



"Like previous administrations, Democratic and Republican, we strongly oppose such unilateral measures..."



Antony Blinken on Israel's moves to advance settlements

GOVT PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS Mid-day meals likely for all from July

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is planning to introduce the school feeding programme for students of all state-run primary schools in July with the hope that it will help increase attendance and

ministry is set to complete a feasibility test for the mid-day meals project this month and will start preparing a Development Project Proposal (DPP) next month, said Farid Ahmed, secretary of the ministry. State Minister Zakir Hossen told



The livestock ministry wants to provide 250ml of UHT (ultra-high temperature) milk to each student of 50 schools from this month. It will increase the number of schools to 300 in July and add eggs too.

reduce dropouts.

The mid-day meals ensure that the children get at least 30 percent of their required daily calorie intake at school, said officials.

The primary and mass education

reporters at his office yesterday, "We are hopeful that a new mid-day meal project for all government primary schools will begin in July."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

PM, president-elect call on Hamid at the Bangabhaban

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and president-elect Md Shahabuddin yesterday met incumbent President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban.

Prime Minister's sister Sheikh Rehana, wife of President-elect Dr Rebecca Sultana accompanied them, Press Secretary Joyal Abedin told UNB.

On their arrival, President Abdul Hamid and his wife Rashida Khanom welcomed them with bouquets.

President Hamid congratulated Shahabuddin for being elected president of Bangladesh.

The prime minister briefed the president about the activities of the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina congratulating president-elect Md Shahabuddin with a bouquet at the Bangabhaban in the presence of outgoing President Abdul Hamid yesterday.

PHOTO: PID



Where Showbiz meets the Internet

We are pleased to present to our readers the third of our five-part, special supplement series.

This instalment of The Daily Star's Anniversary Supplement will feature a collection of articles highlighting Bangladesh's arts and entertainment industry, and how far it has progressed since last year.

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CHILDREN WITH CANCER A parent's worst nightmare

High cost, lack of accommodation and centralised treatment main obstacles to proper care, experts say

NILIMA JAHAN

Young parents Ringku Mia's and Shifa Akter's world had turned upside down when their four-year-old daughter Farha was diagnosed with

her youngest daughter, just two years old, spend their nights on the floor of the paediatric surgery unit-5 of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Meanwhile, Ringku stays in the hospital corridor.



stage-4 cancer that originated from a tumour in her kidney.

Ringku, 35, and Shifa, 26, along with their entire family, have been living through a nightmare for the past four months.

They had to mortgage their only cultivable land in Habiganj's Baniachong to pay for Farha's treatment.

In an unfamiliar city with no relatives to turn to, Shifa, mother of three, left her eldest daughter in the care of her sister back in Habiganj, while she and

Shifa's two-year-old has also gotten ill from spending her nights on the cold floor of the hospital, while Farha herself is having to share a hospital bed with three others.

Remembering the diagnosis, Shifa said when her child had abdominal pains around four months ago, they did not initially take it seriously. However, when Farha showed signs of jaundice and continued pain, they took her

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Bangladesh left out of US democracy summit again

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has not been invited to the Biden administration's Summit for Democracy for the second time, while its South Asian neighbours -- India, the Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan -- made it to the list of invitees this year.

Dhaka had expressed displeasure when the US State Department published the list of 110 invitees to the first democracy summit held in December 2021. However, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen was optimistic that the Biden administration would invite Bangladesh this year.

Even, the then US South

SEE PAGE 7 COL 7

2 BCL women 'torture' female student at IU

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A student yesterday filed a complaint with the Islamic University in Kushtia accusing two Chhatra League girls of torturing her for staying in a dormitory without informing them.

The accused are Sanjida Chowdhury, vice-president of the IU Chhatra League, and Tabassum Islam, an activist of the same Chhatra League unit. Sanjida is a student of statistics and Tabassum is a student of finance and banking.

According to the complaint, on the first day of the first-year honours class for 2022-23 session on February 8, the victim started staying at the room of a resident student in Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall as no seat was allocated to her. At night, Tabassum in the dining room of the dormitory wanted to know who among the freshers were residing at the hall.

As the victim raised her hand, Tabassum became angry. She asked the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BUSINESS

Govt keeps borrowing from BB, fuelling inflation risks

STORY ON B1

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CRITICAL DOCUMENTARY Tax officials raid BBC India offices Opposition Congress party condemns actions; ruling BJP terms the raids lawful

AFP, New Delhi

Indian tax authorities raided the BBC's New Delhi and Mumbai offices yesterday, weeks after the broadcaster aired a documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's actions during deadly sectarian riots in 2002.



Press freedom in the world's biggest democracy has suffered during Modi's tenure, rights activists say, and the opposition Congress party condemned the raids, saying there was an "undeclared emergency" in the country.

A spokesman for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused the broadcaster of engaging in "anti-India propaganda" but said the raids were lawful and the timing had nothing to do with the government.

"India is a country which gives an opportunity to every organisation," Gaurav Bhatia told reporters, "as long as you don't spew venom."

"If you have been following the law of the country, if you have nothing to hide why be afraid of an action that is according to the law?"

In a statement on Twitter, the broadcaster said it was "fully cooperating" with authorities.

"The Income Tax Authorities are currently at the BBC offices in New Delhi and Mumbai and we are fully cooperating," it said. "We hope to have this situation resolved as soon as possible."

Police sealed off the BBC's New Delhi office, SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

AWARDED Superbrands BANGLADESH'S CHOICE 2023-24

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Explore new markets for apparel

PM tells industry stakeholders

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged industry stakeholders to explore new markets for Bangladeshi garment products and keep pace with the ever-changing trends.

"Those working with garments and their exports will have to find new markets. Newer products will have to be produced keeping in mind that the choices vary in different countries," she said.

The premier was addressing through a video conference an event marking the National Textiles Day and the inauguration of six textile educational institutes.

The Ministry of Textiles and Jute organised the event at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) in the capital.

"Fashion and design are very important and they are constantly changing. We have to... realise which design is high in demand."

The newly inaugurated six textile institutes are: Sheikh Rehana Textile Engineering College in Gopalganj, Sheikh Russel Textile Institute in Jamalpur, Shahid Abdur Rob Seraniabat Textile Institute in Barishal's Gournadi, Shahid Kamaruzzaman Textile Institute in Naogaon, Begum Amina Mansur

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Parked trucks occupy even the fast lane of this street in Tejgaon. The first mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, late Annisul Haq, had removed this illegal truck park but the truckers returned to the area despite being evicted several times. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

NEW SETTLEMENTS IN WEST BANK

Western powers 'strongly oppose' Israeli moves

AFP, Berlin

The foreign ministers of five Western powers said yesterday they were "deeply troubled" by the Israeli government's decision to legalise nine West Bank settlements and build thousands of new units.

The ministers from Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the United States said: "We strongly oppose these unilateral actions which will only serve to exacerbate tensions between Israelis and Palestinians and undermine efforts to achieve a negotiated two-state solution."

They underlined their backing for a "comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which must be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties."

"We continue to closely monitor developments on the ground which impact the viability of the two-state solution and stability in the region at large," they added.

Israel's security cabinet had announced on Sunday that it would legalise nine settlements in the occupied West Bank following a series of attacks in east Jerusalem, including one that killed three Israelis.

These so-called "wild" settlements were built without authorisation from the Israeli government.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who signed up to yesterday's statement, had on Monday already criticised Israel's plans on advancing settlements.

Israel's moves came on the heels of a visit by Blinken to the region in which he explicitly warned against settlement

activity as he sought to ease tensions following violence.

More than 475,000 Israelis reside in settlements in the West Bank, where 2.8 million Palestinians live.

Meanwhile, Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian teenager in the occupied West Bank early yesterday, Palestinian officials said, with the army saying troops opened fire after the suspect approached them with explosives.

The Palestinian health ministry said Mahmud Majid Mohammed al-Aidi, 17, died from "critical wounds he sustained by live occupation (Israeli) bullets to the head" at Al-Fara refugee camp north of Nablus.

The army said Israeli troops carried out "counterterrorism operations" in several West Bank towns and cities early yesterday.

Man held over rape, murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police yesterday arrested a man in connection with the rape and murder of a five-year-old girl in Thakurgaon Sadar.

The arrestee is Safiqul Islam, 20, the victim's neighbour, said Atiqur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bhullia Police Station.

Rahima Begum, the victim's mother, filed a case against him.

According to the case statement, Fariha was playing near her house around 8:00am. After two hours, locals found her body in a maize field.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, the OC said.

Police found several injury marks on the body while preparing inquest report, he further said.

BB CYBER HEIST CASE

CID gets another date for submitting probe report

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked the Criminal Investigation Department to submit its report on the Bangladesh Bank cyber heist case by April 4.

The CID has now taken 70 dates to complete its probe into the case filed over the heist of \$101 million from Bangladesh Bank's account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in February 2016.

Metropolitan Magistrate Rajesh Chowdhury passed the order after Raihan Uddin Khan, additional superintendent of police and also investigation officer of the case, failed to submit the probe report by yesterday.

At least \$81 million was transferred to the accounts in Manila-based RCBC, from where it disappeared into the casinos of the Philippines.

Bangladesh Bank Deputy Director (accounts and budgeting) Zobayer Bin Huda filed the case with Motijheel Police Station on March 15, 2016.

So far, Bangladesh retrieved \$15 million from RCBC and recovered another \$20 million sent to a bank in Sri Lanka.

On February 1 last year, Bangladesh Bank sued Rizal Bank in a US court to recover \$66m of stolen funds.

2 BCL women

FROM PAGE 1

victim why she didn't inform her about the matter earlier.

The Chhatra League activist also asked the victim to meet her in Sanjida's room. But the student did not comply.

Around 10:00pm on February 12, Sanjida called the victim to the hall's guest room. Sanjida along with Tabassum and several other Chhatra League activists tortured and assaulted her there until 3:30am, added the complainant.

Contacted, the victim said she was assaulted and tortured by some Chhatra League leader and activists. The incident was filmed at one stage, she added.

She was also threatened that she would be driven out of the hall and the video would be circulated if she told anyone about the torture.

Asked about the allegation, Sanjida said, "As the student lodged the complaint, she has to prove now whether the incident is true."

She also claimed that the allegation against her was false.

This newspaper could not reach Tabassum for comments.

Proctor Shahadat Hossain confirmed to The Daily Star that he received the complaint and the vice chancellor had been informed of the matter. The VC would decide on the next course of action, he said.

PM, president-elect

FROM PAGE 1

government during the meeting. Shahabuddin is set to be the 22nd President of Bangladesh.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday declared the ruling party's nominee the president-elect of Bangladesh.

As per the election schedule, two nomination papers were submitted for Shahabuddin on Sunday and one of those was accepted as valid after scrutiny on Monday.

A gazette was issued in the afternoon in this regard.

No other political party with representation in parliament proposed any name for the presidential election.

President Hamid is set to complete his tenure on April 23 this year.

According to the constitution, a new president has to be elected within 60 to 90 days prior to the end of the incumbent president's tenure.

Mid-day meals likely for all from July

FROM PAGE 1

There was a school meal programme for students in poverty-affected areas of 104 upazilas, but it ended in June last year.

Before that project ended, the ministry in August 2020 prepared a project worth Tk 17,290 crore to feed 1.41 crore students of the 65,566 government primary schools for five years.

But the project drew flak from many, especially since it had a provision for officials to embark on foreign trips to observe delivery and preparation of mid-day meals including khichri. In June 2021, the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) turned down the project.

"The project was not approved as the prime minister was concerned about its structure [modus operandi]. She said cooking khichri in schools might hamper studies," Planning Minister MA Mannan said at the time.

He added that the PM ordered revising the project design.

Besides, no feasibility test was done for the project, Secretary Farid yesterday said.

A feasibility study is required for any development project worth Tk 50

crore and over, according to Planning Commission guidelines.

Farid said it was not decided whether khichri or fortified biscuits (high on energy, nutrients) would be provided. "There are also proposals for fruits, eggs and even samosas. We will finalise soon."

Officials are trying to complete the new DPP as fast as possible, and the project cost could be less than what they had proposed in 2020.

The government wants to start school lunches at least at the schools in poverty-affected areas, Farid said.

Officials are also in talks with the Global Partnership for Education to be able to use some of its \$90 million grant for the meals.

The ministry wants to use the GPE fund to cover schools that may not be initially served by the project, he said.

The ministries of health, agriculture, and fisheries and livestock have expressed interest in working with the mass education ministry for providing the meals, officials said.

The livestock ministry wants to begin providing 250ml of UHT (ultra-high temperature) milk to each student of 50 schools from this month. It will increase the number of schools to 300 and add eggs in July.

Officials wanted to keep a provision for funding the mid-day meals from revenue, Farid said.

The World Food Programme ran a project to feed schoolchildren from 2001 to 2009. The last government school feeding programme was introduced in 2010.

Under that programme, the government gave 75 grams of fortified biscuits to nearly 3 million schoolchildren in 104 upazilas.

Primary education ministry officials said they saw attendance rise by 6.6 percent and dropouts fall by 6 percent in those schools.

According to the Directorate of Primary Education, dropout rate at the primary level was 39.8 percent in 2010 and it fell to 14.15 percent in 2021.

KM Enamul Hoque, deputy director of Campaign for Popular Education, said, "School meals are vital as many children go to school in an empty stomach every day. It makes it hard for them to focus in class, and their learning outcome does not reach the desirable level."

"Students will get better nutrition if they get mid-day meals at schools. It is also a great incentive for families to send their children to school."

Tax officials raid BBC India offices

FROM PAGE 1

which occupies two floors of a high-rise on a leafy avenue in the capital's commercial heart.

A New Delhi-based BBC employee said that officials had been "confiscating all phones" during the tax raid.

Last month, the BBC aired a two-part documentary alleging that Hindu nationalist Modi ordered police to turn a blind eye to sectarian riots in Gujarat state, where he was premier at the time.

The violence left at least 1,000 people dead, most of them minority Muslims.

India's government blocked videos and tweets sharing links to the documentary -- which was not aired in India -- using emergency powers under its information technology laws.

Government adviser Kanchan Gupta had slammed the documentary as "hostile propaganda

and anti-India garbage".

University student groups later organised viewings of the documentary despite campus bans, defying government efforts to stop its spread.

Police arrested two dozen students at the prestigious Delhi University after stopping a screening there in late January.

"First came the BBC documentary, that was banned," the opposition Congress party said on Twitter. "Now IT has raided BBC," it continued, referring to the Income Tax Department. "Undeclared emergency."

Press freedom in the world's biggest democracy has suffered during Modi's tenure, rights activists and opposition lawmakers say.

India has fallen 10 spots to 150 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index, compiled by Reporters Without Borders, since Modi took office in 2014.

Critical reporters, particularly women, say they are subjected to relentless campaigns of online abuse.

Media outlets, international rights groups and foreign charities have also found themselves subjected to scrutiny by India's tax authorities and financial crimes investigators.

Late Catholic nun Mother Teresa's charity last year found itself temporarily starved of funds after the home ministry refused to renew its licence to receive foreign donations.

Amnesty International announced it was halting operations in India after the government froze its bank accounts in 2020, following raids on its offices.

In 2021, Indian tax authorities raided a prominent newspaper and a TV channel that had been critical of the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, triggering accusations of intimidation.

A parent's worst nightmare

FROM PAGE 1

to a doctor, who, after an ultrasound and a CT scan, referred them to the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH) in the capital's Mohakhali.

"We couldn't believe his words and sought a second opinion from a private hospital in Dhaka. But we had to accept the reality and shift to NICRH as Farha's stomach had begun swelling," Shifa sobbed as she spoke.

"They gave her six rounds of chemotherapy there to shrink the tumour, before referring us to the Dhaka Medical's tumour board for surgery. The doctors at Dhaka Medical performed the surgery on February 5 and removed the tumour and a portion of her kidney to prevent the cancer from spreading. She still needs to receive 27 more doses of chemotherapy and two doses of radiotherapy."

Shifa added, "The whole process has so far cost us Tk 2 lakh, which we had to arrange without any help from others... We are somehow getting by."

Farha's father Ringku, a farmer, said, "This reality was beyond my worst nightmares. I've never experienced the streets and roads of Dhaka. My phone was even pickpocketed right before the surgery, and right now, we are living without communication with anyone."

The situation is similar for four-year-old Imamul Hasan, a cancer patient from Sunamganj, who is suffering from a malignant kidney tumour causing blood to flow through his urine.

Imamul had already come to the hospital late.

Once his family was told about the expenses, they had to go back to the village to mortgage his grandparent's land off to arrange the money.

The delay only further deteriorated his condition.

Prof Shahnoor Islam, unit chief of the paediatric surgery department at DMCH, who excels at paediatric surgical oncology, said, "Although early detection can go a long way, a lack of awareness and information leads to late detection, as patients travel many long winding paths before finally reaching us."

She also reported a severe shortage of beds in her unit, with three to four patients sharing a single one. The unit has only eight beds, mostly occupied by cancer patients.

Besides, DMCH's paediatric oncology and haematology departments have only 30 beds, and a few cabins, making it difficult to accommodate the nearly 200 children with cancer, including outpatients.

"Cancer treatment is expensive, ranging from Tk 2 lakh to Tk 12 lakh, depending on the stage and nature, making it difficult for families to afford. Although we are concerned about the risk of infection, abandonment of treatment due to high costs cannot be

an option," Shahnoor said.

She added that they try to reduce investigation costs by admitting the patients, and if patients don't need hospitalisation during chemotherapy, they are allowed to receive treatment at home.

Besides, as parents often struggle to accept their child's cancer diagnosis, the tumour board at DMCH offers counselling from a psychiatrist to offer hope and support.

World Child Cancer, the leading international children's charity dedicated to addressing the global inequality in childhood cancer care, through its Bangladesh office, has been offering psycho-social support and financial aid to such poor patients and their families in six hospitals in Bangladesh.

This includes funding for diagnostic tests, medications, chemotherapy, transportation, food and accommodation. On average, each family receives Tk 5,000, based on their specific needs and treatment requirements.

"We have family support officers in six hospitals -- DMCH, Bangladesh Shishu Hospital, BSMMU, SSMC Mitford Hospital, NICRH, and Chittagong Medical University. From October to December last year, they provided finances and counselling to 1,368 families," said Jewel Ahmed, country representative of World Childhood Cancer.

Although there are no official cancer statistics for Bangladesh, data from DMCH showed that on average, almost 600 children receive cancer treatment per month at DMCH alone, due to the high number of patient referrals there.

The lack of paediatric onco-surgeons for solid tumour management has also been an obstacle to managing the flow of patients at DMCH -- the only facility with a tumour board for children.

Jewel suggested that if the government's project to establish dedicated cancer hospitals in eight divisions is implemented, it would greatly improve the situation for grassroots children with cancer, as each hospital will have 20 beds designated for them.

On the other hand, Prof Shahnoor emphasised the need for the position of paediatric onco-surgeons at those hospitals to reduce patient flow at DMCH.

"Unlike developed countries, we need adequate shelter facilities for both children undergoing cancer treatment and their guardians."

She also stressed the need for a higher number of molecular labs to reduce delays in returning urgent medical reports, along with more research and training for healthcare professionals to improve childhood cancer treatment in Bangladesh.

AMAR EKUSHEY BOI MELA

A sea of red and yellow

DIPAN NANDY

People were coming hand in hand, wearing yellow and red color dresses. Celebrations of Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day were in the air everywhere yesterday, especially at the premises of Ekushey Boi Mela.

Many couples, friends and families chose the book fair to spend quality time with their loved ones. Some were even seen reading poetry to their partners, while checking out books at different stalls.

Many people visited the book fair to gift books to their loved ones on the occasion of Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day.

Risat and Ananya came to the fair hand in hand yesterday afternoon. The two have been married for four years. Talking to this correspondent, Ananya said she buys Anisul Huq's books every year at the fair.

There were many arrangements at the book fair as well. The unveiling ceremony of Sumana Gupta's first poem book "Mayavhara Ayanginar Path" is one of them. Bangla Academy Sahitya Puroskar winner writer Masud Uzzaman, writers Swakrito Noman and Mojaffor Hossain were unveiling the book in front of the Shrabon Prokashani.

Besides, a discussion programme on the translation of Bangla literature and Bangla translation of foreign

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Writ seeks HC order to probe graft allegations against Zahangir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday seeking its directive on the authorities concerned to conduct probe into the corruption allegations against suspended Gazipur City Corporation mayor Mohammad Zahangir Alam.

One Md Abdur Rahim Sarkar from Gazipur submitted the petition as a public interest litigation through lawyer Md Ekramul Haque Tutul, requesting the HC to order the Anti-Corruption Commission to conduct enquiry into the reported allegations against Zahangir and to submit a report to this court.

Ekramul told The Daily Star that his client has filed the petition following reports published on different newspapers including The Daily Star about the corruption allegedly committed by Zahangir.

The HC may hold hearing on the petition today, he said, without elaborating the contents of the petition.



Adorned in the colours of spring, a couple goes through a few books that piqued their interest at a stall at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday, perhaps as a yearly tradition they've had since they got together many years ago. Many individuals celebrating both Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day were spotted at the book fair -- some of whom visited with the sole purpose of buying their significant other a book as a token to remember the special day.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Dream of better life ends in nightmare

5 of fake recruiting agency, who used to send people abroad only to become victims of torture, held

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Without any licence to run a recruiting agency, they used to send people abroad.

This "agency" mainly targeted unemployed women, alluring them with a false promise of providing a job in Saudi Arabia with a handsome salary.

If anyone fell into the trap, the gang charged Tk 3 lakh from each fortune-seeker for medical tests, visa, and air ticket expenses.

However, once they reached the Middle Eastern country, these migrants had to undergo tremendous torture. On some days,

they had to go by without any food. When their families contacted the recruiters, they would ask for Tk 3 lakh to bring them home.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-3) yesterday disclosed the activities of the unlicensed recruiting agency, which has been trafficking women to Saudi Arabia for the last four years.

Based on the complaints of at least four to five victims, a team of Rab-3 arrested five people, including the ringleader of the criminal gang -- Nazrul Islam Milan, 42. The four other arrestees are Badal Akan, 40, Helal Uddin, 32, Abdur Rahman Ripon, 38, and

Masud Alam, 26.

A Rab team arrested the five on Monday around 6:15pm and seized 10 cell phones, eight ATM cards, three stamps, and Tk 25,000 from their possession, said Lt Col Arif Mohiuddin Ahmed, commander of Rab-3.

"They used to threaten the victims' families and told them not to contact law enforcers for assistance," the commander added.

Following the arrest, a case was filed with Paltan Police Station on Monday.

According to the first information report (FIR), arrestee

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

BR hires joint venture for projects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Railway yesterday hired a joint-venture firm to carry out preparatory works for several upcoming projects, including building a new rail line from Dhaka to Cumilla via Narayanganj.

Mahbubur Rahman, director of Railway Connectivity Improvement Preparatory Facility Project, and Yuji Asano, general manager (Dhaka office) of Oriental Consultants Global -- the firm representing the joint venture -- signed the contract at the capital's Rail Bhaban.

The consortium of Japan's Oriental Consultant Global, France's EGIS and Malaysia's HSS will carry out feasibility studies, prepare detailed designs and conduct other related works for 11 sub-projects. They are supposed to complete the works within 30 months at a cost of Tk 193.64 crore.

The JV will be assisted by five local companies -- KS Consultants Ltd, SODEV Consult International Ltd, STRATEGI consulting Company Ltd, DevConsultants Ltd and SARM Associates Ltd.

The new chord line from Dhaka to Cumilla via

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

3 more DU students suspended

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University authorities have suspended three more students for allegedly tarnishing the university's image through indiscipline and misconduct.

Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman approved the suspension yesterday, according to a press release.

The students -- Fazle Naveed Anana of theatre and performance studies, Rahat Rahman of management information systems, and Sadiq Ahammad of Institute of Social Welfare and Research -- were asked to show cause in seven working days as to why they should not be expelled permanently.

On February 12, they were expelled from Bangladesh Chhatra League for their involvement in mugging.

Earlier on February 5, a court sent them to jail in a case filed for stanching money from a covered-van driver.

On February 6, the DU authorities suspended another two students -- Tanzir Arafat Tushar and Rahul Ray, who were also BCL leaders -- for "breaching discipline".



CNG-run auto-rickshaws remain parked beside the Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery Complex in Basabo, occupying a large portion of the entire stretch of the road. As a result, gridlock has become a constant in the area. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HUQ

BNP shifts Dhaka road march to February 17

UNB, Dhaka

BNP has rescheduled its road march in the capital by a day, deciding to organise the programme on February 17 instead of 18 "due to unavoidable reasons".

BNP acting office secretary Syed Imran Saleh announced the decision at a press conference at its Nayapaltan central office yesterday.

He, however, said the date for holding a similar programme in all other metropolitan cities -- Chattogram, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Cumilla, Faridpur, Narayanganj and Gazipur -- remains February 18 as per the previous announcement.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

BNP starts road march after losing its way: Quader

BSS, Noakhali

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said sensing defeat, BNP is now afraid of joining the next general elections and the party has begun road march, going astray.

"There will be no movement if common people are not involved in it... BNP leaders and workers have joined the party's movement but they [BNP] failed to bring the common people," he said.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, made the remarks while speaking at a meeting on Basurhat Pourashava Bangabandhu premises in Companiganj upazila.

Speaking as chief guest, he said developed nations have put the entire world at risk today, but Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is tackling the crisis that Bangladesh is facing due to the global economic setback.

Recently, the IMF acknowledged Bangladesh as the 35th economically prosperous country in the world, claimed the AL general secretary.

Claiming that Bangladesh has started to turnaround from the ongoing crisis, he said Pakistan has no foreign reserves to import goods. "Bangladesh will not be like Sri Lanka. The country gave loan to Sri Lanka during its crisis period."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

FARDIN MURDER CASE

Bushra's bail extended

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday extended Amatullah Bushra's ad-interim bail till March 16 in the case filed over Buet student Fardin Noor Parash's death.

Bushra, who was in jail for two months following Fardin's death in November last year, was cleared of the murder charges by a report submitted by police's Detective Branch (DB) on February 6.

Bushra was present at the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday to submit a petition for permanent bail.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shanto Islam Mallik extended her ad-interim bail till March 16, the next date of hearing.

Meanwhile, Fardin's father yesterday filed a petition seeking time to file

Elegance is an attitude
Kate Winslet
Kate Winslet

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Ex-employee of TV channel sues in-charge for rape

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A former female employee of a private television channel has filed a case against the channel's assignment editor for raping her with false promises of marriage. The employee filed the case with Wari Police Station on Monday. Police yesterday sent her to the One Stop Crisis Centre (OCC) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital for a medical test. According to the FIR, the woman met the accused in February last year while working at the channel, where she worked till September 30 last year. The accused also recorded personal videos and took photographs of

the employee on his phone, with which he blackmailed her, the woman mentioned in the FIR. This newspaper could not reach the accused over phone despite repeated attempts. The employee could not be reached either, as she is currently in police protection for her medical examination. Mostazirur Rahman, officer in charge of Wari Police Station, said, "A case has been filed and we are currently investigating it." Asked about interrogating the accused, Mostazirur said they are yet to detain or arrest him. "Let us work on this. We cannot disclose the details to you."

Probe graft allegations

FROM PAGE 5
Citing the report, a suomuto (voluntary) move following a report published on Bangla daily Samakal, headlined "Rajuker Cheraage Bari, Gari, Plot, Dokan (houses, cars, plots, shops at the lamp of Rajuk)".

the HC bench said Rajuk chairman has been remaining in a helpless condition in preventing accumulating wealth by a section of the employees through corruption and abusing powers.

Bushra's bail

FROM PAGE 3

a no-confidence petition against the DB report clearing Bushra of murder charges. Kazi Nooruddin Rana, plaintiff in the case, in the petition said he rejected the probe report and would file a no-confidence petition against it on the next scheduled date. On January 8, Bushra was granted bail by a Dhaka court until the submission of the DB probe report. DB Inspector Yasin Shikder, also investigation officer of the case, on February 6 submitted the final report to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka. In the report, the IO said Fardin died by suicide.

Complete all

FROM PAGE 5

year, we have showed a lot of success. This year is more important for us. We have already taken an initiative to clean our canals; those [officials] who are involved in this, please clean the waterbodies..." he said. The mayor also said sometimes they find negligence in the works of contractors. For this, councillors will have to show their vigilance. "We've already appointed contractors to clean all drains. The work will start from the last week of February and will continue till April," said the mayor. "There is no alternative aside from cleaning drains to solve the waterlogging problem," he added.

HC starts

FROM PAGE 5

They submitted the petition to the HC on January 19, 2020, saying that the two sections are hampering freedom of expression and thought. Lawyers Imran A Siddique and Shishir Monir appeared for the writ petitioners, while Deputy Attorney General Sk Shaifuzzaman represented the state during the hearing yesterday.

Man 'kills father over land dispute' in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A man reportedly killed his father over a land dispute in Mymensingh's Sadar upazila yesterday morning. The victim is Md Joyuddin, 75, of the upazila's Abdullahpur village, said police. Quoting family and neighbours, Md Faruq Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said Joyuddin recently registered 30 decimals of land for Abdul Matin, 35, the son of his first wife.

As there was a mistake in the land document, a feud began between them. Yesterday, Matin allegedly hacked his father indiscriminately. Joyuddin died on the spot. On information, police rushed to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. None has been arrested as Matin fled the scene, and no case had been lodged till the filing of this report, said the OC.

Dream of better life

FROM PAGE 3

Ripon has allured one of his neighbour's daughters to send her to Saudi Arabia, telling her that a job will pay Tk 50,000 a month, with food and housing allowances and two-yearly festival bonuses. On February 3 last year, the victim went to Ripon's office in Paltan. On February 15, they assured the victim to send her to Saudi Arabia to work as a house help. On October 4 last year, they made the victim's family sign a stamp paper stating that the victim will not return home within the next two years. The expense to send her back will be Tk 3 lakh, including the air ticket and medical fees. On October 19, the victim was flown to Saudi Arabia on a flight around 5:00pm, reads the FIR. However, within 15 days, the victim called her family and said she did not get the promised job, adding that her employer was physically torturing her, said the FIR. The victim's brother told this correspondent

that they asked for help from law enforcers after receiving the call. "I requested the agency to return my sister in exchange for Tk 1 lakh, as my financial condition is not that well. They took the money and promised to return her within 24 hours on January 17," he added. However, after receiving the money, the members stopped communicating with the family. The victim is still in Saudi Arabia. Farzana Haque, senior assistant superintendent of police, also staff officer (media) of Rab-3, said the gang has been involved in sending people abroad since 2018. "During primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted to sending a dozen people. However, we are suspecting that a huge number of families have become their victims. We are now verifying the claims and trying to get the details of other accusations," she said. "We are also trying to bring the victims home," she added.

3 held

FROM PAGE 5

for each of them. CID's Special Superintendent of Serious Crime Unit Nazrul Islam said there are more members in the gang. "We hope to get their names and detailed information of their activities during interrogation," he told The Daily Star. CID officials said during primary interrogation, they found that Daud Elahi formed an organised fraud gang while working as a "jamadar" in the HC. The gang used to create fake bail orders in the name of HC judges and helped their clients, particularly convicted accused, and helped them obtain bail in exchange for a good amount of money. There are several cases against the members of the fraud ring and efforts are on to arrest more accused involved in such activities, said the officials.

A sea of red

FROM PAGE 3

literature was held at the main stage of the fair. Papers were presented by GH Habib and Shamsuddin Chowdhury. The discussion was attended by Sampad Barua, Rafiq-um-Munir Chowdhury, Prof Md Abu Zafar and Mahbooba Rahman. Fakrul Alam presided over the event. Meanwhile, Jannatun Nayeem Prity's book "Jonmo o Jonir Itihash" has been declared banned in the ongoing book fair. Redwanur Rahman Jewel, publisher of Nalonda, said, "We stopped selling Prity's book at the fair as the task force told us not to. However, the book can be found in Banglabazar." Ashim Kumar Dey, chairman of Bangla Academy taskforce, said in this book, various issues have come up against the rules of the book fair. These include attacks on personal, objectionable comments on eminent personnels.

Save Sundarbans

FROM PAGE 5

Nogorbasi Poribesh Andolon, and Green Voice took part in the rally. Nur Mohammad Talukdar, vice-president of Bapa, said the Sundarbans is the lungs of South Asia. It shields the country's south against natural disasters. "We don't want development that costs the environment, forest and rivers. The government must stop allowing industries to operate there," he said. Alamgir Kabir, joint-secretary of Bapa, said, "We have to raise awareness among the new generation about the Sundarbans. If we fail to conserve the forest, it will incur irreparable loss for our generation." Architect Iqbal Habib, Mihir Biswas and Ebnul Said Rana of Bapa were present among others in the rally.

BR hires joint

FROM PAGE 3

Narayanganj is expected to reduce the distance between Dhaka and Chattogram by 90 kilometres and travel time by one-and-a-half hours, said BR officials. The existing Dhaka-Chattogram rail line, which goes through Tongi-Bhairab-Akhaura-Cumilla-Laksham, has a distance of 320 kilometres. Apart from the chord line, the consulting firm will also carry out the feasibility study and prepare a detailed design for a new bridge parallel to the existing century-old Hardinge Bridge over the Padma River in BR's western zone. The firm will also assess the future demand for rolling stocks, prepare core and non-core business plans for BR and carry out a need analysis for establishing a signalling training centre for BR, among other assignments. In June 2020, the government approved the Tk 235.37 crore Technical Assistance Project, with the Asian Development Bank providing Tk 167.14 as a loan. The deadline for the project is December this year, implying that it will be extended. BR Director General Quamrul Ahsan said among the sub-projects, the chord line and second Hardinge bridge are urgent. "We are requesting you to complete the works [regarding the two projects] at the earliest, so that we can take investment projects," he told the firms. Railways Minister Nurul Islam Suhan said many projects are not completed citing different excuses. "We hope they will complete the work in time, if possible before the time." He suggested keeping a provision in future projects which will ensure action against contractors or consultants upon failure to meet project deadline. Railways Ministry Secretary Humayun Kabir chaired the contract-signing programme.

Dhaka South City Corporation
Office of the Chief Store & Purchase Officer
Store & Purchase Department, Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka

Memo: 46.207.007.17.02.2023-261 Date: 14-Feb-2023

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl. No.	Method of Tender & Tender ID, Ref No.	Procurement item description	Publishing date & time	Last selling date & time	Closing & opening date & time
1.	OTM (NCT) Tender ID: 788885 Ref.46.207.007.17.01-2022-11	Supply of various printing works of Hospitals under Health Department of DSSC in 2022-2023.	15-Feb-2023 17.00.00	05-Mar-2023 17.00.00	06-Mar-2023 14.00.00
2.	OTM (NCT) Tender ID: 788096 Ref.46.207.007.17.01.2022-53	Supply of annual revenue printing work of DSSC in 2022-2023.	15-Feb-2023 17.00.00	05-Mar-2023 17.00.00	06-Mar-2023 14.00.00

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

Mohammad Bashirul Haque Bhuiyan
(Deputy Secretary)
Chief Store & Purchase Officer
Store & Purchase Department
Dhaka South City Corporation
E-mail: csपो@dhakasouthcity.gov.bd

ডিবেসিসি/পিআরডি/২১৪/২০২২-২০২৩
জিডি-২৭২

বাংলাদেশ ডায়াবেটিক সমিতি
৫ম তলা, হাসপাতাল ভবন, বারডে
১২২, কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম এভিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ ডায়াবেটিক সমিতির (বাডাস) সম্মানিত আজীবন সদস্য এবং অধিভুক্ত ও সাব-অধিভুক্ত সমিতিসমূহের মনোনীত প্রতিনিধিদের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, আগামী ১৭ মার্চ ২০২৩ তারিখ শুক্রবার বেলা ৩:৩০ মিনিটে সমিতির ৬৩তম বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভা (এজিএম) এবং ২০২১-২০২৪ মেয়াদের বাডাস ন্যাশনাল কাউন্সিলের নির্বাচিত সদস্যদের এক তৃতীয়াংশ শূন্য পদে (আজীবন ও ডেলিগেট কাটাগেরি) নির্বাচন বিইউএইচএস, দারুস সালাম, মিরপুর, ঢাকায় অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। এ ব্যাপারে সংশ্লিষ্ট কাগজপত্র ১৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৩ তারিখ হতে ২৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৩ তারিখ পর্যন্ত প্রতিদিন (শুক্রবার এবং সরকারি ছুটির দিন বাদে) সকাল ৯টা থেকে বেলা ২টা পর্যন্ত সমিতির কার্যালয় ১২২, কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম এভিনিউ, শাহবাগ, ঢাকায় অবস্থিত বাডাস সচিবালয়ের সচিব শাখা (ফোনঃ ০১৭১৪-১৩৪০৩৫) এবং বারডেম জেনারেল হাসপাতালের ২য় তলায় ২৪০ নম্বর কক্ষ (ফোনঃ ০১৭১১-২৪০০১৯) থেকে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। আগামী ১৭ মার্চ ২০২৩ তারিখ বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভা এবং জোটের তালিকাসহ নির্বাচন সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় তথ্য ও কাগজপত্র সমিতির ৫ম তলার নোটিশ বোর্ডে প্রদর্শন করা হয়েছে। আজীবন সদস্যদের মধ্যে যাদের সদস্যপদ এক বছর পূর্ণ হয়েছে শুধুমাত্র তাঁরা এবং অধিভুক্ত সমিতিসমূহের মনোনীত প্রতিনিধিরাই বাংলাদেশ ডায়াবেটিক সমিতির ন্যাশনাল কাউন্সিলের সদস্য নির্বাচনে ভোট দিতে/অংশ নিতে পারবেন। উল্লেখ্য, জোট প্রদানের জন্য সম্মানিত আজীবন সদস্যবৃন্দকে 'আজীবন সদস্য কার্ড' সঙ্গে আনতে হবে। যারা আজীবন সদস্য কার্ড হারিয়ে ফেলেছেন অথবা জোটের তালিকায় নাম আছে অথচ সদস্য কার্ড এখনো সংগ্রহ করেননি তাঁদেরকে আগামী ২৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৩ তারিখের মধ্যে বর্তমান ঠিকানাসহ ২ কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি সমিতির কার্যালয়ে জমা দিয়ে নিজ দায়িত্বে 'আজীবন সদস্য কার্ড' সংগ্রহ করার জন্য অনুরোধ জানানো যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ সাইফ উদ্দিন
মহাসচিব

নারায়নগঞ্জ ক্লাব লিমিটেড
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ক্র.সং.	বিভাগ	বিস্তারিত
০১	সংস্থের নাম	শ্রী নারায়নগঞ্জ ক্লাব লিমিটেড
০২	ঠিকানা	৯৫, বঙ্গবন্ধু রোড, নারায়নগঞ্জ, বাংলাদেশ।
০৩	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং ও তারিখ	নারায়নগঞ্জ ক্লাব ৪ / নির্মাণ/২০২৩/০০১
০৪	বাজেট ও টাকার উৎস	নারায়নগঞ্জ ক্লাব নিজস্ব তহবিল।
০৫	কাজের বিবরণ	Electrical Work
০৬	কাজের মেয়াদ	নির্দিষ্ট প্রতিষ্ঠান ও দর দাতার আলোচনা সাপেক্ষে সর্বনিম্ন সময়।
০৭	দরপত্র সিডিউল	নারায়নগঞ্জ ক্লাব থেকে সংগ্রহ করতে হবে।
০৮	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর নাম ও ঠিকানা	জগদীশ মোস্তাফিজ কামাল, নারায়নগঞ্জ ক্লাব লিমিটেড। মোবাইল নং: +৮৮০১৭১৩৩৩৬৫৯৫
০৯	দরদাতাদের যোগ্যতা	কমপক্ষে ০৫ বছরল আবাসিক ও বাণিজ্যিক বসনের Electrical Work এর অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
১০	দরপত্র দাখিল	নারায়নগঞ্জ ক্লাব লিমিটেড, ৯৫, বঙ্গবন্ধু রোড, নারায়নগঞ্জ, বাংলাদেশ।
১১	দরপত্র সিডিউল তারিখ	বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পর ১৫/০২/২০২৩ইং ও ১৬/০২/২০২৩ইং
১২	দরপত্র খসিকের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৮/০২/২০২৩ ইং বেলা ১:০০ টা পর্যন্ত।
১৩	দরপত্র বন্ধ হওয়ার তারিখ ও সময়	১৮/০২/২০২৩ইং বিকাল ৪:০০ টা।
১৪	দরপত্র মূল্য	২,৫০০/- টাকা (অক্ষয়দ্বয়োপা)

কেন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে কর্তৃপক্ষ দরপত্র পরিবেশন বা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে। কর্তৃপক্ষ

বাংলাদেশ কৃষি গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট
কৃষি ও ইমারত শাখা
Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute
Gazipur-1701

কৃষি সমিতি
Tel: 49270077
E-mail: se.building@bari.gov.bd
Web: www.bari.gov.bd

Memo No. 12.21.0000.010.41.468.20.951 Date: 12.02.2023

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Tendering method	Description of works	Online (e-GP System) tender publication date & time	Online (e-GP System) tender closing date & time
1.	785989	LTM	Repairing and Renovation Electric Line, Gas Line and Door & Window for Titash-Turag Tin shade Mosque at BARI, Gazipur	07-Feb-2023 15:00	23-Feb-2023 12:35
2.	785988	OTM	Construction of Toilet back side Sonali Bank at BARI Gazipur.	07-Feb-2023 15:00	23-Feb-2023 12:30
3.	785985	OTM	Renovation of Electrical Overhead line at Vegetable field-2 at BARI, Gazipur.	07-Feb-2023 15:00	23-Feb-2023 12:45
4.	785704	OTM	Repairing and Renovation of old labour club at BARI Gazipur	07-Feb-2023 15:00	23-Feb-2023 12:20
5.	785612	OTM	Supplying and Installation of P.C. Pole & Related Works at RARS, Akbarpur, Moulvibazar.	07-Feb-2023 15:00	23-Feb-2023 12:15
6.	785042	OTM	Supplying superior quality Electrical Goods use for office & residential area at BARI, Gazipur.	07-Feb-2023 15:00	23-Feb-2023 12:00

This is online tender, only e-Tender will be accepted in National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. Registration is essential to submit e-Tender. Fees have to be deposited for downloading the tender documents from e-GP Portal through any registered bank. For further information please contact e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). Source of Found: GoB

Engr. Md. Ferozur Rahman
Superintending Engineer (In-charge)

GD-269

Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited
(A State Owned Organization)
116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1205
www.bscl.gov.bd

Invitation for Tenders

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology.
2	Agency	Posts and Telecommunications Division.
3	Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited.
4	Procuring entity code	Not used at present.
5	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.
6	Invitation Ref No.	14.39.0000.012.07.001.23.36
7	Date	13/02/2023

KEY INFORMATION

8	Procurement method	Open Tender.
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FUNDING INFORMATION

9	Budget and source of funds	Company's own fund.
10	Tender Package No.	BSCL/2022-23/PG-07
11	Tender package name	Procurement of Multiple Carrier Per Channel (MCPC) Broadcast Platform.
12	Tender publication date	15/02/2023 Time
13	Tender last selling date	19/03/2023 04:00pm
14	Tender closing date and time	20/03/2023 12:05pm
15	Tender opening date and time	20/03/2023 12:20pm
16	Name & address of the office(s)	Address
	- Selling tender document (principal)	Managing Director, Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited, SEL Rose-N-Dale, Level-07, 116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka.
	- Selling tender document (others)	
	- Receiving tender document	
	- Opening tender document	
17	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited, SEL Rose-N-Dale, Level-07, 116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000. Date: 05/03/2023 Time 11:00am.

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

18	Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	a) Any Bangladeshi tenderer with minimum 03 (three) years of supply experience. b) Specific experience as supplier in supply of goods (network/broadcast/Telecommunication equipment) of at least 02 (two) contract successfully completed within the last 05 (five) years, each with a value of at least Tk 05 (five) crore.
19	Brief description of goods	Supply of Multiple Carrier Per Channel (MCPC) Broadcast Platform
20	Brief description of related service	Installation, commissioning and testing of supplied MCPC Platform, training & operational Service support
21	Price of tender document (Tk)	Tk 2000 (two thousand)
22	Lot No.	Identification of lot
	1	Nil
		Location
		Tender security amount (Tk)
		Completion time in weeks / months
		As per the "Work Schedule" of tender document

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

23	Name of official inviting tender	Md. Shafiqul Islam.
24	Designation of official inviting tender	Managing Director.
25	Address of official inviting tender	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited, SEL Rose-N-Dale, Level-07, 116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka.
26	Contact details of official inviting tender	0241030091-93 <Fax No.> procurement@bscl.com.bd

The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.

(Signed)
Md. Shafiqul Islam
Managing Director
Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited

GD-270

CONSTITUTIONALITY OF DSA SECTIONS
HC starts hearing on rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday started hearing on a rule it issued three years back questioning the constitutionality of sections 25 and 31 of the much talked about Digital Security Act, 2018.

The relevant sections criminalise the publishing of false and intimidating information – contributing to the deterioration of law and order – and detail the penalties for offenders.

The HC bench of Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury and Justice Kazi Ebadath Hossain began the hearing with writ petitioners' lawyer Imran A Siddique placing argument on the rule. They then adjourned the hearing till tomorrow.

Following a writ petition, another HC bench on February 24, 2020 issued the rule asking the government to explain why the two sections should not be declared unconstitutional.

The petitioners are Dhaka University teachers Mohammad Ismail, Md Kamruzzaman and Md Rafiqul Islam; journalist Mohammad Abdullah; and Supreme Court lawyers Md Asad Uddin, Md Asaduzzaman, Md Zobaidur Rahman, Md Mohiuddin Molla and Md Mujahidul Islam.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 15

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:25	12:45	4:30	5:57	7:15
JAMAAT 6:00	1:15	4:45	6:01	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Mustering up his conviction and might, a man throws his net to get a good catch of fish in Piyan River of Sylhet's Jaflong. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Probe graft allegations against Rajuk employees: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned to conduct probe into the allegations against a section of lower-class employees under Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) of amassing assets including multistorey buildings, plots, flats and cars through illegal means.

The court ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission and Rajuk to conduct separate enquiries into the allegations and to submit reports to this court by April 5.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu passed the order on

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Save Sundarbans from all hazards

Activists, civil-society leaders urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Green and cultural activists, along with civil-society leaders, urged the government to take steps to protect the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, from all hazards.

They made the call at a rally organised to celebrate "Sundarbans Day" in front of the capital's National Museum yesterday.

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), National Committee to Protect Sundarbans, Buriganga Bachao Andolon, Nagorik Uddyog, Unnayadhara Trust, Nirapod Development Foundation, Bangladesh Baul and Lokosilpi Sangstha,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Complete all infrastructural work properly

Says Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday instructed all its ward councillors to take steps so that contractors complete all ongoing infrastructural development work properly.

The mayor made the comment at its board meeting held at the capital's Nagar Bhaban, with a target to give city dwellers respite from waterlogging problems.

"Rainy season is coming again. We have to do a lot to solve the waterlogging problem. Last

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

3 held over forgery of bail orders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department of police yesterday arrested three members of an organised gang who allegedly created forged bail orders of Supreme Court Judges to ensure their clients' release from jail in exchange for money.

The gangs' activities came to light in 2011 when the then High Court judge Hasan Foez Siddique, now the chief justice, visited Magura Judge Court and found that in 11 cases, bail orders of SC judges were forged.

He directed the then deputy registrar of the HC Md Mahfuzul Karim Akand to investigate the matter. After the investigation, Mahfuzul filed a probe report accusing Md Rafiq and Md Daud Elahi.

Based on the findings, the then court keeper of the HC division Md Abdul

Wareh filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station on May 20, 2015.

The case was initially investigated by Shahbagh police station and the Anti-Corruption Commission for more than seven years. However, they failed to solve the case and arrest the culprits, said a CID official, requesting anonymity.

Later, the Police Headquarters tasked the CID with the investigation of the much-talked-about case.

A team of CID's Serious Crime Unit – the investigating body of the case – finally arrested Md Daud Elahi, ex-jamadar (lower class staff) of the High Court, Sheikh Abdul Majed, ex-jail guard, and Ashrafuzzaman alias Rony from Magura early yesterday.

The arrestees, all of whom hail from Magura Sadar, were placed before a court seeking remand for interrogation. The court granted a one-day remand

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

The gang used to create fake bail orders in the name of High Court judges and helped their clients, particularly convicted accused, and helped them obtain bail in exchange for a good amount of money. There are several cases against the fraud ring.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Chief Controller of Stores
Bangladesh Railway, Chattogram
Phone: +88 031 659604, Email: ccspt@railway.gov.bd
Notice No. 54.01.1543.335.08.125.22.002 Date: 09/02/2023

Re-Request for Expression of Interest (Re-EOI)

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Railways.
2	Agency	Bangladesh Railway (BR).
3	Procuring entity name	Chief Controller of Stores.
4	Expression of Interest (EOI)	Pre-shipment Inspection Firm.
5	EOI Reference No.	54.01.1543.335.08.125.22.002
6	Date	Thursday, February 09, 2023

KEY INFORMATION

7	Procurement method	Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS).
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FUNDING INFORMATION

8	Budget and source of fund	Government of Bangladesh.
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PARTICULAR INFORMATION

9	Programme code (if applicable)	Not applicable.
10	Programme name (if applicable)	Selection of Pre-shipment Inspection (PSI) Service.
11	EOI tender publication date	Wednesday, February 15, 2023.
12	EOI & relevant documents available offices	1. Office of the Chief Controller of Stores, Bangladesh Railway, Chattogram. 2. Office of the Controller of Stores (East), CRB, Chattogram. 3. Office of the Controller of Stores (West), Rajshahi. 4. Office of the Senior Assistant Controller of Stores, Kamapur Railway Station, Dhaka.
13	EOI submission place	1. Office of the Chief Controller of Stores, Bangladesh Railway, Chattogram. 2. Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Chattogram, Court Road, Chattogram. 3. Office of the Police Commissioner, 360, CDA Avenue, Chattogram.
14	EOI tender closing date and time	Sunday, April 2, 2023 at 12.00pm (Local Time).
15	EOI tender opening place, date and time	Office of the Chief Controller of Stores, Bangladesh Railway, Chattogram-4202, Sunday, April 2, 2023 at 03.00pm (Local Time).

INFORMATION OF APPLICANT

16	Brief description of assignment	The selected inspecting firm shall be responsible for Pre-shipment inspection of all items imported by the BR in accordance with terms and conditions of the purchase contract and applicable standards set out in the technical specifications, drawings or any other standard approved by the BR and/or in accordance with reasonable decisions and instructions and orders as the BR may issue. Pre-shipment inspection shall include inspection, testing, acceptance, rejection and supervision of loading, unloading, packing, handling, and providing rejection mark of the materials against different purchase contracts Details Terms of Reference (ToR) have been added to the tender document.
17	Qualification and experience	BR will conduct 'short-listing' of the interested inspecting firms who will have submitted Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the above-mentioned inspection services. For this purpose, experience and resources but not limited to of the inspecting firms are as follows: (a) Technical Competence: General experience, specific experience in similar assignments (b) Geographic Experience: Experience in similar geographic area. (c) Contractual Management Experience: Substantial experience in managing Pre-Inspection Service contracts as a firm and by the key members of the team. (d) Management Capabilities: Financial (Annual Turnover); capability to retain the required number of Key Experts who are preferably permanent employees of the inspecting firms with adequate qualifications. (e) The Pre-shipment Inspecting (PSI) firm shall have Non-Destructive Testing (NDT) facilities for the Railway materials/equipment/machinery or any other materials. (f) The inspecting firm shall have adequate Physical Resources such as office, working equipment, IT Facility, Survey equipment, logistical support etc.
18	Association with other firms	The applicants may associate with other firm(s) to enhance their qualifications and association with other firms is encouraged.
19	EOI tender document price	BDT 1,000.00 only to be paid to Code No. 1422328 through A-Challan to the FA&CAO (East), Bangladesh Railway, CRB, Chattogram (Code: 1510321132285).

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

20	Name of official inviting EOI	Farid Ahmed.
21	Designation of official inviting EOI	Chief Controller of Stores.
22	Address of official inviting EOI	Office of the Chief Controller of Stores, Bangladesh Railway, Pahartali, Chattogram-4202.
23	Contact details of official inviting EOI	Phone: +88 031 659604, Email: ccspt@railway.gov.bd

Asif Ul Islam
District Controller of Stores (General)
on the behalf of the Chief Controller of Stores
Phone: +880 1711 691026
Email: dcosgpt@railway.gov.bd

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Netrokona
Memo No. 37.07.7200.008.07.002(29).22-138 Date: 14/02/2023

e-Tender Notice No. 2022-2023/29

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following works under EED Netrokona as mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tendering method	Tender ID	Last date and time of selling documents	Tender closing date/time	Tender opening date/time
1	WD-03/Madrasa	Construction of 4-Storey Academic Building with 4-Storey Foundation including Sanitary Water Supply & Electrification Works at Lotifa Abbas Model Mohila Alim Madrasa under Sadar Upazila Netrokona District.	OTM	790766	09/03/2023 15:00	12/03/2023 13:00	12/03/2023 13:00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be acceptable in the National e-GP System Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Monzurul Alam Sharif
Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Netrokona
Email: ee_net@eedmoe.gov.bd

Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of The Executive Engineer
Pirojpur
www.lged.gov.bd
Memo No.46.02.7900.000.07.001.2023-3016 Date-13.02.2023

e-Tender Notice No-27/2022-2023

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works office of the under signed.

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No and Name of works	Procurement Method	Last selling date & time	Closing & Opening Date & Time
1	785571	(LGED/PIROJ/VRRP/Re-hab/22-23/W-20) Rehabilitation of Shapleza Varani UZR Kachubaria Lanch Ghat via Kachubaria cyclone Shelter Road from Ch: 00m-2230m under Mothbaria upazila District: Pirojpur. (Road ID: 579584001)	LTM	01.03.2023 16:00 PM	02.03.2023 13:00 PM
2	785572	(LGED/PIROJ/VRRP/Re-hab/22-23/W-21) Rehabilitation of Sreepur UZR 2004 to Paikkhali Bazar RHD Road via Hanif Madrasa Road from Ch: 1100m-2600m under Bhandaria upazila District: Pirojpur. (Road ID: 579144193)	LTM	01.03.2023 16:00 PM	02.03.2023 13:00 PM
3	785573	(LGED/PIROJ/VRRP/Re-hab/22-23/W-22) Rehabilitation of Bhandaria-Kawkhali RHD (Mohasin Chorasta) via Sordarer hat & Enayet Khan hat Road from Ch: 00m-1200m under Bhandaria upazila District: Pirojpur. (Road ID: 579144040)	LTM	01.03.2023 16:00 PM	02.03.2023 13:00 PM
4	785574	(LGED/PIROJ/VRRP/Re-hab/22-23/W-23) Rehabilitation of East Charkhali-Hetalia Rd. Road from Ch: 00m-2000m under Bhandaria upazila District: Pirojpur. (Road ID: 579144003)	LTM	01.03.2023 16:00 PM	02.03.2023 13:00 PM
5	785575	(LGED/PIROJ/VRRP/Re-hab/22-23/W-24) Rehabilitation of Telikhali UP Complex - Uttar Junia Bazar via Shahajan Member House Road from Ch: 00m-3000m under Bhandaria upazila District: Pirojpur. (Road ID: 579144069)	LTM	01.03.2023 16:00 PM	02.03.2023 13:00 PM
6	785576	(LGED/PIROJ/VRRP/Re-hab/22-23/W-25) Rehabilitation of Maliharhat-Madhapur Reg. P/School Road from Ch: 00m-1000m under Bhandaria upazila District: Pirojpur. (Road ID: 579144050)	LTM	01.03.2023 16:00 PM	02.03.2023 13:00 PM
7	785577	(LGED/PIROJ/VRRP/OL/22-23/W-26) Rehabilitation of Mathbaria Mirukhali Road - late Esahaque Ali X - chairman House Road from Ch: 00m-1800m under Mothbaria upazila District: Pirojpur. (Road ID: 579584098)	LTM	01.03.2023 16:00 PM	02.03.2023 13:00 PM
8	785578	(LGED/PIROJ/VRRP/OL/22-23/W-27) Rehabilitation of Mathbaria Pirojpur RHD road Mathbaria Danisafa Border via Majerpool Bazar Road from Ch: 00m-2022m under Mothbaria upazila District: Pirojpur. (Road ID: 579584002)	LTM	01.03.2023 16:00 PM	02.03.2023 13:00 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the national e-GP system portal have to be deposited through on line at any branches of registered Banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Abdus Sattar Howlader)
Executive Engineer
LGED, Pirojpur
0461-62463
xen.pirojpur@lged.gov.bd

Remembered my wife after hearing about Ekushey Padak

MASUD ALI KHAN

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Recently, it was announced that eminent actor Masud Ali Khan would be receiving the Ekushey Padak—the second highest civilian award in Bangladesh. This came to fruition after industry regulars voiced their support for the artiste after The Daily Star published the report, “93-year-old Masud Ali Khan has no regrets”.

However, the actor has not been able to work for the last four years. Yet, audiences still love Masud Ali Khan for his performances in timeless dramas like *Kul nai Kinar nai*, *Ei Shob Din Ratri*, and *Kothao Keu Nei*.

In a conversation with The Daily Star, the Ekushey Padak-winning actor opened up about his life.

You have finally been announced as an Ekushey Padak recipient. What was your first reaction to the good news?

When I first received the news about the award, my wife was not at home, as she was visiting the doctor. She was the first person to come to my mind when I got to know this wonderful news. After that, I remembered my beautiful parents, who have never stopped me and have always told me to pursue my passion. I also miss my son, who is staying abroad with his family.

Many entertainment personalities came forward to ensure that your hard work was acknowledged. This came after The Daily Star published a news article about you.

I am forever grateful to The Daily Star and to you, for writing about me. Nobody thought about me until now. However, after your thoughtful piece, people began

to realise my contributions and nominated me for the prize. I am thankful to the government for giving me the honour.

What were your feelings after winning the award?

I want to thank the government and all my colleagues for always supporting me and for also giving me this award. After my name was revealed in the list, almost all of my colleagues called me up and congratulated me. This really feels good.

What was your first movie?

My first film was *Nodi O Nari*, where I starred alongside talented actors like Kazi Khaliq and Dr Rawshan Ara. The shooting took place in the *char* area of Padma river. The memory of the shooting is still fresh in my heart. I remember I watched my film for the first time in Gulistan Hall and I felt that I needed to improve my acting.

Do you have any regrets in life?

I don't have any regrets as an artiste, however deep down I feel guilty that I can't contribute anything to acting now.



Shakib Khan injured



Dhallywood's popular actor Shakib Khan has been injured while shooting for his latest project, *Agun*. The actor was shooting an action scene yesterday, when he sprained his right ankle.

He has received primary care in a private hospital but is currently resting at home as per doctor's instructions.

The Badiul Alam Khokon directorial, *Agun* is expected to be released on the occasion of Eid. Once recovered, Shakib will finish shooting the film's musical sequence.

The film also features Misha Sawdagar, Ali Raj, Zahara Mitu and others in pivotal roles.

Coke Studio Bangla: The magic returns

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Yesterday, around 4:30 pm, Coke Studio Bangla was present, live at six locations across four divisions—Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna and Sylhet.

The event featured a number of activities, including fan interactions, along with the grand launching of Season 2. Special guests, including Coke Studio artistes and Shayan Chowdhury Arnob were present.

The live screening for the first song from season two took place around 6 pm. The event in Dhaka took place at Rabindra Sarobar in Dhanmondi.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

NEWS

'A dark spot' in the country's legal history

FROM PAGE 12

President Md Tanbir Bhuiyan, Secretary (administration) Akkas Ali, and lawyer Zubayer Islam.

The three lawyers appeared before the bench in compliance with summons.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Md Momtaz Uddin Fakir and Secretary Md Abdun Nur Dulal, Bangladesh Bar Council Executive Member Mohammad Sayeed Ahmed Raza, and Supreme Court lawyer Shah Monjurul Hoque appeared for Tanbir, Akkas and Zubayer during the hearing. They prayed to the HC to give one month's time for placing explanations before it about the roles of their clients in connection with the incidents at the Brahmanbaria court.

They told the HC that steps were taken to settle the issues at the Brahmanbaria court and the situation improved as courts were functioning now.

The HC bench said, “You have not submitted any affidavit [explaining the conducts of the lawyers in reply to the rule]. This court had given one month's time to submit the affidavit, but you didn't do anything. The court in Brahmanbaria, which is a constitutional institution, has been kept dysfunctional for a month.”

Lawyer Momtaz Uddin requested the HC to fix a date in March for further hearing on the rule.

The bench said, “A man can make mistakes. He can show arrogance for a day. But can this go on continuously?”

Momtaz Uddin said they have held meetings with the stakeholders and taken necessary steps to settle the issue.

“We have no laches. Some media published exaggerated reports,” he said.

The HC bench then fixed February 26 for holding further hearing on

the issue and ordered Brahmanbaria lawyers Tanbir, Akkas and Zubayer to appear before it on that day in connection with the contempt of court rule against them.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's lawyer Ashraful Hadi informed the same HC bench yesterday that the BTRC took down from social media platforms 13 videos on the incidents of lawyers' misbehaviour with a judge in a Brahmanbaria courtroom.

Eight videos were removed from Facebook and five from YouTube in compliance with the HC order, he told the HC.

On January 5, the HC bench summoned and issued contempt of court rule against Tanbir, Akkas and Zubayer for shouting and creating chaos in the courtroom of the Brahmanbaria Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Tribunal-I and for misbehaving and scolding its judge.

It's not office

FROM PAGE 12

that the post of president cannot be called an office of profit. It [the restriction] is clearly not applicable to him [president-elect Sahabuddin].

“The president or prime minister or ministers are not employees or officers of the republic. These are constitutional posts.”

The EC on Monday issued a gazette notification declaring Shahabuddin, a retired district judge and former ACC commissioner, as the president-elect.

Alamgir, also a former EC secretary, said constitutional posts do not fall under the definition of a profitable post.

Regarding the next national election, he said as per an action plan, the election will be held between the last week of December this year and the first week of January next year.

Explore new markets

FROM PAGE 2

Textile Engineering Institute in Sirajganj and Bhola Textile Institute.

Textiles and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi, Bir Prateek, its secretary Abdur Rauf and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association Acting President Shahidullah Azim also spoke at the function.

Dastagir, on behalf of the prime minister, handed over honorary awards to 10 individuals and institutions including the BGMEA, BKMEA, BTMEA, and Bangladesh University of Textiles.

Sheikh Hasina said the readymade garments industry was playing a pivotal role in the country's economy as Bangladesh has earned \$45.70 billion by exporting those in 2022.

“The textile sector makes a special contribution to our economy. We have earned a lot of foreign currency by exporting readymade garment items, and it has created a huge employment [opportunity] for both women and men. It has particularly opened a new door to women's employment.”

The prime minister said the readymade garments immensely contributed to making the village economy more vibrant as the women from the grassroots worked in the garment factories.

Did Modi pressure Hasina

FROM PAGE 12

cost of electricity supplied to Bangladesh from Adani's Godda [Jharkhand] power plant is much higher than what its own thermal plants supply? Does enriching your friends at the expense of neighbouring countries further India's foreign policy interests?” the party asked in the first question.

In its second question, the Congress aimed its gun on Adani's power plant in Jharkhand.

The party claimed that Jharkhand, in 2016, required 25 percent of the electricity produced by a power plant to be supplied to the state at discounted rates. This was reflected in its initial February 2016 agreement with Adani Power.

“However, in October 2016, the policy was abruptly amended to benefit Adani,” the party said.

Is it correct that these revised terms will cost Jharkhand money over the 25-year lifetime of the project? Did the office of the state accountant general say that the agreement with Adani amounted to “preferential treatment” and would give the company “undue benefits”? it asked.

“What was your role in persuading the then Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das of BJP to reverse this longstanding state government policy?” read the party's second question.

The Congress alleged that in February 2018, Adani Power had applied to set up the plant as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) to avail benefits. The party said the ministry of commerce had, however, declined this request because it conflicted

with guidelines that prohibited the establishment of a standalone power plant inside an SEZ.

Next year, the Congress said the ministry changed its view and amended the said guidelines on January 9, 2019. Thereafter, on February 25 the same year, the Board of Approval for SEZs approved Adani Power's application.

“What was the role of the Prime Minister's Office in this policy change that benefitted Adani Power to the tune of Rs 300 crore per year via the elimination of coal import duties?” the Congress asked in its third question.

The official spokesman of India's External Affairs Ministry Arindam Bagchi had recently sought to distance the government from the Adani Power and Bangladesh deal saying, “We are not even involved in it.”

Bus, armoured truck crash kills 20 in South Africa

AFP, Johannesburg

A crash between an armoured truck and a bus has killed 20 people and injured another 60 in South Africa's northern province of Limpopo, the regional transport department said yesterday.

“Twenty people were tragically killed in an accident, where a cash-in-transit truck lost control and collided head-on with an oncoming bus” on a highway on Monday, the department said in a statement.

Three dead, 5 hurt

FROM PAGE 12

on campus working in a coordinated effort to ensure the safety of campus and identify and apprehend the suspect,” Rozman said.

Police responded quickly to the scene and students and staff were ordered to shelter in place.

Officials said all campus activities will be canceled for the next 48 hours.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer was briefed on the shooting

and said police were working to secure the area.

“Let's wrap our arms around the Spartan community tonight,” she wrote on Twitter, referring to the university's athletic logo.

School and university shootings are alarmingly common as part of a broader wave of gun violence in the United States, where the proliferation of firearms has soared in recent years.

Security co-op, Rohingya issue

FROM PAGE 12

with an elevated focus on the Rohingya humanitarian response,” a foreign ministry statement said.

Meanwhile, Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra also arrived in Dhaka for the Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) between him and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, who received him at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport last evening. Kwatra will also call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her Principal Secretary M Tofazzel Hossain Miah, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen. He will attend a dinner to be hosted by the Indian High Commission.

A statement of the India's Ministry of External Affairs said India and Bangladesh will discuss forging greater cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, power and energy, defence, connectivity, water and security at the FOC.

“The visit to Bangladesh is in line with the highest priority accorded to India's ‘Neighborhood First’

policy. Bangladesh is India's top-most development partner and its largest trade partner in the region. The foreign secretary's upcoming visit will further strengthen bilateral ties and impart momentum to the ongoing cooperation in diverse areas,” the statement said.

Foreign ministry officials said Vinay Kwatra will also discuss the G20 Summit, which will be held in New Delhi in September. Prime Minister Hasina is expected to attend the summit.

Foreign Minister Momen in early March will also attend the G20 foreign minister-level meeting in New Delhi.

Also, South Korean Presidential Envoy Jang Sung Min also arrived in Dhaka for a two-day visit. Toufique Hasan, the foreign ministry's director general (east Asia and the Pacific), received him at the airport.

He will also call on Prime Minister Hasina and Foreign Minister Momen.

Jang Sung Min, who is now senior secretary for future strategy in the

President's Office, will explore ways to improve bilateral relations on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries this year.

He will discuss ways to strengthen economic ties, promote trade and investment, and explore new areas of cooperation.

“This visit is expected to serve as an opportunity for Korea and Bangladesh to strengthen their friendship and cooperation and to explore new opportunities for mutual benefit on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries,” said a statement of the South Korean embassy in Dhaka.

Amazon's Zoox

FROM PAGE 12

Other companies, such as Alphabet subsidiary Waymo and General Motors subsidiary Cruise, have been testing robotaxi services in limited areas but vehicles are still built with controls to allow a human drivers to take control as a precaution.

China's Xi hails Iran 'solidarity' Calls for early resolution of nuclear issue

AFP, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping hailed Beijing's "solidarity" with Iran yesterday as he hosted the Islamic republic's President Ebrahim Raisi at the start of a three-day trip.

For the first state visit by an Iranian president to China in more than 20 years, Raisi has brought a large trade and finance delegation to Beijing and was earlier greeted by Xi on a red carpet.

"In the face of the current complex changes in the world, times, and history, China and Iran have supported each other (and) worked together in solidarity and cooperation," Xi said, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Both countries face pressure from Western nations over their positions on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while Iran is already under strict US sanctions due to its nuclear programme.

Iran has emerged as one of Russia's few remaining allies as Moscow has been pushed deeper into international isolation over the invasion.

Western countries have accused Tehran of supplying armed drones to Russia for use in the war in Ukraine, a charge it denies.

In December, Washington outlined what it said was an extensive relationship between Iran and Russia involving equipment such as helicopters, fighter jets and drones.

China "supports Iran in safeguarding national sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national dignity... and in resisting unilateralism and hegemonism", CCTV reported Xi as saying.

Beijing also "opposes external forces interfering in Iran's internal affairs and undermining Iran's security and stability", and will continue to "promote the early and proper resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue", the Chinese leader said.



An aerial photo taken yesterday shows flooding caused by Cyclone Gabrielle in Awatoto, near the city of Napier. New Zealand declared a national state of emergency yesterday as Cyclone Gabrielle swept away roads, inundated homes and left more than 100,000 people without power.

PHOTO: AFP

MAJOR NEW OFFENSIVE

Russia pounds Ukraine's south, east

REUTERS, KYIV

Russian forces bombarded Ukrainian positions along the frontlines in eastern Donetsk region yesterday in what appeared to be early salvos of a new offensive as Nato allies met in Brussels to plan stepped-up supplies to the Kyiv government.

The Donetsk region city of Bakhmut, a major target for Russian President Vladimir Putin's invading troops, was in a precarious position.

"There is not a single square metre in Bakhmut that is safe or that is not in range of enemy fire or drones," regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko told Ukraine's national broadcaster.

He said Russian artillery was hitting targets all along the frontlines in Donetsk, which along with Luhansk region makes up the Donbas, Ukraine's

industrial heartland and a main objective for the Russians.

With the first anniversary of the invasion approaching, the Kremlin has intensified operations across a broad area of southern and eastern Ukraine and a major new offensive has been widely anticipated.

Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on Monday that the bombardments and ground attacks indicated the offensive was already underway.

Ukraine's military said yesterday its forces had repelled attacks in five settlements in Luhansk and six in Donetsk, including in Bakhmut, over the past 24 hours.



They had also beaten back an attack on a town in Kharkiv region, which borders Russia in northeast Ukraine.

"The situations is difficult as a whole, but controlled," Kyrylenko said. "The enemy has not been able to achieve a tactical or strategic success there."

The Russian assault on Bakhmut has been spearheaded by mercenaries of the Wagner group. Britain's defence ministry said yesterday the mercenaries had made small gains in the northern outskirts in the past three days.

The capture of Bakhmut would give Russia a new foothold in Donetsk and a rare victory after months of setbacks.

Bangladesh left out

FROM PAGE 1

and Central Asian Affairs Bureau deputy assistant secretary Ambassador Kelly Keiderling during her visit to Bangladesh in 2021 had said the Biden administration could expand the list and hopefully Bangladesh could participate in the next summit.

However, that hope has been dashed as the list of the 110 invitees does not contain the name of Bangladesh this year.

Asked about it, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said, "We are not worried about it -- if they invite us or not."

He also said a big majority of people in the US think their democracy is weak. "So we don't bother if we are invited or not."

Contacted, US Embassy acting spokesperson Bryan Schiller said President Joe Biden invited democracies that represented a diversity of regions, country sizes, and other factors.

Following the first summit, the US invited all participant countries to make commitments and make 2022 a "Year of Action" to strengthen democracy.

"We also encouraged countries not invited to the first summit, including Bangladesh, to make public their own Year of Action plans to demonstrate their commitment to strengthening democracy and countering authoritarianism, fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human rights," Schiller said.

He said one important factor in considering which countries to invite to the second summit was the degree to which countries

responded to this invitation and participated in the Year of Action in 2022 to strengthen democracy.

"Building on the first summit held in December 2021, the next summit, in March 2023, will highlight how democracies deliver for their citizens and are best equipped to address the world's most pressing challenges."

On March 29-30 this year, the US will co-host the second Summit for Democracy with the governments of Costa Rica, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea, and Republic of Zambia.

The summit will assemble world leaders in a virtual, plenary format, followed by gatherings in each of the co-hosted countries with representatives from government, civil society, and the private sector.




In a statement, US President Biden said, "No matter how challenging the problems we face, we know that democracy remains the best tool we have to unleash our human potential and deliver for all our people, and we will continue to champion it."

7m children affected

FROM PAGE 12

the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Turkey, told reporters in the rebel-held town of Sarmada.



In the devastated Turkish city of Antakya, clean-up teams have been shifting rubble and putting up basic toilets as the telephone network started to come back in parts of the town, an AFP reporter said.

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Date: 15/02/2023

e-Tender Notice

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


Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last Date and Time of Tender Security Submission	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	788791	Establishment of Campus Networking and Related Service in Rangamati Govt. College, Rangamati	02/03/2023; 1:00 pm	02/03/2023; 2:00 pm

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

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The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks' Branches upto 01/03/2023 at 4:00 pm.

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




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GD- 267

আপনার ব্যাংকিং হোক শরি'আহ-এর আলোয় আলোকিত

স্ট্যান্ডার্ড ব্যাংকের উল্লেখযোগ্য চলতি/সঞ্চয়ী/ক্ষিম হিসাবসমূহ:

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স্ট্যান্ডার্ড ব্যাংক লিমিটেড

শরি'আহ ভিত্তিক ইসলামি ব্যাংক

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

We need skilled workers for higher remittance

Potential there, political will needed

It is disappointing that Bangladesh is unlikely to get the desired amount of remittance despite sending well over a million migrants abroad last year, simply because four out of five of them were less skilled. We have been a victim of this problem for many years, and experts and migrant rights activists have given the government a number of suggestions in the past, urging it to implement those. Yet, the findings of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), based on the government's own data, suggest that whatever little the government has done to address it has been less than satisfactory.

According to the RMMRU's 2022 Migration Trends Report, the percentage of less skilled workers who migrated abroad rose to 78.64 percent last year from 75.24 percent the year before. According to the expatriates' welfare ministry, the percentage of skilled workers migrating abroad has been dropping every year since 2019-2020, when it was as high as 33.3 percent. In the following two years, that figure dropped to 22.68 percent and 20.4 percent, respectively. Because less skilled workers receive lower wages compared to skilled workers, Bangladesh has not been getting as much remittance as it potentially could, at a time when the economy is going through a difficult phase – when we need remittance earnings the most. On the flipside, the migrants themselves are able to send less money back home to their loved ones, and are more likely to become victims of frauds.

According to the 2021-2022 report of the expatriates' welfare ministry, at least 64 technical training centres and six institutes of the marine technology under the ministry's guidance provide training to aspiring migrants on 55 different trades. The ministry's website also said that 86,437 people got training at those institutes in the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Given that more than a million migrants went abroad in the same year, that number seems quite low. Therefore, the government clearly needs to advertise the availability of such training facilities to migrants better, as well as promote the benefits of receiving such training for individuals prior to migrating. It should also find out whether the training it offers can be better targeted, and should include other specialised training besides what is currently being provided.

A leader of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies said that they receive more demand letters for less-skilled and semi-skilled workers than for skilled workers from Middle Eastern countries, where Bangladeshis migrate to the most. However, it is not because of a lack of overall demand, but because the market for skilled workers there is already being catered to by countries like the Philippines and India. The government needs to find out what these countries are doing that Bangladesh is not, and try and compete with them better. At the same time, it should also look into other potential markets to send Bangladeshi skilled workers.

Overall, there is a lot more that the government could do to boost our remittance earnings. And these steps should have been taken a long time ago. However, since the current economic crisis clearly demonstrates how valuable remittance earnings is for our economy, the government urgently needs to take these measures now.

A giver lives many lives

Organ donation pioneer Sarah shows the way forward for many others

Modernity has robbed us of many of our virtues and introduced many vices. Individualism has driven us to a level where we think of the well-being of others only as an afterthought. While we still hear many talk the talk of compassion and kindness, we rarely see anyone walking the walk. In a world so driven by cruelty and self-interest, a 20-year-old gave us all pause with her act of kindness, even in her death.

On January 18 this year, the country's first successful brain-dead organ transplants took place thanks to Sarah Islam's decision to donate her organs after her death, giving new life to four people – two with fully destroyed kidneys and two without eyesight – in the country's first successful brain-dead organ donation. Sarah's contribution was so powerful that MP Mahbul Alam Hanif even proposed that she be given state honour – a sentiment we laud and support. These kinds of generosity should be promoted by the state because such actions are not just good for the direct beneficiaries, but for the society at large.

It seems her brave decision has reminded us of our dormant humanity. She has inspired seven people, including Prof Sharfuddin Ahmed, vice-chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), to also donate their organs. We applaud these selfless people who have responded to Sarah's inspiring call for action. We also wholeheartedly welcome the inauguration of the "Sarah Islam Cadaveric Transplant Cell" at the hospital, which will facilitate the process of donation, benefitting, we hope, countless others in the future.

Sarah's act is especially courageous because various stigmas still exist in our society about organ donation, which discourage people from helping those in desperate need. For example, against an annual need of 20,000-25,000 corneas, Bangladesh's lone eye bank, Sandhani Eye Hospital, is only able to collect 25 to 30 corneas. The demand and supply ratio for kidneys and other organs is similar. More than 20 million people in Bangladesh suffer from some form of renal disease, with an estimated 40,000 dying from kidney failure each year. More than 20,000 of them die because they cannot afford the constant dialysis required to keep living.

Sarah's act of kindness – and that of the seven new donors – should move us all to reflect about the roles we play, as individuals, within a collective. Are we really doing our part for this society, or becoming more and more self-centred in our relentless quest for a better life, all the while forgetting that such a pursuit is counter-productive for us all in the long run? It is high time that we confront our internal biases and hypocrisy and take part in acts of kindness that can actually save lives. We hope that the recent organ donations and the inauguration of the aforementioned facility will inspire a new culture of posthumous organ transplantation in the country.

The long road since 48 hours



STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan, ndc, psc (ret'd) is a former associate editor of The Daily Star.

SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN

It is difficult to recall whether any other high-profile murder case in Bangladesh has remained irresolvable for such a long time as that of the murder of the journalist couple Sagar-Runi. Both were senior journalists, Sagar being the head of an electronic news channel at the time of his death. Both had acquired a decent reputation as good investigative journalists. Soon after the killings, the then home minister had assured us that the killers would be nabbed within 48 hours. Alas! Countless 48 hours have passed since then. And after 11 years, the investigators are yet to solve the murder mystery.

Only those who have had to endure the pains of such gruesome killing of their kinsmen can understand the agony one goes through every hour of the day waiting for the case to come to trial and for justice to be done. Eleven years is too long a time to suffer through such pain. But any talk of trial feels redundant when we don't even know what happened to the five or so people arrested at the very seminal stage of the investigation.

Again, this year, a fresh date has been sought by the investigating

Again, a fresh date has been sought by the investigating agencies, for the 95th time since 2011. After the investigating officer being changed six times, the case has, in all probability, stalled. We believe, it being a high-profile murder case, the progress so far must be made public, at least as much as would not hamper the investigation process.

agencies, for the 95th time since 2011. After the investigating officer being changed six times, the case has, in all probability, stalled. We believe, it being a high-profile murder case, the progress made so far must be made public, at least as much as would not hamper the investigation process.

Why has the double murder



VISUAL: TEENI AND TUNI

resisted a solution for 11 years? Surely, there must have been some lead pointing to the killers and their motives. Are we to believe that the killers were so methodical that they left no trace behind? Facts tell us that every murderer leaves behind evidence. It defies imagination that our investigating agencies would remain clueless after conducting probes for 11 years. Or are we to believe that the assassins and the mastermind – and I strongly believe that they are not the same – are so very powerful that their names cannot be revealed?

One despairs to see the waning of interest in the journalist community regarding this matter. Initially, there was a robust group of journo's literally breathing down the neck of the government, the information minister's in particular, for a thorough inquiry and quick identification of the killers. But since the person giving leadership to this group of journalists was given an important post, he has not been seen talking much about the case anymore. Little ground there is not to believe that the post was a lollipop to lure him to abstain from lending his weight to the movement

expressing their frustration, till it dissipates from public memory eventually.

The motive of the gruesome murder remains unexplained. We wonder what happened to the High Court hearing on the rule issued by it in 2012 over the government move to identify the motive of the killing, which was scheduled for the first week of April of 2022? It doesn't need a Poirot or a Holmes to surmise that robbery was not the motive, since nothing valuable was found to be missing. Then what was?

Even an ignoramus knows that the first thing investigators try to establish when probing into a killing is the motive behind it. By a process of elimination, they preclude all possible motives till only one stands out as the prime. It is difficult to believe that our highly trained agencies have so far been unable to put their fingers on the motive.

Or are both the motive and the possible perpetrators too hot to put a finger on? Is it that the then IGP's statement of there having been "marked progress in the investigation" a few days after the killings was indeed

damage to said person and/or their business if made public. This is not my personal assumption, but something that has been in the grapevine all these years and is still making the rounds. We wonder whether Rab has probed this area at all?

It is time the matter came to a head. We wonder what the agencies have not been able to find out in 11 years that the investigators will be able to discover in the next few months or years, if at all. What is there to be probed further that has not been done in 11 years?

There can be two explanations. Either the investigators are really out of their depth or in a cul-de-sac (which defies logic), or the findings would rather not be revealed, for whatever reasons.

We believe it is up to the government to prove wrong those who label this country as having an "appalling and pervasive culture of impunity" by completing the probe into Sagar and Runi's murder without further ado and bringing the killers and those behind the killings to justice, whoever they may be – or live with the contemptible tag.

Right to information at home and abroad

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SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

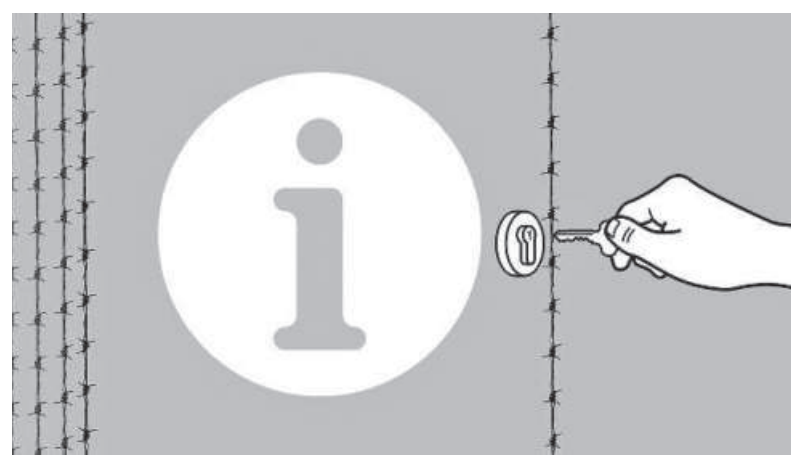
One of the reasons we write this column is to show our readers how people here and abroad make use of Right to Information (RTI) legislation. Today, we look at two examples each from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. All four demonstrate the vast range of ways in which RTI can push for government transparency and accountability. The Sri Lankan examples show the use of the law at the state level, while the Bangladeshi examples show its use at the lowest level of administration.

A group of RTI activists in Sri Lanka asked the highest-level police authorities for information on detainees on remand under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The activists wanted to know how many detainees were held, the condition of their mental and physical health, and how many were released without any charges. This application for information was refused. In October 2022, the Sri Lankan Information Commission directed the police to provide the information.

The police authorities had denied the request claiming that the release of the information would undermine the defence of the state, national security, or territorial integrity. The Commission, however, was incredulous as to how the requested statistical information (such as the number of arrestees, expectant mothers, individuals receiving treatment) could cause harm to the state. In regard to the detainees who were earlier released without charges, the Commission

opined that, "If persons indicted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act are released, it is evident that such persons have not committed any offence; consequently, the release of information thereto cannot in any way endanger the defence of the

had been drawn by Litro Gas executives during the presidency of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, all while the company was charging Sri Lankan citizens exorbitant prices for its gas cylinders. The Commission directed Litro Gas to disclose the requested information,



VISUAL: STAR

State, national security or territorial integrity."

The Commission not only ordered release of the information within two weeks, but also warned the police that failure to comply would lead to prosecution under the RTI Act. The Commission could not have been more unequivocal.

The second Sri Lankan case involves one WKS Karunaratne. He asked Litro Gas, a leading supplier of domestic cooking gas in the country, for information on salaries the company paid its top management and the loans it provided them. The company refused to provide the information on grounds of exemption prescribed by the law, whereupon Karunaratne appealed to the Information Commission. He alleged in his appeal that disproportionate sums of money

stating that since it related to the use of public funds, it was of public interest.

The Sri Lankan tales show how powerful RTI can be on matters of ethical, political, and economic concerns of society and the state.

The Bangladeshi examples we cite below are more mundane, down-to-earth, and elemental. They also underline the fact that RTI use in this country remains at that level and has failed to attract the attention of the elite, educated classes to achieve broader goals.

The first case was brought to our attention by RTI activists promoting the law at the grassroots level in Bangladesh.

Shamim Ahmed, from Moulvibazar sadar upazila, submitted an RTI request to the local union council asking for the list of persons who

had been awarded old-age pension in the union, under the government's social safety net programme for the year 2020-21. Upon receiving the application, the secretary of the union council showed up to the applicant's home and scolded him for having the "audacity" to ask for such information. Shamim had to flee, and reported the incident to a senior member of his RTI group. The latter called upon the secretary and had to promise that Shamim would not pursue a formal response to his request. Unfortunately, such an outcome is not uncommon in Bangladesh.

But the next Bangladeshi example has a happier ending. In November 2022, an RTI applicant named Jahar Lal, also from Moulvibazar, wanted to know whether the Forest Department authority in Cumilla was aware of the damage caused to trees under its jurisdiction by the rampant nailing of posters on them. He reminded authorities that trees are living beings and can feel pain. Mohammad Ali, the concerned officer, agreed that the matter was indeed "inhumane" and promised to take proper action. Ali raised the issue to his colleagues and at a meeting on December 3, 2022, it was resolved that the department will ensure that trees in the district are properly protected and not subjected to such torture.

These four stories from two different countries demonstrate the unique power of the RTI Act to address universal concerns of citizens on matters of governance that affect their lives, whether individually or collectively. They also show how individuals or groups can come together and intervene to remind authorities of their responsibilities under the laws of the land, and how they too can benefit from transparency and accountability in their work.

The 'mega serial' of bank scams



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KALLOL MUSTAFA

Embezzling thousands of crores of taka in the name of taking loans from banks is a regular occurrence in Bangladesh. Sometimes behind the front of business and industrial loans, sometimes through direct fraud and deception, such embezzlement takes place. The frequent reporting on such scams, involving a new bank each time, is reminiscent of a popular web series portraying heists. The latest Tk 16,000 crore LC fraud from Social Islami Bank and the Tk 30,000 crore loan scam from Islami Bank by S Alam Group are the latest additions to this parade. These incidents are so systematically organised, using different institutional patronages, that they cannot be called exceptional events and must be seen as an established mechanism of capital accumulation by looting the public's money.

Looting in the name of bank loans
In Bangladesh, the easiest and most common method of primary capital accumulation for businesses is to get loans from public and private banks without collateral – or with inadequate collateral – using political patronage and by bribing bank managers. Then, they default. Debt restructuring, lawsuits, investigations, and writs continue for years.

Yunus Badal, who was caught by the police for stealing a car in 2007, emerged as one of Janata Bank's biggest borrowers in 2010 due to his political patronage. Janata Bank violated loan approval rules and provided him with loans worth Tk 5,000 crore in just six years. The chief perpetrator of the Sonali Bank-Hallmark scam, Tanvir Mahmood, embezzled Tk 2,731 crore. Both became businessmen of great scale,

with Badal going on to own 22 enterprises.

Bank heists by bank owners
Unlike other private or public limited companies, a paid-up capital of Tk 400 crore is required to establish a bank. After that, thousands of ordinary people deposit their savings in said bank. By investing only Tk 400 crore, the bank owners are able to control the deposits of thousands of crores of taka, decide where to invest it, and who to lend it to. So, to accumulate a huge amount of money by investing very little, one first acquires a bank licence using political connections and then embezzles the deposited money under the guise of loans.

According to Bangladesh Bank (BB) policies, no bank director can borrow more than 50 percent of their total shares from their bank. To bypass this regulatory hurdle, bank owners either get loans from their banks through relatives or front companies, or take out loans from other public or private banks by establishing a "mutual understanding" with other directors/owners.

The looting of the Farmers Bank deposits by the owners themselves is a case in point. Due to corruption by the owners, the bank which came into operation in 2013 quickly fell into a capital deficit of Tk 283 crores. By December 2017, its amount of defaulted loans increased to Tk 723 crore. In a report, the BB had held Farmers Bank's former chairman Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir and ex-chairman of its executive committee Mahabubul Haque Chisty largely responsible for the scams.

The case of Islami Bank, the largest private sector bank in Bangladesh, is another example of how people's

deposits are looted by bank owners themselves.

In January 2017, the bank fell into a severe financial crisis, just 15 months after its ownership came into the hands of S Alam Group. According to BB's audit report, S Alam Group has taken out more than Tk 30,000 crore in loans from Islami Bank using various unethical mechanisms.

one to two percent down payment, instead of the usual 10 percent. The total amount of the restructured loan was Tk 15,000 crore. Despite these concessions, after two years, six of these companies – Beximco, SA Group, Ratanpur Group, RSRM, Keya, and MR Group – failed to repay instalments. Interestingly, Beximco – which had obtained one-third of the

could also avail new loans.

In this way, through rescheduling, defaulted loans are shown to be reduced without even collecting them.

Two other methods used to mask the reality of default loans are the relaxation of loan write-offs and classification policies. In February 2019, BB reduced the time period after which banks can write-off bad

steal money from banks.

Although an investigation was carried out in the case of the central bank reserve theft, the investigation report was not published and the guilty persons were not prosecuted. The parliamentary committee related to the finance ministry has not published the investigation report on the Sonali Bank-Hallmark scam, either. The trial of 38 cases filed by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) against Hallmark is still continuing at snail's pace.

Authorities were reportedly fully aware of the irregularities and corruption of the former chairman of BASIC Bank, Sheikh Abdul Hye Bachchu. But no action was taken against him. The ACC filed 56 cases in this regard, but Bachchu, accused of being the mastermind, was not charged in any of them. Expressing dissatisfaction with the ACC's role in this case, the High Court recently said, "Crores of taka have been embezzled. But no work is being done though the Anti-Corruption Commission and so many judges and lawyers are there. Why are they [ACC] silent? This is just like a drama. We are watching the drama. This is not acceptable."

Recognise the pattern

It is evident that, while disbursing loans, state-owned banks prioritise those who are close to the state power. On the other hand, private banks act for the primitive accumulation of capital, prioritising businesses related to bank owners and directors. Sometimes, powerful loan defaulters obtain stay orders from the HC using legal loopholes to not be included in the defaulters' list and thus continue to take out new loans from other banks.

If we closely observe and analyse the context of each of the ongoing banking scams, a structural pattern becomes evident, one that is directly related to the country's capital formation, the structure of the financial and banking sectors, and the interests of the booty capitalist. And there is no chance of ending this "mega serial" of scams without strong and organised resistance from the people.



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

Unbridled loan restructuring facilities

Default loans are becoming more and more prevalent because vested groups are using their political backing and colluding with bank directors and owners to obtain the loans. Far from recovering thousands of crores of the people's money and punishing the defaulters, the banks are instead giving them rescheduling benefits, with relatively low interest rates and long-term restructuring facilities.

According to a report published by *The Daily Star*, in 2015, 11 big business groups – each of them having taken out loans of over Tk 500 crore from different banks – led by Beximco made a proposal to Bangladesh Bank for restructuring their bad loans. The BB agreed and the companies were given a rescheduling benefit of only

restructured loan – made profits and paid dividends, yet did not pay back loans.

In May 2019, BB issued a directive providing loan defaulters the opportunity to reschedule their classified loans by making a down payment of only two percent, instead of the previous 10-50 percent. The interest rate was capped at nine percent from 12-16 percent and the tenure for repayment was made 10 years.

In July 2022, the central bank allowed businesses to reschedule their loans by making a down payment of 2.5 to 6.5 percent on their term loan, instead of the previous 10 to 30 percent. It also extended their payment tenure to five to eight years, from the previous maximum of two years. In the meantime, businesses

debts from five years to three years, and increased the amount which banks can write off without filing a lawsuit with the Artha Rin Adalat from Tk 50,000 to Tk 2 lakh. This has been further increased to Tk 5 lakh, according to the latest directive issued on January 5, 2023. And in April 2019, the time period after which an overdue loan can be classified as "substandard," "doubtful," or "bad/loss" was increased to three months.

Culture of impunity

Habitual bank loan defaulters who are politically connected are not punished for embezzling public money. Only the small fish are caught and put in jail. The probes and trials go on for years without any conclusion. This culture of impunity encourages defaulters to continue to



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT)
Old Ban bhaban, (5th and 6th floor)
101, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212
www.bcct.gov.bd



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Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)
For
Selecting Consulting Firm(s) Against Performing End of the Project Evaluation "Strengthening Gender Responsive Climate Actions in Bangladesh (SGRCAB)" Project.

01	Ministry Division	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)	
02	Agency	Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT)	
03	Procuring Entity	Managing Director, Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT).	
04	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka	
05	EOI for Selection of	Consulting Firm (National)	
06	EOI Ref No.	File No: 22.06.0000.128.14.034.20-part-1 "Strengthening Gender Responsive Climate Actions in Bangladesh (SGRCAB)" Project.	
07	Procurement Method	Quality and cost based Selection (Fixed Budget)	
08	Source of Fund	GoB (CCTF), Selection under a Fixed Budget (SFB)	
09	EOI Publication Date	15-02-2023	
10	EOI Submission Date & Time	10-03-2023, 12.00 p.m.	
11	EOI Opening Date & Time	10-03-2023, 12.15 p.m.	
12	EOI Submission Place	Office of the Project Director Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Old Ban Bhaban (6 th floor), Room No (701) 101, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212	
13	Brief Description of Assignment and Project	The Firm will conduct Impact Evaluation depending on approved TOR. The objective of this assignment to conduct In- depth evaluation of the "Strengthening Gender Responsive Climate Actions in Bangladesh (SGRCAB)" Project. The findings of the proposed study will show the effectiveness of the project, how far changes created in the livelihood of beneficiaries as well as in the society due to the project and the recommendations made by the consulting firm would be a guideline to direct the project on right track and help to implement similar project in future.	
14	Experience, Resources and Delivery Required	Interested Firm(s) must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (Brochures, registrations, profile, availability of appropriate skills/experts among staff etc). The EOIs will be evaluated on the basis of the following to prepare a shortlist:	

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Registration of the firm(s); 2) Background of the firm(s); (limited to two pages); 3) At least 5 years' experience in conducting research or relevant studies. Preference will be given to organizations that have evaluated government projects. 4) Summary of similar projects/services including total professional man-month (limited to 3 pages); 5) Average Annual Turn Over of the firm(s) during the last 5 years (Audited financial reports of the firm(s) for the last 5 years); 6) Availability of appropriate skills/experts among staff demonstrated capacity to handle such assignment in terms of resources; 7) VAT & IT certificates. 	
15	Other Details	Interested firm(s) will be required to submit the EOI in closed format mentioning the name and address of the applicant, EOI no. & date and be addressed to the EOI issuing Authority in 3 (three) copies; 01 (One) marked as "ORIGINAL" and other 2 (two) as "COPY" in separate envelope in the form of book binding. Both the "ORIGINAL" and "COPY" shall have to cover within a single envelope to the address below before the EOI closing date & time. The applicant shall mention the page no. serially in every page of submitted EOI document. EOI will be opened on 22-02-2023 just after closing time. In case of any unavoidable circumstances such as strike, civil commotion, Govt; declared holiday etc, EOIs will be received and opened on the following working day. Upon receipt of EOIs the interested firm(s) those are deemed best suited to perform the assignment will be short-listed. There after Request for Proposal (RFP) document will be issued to the short-listed firm(s). The consulting firm(s) will be selected based on Quality & Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method in accordance with the procedures set out in the PPR 2006 and PPR 2008 of GOB.	
16	Time for performing the study & Reporting	3 (three) months from the date of signing the contract.	
17	Name of Official Inviting	Md. Khairuzzaman	
18	EOI Designation of Official Inviting	Deputy Secretary and Project Director of the Project " Strengthening Gender Responsive Climate Actions in Bangladesh"	
19	EOI Address of Official Inviting	Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Old Ban Bhaban (6 th floor), Room No (701) 101, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212	
20	Contract details of official invitins EOI	Tel:02222282596 Email: khairuzzaman15787@yahoo.com	
21	Expression of Interest (EOI) shall be submitted in sealed envelope, delivered to the address of undersigned. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without assigning any reason whatsoever.		



05.02.2023
Md. Khairuzzaman
(Deputy Secretary)
Director (Planning, Development and Negotiation)
&
Project Director of "SGRCAB" Project

GD- 265

Once a forest, now salt fields

SIFAYET ULLAH

“Due to the destruction of the forest, the ecological balance of the area will be disturbed and the wild animals who were living in the area will lose their habitat and become displaced.”

—Mohammad Kamal Hossain
Former professor of Chittagong University

Thirty-five hectares of mangrove forest in Eastern Char Dhurung village under Cox's Bazar's Kutubdia upazila have been turned into salt fields. Thousands of trees were felled in the process, at a cost of the area's biodiversity and environmental balance.

According to forest officials, the mangrove forest, which contained at least 70,000 saplings, was established in 2019-20 as part of a forest department project on Khas land under the jurisdiction of the deputy commissioner.

Shamim Reza, ranger of the Kutubdia coastal forest office, admitted that encroachers have destroyed the forest to make salt fields. “We reported the matter in writing to our higher authorities.”

“We could not take legal action against the encroachers as the land is under the DC,” he added.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found that most of the trees in the forest have been cut down by the encroachers. Labourers were seen working in the salt fields that were created by massive deforestation.

Mohammed Malek, a worker, told The Daily Star that they have been working there for the last 6 months on daily wages.

“I'm working here according to the instructions of the owner,” he added.

Local and forest officials said Mohammed Sujan and Abdul Mazed, two locals, have taken over most of the forest and turned it into salt fields.

However, Mohammed Sujan claimed that the forest department planted trees in the lands after it emerged as a Char.

“But these lands were our ancestral property, which we lost to river erosion. Now we are producing salt in the land,” he said.

When asked about the tree felling, he said they were just “clearing” the land for salt production.



PHOTO: STAR

According to data from the Chattogram coastal forest division, the Kutubdia range has 867 hectares of land. However, there is forestry in it only on 200 hectares of land.

Abdur Rahman, divisional forest officer (DFO) of the Chattogram coastal forest division, claimed that they did not take any legal action against anyone as the 35 hectares of mangrove forest were destroyed due to natural causes.

“We have already sent a detailed report about the matter to the higher authorities of the forest department,” he added.

Contacted, Cox's Bazar DC Mohammad Shahin Imran said, “As per law, any land that re-emerges as a Char after being eroded is government property. I will look into the issue of encroachment and take action accordingly.”

However, Kutubdia UNO Dipankar Tanchangya told The Daily Star that the forest department should have informed

them about the encroachment but did not.

“We will promptly investigate the encroachment of government land and uprooting of trees and take legal action against those involved,” he added.

Experts said the mangrove forest protected the area from the most dangerous gusts. The complicated branches and leaves of mangrove trees serve as a natural barrier, lowering the height of storm surges.

Mohammad Kamal Hossain, former professor of Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science at Chittagong University, said mangrove forests not only maintain the balance of the environment but also provide effective soil protection against erosion.

“Due to the destruction of the forest, the ecological balance of the area will be disturbed and the wild animals who were living in the area will lose their habitat and become displaced,” he added.



A new hope for Dhaka-Ctg route passengers

Railway plans to launch new train after 7 years

SIFAYET ULLAH

After seven years, Bangladesh Railways is planning to launch a new intercity train on the Dhaka-Chattogram route, aiming to provide a quick and hassle-free journey to passengers on this busy route.

“The ministry gave us a demand letter for running a new non-stop train on the Dhaka-Chattogram route last month. Following this, we have already prepared a proposal with a new schedule of currently running trains. We will send it to the railways ministry for final approval soon,” said Jahangir Hossain, general manager of the BR (east).

Besides, the schedule of currently running trains on this route will change as a new train is planned to run with the existing engine-coach of other trains plying this route, said an official of the BR.

According to BR officials, the last intercity train on this route – Sonar Bangla Express – was added in 2016.

Around 11,000-12,000 passengers travel on the route every day, said Chattogram Railway Station sources.

For them, currently, there are eight passenger trains running daily on the route. Of these, six intercity trains are Subarna Express, Mahanagar Express, Mahanagar Godhuli, Sonar Bangla Express, Chattala Express and Turna Express.

The total number of seats in these trains is 5,235.

Besides, two mail trains – Dhaka Mail and Karnaphuli Express – are running every day on this route.

Billah Hossain, a regular passenger on this route and to get train tickets is always a hassle. “We hope the sufferings will reduce with the new train on this route,” he said.

Ratan Kumar Chowdhury, manager of Chattogram Railway Station, said the ticket crisis will be solved and passengers will benefit once the new non-stop train is introduced.

According to BR, after witnessing a massive shortfall in revenue due to the pandemic and lockdown, the BR eastern zone has improved its position on this front in the 2021-22 fiscal year and has earned a total revenue of Tk 493 crore 75 lakh in 2021-22 against the Tk 318 crore 22 lakh during the previous fiscal year, thus registering a 55 percent rise.

Mohammed Nazmul Islam, chief commercial manager of BR Eastern Region, said, “Dhaka-Chattogram is a profitable route for us. The revenue of the railway will increase as a new train will be introduced on this route.”

However, Bangladesh Railways continues to make huge losses from its operations allegedly due to poor services, corruption, and a lack of proper management of assets. The state-run agency posted a Tk 1,384 crore loss for the 2020-21 fiscal year, shows a railways ministry document.

Boi Mela gaining momentum

ARUN BIKASH DEY

The 21-day long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela Chattogram 2023 kicked off at the MA Aziz Stadium Gymnasium premises of Chattogram on Wednesday.

The fair is gradually gaining momentum as bookworms from different parts of the port city are swarming into the fair everyday, specially on weekends.

Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) Mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury inaugurated the fair.

A total of 108 publishers from Chattogram and Dhaka have been participating in the fair displaying books in 140 stalls, said Nisar Uddin Ahmed Manju, a councillor of CCC and convener of this year's edition.

Creative Publishers Council is assisting CCC to organise the fair.

Visiting the book fair on Friday afternoon, it was seen that a good number of book lovers came to the fair. They were seen selecting their

favourite books at different stalls.

Readers were flocking to the stalls, including Baatighar Publication, Adorn Publication and Kothaprokash Publication.

Eighth grader Rafi came to the fair with his father. He said he liked books of Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and so he came to the fair to purchase some new books of the writer.

Eleventh grader Tanima Chowdhury came with her friends. They were all looking for books at the Baatighar publication's stall. Tanima said she came to buy books on history. Besides, she was looking for a new novel by writer Asif Nazrul.

Bablu Chowdhury, a salesman at Baatighar Publication, said books on politics and novels were in high demand.

“There is also a great demand for children's literature,” he added.

The fair will remain open between 3:00pm and 9:00pm every day and between 10:00am and 9:00pm on holidays.



PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

From dropout to role model in five years

How a Bandarban youth found success in farming

MONG SING HAI MARMA

He was a youngster with big dreams, hailing from Tangpru Para of Bandarban. Thoai Sing Hla Marma came to Dhaka in 2014, to pursue his goal of becoming a civil engineer, and got admitted to the National Polytechnic Institute.

But life in Dhaka is not always easy for youths coming all the way from the Chattogram Hill Tracts. When he was in the eighth semester, he had to drop out and return to his village home due to financial trouble.

“I fell into depression during that time,” Thoai told The Daily Star during a recent conversation.

“When I returned home in 2018, I had to work as a day labourer on other people's land for Tk 500 per day. As the eldest child, I had no choice but to bear the burden of my family,” he added.

However, being the dreamer that Thoai is, he did not give up that easily. He decided to become an agricultural entrepreneur and saved Tk 20,000 by working relentlessly for two years.

His misfortunes continued to haunt him. After the advent of the pandemic, Thoai lost all avenues to earn money, and his savings depleted quickly.

Thoai did not lose his resilience. When the lockdown eased in 2021, he took a Tk 50,000 loan from the “My house, My farm” (Aamr Bari Amar Khamar) project of the government and started



cultivating papaya.

A year later, he repaid the loan with his earnings, obtained another Tk 1 lakh loan from the same project, and planted 1,000 papaya saplings on an acre of hillside land.

The wheels of his fortune started turning, finally.

“I earned Tk 2 lakh the next season by selling papayas. After repaying the loan, I planted mango seedlings and took lease of a pond with the rest of the money. I began raising fish in the pond and also set

up a chicken farm,” Thoai said.

Contacted, Mongsanu Marma, a public representative of the area, said, “Thoai had a difficult life. Despite dropping out of college due to the economic crisis, he did not stray. He worked very hard to become self-reliant.”

He added that Thoai has become a role model for the youth in the village. “The nation will benefit if educated youth engage in farming rather than seeking jobs.”

Star **SPORT**

DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2023, FALGUN 2, 1429 BS

What to WATCH

Star Sports 2 and GTV
 ICC Women's T20 World Cup
 West Indies vs India
 Live from 7:00 pm
 Ireland vs Pakistan
 Live from 11:00 pm
Star Sports Select HD1

English Premier League
 Arsenal vs Manchester City
 Live from 1:00 am
 (Thursday)
Sony Sports 2
 UEFA Champions League
 Club Brugge vs Benfica

Live from 2:00 pm
 (Thursday)
Sony Sports 1
 UEFA Champions League
 Dortmund vs Chelsea
 Live from 2:00 pm
 (Thursday)

Mashrafe's Sylhet make BPL final

SPORTS REPORTER

Locals' effort, guided by Mashrafe Bin Mortaza – the ultimate captain in Bangladesh cricket – saw Sylhet Strikers make the BPL final in expense of a strong Rangpur Riders outfit in the second qualifier on Sunday. Sylhet franchise had never played in a BPL final before and had performed poorly in recent editions. The turnaround was spectacular just as it was during Tuesday's game.

"If you look at our journey, we have been outstanding. We have bounced back really well. We needed to break the momentum. (Tanjim Hasan) Sakib's two overs brought us back into the game," Mashrafe said at post-match presentations.

Sakib was the hero with the ball while Zakir Hasan, who made a meal of a simple catch of Rony Talukdar in the 10th over that almost saw the game slip away from Sylhet's grasp, came up with vital contributions in the end as Sylhet defended 182, winning by 19 runs in the end.

Rangpur opener Rony had taken over from Fortune Barishal's Shakib Al Hasan to become the third-highest run-getter in this BPL and showed that his form was not a fluke in this crucial game. He drove with ease and his pick-up shots made Sylhet sweat as he appeared to have taken the game under his control. He had the rub of the green as well when Zakir missed a dolly of a catch.

Rony and skipper Nurul Hasan carried the game into the 15th over, needing 46 runs off the last five with seven wickets in hand. Mashrafe conceded just four in the 16th over and then Sakib bowled a massive 18th over, removing Nurul for a 24-ball 33. Zakir then effected the run-out of Rony in the same over before Luke Wood and Rubel Hossain defended the score as Sylhet won from a precarious position, conceding just 28 runs in the last five overs.

It was a collective effort with the bat following the solid platform from Najmul Hossain Shanto and Towhid Hridoy that saw Sylhet put on a challenging score. Both Hridoy and Shanto were getting into their groove but the momentum was broken by an unfortunate leg-before decision which left Shanto flummoxed, given out despite coming down the wicket. After Shanto's 25-ball 40, Hridoy top edged a Hasan Mahmud delivery after a run-a-ball 25.

Mashrafe brought himself at number three to up the ante and played an important knock under the circumstances to give his side a chance. He smashed a six off the very first delivery and saw Zakir and Ryan Burl depart soon after each other before he too was dismissed for a 16-ball 28. Hasan shone at the death and picked up the experienced Mushfiqur Rahim to finish with two for 34 and top the wicket takers' chart this BPL. However, Burl's five-ball 16 had an impact and then Thisara Perera and George Linde closed the innings at 182 for 7.



Sylhet Strikers captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (R) pumps his fist to celebrate their 19-run victory over Rangpur Riders which sealed them a final berth in the BPL in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Sayed attends BHF meeting after three-and-a-half-year hiatus

SPORTS REPORTER

AKM Mominul Haque Sayeed, the general secretary of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF), suddenly appeared at a meeting of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation's (BHF) executive committee today after a three-and-a-half-year hiatus following his alleged involvement in the 'casino scandal' in 2019.

Sayed fled aboard after the crackdown in Motijheel's Club Para in September of 2019 and had not attended any BHF executive committee meetings since. In February, 2022, on the back of a 27-month investigation, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a charge sheet against the former Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) councillor for amassing about Tk 5.60 crore from undisclosed avenues of income.

Sayed joined the meeting at the last moment. When asked about his sudden appearance, BHF president and Air Chief Marshall Shaikh Abdul Hannan said: "If there is no hindrance, he [Sayeed] will be included in the general process. If there is no restriction in principal, then I there are restrictions from my side. The vice presidents and other members will take the appropriate decision."

The BHF president added in a separate response: "He can assume responsibility as general secretary if there are no barriers."

However, one of BHF executive member, seeking anonymity, informed that the BFF executive committee had released Sayeed from his responsibilities before in line with the constitution due to his continued absence from meetings and had communicated that decision to the National Sports Council.

Another source, preferring to remain unnamed, said that Sayeed was going to manage a sponsor worth Tk 50 lakh for the youth hockey team's training camp ahead of Asian Youth Championship and that Sayeed was likely to represent the BHF in the upcoming Asian Hockey Federation congress.

The meeting also decided to continue the training of the youth team under the guidance of local coach Mamunur Rashid and Hedayetullah Razib.

India to host SAFF C'ship in June

SPORTS REPORTER

India will host the upcoming SAFF Championship in June, it was announced yesterday after the executive committee of the South Asian Football Federation signed over the marketing and commercial rights to Dubai-based marketing company Sports Partner International for the next four editions of the regional football extravaganza.

"We have approved the tender from Sports Partner International for four editions up to 2029. Although Nepal launched a bid to host the next SAFF Championship, the first tournament during will

be held in India in line with the marketing company's conditions," SAFF general secretary Anwarul Haque Helal told The Daily Star after a virtual meeting.

Helal also informed that All Indian Football Federation (AIFF) would apprise them of venues and dates by March 10.

The last edition of SAFF Championship was held in the Maldives in 2021 after India played host in 2015.

The marketing company has also proposed holding the 2025 SAFF Championship on a home and away basis, which will see each team play three home matches and three away matches in a one-month period.

"India has objected to the home-and-away format because it will take a long time, but the marketing company believes there is still room for discussion," Helal added. "If we don't reach a consensus in the coming days, the SAFF Championship will be held in a centralised venue like this time."

The SAFF general secretary also informed that the marketing company will provide SAFF with 1 million dollars for the 2023 SAFF Championship and 1.5 million dollars from 2025 edition, subject to the approval of the new format.

Helal also informed that the SAFF Congress would take place on May 6 April 29 in Dhaka.



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POST OF PRESIDENT It's not office of profit: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Md Alamgir has said the post of president is not an office of profit and there is no obstacle for Md Shahabuddin to hold the post.

According to law, after the end of an individual's service as a commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission, the person will not be eligible to hold an office of profit in the service of the government.

After the announcement of Shahabuddin's nomination for president, questions arose as to whether the office of president is profitable.

When reporters asked him about this, Election Commissioner Alamgir yesterday said the EC made decisions knowing the law. "When Justice Shahabuddin became president [in 1996], a case was filed about it, because judges cannot hold any office of profit [after their service]."

The High Court then said there was no bar to Shahabuddin's presidency, he said. "We have before us a specific example of the High Court [verdict]

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Young dancers sway to the melodies of spring at the Sheikh Russel Park in Chattogram city's Pahartali area yesterday. Like every year, the Boshonto Utshab, or spring festival, was celebrated at the venue amid colours, music, dance and more from early morning till late afternoon.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

'Did Modi pressure Hasina to accept Adani deal?'

Congress asks BJP govt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian National Congress yesterday asked the country's government if Prime Minister Narendra Modi had "put pressure on his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina to accept terms that were extremely favourable to Adani Power and unfavourable to Bangladesh" in the agreement for power purchase from a plant in Godda, Jharkhand.

In a campaign by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh "Hum Adani Ke Hai Kaun", the opposition party has raised questions on Modi's alleged "misuse" of foreign policy.

The three questions released yesterday by the party asked if Modi used his influence on Bangladesh.

The party said the Congress-led UPA government had signed an MoU in 2010 for the state-owned National Thermal Power Corporation to set up a 1,320MW power plant in Bagerhat.

Congress alleged that after assuming power, the BJP announced that Adani Power and Reliance Power (Ambani) would construct power plants to supply electricity to Bangladesh.

"Is it true that you put pressure on your counterpart PM Sheikh Hasina to accept terms that were extremely favourable to Adani Power and unfavourable to Bangladesh, and that the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

US OFFICIAL'S VISIT Security co-op, Rohingya issue top on agenda

Indian foreign secy also
in Dhaka to hold talks on
energy, connectivity, defence

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The high-level US delegation, led by State Department Counselor Derek Chollet, arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon for a two-day visit as Washington seeks to advance the security partnership with Bangladesh and coordinate the response to the Rohingya crisis.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen received Chollet yesterday afternoon at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Chollet is leading a seven-member interagency delegation that includes Clinton White, counselor to the Administrator at the USAID; Elizabeth Horst, principal deputy assistant secretary of Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs of the US Department of State; Beth Van Schaack, ambassador at large for Global Criminal Justice; and three other members.

"In Bangladesh, the delegation will meet with senior Bangladeshi officials to discuss coordination and response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, strengthening cooperation in international forums, and advancing the security partnership between the United States and Bangladesh," the State Department said in a statement.

The US delegation will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, and hold a separate meeting with Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen along with senior foreign ministry officials today.

"The purpose of the visit [of Chollet] is to strengthen bilateral relations and government-to-government ties

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE

7m children affected

Says UN, voices fear that 'many thousands' more died

AGENCIES

More than seven million children have been affected by the massive earthquake and a major aftershock that devastated Turkey and Syria last week, the United Nations said yesterday, voicing fear that "many thousands" more had died.

"In Turkey, the total number of children living in the 10 provinces hit by the two earthquakes was 4.6 million children. In Syria, 2.5 million children are affected," James Elder, spokesman for the UN children's agency Unicef, told reporters in Geneva.

"Unicef fears many thousands of children have been killed," Elder said, warning that "even without verified numbers, it is tragically clear that numbers will continue to grow."

He said he feared the final toll would be "mind-boggling." Given the catastrophic, and ever-increasing, death toll, he said it was obvious that "many, many children will have lost parents in these devastating earthquakes."

"It will be a terrifying figure," he warned.

Among the rubble, hundreds of thousands of homeless people face cold and hunger.

Families with children were "sleeping in the streets, malls, schools, mosques, bus stations and under bridges, staying with their children in open areas for fear of

going home," he said.

"Tens of thousands of families are exposed to the elements at a time of year when temperatures are biting cold, and snow and freezing rain are common," he said, pointing to reports of rising numbers of children suffering from hypothermia and respiratory infections, reports AFP.

DEATH TOLL
37,500



Meanwhile, the total death toll following the earthquake passed 37,500 yesterday, as Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) announced 31,974 confirm deaths in Turkey alone.

In Syria, more than 5,814 have died, according to a Reuters tally

of reports from Syrian state media and a UN agency.

The World Health Organization said yesterday that massive earthquake constituted the "worst natural disaster" in 100 years in its Europe region.

"We are witnessing the worst natural disaster in the WHO European region for a century and we are still learning about its magnitude," Hans Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, told a press conference.

The WHO's European region comprises 53 countries, including Turkey. Syria is a member of the WHO's neighbouring Eastern Mediterranean region.

The first UN team arrived in rebel-held northwestern Syria yesterday. As hopes fade of finding people alive under the debris, the focus has switched to providing food and shelter to the vast numbers of survivors.

But activists and emergency teams in Syria's northwest have decried the UN's slow response to the quake in rebel-held areas, contrasting it with the plane-loads of humanitarian aid that have been delivered to government-controlled airports.

"I don't want to sit here and give excuses, but I wanted to share that we are all collectively in the same place," Sanjana Quazi, who heads

SEE PAGE 7 COL 8

Amazon's Zoox robotaxis take to California roads

AFP, New York

The Amazon subsidiary Zoox has said its self-driving vehicles with no manual controls took to California public roads over the weekend, calling it a major breakthrough for the robotaxi industry.

Use of the boxy electric vehicles is to be limited to full-time employees who will be able to use the service only to travel the short distance between two Zoox headquarters buildings about a mile apart in Foster City, near San Francisco, during regular office hours, the company said in a blog post on Monday.

"This is an amazing milestone for Zoox and the autonomous vehicle industry as a whole," said chief executive Aicha Evans.

The service was tested during the weekend and will be made available to Zoox employees beginning in the next few months, according to the company.

"Getting to be the world's first passenger in a robotaxi with no manual controls on open public road...was one of the highlights of my life," Zoox co-founder and chief technology officer Jesse Levinson said in the post.

"I can't wait for everyone to experience that magic."

Zoox robotaxis have no steering wheels or pedals for human drivers.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



MISCONDUCT WITH JUDGE 'A dark spot' in the country's legal history

HC slams B'baria Bar Association
for courtroom incident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brahmanbaria District Bar Association has made "a dark spot" in the country's legal history as they scandalised the entire lawyers' community by using force, the High Court said yesterday.

"If this situation continues, they [lawyers] will have to face consequences," warned the HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil, blasting the president and two other lawyers of the association for misbehaving with the judge of Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Tribunal-1 and creating chaos in the courtroom on January 2.

"Be it the president or a member of a bar, no one is above the law. We will take action if the [Bangladesh] Bar Council, the licensing authority of the country's lawyers, doesn't do anything to this effect. We learnt from the media what happened at the Brahmanbaria court.

"You are boycotting court, you do it. But the litigants are being disturbed and threatened."

The HC too can examine whether the lawyers are eligible to practice law, said the bench.

The court was holding a hearing on a contempt of court rule against Brahmanbaria District Bar Association

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Rescuers work to extract the bodies of a father and a son from under the rubble in the aftermath of a deadly earthquake in Hatay, Turkey yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CAMPUS SHOOTING Three dead, 5 hurt in US

AFP, Washington

Three people were killed and five others wounded Monday when a gunman opened fire on a university campus in the United States, before fleeing the scene, local police said.

The suspect opened fire inside a building at Michigan State University shortly after 8:00 pm local time, said Chris Rozman, interim deputy chief of campus police.

The gunman then moved on foot to a nearby building where more shots were fired.

"There are three confirmed fatalities," Michigan State University police said in a statement on Twitter. "This is in addition to the five victims who have been transported to the hospital."

Some of the wounded had suffered life-threatening injuries, Rozman told reporters.

Police released a photo of the suspect, a short Black man, wearing red shoes, a denim jacket and a baseball cap.

"We currently have hundreds of police officers and law enforcement officials -- state, local and federal --

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5