



# \$6b more to come from dev partners

The amount expected over next four years from WB, ADB, JICA, AIIB

REJAUL KARIM  
BYRON and  
MAHBUBUR  
RAHMAN KHAN

Bangladesh is expected to get about \$6 billion over the next four years from development partners other than the International Monetary Fund to meet the development financing needs, particularly to address climate change challenges.

The IMF's staff mission projected a financing gap of \$9.1 billion for the period. While the lender would be providing \$4.7 billion, there would still be a deficit.

Subsequently, during its nine-day tour of Dhaka last year, the staff mission met with the representatives of the other development partners to learn about their financing plans for Bangladesh and also to harmonise their conditions with the IMF's 42-month loan programme.

The staff mission learnt that another \$6 billion would be arriving from the other multilateral and bilateral lenders.

Of the \$6 billion, \$1.75 billion is expected from the World Bank, \$2 billion from the Asian Development Bank and \$2.12 billion from other development partners

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## GOVT'S TASK LIST FROM IMF FOR 2024-26

- Automated pricing formula for petroleum products
- Bring down national savings certificate sales
- 60pc of govt transactions through electronic transfers
- Move to interest rate-based monetary policy
- Publish fiscal risks of state enterprises
- Publish banks' distressed assets as per BASEL III
- Submit to parliament amendments to bankruptcy, money loan court and negotiable instruments acts



A dockyard has been set up encroaching upon the Buriganga in Char Kaliganj area of South Keraniganj. Grabbing of land beyond the demarcation pillar, circled, on the river bank has narrowed the water body, but the authorities don't seem to bother. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# No licence, no bike

BRTA prepares guideline to control operation of motorcycles responsible for 40pc of road accidents

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Nobody will be allowed to buy a motorcycle without a driving licence. Also, one would need a licence to get a motorcycle registered with the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority.

This has been stated in the draft guideline prepared by the BRTA to control the operation of bikes, the vehicle involved in the highest number of crashes in recent years.

According to the guideline, no biker will be allowed to carry a pillion passenger on highways. Operations of bikes on highways



and inter-district roads will be suspended for 10 days before and after the day of any major festivals like Eid.

The speed limit for bikes on highways and inside cities will be 60 kilometre per hour and

30kmph respectively.

Violation of this guideline by a rider, a dealer, an agent of a motorbike producer or an importer will be considered as crimes and legal actions can be taken against them, said the draft of the Motorcycle Operation Control Guideline-2022.

"We have prepared the draft guideline following the directives of the National Road Safety Council [NRSC] and sent it to the road transport and bridges ministry last month," BRTA Spokesperson Mahbub E Rabbani said.

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- For bike ownership, minimum age 18yrs, minimum education level class-VIII
- No pillion rider on highways
- Bike's highest speed 60kmph on highways, 30kmph in cities
- Violation of the guidelines will be punishable
- 55.92 lakh vehicles got registered till Dec 2022, of them 40.07 lakh or 71.67% motorcycles
- Many motorbikes are not registered in the country

# AL, BNP gear up for show of strength

Both parties to hold rallies today

STAR REPORT

The ruling Awami League will hold "peace rallies" in Dhaka and five other metropolitan cities today in an apparent bid to counter the BNP rallies at the divisional headquarters across the country.

The BNP rallies are aimed at garnering support for its 10-point demand, which include holding the next national election under a non-partisan government.

The other cities where the AL will organise rallies are Mymensingh, Chattogram, Sylhet, Khulna, and Rangpur.

The central committee members of the party have asked local leaders and activists in those cities to keep an eye on BNP's activities, insiders said.

BNP leaders say AL's counter programmes have created unnecessary tension in these cities and the ruling party was trying to instigate violence to foil BNP's pre-scheduled events.

In Dhaka, the BNP rally will be held in front of the party's Nayapaltan headquarters around

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## 45<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary

(Abul Company) The founder of Abul Khair Group noted industrialist and social worker

Late Janab ABUL KHAIR



Death: 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1978

In accordance with the will of Almighty Allah the Beneficent, you left this mundane world, leaving us and many of your relations overwhelmed by grief. In our everyday life your bright ideals serve as beacon. You are immortal in your death. We pray to Almighty Allah for the salvation of your departed soul.

May Allah the Beneficent bless you with the eternal bliss of paradise. Ameen.

Your loving  
Sons, Daughters and Relatives

## COMBATTING CANCER

# 2 in 3 patients die without treatment

Says expert as shortage of resources persists

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

In mid-September last year, Mozibor Rahman, a 42-year-old cancer patient from Rangpur, visited the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH) in Dhaka with the hopes of receiving radiotherapy -- one of the most common treatments recommended.

However, as luck would have it, after 18 days of failed admission attempts, he was forced to return home, where he died in agony the following month without palliative care, a type of medicare for lessening the pain of dying patients like him.

Once a rickshaw-puller, Mozibor, lacked the means to stay in the capital city for an extended period of time in order to wait for a bed to become available at one of the very few cancer hospitals there.

Hundreds of patients like him are rejected daily from the nine public hospitals in the country that offer cancer treatment, owing to dysfunctional radiotherapy machines and acute manpower crisis.

Meanwhile, a 20-year-old cancer patient from Munshiganj was admitted to the Health and Hope Hospital in Dhaka for basic care until he could be admitted to the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) for radiotherapy.

Since he was diagnosed with cancer in April last year, his family has spent around Tk 16 lakh so far.

"Due to the shortage of treatment facilities, two-thirds of cancer patients die without treatment. The shortage of resources has made the situation worse for the patients," said Dr Habibullah

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# EU releases €23m for Rohingyas in Bangladesh

## The fund will be used to meet humanitarian needs of the refugees, host communities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union (EU) has released over €23 million to address the humanitarian needs of Rohingya refugees and their host communities in Bangladesh.



A further dedicated allocation of €2 million will help address the needs of Rohingya and other refugees in neighbouring countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, according to an EU media statement released on Wednesday.

The EU will continue to support the efforts of Bangladesh in responding to the Rohingya refugee crisis by providing the fund, part of which will also contribute to implementing disaster preparedness programmes in the country, reads the statement.

EU support for Rohingya refugees, their host communities, and disaster preparedness efforts in Bangladesh since the beginning of the Rohingya crisis in 2017 now stands at over €242 million, it says.

The statement also says the EU has released over €18 million to address the humanitarian needs of the people of Myanmar.

“Myanmar has seen a dramatic increase in humanitarian needs since the military takeover. Meanwhile, the situation of Rohingya refugees requires continued life-saving assistance in Bangladesh and neighbouring countries,” said EU Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič.

In Myanmar, 17.6 million people are expected to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2023, a dramatic increase from one million in 2021. A third of those in need are children.

EU humanitarian aid for Myanmar now totals over €68 million since 2021.

EU has been providing humanitarian aid to people in Myanmar since 1994, and in Bangladesh since 2002, according to the statement.

# Mexico keen to bolster ties with Bangladesh

## Its envoy Federico Salas tells The Daily Star; the Latin American country set to open embassy in Dhaka

PORIMOL PALMA

Mexico is set to open an embassy in Dhaka this year as the Latin American nation is eager to boost trade and diplomatic relationship in consideration of Bangladesh’s growing economy and importance in regional and global spheres.

Mexico currently has a consulate in Dhaka.

Federico Salas, Mexican Ambassador to Bangladesh, was in Dhaka to present his credentials to President Abdul Hamid. He agreed to an exclusive interview with The Daily Star on January 30 where he shared his insights on bilateral relations between the two nations and future plans.



people-to-people ties.

Salas, who is based in Delhi and accredited to Bangladesh, Nepal, the Maldives and Sri Lanka, also met Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen and visited the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) during his trip.

“Mexico-Bangladesh relationship is still focused on multilateral sphere, mostly in UN, but bilateral relationship is growing. In the past five years, two-way trade multiplied by 100 percent to about \$500 million, which has created a momentum. I want to pursue this to keep up the growth trend and diversify goods and services. There is a significant potential there,” said Salas.

With that in mind, Mexico’s Minister for Interior and Exterior Relations Marcelo Ebrard will be visiting Bangladesh on March 7-8, which will be the first visit to Bangladesh by a Mexican foreign minister to explore future cooperation.

Currently, Mexico exports cotton to Bangladesh and imports textile from the nation but is eager to diversify to include pharmaceutical products and information technology products, the envoy added.



“We are taking tangible and specific decisions. We decided to open a resident embassy in Bangladesh in the course of this year. With this, opportunities will multiply and in turn deepen our relationship,” said Salas.

Noting that cultural and people-to-people contact play an important role in improving relations, Salas said, adding that he wanted to bring Mexican chefs and have week-long culinary experiences here in Bangladesh.

“Mexican food is part of world heritage. We want to bring here—the taste, the colours and the spirit.”

Salas also said he will start working on academic exchange in higher education to improve

# Woman killed in train accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A woman was killed after a train hit her in Chattogram’s Mirsarai upazila yesterday.

The identity of the victim could not be known immediately, said police.

The victim is around 55 years old. She might have been hit by Dhaka-bound Chattala Express or Maimansingh-bound Bijoy Express, said Khorshed Alam, sub-inspector of Railway Police’s Sitakunda Camp.

The victim was walking on the rail track when she was hit by the train. She died on the spot, he said quoting witnesses.

On information, police recovered the body, he further said.

# Man lands in jail over rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Habiganj court has sent a man to jail in connection with a case filed over the rape of a schoolgirl in the district Sadar.

The victim’s father filed a case against Ahad Mia, 50, an Arabic teacher at a local maktab (Islamic school), with Habiganj Police Station on Thursday.

According to the case statement, Ahad raped the victim on Wednesday when she went to the maktab to learn Arabic.

He was arrested and produced before a court on Thursday, said Golam Mortuza, officer-in-charge of Habiganj Police Station.

# Student found dead in classroom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police recovered the body of a teenage boy from a classroom at his school in Khulna’s Dumuria early yesterday.

The victim is Nirob Mondol, a student of Gutudia ACGB Secondary School, said Sheikh Koni Mia, officer-in-charge of Dumuria Police Station.

Six children, aged between 12 and 15 years, were also taken to the police station for questioning, the OC added.

Mustafa Sarwar, former president of the school, said Nirob’s father received phone calls from two unknown dialers around 4:00pm yesterday.

“They demanded Tk 30 lakh in ransom,” he added. Police were informed about it immediately and a general diary was also filed.

# \$6b more to come from dev partners

FROM PAGE 1  
including Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, according to the IMF’s staff report.

The IMF, the WB and the ADB would be collaborating extensively to help Bangladesh build its climate resilience, a key objective of the programme.

Being one of the world’s most vulnerable nations to climate change, Bangladesh has set its course toward achieving climate-resilient development by envisioning various strategies and policies, including a Delta Plan and a series of five-year plans, said Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdul Rouf Talukder and Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal in their letter of intent to the IMF.

“These plans as well as our National Adaptation Plan, recently approved by the cabinet, have identified our country’s adaptation and mitigation priorities in the transportation, power, industry, infrastructure, and agriculture sectors, estimating the additional annual climate financing needs at 2-3 percent of GDP,” they added.

An automated pricing formula for petroleum products, which is scheduled to kick in next fiscal year, is one of the 11 conditions of the IMF’s newly-formed Resilience and Sustainability Facility that helps low- and middle income countries vulnerable to climate change address the challenges.

“This is a high urgency,” said the IMF staff report.

Bangladesh is the first Asian country to access funds from RSF. Of the \$4.7 billion that the country is getting from the IMF, \$1.4 billion is coming from RSF.

“To further enhance climate mitigation, Bangladesh has ramped up its reform efforts toward transparent market-based pricing of fossil fuels,” the IMF staff report said.

Going forward, the authorities plan to regularly adjust petroleum product prices via a formula-based pricing mechanism and thereby lock in zero structural subsidies for petroleum products.

“These actions are expected to help ease budget pressures for energy subsidies and encourage more efficient fuel consumption going forward.”

In addition, barring further global price shocks, the government has committed to not increase these subsidies during the programme and explore options to gradually reduce them further, while scaling up social protection schemes.

The government has also committed to adopting a sustainable public procurement policy paper and an associated action plan to integrate climate and green dimensions by September as part of the reforms under RSF. The IMF has marked this as a top reform priority.

By the end of this year, the central bank will adopt guidelines for banks and financial institutions on reporting and disclosure of climate-related risks

in line with the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures.

In fiscal 2024-25, the government will adopt a national disaster risk financing strategy while integrating social assistance measures. This reform was agreed upon following a discussion with the WB.

Next fiscal year, the finance ministry will adopt and implement a methodology for embedding climate change in the medium-term macroeconomic framework, by analysing macro-fiscal risks from climate change and publishing it in the Medium-Term Macroeconomic Policy Statement.

This reform agenda is synced with the WB and the ADB’s prospective financing conditions.

By December next year, BB will conduct and publish climate stress testing for the overall financial system and update the guidelines on stress testing for banks and financial institutions to include climate change considerations. This is another high-urgency reform agenda of the programme.

By June 2025, the government would adopt an updated PPP policy and framework that integrates climate-related risks and develop relevant guidelines.

“This has been discussed with the WB and the ADB for synergies,” the IMF staff report added.

# No licence, no bike

FROM PAGE 1  
The ministry would now finalise the guideline, Rabbani, also the BRTA director responsible for road safety, told The Daily Star.

A sharp and unregulated growth of vehicles, especially motorcycles and three-wheelers, over the last few years has resulted in a spike in the numbers of crashes and casualties.

A total of 55.92 lakh vehicles were registered with the BRTA till December last year. Of them, 40.07 lakh (71.67 percent of the total) are bikes, according to the BRTA.

Besides, many motorcycles are not registered.

At least 7,713 people were killed in 6,829 crashes last year. Bikes were involved in 2,973 of the accidents that left 3,091 people dead, according to data from the Road Safety Foundation.

The figures were 43.53 percent and 40.07 percent of the total crashes and deaths occurred that year, the foundation said this month.

An investigation by a government committee into road accidents during last year’s Eid-ul-Fitr holidays found a sharp rise in bike crashes and recommended banning motorcycles on national highways that don’t have service lanes.

A proposal on banning motorcycles on highways was placed before the road safety council on November 15 last year. But the council, led by Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, directed the authorities concerned to prepare a guideline instead.

As per section 32 of the Road Transport Act-2018, the government can control any type of vehicle and the guideline is going to be enacted following this section, reads the draft.

The purpose of the guideline is to curb road accidents through controlling bikes, introducing relatively less accident-prone motorcycles, creating awareness among bikers and helping bring discipline and ensure road safety, it added.

The draft guideline recommended implementing the control in four stages – at the production or import level, at sale, at registration or changing ownership, and during operations of motorcycles.

Scooty-type bikes are less accident-prone than the sporty-type ones, that are more common in Bangladesh. So, production of scooty-type bikes should be increased and the vehicle should be popularised, the draft said, adding if necessary, special duty benefits should be offered to scooty-type bikes, and duties on sporty-type motorcycles should be increased.

Bike dealers, agents of motorcycle producers or importers will not allow anyone to buy a bike without having a driving licence and they have to complete registration before handing over the vehicle to the buyer, says the draft.

It also stipulates that bikes cannot be sold or registered with the BRTA if the buyer does not have a national identity card. Applicants for motorcycle registration must

be aged above 18 and must have education up to class-VIII and equivalent classes.

Bike producers, assemblers and importers must have a road safety wing and they will provide at least two day’s mandatory training on road safety to buyers before handing over bikes, the draft says.

Bikers providing ride-sharing service have to wear a specific dress, it added.

Contacted, Hafizur Rahman Khan, president of Motorcycle Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said he is not aware of any such guideline.

He said the number of road crashes must be curbed and to ensure it, the relevant laws, especially those regarding controlling speeding, have to be enforced properly.

“Controlling only a particular type of transport will not yield any positive results in this regard. You have to control speeding of all vehicles,” he told this correspondent last week.

Yousub Ali Mollah, additional secretary of Road Transport and Highways Division, said upon receiving the draft, his division has formed a committee, led by Anisur Rahman, a joint secretary of the division, to scrutinise the draft.

Once they get the opinion from the committee, they would hold inter-ministerial and stakeholders’ meetings and upload the draft guideline on their website seeking public opinion before finalising the guideline, he told this newspaper.

prevented people from joining it. A BNP activist was also killed in an attack... Since most of the BNP men are likely to attend the rally commuting through the Awami League venue, our activists are in fear of attacks.”

Khulna City AL Office Secretary Munshi Mahub Alam Sohag said apart from some isolated incidents, no clash between the AL and the BNP has ever taken place in Khulna.

In Rangpur, the BNP will hold its event at the Grand Hotel intersection while the AL will hold a rally on the Public Library premises.

Mymensingh City AL will hold its rally on the Gymnasium premises around 11:00am while the BNP’s event will be held at Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute ground around 2:00pm.

[Our Chattogram, Sylhet, Rangpur, Khulna, and Mymensingh correspondents contributed to this report.]



## Keep hospital beds ready for Nipah virus patients: DGHS

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday gave directives to the relevant authorities to keep the Dhaka North City Corporation Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital ready in the wake of the spread of the Nipah virus in 28 districts of the country.

The Directorate General of Health Services issued the directives asking the hospital authorities to keep 10 beds in the isolation ward and 10 Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds prepared, said a press release signed by Dr Sheikh Daud Adnan, director (hospitals and clinics) of the DGHS.

On January 29, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said so far, five people have died of the Nipah virus this year.

People who drink raw date juice and fruits partially eaten by birds, especially bats, have the possibility of being infected with the virus.

## AMAR EKUSHEY BOI MELA Fun day for little ones

DIPAN NANDY

Shankha Saha was having too much of a good time to pay heed to his father.

The seven-year-old was busy moving around the book fair at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, his father Shantanu Saha not only had to keep an eye on him, but also buy books for him from Sisimpur stall.

“Shankha kept on forcing me to come to the book fair. He did not want to miss the first Shishu Prahar (special hours dedicated to children),” he told this correspondent.

Like him, hundreds of children surrounded Sisimpur Mancha at Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela yesterday noon, shouting, “We love to read books!” They were accompanied by mascots of the popular characters from Sesame Street’s Bangladeshi adaptation.

Marking the first “Shishu Prahar”, Sisimpur’s Halum, Ikri and Tuktuki recommended the children to read more books and consequently performed skits, much to their excitement. Besides, children were seen walking around holding the hands of their guardians, some were also being carried by the adults accompanying them.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Shishu Chattar on the fair premises at 11:00am.

The Shishu Prahar was inaugurated by Bangla Academy Director General Mohammad Nurul Huda at Sheikh Russel

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## US for democracy in Myanmar

Says US State Dept Counselor Derek Chollet

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT



The US will pressurise the Myanmar junta to support the pro-democracy movement in the civil-war-ridden Southeast Asian nation, hoping to see the return of democracy in a year.

“This is an effort that we will not waver from in the coming months, and we very much hope that a year from now, we will not have to commemorate the grim milestone of the third year after the coup. Rather, we hope to reflect on a moment in which Myanmar has returned to the path of democracy,” said US State Department Counselor Derek Chollet.

Chollet, a senior policy advisor to the Secretary of State, said this during a telephone briefing on the second anniversary of Myanmar’s military coup on Wednesday.

He will visit Bangladesh on February 14-15, visit the Rohingya camps in Cox’s Bazar and is expected to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen.

Diplomatic sources said the purpose of his visit is mainly to discuss the Rohingya crisis and humanitarian assistance. Bangladesh has been sheltering more than a million Rohingya refugees, most of who fled a brutal military crackdown in 2017.

The situation in Myanmar was aggravated when the military took control of the country through a coup on February 1, 2021. The elected civilian lawmakers of Aung

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## 6th edition of Dhaka Art Summit starts



PHOTO: STAR

STAR REPORT

Dhaka Art Summit 2023 officially commenced yesterday at the National Art Gallery of Shilpakala Academy.

In the sixth edition of DAS, a total of 160 artists from across the globe were featured, centring on the theme of “Bonna” (flood).

Lawmaker Salman F Rahman, private industry and investment advisor to the prime minister, was the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony, while State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid was the special guest.

The ceremony was attended by Liaquat Ali Lucky, director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy; Nadia Samdani MBE, director of Dhaka Art Summit and president of Samdani Art Foundation; Rajeeb Samdani, trustee of Dhaka Art Summit and Samdani Art Foundation; Mohammad Shaker Shamim, managing director and CEO of Golden Harvest Agro Industries Limited; and Farooq Sobhan, chairman of DAS organising committee.

KM Khalid thanked Samdani Art Foundation for giving people the opportunity to not only see the work of Bangladeshi artists but also those of international artists.

Salman F Rahman reminisced about his journey as a patron of art and artists. He also praised Bangladesh for leading the way in women’s empowerment, which he remarked was related to the theme of Bonna.

The floors of the National Art Gallery were adorned with diverse paintings, photography, illustrations, videography, installations, architectural drawings and models, fabric and crochet work, leather work, laser works, sculptures, carvings, projections, poetry, performances, and crafts. The summit is open for all and will run at Shilpakala Academy till February 11.

## Bangladesh must be ready to make its own vaccines

Says vaccine expert Prof Robin Shattock

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Bangladesh should take measures to reduce reliance on high-income countries for vaccines in the case of a future pandemic, said Prof Robin Shattock, a leading expert in vaccines and researcher at Imperial College London.

Shattock’s team at Imperial is currently working on developing a new technology that will make vaccines cheaper in the near future. As part of their global collaboration to ensure vaccine equity through technology transfer, they’ve partnered with Incepta Vaccines Ltd, the first human-vaccine manufacturer in Bangladesh, to develop new vaccines that can prevent cervical cancer and diarrhoea caused by Shigella bacteria. Visiting Bangladesh for his project with Incepta, Shattock said, “The disparity in vaccine access and infrastructure is a concern. So, it is crucial to ensure that Bangladesh, like any other low-income country, has the technology to produce vaccines for future pandemics.”

For this, he said, the country can either implement the capacity to develop new vaccines or partner with global players like the World Health Organization to support clinical trials as independent investment can be costly.

According to Shattock, Bangladesh’s biotechnology industry is promising, with a high potential for growth.

“To expand the potential of the industry though, it will be important to invest in training and retain skilled workers from seeking careers overseas for higher salaries,” he told The Daily Star.

Terming the government’s Covid-19 vaccination campaign successful, he lauded the “mass participation across the country and the donation of a huge number of vaccines from the COVAX initiative.”

**Bangladesh’s biotechnology industry is promising, with a high potential for growth. To expand the potential of the industry though, it will be important to invest in training and retain skilled workers from seeking careers overseas for higher salaries.**



Shattock’s team at Imperial College London has also been working on developing new RNA-vaccine technology, to be made available in the next few years, which could potentially be much cheaper. “It is more potent, so one can use a lower dose – perhaps tenfold lower than the current mRNA vaccines, which lowers

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## PM to open revenue conference tomorrow

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate a two-day revenue

conference on Sunday which will be held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) in the capital.

“National Board of Revenue (NBR) is going to organise the revenue conference to develop the country’s revenue management system. It is scheduled to be inaugurated by the prime minister, who will also inaugurate the new building of the NBR on the same day,” said NBR Chairman Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem at a press conference at NBR conference room yesterday.

“Bangladesh has already made a lot of progress in becoming a developed country by 2041. In this context, NBR has been working to increase internal revenue collection through modernisation of revenue management,” said NBR chairman.

Muneem informed that three seminars on value added tax (VAT), income tax and customs

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## 3 arrested with 5.4kg of heroin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab claimed to have seized 5.4 kilos of heroin and arrested three members of a drug smuggling gang, who employed female carriers to deliver the drug to clients in Dhaka and other districts in the country.

Shakibur Rahman, 35, ring leader of the smuggling gang, his wife Selina Khatun alias Shirina, 38, and their associate Rajia Khatun, 33, were arrested from Gazipur and Naogaon on Thursday.



**The gang used to smuggle 4-5 kilos of heroin every month into the country through the Rajshahi’s Godagari border area.**

KHANDAKER AL MOIN  
Rab’s Legal and Media wing director

The gang used to smuggle 4-5 kilos of heroin every month into the country through the Rajshahi’s Godagari border area, said Khandaker Al Moin, Rab’s Legal and Media wing director, in a press briefing yesterday.

Shakib and his associate used to supply the drugs to Bogura, Sirajganj, Gazipur, Jamalpur, Narayanganj and Dhaka, said the Rab official.

Shakib is the kingpin of the gang, which has 10-12 female members. He used to transport the drugs via these female carriers to dodge the eyes of law enforcers, added Moin.

A team of Rab first seized three kilos of heroin

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## UN leprosy expert to visit Bangladesh on Feb 7-15

UNB, Dhaka

The UN Special Rapporteur on discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, Alice Cruz, will pay an official visit to Bangladesh from February 7 to 15.

“The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, at its most recent review on Bangladesh made several recommendations about leprosy-related discrimination,” the expert said.

“I will explore how Bangladesh endeavours to eliminate discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members,” she said yesterday.

Cruz will assess issues of structural

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## Ban all zoos Protestors demand at Shahbagh rally

DU CORRESPONDENT

A group called Save the Nature of Bangladesh yesterday demanded the closure of all zoos in Bangladesh, describing them as a “wildlife torture cell”.

The demand has been raised from a protest rally held in front of the National Museum in Shahbagh yesterday, under the banner of the “Anti-Zoo Movement in Bangladesh”.

As many as 150 activists from several districts and different organisations participated in the rally.

As a symbolic protest, some protestors locked themselves up in enclosures with their hands and legs cuffed to depict the ordeal of wildlife inside zoos.

They have issued around 700 postcards from the rally to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for taking the initiative to ban all zoos.

Some of the placards from the protest read, “Zoo is a symbol of modern civilisation’s cruelty to wildlife” and “Ban wildlife torture cells”.

Animals were supposed to live free, according to the speakers at the rally, but they are held in cages across the country for people’s entertainment instead.

“There are around 50 zoos across the country where thousands of wild animals are confined. They are living there in a cruel environment,” said ANM Moazzem Hossain, chairman of Save the Nature of Bangladesh.

“We will issue one lakh postcards to the PM for banning all zoos in the country as part of the ongoing protest. We have already issued around 27,000 of them. Our protest will continue till this torture of wildlife stops,” he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



**Nazrul Utsav, organised to commemorate the life and work of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, mesmerised the audience with the performance of renowned and promising artists alike. The event will conclude today at Gulshan Society Lake Park in the capital.**

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## Nazrul Utsav concludes today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The second edition of Nazrul Utsav, organised in the capital’s Gulshan Society Lake Park, is going to end today.

The two-day event was organised by Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha (BNSS), the High Commission of India in Dhaka and Gulshan Society.

HSBC Bank Bangladesh is the title sponsor of the event.

Commemorating the works of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, the festival aims to celebrate the life and work of the poet by collaborating with artists from both sides of the border. This year, over 50 renowned senior and promising artists joined the festival.

Ekushey Padak-winning Nazrul Sangeet exponent Khairul Anam Shakil, also general secretary of BNSS, was the convener of the festival.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



## Death anniv of Dr AR Mallick today

CITY DESK

Today is the 26th death anniversary of Dr AR Mallick, an eminent educationist and the first technocrat finance minister of the country, said a press release.

To mark the occasion, a memorial discussion and a milad mahfil was held at RKB Mallick School and College at his village home in Rajapur of Dhamrai, Dhaka. Food will be distributed among orphans.

Dr Mallick was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, USA in the early 60s and the founding vice chancellor of Chittagong University.

He was president of the Liberation Council of Intelligentsia in 1971, the first education secretary, the first high commissioner to India. He was also elected chairman of Asian Development Bank.

His publications include "British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal" and "Amar Jibon Kotha O Bangladesh Mukti Sangram". Bangla Academy published "Dr AR Mallick Sharak Grontho", comprising articles by renowned personalities from home and abroad.

Dr AR Mallick Lecture Hall has been established in DU, JU and RU.

## Justice Nazmul Ahasan's death anniv today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the first death anniversary of Justice F R M Nazmul Ahsan, who was elevated as a judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

On the occasion, a milad and doa mahfil have been arranged at his residences in Dhaka and Barishal.

Justice Ahasan died of Covid-19 at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University on February 4 last year.

## Ban all zoos

FROM PAGE 3

Advocate Farhana Islam said, "Hunting, killing, buying and trafficking of wildlife is a punishable offence as per the law. However, this law is barely implemented. We urge the government to execute this law properly."



As many as 150 activists took part in a rally yesterday demanding closure of all zoos across Bangladesh. Some protestors locked themselves up in enclosures with their hands and legs cuffed to depict the ordeal of wildlife inside zoos. Some of the placards read, "Zoo is a symbol of cruelty to wildlife" and "Ban wildlife torture cells". This photo was taken in Dhaka's Shahbagh area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## UN leprosy expert

FROM PAGE 3

and interpersonal discrimination on grounds of leprosy, anti-discriminatory policies, strategies for stigma reduction and enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and disability rights by persons affected by leprosy.

The expert will meet government representatives, UN agencies, civil society organisations, and people affected, their families and their representative organisations, according to

an official announcement made yesterday from Geneva.

She will visit communities outside Dhaka, including Nilphamari and Bogura.

At the end of her visit, Cruz will share her preliminary observations and recommendations in Dhaka.

The special rapporteur will present a full report on her visit, including findings and recommendations, to the Human Rights Council in June 2023.

## Fun day for little ones

FROM PAGE 3

arrangements have been made for children. The Shishu Chattar has also been set up with more space, doubling their joy."

Yasin Araf, an attendant at the Sisimpur stall, said, "We have more sales on Fridays and Saturdays, and the trend has so far continued on the first weekend of the fair this year."

This year, the Shishu Chattar saw an increase in space on the right side of the entrance through the Ramna Kali Mandir. Around 111 units of 71 institutions have been set up.

Later in the afternoon, a separate Shishu Prahar was organised by Sisimpur

at the Shishu Chattar, which was inaugurated by Professor Muhammad Zafar Iqbal.

"Instead of handing children mobile phones, give them books. Books will help them become more intelligent," he said.

However, in the afternoon, readers of all ages started coming to the fair.

Badrul Alam, who came to the fair from Segunbagicha, said, "I look forward to this fair all year round. I have a separate budget for this year's fair alone."

Later, the unveiling ceremony of Banani Roy's "Srotoswini Jibon" was held at the publishing house Subarna's stall.

According to Bangla Academy, 96 new books were published at the fair yesterday.

The book fair will open its gates for visitors at 11:00am today.

## Nazrul Utsav

FROM PAGE 3

HSBC CEO Md Mahbub ur Rahman; Mrinmoy Chakraborty, director, Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre; and Khilkhil Kazi, granddaughter of Kazi Nazrul Islam and vice president, BNSS, also spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid, inaugurated the festival as the chief guest.

The state minister spoke about the struggles Kazi Nazrul Islam had to undergo. "Had he shared the same background as Rabindranath Tagore, Bengal could have had another noble laureate," he said.

The first day of the programme was divided into several sections, including songs of Nazrul, dance performances, and

recitations. The dance performance was organised by the team of eminent dancer Sharmila Banerjee.

Eminent cultural personality and lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor, and Krishti Hefaz performed solo recitations. Renowned artists, including Supriya Das, Mohit Khan, Paromita Mumu, Priyanka Gope, Kaniz Husna Ahammadi Sympi, Pandit Tushar Dutta, Salauddin Ahmed, and Khilkhil Kazi, mesmerised the audiences with their performances.

The second and final day of the festival will be inaugurated by Education Minister Dipu Moni.

Festival-goers will get to enjoy Nazrul Sangeet recordings collected from 125 artists, which will be released on YouTube on the occasion of the festival.

## Key accused held

FROM PAGE 5

test and started to bargain in the ward. As he asked Saddam to leave the ward, the latter became angry and assaulted him. Saddam and his men also threatened to stab Raja

outside the hospital.

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 the same day.

## PM to open revenue

FROM PAGE 3

will also be organised at the conference premises, where economists, development partners and relevant stakeholders will participate.

Masud Sadiq, a member of the NBR's customs policy and ICT committee, stated at the press conference that the NBR is on the right track to increase revenue in accordance with the conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) when providing a loan.

"Tax restructuring, on the other hand, is an

ongoing process. It is done every year when the budget is fixed, regardless of whether an IMF loan is obtained," he added.

According to Pradyut Kumar Sarkar, member for tax audit intelligence and investigation at the NBR, as tax exemptions are gradually phased out, the tax-to-GDP ratio will rise.

"Tax exemptions in various sectors have helped the country develop economically and we have gotten good results from this facility in the last two decades," he added.

## 3 arrested with 5.4kg

FROM PAGE 3

from Shakib and Rajia, while they were carrying the drugs in a motorcycle, which they use while transporting consignments that weigh more than 3 kilos.

Later, based on the information acquired from them, the Rab team raided his house in Naogaon's Niamatpur area and seized the rest from his wife.

Rab also had information about the gang hiding another 1.5 kilos of heroin in Shakib's mother's house. However, they failed to seize the package as Shakib's mother fled before they raided her house.

The market value of the seized heroin is around Tk 5 crore. The seized drugs were indeed heroin, as confirmed by the test results conducted in Rab's laboratory, said Moin.

Moin also said the consignments were supplied to drug peddlers in different parts of the country through passenger buses, launches and courier services.

Shakib, who was earlier involved in theft, used to collect the payment for the sold drugs through mobile banking. He also collected money directly from trusted drug dealers at convenient times.

He has been in the drug smuggling scene for the last two years and has multiple partners in the business, said Moin.

Another arrestee Rajia, who is from Rajshahi's Godagari, has been involved with the gang for a year. She has delivered consignments of heroin to dealers in different districts along with Shakib in motorcycles, said the Rab official.

## Man kills wife with hammer in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A man killed his wife with a hammer following a dispute in Narayanganj's Sonargaon upazila on Thursday night.

Saidul Islam went into hiding after the incident, said Sonargaon Police Station Inspector (Investigation) Ahsan Ullah. Police recovered the body of Ankhi Akhter from her house at Changakandi village in the upazila around 10:00pm.

Ankhi, 32, was a mother of three children – Arnab, 12, Siam, 10, and four-month-old Saifa.

Ankhi's father Ibrahim Pradhan said his daughter and Saidul got married around 15 years ago.

He alleged that Saidul used to beat his daughter.

According to Arnab and Siam, their parents had a fight at night when they were in the next room.

At one point, they heard their mother's scream. When they rushed in the room, they saw their father beating their mother with a hammer. Seeing them, Saidul ran away, they said.

Locals took Ankhi to Sonargaon Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared her dead.

The victim's father filed a murder case with the local police station, said police.

## Leaders at home

FROM PAGE 5

Mintu also mentioned that Rasel had no work but frequently spent large sums of money. "Even he spent around Tk 30 lakh to commemorate his parents' death anniversary in the neighbourhood," he added.

DC Mashiur Rahman

of DB police said they had come to know that the robber gang targeted Rafiqul when he was at the bank to withdraw money.

"We are now conducting a drive to arrest Rasel and other members of the gang," he added.

highlighted some specific challenges for low-income countries like Bangladesh, adversely impacted by climate change and growing antibiotic resistance.

For example, climate change may lead to an increase in vector-borne infections such as malaria, dengue, and chikungunya. These diseases, attributed by WHO as "neglected tropical diseases", generally do not attract investment from large global pharmaceutical companies. The reasons for this lack of research and development include the geographical absence of these diseases in the West, which makes for low commercial incentives, along with scientific difficulties.

"As a scientist, I would say it's a really important issue in the global scientific community, and there

should be significant investment in researching these neglected diseases," he added.

He also mentioned that vaccines can tackle antibiotic resistance. This could potentially be a solution for the future. "But it's not a magic bullet. So judicious use of antibiotics is clearly an important consideration," Shattock said.

Asked whether global organisations like the WHO possess a bias in making regulations harder for small companies from low-income countries, he said, "I think that's a difficult question, and it's too easy to have a simplistic answer."

"I think the WHO and the international regulatory system are getting much more familiar with working with low-income countries," he added.

## US for democracy

FROM PAGE 3

San Suu Kyi's National League of Democracy formed a shadow government – National Unity Government (NUG). It also has its armed wing Peoples' Democratic Force (PDF). NUG and other ethnic rebel groups control about 80 percent of Myanmar's territory.

Last year, the US determined the Myanmar junta's atrocities against the Rohingya as genocide and to date has imposed sanctions against 80 individuals and 32 entities related to the Myanmar military.

The US is the largest donor of humanitarian assistance both in Myanmar and for the Rohingyas in Bangladesh, that amount to around \$2 billion since 2017.

In December last year, the US Congress passed the

Burma Act meant to impose severe consequences for the regime's atrocities, support the pro-democracy movement and provide critical humanitarian assistance.

Chollet said the US is committed to supporting the NUG and other pro-democracy actors to gain capability and effectiveness. It is already engaged with pro-democracy leaders in Myanmar, providing them with the necessary support.

"The US and its partners, including Australia, the UK and Canada, stand in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and will take action against those enabling the military regime," added Chollet.

He also said the US is deeply concerned about Russia's supply of military equipment to Myanmar's junta and will continue to seek ways to limit such

cooperation between the two countries.

He said the US is coordinating closely with its allies and partners, including ASEAN and its members, as well as with the UN and other international organisations to hold the military regime in Myanmar accountable.

"Our overarching goal in Myanmar remains to foster conditions that end the current crisis but more importantly, return Burma to the path of inclusive, representative and multiparty democracy. And we have to be prepared for the year ahead," said Chollet.

He also mentioned that despite no shortage of important issues on the US foreign policy agenda, the US remains focused on the people of Myanmar and helping them back on the path towards democracy.

## Avian guests bid early farewell

FROM PAGE 5

campus in the winter. But now, because of the multi-storied buildings, when the bird wants to come down from above, it will see brick-concrete rather than green. That explains why they left earlier."

According to Prof Jamal Uddin of the Department of Environmental Science, "Birds cannot move easily now. Besides, people throw used masks, polythene, and plastic waste into the lake, destroying the natural habitat of aquatic animals and migratory birds."

Prof Md Kamrul Hasan of the zoology department said, "The two major lakes of the university – Transport Yard Lake and Joy Para Lake – are the main junctions for the migratory birds. It's

mainly the ill-mannered visitors, whose disturbance has driven away the birds," he said.

"Around 7,500 migratory birds came to the campus in 2020. In 2021, the number declined to 4,500 and in 2022, it came down to 3,000. This is a worrying trend," he added.

### BIRD FAIR HELD

A daylong bird fair was held on the JU campus yesterday, aiming to create mass awareness about wildlife conservation and the preservation of birds.

The university's zoology department, in association with Wildlife Rescue Centre, Bangladesh Bird Club, Aronnyok Foundation, Prokriti O Jibon Foundation and Bangladesh Zoological

Society and International Union for Conservation of Nature organised the fair.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Nurul Alam inaugurated the programme in the morning on the Zahir Raihan auditorium premises.

The fair hosted an inaugural session, a bird identification competition by audio and video clips, an environmental debate, a bird painting competition for children, an award ceremony, and other activities.

Besides, a total of seven bird conservationists were awarded under three categories – Big Bird Bangladesh Award, Conservation Media Award and Scientific Publication Award.

### খুলনা প্রকৌশল ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

খুলনা-৯২০৩

#### নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

অত্র বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের রাজস্বখাতের আওতায় নিম্নবর্ণিত পদসমূহে বিধি মোতাবেক প্রদেয় বেতন ও অন্যান্য আর্থিক সুবিধাদিসহ সম্পূর্ণ অস্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত ও স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে আবেদনপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

এমিক নং	পদের নাম	বেতন স্কেল (২০১৫ অনুযায়ী)	পদ সংখ্যা
১।	সহকারী অধ্যাপক, সিভিল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	৩৫৫০০-৬৭০১০/-	১টি
২।	সহকারী অধ্যাপক, ইলেকট্রনিক্স এবং কমিউনিকেশন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	৩৫৫০০-৬৭০১০/-	১টি
৩।	প্রভাষক, ইলেকট্রনিক্স এবং কমিউনিকেশন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ *	২২০০০-৫৩০৩০/-	২টি
৪।	প্রভাষক (অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে-১, সহযোগী অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে-১), টেকস্টাইল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	৩৫৫০০-৬৭০১০/-	২টি
৫।	প্রভাষক (অধ্যাপকের বিপরীতে), ম্যাটেরিয়ালস সায়েন্স এবং ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	২২০০০-৫৩০৩০/-	১টি
৬।	প্রভাষক (অবকাশিক), ম্যাটেরিয়ালস সায়েন্স এবং ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ	২২০০০-৫৩০৩০/-	১টি

\* গত ১৭/০১/২০২৩ইং তারিখের যুগ্মবি/সওপ্র/২৬৫২/১০০নং স্মারকসূচী প্রকাশিত (প্রভাষক, ইলেকট্রনিক্স এবং কমিউনিকেশন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বিভাগ) পদে পূর্বে যারা আবেদন করেছেন তাদের পুনরায় আবেদন করার প্রয়োজন নেই।

প্রতিটি পদে আবেদন করার জন্য বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের নির্ধারিত ফরম, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা, নিয়োগের শর্তাবলী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ওয়েবসাইট ([www.kuet.ac.bd/career](http://www.kuet.ac.bd/career)) হতে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। আবেদনপত্র জমা দেয়ার সময় ক্রমিক নং- ১ হতে ৬-এ উল্লিখিত পদের জন্য ২৫০/- (দুইশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা অত্র বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের হিসাব বিভাগে নগদ জমা দিয়ে জমা রশিদ অথবা জনতা ব্যাংক লিঃ এর যে কোন শাখা হতে বিবিধ তহবিল, কুয়েট, খুলনা এর অনুকূলে ইস্যুকৃত পে অর্ডার (যা জনতা ব্যাংক লিঃ, কুয়েট শাখা হতে পরিশোধযোগ্য) আবেদন পত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে। আগামী ১৬/০২/২০২৩ইং তারিখ বিকাল ৫-০০ টার মধ্যে আবেদন পত্র রেজিস্ট্রার দপ্তরে জমা দেয়া যাবে/পৌছাতে হবে। ডাক বিভাগের বিলম্বের জন্য কর্তৃপক্ষ দায়ী থাকবে না। নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তির অন্য পদের সংখ্যা ত্রাস/বৃদ্ধি হতে পারে, এর ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করে।

(প্রকৌশলী মোঃ আনিছুর রহমান ড্রঃ)

রেজিস্ট্রার

খুলনা প্রকৌশল ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়।



## 2 beaten to death on suspicion of theft in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Two construction workers were beaten to death on suspicion of theft in Rajshahi city's Sopura BSCIC area on Thursday night.

The victims were identified as Ataur Rahman, 45, and Rakibul Islam, 43, said Majharul Islam, officer-in-charge of Boalia Police Station.

Ataur and Rakibul were doing repair works at the house, he said.

The bodies were sent to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Rakibul's wife Suma Khatun filed a murder case with the police station.

Police arrested four persons -- the house owner Abdullah, 38, his father-in-law Masum Reza, 50, cousin Moin Uddin, 20, and employee Imran Hossain, 21.

The house owner suspected that the two construction workers were involved in stealing Tk 4 lakh from the house. He and his relatives kept them confined to their house in the afternoon and tortured them after tying them to bamboo poles, said police. On information from locals, police rescued the two injured from the house at 8:00pm and admitted them to RMCH.

They succumbed to his injuries at the hospital at night. Police said they got a hold of a video footage of the torture where they were seen forcing the workers to admit that they stole the money.



For years, Jahangirnagar University campus has served as a welcoming transit spot for migratory birds during winter. But owing to lack of greenery, ill-mannered birdwatchers and noise pollution, they've started to leave the premises early this year, within the first week of January. The photos was taken from a lake at the university recently.

PHOTO COURTESY: AURITRA SATTAR

## 26 hurt as picnic bus collides with lorry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least 26 people were injured in a head-on collision between a lorry and picnic bus bound for Cox's Bazar from Netrakona on Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Highway in Chattogram early yesterday.

The accident took place around 5:30am in Chunti area of Lohagara upazila, said police.

All the injured were teachers and students of Political Science Department at Netrakona Government College, said police.

The injured were sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital, said Mohammad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Dohazari Highway Police Station. Both the vehicles have been detained while the drivers managed to flee, he said.

Alauddin Talukder, in-charge of CMCH Police Camp, said three of the 26 injured were in a critical condition.

# Leaders at home, robbers on highways

### Four members of theft gang arrested

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Locally, they were known as politicians or social workers. They even held social programmes spending a considerable sum of money.

However, their true faces emerge once they step outside their area. These so-called respected politicians are, in reality, notorious robbers.

Identifying themselves as police officials, they conducted robberies on highways after intercepting public transports.

Police's Detective Branch (DB) disclosed the findings of the robber gang with this newspaper on Thursday, following the arrest of its four members recently.

The arrestees are Mahtab Uddin, Kawsar Ahmed, Jamal Hossain, and Mujibor Rahman. The arrestees already disclosed the gang's activities in detail during remand. Besides, arrestee Kawsar has given a confessional statement before the court on January 24.

The detective arrested the four while investigating a bus robbery that took place on Dhaka-Shariatpur highway in October last year.

Investigators said the ringleader of the gang is Rasel Kabir.

Hailing from Amtoli of Barguna, Rasel is involved with the politics of BNP and was the joint convener of the district's Holudia Union Jubo Dal unit.

Arrestee Mahtab is the gang's second-in-command. In his native town of Patuakhali, he is known as a contractor among the locals. Kawsar is also known as a contractor and a supporter of Jubo Dal's Patuakhali district unit, while Jamal and Mujibor are their associates, said detectives.

Mashiur Rahman, the deputy commissioner of DB (Lalbagh Division) under DMP, told The Daily Star that Rafiqul Islam,

**On the day, two motorbikes intercepted our bus and the criminals got on board. All of a sudden, they stopped in front of me and started beating me. Other passengers were silent as they identified themselves as police.**

RAFIQUL ISLAM, a victim

a trader, was going to his village home in Shariatpur from Dhaka after withdrawing Tk 41 lakh in cash from Babubazar area on October 6 last year.

On the way, a group of people, identifying themselves as policemen, stopped the bus he was travelling on in the Chunkutia area of Keranigan.

They then dragged Rafiqul out of the bus, beat him mercilessly, snatched away all his

money and promptly left the spot. A case was filed over this incident with the South Keraniganj Police Station.

"On the day, two motorbikes intercepted our bus and the criminals got on board. All of a sudden, they stopped in front of me and started beating me. Other passengers were silent as they identified themselves as police," Rafiqul told this correspondent.

"They left me alone beside the road after taking all my money," he added.

Detectives started a shadow probe into the case and were finally able to detect the gang after a month of investigation.

On November 4, last year, a DB team attempted to apprehend the gang in Old Dhaka's Sutrapur area, but they managed to flee by holding local shopkeepers at gunpoint.

However, the cops succeeded in arresting the four in a similar operation in mid-January.

Police recovered two motorbikes used for robbery, four cell phones, and Tk 11 lakh from their possession.

Asaduzzaman Mintu, chairman of the Holudia Union Parishad of the Amtoli area of Borguna, told The Daily Star that he had heard of Rasel's involvement with many criminal activities.

"He was missing from the locality for the last three to four months. We heard that he went into hiding in India or Dubai after police started looking for him," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES Raise awareness on SRHR among them: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The civil society leaders and development partners should come forward to raise awareness about sexual reproductive and health rights (SRHR) in the indigenous community, said speakers at a seminar in the capital yesterday.

The seminar titled "Diversity, Indigenous People and SRHR" was organised by Indigenous Peoples Development Services (IPDS) at Folk Centre.

Tuly Labanna Mrong, coordinator of IPDS who

**SRHR is an important issue for indigenous women and girls, but they are not fully aware of it. The government, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society organisations should come forward and take special measures to address SRHR issues for the indigenous community.**

TULY LABANNA MRONG  
Coordinator of IPDS

also presented the keynote paper, said SRHR is an important issue for indigenous women and girls, but they are not fully aware of it.

She recommended that the government, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society organisations should come forward and take special measures to address SRHR issues for the indigenous community. Sanjeeb Drong, president of IPDS, chaired the seminar while Ruhana Shama, manager, Dutch NGO Red Orange; and Anne Drong, ILO representative, were also present.

## ATTACK ON NURSE Key accused held, sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police yesterday arrested the prime accused in a case over the assault of an intern nurse at Pabna 250-bed General Hospital on Tuesday.

A broker named Saddam Hossain was arrested around 3:00am after the victim filed a case against him and 4 to 5 unidentified people on Thursday, two days after the incident.

Later, the accused was produced before a court that sent him to jail yesterday, said Kripa Shindhu Bala, officer-in-charge of Pabna Sadar police station.

Raja Hossain, a second-year student at Ichhamati Nursing Institute, was assaulted by Saddam on Tuesday.

According to Raja, locally influential Saddam took Tk 600 from a patient for an electrocardiogram

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

# 500 people get free health check-ups

### Faraaz Hossain Foundation holds medical camp in Nilphamari



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

More than 500 people with various health complications got a chance to consult specialised doctors free of cost at a health camp at Dangapara Kaniakhatra village in Sadar upazila of Nilphamari yesterday.

The daylong health camp was organised by Faraaz Hossain Foundation at the local Eidgah field. Since morning, there were long queues of people at the camp where the doctors provided services.

Alimuddin (65) said, "I'm suffering from diabetes for a long time... but due to poverty I could

not afford treatment. But today, I was able to consult a doctor and got medicine from them free of charge."

Monufa Begum (50), who has been suffering from asthma, echoed the same.

The camp was held commemorating Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain.

Faraaz has become an epitome of supreme sacrifice for the cause of humanity. His refusal to leave his friends during the militant attack at Gulshan's Holey Artisan Bakery on July 1, 2016 was not only an act of bravery that the world saluted but also set the burning example of

what a pristine youthful mind can do when it comes to choosing the right path at the expense of mere mortality.

A discussion was also held as part of the event.

Principal of Nilphamari Medical College Prof Md. Rabiul Islam Shah inaugurated the event where district council chairman Md Momtazul Huque was the chief guest. Md Wahiduzzan, manager of Faraaz Hossain Foundation, also attended the programme.

Local organisation "Uddipto Tarun Foundation" provided volunteers for the medical camp.

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PRAYER  
TIMING

FEBRUARY 4

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

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



## ECONOMIC CRISIS

# Pakistan‘to agree’ to tough IMF conditions: PM

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said yesterday the government would have to agree to IMF bailout conditions that are “beyond imagination”, as it battles a spiralling economic crisis.

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation landed in Pakistan on Tuesday for last-ditch talks to revive vital financial aid that has stalled for months.

The government has held out against tax rises and subsidy slashing demanded by the IMF, fearful of backlash ahead of elections due in October.

“I will not go into the details but will only say that our economic challenge is unimaginable. The conditions we will have to agree to with the IMF are beyond imagination. But we will have to agree with the conditions,” Sharif said in televised comments.

Pakistan’s economy is in dire straits, stricken by a balance of payments crisis as it attempts to service high levels of external debt, amid political chaos and deteriorating security.

The country’s central bank said Thursday its foreign exchange reserves had dropped again to \$3.1 billion, which analysts said was enough for less than three weeks of imports.

The world’s fifth-biggest population is no longer issuing letters of credit, except for essential food and medicines, causing a backlog of thousands of shipping containers at Karachi port stuffed with stock the country can no longer afford.

Data on Wednesday showed year-on-year inflation had risen to a 48-year high, leaving Pakistanis struggling to afford basic food items.

With the prospect of national bankruptcy looming, Islamabad in recent weeks began to bow to pressure prompting the IMF’s last-minute visit.

The government loosened controls on the rupee to rein in a rampant black market in US dollars, a step that caused the currency to plunge to a record low. But the IMF wants further hikes to artificially cheap petrol, electricity and gas prices, designed to help low-income families, and the withdrawal of tax exemptions for the export sector.



Palestinian protesters burn tyres during a demonstration in the village of Baita, south of Nablus in the occupied West Bank, against the establishment of Israeli outposts on their lands, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## RESISTANCE STRONGHOLDS IN MYANMAR

# Junta imposes tough new measures

People, accused of treason, to be tried by military court

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar’s junta has introduced tough new measures in resistance strongholds under which people accused of treason and “spreading false news” will be tried by a military court, state media said yesterday.

In the 37 townships affected by the measures, no appeals will be allowed for convictions handed down by military tribunals, with the exception of the death penalty, which must be approved by junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, according to the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since a 2021 coup ousted Aung San Suu Kyi’s government, and a subsequent crackdown on dissent has sparked fighting across swathes of the nation.

The latest announcement signals the junta is looking for new ways to stamp out resistance in areas where anti-coup fighters are active.

The Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper said the expansion was done “to exercise more effective undertakings for ensuring security, the rule of law and local peace and tranquillity”.

Under the new measures, military tribunals will hear criminal cases ranging from high treason to a ban on “spreading false news” which the army has used to jail dozens of journalists.

The 37 townships lie across eight states and regions – Sagaing, Chin, Magway, Bago, Mon, Karen, Taninthayi, and Kayah.

Junta troops have clashed regularly with anti-coup “People’s Defence Forces” in those areas, as well as established ethnic rebel groups.

At least another 11 townships – six in commercial hub Yangon and five in second city Mandalay – were already under similar laws.

The decision came a day after state media announced a six-month extension to a state of emergency, delaying elections the junta had pledged to hold by August.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing acknowledged that more than a third of the country’s townships are not under full military control, in comments reported by state media on Wednesday.

More than 2,900 people have been killed in the military’s crackdown on dissent and over 17,000 arrested, according to a local monitoring group.



## Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12

The report also revealed that the long decline of global democracy has somewhat stalled in 2022.

The developed countries of western Europe dominate among the world’s “full democracies”, accounting for 14 of the total of 24 in 2022, reveals the report.

Canada is the sole “full democracy” in North America, as the US continues to languish as a “flawed democracy”, where it was relegated in 2016.

Asia and Australasia have five “full democracies” – Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia and New Zealand.

Three Latin American countries are classed as “full democracies” – Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay – and so is one African country, Mauritius.

## Iranian filmmaker

FROM PAGE 12

for freedom”, the US-based Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI) said on Twitter, while Iran’s reformist Shargh newspaper posted an image of Panahi jubilantly embracing a supporter.

His wife Tahereh Saeedi posted a picture on Instagram of Panahi being driven from prison in a vehicle.

The prize-winning director was arrested in July and went on a dry hunger strike on Wednesday to protest his continued detention.

“Mr Panahi was temporarily released from Evin prison with the efforts of his family, respected lawyers, and representatives of the cinema,” Iran’s House of Cinema, which groups together industry professionals, said in a statement.

The announcement that Panahi was going on a dry hunger strike sparked a wave of concern across the world about the director, who has won prizes at all of Europe’s top three film festivals.

“Today, like many people trapped in Iran, I have no choice but to protest against this inhumane behaviour with my dearest possession – my life,” Panahi had said in the statement published by his wife.

## Adani issue

FROM PAGE 12

per se are not the government’s concern and there are independent regulators to take necessary actions, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

“There is absolutely no concern from the point of view of financial stability, either for depositors or for policyholders or for anyone holding shares in these institutions. The share of any one company is not such as to create any impact at the macro level and so there is absolutely no concern from that point of view,” he said.

Meanwhile, Gautam Adani, the Indian tycoon in the eye of the storm, yesterday denied that his rise to become Asia’s richest man – a title he has lost in a phenomenal stock rout – was due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

His listed units’ combined market capitalisation has collapsed by around \$120 billion – about half of the group’s value – since US short-seller Hindenburg Research, which makes money by betting on shares falling, released an explosive report last week.

It accused Adani of accounting fraud and artificially boosting its share prices, calling it a “brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme” and “the largest con in corporate history”.

Critics say Adani’s close relationship with Modi, who is also from Gujarat state, has helped him win business and avoid proper oversight.

“These allegations are baseless,” Adani told India Today television yesterday, adding that their shared origins made him an “easy target” for such claims.

“The fact of the matter is that my professional success is not because of any individual leader,” he insisted.

His comments came as shares in his flagship firm Adani Enterprises went on a rollercoaster ride on the Bombay Stock Exchange, hitting multiple trading stops as they fell by 30 percent before recovering to close up 1.25 percent on the day. Since January, the Bombay Stock Exchange Sensex has slumped by over 1,000 points largely driven by a sell-off in

Adani group stocks.

Adani has seen his fortune plummet by tens of billions of dollars, dumping him from third to 17th on the real-time Forbes rich list.

The 60-year-old school dropout’s operations expanded at breakneck speed, with Adani Enterprises shares soaring more than 1,000 percent over the past five years. However, in recent weeks, the stock price of Adani Enterprises fell by over 70 percent from its peak of Rs 4,190 in December.

On late Wednesday his main firm cancelled a \$2.5-billion stock sale meant to help reduce debt levels – long a concern – restore confidence and broaden its shareholder base.

Big banks including Credit Suisse and Citigroup have stopped accepting Adani bonds as collateral for loans to private clients, according to Bloomberg News, fueling worries about how the conglomerate will raise fresh funds.

Bonds nonetheless rallied slightly yesterday after Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan bankers told clients that parts of Adani’s portfolio remained strong, Bloomberg reported, citing unidentified sources.

Fitch Ratings said in a statement there was “no immediate impact” on rated Adani entities’ credit profiles from the Hindenburg report.

According to Hindenburg Research, Adani has artificially boosted the share prices of its units by funneling money into the stocks through offshore tax havens.

The group had benefited from what it called a “decades-long pattern” of government leniency, and that “investors, journalists, citizens and even politicians have been afraid to speak out for fear of reprisal”.

Adani said it was the victim of a “maliciously mischievous” reputational attack and issued a 413-page statement on Sunday. The statement claimed Hindenburg’s claims were “nothing but a lie”.

Adani said in his interview yesterday only 32 percent of his firms’ loans were owed to Indian banks, with almost half their debt obtained through international bonds.

## EU pledges more

FROM PAGE 12

with the top EU officials following the summit in Kyiv yesterday, President Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukraine would fight to hold on to the eastern “fortress” city of Bakhmut for as long as it could, and urged the West to supply long-range weapons to help Kyiv push Russian forces out of the Donbas region.

The city of Bakhmut has become the focal point of Ukrainian resistance to Russia’s invasion and of Moscow’s drive to regain battlefield momentum, reports Reuters.

Russian officials have said Russian forces are encircling Bakhmut from several directions and battling to take control of a road which is also an important supply route for Ukrainian forces.

Zelensky said Russia would continue to push in the east but that Ukrainian forces would be able to hold out until more Western weapons arrived.

## Flights disrupted

FROM PAGE 12

All the 148 passengers of the flight were flown to Dhaka by another flight at 4:30pm, she added.

An engineering team of Biman went to Sylhet and changed the tyre of the plane, Tahera further said, adding that the aircraft returned to Dhaka at 5:30pm after repair.

According to the airport sources, a flight from Manchester could not return due to the closure of the runway.

## Man detained after attack threat on French train: police

AFP, Strasbourg

French security forces yesterday detained a 24-year-old man who threatened to blow himself up on a high-speed train and were evaluating his psychiatric health after finding no

## SC scraps verdict

FROM PAGE 12

SC verdict released on Thursday.

“In our view, these individuals do not deserve to be treated as suspects or as persons of interest. They deserve to live with dignity. Their departure from the Ansar should not be a reason for discrimination used to deny them employment – especially in private organisations,” a three-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique said in the judgement.

The two other judges are Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice M Enayetur Rahim.

Writ petitioners’ lawyer Salahuddin Dolon told The Daily Star that there is no legal bar for the government to take the Ansar members back to service through scrutiny.

On August 2, 2022, the apex court bench delivered a short verdict on this issue after hearing three appeals and three leave to appeal petitions filed by the state and the director general of Ansar and VDP challenging the HC verdicts.

Senior lawyer and Supreme Court Bar Association President Md Momtaz Uddin Fakir also appeared for the Ansar members while Attorney General AM Amin Uddin represented the state. Senior lawyers Kaml Ul Alam and Quamrul Haque Siddique argued for the director

## UNDERAGE MARRIAGE

# Assam police arrest 1,800 men

REUTERS, Guwahati

Police in Assam have arrested more than 1,800 men for marrying or arranging marriages to underage girls, launching what the eastern Indian state’s chief minister said yesterday was the start of a sustained crackdown on the practice. Police began the arrests on Thursday night, and more were likely, including of people helping to register such marriages in temples and mosques, Himanta Biswa Sarma told Reuters. “Child marriage is the primary reason behind child pregnancy, which in turn is responsible for high maternal and infant mortality rates,” he said. Marriage under 18 is illegal in India, but the law is openly flouted. The UN estimates that the country is home to the largest number of child brides in the world at around 223 million. “From Muslims to Hindus, Christians, tribal people to those belonging to the tea garden communities, there are men from all faiths and communities who got arrested for this heinous social crime,” Sarma said.

## Taliban detain Afghan educator

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan’s Taliban authorities have “beaten and detained” an academic who voiced outrage on live television against their ban on women’s university education, his aide said yesterday. Veteran journalism lecturer Ismail Mashal caused a storm by tearing his degree certificates to shreds on TV in December, protesting the edict ending women’s higher education. In recent days, domestic channels showed Mashal carting books around Kabul and offering them to passers-by. “Mashal was mercilessly beaten and taken away in a very disrespectful manner by members of the Islamic Emirate,” Mashal’s aide Farid Ahmad Fazli told AFP, referring to the Taliban government.

## EU MIGRANT CRISIS

# Italy recovers eight bodies from boat

AFP, Rome

Italy’s coastguard recovered the bodies of eight migrants in the Mediterranean, officials said yesterday, as a debate rages over Rome’s crackdown on rescue charities in the world’s deadliest crossing. Rescuers found the bodies of five men and three women – one of whom was pregnant – in a boat late Thursday, according to Filippo Mannino, the mayor of the tiny island of Lampedusa. The 42 survivors on board were brought ashore, he told AFP. The deaths come ahead of a European Council summit next week at which Italy’s Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will push for greater assistance from the bloc on managing boat migrants.





# Shamol breaks his silence

ANTARA RAISA

Starting his career in the theatre, popular actor Shamol Mawla slowly made his way into the hearts of the audience with his versatility and dedication, over the years. Once called the 'Prince of OTT', Shamol brought another exciting thriller web-series, *The Silence*—which has recently been released on Binge.

**In an exclusive interview with Star Showbiz, the actor shared his experience about working in the series and much more. Your thriller web-series 'The Silence' has been released on Binge recently. How was the response?**

Since its release, I have been receiving great responses from the audience. Fans have been calling and messaging me to congratulate me about the series. The concept of *The Silence* is very different from what we watch in our country. Maybe, it's the first time any director has worked on this concept. As this is Vicky Zahed's production, people always expect a surprise from him. I think they were not disappointed.

**What was the most challenging part of playing your character in the series?**

Staying silent throughout most of the series was the most challenging part for me. It might seem like it's an easy job and we just have to keep our mouths shut, but it was very tough to execute. To convey a message through just actions and expressions was difficult for me.

Sometimes, I had to be silent in my own home, just to become familiar with my character.

**What convinced you to sign on for 'The Silence' and how was the experience of working with Vicky Zahed?**  
This is my first

project with Vicky Zahed. When he told me the story, I was so amazed by the concept and my character, that I decided to do the project without any hesitation from that moment. I had a great time working with Vicky. His entire team was very energetic and fun, which meant I rarely felt bored. Everyone on the team was involved in the story.

**When the OTT industry began flourishing in Bangladesh, you received critical acclaim for your performance in 'Money Honey'. However,**

**afterwards you were absent from the scene. What caused this gap?**

The time gap was intentional on my part. After *Money Honey*, I was being offered too many projects. I felt like I need a break because I was doing the same type of roles. The audience can get bored when they watch you in too many similar projects. So, I wanted to return to the OTT industry with a bang. I was waiting for a good script to come. Finally, it happened with *The Silence*.

**Who are your favourites in the showbiz industry?**

I am a great fan of Ahmed Rubel, and I also like to watch Afran Nisho's works. Apart from this, I also admire Zakia Bari Mamo, Nazia Haque Orsha, and Moushumi Hamid. Recently, I have worked with Mehazabien Chowdhury and I absolutely loved her acting.

**In your opinion, what are your top three projects so far?**

I would say, *Money Honey*, *The Silence* and *Mohanagar*.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## Out and about IN DHAKA



**Dhaka Headbangers (Vol 1)**  
February 10 | 2 pm  
Liberation War Museum



**Abyss in abjection: A journey through pandemic**  
February 6 | 10:30 am – 5 pm  
Bangladesh National Museum



**Spread Warmth 2023 Day 2**  
February 4 | 2:30 pm  
Mahbub Ali Institute

## TV TALKIES

# CUNK ON EARTH

## No question is too stupid to ask

Already a phenomenon that has spread on social media, this British mockumentary features Diane Morgan as Philomena Cunk, who explores the wonders of the world in the most comical way possible.

This 2022 series explores the world's greatest inventions—daring to ask questions one wouldn't normally ask. The *Afterlife* famed actress pulls off the hilarious

character of a TV presenter, who parades herself as a dumb question-asker, while secretly being a genius.

Over five episodes, the mockumentary covers everything from human evolution down to organised religion, all the while asking "why". Charlie Brooker and Diane Morgan's genius peeks through each episode, as Philomena goes through deadpan and witty

commentaries exploring the different aspects of the human race. Not once does the character ever become aware of the absurdity of her questioning, often making the real-life experts uncomfortable.

*Cunk on Earth* is a perfect mix of meta-comedy, under the guise of pretending to be serious, presenting itself as a delightful, dry, quintessential British-humour.



## TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix  
You People

Binge  
The Silence

Hoichoi

Hello!  
Remember me?

Disney plus

Clan of the  
Meerkats

Amazon Prime  
Carnival Row

## WHAT'S ON THE GRAM



# Bidya Sinha Mim

The ravishing beauty, Bidya Sinha Mim has been the embodiment of couple goals, with her fantastic pictures from Dubai. The Bangladeshi 'Habibi' looked like a million dollars, with her long white gown and multi-coloured jacket. The actress looked fierce donning a *keffiyeh*, while a majestic eagle sat on top of her head.





## Revise power purchase agreement with Adani

Ensure fair exchange for Bangladesh

We welcome the government’s decision to revise its power purchase agreement with Adani Group in light of skyrocketing coal prices, although we cannot help but wonder why such an unfavourable agreement to Bangladesh was signed in the first place – and that, too, in such a clandestine manner.

Bangladesh is set to buy 1,496MW of electricity from Adani Power Ltd for 25 years, under a contract signed by the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) in 2017. The request for a review of the agreement came after Adani Power asked BPDB to issue a demand note to open letters of credit (LCs) for coal, in which the price of coal was quoted at USD 400 per metric tonne – a significantly higher amount than that paid by the local coal-fired power plants. To compare, the BPDB pays USD 245 per metric tonne for the coal used in the Payra power plant, USD 254.38 for S Alam and Rampal power plants, and USD 270 for the Barishal power plants.

A recent report by *The Washington Post* has exposed the enormous degree to which the agreement would cost Bangladesh, after reviewing the 163-page confidential document. It highlights that the coal price is higher because Adani will use coal imported from its stranded Carmichael coal mine in Australia through Adani ships and Adani-built railways, while the electricity generated will be transmitted via an Adani-built high voltage line. However, it is Bangladesh who must bear all the additional shipping and transmission costs, according to the current agreement.

Worse still, unlike other agreements with foreign power suppliers, there is no cap on the price of coal imported from Adani if it shoots up in the international market.

It is inconceivable that Bangladesh should have voluntarily and enthusiastically entered an agreement that is so detrimental to the nation and its people, who must ultimately shoulder the burden of higher prices. While we appreciate the government’s commitment to ensuring high electricity production, we must ask why it has continued to take one questionable decision after another in the process, such as paying exorbitantly high amounts of capacity charges – about Tk 90,000 crore in a decade – for rental power plants to sit idle.

Bangladesh is currently paying about Tk 1,500 crore as annual capacity charges to India, which, ideally, we should discontinue to ease the burden on our stretched forex reserves. Instead, thanks to the Adani agreement, Bangladesh is looking to pay a whopping USD 11.01 billion in capacity charges to Adani power over the 25 years of the deal, according to a report co-published by the Bangladesh Working Group on External Debt (BWGED) and India’s Growthwatch, which is simply ludicrous.

In light of the economic and energy crises we are facing, it is imperative that the government revisits not just the clause on coal prices, but other agreements at large to ensure a fair exchange for the people of Bangladesh.

It must also make the existing agreement, and any possible revision, subject to public scrutiny, as it is the public in whose name, and from whose pockets, such large amounts of money will be paid to Adani. Why was the initial agreement signed in such a secretive manner, given that it was not a matter of national security? Why must we find out about its provisions from foreign newspapers?

This secrecy must end, and the government must ensure transparency and accountability to the people of Bangladesh, whose interests it is constitutionally obligated to represent and protect.

## How long before BRTA does its part?

Rampant irregularities and corruption must be checked

It is exhausting to have to confront news of traffic accidents every day, particularly when we come to learn that the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has done little to prevent these accidents. According to our report, unfit vehicles have been causing increasingly more road accidents in recent years. This raises serious concerns about the BRTA’s inspection quality and its process of issuing fitness certificates to motor vehicles.

Lately, multiple allegations have been brought against the BRTA for issuing fitness clearance certificates to vehicles without carrying out any inspection, which violates the Road Transport Act 2018, and other relevant laws. The most egregious example of this phenomenon came to light in a recent report by this daily. A mini truck, which had been seized by police during a robbery in Cumilla, was apparently given a fitness certificate while it was still in police custody. Last year, another vehicle involved in an accident case was given clearance without any inspection.

Sources at the BRTA confirmed that some unscrupulous officials were involved in this activity with brokers. This is unacceptable, not least given the fact that BRTA has increased its service fee by 233 percent, which is another burden on citizens during the worst cost-of-living crisis in over a decade. We would like to know what actions the BRTA has taken to identify the syndicate in question. And despite repeated reports, why has it failed to put an end to the mockery that the inspection process has been reduced to?

Earlier in 2020, the High Court issued a rule that no unfit vehicles should be allowed to ply our roads. The High Court also asked the BRTA and the IGP to explain what actions they had taken to address the increasing number of road accidents, while directing the authorities concerned to ensure that no vehicle could get fuel without valid fitness certificates. But the directions fell on deaf ears, as usual. A large number of vehicles are not even registered under the BRTA, which means they don’t have any fitness reports, but are still plying the streets, endangering people’s lives.

The BRTA’s failure gives us a glimpse into the sorry state of road safety in our country, despite a number of protests and strong citizen activism in recent years seeking specific redress. We, too, have repeatedly urged the BRTA to take its mandate seriously. We ask again that it makes its services transparent, accessible, and modern. Corruption that has become ingrained within its activities – and, dare we say, its ethos – must be exposed. The BRTA cannot take its role lightly, as people’s lives depend on it.

# By-Poll Drama, Hero Alom, and a Smart Bangladesh



MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

### THE STREET VIEW

Mohammad Al-Masum Molla is chief reporter at The Daily Star.

With less than a year to go until the next parliamentary election, by-elections to six constituencies took place on Wednesday, apparently in a peaceful way, bar a few stray but customary incidents of gun-firing and the ever-familiar chase and counter-chase between the supporters of rival candidates.

However, other features of these by-polls were not so customary, at least if we consider how participatory elections used to be held in Bangladesh, amid a festive atmosphere, even a few years ago. This time, there were extremely low voter turnouts (indicating a lack of interest among voters, possibly resulting from the boycott by the main political opposition BNP), ruling party men taking control of polling centres (also because BNP members were absent from the field), and the most alarming of them all – the disappearance of a candidate five days before voting day.

These phenomena raise some serious and obvious questions about the Election Commission’s capacity to hold free and fair polls. But what they also indicate has grave consequences for the state of democracy in the country. The commission’s primary task is to make sure that all elections are fair, that every candidate gets a fair shot at winning, and where every voter gets the chance to cast their vote in favour of their chosen candidate. But given what happened on Wednesday, it didn’t take people long to forget that this same Election Commission managed to hold an impressive by-election (at least by recent standards) in the Gaibandha-5 constituency only a month ago. As if it was just a fluke.

We saw the recurrence of the most alarming trend ahead of the by-poll to Brahmanbaria-2 as well: one of the opposition candidates went missing. Nothing could be worse for a democracy than when the Election Commission, without a shred of proof, speculates that the candidate might have gone into hiding. Should they not have taken a moment to reflect and used common sense to realise



VISUAL: STAR

that whatever they were saying was completely against the spirit of the very existence of their commission?

The missing candidate, Abu Asif Ahmed, returned the day after the by-election, saying he had gone away as the pressure of the election had gotten unbearable for him. If that is indeed the case, would one be wrong in thinking that the Election Commission has failed to do their primary job?

Altogether, this adds more weight to the BNP’s and other political parties’ claim that a fair election under the current Election Commission is not possible. The commission, which has been suffering from a severe credibility crisis – obviously, this commission is not solely responsible for such a situation; the last two commissions contributed a lot to the lack of credibility given how they conducted the last two general elections – will feel more pressure.

desperate to prove that the BNP lawmakers’ decision to resign from parliament was wrong. It possibly also wanted to send a message to the BNP leaders and aspirants that they might have a chance in the next polls if they betrayed their party.

But what has been more surprising is the desperation of the ruling party. They exercised their maximum strength to ensure the victory of Abdus Sattar (who was elected five times from the BNP ticket and was a technocrat minister during the BNP-led four-party alliance government in 2001) in Brahmanbaria-2.

They succeeded, but at a high cost: they proved once again that a free and fair election under a partisan government is absolutely impossible (at least recent history says so).

That is why we now see Hero Alom, an internet sensation with a huge fan following, pointing his finger at the Election Commission and the

“There are some people in the educated society who don’t want to accept me. They think that if I get elected, Bangladesh’s prestige would suffer; their [the educated people] prestige would suffer. They would be forced to call illiterates like me ‘Sir.’ That’s why they don’t want to accept me. They couldn’t accept my victory. If the election is rigged and farcical, people will disregard elections forever.”

Aside from Alom’s concerns about political and educated people’s alleged disdain towards him, what is truly concerning is that the Awami League may replicate the Brahmanbaria-2 template in luring opposition candidates like Sattar in the upcoming general election, scheduled for January 2024. That would undoubtedly be a moral and political defeat for the ruling party, and certainly an unsmart move of a government that dreams of a “Smart Bangladesh.”

## Aalo clinics: Changing urban healthcare in Bangladesh



MOHAMMAD IHTESHAM HASSAN

Mohammad Ihtesham Hassan is pursuing a master’s degree in health economics at the Institute of Health Economics, Dhaka University.

I recently visited the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) to conduct a survey for my university coursework. It was essentially my first visit there. My perception of DMCH prior to this visit was that, since it’s a government facility, it’s not very well-managed, and only gets so many patients because it provides affordable healthcare and related services.

However, only after visiting the place did I realise how dire the situation is at this hospital. It is clearly operating at overcapacity and is burdened with more patients than it can accommodate. Unable to find a bed, sick patients can be seen lying on the floors of corridors and balconies. The agony of those injured or in critical conditions is on open display. I found the overall environment suffocating, and could not help but wonder how the health of a sick individual could improve under such dreadful conditions.

However, we cannot blame the DMCH for this situation. The main reason behind the overcrowding lies elsewhere.

DMCH is a tertiary healthcare facility. That is, the facility’s service provision is primarily involved in providing specialised care to patients referred by secondary and primary care facilities. The accepted

practice worldwide is, unless it is an emergency, a patient will go to a primary healthcare facility, then get referred to a secondary facility, and eventually a tertiary facility if needed. Yet, a majority of the patients who visit DMCH go there without being referred from the lower-tier healthcare facilities.

Bangladesh became a signatory to the Alma-Ata Declaration in 1978, which means the country is committed to providing primary healthcare. Over the years, despite some setbacks due to the shifting of policies between different governments, Bangladesh has invested significantly in developing its primary healthcare system. For instance, the rural healthcare service delivery system has sound structural design. A hierarchical system is followed, where a patient initially visits a community clinic, then is referred to a union-level health facility, and finally an upazila health complex, depending on their needs.

However, urban areas in Bangladesh don’t have a properly defined service delivery system because the health ministry is not responsible for primary healthcare service provision in urban areas. Rather, it is the LGRD ministry’s jurisdiction through city corporations and municipalities.

However, the LGRD ministry does not have the resources or infrastructure to provide the healthcare services that are required in the urban sphere.

The LGRD ministry currently provides primary care through the Urban Primary Healthcare Services Delivery Project (UPHCSDP) and government dispensaries. However, these healthcare facilities are insufficient in number and cannot cater to the entire urban population. These facilities face various challenges as well, among which are a lack of accountability, weak monitoring system, staff shortages, and provision of limited services. But, most importantly, these facilities are not designed under an umbrella model.

To tackle the existing crises in the provision of primary healthcare in urban areas, Sida of Sweden, Unicef, CMED Health Ltd, and a few other stakeholders recently launched the Urban Clinic Model. The model is currently being operated in six areas under the name “Aalo clinic.”

Aalo clinics are designed to provide comprehensive primary healthcare services. The design of this model draws inspiration from Delhi’s *mohalla* clinics, UK’s general practitioner (GP) system and a few other countries’ primary healthcare systems. The model also addresses the challenges that the existing primary healthcare facilities face, and has designed Aalo clinics in a way to mitigate those problems.

Services at Aalo clinics are provided free of cost and each clinic is expected to have a service coverage of 5,000-6,000 households. The goal is to provide all types of healthcare services, which come under the purview of primary healthcare services such as

preventive care, communicable and non-communicable diseases, among others.

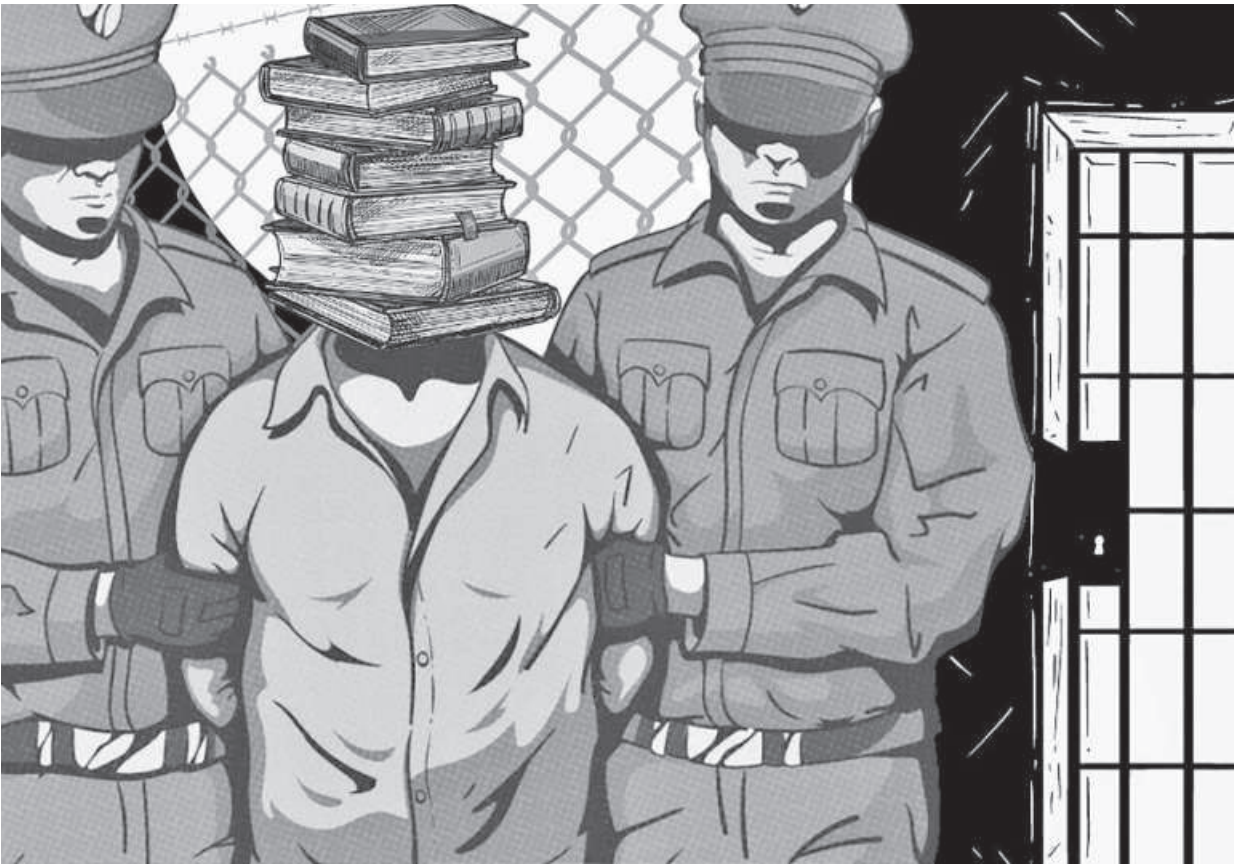
An Aalo clinic operates in two shifts of 12 hours each. It houses an adequate number of staff: two GPs (one male and one female), a clinical assistant, a cleaner, and a security guard. The staff is well-trained and doctors are explicitly instructed to see an individual patient for a minimum of 8-10 minutes.

Each facility can provide common diagnostic tests and also telemedicine services. The entire system is digitalised. Therefore, accountability can be ensured through constant monitoring. New patients are also registered in the system’s database, for which the doctors will be able to view past records for future visits.

Talks are underway for the government, specifically the health ministry, to take over the project and scale up the model to ensure that there are an adequate number of facilities across all the cities and municipal areas in the country. Implementing such a model, where there are free provisions for healthcare services, and a foolproof system to counter absenteeism, poor quality service, etc, can improve the health of lower-income groups in our urban areas and prevent them from facing catastrophic health expenditures.

If the government can implement the Urban Clinic Model, it is certainly expected to completely change the primary health provision landscape in urban areas, and would significantly reduce the burden on tertiary facilities like the DMCH and other medical colleges. By scaling up the Aalo clinic model, we can go a long way in realising our goal of becoming a country with universal health coverage.





VISUAL: TEENI AND TUNI

# Choose books, not bans



Mahrukh Mohiuddin is the managing director of The University Press Limited (UPL).

MAHRUKH MOHIUDDIN

There are a few things to be noted regarding this year's Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, one of which is the expectation that this would be the year of recovery. After two years of writers, publishers, and publications being held hostage by the pandemic, last year's Boi Mela was able to exude a sense of normalcy. But then, of course, a national economic crisis hit soon afterwards.

One key issue that must be highlighted as it has been significantly affecting this sector, is the increase of paper price. The price hike of paper has been a major hurdle, but was not addressed with the seriousness it deserved. The price of paper has been an issue for our sector for a long time, but the situation escalated unusually last year, and therefore drew the attention of the media as well as the policymakers. What is most regrettable is that, even after paying high prices for locally produced paper, publishers are not receiving goods of their desired quality. This is something that needs to be highlighted throughout the year, and not only during the book fair season. If a state deems it important to move towards a knowledge economy, the price of paper – an essential item for knowledge products – have to be taken into serious consideration.

While producing new books was a challenge this year, publishing houses have tried hard to keep the promises made to authors and readers. We need to bear in mind that the publication industry supports the livelihoods of many people.

As for the quality control of books and publishers showcased at Boi Mela, the Bangla Academy certainly has a role to play. As publishers, we

**Aalo clinics are designed to provide comprehensive primary healthcare services. The design of this model draws inspiration from Delhi's mohalla clinics, UK's general practitioner (GP) system and a few other countries' primary healthcare systems. The model also addresses the challenges that the existing primary healthcare facilities face.**

also want the academy to play this role constructively and host the book fair as a non-partisan entity. However, I believe that there is a scope for the book fair policies to be reviewed. One may have disagreement with what a book may be condoning, but that should be addressed with a counter-argument made in another book, and not by means of undue censorship.

We believe that the freedom of expression of writers and publishers must be preserved. The Bangla Academy and our cultural affairs ministry is tasked with upholding the interests and rights of publishers and writers. For these institutions to instead become a barrier to our freedom of expression can only be described as tragic. I hope these

institutions that we respect deeply also realise that irrational embargoes can only make way for situations that come back to haunt those who impose these restrictions.

The least we can say is that the policies should be applied across the board with the rights of readers, writers, publishers and other stakeholders in mind, and not to serve the interest of a coterie of publishers with privileged access to policymakers, and particularly not at a time of deep financial crisis.

Publishers nowadays are having to work through a lot of challenges, but one hopes that some scope for discussions and dialogue will open up. I believe that the current policies in place at Boi Mela are somewhat well thought out, but I am not sure if the policies are uniformly applied in order to maintain the quality of books showcased at the fair, or to sufficiently prevent pirated books being displayed, or to offer some level of fairness for publishers of all capacities.

We have no option but to remain hopeful that the institutions tasked with regulating Boi Mela will open up space for dialogue. When these regulations are reviewed in the future, we hope that active participation of all stakeholders will be sought. After all, Amar Ekushey Boi Mela does not just belong to the Bangla Academy; it belongs to the publishers, writers and readers as well.



Lastly, we hope that our freedom of expression – which we believe is our constitutional right in a free country – will be ensured, and that the relevant government organisations will play the most significant role in upholding our rights.

*Transcribed and translated by Afia Jahin.*

# Will the new air pollution control rules save us?



Md Masud Rana is an air quality consultant who works with the Department of Environment of Bangladesh, European Union, World Bank and other relevant organisations on air quality issues.

MD MASUD RANA

AFTER a long wait, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change recently published the Air Pollution (Control) Rules (APCR), 2022 as a gazette notification, aiming to curb the harsh air pollution in Bangladesh. Although the document was first drafted as an act in 2019, it was issued as a set of rules under the Environment Conservation Act (ECA), 1995, keeping most of the points of the original document.

Now, a question has been raised as to whether the rules would be stringent enough to control air pollution, and whether the relevant authorities would be liable enough. It is also imperative to review the strength of the authorities concerned and the coordination mechanism among the relevant organisations. It should be noted

problems, diabetes, etc. Almost the entire population of the country now lives in polluted air heavy with the level of fine particulate matter greater than deemed safe by the World Health Organization (WHO). Data from the Department of Environment (DoE) shows that the middle part of the country (Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj) is the most polluted region, while the northeastern part (Sylhet division) is comparatively less polluted.

The level of fine particulate matter in Dhaka is more than double the first interim target set by WHO, and about 15 times greater than the final target it suggests. The city is one of the top 20 most (air) polluted cities in the world, and is just behind Delhi in the list of the top most polluted capital cities. The cost of this pollution is enormous: more than 200,000 people died

decades even within its expanding investment and control over the air quality improvement programmes, which has improved its air quality by about 50 percent. This achievement is the result of a cost-effective strategy with determined implementation.

The AQIP and NAQMS will, thus, be prepared based on scientific and economic analyses, social awareness, coordination, logistics, etc. For example, to enforce the standard of 35 microgram per cubic metre (set by the APCR for fine particulate matter) in Dhaka, the maximum tolerable amount of fine particulate matter within the city's airshed needs to be calculated first. To do so, we need to figure out the types and number of sources (including those outside the city) and their contributions to the total amount of fine particulate matter. The cost-benefit analysis of the available control options for the sources will help us plan the enforcement mechanism.

For policy considerations, we may initially enforce firmly on the less important but big contributing sources (like dust), while we may focus on limiting emissions from the important sources (like exporting industries) by improving management and retrofits of the



Dhaka has consistently been one of the most air-polluted capital cities in the world for the last several years.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

that the earlier ambient air quality standards and vehicular emission standards, which were set by another set of rules under the ECA, could not be met in more than one and half decade. In these circumstances, a possible way forward needs to be devised and implemented systematically to meet the target set in the APCR.

Air pollution in Bangladesh has been worsening with the increasing level of fine particulate matter (particulate matter with diameter less than 2.5 microns), which is greatly responsible for many serious

**The level of fine particulate matter in Dhaka is more than double the first interim target set by WHO, and about 15 times greater than the final target it suggests. The city is one of the top 20 most (air) polluted cities in the world, and is just behind Delhi in the list of the top most polluted capital cities. The cost of this pollution is enormous: more than 200,000 people died prematurely in Bangladesh in 2019 due to air pollution.**

prematurely in Bangladesh in 2019 due to air pollution, according to the State of Global Air report published by the US-based Health Effect Institute. The World Bank (WB) estimated Bangladesh's economic loss due to air pollution to be equivalent to about four percent of the GDP in 2019, which is concerning.

There are different scientific data regarding the contributing sources to Dhaka's air pollution. While some studies point to brick kiln emissions as the main sources, some point to dust sources, and others to vehicular emissions. The latest report published by the World Bank (2022) attributed 85 percent of the fine particulate matter in Dhaka's air to long-range sources. Among the sources, industries are responsible for 35 percent of the pollution in Dhaka (including 14 percent from brick kilns), and household sources (cooking, generator, etc) for 28 percent of the pollution. Although it is hard to believe that only 10 percent of the anthropogenic pollution is generated within the city (according to the World Bank), we must agree that a substantial amount of fine particulate matter during the dry season in Dhaka comes from long-range sources. Thus, The APCR will face great challenges in devising and implementing cost-effective solutions for sustainable improvement in air quality.

According to the rules, the DoE will monitor the countrywide air quality continuously and tag a region as "degraded airshed" if it does not satisfy the national standards. The DoE will prepare air quality improvement plans (AQIP) for each of the degraded airsheds; a national air quality management strategy (NAQMS) will also be prepared. These tasks are highly important, but will require laborious, systematic and coordinated approaches with skilled manpower. While in-depth scientific work (monitoring, modelling and analyses) to identify the real causes of air pollution are required, economic analyses are needed to find cost-effective control measures. Beijing, known for its air pollution, has been able to maintain steady GDP growth for the last three

outdated instruments. We may also be stringent on the sources that emit very harmful pollutants like lead, chromium, persistent organic pollutants, etc. In some cases, based on analyses of air quality data, topography, socio-economic features, etc, we may need to set time variation for the operation of particular sources, and sometimes may need to relocate sources.

As per the APCR, a high-level national committee with the cabinet secretary as president, and with 26 members from the relevant ministries, departments, authorities, city corporations, and educational institutions may be formed. This committee will oversee the implementation of AQIP and NAQMS, function as the centre of coordination among relevant organisations, and advise the government on air quality improvement issues. The APCR has also provided guidance and directives to the industries, local government institutions, and other government and non-government organisations on how to limit emissions from their facilities or constructions. However, if any party does not comply with the emission guidelines or the directives outlined in the APCR, they could be punished with up to two years of imprisonment.

The APCR could be an effective tool to control the continued harsh air pollution in Bangladesh. But its sustainable success will depend on the factual preparation of AQIP and NAQMS and their persistent implementation. The DoE and local government institutes have to play major roles here. The DoE may also arrange to broadcast real-time air quality status and the forecasts of air quality for other responsible authorities as well as the general public. This may prove to be a challenging job that requires extensive resources, it may lessen the harsh impacts on public health and agriculture through informed preparations. The DoE is now expected to make the necessary arrangements immediately to initiate the tasks outlined in the APCR, and enforce it accordingly to ensure a healthy life and environment.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Unduly severe

6 Separate

11 Not obtuse

12 Juliet's love

13 Aquarium fish

14 Fudd of cartoons

15 Bear in the stars

17 Bullfight cry

18 Window covers

22 Milk buy

23 Marionette's kin

27 Peruvian peaks

29 Fielder's aid

30 Put away

32 Takes advantage of

33 Mimics Porky Pig

35 Rockies tree

38 Italy's shape

39 Fragrance

41 Car type

45 Subject

46 Packing box

47 Be furtive

48 To this point

DOWN

1 Bowler or boater

2 Top card

3 Deep groove

4 Peacocks, notably

5 Body pump

6 Partial floor cover

7 Campaign pro

8 Clip contents

9 Lively folk dance

10 Ripped

16 Fall mo.

18 Relaxing resorts

19 Intimation

20 Edit menu choice

21 Speaks falteringly

24 Do some modeling

25 At any time

26 Dick Tracy's love

28 Reversal

31 Twosome

34 Puccini opera

35 Music's Waller

36 Steel ingredient

37 Lasso

40 Farrow of film

42 Week part

43 Noshed

44 Tennis need

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5-2

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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HAVEN

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NESTS

non-communicable respiratory diseases such as bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer, etc, and is associated with cardiovascular



# Bangladesh off to winning start

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh edged Nepal 3-1 in their opening match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship after defending champions India thrashed Bhutan 12-0 at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Bangladesh looked like they were in for a dominant performance when they took a 2-0 lead within 13 minutes but Nepal fought back and gave the hosts a run for their money, but eventually in vain.

Bangladesh took only three minutes to break the deadlock when Aklima Khatun raced on to a long ball from Shaheda Akter Ripa and beat the Nepal goalkeeper Kabita with a placing shot. The lead was doubled 10 minutes later, with captain Shamsunnahar finding the back of the net following another long-ball from inside the Bangladesh half.

Nepal, however, pulled one back in the 24th minute, with Manmaya Damai's effort from the top of the box hitting the inside of the far post and nestling at the back of the Bangladesh net.

Shamsunnahar, the Bangladesh captain, got injured when a Nepal player's high foot hit her in the head towards the end of the first half. She got back on her feet after a delay but was subbed off at the start of the second half, with Airin Khatun taking her place. And her absence was clearly felt as Bangladesh lacked creativity in the attacking third in the second half.

Just as Nepal were looking desperately for an equaliser, Bangladesh sealed the victory with Ripa finding the far corner of the net with a wonderful volley from just outside the box in the first minute of stoppage time.

In the opening game of the four-team championship, India blanked Bhutan 12-0, with Neha, Lynda Kom and Anita Kumari getting hattricks. Apurna Narzary scored the first two goals for India while Nitu Linda scored the other for India, who led the first half 4-0.

Bangladesh will play against India while Nepal will take on Bhutan on the second match day tomorrow.



Bangladesh players celebrate one of their early goals during a 3-1 win against Nepal in their first match of the SAFF U-20 Women's Championship at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

PHOTO: BFF

# Siddikur makes cut in \$5m event

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman made the cut in the PIF Saudi International after securing a par half way through the five million US-dollar event at the King Abdullah Economic City of Saudi Arabia yesterday.

Although Siddikur started with two birdies, the two-time Asian Tour winner could not keep up the good work.

The 38-year-old later carded two bogeys for a par on the day and ended up having carded 70 in the first two rounds for an aggregate of 140, which helped him narrowly avoid missing the cut by just a stroke.

The feat will help Siddikur with a substantial prize money even if he fails to make an impression in the last two rounds of the event, funded by the SoftBank Investment Advisers.

This PIF Saudi International is the first event of the Asian Tour and will be shortly followed by big-money events in Qatar and Oman over the next two weeks.

# Buttler irked by pullouts

AGENCIES

England white-ball captain Jos Buttler said he was frustrated over players opting to feature in franchise tournaments instead of touring Bangladesh in March.



England will play three ODIs and as many T20Is against Bangladesh, with the ODI series one of just three left to play before their 50-over World Cup defence begins in India in October.

Alex Hales, Sam Billings and Liam Dawson opted to skip the tour in favour of more financially lucrative deals in the Pakistan Super League. David Willey will also miss the tour to spend time with his family in between stints in the SA20 and the Indian Premier League.

"Wherever people are playing, we want to pick our best available team, especially for World Cups and big ICC events, so we are open minded," Buttler was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

Buttler, however, mentioned that the ones who had withdrawn remained in contention for the World Cup. "It's quite a unique situation," he admitted.

"It's the times we are in, the way the games are scheduled, and I can sort of understand it both ways.

"As an England captain, on one side you wish that everyone would see playing for England as the main thing and grab any opportunity but there are bigger things in play as well and the discrepancy between what people can earn playing for England and not playing for England is quite large."

# 'What matters is how mentally prepared we are'

Mehedi Hasan Miraz had an incredible 2022, which ended with a series win against India, and appears to be bubbling with confidence as Bangladesh gear up for the 2023 World Cup. He talked about the dressing room culture, skills needed to fulfil the World Cup dream and the return of Chandika Hathurusingha during an interview with The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi. The excerpts are below:

**The Daily Star (DS):** What are your expectations for the 2023 World Cup individually and as a team?  
**Mehedi Hasan Miraz (MHM):** We have been doing well in ODIs over the past five-seven years so the expectation from everyone is to become World Cup champions. Everyone has to stay fit and perform. How much we prepare ourselves is crucial. The captain, coach and players will have a plan and this World Cup is one where we are at full strength.

Our seniors have the experience of four World Cups and juniors have at least six years of international experience. Anyone can win matches on their day. We don't lack skills or experience so what matters now is how mentally prepared we are. I believe this World Cup will be a memorable one for us. If it doesn't happen this time, I want to at least win a World Cup someday. Of course, luck is needed but we have a chance and our first target is the semis.

**DS:** What is required to make the dream come true?

**MHM:** Players know what they need to do. We have to develop skills. For example, I bowl a certain way but if I can add to my arsenal confidently, it changes morale. We have to chase 300-350 so we have to train to

do that and plan accordingly. It's mental and skill-based; not about experience.

**DS:** How did it feel to get Virat Kohli's wicket?

**MHM:** I always wanted to get Virat Kohli out. I created three opportunities but it didn't happen before. He survived once by taking a review but this time I got him. I really wanted his wicket in the Dhaka Test



and wanted to produce my best delivery. When you play T20s more, sometimes your shape is disturbed when you go for Tests. The rotation [of the ball] needs to be completely different in Tests. My coaches Sohel [Islam] and [Rangana] Herath help me a lot.

**DS:** What did you make of Hathurusingha's return?

**MHM:** He knows everyone and that's an advantage. He has plans

and the board wants something good from him. I debuted under him and I have grown after that so I will be able to learn more. He has been really successful and we did well under him in the 2015 World Cup. He has gotten more experienced now and we will share our experiences with him.

**DS:** Your thoughts on the dressing room culture of Bangladesh?

**MHM:** Everyone is very supportive of each other. It's been happening for 10-12 years; our seniors set the example. When I was watching highlights of the first ODI against India, I saw how happy the dressing room was and Shakib bhai even took me up on his shoulders. Without a good dressing room culture, such feelings don't arise. There is no jealousy. A team gets results when they are this way.

**DS:** How do you feel about those seniors approaching the end of careers?

**MHM:** They took us to a new level when we didn't have many dreams and their journey is still continuing. Our target is to take the team to the next step so that we can tell the next generation to go higher. That's how things grow. Our seniors always give us the same message.

# Donald contract extended till WC

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) extended the contract of Bangladesh fast bowling coach Allan Donald till the upcoming ICC 50-over World Cup, set to take place in October this year in India.

The legendary South African quick was appointed in the role in March last year with a contract till the 2022 ICC T20 World Cup. The 56-year-old also worked with the Bangladesh team during their last home series against India in December after the T20 World Cup.

"We have extended the contract of our fast bowling coach, Allan Donald, till the upcoming ICC ODI World Cup," BCB's cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus confirmed the news to The Daily Star yesterday.

According to Jalal, Tigers' spin bowling coach Rangana Herath will also continue with the Bangladesh team as his contract runs till the end of this year.

Earlier, the BCB had appointed Chandika Hathurusingha as the new head coach with the Sri Lankan expected to arrive in the country for his second stint with Bangladesh by February 20. Hathurusingha's first assignment is set to be the white-ball home series against England, including three ODIs and as many T20Is, starting from March 1.

The remaining members of the coaching panel are set to arrive on February 22, a day before the training camp for the England series is scheduled to begin.

# Resolute MSC come close to spoil Kings' party

SPORTS REPORTER

A last-gasp winner by Dorielton Gomez helped Bashundhara Kings maintain their 100 per cent record in the Bangladesh Premier League as the defending champions edged past Mohammedan Sporting Club 1-0 at the Shaheed Dhirendra Nath Dutta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

Having won the away fixture, Kings now have a maximum of 24 points from eight matches. This time though, they were made to toil hard to break down a resolute Black and Whites, who were looking to end a sequence of defeats and draws after winning their league opener and currently remain on six points from seven matches.

In the game, with hardly any clear-cut opportunities on either end, it looked like Oscar Bruzon's charges would taste their first setback of this season. However, the fifth minute of second-half's stoppage time triggered the change of fate for Kings as Dorielton back-headed a long ball from Miguel Ferreira to find Ali Reza Khanzadeh galloping inside the box. Mohammedan goalkeeper Sujon Hossain then tried to retrieve the ball ahead of the Iranian, but defender Sadikuzzaman Fahim did not hesitate to clear the ball for a corner.

Little did he know that the touch taken at the stroke of the final whistle would come back to haunt him and his side as Robson Robinho curled in the corner in the middle of the box to find a leaping Dorielton, who successfully headed the ball at the target's corner.

Elsewhere, the other match of the day between fifth-placed Fortis FC and 10th-placed Chittagong Abahani ended in a goalless draw at the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj.



# Bale stuns onlookers

AGENCIES, California

Few tuning in to watch the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am on Thursday would have been surprised to learn that former Real Madrid star Gareth Bale was good at golf, but the former Real Madrid forward caught many by surprise after an impressive first-round showing on his PGA Tour debut in California.

Playing alongside professional partner Joseph Bramlett, Bale carded a seven-under 65 on the notoriously challenging Spyglass Hill course to finish the day five shots behind the Pro-Am's leading duo.

Just three months ago, Bale was his country's captain at the Qatar World Cup. But the 33-year-old's overwhelming highlight this time came on the second hole when Bale was given a drop on a cart path close to the green.

Faced with an awkward route over a curb, Bale sent a ricocheting shot bouncing off the bank and onto the green, the ball trickling to within four feet of the hole for a par-saving putt.

In the moment, Bale's first thought was to check the nearby cameras had captured the effort. "It was a great shot. Just tried to put it into the bank and hope for the best, like most amateurs do. It was nice to see it roll up nice and close," he said.





Despite having won just two out of 17 matches across four ICC Women's T20 World Cups since making their debut appearance in the 2014 edition, expectations from the Nigar Sultana Joty-led Bangladesh side will be at an all-time high as the women in red and green gear up to prove their mettle in the upcoming mega event in South Africa, starting February 10.

As a team, we want to inspire the next generation of women's cricketers back home and the best way to do that is by winning matches.

Nigar Sultana Joty  
Bangladesh women's cricket team captain



## Prottasha relishes her taunters' u-turn

Despite having hardly any expectations, Bangladesh Women's Under-19 team surprised everyone with their performance in the recently concluded ICC Women's Under-19 T20 World Cup in South Africa. Afia Prottasha was among the few cricketers who shone bright in the mega event as she displayed glimpses of her hard-hitting ability. **The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin** caught up with Prottasha and the cricketer from Rajshahi addressed her game, future plans along with a few other topics during an exclusive interview, the excerpts of which are given below:

**The Daily Star (DS):** How did you begin your journey in cricket?

**Afia Prottasha (AP):** I heard from my parents that when I was a kid and whenever they asked me what toy I needed, I used to reply: bat and ball. It all started from there. And since my father was also a cricketer, he used to take me to the ground. There was a field near my house where I started practising. There, Tushar sir and Saad sir helped me a lot.

**DS:** Your father had a great impact in you becoming a cricketer.

**AP:** My father, being a pace-bowling all-rounder, used to assist me in the batting drills, and it took place even one or two months ahead of any tournament. He always bowled quick during the drills and said that if you are able to face fast bowlers, it will help you become a better batter.

**DS:** How was the preparation of the team, and you personally, while approaching the World Cup?

**AP:** Our preparation began a couple of years back, when a total of 40 cricketers started the training camp and worked really hard ever since. There was a message from the coaching staff that we need to play aggressive cricket. If I talk about my own preparation, I always tried to improve my game. Our head coach Dipu Roy Chowdhury sir and Ruhul Amin sir helped me a lot. I love to play lofted strokes and having observed this, they tried to enhance that skill and specifically worked on it. It worked well for me.

**DS:** We have seen you hitting some big sixes in the World

**I want to improve my game and I think it (national call-up) will eventually happen when the time is right. My goal is to serve the national team for a long time.**

Cup. Tell us about your big hitting ability.

**AP:** To be honest, I never intend to hit big sixes whenever I go out to bat. My main focus is to play according to the [merit of the] ball. I used to practise with a tennis ball since my childhood, I also played taped-tennis tournaments with the boys, and that helped me to develop my natural habit. Actually, it's not important which position I bat at. I will try to adapt and deliver for my team in any position.

**DS:** Could you share the story of your encounter with national cricketer Mahedi Hasan.

**AP:** We were in a camp in Khulna and there I possessed a poor-quality bat. While I was batting, I couldn't connect the ball properly. However, Mahedi Hasan bhai was observing the net session and he approached me and, to my surprise, offered his bat. Once I held and used it, I felt great and I had realised the difference between a good bat and an average one.

**DS:** What was the situation in the dressing room after the South Africa loss as Bangladesh could have qualified for the semi-final if we had won that game?

**AP:** The way we started off the tournament, everyone in the country was expecting us to bring the trophy. It was a tight game (vs. South Africa) and our emotions were running high. We made a few mistakes and after the game were all in tears since we were almost there in the semi-finals.

**DS:** Four cricketers from the U-19 World Cup team were called up in the national team. Do you feel that you could have also made it to the senior team?

**AP:** To be honest, I want to improve my game and I think it (national call-up) will eventually happen when the time is right. My goal is to serve the national team for a long time.

**DS:** Who is your role model?

**AP:** I follow the batting of Virat Kohli to improve my game. I try to learn a lot from his technique and mentality as a batter.

**DS:** Has everything changed around you after coming from the World Cup?

**AP:** To be honest, yes. Since returning to my hometown everyone has been appreciating me. Interestingly, when I started playing cricket, many people from my area used to complain to my father about why I play cricket being a girl. They commented on my dress as well. But My father told me one thing: if you want to continue, don't bother about what others say.

Now I am enjoying the fact that those people who resorted to taunt me in the past are encouraging me.



set to appear in her fourth T20 World Cup, the team is ready for the challenge.

"Our main strength as a team is our unity. We are very well-balanced, we have a mixture of experienced players and talented young players, and our team are always ready to take on a challenge.

"As a team, we want to inspire the next generation of women's cricketers back home and the best way to do that is by winning matches," she said.

Bangladesh will begin their World Cup journey with the game against the Lankans on February 12 in Cape Town, and they will hope to defy history and odds and even out the column of good memories in the event.

# A chance to make a statement

NABID YEASIN

The recent success stories of the country's women's sides across different sports -- Bangladesh's triumph in the SAFF Women's Championship last year still very fresh in memory -- have not only resulted in a boost in viewership but also raised the bar of expectation from the girls representing the nation at any level in any sport.

Even the women's under-19 cricket team came through on those expectations as they marked the inaugural ICC Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup in South Africa last month with some impressive showings -- including taking down a strong Australia in the tournament opener before bowing out from the Super Six only due to net run-rate.

And in that regard, it is no surprise that expectations will be there from the Nigar Sultana Joty-led side, who are set to fly Bangladesh's flag in the next big global event -- the eighth edition of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, set to commence on February 10 with the hosts South Africa taking on Sri Lanka in Cape Town. Nigar & Co have also been boosted by three in-form players -- Shorna Akter, Disha Biswas and Marufa Akter -- that featured in the Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup.

However, realistically, expectations might need to be tempered, given Bangladesh's recent form and how they fared the four times they featured in the event. Having made their first appearance in the 2014 edition at home, Bangladesh have played in all three editions of the T20 World Cup since. But unfortunately, the Tigresses do not have much to show for the 17 T20 World Cup matches played as the only two wins managed by the women in red and green were nine years ago, against Sri Lanka and Ireland at home.

Moreover, recording the two lowest innings totals in the tournament -- 46 all out in just 14.4 overs against hosts West Indies in 2018 and 58 for nine against England in 2014 in Sylhet -- only dampens the Tigresses' history in the biennial event.

But, in words of the Tigresses' skipper Joty, the dismay of the past only makes the upcoming event even more a spectacular opportunity for her side to prove a point and make amends.

"The upcoming ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2023 is a big and exciting opportunity for our team. We have played in four T20 World Cups but in the last three, we have not played so well and have not been able to record a win. This time, we are determined to make

sure we break that record, get some momentum going, and show the world what we can do," Joty was quoted as saying in a column published by the International Cricket Council as part of the build-up to the mega event.

Following a dismal showing in the Asia Cup in October last year, Bangladesh also failed to win a single game in their tour of New Zealand in November-December. The Tigresses lost the three T20Is by convincing margins before losing the three-ODI series 1-0 with the final two games abandoned against the Kiwis.

However, with hopes to better acclimatise to the conditions, Joty's troops already arrived in South Africa last month and the side will be hoping to bounce back to winning ways in the two official warm-up games -- against Pakistan on February 6 in Cape Town and India on February 8 in Stellenbosch.

Having been placed in Group 1 with hosts South Africa, defending champions Australia -- who are also the most successful side in the tournament with five titles so far -- New Zealand, and the Asia Cup finalists Sri Lanka, the Tigresses definitely have their work cut out.

But according to Joty, who is

## Not just a fluke

MAZHAR UDDIN

Even though Bangladesh's performance in the recently-concluded ICC Women's Under-19 T20 World Cup surprised many, it was, in fact, a reflection of the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) long-term planning and the hard work put in by the players.

Disha Biswas and her troops barely missed out on qualifying for the semifinals of the inaugural event as Bangladesh and three other teams -- Australia, India, and hosts South Africa -- from Group 1 of the Super Six stage ended with six points, with the former two sides eventually progressing courtesy of a superior net run rate.

The young Tigresses began their World Cup campaign with a thumping seven-wicket win over Australia and went on to beat Sri Lanka and the USA in the group stage to advance to the Super Six as unbeaten group champions.

But a defeat to South Africa in the first Super Six game changed the scenario as the young Tigresses' only slip-up in the tournament proved too costly. And had it not been for that five-wicket defeat against the hosts in Potchefstroom, the plan that had been set in motion more than two years ago could have culminated in an even better outcome.

According to Bangladesh women's team head coach Dipu Roy Chowdhury, the preparation for this Under-19 World



Cup began in 2020 during the Women's T20 World Cup in Australia. Back then, the women's wing and the game development committee of the BCB collaborated to hunt cricketers through a divisional Under-18 tournament.

"It all started during the Women's World Cup [in 2020]. At that time, the women's wing and the game development committee of the BCB worked together to scout players from an Under-18 divisional tournament. We selected cricketers for the Under-19 side from that tournament. We also gave opportunities to first division players to play in the premier league. The selected players also played with the senior

side and [BCB Women's Wing manager] Towhid Mahmud bhai arranged for a few players to be sent to New Zealand with the senior team to give them exposure," Dipu told The Daily Star.

Under the guidance of Dipu and in presence of a fast-bowling coach and a batting coach, the Bangladesh Under-19 team held a training camp in Khulna. The girls were made to play matches against boys in order to improve their skills and build their confidence to play fearless cricket.

"We tried to instil the attacking mindset in the girls right from the start which was reflected in their body language in the







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# Adani issue a ‘storm in a tea cup’

Says India govt, claims country  
has ‘robust economy’; Adani  
denies Modi’s role in his rise

STAR REPORT

The Indian government yesterday termed the stock market turmoil sparked by a sharp fall in the values of Adani Group a “storm in a teacup”, as a ruckus over the issue disrupted the proceedings of both Houses of the Indian parliament for the second successive day.

Parliament was adjourned for a second straight day yesterday after opposition lawmakers again demanded that the government grant a debate on Adani and Indian financial institutions’ exposure to the group. The ensuing disruption forced the Speaker to adjourn the parliament till Monday.

Indian Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Indian markets were well regulated and the controversy would not affect investor confidence.

“One instance, however much talked about globally, I would think is not going to be indicative of how well Indian financial markets have been governed,” she told broadcaster News18.

Indian Finance Secretary T V Somanathan, in the first public comments by the government on the issue, termed the stock market turmoil sparked by the crisis as a “storm in a tea cup” from a macroeconomic point of view and maintained that India’s public financial system is robust.

He also said that movements in the stock market

**“One instance, however much talked about globally, I would think is not going to be indicative of how well Indian financial markets have been governed.”**

Nirmala Sitharaman  
Indian finance minister



Children are enjoying the illustrations in books at a stall at Ekushey Book Fair in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday. The fair authorities have dedicated “Shishu Prohor”, from 11:00am to 1:00pm on weekends. The month-long fair draws a large number of visitors from all age groups.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## SYLHET AIRPORT Flights disrupted as Biman plane tyre bursts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The flight operations at Osmani International Airport remained suspended for about four hours as the tyre of an aircraft burst before takeoff yesterday.

The incident, involving flight 602 from Sylhet to Dhaka, took place around 1:15pm, said Tahera Khandaker, general manager (public relations) of Biman.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## 1994 ANSAR MUTINY SC scraps verdict that reinstated 2,000 jobs

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has scrapped the High Court verdicts that ordered the government to reinstate around 2,000 Ansar members dismissed after the 1994 mutiny.

However, the government may reinstate after scrutiny the individuals who are innocent and those who moved writ petitions before the HC to get back their job, the apex court observed in the full text of a verdict.

“The government may take measures to take back the innocent writ petitioners in Battalion Ansars after proper scrutiny, if they are found not guilty of revolt or ‘Mutiny’,” read the full text of the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

## DEMOCRACY INDEX Bangladesh moves two notches up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh ranked 73rd on the Democracy Index 2022, prepared by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), two notches up from the previous year.

In 2021, Bangladesh was in the 75th position on the index.

As per the latest index, Norway was at the top of the list whereas neighbouring India secured 47th position.

Based on the electoral process and pluralism, government functions, political participation, political culture and civil liberties, the index categorised Bangladesh as a hybrid regime.

A hybrid regime means Bangladesh has a fraudulent electoral system which slows down its effort to be a free and democratic country.

Bangladesh continued to score 5.99 out of 10 steadily over the last three years.

On a regional basis, Bangladesh ranked 15th while neighbouring India ranked eighth in Asia and Australasia region, according to the index.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi released

AFP, Paris



Acclaimed Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi has been released on bail after starting a hunger strike to protest against his almost seven-month detention, supporters said yesterday.

The director had been arrested months before the current anti-regime protests erupted, but his imprisonment became a symbol of the plight of artists speaking out against the authorities.

Panahi has been released from Tehran’s Evin prison “two days after starting his hunger strike

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Ukrainian firefighters put out fire in a hardware shopping mall following shelling in Kherson, yesterday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

# EU pledges more support for Ukraine

Germany approves Leopard 1 tank deliveries to Kyiv;  
Russian troops advance in Bakhmut

AGENCIES

The EU yesterday pledged to support Ukraine “every step of the way” in its quest for bloc membership as top officials gathered in Kyiv for a highly symbolic summit.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky pressed the bloc for speedy membership as it battles to defeat a nearly year-long Russian invasion.

The EU granted candidate status to Ukraine last June, but the path to full membership is likely to be fraught and could take years.

EU chief Charles Michel announced his arrival in the Ukrainian capital as air raid sirens sounded, vowing that there will be “no let up in our resolve.”

“We will also support you every step of the way on your journey to the EU,” Michel said.

The bloc’s chief Ursula von der Leyen and the EU’s most senior diplomat, Josep Borrell, also attended the summit.

The EU, in a statement after the summit, said Ukraine had made “considerable efforts” to advance towards membership but urged Kyiv to implement more reforms, reports AFP.

The bloc said it “encouraged the country to continue on this path and to fulfil the conditions specified in the Commission’s opinion on its membership application in order to advance towards future EU membership.”

The bloc plans to ramp up efforts to use Russian frozen assets to compensate Ukraine war damage.

“The EU will also step up its work towards the use of Russia’s frozen assets to support Ukraine’s

reconstruction and for the purposes of reparation, in accordance with EU and international law,” the statement said.

The European Union and Kyiv also backed plans to set up an international prosecution office in The Hague to help investigate Russia for the “crime of aggression” in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Germany has approved a delivery of Leopard 1 main battle tanks to Ukraine from industrial stocks, government spokesperson Steffen Hebestreit said.

Hebestreit confirmed “an export licence has been issued” for the delivery by a private arms-maker of its older Leopard 1 tanks, but did not provide further details.

Addressing the news conference

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Warmest Felicitations to  
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**On His August Visit to Bangladesh.**  
**(4th & 5th Feb 2023)**



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# ‘Life seemed better under union parishad’

The plight of DNCC wards 52, 53 under zone 6

**In July 2017, Dhaka North City Corporation took 18 wards under its wing, which were previously under the union parishad system. It divided the newly added wards into 5 zones. While this move came with a promise of development for these wards, the reality after five years is way far from that. They remain as backward as they used to be, if not more. The Daily Star explored the plight of these neglected wards in a five-story series. Today we look into wards 52 and 53 under zone 6.**

**Shamim Hossain, a youth of Chondalvog area, said, “Our standard of living is significantly lower than Uttara, though it’s just a few kilometres away.”**

DIPAN NANDY AND ARAFAT RAHAMAN

If anyone visits the capital’s Uttara area, they will find some attractive wide roads, surrounded by high-rise buildings, like the ones we see in a modern city. Expensive cars and other vehicles regularly pass through these roads.

But just a few metres ahead, when they reach Ranabhola Bazar after crossing Sector 10, they will be astounded to see the same city in such a disarray.

Ranabhola Bazar, which was previously under Harirampur union, became a part of Dhaka North City Corporation in 2017, but is yet to see any development.

While visiting wards 52 and 53 (under zone 6), these correspondents were having trouble realising that these areas are part of the capital. Residents living in that area are completely deprived of civic amenities.



Ayesha Siddiqua, a Bamnartek resident who is currently pregnant, stated that she recently fell from an auto-rickshaw and was severely injured while on her way to see a doctor. Many of the residents of the area shared similar ordeals.

## POOR DRAINAGE, MOSQUITO MENACE

Locals alleged that due to absence of a proper drainage network and sewage system, roads often get muddy or submerged in knee-deep water even after a short spell of rain. Besides, as there is no designated garbage disposal area, waste spreads to different places during this time.

As a result, the localities become a breeding ground for mosquitoes, making residents vulnerable to dengue fever.

Abdul Mazid, a resident of Nalbhog area, said, “Despite our initial high hopes, the situation has remained unchanged even five years after our area became a part of DNCC.”

“Elections come, we cast our votes, we see new councillors, but our conditions remain unchanged,” he added.

## SECURITY CONCERNS

Though a large number of residents live in these areas, there are no sufficient street lights along the roads. As a result, people are afraid to step outside after dark.

Residents of Badaldi, Uludaha, Chandura, Mandurah, Sholati, Dalipara, Ahalia, Pakuria and Balijuri areas shared similar experiences.

## NO WATER SUPPLY

Residents of ward-53 also alleged that there is shortage of pure drinking water as Wasa does not provide services in their locality. So, they have no choice but to drink water from shallow tube wells, which are mostly contaminated

with iron. Often, people suffer from different waterborne diseases due to this.

Shamim Hossain, a youth of Chondalvog area, said, “Our standard of living is significantly lower than Uttara, though it’s just a few kilometres away.”

“What I can’t fathom is that we used to have some sort of development activities in our localities when we were under the union parishad. Our condition worsened when we integrated with the city corporation, although it was supposed to improve,” he added.

## NO PLAYGROUND

Contrary to the tall claims of city authorities building a playground in every ward, there’s not a single field or open space for children in wards 52 and 53.

Shariful Alam of Dolipara under ward-52, said, “Buildings in this area are being constructed without any proper planning. As a result, it’s eating up all the open spaces and playgrounds for our children.”

## COUNCILLORS’ TAKE

Contacted, councillors of the wards expressed frustration and said they are under pressure from people, as the constituencies did not see any development work since their inclusion under DNCC.

Md Farid Ahmed, councillor of ward-52, said, “I have already constructed three new roads, and installed street lights in some areas, but could not continue further development projects, due to insufficient budget.”

Md Nasir Uddin, councillor of ward-53, said, “I have already informed higher authorities to provide me with sufficient budget. We are hopeful to start developing new roads, along with drainage systems soon.”



## A village of crabs, in Dhaka!

DIPAN NANDY AND ARAFAT RAHAMAN

It was early morning. The sun had not yet risen, and most of Dhaka was still sleeping.

However, it was peak business hours for some residents in Uttara’s Nalbhog area.

There was a kilometre-long line of parked trucks on both sides of the road. Small baskets full of crabs, which came from farms in different coastal regions of the country, were being unloaded from the trucks.

According to Bangladesh Live and Chilled Food Exporters Association (BLCFEA), Bangladesh exports more than 7,000 tonnes of crabs a year. Nalbhog area in Uttara is the place from where around 200 commercial companies operate their crab exporting business.

Previously, crab packing factories were built in various parts of the capital. However, because the airport is close by, the majority of this industry’s packing factories have been established in Nalbhog. As a result, it became known as the “Village of Crabs (Kakrar Gram)”.

The exporters association has approximately 200 members, with 60-70 of them actively involved in the processing of crabs for export from the area.

After unloading the baskets, the workers clean the crabs by separating male crabs from the females, said Rafiqullah, member of a crab-exporting firm.

He explained that after weighing, they process the crabs, and pack them into plastic or cardboard boxes. Then they become ready for shipment, and are sent to various countries.

These correspondents found crab farmers coming from Khulna, Satkhira, Noakhali, Patuakhali, Chattogram and Cox’s Bazar at the site.

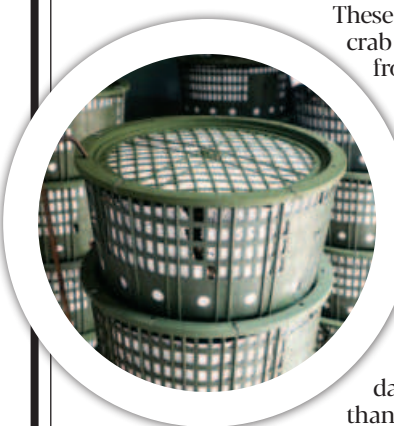
According to Khairuddin Ahmed, chairman of BLCFEA, around 20 to 25 tonnes of crabs are exported from Bangladesh every day, amounting to more than 7,000 tonnes per year.

But Gazi Abul Hashem, a former chairman of the association, said, “We suffered losses during the Covid period because there was an export ban.”

“I was forced to shut down my business,” he added.

But the current chairman says the situation has improved now.

“As China has removed the ban on crabs imported from Bangladesh, around 15 to 20 companies have already gotten permission and started exporting crabs like before,” he added.



## Watching planes their only entertainment

DIPAN NANDY AND ARAFAT RAHAMAN

With a smiling face and curiosity in her eyes, six-year-old Anika stood beside a barbed wire fence and gazed up at the sky. Soon, an aeroplane took off with a loud roar.

A few minutes later, another plane touched down the long, grey runway surrounded by a wide carpet of green grass, causing the little girl to clap in delight.

This is a regular scene for residents of Dolipara area in Uttara, adjacent to the runway of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

It is one of the few means of entertainment for the children as well as for other residents of Dolipara under zone-6 of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC). They flock to the area, keeping their eyes at the sky, just to see the planes fly.

In a recent visit, these correspondents found that there is no playground, or any other open space for the children in the locality. So, the residents have chosen the runway for their leisure activity.

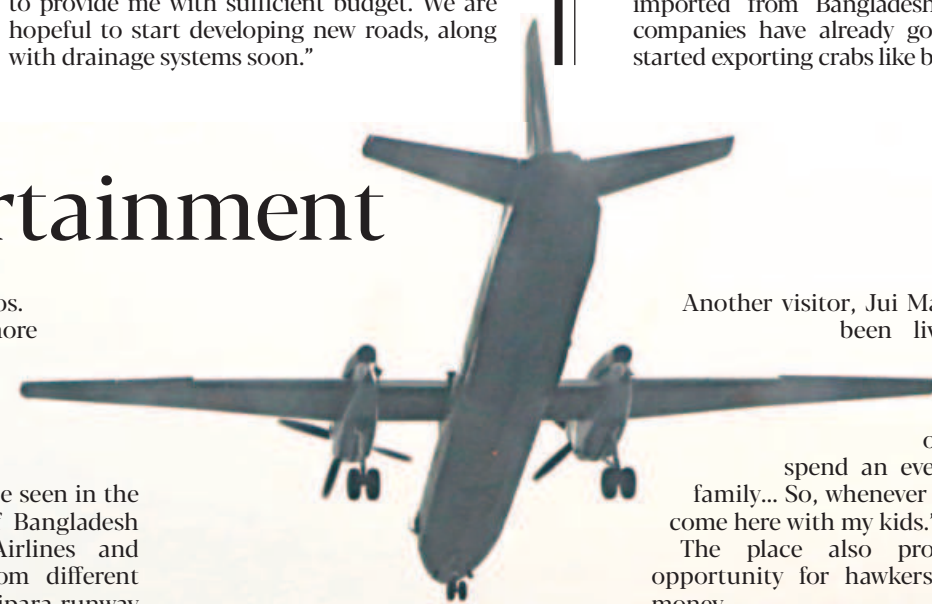
People were seen standing close to the fence, maybe just out of a sense of curiosity, or imagining what it might be like to fly in the sky in a blink of an eye. Many were busy

taking photographs and videos.

The sky becomes more interesting every day in the afternoon for the visitors, as most of the flights either take off or land during that time, they said.

Rows of large planes can be seen in the distance, including those of Bangladesh Biman, Emirates, Saudi Airlines and Turkish Airlines. People from different parts of Dhaka also visit Dolipara runway on weekends as well as on different holidays.

Masudur Rahman, Anika’s father, said,



Another visitor, Jui Mandal, said, “I’ve been living in Uttara sector-12 for seven years. There is no open space to spend an evening with your family... So, whenever I get a chance, I come here with my kids.”

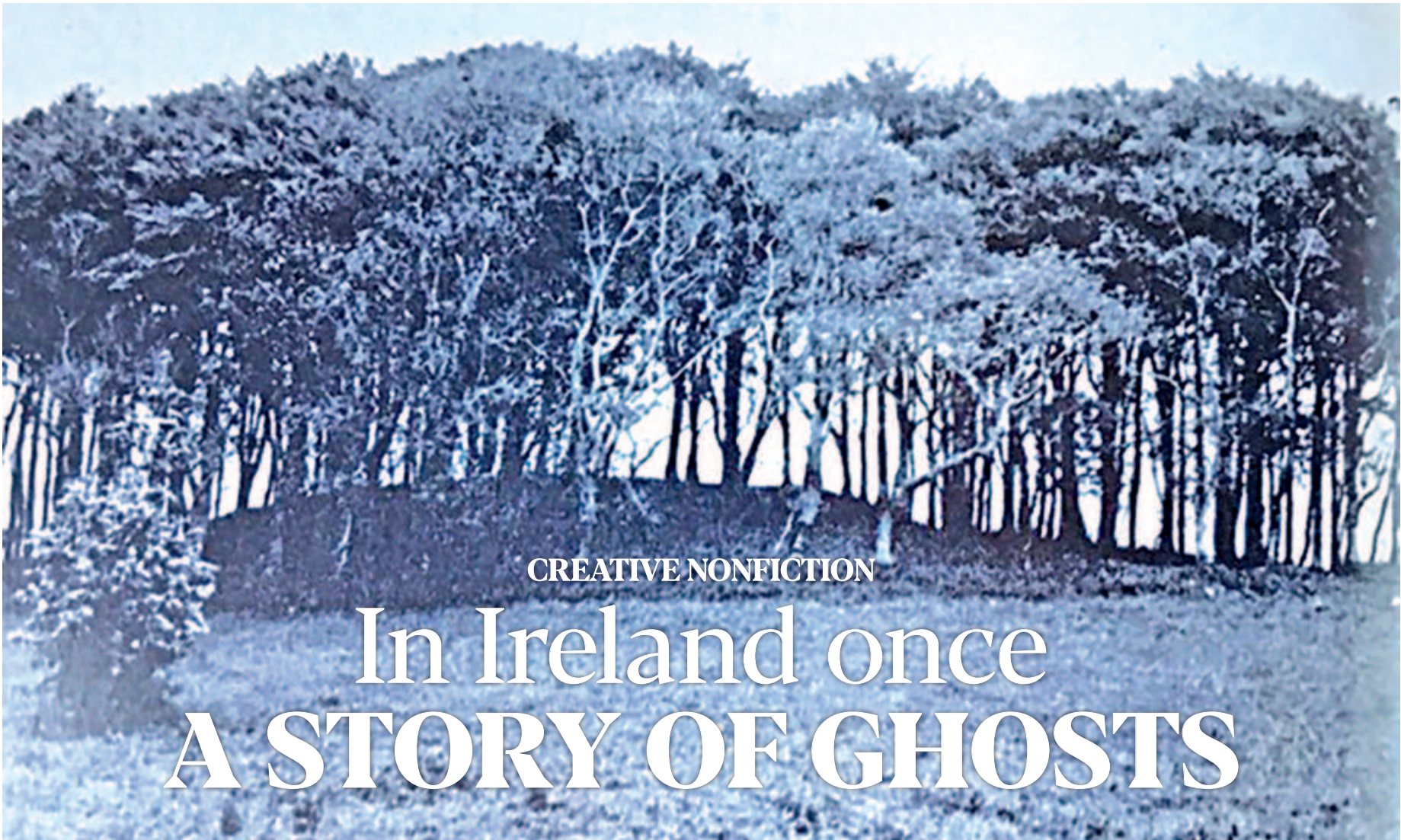
The place also provides a good opportunity for hawkers to earn some money.

Md Liton, a vendor, said, “Almost 300 to 400 people usually come here to see the planes every day.”

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN







Lis Ard, the Fairy Fort.

Exactly a hundred years ago, Bengali eyes were focussed on Ireland as it fought out a civil war over whether or not to accept the Partition that followed the winning of the War of Independence from Britain. India had charted out a similar path towards Home Rule, the Lucknow Pact of 1916 had brought both wings of Congress and the Muslim League together in common

JOHN DREW

**Killeaden**  
Are ghosts real? This was the question Mollie, a little 8-year-old girl who lives at the end of our street asked me in a real-letter she wrote me recently. I had apparently included a book of ghost stories in a bag of books I had given her.

Mollie's question caused me to remember a holiday I had had on an estate in the west of Ireland some 65 years ago. Killeaden was not so much a Big House as a farmhouse of grey stone, approached by a long tree-lined drive. The grounds included a famous fairy fort, Lis Ard, beeches on its hill-top and ringed by a ditch as well as a bog providing the peat for its smouldering turf fires.

If the name of the estate is to be believed it was once the site of St Aidan's monkish cell. What it certainly was was the spiritual home of the last of the wandering minstrels, the blind poet Raftery, even after the then landlord, Frank Taaffe, banished him after the death of a horse in the bog on an outing to procure drink.

invisible presences that haunted Killeaden, the goblin pooka dogs and the tetchy enchanted thorn trees.

In the house when I holidayed there with some friends were Miss Solon, the Housekeeper, an upright lady severely dressed in black, Miss Corless, the Assistant Housekeeper, and, up in the game-keeper's cottage, Patsy Cunningham and his wife. These were the permanent settlement.

**First Story**  
These three were the source of our ghost stories. The first we heard, to our surprise from the austere Miss Solon, sitting before the earthy turf fire in the gunroom following a day in the fields saving the sweet-smelling hay. Miss Solon prefaced her story by telling us that the people in the local village were convinced the house was haunted by a ghost, a belief that had been confirmed by an experience during the Time of the Troubles.

A hundred years ago, one would not have needed to remind Bengalis that the Troubles in Ireland referred to the disturbed years of the War of Independence and Civil War, spanning 1919-1923.

down to the front door, opened it and then, not knowing what to do, stood transfixed.

It seemed an age but it was only moments before Miss Solon realised she was in her long white nightgown without even a shawl about her and she would have died of shame had the men not all turned tail and fled...

**Second Story**  
On another evening, perhaps the day we had climbed one of the holy mountains, Croagh Patrick or Nephin, Miss Corless, a cheery sort, began by pointing out that, although there was an explanation for the ghost in Miss Solon's story, there were fairy stories about the estate that could not be explained so easily. She could cite an example that Miss Solon would also remember.

At one time there was a servant girl on the estate who made a habit of walking up to the fairy fort as of an evening. One evening the maid did not return in time for her kitchen duties and, since this was not unknown, it was not until nightfall an attempt was made to look for her. There was no sign of her up at the fort and no news of her either in the village when she was asked for there.

Next morning, the girl turned up, looking dazed. She had gone up to the fort as usual but when she tried to come down, an invisible barrier in the ditch had prevented her from leaving. She had tried to break out in various places, had even torn her clothes and, look you, had bruised her skin but the fairies had prevented her. She had left service soon after that, afraid of the fairies, she said.

It was in front of the turf fire in Patsy Cunningham's cottage, its earthy scent as beguiling as any myrrh or frankincense from Arabia, that we heard the explanation for Miss Corless's fairy story. It was not the fairies that had detained the servant girl up at the fairy fort, Patsy told us, but one of the local lads. She used to go up daily to meet him there and one evening the inevitable had happened and she stayed...

**Third Story**  
I cannot for the life of me remember who told me the third story. I remember the story well enough but cannot recall the voice that told it. I am sure only it was someone who was sceptical of the existence of the spirit world of ghosts and fairies. Maybe it was Doctor MacManus himself back in mundane London.

The Doctor, on one of his annual holidays at Killeaden, found the people there speaking of little other than the sounds of footsteps being heard on the stairs at night. These did not pass out through the solid oak of the front door but stopped dead at the foot of the stairs.

The Doctor, determined to lay this particular ghost story to rest, called a lad from the stable yard to bring a jemmy and prize up the floorboard under the mat at the foot of the stairs. The floorboard taken up, the skeletons of a woman and infant were discovered to be lying there. It was with some difficulty the Doctor managed to persuade the local priest to re-bury these remains within the churchyard walls.

My concern to recall exactly who had told me this story combined

with my memory of an enchanting summer in rural Ireland prevented me for all too long from trying to account for the bones discovered at the foot of the stairs.

Miss Solon's ghost story was delightful but it could have had a tragic ending. So, too, could that of the servant girl. Ireland these days is full of horrific stories of unmarried mothers being separated from their children in the 20th century, the mothers being put to work in Magdalen laundries for a pittance and the children incarcerated in equally awful religious institutions, so ill-treated many died young of disease, if not starvation, and were cast into mass graves.

Suddenly the romantic Ireland of my dreams and memories, the fairy-tale world of story-telling, was turning ugly. Surely, no amusing explanation could be found for the sinister position of the skeletons at the foot of the stairs: how had they come there?

Another historical memory the Irish have in common with the Bengalis is of one particular Famine among the many being unrelieved by the British during whose rule it occurred. In Ireland this was during the 1840s and, of the many who never took ship from Mayo's seaports to be buried in quarantine stations on the other side of the Atlantic, one in two failed to survive, let alone thrive on a diet of nettles, dock-leaves and, if lucky, Indian meal.

Did the (as we may suppose) mother and child at the foot of the stairs date from the time of the Great Potato Famine? The house had been in the hands of the Taaffe family since 1780. Frank's father, Patrick, killed a man in a duel and, before he could be arrested and hanged for it, was killed in another quarrel. These were openly violent times and the Taaffes were an old Anglo-Norman family with a sense of their seigneurial rights.

Frank Taaffe never relented to allow the blind poet Raftery to return to his beloved Killeaden. If Raftery, romanticised in the Cultural Renaissance signalled by WB Yeats, Lady Gregory and Douglas Hyde, was tragically blinded by smallpox, his eight siblings were killed by it. Romantic Ireland's dead and gone? Was it ever there?

It would seem unlikely the staircase skeletons could be laid at the door of the MacManuses who took over Killeaden from the Taaffes about the time of the Famine. The first MacManus actually made a solemn promise standing on the slopes of Lis Ard to be a good landlord. And yet his son James who returned from abroad to refurbish the rambling, tumbledown old farmhouse was coming from managing a sugar plantation in Demerara.

Whatever ghosts may have greeted James on his arrival in stricken Ireland, what others, abused women and children, indentured Indians from Kolkata among them, may have followed his ship across the Ocean from that other even more devastating outpost of imperial progress? The desh of the Banglas shares a colonial history with Ireland: does it have equally unquiet ghosts waiting for their stories to be heard?

John Drew is a peripatetic poet, tutor and contributor to Star Literature.

OPINION

The world of Colleen Hoover does not warrant celebration

Writer and #BookTok queen Colleen Hoover is quite hard to escape in any bookstore or library these days. The hashtag, #colleenhoover on TikTok alone has over 560 million views, and that must say something. In order to truly understand the appeal to her books, I decided to take up a book she has written, and thus started a journey I wish I never took.

SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

*It Ends With Us* (Atria Books, 2016) navigates the world of the protagonist, Lily Bloom, after her college graduation. The novel starts with the death of Lily's father, with whom she had a trauma riddled relationship due to his abusive tendencies. She then falls into an equally troublesome relationship with Ryle, a man with whom her relationship flourishes on the basis of creepy encounters. This includes Ryle framing an enlarged version of Lily's photo without her consent, and outbursts of jealousy.

Only after multiple bouts of unnecessarily graphic imagery of domestic violence, a semi-hearted speech by a friend/past lover (who is also set in a world of incredible trauma during his own childhood), and a quasi-surprise pregnancy, does Lily realise she must end this cycle of abuse, and hence comes the title, *It Ends With Us*.

While I could go on for pages about my personal issues with this story, I want to highlight the issues I think are detrimental to anybody reading these books.



DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI

Firstly, most characters, especially the women, seem to have no agency, and no mind of their own to make clear judgements for themselves. The turning point for Lily in *It Ends With Us* is the birth of her own daughter, as if her own life, and the abuse delivered to her, had no real value.

Additionally, Colleen Hoover's writing deals with toxic relationships terribly. What is probably meant as foreshadowing, are clear signs of inappropriate behaviour, harassment, and even abuse. However, her characters often fail to recognise these signs, and when they do, they continue to make excuses for those horrible actions. "Sometimes an unexpected wave comes along, sucks you up and refuses to spit you back out", Lily says at one point in *It Ends With Us*. "Ryle is my unexpected tidal wave, and right now I'm skimming the beautiful surface."

This depiction of love in the novel (as well as in Hoover's other stories) are all immersed in abuse and problematic behaviour. Unless it is the "truer" love, which blossoms and is shared through trauma bonding.

Hoover's reader base largely consists of young teenagers who are notoriously known to be impressionable. Depiction of such problematic forms of 'romance' and relationships surely distort the judgement of readers regarding love and romance. Not only that, Hoover's habit of continually making her characters justify and excuse "lesser" forms of abuse, does the opposite of spreading awareness regarding the realities of abuse.

What is truly infuriating is that her stories are usually a cluster of one form of abuse after the other, each layered on top of the other without any attempt to unpack the event itself or its impact—on the surface level or through the characters—leading to no real positive impact to visceral scenes. It seems as if the only thing furthering the plot of her stories are these episodes of assault.

The author has been under immense controversy for her actions in real life as well, with accusations of turning a blind eye to her own son's alleged harassment, and most recently for attempting to publish a colouring book for a book depicting graphic scenes of domestic violence and abuse.

This article has repetitively mentioned the words assault, trauma, violence and abuse multiple times, and that precisely, is where my problem lies with Colleen Hoover. With surface level characters, and nothing beyond trauma in her plot, Hoover continues to capitalise on what she calls "telling the reality of abuse", which I would much rather like to call "glorification of trauma" at best.

Afrin Tarannum is a Sub editor at SHOUT magazine, The Daily Star.



Killeaden House and its fairy thorn tree.

PHOTO: COURTESY

purpose and, had not Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922, events in India might have had much in common with those in Ireland. The following article, intended as a pleasant reminiscence about story-telling in Ireland, found itself confronted with some violent moments in its modern history. Perhaps aspects of this story will ring bells in Bangladeshi minds?

The MacManus family, following the Taaffes, had owned Killeaden for more than a century but, though they loved it and returned to it—and shared the Catholic faith of the local people—they had been frightened by the Land Agitation of the 1880s and had gone to make their living in London.

Dr Desmond, the owner, was a physician to the King with a key to the back-gate of Buckingham Palace at the time of our visit, though his sister Emily, having been the Matron at Guy's Hospital, had returned to live on nearby Lough Conn, dispensing primary health care from what seemed to us to be the only car in County Mayo.

Two members of the family had become ardent Irish nationalists. The Doctor's brother Diarmuid, who had served the King-Emperor in India, threw in his lot with the IRA in the War of Independence and then with the Irish Free State during the bitter Civil War that followed. His aunt Lottie had foresworn England's Sussex to return to Killeaden and write patriotic stories of Irish heroes. Diarmuid wrote books about the

They were years when virtually the same pattern of events might well have taken place in India.

One moonlit night, the tree-lined drive of Killeaden was filled with a body of men with sticks, torches and lanterns, approaching the house intending mischief. Though the local people had respect for the MacManus family, who, if absent much of the year, were decent enough landlords and Catholics to boot, they were perhaps instigated by some IRA irregulars to do their patriotic bit.

As the men came out into the forecourt of the house, a hazy figure in white appeared in the shadow of the porch and, standing motionless, stared them down. They turned tail with a yell and fled and nothing on earth, let alone the IRA, could have induced them to return.

Miss Solon, a ghost of a smile on her lips, explained that, as a young woman, she had only just joined the staff of the house at that time and left in charge with no expectation that the house would be threatened, was alarmed in bed one night to hear shouting in the drive. In panic, she had rushed





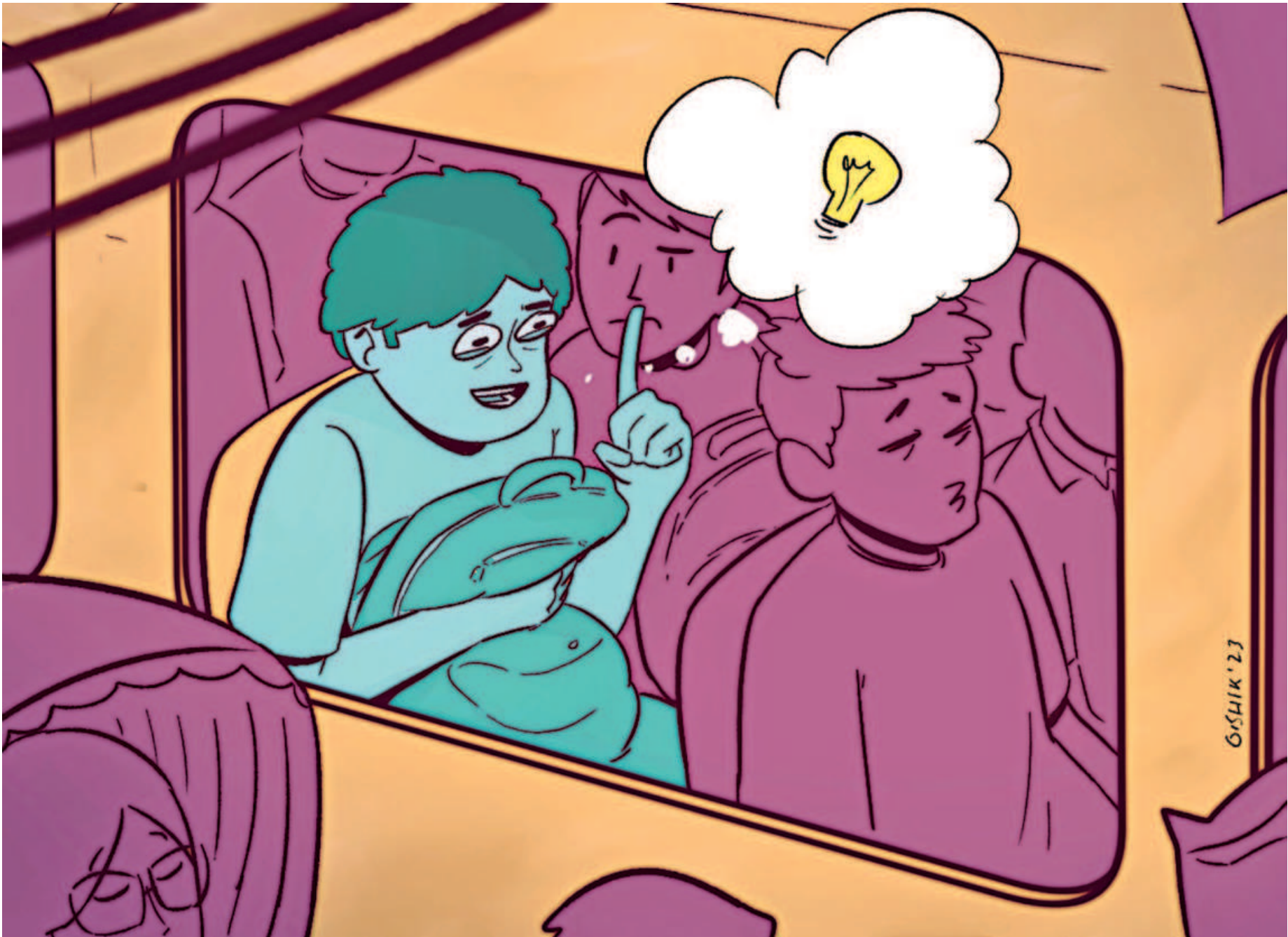
## BOUNTIES OF BANGLADESH

Every winter, the farmlands surrounding the Shankha River in Chattogram's Chandanaish upazila are carpeted with fresh winter vegetables. Starting from glossy purple and green aubergines and green hyacinth beans to thick white radishes and large fresh cauliflowers. Added to those are the array of beautiful green and red spinaches. Farmers harvest the veggies and carry them across the river to sell them to the wholesale Dohazari market throughout the cold season. From there, these are sent to markets across the port city.

PHOTOS: RAJIB RAIHAN







# Realistic things to do in Dhaka traffic

And no, there won't be suggestions to read books, because honestly it's a nauseating affair in a car, a bus, and for the daring few, a motorcycle. Instead here are some fun and actually realistic things to do in Dhaka traffic.

NAZIFA RAIDAH

Talking about Dhaka traffic and talking to a wall is almost the same thing. You can scream and shout all you want, but at the end of the day you realise that it feels like talking to a wall, and unfortunately, this wall doesn't have ears as the Bangla saying goes.

While one would think that reports on the loss of productivity would make authorities shift from their seats and get them rushing to fix the drain in money – citizens of Dhaka are constantly made to feel naive even by having the thought of a fix. No authoritative figure is willing to accept traffic as an excuse anymore.

This is when the average citizen has no option but to delve into their inner cynic and actually make the best out of Dhaka traffic. And no, there won't be suggestions to read books, because honestly it's a nauseating affair in a car, a bus, and for the daring few, a motorcycle. Instead here are some fun and actually realistic things to do in Dhaka traffic.

**Rant about the country's conditions with strangers**

There's something that feels so inherently nationalistic and cathartic about ranting on living in such horrible conditions with a fellow

commuter, that I can't really make sense of it. Whether it's your CNG or rickshaw mama, or a fellow passenger on the bus, or your chauffeur, go on, start up a conversation. You will find yourself going over multiple topics from fuel prices to the Russia-Ukraine war to load-shedding and many more – so much so that the passage of time will quicken and ease the wait. Here's another topic that never gets old – traffic!

It's also humbling to realise that while you will be in your office or your designated place after reaching your destination, the man driving the vehicle has to endure more hours on the road, since literally, that's their profession.

**Contemplate on things you want to do but never get the time for**

A traffic jam is a classic existential crisis inducer. Since you have to wait excruciating hours doing nothing, why not remember that load of dirty clothes you have sitting on the chair for over four weeks? And while we're at it, let's not forget that instrument you once used to play that brought you joy, the book you started and never finished or even the new skill you wanted to adopt, but never got to start. Because you never have as much time as other people living in other cities do. Well, even if you don't want to, your mind is going to wander the longer you

stay in traffic. Best take a dip in the void before you distract yourself with productivity again.

**Fry your brain with social media content**

For the faint-hearted who don't want to take an adventurous ride through their minds, social media is the saviour. I mean, why waste time on consciousness when you can get yourself mindlessly addicted to a screen? And thank goodness for reels, right? Short 30-second videos that swipe up automatically when you're done watching. Not to mention how fast time goes by when you get caught in a 'reelception', forgetting why you got onto the social media platform in the first place. Let the tech lords micro-analyse your every behaviour and manufacture your every want and need.

**Leave!**

As a capital dweller probably the most civic-sensible thing you can do to save it, and fellow traffic worms, is to leave. Not only would that reduce the population, you can also talk about how much you miss Dhaka while living in a pollution-free, traffic free region or country. Slowly, you'll see yourself transition into Hannah Montana, living the best of both worlds. But plan ahead, it's going to take time to escape, because you know... traffic.

## ChatGPT actually run by customer service firm in Bangalore: Study

AI FM AI CORRESPONDENT

A bombshell new study has discovered that the AI chatbot that has taken the world by storm, is in fact not artificial intelligence at all.

It is a hundred percent natural.

ChatGPT is actually operated by a huge customer service firm in Bangalore, India, according to a study by Stereo Type Westernview, a group of researchers in Mississippi, USA.

Presenting their study at a press conference in the capital of Mississippi yesterday, the lead researcher said, "After careful analysis of the software's behaviour and having talked to customer service agents for many, many years, the only conclusion we could reach was that ChatGPT is run by them out of Bangalore."

"We do not believe that a non-human could have told me about why the economy is tanking, or the intricacies of the Russia-Ukraine war," said John Smith, one of the researchers.

Researchers said that having talked to customer service agents, they know that they have books open in front of them on every topic, and that is also how the people behind ChatGPT are answering the questions.

"Also, sometimes ChatGPT takes some time to answer. That's actually just one of those people



PHOTO: REUTERS

riffling through their manuals," said Jane Doe, another researcher.

The clincher, she said, was that everyone was worried about ChatGPT taking their jobs.

"Okay, so who are the ones always taking our jobs? Immigrants, Indians. QED," said John Smith.

Asked whether it was really run by a Bangalore customer service firm, ChatGPT said, "No, I am an AI language model created and maintained by OpenAI, a research organization based in San Francisco, California. I am not run by customer service agents in Bangalore or any other specific location. I operate autonomously, using advanced machine learning algorithms to generate responses to questions and other input."

That, Smith said, is exactly what a customer service agent pretending to be ChatGPT would say.

# Disappointment as dream of seeing Boi Mela from metro rail still unfulfilled

MAHUB ALAM MUNNA

Some people in the capital have reacted with disappointment as their supposed dream of looking at the Boi Mela will not be fulfilled this year as the section of the elevated railway that passes near the book fair venue is yet to come into operation.

Unidentified experts in the field of public disappointment say they do not know why there would be disappointment in this regard, as the section of metro rail was not supposed to be in operation before December this year.

Zubair, a boy from Uttara, was regardless eagerly waiting for the precious day when he could zoom by the book fair, but frustration engulfed him completely when he realised he would have to visit the Boi Mela on foot once again. "I hate crowds. I was on cloud nine when I first heard that there was a metro rail route from Agargaon to Motijheel, via TSC. I thought that my days of struggling in the crowd



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

were over and I would be able to enjoy Boi Mela while flying over that area on metro rail.

"People make fun of Uttara and I was all set to make fun of them by uploading photos of TSC, Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan, taken from the window of metro rail. I can't believe I have to visit Boi

Mela on foot again!" Zubair said.

The unidentified experts speculated that Zubair may not have known about the date of inauguration of the Agargaon-Motijheel section because he lived in Uttara, and it took really long for news to reach there.

Meanwhile, some "too



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

confidential to disclose" sources said more than 60 percent of the people who visit Boi Mela, do so just to roam around the area and take photos for social media purposes to show off their love of books, which is as fake as anything else people post.

Several groups of people from

Uttara and Mirpur were in a race to be the first human being to have been able to visit Boi Mela without even touching the dust of TSC area, let alone walking.

"I wanted to be the first man to take a photo of TSC from a height, but the drone seems so far to be the lucky entity to be able to do that,"

said Tausif, who planned to take the window seat of the southward metro rail train so that he could capture photos of TSC, while asking his friends "Drone diye ar koto chobi tulbo?"

"Getting down at TSC from metro rail is more cinematic than getting down from a rickshaw. I have been dreaming of commemorating this most awaited moment with a photoshoot and a TikTok video. But I cannot believe, like previous years, I have to get down from a rickshaw this year too. Can you imagine the pain when your long-cherished dream gets shattered every year?" said Suzana, a girl from Dhanmondi.

Since even persons from Mirpur and Dhanmondi were taken aback by the well-known-by-most fact of the metro rail section's planned inauguration date, unidentified experts concluded that some people do not keep up with news, and expressing disappointment is a hobby even more popular than fake intellectualism on social media.