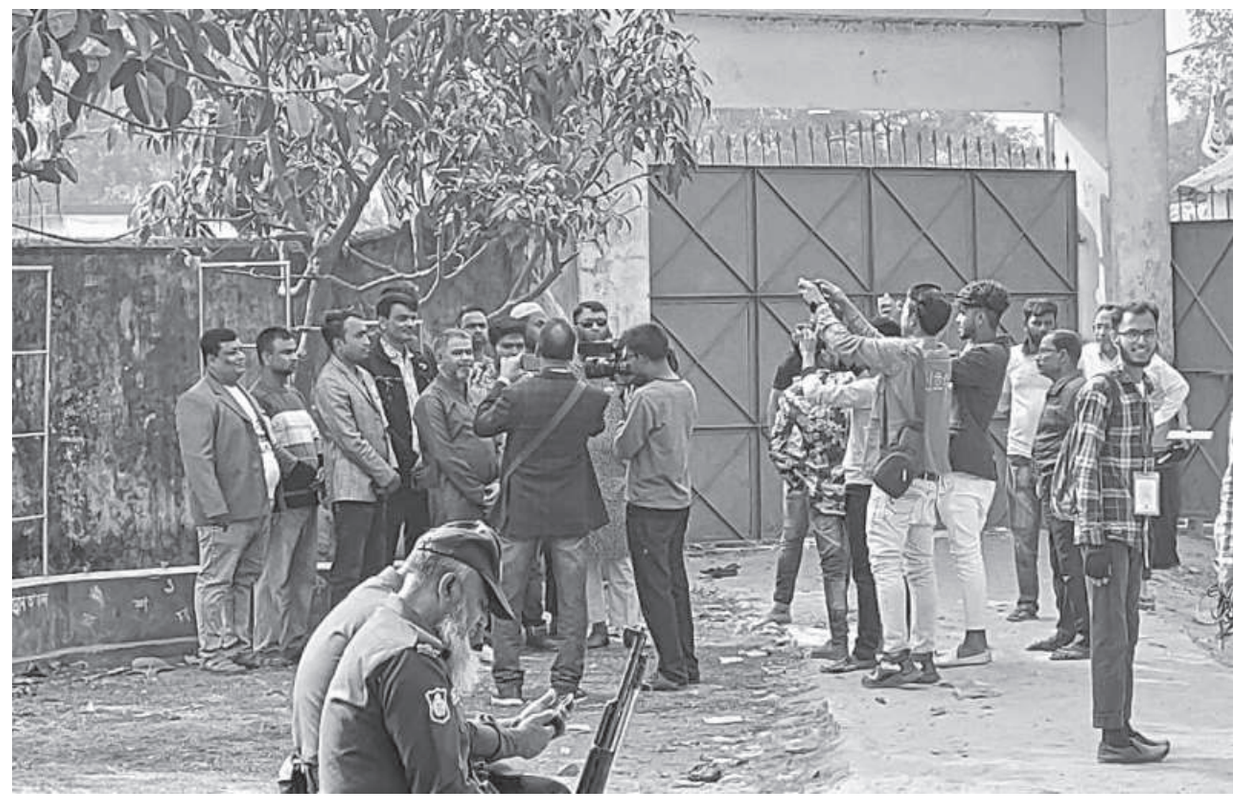
KAMAL AHMED

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader has described the just-concluded by-elections to six parliamentary constituencies as "free and fair" and "a win for democracy in Bangladesh." Addressing a party meeting in Dhaka's Jatrabari, he said who won and who lost in the by-polls was not the main issue. "It was important whether the by-elections were held in a free and fair manner or not," he added. His portrayal of the by-polls tells us what kind of general election we should be expecting.

There's no surprise in the results, except one, as the ruling alliance had it all settled in terms of sharing those six seats left vacant by the BNP as part of their anti-government movement. The lone loser is from the Workers Party, an important ally of the Awami League, who lost to the nominee of Jatiya Party, another partner of the 2018 seat-sharing coalition. Workers Party nominee Yasin Ali's loss might be the result of not getting enough administrative favour as a consequence of the party chief's post-2018 criticism of some of the government policies that had embarrassed the top leadership of the alliance.

The seat-sharing arrangement was so well-designed that none of the alliance partners objected to hiring a BNP-deserter for Brahmanbaria-2 constituency. The ruling party has set a new example of mobilising the party machine behind someone whose political loyalty, as of now, remains a mystery. Because when he left his over-three-decade association with BNP, he didn't join the Awami League or any other allied parties. It's also quite remarkable that there was no rebellion within the ruling party on the issue of supporting Ukil Sattar in his re-election bid, which is quite common in the Awami League.

These by-elections are nothing more than a mere fulfilment of legal obligations, as it won't be able to bring in any change in parliamentary balance. The 11th parliament for the rest of the term will remain without any effective opposition, as the official opposition, the Jatiya Party, has the dubious record of contesting the last general election under a seat-sharing accord with the Awami League. No wonder that the ruling party's all-out support for Ukil Sattar raises some critical questions.



Local Jubo League men inside one of the polling stations in Bogura-6 constituency during the by-election on February 1, 2023.

PHOTO: **MOSTAFA SHABUJ**

Many political observers believe that Awami League's real motive for getting Ukil Sattar re-elected is to entice and encourage more desertion from the BNP and show those potential defectors what kind of practical help they can expect, in the event of a poll boycott by the main opposition. Quelling internal rebellion, forcing others in the coalition to give a walkover, intimidating independents – including creating an environment where a potential challenger mysteriously disappears – and deploying the party machine in favour of an outsider are no small feat. They, however, exposed how BNP's recent resurgence has rattled the ruling party.

Reports of widespread intimidation and harassment during campaigns in all those constituencies where Awami League candidates were contesting, too, showed a lack of self-confidence, despite the fact that their main challenger, the BNP, was not in the race. Polling day scenarios were not pleasant, either. If controlling the vote centres, intrusion into booths, and voting for others by Awami League activists constitute free and fair polls, then there's every reason to think that these by-elections were truly a dress rehearsal for the upcoming general election.

There's little doubt that it was a genuine dress rehearsal for the Election Commission (EC). The suspension of the Gaibandha by-poll in October last year, the first under the current EC, somehow raised people's expectations that it would remain firm, try to regain public confidence in the electoral process, and recoup lost trust in the institution. The reasons the CEC gave for halting the Gaibandha by-poll were: "evidence of people either illegally supporting or forcing voters to cast ballots, widespread irregularities, and malpractices." The EC then concluded that the election was out of control, and that one side (or one candidate) was able to influence it. Media reports from Brahmanbaria, Bogura, and Chapainawabganj on February 1 have suggested similar widespread irregularities and malpractices. Unfortunately, things turned out to be a complete reversal of Gaibandha 2022.

It appears that after the ministers' outburst following the suspension of the Gaibandha by-poll, the EC has decided not to confront the ruling party anymore. Nothing else can explain their inaction in preventing MPs from campaigning and their failure in investigating alleged disappearances of Abu Asif Ahmed, a candidate in Brahmanbaria, and his agent. Disappearance of a contestant ahead of the polling day is unheard of in any election in the country.

A serious and fair investigation was needed to find out whether it was a deliberate and voluntary disappearance to mislead others, or a case of involuntary or enforced disappearance. In either case, the perpetrator and all others involved in such a crime should be prosecuted according to the law.

This incident also exposes inadequacies in our election laws, as the People's Representation Order, 1972, in its present form, only prescribes halting the election in case of a candidate's demise after submission of the nomination paper, but gives no relief to a possible victim of involuntary disappearance. Unless this lacuna is addressed, recurrence of such mysterious disappearances of prospective candidates in the upcoming general election cannot be ruled out.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Death or Glory in Russia

Dr Slavoj Žižek,
professor of philosophy at the European Graduate School, is international director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at the University of London and the author of Heaven in Disorder.

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

Rumours are flying about veiled jockeying within Russia over who will replace President Vladimir Putin, now that his war of aggression in Ukraine has gone so disastrously wrong. Such a struggle cannot fail to expose the morbid pathologies of Russian politics. The key players are not organised political parties, but rather gangs of oligarchs who preside over various informal nodes of power.

This explains why Russia's most effective military force on the front line in Ukraine, the mercenary Wagner Group, is not even a part of the Russian army. Russia is now a land of warlords, something one generally associates with rogue and failed states. Its current and aspiring leaders are trafficking in fever dreams of battlefield glory. Implicit in this martial culture is a Hobbesian view of life as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short – and increasingly cheap.

The rise of private armies in and around Russia has led to some genuinely funny developments. For example, last year, former members of US and other Western armed forces organised a voluntary military unit to fight on the Ukrainian side. With pitch-perfect irony, they call themselves the Mozart Group – a direct riposte to the Wagner mercenaries (both names being of a German composer). One can only hope they will bomb Russian army positions with weapons more powerful than chocolate Mozartkugeln.

But the humour ends there. Russia's apparent reversion to warlordism has been abetted by a strain of Russian religious fundamentalism that openly celebrates death. Some Russian clergy have been telling their congregations that they can "become themselves" only through the act of killing. The "special military operation" in Ukraine, they are told, is a struggle for "all of God's creation." As one of Putin's chief propagandists, Vladimir Solovyov, said in a New Year's message on Russian television, "Life is highly overrated. Why fear what is inevitable? Especially when we're going to heaven. Death is the end of one earthly path and the beginning of another. Don't let fear of death influence decisions. It's only worth living for something you can die for, that's the way it should be... we are fighting against satanists. This is a holy war, and we have to win."

Likewise, Magomed Khitanaev, a Chechen theologian and Russian army commander, portrays Ukraine as a latter-day Sodom and Gomorrah, "We're asking: Oh, Ukrainians, why did you permit gay parades in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odessa? Why did you permit it? Why didn't you come out against them, against your government that was overtaken by fascists? Without shame before God, people, they are openly, manifestly spreading their filth."

To understand contemporary Russian ideologists like Solovyov and Putin's so-called "court philosopher," Aleksandr Dugin, one must examine the tradition of Russian "cosmism," a philosophical movement that began with the 19th-century educator Nikolai Fedorov. As Jules Evans, a philosopher at Queen Mary University of London, writes, Fedorov "was nicknamed the 'Socrates of Moscow,' because of his ascetic habits and his radical philosophy. He had one all-encompassing goal: the achievement of immortality and the resurrection of the dead."

Among Fedorov's 20th-century followers was the Soviet rocket scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (who theorised about space travel), the science-fiction writer Alexander Bogdanov (who believed that one could prolong one's life through blood transfusions), and – in a fitting coincidence – the religious thinker Vladimir Solovyov.

According to Evans, this earlier Vladimir Solovyov called for "a universal theocracy under a Russian czar, to hasten humanity's 'long and difficult passage from beast-mankind to God-mankind.'" Once accomplished, adherents to the faith would "become immortal spiritual beings – only Christ has reached this stage so far, but all humanity will soon follow." While Solovyov believed that this evolution could be advanced with magic, Fedorov himself advocated scientific means. But both ultimately "agreed that humanity would be saved by Russian theocracy."

Denys Sultanhaliiev of the University of Tartu has explored the links between the two Solovyovs and established a clear lineage from Russian cosmism, in both its mystical and scientific forms. There is a direct through line from the cosmism that prevailed in the first decade of the Soviet Union to the nihilism and nuclear brinkmanship on display today under Putin.

A belief in resurrection and eternal life is key. But cosmism could emerge only within the Russian Orthodox version of Christianity, whose basic formula is "God became man so that man will become God." That is how cosmists interpret the appearance of the God-man Christ: as a model for what all of humanity should pursue.

As we watch ideological madness play out in Russia, we must be mindful of its roots in Russian Orthodoxy. Many in the West now view that tradition as an antidote to the liberal decadence that Western Protestantism supposedly unleashed. In a perverse way, they are right: death solves all problems.

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100TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF AHMADUL KABIR

Honouring an Institution

Prof Rehman Sobhan
is the chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

REHMAN SOBHAN

It is hard to imagine that many years have gone by since the passing of Ahmadul Kabir (Monu Bhai to most of us). If you make it into your 80s and have remained a vital presence virtually upto the end of your days, you qualify to be designated as an institution. Monu, however, had more claims to being an institution than owed to his vitality and longevity. He represented a tradition in our public life that is now in danger of becoming extinct. He entered politics without any expectation of personal gain. He came from a social background where he had no strong financial need to make a livelihood from politics. In fact, he invested his personal fortune in supporting political causes that had little scope of prospering, and thereby propelling him into high office from where he could recoup his investments.

In the 1960s, he could have prospered by joining the Ayub Muslim League and could have walked into the cabinet in Islamabad or Dhaka anytime he wanted. But he chose to contest the election to the East Pakistan legislature in 1962 on the ticket of the National Awami Party (NAP), where he remained one of the most vocal spokesmen for the opposition. In the historic 1970 election to the Pakistan National Assembly, he contested and was defeated by Tajuddin Ahmad for the Ghorasal seat. After liberation, he could have joined the ruling Awami League, since he was well-known to Bangabandhu and much of the party leadership, but chose not to do so. After 1975, successive ruling parties would have been more than happy to have Monu Bhai join their ranks and would have offered him a cabinet post of his choice, but he chose to sit in the opposition benches when elected to the second and third Jatiya Sangsad.

To spend half a century in politics in Pakistan and Bangladesh, where Monu Bhai's uncle was once the chief minister of East Bengal, where he could virtually address every cabinet member of consequence in the national and provincial legislature by their first name and as *tumi*, without deriving political benefit from these relationships, makes him quite unique to the point of being labelled a political eccentric. He remained all his life on the "left," interpreted in its broadest sense. He was actively involved with the Jukta Front in their historic defeat of the Muslim League in 1954, and was a treasurer of the Krishak Samity. In 1957, he participated in the founding of NAP, which brought together the progressive elements of Pakistani politics with those who were also keen to promote regional autonomy, and was elected as a member of its national executive committee.

He remained with NAP, and when it split between its Pro-Moscow and Pro-Beijing components, he sided with the Moscow faction that in the then East Pakistan was led by Prof Muzaffer Ahmed. However, his brother-in-law, Syedul Hasan (murdered by the Pakistan army in 1971), was close to Maulana Bhashani who, when visiting Dhaka, usually stayed at his home. Monu Bhai, thus, continued to maintain excellent relations with many of the stalwarts of the Bhashani NAP even when the political divide was quite deep. Monu remained loyal to NAP, but when it fell apart in the 1980s, he constituted his own party, which could at best be termed a political fragment.

Monu's political identity and stature, however, did not derive from his political affiliations, but was much more personal. He continued to command influence, whether in

Ahmadul Kabir (1923-2003)

or out of parliament, or in his family constituency in Ghorashal, and could always draw upon the respect and connectivity he maintained across the entire political spectrum, first of Pakistan and then of Bangladesh. Before 1971, Monu's home was a caravanserai of visiting politicians from West Pakistan, many of whom stayed with him when they were in Dhaka or who ate at his superbly cuisined dinner table. All the top leaders of the West Pakistan NAP, such as Wali Khan, Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, Ataullah Mengal, and Mahmud Ali Kasuri, were regular visitors to his home.

Indeed, because of his capacity to bring diverse political figures together and his proverbial hospitality, Monu Bhai could reach out to a much wider constituency of politicians than those with whom he was politically linked. In this capacity, Monu was an important nexus between politicians not just of East and West Pakistan, but of varying political persuasions – a role he played right down to his last days. Thus, some of the most interesting and at times important political dialogues and even negotiations took place around Monu Bhai's dining table, where Laila Kabir was often an active participant in the heated discussions. Today, very few people remain who retain the authority of Monu Bhai to bring contending political elements together to discuss politics in a civilised environment.

Monu Bhai had his own ideas and idiosyncratic views on politics and economics that were sustained by a rather wide and eclectic reading list as well as a rich body of experience. He was quite opinionated and often impatient with views he disagreed with, but he was always open to discussion.

Since I was many years his junior, not just in years but also in exposure to politics, I learnt much from him, but also had many disagreements, which he generously tolerated from a younger friend. When I joined hands with Kamal and Hameeda Hossain in 1969 to publish the weekly journal *Forum*, Monu Bhai generously put the services of the *Sangbad* press at our disposal to print the paper. I vividly remember spending late nights with Hameeda at the *Sangbad* office reading the final proofs before *Forum* was about to be printed, and Monu Bhai dropping in on us with words of advice and good cheer.

Monu had the stature and maturity to appreciate that politics was not a profession but a vocation. He was a true democrat who rejected an absolutist vision of politics, and recognised that you must listen to a variety of views and give space to dissenting opinions if democracy was to work. He was a genuinely secular person in the true sense of the term. This did not mean he was irreligious, but that he passionately believed that religion should not be abused for political gain.

His vision of politics was fully reflected in his more enduring contribution to Bangladesh's public life in the form of the daily *Sangbad*. Under Monu Bhai's patronage, *Sangbad* was a paper that gave a home to progressive journalists and offered them freedom to express themselves when most outlets were closed to them for political or commercial reasons. This tradition of committed journalism associated with *Sangbad* remained integral to the sustainability of progressive ideas in Pakistan and Bangladesh at a time when the political climate was hostile towards radical ideas. In the process, *Sangbad* helped to influence the consciousness of a generation of Bangladeshis who came of age during the period of Pakistani rule.

Over the last half century, few progressive papers could financially survive, and *Sangbad* did so largely because of Monu Bhai's courage and willingness to invest in his own beliefs. It is appropriate that *Sangbad* survives Monu Bhai and that his son Altamash Kabir (Mishu), today the managing director of *Sangbad*, continues to perpetuate the family tradition.

In an era when secularism has been erased from our constitution and is challenged in our society, when progressive thinking is being exorcised from our intellectual life amid globalisation, and a democratic culture is under perpetual threat by those who are sworn to uphold democracy, Monu Bhai's passing is not so much a requiem on a vanished age as a dirge for our vanquished hopes.

This article is part of a collection of tributes to Ahmadul Kabir.

VISUAL: **TEENI AND TUNI**

Is 'Faraaz' just another movie?

AM Hassan
is a security researcher.

Nazifa Raidah
is a sub-editor at The Daily Star.

AM HASSAN *and* NAZIFA RAIDAH

The answer is a "yes" and a "no." Yes, it's just another movie that will lose significance as soon as a few weeks go by. Then again, it's not "just another" movie. It is a lesson in horrific storytelling that revisits wounds that still bleed at the mention.

The Holey Artisan terror attack was a tragedy that many of us grew up with and lost our innocence to. There is merit in asking whether an Indian filmmaker, with no connection to Dhaka, had any right to recount the story that impacted thousands of lives he will likely never meet. Further, one must contextualise the movie to where it's being released – India, a country that remains largely polarised with a populist government using Hindutva to persecute minority Muslims. Despite it not being director Hansal Mehta's intention, it will play into the Indian government's narrative that Muslims are the ideological, and perhaps geographical, "other." In times like these, we should remember that everything is political, and the inherent fear of the "other" will likely propel ticket sales to *Faraaz*, feeding existing biases.

One can also wonder if the art is accommodating the victims and not turning their grief into a battering ram for box office profits. If we dissect similar instances in the West, a slate of 9/11 documentaries and archival movies – especially in the first five years after the tragic incident – moved forward with the blessings of the victims' families. Many directors noted that they would not have commenced work had the families objected to how the story was focusing on the truth, contributing to its enduring legacy.

In general, it's common for filmmakers to seek the consent of individuals or families who are depicted in films based on real-life events, especially if the portrayal could be seen as (in) sensitive or controversial. Mehta has had a long-standing reputation of doing autobiographical films, which, frankly, he has executed well. In *Shahid* (2013), he bases the film on the life of human rights lawyer and activist Shahid Azmi. *Aligarh* (2016) was a film inspired by the real-life incident of Dr Shrinivas Siras, a professor who was suspended from his job because of his sexual orientation. Then in 2020 came *Scam 1992*, a web series based on the life of stockbroker Harshad Mehta and his involvement in the securities scam of 1992, and *Chhalaang*, a sports drama film inspired by the true story of a physical training instructor in a government school.

How is it that such a seasoned director did not seek consent from the victims' families when making *Faraaz*? Ruba Ahmed, mother of Abinta Kabir, one of the victims of the Holey Artisan attack, filed a case just before the pandemic to stop the movie. When no word was heard on the film's production, she breathed a sigh of relief, knowing she wouldn't have to revisit the trauma of losing her daughter on the big screen. Then two years went by and Mehta emerged with a fully finished film. There were hardly any promotions or campaigns last year, which was odd, given that's what one would typically expect before a film's release. Why this secrecy? The director's general disregard of the victims' families' emotions puts into question the extent of sensibility he might have applied into making the film itself.

In this regard, Ruba Ahmed's argument against Mehta strikes the most relevance, "Nobody knew what happened behind those doors, nor can anyone tell what happened." To pick and choose a hero and then highlight that speck of heroism as the most significant aspect in a hostage situation is probably not the most sensitive or sensible act that one could've expected from a veteran director.

There's also the question of how the attackers will be represented. One of the attackers was a student of a private university in Bangladesh, who later transferred to Malaysia, where he was likely radicalised. After the media revealed his face to the public, many in Dhaka were in denial and shock,

When movies commercialise traumatic and culturally significant events like the Holey Artisan attack, the onus shifts on the filmmakers to introduce a humanising force that unites everyone in grief, pain and disagreement, while simultaneously restoring dignity by leveraging the truth in storytelling. Else, we keep our societies open to the enduring pedagogy of fear – instead of unity – furthering social polarity and the fear-based cognitive dissonance that does more net harm. Will 'Faraaz' and 'Saturday Afternoon' end up causing more harm commercialising trauma? Only time can tell.

either for knowing him personally or knowing of his life's priorities even days before his unexplained disappearance.

He used to be another regular guy with mundane Monday problems, and with the English Premier League dominating his world. On the verge of his graduation, when he was supposed to be worried about his midterms and securing a job, how was it that he found himself worried about waging a "religious war"?

While the Holey Artisan attack reduced him to just another statistic, forever painting him and – just by virtue of association – his family as the "inherent evil," it will not be unreasonable to expect pop culture to represent him and his surroundings in a way that represents all of us. For this attacker, too, was once one of us, before radicalisation put a wolf's teeth in that lonely boy. Can an Indian filmmaker, making the first move on this story, go in-depth into the character of urban radicalisation that underpinned IS' prime recruitment strategy in Bangladesh? Or will he dilute it with a trailer and dialogues that sound reminiscent of Pakistani soldiers in movies like *Border* or *Lakshya*?

These cultural and community intricacies bear significant weight on projects such as these, galvanising more support for local productions to tackle local stories of seismic proportions. Not addressing these wounds not only tells a one-sided story, but also disrespects families who neither had anything to do with the attackers' radicalisation, nor had any idea what really went down below.

However, there is a greater analysis of fear that becomes pertinent every time a terror attack is commercialised for profit. While pop culture invests its energy and big dimes into the representation of conquering fear, terrorism – and its enduring legacies – are different.

It's more than just enhancing and enabling stereotypes – it's about how terrorists actively work to create their identity through violence. Any social response that is mildly aggressive only feeds into their ideology, creating a never-ending, vicious cycle that breeds radicalisation, especially when terrorist activities are low.

It is not pop culture's responsibility to rehabilitate the image of terrorists, radicals or religious fanatics. But when movies commercialise traumatic and culturally significant events like the Holey Artisan attack, the onus shifts on the filmmakers to introduce a humanising force that unites everyone in grief, pain and disagreement, while simultaneously restoring dignity by leveraging the truth in storytelling. Else, we keep our societies open to the enduring pedagogy of fear – instead of unity – furthering social polarity and the fear-based cognitive dissonance that does more net harm. Will *Faraaz* and *Saturday Afternoon* end up causing more harm commercialising trauma? Only time can tell.

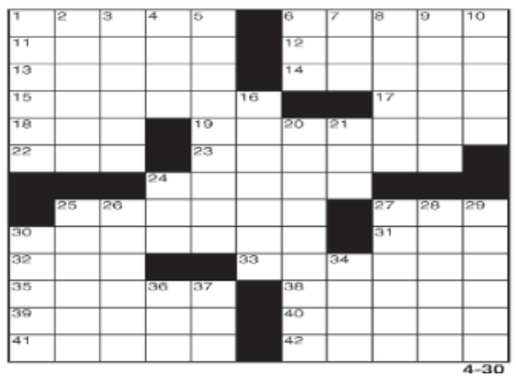
What can be said for certain is that there is something like "too soon," and there definitely is a wrong way to tell a story. But with meticulous research, one can separate the truth from political fiction, and bring comfort to a varied demographic reliving their trauma while they watch it on a big screen. So, if the question is, can artists explore culturally traumatising events? Absolutely; creative avenues should be afforded to filmmakers who exercise the highest care to craft stories that hold up to the standards, and it is not a process previously unheard of. Many victim families opposed movies regarding the Boston Marathon bombing of 2013, but eventually agreed to the production once they were made privy to the research process, and when the plot and the sub-plots avoided significant dramatisation of events to protect the sanctity of lives lost.

Popular culture's representation of these events helps narrate micro-stories that often don't see the light of day. It's not just a simple conversation about freedom of speech – all the information is out there for any keen person to view. But it's about piecing all that information together to present valuable insights about an event that had ground-breaking significance to you, your family, your culture, your ambitions, and your future.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Fixed shoes
6 Pub pastime
11 Merge
12 Sung drama
13 Spotless
14 Daughter of Leda
15 Words on a candy heart
17 Break off
18 One, for Juan
19 Conductor Eugene
22 Signing need
23 Freshwater varieties
24 "— Amore"
25 Verb in an O'Neill title
27 Screening org.
30 Grassy expanse
31 Equip
32 Ump's call
33 New Orleans cooking stvle
35 Lama's land
38 Safe spot
39 Custom
40 Bit of history
41 Suit material
42 High homes

DOWN
1 Absorb, like a sponge
2 One way to shop
3 Rests atop
4 Greek vowels
5 Cub Scout leader
6 Cry from Homer
7 Zoo beast
8 Let up
9 Market directions
10 Yellow-gray
16 Unpredictable
20 Protective sort
21 Switz. neighbor
24 "I don't need the details," for short
25 Liner trip
26 Granola treat
27 Treasure stores
28 Hushed
29 FBI employees
30 White House acronym
34 Roof feature
36 Nest sight
37 Golf need



4-30

SATURDAY'S **ANSWERS**

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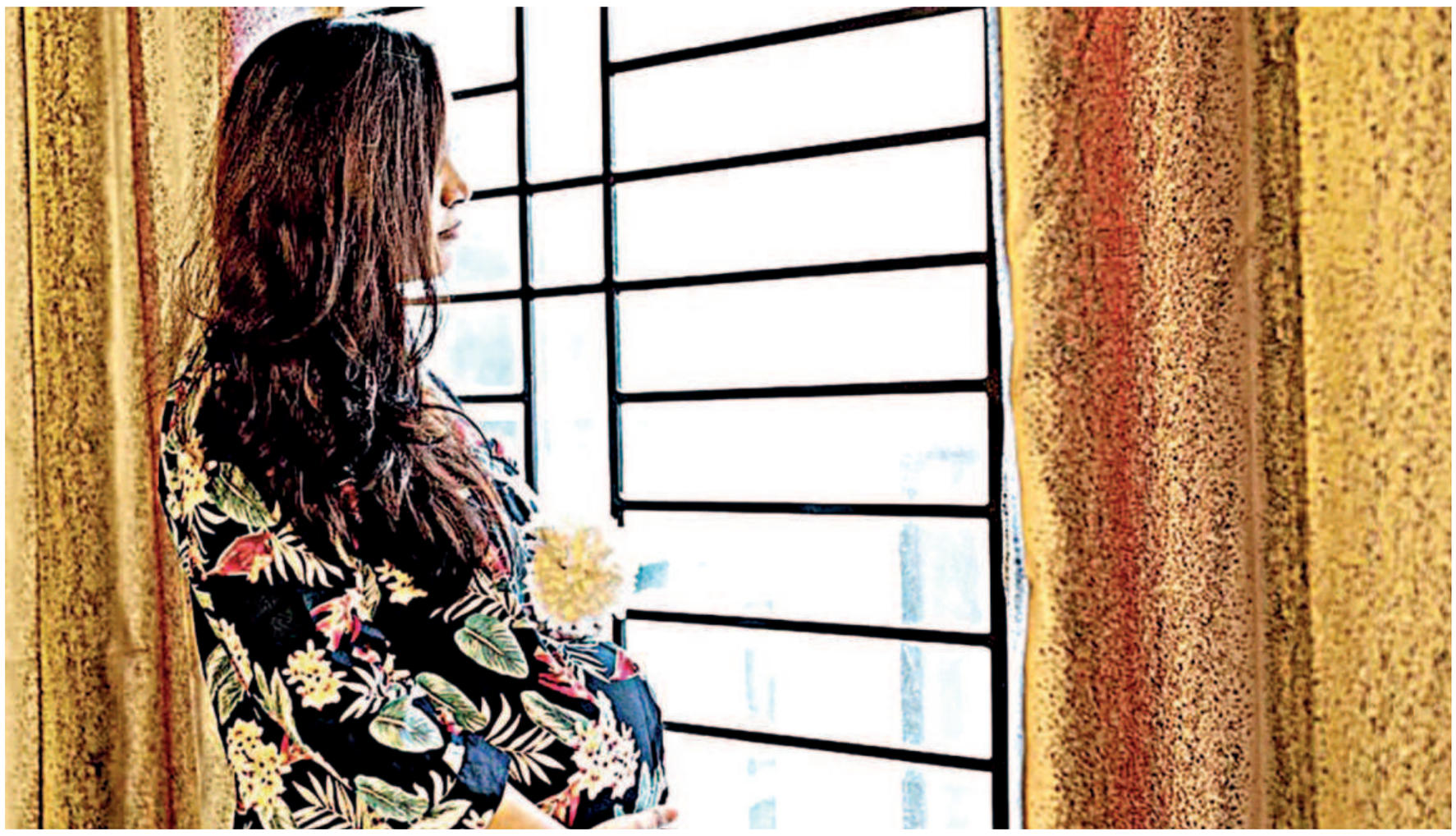


RIGHTS WATCH

The motherhood penalty of female students

Student maternity leave can help remould the entire picture of women education in the country. It will reduce female students' dropout rate and facilitate them to unravel their unexplored talents.

SURIYA TARANNUM SUSAN

Motherhood penalty is a term coined by sociologists to refer to the pay gap and workplace biases towards a pregnant woman. A certain amount of attendance is a prerequisite for appearing in exams in almost all educational institutions in Bangladesh. In the absence of a student maternity leave, the biases stemming from motherhood coupled with the legal vacuum are acting as an impediment to such student's right to education. This cannot be anything short of a penalty.

Nausea, dizziness, morning sickness, and fatigue are some of the very common pregnancy-related complications. Moreover, after the delivery, many new mothers experience postpartum depression, and unexpected sleeping and feeding patterns. Academic pressure coupled with pregnancy-related health complications can be physically and mentally draining for the childbearing students.

Maternity leave is designed to ensure that a pregnant woman can prioritise her health and provide necessary care to the newly born child without the tension and hassle of all other responsibilities. Sections 45-50 of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 focus on maternity leave policies. The Act instructs employers to allot four months of paid leave to pregnant women, eight weeks prior to delivery and eight weeks post-childbirth. The newly amended Bangladesh Labour Rules, 2022 deals with the special situations of leave for childbirth after the end of the maternity leave in rule 38(a) and leave for miscarriage in rule 38A.

Permanent government servants are entitled to six months of maternity leave with payment under rule 197(1) of Part-1 of the Bangladesh Service Rules. This provision enables female faculty members and staff of public universities to take maternity leave. It remains a matter of curiosity as to why a legal vacuum still exists regarding the maternity leave for pregnant female students. The stories of expectant student mothers or new student mothers are filled with despair, anguish, and plight. Pregnancy amidst study years impairs many female students from attending exams, and consequently, some discontinue education.

It is quite unfair not to extend the same opportunities to female expectant students. Maternity in its very nature is related to the human body. The unborn babies deserve equal and proper treatment regardless of status or category of the workplace. The lack of attention towards pregnant students is an infringement of article 28, also dubbed as the equality clause of the Constitution of Bangladesh.

Article 15(c) enumerates the right to reasonable recreation, rest, and leisure. Clause d of article 15 mentions social security, which provides for undeserved wants arising from disability. Article 28(4) permits the State to make special provisions in favour of women and children. Considering pregnancy as an intelligible differentia distinguishing expecting students from others, they can be reasonably classified to avail maternity leave.

It is pertinent to mention that permitting appearance in exams condoning the attendance of pregnant students is not an eccentric phenomenon. In 2013, Calicut University, became the first Indian University to grant long-term maternity leave for women students. In 2008, the Delhi High Court imposed a fine of Rs. 25,000 on the Principal of the Delhi Institute of Pharmaceutical Science and Research for declining maternity leave to a student and wasting her one year unjustly. His action was declared *ultra vires* as the Delhi University Ordinance ensured maternity leave for students as a special case. The Court also directed the college to allow the student to appear in the examination. The Delhi High Court ruled in favour of the petitioners and observed that "....to punish a woman for becoming a mother would surely be the mother of all ironies." The Draft UGC Regulations, 2022 *inter alia* recognises maternity leave to women candidates for up to 240 days, once in the duration of the PhD programme.

Worldwide top-ranking universities like University of Cambridge, University of Oxford, McGill University, University of Salford, and so forth have their own robust policies ensuring that a pregnant student or new mother can resume her education without any academic loss.

In Bangladesh, the minimum legal age for a female to get married is 18. It is unfortunate that right to education of such students is getting violated due to such lacuna in the legislation. Student maternity leave can help remould the entire picture of women education in the country. It will reduce female students' dropout rate and facilitate them to unravel their unexplored talents. Hence, it is argued that student maternity leave should be mandatorily incorporated into educational institutions. No woman should be penalised for embracing motherhood.

The Writer is a Student of LLB (Hons), University of Chittagong.

LAW EVENT

8th Annual Winter School

To educate the youth about genocide and justice

Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice (CSGJ), Liberation War Museum organised the 8th Annual Winter School on 'Hatred, Violence and Prevention of Atrocity Crimes' on 21- 28 January 2023 at the Sheikh Hasina National Youth Development Center, Savar. It is an eight-day-long residential programme to train students, young professionals, and early career researchers from multidisciplinary fields on genocide and justice. This time, a total of 33 participants from 17 universities coming from Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Thailand attended the School. The participants engaged in lectures, panel discussions, group activities and presentations, museum visits, a field trip to the memorial site, film and documentary screening, interaction with members of martyrs' families, cultural activities, and Non-judicial Hearing (submission on a hypothetical case).

It featured a range of national and international leading and practising experts, academics, and scholars in the field of genocide and justice from India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, and Indonesia. Ambassador Mashfee Binte Shams (Rector, Foreign Service Academy), Professor Adam Muller (University of Manitoba, Canada), Dr. Navras Aafreedi (Presidency University, India), Dr. Muhammed Zafar Iqbal (Former Professor, Shahjalal University of Science & Technology), Patrick Burgess, Pia Conradsen and Tati Krisnawaty (AJAR, Indonesia), Man Sokkoeun (Youth for Peace, Cambodia), Dr. Mohammad Mozahidul Islam (Jahangirnagar University), Professor Sheikh Hafizur Rahman Karzon and Dr. Samina Lutfa Nitra (Dhaka University), and others facilitated various sessions for the Winter School participants to proficient their understanding regarding atrocity crimes through the lens of law, history, sociology, psychology, peace and conflict education, and transitional justice.

The programme was enhanced by interactive sessions where attendees expressed their views and opinions, shared ideas, and engaged in lively discussions with the facilitators, resident mentors as well as their peers. Following the lecture sessions, the participants not only acquainted themselves with the film and documentary on the liberation war but also got the opportunity to interact with the family members of the martyrs.

Furthermore, one of the key features of the programme was a day-long visit to Terashree, Manikganj, that aimed to enlighten the participants about the 1971 genocide from the perspective of the victims and their successors. Apart from these academic sessions, the participants took part in cultural events and festivals like pitha utshob (Bengali cake festival) which helped them understand complex and sensitive topics in a friendly and inclusive atmosphere.

The 8th Annual Winter School concluded with presentation by the participants on the Declaration of Intent expressing their experiences, commitments and key takeaways from the School and a Non-judicial Hearing on a fictional case where they performed in a shadow trial to understand the functionality of multi-layer adjudication mechanisms available in international justice forums.

At the closing ceremony, Rear Admiral (retd.) Md. Khurshed Alam, the Secretary in-charge of Maritime Affairs Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was the guest of honour and handed over certificates and awards to the participants. The Best Performance Award for the outstanding submission at the Non-judicial Hearing went to Waidatul Akmam Tasin from Cumilla University; while Nushrat Nowrin Shozola from Chittagong University received the Academic Excellence Award and Asif Mahmud Mahee from Dhaka University bagged the Overall Best Performance Award.

Event covered by Tabassum Niger Oishi, CSGJ Zia Uddin Tariq Ali Research Fellow, Liberation War Museum.

LAW REVIEW

Into the details of the Road Safety Rules, 2022

JULIAN RAFAH

The government has recently enacted the Road Safety Rules, 2022 for the better implementation of the Road Transport Act, 2018. It includes 12 chapters, 167 provisions, 9 schedules and 44 forms. Rule 2 includes all the definitions required for the purpose of the Rule.

Chapter 2 deals with driving licence renewal, expiration of licence and other issues in great detail. Rule 18 of this chapter provides about the procedures for driving licence for persons with disability. In Chapter 3, the Rules have made it mandatory for conductors and supervisors to have a licence which is a new addition. Under rule 27(2) of the Rules, the minimum age required for driving licence is now 20 years and minimum educational qualification has been lifted to junior school. The conductors are now required to have a licence under rule 23, and they will get minimum wages in compliance with the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 under rules 32(4)-(5).

In chapter 4, the procedure for registration and fitness of vehicles have been included. Rule 52 of this chapter provides exemption of registration fees for freedom fighters. Under rule 48, one can appeal against an order of cancellation of registration.

Chapters 5,6 and 7 deal with other issues including formation of a transport committee, regulations for vehicle manufacturing, assembling vehicle parts, traffic rules and environmental protection compliance. Use of silencer in motor vehicles has been made mandatory under rule 83. Also, rule 86 has prohibited the use of any vehicle that causes excessive sound. The standard use of helmets for bikers have been included in rule 136, which was absent in the 2018 Act.

Chapter 8 of the Rules provides for compensation to victims in case of accidents and treatment to such victims. Financial assistance fund under a trustee board will be formed under rule 142. The amount and form of the compensation and all relevant details have been mentioned under this chapter. Chapter 11 spells out fines and penal sanctions for violation of any provision under the Rule.

Rule 160 grants power of appeal to anyone, who is aggrieved due to an order under the provisions of the Rules except chapter 9, within 30 days from such order. Digitisation of all possible services and formation of a central database server for preserving all data of the services must be made as per rule 165 of the last chapter.

Even though the Road Transport Rules, 2022 has many new features, it also has some loopholes. Under rule 125, speed limit for vehicles has been provided but no monitoring direction or guideline for punishment for breaking the speed limit has been mentioned. There is also no clear provision for fastening seat belts and children crossing roads.

The Rule has failed to provide any clear provisions to force transport owners to pay compensation to the victims. It has rather replaced the victim's right to sue motor vehicle owners with the right to apply for "financial aid" from a Financial Aid Fund through an executive process and not through the intervention of any courts or tribunals. There is also no provision for a Motor Accident Claims Tribunal unlike the previous Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1983 which has now been replaced with the 2018 Act.

To end, although the new Road Transport Rules, 2022 can be appreciated for making some positive provisions for, such as, guaranteeing driving licence for persons with disabilities, exemption of registration fees from freedom fighters, stricter provisions for licence holders, bikers and conductors of public transport and so on; it has failed to make transport owners liable with hefty prices if their vehicles kill or injure any persons.

The Writer is an Official Contributor, Law desk, The Daily Star.

Star SPORT
DHAKA FRIDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2023, MAGH 20, 1429 BS

What to WATCH

Nagorik TV
Bangladesh Premier League
Barishal vs Khulna
Live from 2:00 pm
Dhaka vs Rangpur
Live from 7:00 pm
T Sports

Bangladesh Premier League football
Mohammedan Sporting Club vs Bashundhara Kings
Live from 3:00 pm
T Sports
ILT20

Abu Dhabi Knight Riders vs MI Emirates
Live from 8:00 pm
Star Sports Select HD1
English Premier League
Chelsea vs Fulham
Live from 2:00 am (Saturday)

Buttler leads Eng squads for Bangladesh tour

STAR SPORTS DESK

There were a lot of speculations regarding probable first-team omissions due to scheduling conflicts and players' lucrative franchise commitments but England boasted their depth on Thursday when they announced strong squads, led by Jos Buttler, for their upcoming white-ball tour of Bangladesh.

England will play three ODIs and as many T20Is in Bangladesh from March 1 to 14.

England picked teenage leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed in their white-ball squads for the first time. The 18-year-old Leicestershire bowler became England's youngest men's Test cricketer against Pakistan in Karachi in December and marked his debut in style with a five-wicket haul.

Rehan had played just three first-class matches before making his Test bow, but has more experience in white-ball cricket, having appeared regularly for his county side.

Uncapped Somerset batter Tom Abell, who is set to captain the England Lions in the upcoming ODI series in Sri Lanka, was also included in both squads.

Pacer Saqib Mahmood, who was named in the ODI squad, made his return to the England squad for the first time since suffering a stress fracture of the back in May last year.

Alex Hales was one of the major omissions as he opted to forgo the tour to honour his lucrative contract in the Pakistan Super League, while Liam Livingstone and Johnny Bairstow remained unpicked due to injury.

Members of the Test side like Joe Root, and Harry Brook were not included as they would conclude their Test duties in New Zealand on February 28 but Ben Duckett and Will Jacks are set to make the tour having been selected for the T20I side.

ENGLAND SQUADS

ODI: Jos Buttler (c), Tom Abell (Somerset), Rehan Ahmed, Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Sam Curran, Saqib Mahmood, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, James Vince, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood.

T20I: Jos Buttler (captain), Tom Abell, Rehan Ahmed, Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Sam Curran, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood.

Spinners are yet to leave their mark in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League, which is set to resume for its final phase in Dhaka today. Rangpur Riders skipper Nurul Hasan Sohan was observing the likes of Mahedi Hasan, Rakibul Hasan and Mohammad Nawaz in training on Wednesday, and he would hope for his spinners to come to good effect when Rangpur take on leaders Sylhet Strikers in the day's second fixture today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'I will be happy if Chandika proves me wrong'

SPORTS REPORTER

Chandika Hathurusingha's return has been viewed positively around the corridors of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), with his reappointment having been handled personally by BCB president Nazmul Hassan. But not everyone has been as welcoming to Hathurusingha, who left the Bangladesh team on a sour note in 2017 despite his reputation as the Tigers' most successful coach.

His tenure with Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) ended in far worse circumstances, with legal disputes needing to be handled by the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) before the SLC finally terminated his contract and levelled charges against him for failure to maintain good relationships with players and failing to prepare the side for assignments.

Former Bangladesh chief selector Faruque Ahmed, who had served as chief selector during Hathurusingha's previous term, was among those who did not see the Sri Lanka's return in a positive light.

"I don't think Hathurusingha's inclusion is a very good decision. Reason number one is the way he left Bangladesh cricket at a very crucial time without giving us any opportunity or time to find another coach. When something like that happens and we go back to the same coach, it means we don't have any options and the coach might behave worse than he used to before," Faruque told The Daily Star regarding BCB's decision to bring back the Lankan.

That raised the questioned of whether the BCB were trying to find a stop-gap solution with the ODI World Cup in India

looming. Faruque believes that more than performance, team atmosphere has to be solid.

"There will be less accountability and it will always be on his mind that there were no options so whatever he does is okay. Performance is one thing; we want to see Bangladesh winning. But at the same time we have to build culture and cricketing atmosphere so that everyone does their job the right way.

"We are a Test playing nation so if he does well then I'll be happy but I don't know," he remarked.

Hathurusingha's tenure had seen Bangladesh produce positive results at home against South Africa, Pakistan, India and England and 2015 remains Bangladesh's best-ever World Cup campaign. Those are facets the BCB considered but relationships with several players such as Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad had soured.

"He can do well as a tactician and bring out good things. That's his job but at the same time the surroundings were better back then. Many [of the previous batch] are not playing and it can be a good thing or a bad thing. His resume is not strong enough. He was only an assistant coach at New South Wales. Then there is how his tenure ended with Sri Lanka. I will be happy if he proves me wrong," Faruque added.

Former captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza also recently questioned the manner of Hathurusingha's exit in an interview, although he felt the coach may be able to do things in a new way.

Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, a mentor to many of the country's stars, was balanced in his assessment.

"When he was here before, the circumstances were different. The challenges will be different this time. The better he understands this, the better he will be able to work. The advantage is that he will have the support of the board and I feel we need to wait to see how he works and how his philosophy is and whether it has changed. I don't know what his relationship with the seniors was like, but since the circumstances have changed, others things might too. If the team does well, it's good for his career too. I believe we will start from a good position and not how things were," Fahim added.

Varane calls time on France

AFP, *Paris*

France centre-back Raphael Varane, a World Cup winner in 2018 and runner-up last year, announced Thursday his retirement from international duty at the age of 29.

"I've been thinking about it for several months and I decided it was the right time for me to retire from international football," Varane wrote on Instagram.

The Manchester United defender made his France debut in 2013 and won 93 caps for Les Bleus. He had been in the running to take over as captain following the retirement of Hugo Lloris last month.

"To represent our magnificent country for a decade has been one of the greatest honours of my life. Each time I wore this special blue shirt I felt immense pride," said Varane.

Varane's decision to call time on his France career leaves Kylian Mbappe as the frontrunner for the captaincy, with Didier Deschamps' side set to begin Euro 2024 qualifying at the end of March with a double-header against the Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland.

The former Real Madrid star played every minute of his country's triumphant 2018 World Cup campaign as France defeated Croatia 4-2 in the final.

He was one of five French players who also started the 2022 final defeat by Argentina on penalties, recovering from a leg injury that ruled him out of the start of the tournament.

"I'll definitely miss these moments with you, but the time has come for the new generation to take over," he said, thanking Deschamps and his coaching staff as well as the supporters.

Messi surpasses Ronaldo

AGENCIES

Lionel Messi broke yet another record of rival Cristiano Ronaldo as the Argentine surpassed the Portuguese's record of scoring the most goals in Europe's top-five leagues during Paris Saint-Germain's 3-1 win at Montpellier on Wednesday.

Following a lacklustre first half, PSG burst into life after the break with Fabian Ruiz, Messi and Warren Zaire-Emery finding the net to put them on 51 points from 21 games, five points clear of the chasing pack in Ligue 1.

It was Messi's 697th goal in top five European leagues, surpassing the record of Ronaldo,

who might see his tally of goals in Europe end with 696 strikes unless the soon-to-be 38 forward returns to a club in Europe's top five leagues from Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr.

Messi, meanwhile, achieved the freat in 84 less games than the Portuguese star. It was also Messi's 14th goal for PSG this season.

It was, however, a night to forget for Kylian Mbappe at La Mosson, having had his spot-kick parried away by Benjamin Lecomte in the eighth minute. He had to take it again, only to be denied.

Under-20 girls looking to regain dominance

SPORTS REPORTER

Having narrowly missed out on the SAFF U-18 Women's Championship title in March last year, Bangladesh, regional powerhouses in women's football, have the immediate opportunity to taste success as they begin the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship campaign at home, taking on Nepal on the opening day today.

The match will get underway at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur at 7:00pm after India and Bhutan, the two other teams in the four-team championship, square off at the same venue at 3:00pm.

The four teams will first play in a round-robin stage before the top two teams advance to the final, slated for February 9.

Bangladesh have dominated women's age-group football alongside India in the South Asian region since SAFF introduced age-group events in 2017. In the past four years, SAFF has staged seven championships for girls from the U-15 to U-20 level. Bangladesh have won three titles while finishing second on four occasions.

They had to settle for second place in the SAFF U-18 Women's Championship last year owing to an inferior goal difference against eventual champions India. The year before, Bangladesh won the title by beating India at home. This event will be an opportunity for Golam Rabbani Choton's charges to get their success story back on track.

"The SAFF age-group events started with a U-15 tournaments in 2017 and we emerged champions. We have played in each of the finals of each age-group tournament since. Our target will be to continue that trend," Choton said at a pre-event press conference yesterday.

Bangladesh's maiden title at the senior level came in September last year, when they beat Nepal in the final of the SAFF Women's Championship in Kathmandu, and will provide extra motivation to this group of players, quite a few of whom have already played at senior level. The recently-concluded domestic women's football league will help keep the players in form, Choton believes.

"The league finished on December 31, and training camp began the next day. Our focus, apart from working on technical and tactical aspects, was to maintain physical and mental fitness," Choton said, adding that this event would go towards preparations for the AFC U-20 Championship Qualification campaign, which will begin in March.

Bangladesh captain Shamsunnahar said she wanted to win the title to banish the haunting memories of near misses. "Bangladesh finished as runners-up twice in age-group SAFF events while I was playing. Maybe next time I won't be eligible to play at the age-group level. So I want to win this title," the striker told media.

Nepal coach yam Prasad Gurung and captain Preeti Rai expressed a determination to put up a good fight in the tournament.

Bangladesh No. 1 Rupna Chakma tries to save one as the reserve goalkeepers look on during a training session at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday, ahead of today's match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship fixture against Nepal.

PHOTO: STAR

LPG price sees steep increase

12kg cylinder to cost Tk 266 more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas has been hiked by Tk 22.15 per kg to Tk 124.85 from the previous price of Tk 102.70 for the month of February.

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) announced its latest price through a press release yesterday.

As per the new price, a 12kg LPG cylinder, the most common form of marketing the product, will cost Tk 1,498, Tk 266 up from the previous price.

Contacted, an official of the BERC said the excessive price hike was the result of a huge increase in the price of the Saudi contract price (CP).

Last month, as per the Saudi CP, the LPG price was $599.59 per tonne while the current month's CP was set at $790 per tonne, he added.

Bangladeshi LPG operators usually import their products from Middle-East markets on the basis of Saudi CP.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

STRAWBERRIES WITH WINGS … Perched on thin bamboo sticks, two male Strawberry Finches, also known as Red Avadavat or Laal Munia in Bangla, face away from each other, perhaps after an argument among themselves! These sparrow-sized birds, well known for their striking red plumage with specks of white, are found mainly in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, but also occur in parts of China, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. They usually prefer staying on open fields and grasslands. Known to be one of the sweetest songbirds, the males also take part in dancing rituals when trying to woo their female counterparts. Though the IUCN listed the birds in the "Least Concern" category, they are becoming increasingly uncommon in some parts of Southeast Asia, mainly due to the pet trade. PHOTO: TIMU HOSSAIN

PM to attend LDC5 in Qatar next month

May visit Japan in April, India in September

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to make three state visits this year -- first to Qatar in March, then to Japan in April, and India in September.

In Doha, she will be participating in the fifth UN conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC5) to be held from March 5-9.

The PM's participation was discussed at an inter-ministerial meeting, chaired by Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, on January 30, said Seheli Sabrin, director general of the foreign ministry's public diplomacy wing and the ministry's spokesperson, yesterday.

"The issues to be raised by Dhaka in the LDC conference are yet to be finalised," she told this correspondent after a weekly press briefing at the ministry.

The LDC5 is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to accelerate sustainable development in places where international assistance is needed most and to tap into the full potential of the LDCs, helping them progress on the road to prosperity.

A foreign ministry official said Bangladesh may ask the developed countries to continue providing

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

BUSINESS

Exports fetch $5.13b in January

Despite the volatility in the world economy, Bangladesh's merchandise exports grew 5.89 per cent year-on-year to $5.13 billion in January, official data showed yesterday.

This was the second-highest single-month shipment in the history of the country. The previous highest was recorded in December when exporters brought home $5.35 billion.

The higher export earnings, along with the growing remittance flow, would give some breathing space to the economy reeling under foreign exchange instability owing to US dollar shortages.

Between July and January, the first seven months of the current financial year, exports grew 9.81 per cent to $32.44 billion, year-on-year.

STORY ON B1

Conflict flares in Gaza

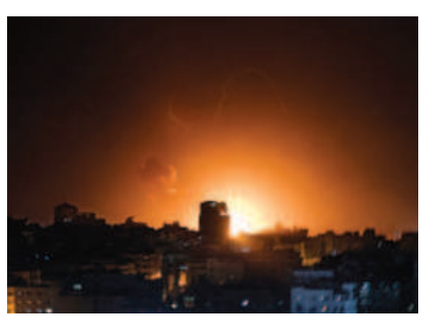
Israel launches air raids after Palestinians fire rockets

AGENCIES

Israeli warplanes struck Gaza early yesterday, drawing retaliatory rocket fire from Palestinian militants, as violence flared despite US calls for "urgent steps" to restore calm.

Israel said the pre-dawn strikes were in response to an earlier rocket launch and targeted military training camps used by Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas.

A statement from the Israeli military said fighter jets had "struck a production site for raw chemical material production, preservation and storage along with a weapon manufacturing site" belonging to Hamas.



The strikes came "in response to the rocket launch from the Gaza Strip into Israel earlier" Wednesday.

"(Hamas) will face the consequences of the security violations against Israel," the army said on Twitter.

Defence Minister Yoav Gallant vowed that Israel stood ready to respond to any attack. "Every attempt to harm our citizens will be met with the full force of the IDF."

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem called the Israeli strikes "a continuation of the cycle of aggression against the Palestinian people".

He accused Israel of "opening the door to escalation on the ground".

During talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders earlier this week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged both sides to prevent further bloodshed.

He expressed sorrow for "innocent" Palestinians killed in months of spiralling violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, warning that the Palestinian people faced "a shrinking horizon of hope".

The US top diplomat's visit came after a deadly upsurge in violence in the West Bank last week.

A Palestinian shot dead seven people outside a synagogue in an Israeli settler neighbourhood of annexed east Jerusalem last Friday, a day after the deadliest army raid in years in the West Bank killed 10 Palestinians.

The synagogue attack on the Jewish Sabbath was the deadliest targeting Israeli civilians in more than a decade and was celebrated by many Palestinians in Gaza and across the West Bank.

Israel said its deadly raid on Jenin refugee camp targeted Islamic Jihad militants. An 11th Palestinian was killed elsewhere in the West Bank that day.

This year the conflict has killed 35 Palestinians -- including attackers, militants and civilians -- as well as the six

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

CU FINE ARTS INSTITUTE

Students asked to leave campus amid protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University authorities have asked the students of the Institute of Fine Arts, who had begun a sit-in last year, to leave the campus residence by 10:00pm yesterday, citing "renovation work".

The decision was taken following an emergency syndicate meeting last evening, reports our correspondent quoting CU Proctor Rabiul Hasan Bhuiyan.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Rabiul said, "After the meeting, the students were ordered to leave the campus by 10:00pm. All physical classes and examinations of the fine arts institute will be suspended for the next one month for some renovation work."

He, however, said the teachers have been asked to conduct online classes.

Earlier on the day, the university's proctorial body along with police conducted a two-hour raid on the campus. They searched every room of the institution's Shilpi Rashid Chowdhury dormitory and the teachers' club.

Asked about the sudden decision of vacating the hall amid the ongoing student demonstration, the proctor said, "Only the members of the syndicate can explain it."

The students started a sit-in programme on November 2 last year to press home their 22-point demand, including shifting the campus to Hathazari main campus.

On November 16, the protesting students locked the institutes main gate

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Neanderthals hunted massive elephants: study

AFP, *Washington*

Neanderthals may have lived in larger groups than previously believed, hunting massive elephants that were up to three times bigger than those of today, according to a new study.

The researchers reached their conclusions, published in the journal Science Advances on Wednesday, based on examinations of the 125,000-year-old skeletal remains of straight-tusked elephants found near Halle in central Germany.

The bones of around 70 elephants from the Pleistocene era were discovered in the 1980s in a huge coal quarry that has since been converted into an artificial lake.

Elephants of the time were much larger than the woolly mammoth and three times the size of the present day Asian elephant, and an adult male could weigh up to 13 metric tonnes.

"Hunting these giant animals and completely butchering them was part of Neanderthal subsistence activities at this location," Wil Roebroeks, a co-author of the study, told AFP.

"This constitutes the first clear-cut evidence of elephant hunting in human evolution," said Roebroeks, a professor of archaeology at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

The study suggests that the Neanderthals who lived in the area for 2,000 to 4,000 years were

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

PABNA 250-BED HOSPITAL

Intern nurses continue work abstention

Demand action over assault of nurse by broker; victim files case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Intern nurses at Pabna 250-bed General Hospital went on an indefinite work abstention protesting an attack on their fellow nurse.

Raja Hossain, a second-year student at Ichhamati Nursing Institute, was assaulted by a broker named Saddam Hossain on the hospital premises on Tuesday.

The victim, who has been working at the hospital as part of his academic programme, filed a case with Pabna Police Station in this connection yesterday, two days after the incident.

According to Raja, locally influential broker Saddam took Tk 600 from a patient for an electrocardiogram test and started to bargain in the ward.

"As I asked Saddam to leave the ward, he became angry and assaulted me. Saddam and his men also threatened to stab me outside the hospital," Raja said.

"I am concerned about my safety," he added.

Protesting the attack on Raja, the Pabna district unit of Bangladesh Diploma Student Nurses Union (BDSNU), called for the work abstention programme at the hospital

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WOMEN = CHEAP LABOUR? … Women picking Boro seedlings on a farmland in Kagdi village of Shariatpur's Sadar upazila yesterday. According to locals, farmers assign women to do this work as it is cheaper. When a woman is assigned to pick seedlings, she is paid Tk 100 for every 100 fistfuls. However, when a man does the same work, he charges at least Tk 50 more. PHOTO: ZAHID HASAN RONY

Hit by bike, JU student fighting for life at ICU

JU CORRESPONDENT

A student of Jahangirnagar University suffered a severe blow to the head after a motorcycle hit him on the campus around 8:30pm yesterday.

Zahid Hasan, a fresher at the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of Enam Medical College Hospital.

At least eight students witnessed the accident.

Zahid, who came to the campus just two days ago

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