

Bridging the Digital Gender Divide

As improving women's digital literacy is closely related to their level of education, the government must continue investing in women's education, and also raise awareness among rural citizens about the significance of digital literacy for both men and women.

NILIMA JAHAN RAHMAN

Despite the government's ambitious Digital Bangladesh agenda, a significant digital gender divide persists in the country, leaving women at a disadvantage in accessing and using ICT tools compared to men. This not only limits their participation in the digital economy but also hinders their overall socio-economic progress. Age, region, and income disparities exacerbate this divide, making it crucial to implement targeted interventions to bridge the gap and ensure equitable access to digital opportunities for all citizens.

Take the example of Rashida Akter, a third-year management student at Jagannath University, who faced challenges attending online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the digital gender divide. She had to attend her online classes using her brother's smartphone during the pandemic as she did not have any.

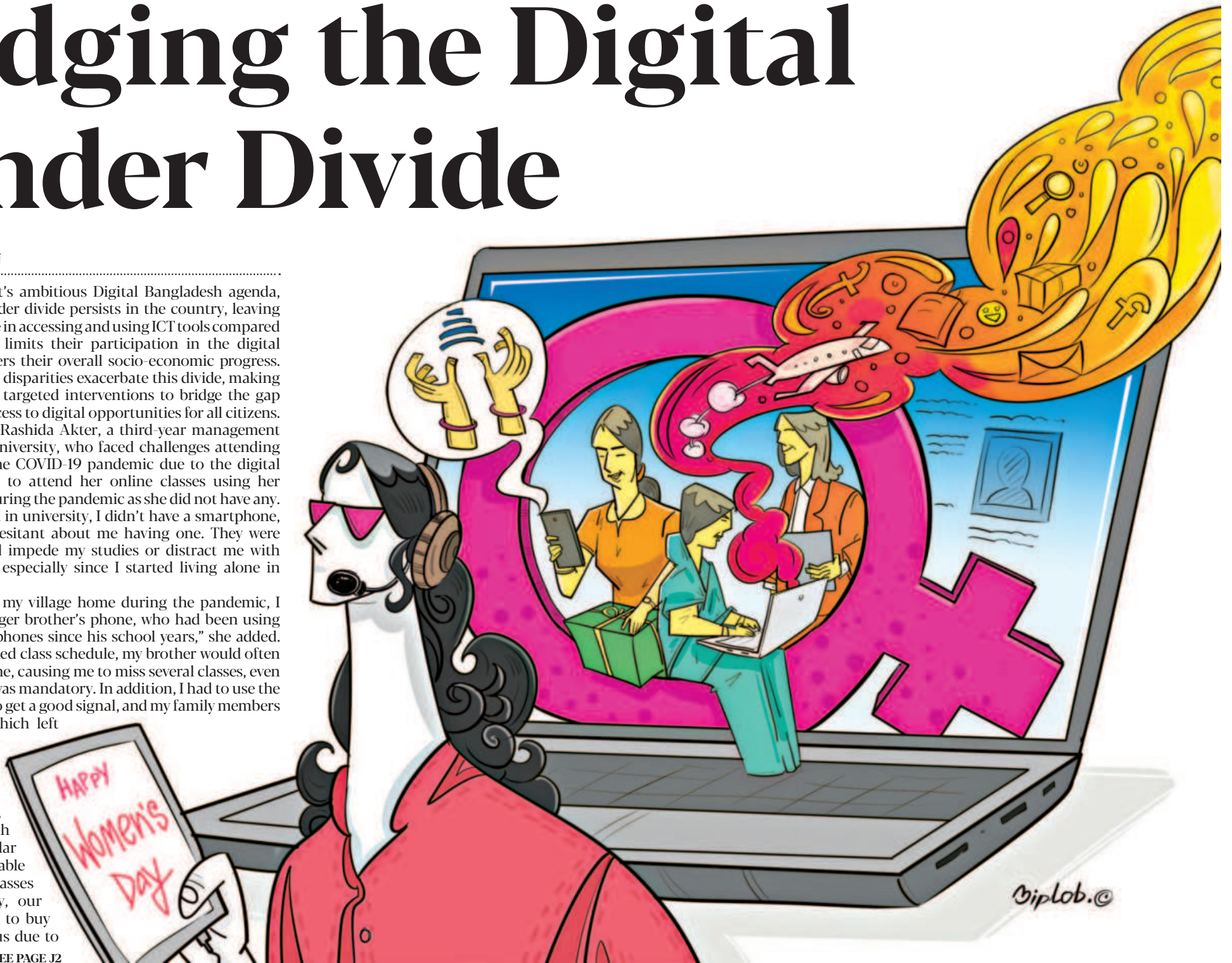
"When I first enrolled in university, I didn't have a smartphone, and my parents were hesitant about me having one. They were concerned that it could impede my studies or distract me with romantic relationships, especially since I started living alone in Dhaka," Rashida said.

"When I returned to my village home during the pandemic, I had to rely on my younger brother's phone, who had been using my parents' only smartphones since his school years," she added. "However, as I had no fixed class schedule, my brother would often be outside with the phone, causing me to miss several classes, even though my attendance was mandatory. In addition, I had to use the phone in a nearby field to get a good signal, and my family members were not supportive, which left me feeling discouraged.

As a result, my grades suffered during that semester."

"My younger sister, Juli, who was in fifth grade, had a similar experience as she was unable to attend her Zoom classes regularly. Unfortunately, our family could not afford to buy a new smartphone for us due to

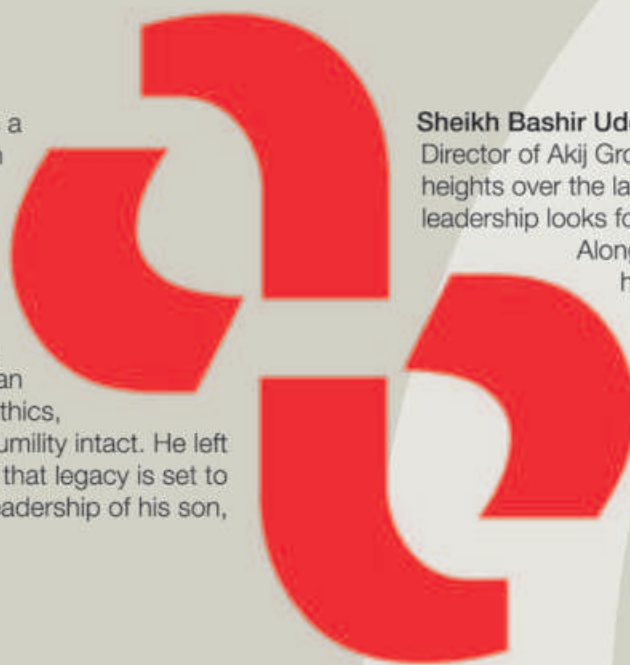
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Unfolding
A NEW JOURNEY



Sheikh Akij Uddin was a man blessed with fortitude and perseverance. His indomitable spirit was highly acknowledged among the first generation of entrepreneurs of an emerging nation. From a humble beginning he established an empire upon the strong foundation of ethics, honesty and diversity while keeping his humility intact. He left behind an enduring legacy! A branch of that legacy is set to evolve through the leadership of his son,



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BEYOND
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Are digital spaces only for men?

According to a study by ActionAid Bangladesh in 2022, about 63.51 percent of women in the country face online harassment and violence. We must keep in mind that this is based on only the reported numbers, which means the real situation of digital safety of women in the country is tremendously alarming.

MAYABEE ARANNYA

"As a woman, navigating online spaces in Bangladesh is quite challenging. Whether it's crude comments about women or gender minorities, news of violence and people making fun of it and victim blaming or problematic content - all of them affect me negatively and stay with me," shares Ahona Aroni Hassan, 26. While boasting about the growing digitalisation of the country, we can't ignore the other side of the coin - digital spaces are not yet safe for women in Bangladesh. According to a study by ActionAid Bangladesh in 2022, about 63.51 percent of women in the country face online harassment and violence. We must keep in mind that this is based on only the reported numbers, which means the real situation of digital safety of women in the country is tremendously alarming.

"Offline public spaces, such as fairs, roads, and public transport, are so unsafe for women and girls that it's no surprise digital spaces can pose similar dangers. In both spaces, this can manifest as not only sexual harassment but also aggression, bullying, and use of obscene language," says Nobonita Chowdhury, Director

of Gender, Justice and Diversity (GJD) and Preventing Violence Against Women Initiative, BRAC. In fact, cybercrime can sometimes be even more dangerous due to the layer of anonymity that cybercriminals possess. They can easily impersonate someone and lay a trap for the victim, and they can also hide their digital footprint, making it difficult to track them down and bring them to justice.

One of the most common forms of harassment of women online is victim blaming. "Victim blaming is not confined to only physical spaces. When a woman speaks up about online harassment, people start to bombard her with questions such as why she posted photos online or wore such a dress in her photos - and if she has followed all societal rules, then they will question why she is even using social media in the first place," explains Nobonita Chowdhury. This culture of victim blaming causes victims to think a hundred times before speaking up and reporting online harassment and violence. "Young women and girls usually don't even share with their parents since they commonly engage in victim blaming,"

shares Kaniz Fatema, CEO, Bangladesh Open Source Network (BdOSN).

While discussing safer digital spaces for women, we cannot exclude transwomen and gender-diverse people from the conversation. "From our surveys, we have found that huge numbers of transwomen and queer women face online abuse, especially fraud and blackmailing. Their safety and security online are so much at risk that many choose not to use social media. This paints the picture of a bigger problem - trans people do not have access to online spaces, and hence are deprived of important opportunities; for example, they miss job postings online," shares Lamea Tanjin Tanha, Founder and CEO, TransEnd.

"There is a need for more conversations on how women and girls have the right to exist in both offline and online spaces without facing harassment or violence. Legal action can't be the only solution to unsafe spaces - there also needs to be a behavioural change in society. We need to create an environment of mutual respect, where people stand up against harassment or violence instead of partaking in it. Social media etiquette should be taught through conversations

in families and schools," she continues. Indeed, the Digital Security Act (DSA) 2018 has proven ineffective in protecting women against cyber violence, so resorting to legal action may not be the best approach.

"Many women and girls in Bangladesh do not maintain 'online hygiene' - they do not have the awareness and knowledge of basic safety and security measures they need to follow when using digital spaces," says Kaniz Fatema. "BdOSN organises regular awareness sessions at academic institutions on online safety. We include both students and teachers in the sessions so that teachers are also aware of these issues and can help students when we are not there. Since a single organisation can't reach all women in Bangladesh, it's imperative that the government and other NGOs conduct similar sessions," she continues.

Another type of awareness session is also required, according to Lamea Tanjin Tanha. "We cannot forget that trans people also have digital rights as citizens of Bangladesh. We need to organise more awareness sessions for cisgender people so that they are aware of these rights and can learn to respect trans individuals. There should also be an app with resources for trans people on digital rights and safety, along with hotlines and website features. There is also a lack of data on the trans community concerning online safety, which needs to change. At TransEnd, we are already trying to change people's mindsets with our activities, such as our documentaries that portray a counter-narrative to the common misconceptions cisgender people have about trans people," she shares.

While awareness building is crucial, there is no alternative to education. "I believe awareness sessions and seminars can't completely solve the problem at hand. Our national curriculum now includes a subject called Information and Communications Technology (ICT). We could include information on online safety in the curriculum of ICT so that students are equipped with this knowledge as early as class three," says Kaniz Fatema.

Finally, we must address the elephant in the room when discussing women's safety in the digital space. "There is a stark digital divide between men and women. We cannot talk about digital safety without ensuring all people, especially women, have equal access to the internet and technology," remarks Nobonita Chowdhury.

Therefore, we can see how breaking down the digital divide and ensuring access of all individuals, including women and gender-diverse people, to online spaces is vital. Simultaneously, their safety and security must be ensured so they can continue accessing online spaces and not be forced to go offline. Everyone deserves to be on the internet - safely.

Mayabee Arannya is a feminist activist leading the youth organisation Kotha.



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Bridging the Digital Gender Divide

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financial concerns," said Rashida. Rashida's story illustrates that in many households, smartphones are predominantly used by men, which can create obstacles for women and girls who need access to them for their education and other essential activities.

According to the Groupe Speciale Mobile Association's (GSMA) 2020 report, there is a significant gender disparity in the ownership and usage of mobile phones in Bangladesh. Women were 29 percent less likely than men to possess a mobile phone, and they were also 52 percent less likely than men to use mobile internet.

The latest Population and Housing Census 2022 also revealed the gender gap in connectivity, as 66.53 percent of men and 45.53 percent of women use mobile phones. The number of internet users stands at 38.02 percent of men and 23.52 percent of women, respectively.

On the other hand, a 2021 Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) study titled "Understanding the Digital Gender Divide in Rural Bangladesh: How Wide It Is and Why" found that there is a striking gender gap among the most digitally-abled members of households - 63 percent of households identified a man as the most digitally-abled person, almost twice as many as women.

The digital gender divide has not only been restricting women's access to educational opportunities, leading to a knowledge gap and skill disparities between men and women, but also further contributing to lower levels of female participation in the labor force and hindering the country's economic growth.

Women's limited access to ICT has also been leading to income disparities between men and women.

For example, Shirin Sultana, a 29-year-old from Melandoho, Jamalpur, has been stitching Nakshi Kanthas for the past five years and earning Tk 5,000 per month by selling those to a local vendor in her area.

The man resells them online throughout the country using a Facebook page. While Shirin only earns Tk 1,000 for each Kantha she stitches, the vendor sells them for around Tk 5,000 each to his customers.

Despite other female workers like Shirin being aware of this, they are unable to take advantage of the online market, as according to Shirin, "None of us know how to operate a smartphone, let alone do business online."

Inequality in digital access between genders also has a profound effect on women's health and well-being, leading to adverse health outcomes for them and their families.

Women who are unable to utilise digital technology are less likely to obtain vital health-related information, such as maternal health, family planning, or disease prevention. Additionally, the absence of digital tools can negatively affect women's mental health, making them feel isolated from their support systems and social networks, increasing the possibility of depression and anxiety.

The BIGD study indicated that social and cultural

beliefs play a significant role in preventing women from using technology. For instance, women who have limited education are often seen as incapable of using technology, while men with similar education levels are not judged the same way.

It also found that women with higher education and in leadership positions are more likely to use technology, resulting in a greater percentage of women who are educated and heads of households being found to be technology users.

The study suggested that as improving women's digital literacy is closely related to their level of education, the government must continue investing in women's education, and also raise awareness among rural citizens about the significance of digital literacy for both men and women.

Besides, although changing societal norms can be difficult, it's essential to identify and pursue feasible solutions.

Women who are unable to utilise digital technology are less likely to obtain vital health-related information, such as maternal health, family planning, or disease prevention. Additionally, the absence of digital tools can negatively affect women's mental health, making them feel isolated from their support systems and social networks, increasing the possibility of depression and anxiety.

On the other hand, Dhaka University Economics Professor Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, who is also the research director at the South Asian Network of Economic Modeling (Sanem) emphasised that parents must change their mindsets and be aware of the advantages of digital literacy for children and allow them to use the device with proper guidance so that they make the best use of it.

"The adolescent club established by the Department of Women's Affairs can raise awareness of digital literacy and its importance, while the government should increase the budget of the women and child affairs ministry, to bridge this parity," she said.

She also suggested that banks and financial institutions in upazila can significantly contribute to reducing the digital gender divide by hiring female officers who can assist women at the grassroots level in accessing the necessary information.

Nilima Jahan Rahman is a journalist at The Daily Star

Making Digital Services Work for Women in Bangladesh

The availability of digital services for women is commendable. But only developing services is not enough; they require proper monitoring.

SARAH SHAKHAWAT

Bangladesh is charged with a new vision, 'Smart Bangladesh', that seeks to empower its citizens through the widespread implementation of digital literacy programs. This ambitious undertaking reflects the country's rapid digital advancement and remarkable success in digitally transforming all sectors. However, the availability of well-structured digital services for women is still a work in progress, despite noteworthy improvement.

Current Situation
Bangladesh's attempt to bridge the gender gap in the digital sector

has not gone unnoticed. Over the years, various digital services, including apps and websites, have been developed to support women in all sectors.

The innovations in digital finance opened the pathways for meeting women's unique financial needs and demands. Some mentionable government digital finance services are 'Sathi', launched by Aspire to Innovate- a2i and 'Swosti', bridging the gap between

mobile banking and microloan.

Sathi was launched in 2022 as a part of the government's financial inclusion plan to establish a network for women entrepreneurs. Aside from women-centric financial services, banks have digitised all their services, making them easily accessible for everyone, regardless of gender. Even so, the number of women subscribers in online banking remains very low, as shared by a woman banker who chose to remain anonymous. Women seem to be more reluctant to use online services.

In the case of the government's emergency helpline 999, data shows that only 19% of the calls received are from females. Even then, 41% of the calls come from Dhaka, whereas the females of the less-developed cities or rural areas scarcely reach out for help. Other security apps are available for women to pursue, including Bachao, Daak tracker, Avoy etc.

The health sector has seen some development in the digital front as well. In 2020, Shakti Foundation installed new technology in Shakti Medical Care Centers in collaboration with Digital Healthcare Solutions. There are women-focused apps such as Maya Apa, Bangladesh's first-ever one-touch help service app for women. The Women Support Initiative Forum (WSIF) is an online platform run by women who have been offering various psychosocial services since 2018.

Challenges

Experts have noticed that women's participation in digital services is significantly lower than that of men. One of the main reasons for this kind of behavior is the lack of proficiency in technological devices. Along with that comes the lack of affordability. Being excluded from digital knowledge creates inertia among women users, according to a woman banker. She further adds, "Some [women] have the perception that they have to go through a lot of procedures if they avail banking services. Women are less interested in business formalisation even though they can easily avail of any business-related support online."

Achia Nila, founder and CEO of Women In Digital, emphasises the lack of information among women users.

While availing of security helplines such as 999, women tend to be more comfortable sharing their problems with female police. Although 85% of the 999 call receivers are female police officers, the workforce is still small to tackle the demands. DIG Amena Begum believes they are not being able to offer their expected service due to a lack of adequate human resources. "Women are not aware of the services, especially in the rural areas. Moreover, many may still doubt whether the police will be able to help them," adds Amena Begum while sharing the challenges of providing digital services.

She further shares, "Another major challenge is the lack of policies against cybercrime. As a result, when there is a complaint of digital abuse, the process is delayed as there is no clear understanding of the steps to be followed." However, an online module on Gender Sensitive Policing has recently been generated to educate police officers on operation levels. Amena Begum thinks this attempt will help to improve the workforce and enable them to provide better service.

Opportunities

The blessings of digitalisation are ample, and the opportunities are endless. Gender equality is one of the fundamental factors to be considered here, and the progress in the context of Bangladesh is visible. The availability of digital services for women is commendable. But only developing services is not enough; they require proper monitoring.

According to Farhana A Rahman, Senior Vice President at BASIS, the initial stage of development has been completed, and now is the time to take quality measures to ensure proper service.

She also highlights the importance of awareness building among women users. "Media can play a key role in shedding light on the importance of digital services as well as attract the private and government sectors to prioritise this sector," she says.

Farhana further emphasises building leadership among women so they can ask for themselves. She believes women should be given a sense of responsibility which can start from a very young age by incorporating such concepts in textbooks. If they are aware of what they need, women will be able to demand accordingly. Otherwise, digital services will continue to be built on assumptions creating more gaps.

Sarah Shakhawat is a journalist at The Daily Star.



IMAGE: STUDIOGSTOCK ON FREEPIK

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How bKash is contributing to empower women

Rukhsana Mily

Unlike other financial platforms, the participation of women is much higher in Mobile Financial Services (MFS). Currently, about 43 percent of total MFS accounts belong to women, the highest inclusion of women in any financial service in the country, according to Bangladesh Bank data. As of December 2022, the total number of MFS accounts in the country stood over 191 million, of which 81.2 million accounts were registered by female. Besides, in terms of owning MFS accounts, women from rural areas are ahead of urban women because about 56.67% of the MFS accounts owned by women are residing in countryside. Due to the financial inclusion through MFS providers like bKash, women now have better control over their money. As a result, after fulfilling family needs, they now have the scope to invest the extra money in health, education or even for setting up small businesses.

One such entrepreneur is Jui Sarkar, a Dhaka University graduate who got married while studying and became a mother right after the graduation. Eventually, she settled in Rangpur near her husband's workplace. She started her e-commerce venture 'Tatini' through opening a Facebook page in 2018. With few employees, she now sells bedsheets, curtains, and home decor products manufactured in her own factory.

She said, "I was envisaging to earn money without going out of my house as I wanted to spend enough time with my child. The dream came true because it has been possible due to the existence of digital payment systems like

bKash. Now I can do my business transactions from home. Shoppers can also pay from their homes conveniently. At the same time, delivery service providers are also accepting payments through MFS. bKash has made life easy, especially

buying medicines for the elderly and ordering food online, all my transactions now can be done through bKash. The digital transactions through bKash have become a part of my life because it enabled me to transact for almost everything from

accounts from home, get remittances, receive government allowances, pay utility bills, pay fees of educational institutions, do business transactions, and transfer money from bank account or card to MFS account in a bid to save time.

A study - "Impact of Mobile Financial Services in Bangladesh - The Case of bKash" - by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) found positive correlation between penetration of MFS and women's empowerment in Bangladesh. The study stated that mobile banking has contributed to women's freedom of movement, family decision-making, participation in income-generating activities, and ownership over their jewelry and household savings. Another study "Closing the Gender Gap: Opportunities for the Women's Mobile Financial Services Market in Bangladesh" by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Bangladesh Bank recommends increasing more women agents in MFS industry to accelerate women's financial inclusion further. Besides, the study also recommended that deposit and short-term loan facilities through MFS would further strengthen women's empowerment. Infact, bKash has already introduced the two financial products for its customers. MFS like bKash have been proven to be the most effective medium that guarantees freedom and empowerment in financial transaction for both male and female. It is spearheading the country towards Smart Bangladesh through digital financial inclusion.

The author is DGM of Corporate Communications department of bKash



for women entrepreneurs like me, since it is quite challenging to go to the bank regularly while managing both business and family."

Sabrina Sultana is a working mother living in the city's Mirpur. Sharing her thoughts about how MFS has made her life easy in recent years, she said, "Family life and work life balance is not an easy job. In this balancing process, technology always gives me great relief. From purchasing groceries and children's necessities, to paying utility bills and school fees, and even

anywhere and anytime." Meanwhile, Cumilla's Parul Akhter is a wife of a migrant worker living in the UAE. She receives remittances on her bKash account every month from her husband. She cashes out the money from the shop near her house. She said, "Previously a nephew of my husband used to get the money for me from the bank located at a distance. Now the money directly comes to me and I can check the balance any time."

MFS like bKash have hugely benefited women from all walks of life by enabling them to open

“The future of healthcare lies in finding the right balance between technology and traditional care delivery models”

In conversation with Sylvana Q. Sinha, Founder, Chair and CEO of Praava Health

As a female entrepreneur, the challenges have been even more significant, given that women entrepreneurs globally receive less than 2% of venture capital. This disparity is even worse in emerging and frontier markets.

The Daily Star (TDS): What inspired you to work in the healthcare sector and launch Praava Health in Bangladesh?

Sylvana Q. Sinha (SQS): I became obsessed with the issue of healthcare in Bangladesh after a jarring experience with my mother at a top private hospital in Dhaka. The experience highlighted the need for high-quality and affordable healthcare in the country, and I realized that there was an opportunity to create a solution that could impact many people's lives.

Despite the significant progress in Bangladesh's economy, accessing high-quality healthcare in the country remains challenging. As a result, thousands of Bangladeshis seek healthcare abroad every day, and billions of dollars are spent on this each year. I believe that access to affordable and trustworthy healthcare is a fundamental human right, and patients in the country need more options for accessing such care. To achieve this, there needs to be more competition in the market, as well as increased regulation to monitor the quality of healthcare.

Healthcare in Bangladesh is heavily centered on hospitals, and patients often wait until they are very sick before seeking medical care. However, we can have a more significant impact by intervening earlier and meeting patients where they are before their conditions become acute. By managing patients' conditions outside of the hospital setting through family doctors or outpatient specialists, we can make it easier for patients to heal and improve their health at home, reducing healthcare costs for households and the country as a whole. This approach also reduces the burden on the healthcare system, allowing hospital care to be reserved for patients who truly need it.

TDS: Did you face any challenges in this journey? How did you overcome them?

SQS: Being an entrepreneur and building something from scratch comes



with a myriad of challenges. Attracting foreign capital into Bangladesh is one of the biggest challenges that I have faced, despite the country's massive potential for growth and progress in the economy. Although we improved our business economics several years ago, raising funds has remained challenging. The pandemic and the current global financial crisis are some of the macro factors that have contributed to this challenge. As a female entrepreneur, the challenges have been even more significant, given that women entrepreneurs globally receive less than 2% of venture capital. This disparity is even worse in emerging and frontier markets. Despite these challenges, I have learned that they make us better leaders as we improve ourselves, build

networks, and access loans.

The pandemic brought unprecedented challenges that were unpredictable and, operationally, managing staff became challenging. During the Omicron surge, our patient volume doubled, and 35% of our staff contracted COVID. Raising awareness was also challenging, but we tried to play a role in it. Despite being a new company, I am grateful that the public trusted us with their healthcare during this time of need, and we had the opportunity to serve our community.

TDS: Can you share how Praava Health is contributing to the healthcare economy of Bangladesh?

SQS: We pride ourselves on being the only healthcare provider in the market

that offers an integrated solution that combines cutting edge technology with comprehensive clinical care. Our services range from telemedicine and home delivery of pharmaceutical products to in-person consultations at our state-of-the-art clinics. We like to call this a 'click-and-brick' model, where we leverage both technology and infrastructure to provide seamless care to our patients.

In my opinion, the future of healthcare lies in finding the right balance between technology and traditional care delivery models. While technology can facilitate remote care management and the delivery of medication, patients often require in-person medical attention. By offering a truly end-to-end outpatient care model, we are able to meet the

diverse needs of our patients, and I believe this is what sets us apart from other healthcare providers.

TDS: What is your greatest achievement?
SQS: While I believe that my greatest achievement is yet to come, I am proud of what we have accomplished so far. Our ability to establish a high-quality healthcare brand in Bangladesh and grow it rapidly is something I am particularly proud of.

However, there is still much work to be done. According to reports from The Lancet and WHO, many people in lower-middle-income countries are dying due to a lack of access to quality healthcare. It's not just a matter of access; quality is equally important.

To address this issue, we have established one of the six international standard labs in the country. While this is a positive development, we recognize that much more needs to be done for a country with a population of 170 million. By expanding access to quality healthcare options, we hope to make a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of the people of Bangladesh.

TDS: What are your aspirations and goals for Praava Health?

SQS: I have big ambitions for this business - I want to scale it across Bangladesh and eventually to other emerging markets. We have already achieved some significant milestones, such as launching Bangladesh's first fully integrated hospital information system and patient app back in 2018. We are now working on a new version of the app which will go live in Q2 of this year. The app enables patients to scan and store all their medical documents in one place, which is a huge opportunity for both patients and healthcare providers. Additionally, we are currently developing some remote care management tools to further enhance our offering.

Interviewed by Sarah Shakhawat, The Daily Star



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14-party fragile as AL 'shifts rightwards'

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

With the ruling Awami League apparently reaching out to some right-wing political parties to forge a bigger electoral alliance, a gap with its left allies keeps widening since the national polls in 2018.

As the parties the AL is trying to woo include the Islamists who have impressive vote banks, its left allies think such coalitions would only mean a deviation from the principles behind the formation of the 14-party alliance.

Democratic values and secularism were the core ideals when the combine came into being during the BNP-Jamaat rule in 2005.

But now, the AL is keen to have ties with Islamist parties keeping the equation of votes in mind, ignoring its ideological partners, said 14-party insiders.

According to some left leaders, it is frustrating that two textbooks of sixth and seventh grades were withdrawn in the face of objections from Islamist groups including Islami Andolon Bangladesh.

The fact that the AL was trying to win the

hearts of Islamist forces was also evident earlier when the government brought changes to the textbooks, caving in to the demands of Hefazat-e-Islam, they said.

The left partners alleged that the AL has deviated from its promises made in the 31-point reform programmes of the 14-party alliance, adopted on July 15, 2005, and the 23-point minimum common programmes, adopted on November 22 of the same year. A secular and democratic government was the crux of it all.

The AL's left allies at a recent meeting expressed their reservations about its efforts to get closer to Syed Bahadur Shah-led Islamic Front Bangladesh.

To the chagrin of the alliance partners, the AL also communicated with Islami Andolon Bangladesh (IAB), founded by "Charmonair Pir" Fazlul Karim, and expressed its interest to bring the Islamist party into its fold, insiders said.

Over the last four years, the left allies on several occasions were ignored in times of crucial decision-making and denied space in the government though

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'I said what I needed to say'

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and DIPAN NANDY

After delivering his watershed speech on March 7, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned home with thousands in his wake.

He knew very well the consequences the speech could have.

During dinner with his family that night, he said, on a rather sombre note, "I said what I needed to say at today's rally. The government can now arrest me or kill me at any time. That is why from today, you will have meals with me twice a day."

Scientist MA Wazed Miah, in his book "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Ke Ghire Kichhu Ghotona O Bangladesh", wrote that from that day, the family members complied with his wish until March 25 afternoon.

"Bangabandhu was busy talking to the leaders of Awami League, Chhatra League, Krishak League, Sramik League, Jubo League and other organisations on the ground floor of the house till 11:00pm [March 25]. We all except my mother-in-law [Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib] had supper," he wrote.

On that fateful night, Bangabandhu was arrested and later taken to Pakistan where he was kept in solitary confinement.

On March 7, Wazed and his wife – Bangabandhu's eldest daughter Sheikh Hasina – were staying at the house.

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What's their organisational capacity?

Amir Hossain Amu, the spokesperson and coordinator for the 14-party combine, has challenged the allies to make the alliance "functional".

"Those who are complaining that the alliance has become non-functional, please ask them to make it functional. Those who talk so much about it – what do they have to offer? What's their organisational capacity?" the veteran politician told The Daily Star on Sunday.

Organising any event under the banner of the alliance has become impossible as the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP are

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There is a top-heavy imbalance

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said the practice of alliance-based politics was never there in the 14-party alliance and it is still absent.

"We hold meetings at the centre and decide to participate in the election unitedly. But those decisions are not reflected at the grassroots. Which means the alliance does not exist at the grassroots and for this, a top-heavy imbalance has been created within the alliance," said Menon in an interview with The Daily Star on Saturday.

"The alliance was forged based on the spirit of secularism and democratic values. Now if the alliance

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Golden period of alliance is over

Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua has said there is a competition between the ruling Awami League and the BNP over doing religion-based politics and trying to prove which party is more pro-religion.

"It is true that the BNP is doing politics with Jamaat, while the ruling party is negotiating with Hefazat directly and indirectly to create a split in the BNP's religion-based politics. They are basically like two flowers on a single stem," said Dilip Barua, also a leader of the AL-led 14-party alliance.

Talking to The Daily Star on Saturday, he said

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Dollar crisis not ebbing despite 'best efforts'

If the trend continues, second tranche of IMF loan may be in jeopardy

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh's dollar crisis is just not subsiding even though imports have dropped off and both exports and remittance are staging a rally.

At the end of January, the overall balance – which is the record of all economic transactions in goods, services and assets of the country with the rest of the world – stood at \$7.4 billion in the deficit in contrast to the deficit of \$2.1 billion a year earlier, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

But, the trade balance, which is the difference between exports and imports, improved: it was \$13.4 billion in the deficit in contrast to \$18.8 billion in the deficit a year earlier.

In the first seven months of the fiscal year, exports increased about 10 percent while imports declined 5.7 percent.

"This is a paradoxical situation. You would think that if imports dropped, the cash flow situation would become stable, but that hasn't been the case," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 7

GENDER GAP IN ADMINISTRATION Women still made to lag far behind

NILIMA JAHAN

While women in Bangladesh have been making remarkable strides in various fields, they still seem to be falling behind when it comes to working in the administration.

The 2021 government report prepared by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics revealed how the percentage of female officials in the administration cadre is far lower than the males.

The report, titled "Gender-Based Employment and Wage", said the percentage of female officials in public administration was 19.62 percent, while it was 22.64 percent in the field administration.

Out of 6,310 posts of senior secretary/secretary, additional secretary, joint secretary, deputy secretary, senior assistant secretary and assistant

A significant gender imbalance prevails in high-level positions – the higher the position, the fewer the number of women.

secretary under the public administration ministry, the number of male officials is 5,072, while that of women is just 1,238.

Out of 742 divisional commissioners, additional commissioners, deputy commissioners, additional deputy commissioners, and upazila nirbahi officers, only 168 are women.

The report highlighted a significant gender imbalance in high-level positions – the higher the position, the fewer the number of women.

For instance, there are only 10 female secretaries compared to 66 male officials, and there are no female

divisional commissioners or additional commissioners.

Despite the exceptional performance of the only

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Holy Shab-e-Barat tonight

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Shab-e-Barat, the night of fortune, will be observed tonight across the country with due religious fervour and devotion.

Muslims consider Shab-e-Barat as one of the three most sacred nights. They also believe that on this night Almighty Allah decides the fate of all human beings, fixing their livelihood for the next year.

Muslim devotees will spend the night at mosques and homes offering prayers, reciting from the holy Quran, and seeking blessings of Allah for long life, peace, progress and happiness for themselves, their families, relatives and friends.

At night, devotees would visit graves and pray for their beloved ones seeking eternal peace of their departed souls.

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star offices will remain closed today on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat. Therefore, the newspaper will not be published tomorrow.



Women from the low-income group crowd an OMS truck in Khulna city's Dualatpur bus stand to purchase essentials at subsidised rates yesterday. With prices of commodities skyrocketing continuously, the number of people from poor families turning to the trucks is ever-increasing. They wait from morning till late afternoon to buy some rice at Tk 30 per kg.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

'Invest in our energy sector' PM urges Qatar businesspeople



UNB, Doha

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged oil-rich Qatar to invest in Bangladesh's energy sector, especially in renewable energy.

"We remain open to investment proposals in our infrastructures and logistics sectors. We believe there is scope for Qatari investment in the energy sector, including in renewable energy," she said.

The premier was addressing the Doha Investment Summit 2023 titled "The Rise of Bengal Tiger: Potentials of Trade and Investment in Bangladesh", held at The St Regis Doha.

Hasina said Bangladesh could benefit from Qatar's expertise in offshore gas exploration and energy distribution systems.

The PM urged the businesspeople from Qatar to look at certain thrust sectors in Bangladesh. She invited a delegation of Qatari businesspeople to visit the country soon.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

'Let's roll up our sleeves, realise our dreams'

Says Chinese ambassador

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen has said that China and Bangladesh will closely cooperate and coordinate on regional and multilateral affairs for more stability and certainty in today's uncertain and unstable world.



Yao Wen

"As an old saying in China goes, 'a year's plan starts with spring', now it is the season of spring in the Bangladeshi calendar and Chinese relations with Bangladesh are also ushering in spring with new vigour and vitality," he said at a reception organised by the Chinese embassy at its premises, marking the welcome of the newly-appointed ambassador yesterday.

"Let's roll up our sleeves together and kick off to realise our respective dreams and embrace an even brighter future of China-Bangladesh relations," Ambassador Yao said.

Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiqul Islam, Prime Minister's Private Secretary and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman, and Foreign Minister Secretary (West) Shabbir Ahmad Chowdhury were present.

Yao Wen said he is fully convinced that China-Bangladesh relations will set a good example for developing countries to understand, trust and support each other.

"Last three years were difficult for all of us due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel," he said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing an event titled "Investment in Research and Development in LDCs for Smart and Innovative Societies" at Qatar National Convention Centre in Doha yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

Russian positions at Bakhmut in peril

Says chief of Wagner mercenary force as fighting rages in Ukraine; Kyiv says forces are holding on

REUTERS, Kyiv

The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary force yesterday warned that Russia's position around the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut was in peril unless his troops got ammunition, the latest sign of tension between the Kremlin and the private militia chief.

Ukrainian military officials and analysts also reported leaders of Russia's 155th Brigade fighting near the town of Vuhledar, south of Bakhmut, were resisting orders to attack after sustaining severe losses in attempts to capture it.

For its part, the Russian Defence Ministry on Sunday said Russian forces had hit a command centre of the Ukrainian Azov Regiment in southeastern Zaporizhzhia region. The ministry did not elaborate on the attack.

Kyiv said yesterday its troops were still holding out in a "hellish" fight for Bakhmut, while Washington said that even if the eastern Ukrainian city should fall to a Russian offensive, it would not necessarily give Moscow momentum in the war.

Speaking to reporters in the Middle East, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he would not predict when or if Ukrainian troops might leave the city, but that its fall "won't necessarily mean that the Russians have changed the tide of this fight".

"I think it is more of a symbolic value than it is strategic and operational value," Austin said.

Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin said Russia's front lines near Bakhmut could collapse if his forces did not receive the ammunition promised by Moscow in

February.

"For now, we are trying to figure out the reason: is it just ordinary bureaucracy or a betrayal," Prigozhin, referring to the absence of ammunition, said in his press service Telegram channel early yesterday.

He also said his representative at operational headquarters had had his pass cancelled and been denied access.

There was no immediate response from the Russian Ministry of Defence. Since the start of this year, the Ukraine campaign has been commanded personally by Russia's top general, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov.

Apart from Bakhmut, Russia's offensive has produced no notable gains, failing to seize ground in Luhansk province further north and taking heavy losses in particular around Vuhledar to the south.

PILOT HIRING SCAM

Biman finally launches probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday formed a three-member committee to investigate the allegations of irregularities in hiring Boeing 777 pilots and paying them hefty salaries.

Captain Siddiqueur Rahman, director of flight operations at Biman, was made the convener of the committee while Capt Enam Talukder, chief of flight safety, was made member, and Taposh Ahmed, deputy chief of training, was made member secretary.

The probe body was asked to submit its report within three working days.

It will also investigate the alleged forgery of HSC certificate by Sadia Ahmed, a first officer of Boeing 777.

Sadia is the wife of Biman Chief of Training Capt Sazid Ahmed.

The state flag carrier formed the probe body in response to a report run by The Daily Star on March 1 under the headline "Biman paying for hiring unqualified Boeing 777 pilots".

According to the report, Biman in February last year recruited a batch of contractual pilots to fly its Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, claiming that it needed pilots immediately due to a shortage.

A year later, only five of the batch of 14 pilots, have taken to the air. The rest are lost in a quagmire of forged certificates, incompetence and failed licensing exams.

Charges framed against ex-Ducsu VP Nur in DSA case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch of police yesterday pressed charges against former Ducsu vice-president Nurul Haque Nur in a case filed over "hurting religious sentiments of Awami League activists and its supporters and defaming the party with his derogatory comments".

Md Saiful Islam, an inspector of the Cyber and Special Crime Division of DB and also the investigation officer of the case, appealed to the court to issue an arrest warrant against him.

On February 28, the IO submitted the charge sheet against Nur to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

What's their

FROM PAGE 1

holding programmes one after another, said Amu.

"All of our activists are busy with the Awami League's programmes. We are not getting any scope for holding separate programmes of the alliance."

Amu, also an advisory council member of AL, alleged that the alliance partners cannot gather crowds for the rallies.

"Holding a programme is not about delivering speeches by 11 persons from 14 parties. There has to be a huge gathering of people. They cannot bring people for the rallies and those who [AL men] can do this are now busy," he added.

Asked if the AL is taking any initiative to bring other like-minded parties to its fold, he said no such decision has been made as of now.

There is a top-heavy imbalance

FROM PAGE 1

is not effective at all times and at all levels, nothing can be done. If the Awami League wants it only to be an electoral alliance, there will be a negotiation on seat sharing."

A lawmaker from Dhaka-8 constituency, Menon said the AL chief is committed to participating in the election under the banner of the 14-party alliance, and they are going ahead keeping this in mind.

About the AL wooing the religion-based parties to the alliance, Menon said the ruling party leaders never discussed the issue and they never do.

Asked whether it's a deviation from the ideological stance of the 14-party alliance, he said, these are parts of electoral strategy and they can do so as part of their electoral strategy.

Menon came down heavily on the AL government saying, "Corruption has not only reached the upper level of the society but also the grassroots. Money laundering is increasing day by day. The government's zero-tolerance policy against corruption doesn't seem to be effective in these cases."

Golden period

FROM PAGE 1

he was not sure whether the AL would reactivate the alliance or it is planning otherwise. "We would have known if there was a meeting of the alliance."

The golden period of the alliance is over, he continued. "Democratic values which were at the core of commitment of 14 parties do not seem to exist anymore."

Stating that they have no other choice than waiting for AL's signal on whether to participate in the next election separately or under the banner of the alliance, Dilip Barua said, "We will comply with the decision of the bigger parties in this regard."

Commenting that the AL and BNP have no difference in terms of patronising looters, he said, "The Awami League is patronising the looters and the rich like the way the BNP did. They are doing it more ingeniously."

"As a result, inflation is soaring, and it doesn't seem to be going down. Looters and upper-class people are at the centre of their economic mechanism, most of them are lawmakers and ministers. In all sectors, corruption has taken an institutional form," he added.

14-party fragile as AL 'shifts rightwards'

FROM PAGE 1

they stood by the grand old party even amid controversies over massive polls irregularities and widespread graft.

Leaders of the left allies say the ruling party turns to its lightweight partners only when it faces a crisis. But when the party formed the government in 2019 for a third consecutive time, they were left out.

Another major factor that frustrates them is that the AL has already started campaigning for the "boat" while keeping its allies in the dark about whether it would take part in the upcoming election on its own or under the banner of the coalition.

Besides, the alliance is currently only Dhaka-based and it has no existence at the grassroots.

On February 25, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon at a rally in Rajshahi slammed the Awami League and said the 14-party alliance is "non-functional".

He also said his party would certainly take part in the next election with his party symbol "hammer", not with "boat".

The 14-party was formed in 2005, comprising the 11-party left combine, Awami League, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and National Awami Party (NAP).

Earlier in 1998, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Gono Forum, Workers

Party, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD-Khalequzzaman), Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD-Mahbub), Gono Azadi League, Gonotantri Party, Bangladesher Samyabadi Dal, Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal, Communist Kendro and Gonotantri Majdur Party formed the 11-party combine.

When the AL forged an alliance with the 11-party in 2005, CPB, BSD (Khalequzzaman) and Nirmal Sen-led Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal stayed away. Later, the Gono Forum left the 11-party combine.

Tarikat Federation and Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) joined hands with the 14-party alliance ahead of the 2008 national polls.

Meanwhile, Bangladesher Samyabadi Dal split into three parts — led by Dilip Barua, Nurul Islam and Harun Chowdhury. Of them, Nurul Islam-led Jatiya Party and Mostafa Amir Faisal Mujaddedi led Zaker Party joining the AL-led camp.

Before the 2018 national polls, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh was brought into the Grand Alliance and its candidates contested the election with "boat".

Now with the general election slated for early next year, the AL has started approaching several political parties outside the 14-party combine. It has also begun talks with Kader Siddique-led Krishak Sramik Janata League.

missed in political arena since its president Abdus Samad passed away.

Before the last parliamentary election, another new political alliance called "Juktofront" was formed with Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and Nagarik Oikya.

Krishak Sramik Janata League, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and Nagarik Oikya joined the Jatiya Oikyafront led by eminent jurist and Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain. Bikalpa Dhara participated in the national polls under the banner of Grand Alliance.

The AL took part in the 2008, 2014 and 2018 elections under the banner of Grand Alliance that included the 14-party.

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'I said what I needed to say'

FROM PAGE 1

He described in his book how Bangabandhu spent the day.

It was the first Sunday of a fiery March and Bangalees were aching to join a rally to be addressed by Bangabandhu who was leading a massive non-cooperation movement at that time.

Bangabandhu's Dhanmondi-32 home was packed with leaders and activists of the Awami League and others since the morning of March 7.

Bangabandhu sat for a closed-door meeting with AL leaders Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmad, M Mansur Ali, AHM Qamaruzzaman, Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed, and Dr Kamal Hossain in the library, Wazed wrote.

After a long discussion, he came out and said they have reached a consensus, and a four-point declaration would be made at the rally in the afternoon.

He said the declaration would be made in the light of the prevailing political situation and the demands of the students and people.

After giving the necessary instructions, Bangabandhu went upstairs to have a shower and lunch. After his meal, when he was resting, Dr Kamal Hossain went up to him and showed him a draft of the declaration.

In his book "Bangladesh: Quest for Freedom and Justice", Dr Kamal said he was asked to prepare the draft of a press statement embodying the position taken.

The statement would be released to the press after the rally. The statement would demand an end to martial law and the transfer of power to elected representatives of the people, among others.

Bangabandhu directed that Tajuddin would be in charge of the statement and that he would make any amendments necessary in the light of the speech delivered before personally issuing it to the press.

WHAT WOULD BANGABANDHU SAY?

The question was being asked everywhere. He described in his book how Bangabandhu spent the day. It was the first Sunday of a fiery March and Bangalees were aching to join a rally to be addressed by Bangabandhu who was leading a massive non-cooperation movement at that time.

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It had been known since March 1 that Bangabandhu would outline the future course of action at a rally on March 7. Subsequently, it was announced that President Yahya Khan would address the nation on March 6, wrote Archer K Blood, then US consul general of erstwhile East Pakistan in 1971 in his book "The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh: Memoirs of an American Diplomat".

"This coming conjunction gave rise to much anxiety, hope and speculation in East Pakistan. The key question debated was whether or not Mujib would use the occasion to declare the independence of Bangladesh, and, if so, how would the army react," he added.

There were intense speculations as to what would be said and everyone had their eyes fixated on Awami League President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the de facto leader after being denied power by the then Pakistani rulers.

THE RALLY Wazed Miah said Bangabandhu accompanied by AL leaders got on a truck

to go to the Ramna Race Course, now Suhrawardy Udyan. A boat-shaped stage was built there. The crowd greeted him chanting slogans at the top of their lungs.

But there was a hush as soon as Bangabandhu stood up to deliver his speech. Emotion choked, Bangabandhu, one of the greatest orators, started by saying, "I have come before you today with a heart laden with sadness..."

In his 19-minute speech, he described how Bangalees were denied their democratic rights even after getting the majority in the election.

Bangla desires emancipation. He ordered people from all walks of life to prepare for armed struggle against the tyranny, exploitation, subjugation and deprivation by the Pakistani military junta with whatever they had and transform every house into a fortress.

He also gave a complete guideline on how the country would be run.

Then comes the masterstroke of Bangabandhu and the final announcement with his thunderous voice: "The struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is a struggle for independence. Joy Bangla."

The crowd listened to him in almost complete silence and took in what Bangabandhu had asked them to do. The people in the gathering raised their hands in unison to express their solidarity with the call.

The speech inspired people to prepare for the Liberation War that eventually began after the Pakistani regime on the night of March 25 launched an attack on unarmed Bangalees and unleashed a genocide that continued for the next nine months.

Mujib's speech on Sunday March 7 was more notable for what he did not say than for what he actually said," Blood wrote.

Women still made to lag far behind

FROM PAGE 1

former female divisional commissioner Dr Mosammat Nazmun Ara Khanum, who now serves as the secretary of the food ministry, no other female has been appointed as a divisional commissioner since then.

Additionally, the report found there are some ministries where the representation of women is particularly low, with a negligible percentage of female officers and staffers.

Mentioning the "Gender Budget Report 2019-2020" of the Finance Division, the report also showed that the fisheries and livestock ministry has the highest percentage of female officials at 27.59 percent, while the primary and mass education ministry has the lowest at only eight percent — down from 14 percent in 2017.

It further highlighted that female staff representation is insignificant in almost all ministries, indicating a widespread deprivation of opportunities for women.

A comparison of data between 2017-18 and 2018-19 revealed a worrying trend, with a decrease in the percentage of women in staff positions, suggesting that fewer women are being appointed to these roles.

The report mentioned that policymakers should look into the reasons behind such employment gaps in the administration.

According to Planning Commission member Mosammat Nasima Begum, the number of women applying for civil services is fewer than the males because the number of female students who completed their tertiary education is much lower than their male counterparts.

Her claim is further validated by the Labour Force Survey 2016-17, which showed that the percentage of females who completed their tertiary education is less than half of the males, and the ratio is worse in the rural areas.

Girls who dominated their secondary-level gradually fell behind in higher secondary and tertiary levels, the survey showed.

Nasima added that a lack of encouragement from families is mainly what keeps women from participating in the civil services examinations.

"For example, when a son in the family completes his graduation, the parents treat him in a way that getting a government job should be the only choice for him. But for their daughters, they consider marrying them off instead."

About employment discriminations, she said there might be a level of inequity as women are still not appointed in some core positions, such as cabinet, land or home secretary.

"But this never means women are incapable of shouldering these duties."

In the police administration, Deputy Inspector General Shamima Begum, who is also the vice president of Bangladesh Police Women Network, told The Daily Star that the percentage of female police officers is now around eight, up from two percent a decade ago.

"The number of female police officials in leadership is still less because the recruitment was postponed towards the end of the eighties for almost 10 years."

"We don't face any discriminations in our services, but from my experience,

I've seen that many women can't take up new challenges for family or personal reasons."

Dr Fauzia Moslem, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said it was disheartening to see such a dismal picture of women's participation at the administration level even after 50 years of independence.

"In order to ensure higher participation of women at the administrative level, the government must have proactive plans and programmes to prepare them for those positions."

Obstacles such as a lack of safe transportation and daycare facilities are also reasons behind the low levels of female employment. Such issues need to be addressed first, she added.

Shireen Huq, founder member of Naripokkho, said, "I salute the 113 women upazila nirbahi officers for their confidence and courage in taking up these positions. They have to not only negotiate resistance from family, but also have to tackle gender stereotypes that are thrown in their paths almost daily."

"Government programmes for stipends for girls in secondary schools have produced the dividend of more girls going for higher education. The government can put in place affirmative action in the recruitment of women. This is not to suggest any compromise with qualifications, but to give deliberate preference to equally qualified female candidates."

She further said, "Once women are recruited, trained and posted, the government has to ensure safe working conditions, safe accommodation and safe transport."

Invest in

FROM PAGE 1

"I also urge the non-resident Bangladeshis based in Qatar to invest in Bangladesh. We need your participation in our nation-building efforts," she said.

Hasina said that Bangladesh's bilateral relations with Qatar should be readjusted based on a mutually beneficial economic partnership as there is immense untapped potential.

She also put emphasis on setting up a joint committee on trade and investment and a joint business forum to bring private sectors on a single platform.

The PM said Bangladesh's agricultural growth also creates scope for cooperation in agro-processing industries, with buy-back arrangements.

"We have plans to set up three special tourism zones, where Qatar can engage in both real estate and hospitality sectors."

She said the country's vibrant start-up scene is ready to draw Qatari investment.

Qatari investors, she said, can consider portfolio investment in Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission is working hard to further develop our capital markets. We have taken several steps to establish our bond market on a solid footing. We are soon going to include derivative products in our capital markets," the PM said.

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'We're the only species to have threatened life on the planet'

Says historian Dipesh Chakrabarty in conversation with *Star*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Modernity, identity, and postcolonial theory have long been the primary areas of interest for Dipesh Chakrabarty, a pioneer of subaltern studies and currently the Lawrence A Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor of History, South Asian Languages and Civilisations, and the College at the University of Chicago.

In a candid and exclusive discussion held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday, Prof Chakrabarty unpacked his most recent work with the "Anthropocene", relaying the stories of how human life coexists with other life forms on the planet. The most urgent lesson to be taken is the risks that arise from this coexistence.



This is the first time that a biological species – not a volcanic eruption nor a meteor shower – has become akin to a great object threatening life forms on Earth.

"Geologists are saying that humans hold geological power today," he said.

"Just as a meteor shower made dinosaurs extinct, the number, the technologies, and the consumption patterns of human beings on earth have turned our species into a force that can bring about the sixth great extinction. This is the first time that a biological species – not a volcanic eruption nor a meteor shower – has become akin to a great object threatening life forms on Earth."

"We're the only species to have threatened life on the planet."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Marking the death anniversary of Tanwir Muhammad Taqi, a painting competition was held at the Charukala Institute in Narayanganj yesterday. Children of various ages from different educational institutions took part in the event. Some of them also drew portraits of Taqi. Seventeen-year-old Taqi went missing soon after he left home on March 6, 2013. His body was found floating on the Shitalakhya river on March 8. It has been 10 years, but the family's wait for justice is still not over.

PHOTO: STAR

Breaking the glass ceiling one at a time

Women share success story at event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Her business was wrecked during the pandemic, leaving her in a dire financial situation. She signed up with a ride sharing company and took satisfaction in being a female chauffeur in Dhaka. She currently earns more than Tk 3,000 per day.



Moriom Akhter shared her inspirational story at a programme in the capital's Chhayanaut yesterday.

The programme titled, "DigitALL: Technology in Equality of Men-Women" was organised by the daily Prothom Alo, in collaboration with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Women face more harassment online

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While women's participation on social media is increasing, they are also facing more harassment on these platforms, speakers told a seminar yesterday.

The speakers made the observation at an event organised by Light House, titled "DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality", in association with Pathfinder International, in Dhaka.

Referring to findings of a research conducted by ActionAid in 2022, Sohrab Hussain, adolescent behaviour change manager at Pathfinder International, said 63.51 percent of women have faced harassment online.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

No need for dialogue with BNP: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday ruled out any immediate prospect of dialogue between the ruling party and BNP.

"I don't see any necessity [for a dialogue]," Quader said after a reporter asked about the possibility.

He was speaking at a press conference at his secretariat office on different contemporary issues.

"If there is a need for dialogue, I will invite Fakhru [BNP's secretary general]. He can call me

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

PRAYER TIMING MAR 7



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5-15	12-45	4-30	6-05	7-30
Jamaat	5-50	1-15	4-45	6-10	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

MY DHAKA

Tradition of breadmaking on SHAB-E-BARAT still alive in Old Dhaka

RBR

A bite into a slice of oven-toasted, fresh bread smeared in soft, salted butter and sprinkled with sugar dust is no doubt heavenly. When the bread is in the shape of a fish with marble eyes and slightly pulled scales, with sesame seeds topped over it, the glee is almost childlike.

It's Shab-e-Barat and lanes of Old Dhaka are bustling with shops vending these soft, fluffy decorative pieces of bread. At the factories, mounds of flour are being made into dough and layered or shaped in moulds of fish and crocodiles, and shapes like circles, triangles, and rectangles.

The bakers add their imagination in detailing the products. Topped with candied fruits, they are sprinkled with sesame seeds and braids designed around edges. Some even have mirrors set on them in shapes of flowers and geometrical patterns.

Many people make it a point to visit the narrow lanes of Nazimuddin Road and stop at "Dhaka Bakery" for their festival bread. Although similar baked bread is found in places like the more renowned Ananda Confectionery, Olympia Bakery & Confectionery, or Chawk Bazar the ones from this particular shop

shop is their equally threadbare factory, where they have big woodfire ovens, where all the baking takes place. This year, Dhaka Bakery has already received orders for 50 mounds from different areas.

There is a certain festive energy surrounding the Shab-e-Barat, a night special to Muslims. Prayers dominate the day's routine but

have a certain plain goodness about them.

Md Alamgir Hossain is the owner of Dhaka Bakery. For 20 years this tiny shoebox-styled old store is rolling out special bread on Shab-e-Barat. The rest of the time they lie low, selling special toasts and regular baked products.

At the back of this cluttered

on a day like this, one needs to let go of strict eating discipline and indulge in the simple pleasure of maybe eating a slice of the special bread procured from Old Dhaka with carrot halwa.

For many, the afternoons are spent making different halwas and decorating them with almonds and edible silver foil. In many households, the air gets heavy with aromas of cinnamon and cardamoms sautéed in ghee. The ritual to prepare bread and halwas and sharing them with neighbours and the underprivileged is part of the day's plan.

Shab-e-Barat has lost much of its grandiosity in past few decades. Yet for many, it remains a night of prayers and devotion followed by a day still steeped in tradition.

Every nook and cranny of Dhaka have stories waiting to be told. "My Dhaka" gives interested writers the platform to share experiences of city life. Only selected stories will make it to our print edition and digital platform. Send your Dhaka story (within 450 words) to rafiat@thedailystar.net

The Daily Star

STELLAR WOMEN

Spark Your Inner Power

REGISTRATION ONGOING

CATEGORY
WOMEN IN EDUCATION

Stellar Women is an initiative of The Daily Star and bti, through which we will be recognising one extraordinary woman every month (from January '23 to December '23), playing a vital role in their distinguished fields for the development of the society and nation.

For the month of April 2023, we are inviting all the women in 'Education' Sector to register, who are:

Implementing multiple measures to ensure accessible education to all

Contributing to the development of a self-sufficient nation through education

REGISTER YOURSELF BY 31ST MARCH '23

FOR DETAILS

btistellarwomen.thedailystar.net

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SITAKUNDA BLAST

Negligence evident, yet no legal action

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Although three days have passed since the explosion at Sheema Oxygen Limited in Sitakunda's Keshabpur neighbourhood, no case was filed in this regard till yesterday.

The explosion killed seven people and injured over 25.

"No case has been filed yet [till 5:00pm yesterday]. The death toll reached seven and police handed over all the bodies to families," OC Md Tofayel Ahmed of Sitakunda Police Station told The Daily Star.

Abdul Malek, assistant director of Chattogram fire service, said, "The plant company failed to comply with factory-safety regulations, demonstrating their incompetence."

"The machines were not maintained properly," he added.

The absence of workers' safety equipment and a lack of inspections of heavy machinery are to blame for Sunday's explosion at Sheema Oxygen Plant, said probe officials after visiting the spot.



While visiting the spot, this correspondent found that two nearby factories -- "Harun Steel Rolling Mill" and Rubaiya Oxygen Plant -- were badly damaged following the blast, forcing them to halt their production.

The probe committee headed by Additional Deputy Magistrate Rakib Hasan visited the spot for the second consecutive day.

Rakib said, "So far, we have recorded the statements of 15 to 16 persons. Hopefully, the probe report will be submitted by Thursday. We will also conduct inspection to identify the risky establishments."

Chattogram Medical College Hospital Director Brig Gen Shamim Ahsan said the injured people have been provided with the best treatment.

Sadek Ali passes away

CITY DESK

Maj (ret'd) Sadek Ali passed away at United Hospital yesterday. He was 80.



He left behind his wife, daughter Amna Ali, granddaughters Suha and Zaha, and relatives, and well-wishers.

Sadek was the son of former minister and diplomat, president of Supreme Court Bar Association (twice), late Tafazzal Ali, and cultural and social worker Sarah Ali.

His wife was advocate Salma Ali, president of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association. His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Gulshan's Azad Mosque today after zuhr prayers. He will be buried at Banani graveyard.

Born in 1942, Sadek was educated in St Gregory's High School and Dhaka College. He obtained BA (Hons) & MA in English from Dhaka University.

He joined the Army Education Corps and took voluntary retirement as a major to pursue other careers. He was the MD of Gumti Enterprises and chairman of Kasba T Ali College. He served as an honorary consul of Lebanon.

We're the only

FROM PAGE 3

He further said in the year 1900, the world saw, for the first time, 1.6 billion people on the planet. The number skyrocketed to 6 billion in 100 years, and to 8 billion today.

One billion of this population were turned into consumers by 1986; 4 billion people are consumers today. This growth was exponential, and by 2000, 70 percent of these consumers comprised the upper classes living in Japan, Australia, North America, and the white population of South Africa. The proportions have been inverted today -- 70 percent of the world's consumers currently comprise the middle classes of India, Africa, etc.

Sustaining all these lives takes up energy. And the more money that humans amass, the more protein they consume, which means that more and more living beings are being consumed.

Prof Chakrabarty illustrated the point with the simple example of chickens -- 21 billion of the birds are being consumed

today; another is the smuggling of sand from the riverbeds of Bangladesh, which changes the course and pace of these rivers.

The evolution of human survival, therefore, charts the path for its mutation as well as that of the natural life with which it comes into contact, Prof Chakrabarty explained.

As the roles of language, art, and politics emerged in the discussion, the historian commented upon the impact of money on the environment. "Our cities become unlivable as consumers engage in the race to capitalise on silence and peace," he said.

And yet, the crisis of survival removes the space for despair.

"When your house is filling up with water, when you are at the front lines of suffering, you simply have to act," he said. "It is on their behalf that the government has to act in advance, be it through satellite systems or natural disaster management, particularly in the coastal regions," he added.

Breaking

FROM PAGE 3

City Alo, to celebrate International Women's Day 2023.

Prothom Alo Editor Matiar Rahman said, "In our society, women suffer from social avoidance, poverty, taboos, and stigmas. We are motivated by the fact that they are attempting to conquer this fear and succeed in their life."

"We must speak out against the mistreatment of women, and we will do so without a doubt," he added.

Few more successful women in their respective sectors shared their struggles and stories.

Attress Mohsina Akhter, biker Sadia Yasmin Chowdhury, and scientist Lamiya Ashraf Mawla were among them.

Mashrur Arefin, managing director of City Bank, said, "Still, the home is a site of vulnerability for women. Almost 60 percent of women experience domestic violence. If women are not included in this journey of prosperity, societal freedom will not be attainable."

Eight more hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least eight dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours across the country till yesterday morning.

According to the DGHS, the total number of dengue cases this year rose to 766.

Nine people have died from dengue this year.

People living under AL misrule CPB gen secy tells rally marking its 75th anniv

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince yesterday said people are now living under the "misrule of Awami League".

"People do not have the right to vote here. They are fed up with the skyrocketing prices of daily commodities," he added.

He made these remarks at a rally held in front of the party's central

office organised to celebrate the 75th founding anniversary of CPB, the oldest political party in the country.

Claiming that AL has deviated from the spirit of the Liberation War, Prince said communal and non-political forces are now rearing their heads.

Saying that exploitation, corruption, looting, communalism, intolerance, and discrimination are on the rise, CPB President Mohammad Shah Alam called upon all to wage a movement to free the country from "AL's misrule".

10 storied building To-Let

House-8, Road-113/A, Gulshan. 100% commercial building. Per floor 3000+ sft. Total 31500 sft. Open space, 2 Lift, Generator (full back up), Parking space. Multinational company, NGO, Organization Preferred. Whole building/ partly is available for rent. Pls. Contact: 01711-78 0401

বসুন্ধরায় কর্পার পুটে বাড়ী বিক্রয়

বসুন্ধরা বারিধারা আবাসিক এলাকায় রোড-৫, বাড়ী নং- ৫৫৯, ব্রক-এইচ, ৮০ফিট/ ২৫ফিট কর্পার রাস্তা সংযুক্ত একটা জমির উপর নির্মিত একটি অত্যাধুনিক ইন্টেলিজেন্ট ডিজাইনসহ ৭তলা বিশিষ্ট ভূপ্রেস্ট নতুন বাড়ী বিক্রয় হইবে। যোগাযোগ: ০১৭১১৫৪৬৬৮৭, ই-মেইল: mdfariduddin6687@gmail.com

No need for dialogue

FROM PAGE 3

if he feels the need," he said. Asked whether there is any possibility that the next election will be held under the president, the minister said the Constitution never had to be amended to accept alternative proposals. "We will not compromise regarding

the Constitution. Solution has to come from the Constitution."

Apart from politics, the minister encountered other questions.

After taking charge of the road transport and bridges ministry around a decade ago, Quader set two priorities: reducing traffic congestion in the capital and bringing discipline in the transport sector to reduce road crashes.

But traffic congestion has rather intensified, and people are getting killed in road crashes every day.

Asked whether he thinks of himself as a successful minister, Quader said, "Nobody is perfect. Even the moon has dark spots... We are not sitting idle. We are working continuously."

Replying to a question, Quader said they are not considering opening Padma Bridge for motorcycles at the moment.

The government banned bikes from plying the bridge a day after it was opened to the public in June last year.

Save the Children Date: March 07, 2023

Save the Children is the world's leading, independent organisation for children

Invitation for Tender

Save the Children International (SCI) is hereby inviting for tender from interested experienced bona fide vendors for Providing Group Life and Medical Coverage Insurance for National Employees of Save the Children International for its offices and other locations in Bangladesh. For details, please see the IFT schedule, which is available on <http://procurement.scibd.com> under tender notification. Downloaded copy is acceptable for tender participation.

Description, submission time & date:				
SL	Name of IFT	Reference No.	Pre-Tender Meeting Schedule and Place	Last date of Tender Submission
1	Group Life and Medical Coverage Insurance for National Employees of Save the Children International, Bangladesh	IFT/SCI/BDCO/ FY-23/0003	Physical Meeting: 13/03/2023 at 3:00 PM House CWN (A) 35, Road 43, Gulshan 2, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh	March 29, 2023, at 2:00 PM

Special Instruction: (a) All activities in connection with the said procurement of Goods/Services will be guided as per the SCI's Procurement Policies. (b) If it is not possible to receive & open the tender on the scheduled date for any unavoidable circumstances, the same will be received and opened on the following working date at same time and same place. (c) If the Tenderer(s) submit any false/incorrect or fake documents then the provided bid by tenderer will be considered as disqualified. (d) The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders.

Head of Supply Chain

NATIONAL CREDIT AND COMMERCE BANK LIMITED COMMON SERVICES DIVISION

Head Office: NCC Bank Bhaban, 13/1-2, Toyenbee Circular Road Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, Phone: 223390053 PABX: 223381901-4, 223383981-2, Ext-117

NOTICE OF INVITING QUOTATIONS FOR BELOW MENTION REQUIREMENTS

Sealed quotations are hereby invited by National Credit and Commerce Bank Limited (the Bank) from reputed Companies/Local Agents/Suppliers/Authorized Distributors/Service Providers for the below mentioned requirements under the terms and conditions mentioned detail in the Request for Quotation (RFQ) documents.

Items Description	Price of the Tender document	Sale start date	Sale end date	Date and time for Tender Submission
Item-1: Supply, deployment, installation and configuration of Hardware--Server at NCC Bank Data Center (DC) and Near Data Center (NDC).	Tk. 5,000/- (Five Thousand) only for each item separately in the form of Payment Order (non-refundable) favoring National Credit and Commerce Bank Limited by any scheduled bank of Bangladesh	March 07, 2023	March 16, 2023	March 22, 2023 on/before 2:00 PM
Item-2: Supply, deployment, installation and configuration of SAN Switch at NCC Bank Data Center (DC) and Near Data Center (NDC).				
Item-3: Supply, deployment, installation and configuration of SAN Storage at NCC Bank Data Center (DC) and Near data center (NDC).				
Item-4: Supply, installation and configuration of Operating System License at NCC Bank Data Center (DC) and Near Data Center (NDC).				
Item-5: Supply, installation and configuration of Database License at NCC Bank Data Center (DC) and Near Data Center (NDC).				

The schedule containing detailed Terms & Conditions may be collected from the Common Services Division, Level-5, NCC Bank Ltd. Head Office, Dhaka and submit the same under sealed envelope to the Tender Box placed at Common Services Division (CSD). Manipulation or any kind of unusual approach or failure to submit offer within the stipulated time frame will be treated as "Disqualified" for the bidding. Tender will be opened on March 22, 2023 at 2:30 PM in presence of the bidders or their representatives (if any). The Bank authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposal without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Vice President & Head of Common Services Division

Women face

FROM PAGE 3

Advocate Kamrun Nahar, programme manager of Naripokkho, pointed out that women are victims of other kinds of abuse as well.

Referring to a 2015 survey of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, she said 72 percent of women among 100 participants responded that they faced domestic violence.

Career Opportunity

Bangladesh Jatiya Andha Kalyan Somity (BJAKS), Cumilla, a national NGO-based at Cumilla is looking for the following position:

Sl. No.	Name of the post	Educational qualification & experience	Age	Additional requirements
1	Assistant Project Manager (Male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from any recognized University. Minimum two years working experience in Eye Related NGO is preferable. 	Not over 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of computer operations including the use of MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint Presentation. Ability to prepare Project Proposal like GO & NGO. Ability to work with donors and Govt. agencies. Fluent in written and spoken English. Represent the program at meetings, consultations, etc. for effective dialogue and advocacy at district, upazila and union level. Provide strategic direction, oversight and leadership to project staffs to manage the project.

Salary and other benefits:

- Salary negotiable.
- P.F and Gratuity as per Organization's policy.
- Two festival bonus equivalent to basic salary.

Interested candidates should apply with details resume along with the name of two references, two copies recent passport size photographs to General Secretary and Chief Executive, Bangladesh Jatiya Andha Kalyan Somity (BJAKS), Cumilla, Shankarpur, Alekharchar (Bishwa Road), Cumilla-3500, Bangladesh or send resume with necessary documents through Courier or Post Office by 23 March 2023.

Dr. A K M Abdus Salim
 General Secretary and Chief Executive
 BJAKS, Cumilla

D-30

RAK CERAMICS

RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited

RAK Tower (7th, 8th & 9th Floor), Plot # 1/A, Jasimuddin Avenue, Sector # 3, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka-1230

NOTICE OF THE 24TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 24th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited will be held on Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 11:00 am (Bangladesh Time). Pursuant to the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission's Order No. SEC/SRMIC/94-231/91 dated 31 March 2021, the AGM will be held virtually by using digital platform through the following link <https://agmbd.live/rak2023> to transact the following businesses:

AGENDA

- To receive, consider and adopt the Audited Financial Statements of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2022, together with the reports of the Auditor and the Directors.
- To declare dividend for the year ended 31 December 2022.
- To elect/re-elect Director(s) of the Company.
- To appoint the Statutory Auditors of the Company for the year 2023 and fix their remuneration.
- To appoint the Chartered Secretary in Practice (Compliance Auditors) of the Company for the year 2023 for compliance certification on corporate governance and fix their remuneration.
- To approve of entering into contract for sale or purchase of goods and materials with Mohammed Trading amounting to 10% (ten percent) or above of the revenue for the immediate preceding financial year.

By order of the Board of Directors

Sd/-
(Muhammad Shahidul Islam FCS)
 Company Secretary

Dhaka, Bangladesh
 Date: March 07, 2023

QR code for AGM link

Notes:

- The shareholders whose name appeared in the Share/Depository Register as on the 'Record Date' (i.e. February 16, 2023), are eligible to participate in the 24th AGM and receive the dividend.
- The Board unanimously recommended dividend @ 10% in cash of the paid up capital of the Company for the year 2022.
- In order to comply with the BSEC notification No. BSEC/CMRRCD/2009-193/10/Admin/118 dated March 22, 2021; the Board of Directors has recommended to enter into contract for sale or purchase of goods and materials with Mohammed Trading [Owner is Managing Director of RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited] amounting to 10% (ten percent) or above of the revenue for the immediate preceding financial year subject to approval of the shareholders.
- A shareholder entitled to attend and vote at the AGM may appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his/her behalf (such a proxy shall be a shareholder of the Company). The Proxy Form, duly filled, signed and stamped of BDT 20 must be sent through email to the Company at sharedepartment.bgd@rakceramics.com not later than 48 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.
- Shareholders are requested to submit through mail to the Company at sharedepartment.bgd@rakceramics.com on or before March 22, 2023, their written option to receive dividend in the form available in Company's website www.rakceramics.com/bangladesh. If the shareholder fails to submit such option within the stipulated time, the dividend will be paid off as deemed appropriate by the Company.
- The concern stock broker, merchant banker and portfolio manager are requested to submit through mail to the Company at sharedepartment.bgd@rakceramics.com on or before March 22, 2023; the statement along with detail of their margin client or customer who has debit balance or margin loan, who are entitled to receive cash dividend of the Company for the year ended December 31, 2022. The statement should include shareholder's name, BO ID number, client-wise shareholding position, gross dividend receivable, applicable tax rate, net dividend receivable etc. along with the Consolidated Customers' Bank Account number, routing number and contact person.
- The shareholders will be able to submit their questions/comments and vote electronically 24 hours before commencement of the AGM and during the AGM. For logging in to the system, the shareholders need to put their 16 digit Beneficial Owner (BO) ID number and other credential as proof of their identity by visiting the link <https://agmbd.live/rak2023>
- Shareholders are requested to log in to the system prior to the meeting start time of 11:00 am (Bangladesh Time) on 30 March 2023. The webcast will start at 10:45 am on March 30, 2023. Please contact +8801730058055 and +8801730055355 for any technical difficulties in accessing the virtual meeting.
- Detail log in process has been sent through email to respective shareholder's mail ID available in their BO Account maintained with the Depository. The detailed procedures to participate in the virtual meeting along with link are also available in the Company's website www.rakceramics.com/bangladesh



People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
office of the Upazila Engineer
Upazila-Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka
E-mail: ue.dhamrai@lged.gov.bd



শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

Memo No.46.02.2614.000.014.2022-288

Date: 02/03/2023

e-Tender Notice No.02/2022-2023

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System portyal (LTM) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following scheme list below:

Sl. No	Tender ID	Name of Scheme	Last Selling date & Time	Closing Date & time	Opning Date & Time
1	796852	1.Improvement of road by brick Flat Solling (BFS) from H/O Shajahan to H/O Mohon at Kataboi Tatipara under Bhararia Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 2. Construction of PVC Pipe drain for Water Reduce on road from H/O Nlu to H/O Alim Sarder at Bhararia under Bhararia Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 3. Construction of Guide wall from Nolam-Shimulia Main road to Near H/O Jalil at Kataboi Nodirpar under Bhararia Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 4. Improvement of Road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from BC Road to H/O Bask Master at Gotul Nowgao Tatipara under Bhararia Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 5. Improvement of Road by Earth filling from H/O Harun to H/O some Ali at Kakran Bhotopara under Bhararia Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 6. Improvement of road by CC work from front H/O Osman to H/O Jamal at Kakran Haluapara under Bhararia Union, Upazila: Dhamra, District: Dhaka. 7. Construction of Guide wall on road front H/O Joynul to H/O Liakat at Kakrar Majhpara under Bhararia Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 8. Improvement of road by CC work from H/O Billal to H/O Hazi Abdul Berek at Tetulia Chandrapara under Bhararia Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Vararia UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
2	796777	1. Improvement of Kalampur Riaz uddib house to Chairman house road under Sutipara UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of RCC road Kalampur-Saturia-Balia Pacca road Kano mia house to Kalampur Central Mosque road under Sutipara UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 3. Improvement of Dhaka-Aricha NHW Assian conzomer West side to Borotia Forhad house road under Sutipara UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 4. Improvement of Dhaka-Aricha NHW Assian conzomer West side to Borotia Forhad house road under Sutipara UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. by BFS Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Sutipara UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
3	796857	1. Improvement of Construction of RCC road from Siyalkul Babul house to Motir house road at ch.70-250m under Suapur UP, Upazila-Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Suapur UP	22-Mar-12023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
4	796850	1. Improvement of Road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from H/O Joynal to H/O Hye at Char Dawtia under Sombhag Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from H/O Mostofa to South side of Mosque at Depashai Noyapara under Sombhag Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 3. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from H/O Munta to H/O Korimon at Nowgao under Sombhag union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 4. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from H/O Nurul Islam to H/O Alomgir at Dawtia Baliapara under Sombhag Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 5. Construction of Guide wall from Mill of Hanif Ali to H/O Kuddus at Chapil under Sombhag Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 6. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from H/O Mehedi to Shop of Momir at Gawail under Sombhag Union, Upazila: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Sombhag UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
5	796846	1. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) of Shibpur Mosque road under Sanora UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Valum College Polli (Kalampur) to Sonia & Josna Madam's House to Saiful's House road under Sanora UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 3. Construction of Inside Campur Road in Vallum Ataur Rahman Khan College under Sanora UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 4. Improvement of road by Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) from Dewnai Paca Road to Mizan Member House road under Sanora UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 5. Construction of road Pond Guide wall in front of Abdul Awal Saheb's House in Pathhara Village of Sanora Union Under Sanora UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 6. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Narayanpur Honu Bepari's House to Koboristan Road under Sanora UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Sanora UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
6	796860	1. Improvement of Senial Akkis house to Chinebash house road by Brick Flat Solling road under Rowail UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of Kishangardresh house to Suapur Pacca road via Bridge road by Brick Flat Solling road under Rowail UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 3. Improvement of Kharar Char Munaf House to Dhudo house road by Brick Flat Solling road under Rowail UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 4. Improvement of Kharar char Habis uddin house to Bahutkul Bridge road by Brick Flat Solling road under rowail UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 5. Improvement of Bhuathkul Pacca road to Sumi house via Tajjuddin Shop Bridge road by Brick Flat Solling road under Rowail UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Rowail UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
7	796863	1. Improvement of Ghorakanda Golam Rasul house to Kader House road Under Nannar UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of Shawrail Sukur house to Sonthos land road Under Nannar UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. by BFS Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Nannaer UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
8	796843	1. Construction of Infront Kusura Union parised Campas Parking Tiles & Complex Verandh Floor Tiles under Kusura UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of 8 no ward Bannakhola Bazar Bottree to North side Dewkhola Madrasa road under Kusura UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 3. Improvement of Toperbari pacca road to Ideal Gosso Village road under Kusura UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 4. Improvement of 2 no ward in Nobogram Kacher Khola to Homayon house road under Kusura UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 5. Improvement of Kathali Sonamia house to Eidga Filed road under Kusura UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 6. Improvement of 3 no ward Modhudangga Village Emaruth House to Sazuuddin house road under Kusura UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 7. Improvement of Kathalia Village Abdur Rahman Shop to Salim sarker house road under Kusura UP Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Kusura UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023

9	796856	1. Improvement of Laruakonda Kurban house to Jamal house road by Brick Flat Solling road under Kulla UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of Barigaon Vim house to Sholakha house road by Brick Flat Solling road under Kulla UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 3. Improvement of Mamura Kurban house to Akhir house road by Brick Flat Solling road under Kulla UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 4. Construction of 800mm dia 7.32m Long RCC pipe culvert on Chowtail Samsul house East side road under Kulla UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 5. Improvement of Rupnagar Masum house to Kheya ghat road by Brick Flat Solling road under Kulla UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Kulla UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
10	796838	1. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) From Jadobpur East Para Aulad Hossain House West side to Abdul Gafur's house road under Jadobpur UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, Dist: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Amrail Atik house to Puran Mosque Road under Jadobpur UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 3. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Back side of Gomgram Mosque Madbor house to East side road under Jadobpur UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Jadobpur UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
11	796866	1. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Gandulia Shohidul New house to East side road under Ganggutia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 2. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Gaborpara rai house to Ganggutia Bazar Road under Ganggutia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 3. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Rokkhit Jelekhar house to East side road under Ganggutia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 4. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Hatkora Mojibor house to East Side road under Ganggutia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 5. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from West para Jalsa Roton house to South Side Road under Ganggutia UP, Upazila Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 6. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Paruhala GPS to North side Marapara road under Ganggutia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 7. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) of Kawlipara Dudh Bazar Road under Ganggutia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Ganggutia UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
12	796854	1. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Kandikul Jame Mosque to Abdul Ohab house road under Dhamrai UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 2. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Damran Samad house to Deoyan Mostofa house road under Dhamrai UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 3. Construction of road by CC from Shorifbag Hasan house to Saiful House road under Dhamrai UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 4. Construction of road by CC from Iquria Chattar house to Kalo Munnaf house road under Dhamrai UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 5. Repairing of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Hazi Amir Uddin House to Alamin House road under Dhamrai UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 6. Construction of PVC Pipe drain for Water Reduce from Emdad house to Iquria South Ghatla under Dhamrai Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 7. Construction of road by CC from Shorifbag Hazi Habibur House to Sariful house road under Dhamrai UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Dhamrai Sadar UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
13	796780	1. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Choto Vakulia Paca Road to Razzak House Road under Chowhat UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Atulla Mannan house Eit Soling to Munsirchor Chorasta road under Chowhat UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 3. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Banggola North Para Bridge to Abdul House Road under Chowhat UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Chowhat UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
14	796790	1. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Nayachar East Para Chanoyar House to Ahmmed Khet under Balia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Dunigram Three road Mor Eit Soling to Jangaliya River Par Badol House under Balia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 3. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Basta Anowar house to pacca road under Balia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 4. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Tetail Puraton Lebu Ghat to Mir Hosain House road under Balia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 5. Construction of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Basta Mukul House to Basta Bazar road under Balia UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Balia UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
15	796840	1. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from H/O Shofi Master to Link road H/O Sultan via H/O Dr. Altaf and H/O District Judge at Khagail Ward No. 02 under Baishakanda Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Kali Mondir to H/O Komol at South Khagail Ward No. 01 under Baishakanda Union, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Baishakanda UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023
16	796781	1. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Agiethail Munsur House to Shanti House under Amta UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 2. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Joar Amta Sattar House to Babu's Bridge under Amta UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 3. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Dakatmara Babul Shop to Sobahan's house under Amta UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. 4. Improvement of road by Brick Flat Solling (BFS) from Boro Jethail Mostofa's house to Koborstan under Amta UP, Upazila: Dhamrai, District: Dhaka. Package No: e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Amta UP	22-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023	23-Mar-2023

This is an online Tender, Where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-Tender Portal and on 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 Document from the National e-GP system Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches 21 March/2023 Time 4.00PM.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

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PHOTO: COURTESY

The Earth Society successfully organises CLIMATE EXPO 2023

We were able to network with many delegates and significant personnel here, and we received feedback from them, which I feel is our most essential takeaway from this Expo.

SUMAIYA RASHID

The Earth Society, in partnership with the Climate Parliament of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Movers Program, RR Kabel Bangladesh, and UNDP conducted Climate Expo 2023 at Gulshan Society Park on February 25, 2023, with the goal of showcasing, connecting, and collaborating on sustainable goods, services, innovation, and eco-friendly activities in order to contribute to SDG-13.

The goal of Climate EXPO 2023 was to connect climate entrepreneurs and change-makers with diverse stakeholders such as corporations, incubators, investors, policymakers, and public visitors. There were small workshops, panel discussions, exhibitor stalls, and interactive activities for leading new solutions to raise awareness on the topic.

"The purpose of today is to promote sustainable living, whether via work or on a personal level. We wanted to provide exposure to what we do and how we promote sustainable living in Bangladesh," said Mashiat Fariha Alam, Senior Project Manager at SOLshare.

SOLShare, Palki Motors Limited, Antobihin, Wastech, Aicha, Safepad Bangladesh, Dr. Chashi, and several other eco-friendly startups were among the green projects showcased at

the Expo.

Jabir Al Mahdi, Co-founder, Wastech describes his experience, "We've wanted to participate in an expo like this for a long time but haven't had the chance until now. We make handcrafted items out of scrap plastic. Our flagship product, the eco-pen made from recycled and discarded papers, will launch next month. We were able to network with many delegates and significant personnel here, and we received feedback from them, which I feel is our most essential takeaway from this Expo. We didn't expect to get so much exposure today, so we're highly satisfied with the outcome."

The final panel discussion led on the agenda "Green Partnership - Collaboration for sustainable solution" and the panellists included, Shamima Akhter, Head of Corporate Affairs, Partnership, and Communication, Unilever; Farhana Islam, Head of Social Impact, Gramphone; Robert Chatterton Dickson, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh; Keith Metzner, team leader, Climate and Environment, USAID Bangladesh; Sarder M. Asaduzzaman, Assitant Resident Representative and Head of Programme Management and Partnership, UNDP

Bangladesh; Dr Saiful Momen, Assistant Professor & Chair of the Department of Environmental Science and Management, North South University.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, Chairman, Standing Committee on Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change Chief Patron, Climate Parliament Bangladesh chaired the panel session and concluded the expo by sharing his viewpoint, "If I can make a confession, I had no idea that so much work was actually being done at the grassroots level by young people. But that is inspiring also because we always think of climate and environment as challenges, at liabilities, but I think there are also opportunities. The young generation in particular are trying to catch up on and that is very exciting. It's a great initiative, I commend and salute the work you're doing. You talked about the SDGs and SDG 17 is about partnerships and I think as we look forward, we need to look at how do we bring governments, how do we bring the academia, the corporate sector, the entrepreneurs and even perhaps development partners together. And I think that's really one puzzle that we need to solve first and I'm sure we are all on the same page."

How I learned to not hate dorms

SADMAN AHMED

I remember when my roommate started to cough frantically at 2:30 AM one day. He had a severe cold for a few days, and that night it got worse. I got up from my bed to fetch the medicine. It didn't feel like a big deal at the time, but the realisation hit me later. What had I just done?

Had this happened just a while back, I'd have probably panicked and woken up someone older for help.

I have been in Dhaka for my whole life. My school and my college always had the same roads and I was always home before dark. As I listened to the stories of my parents' dorm lives, I never felt like those things could happen to me. But fate had reserved something else for me.

The period of denial occurs before one commits to the dorm life. "I have never lived outside home! How can I stay in a dorm?" - the thought haunted me. But practical necessities forced me to take up residence in a random room that was allotted for me. And since...

There has been a brief period of sadness. I had never imagined myself in a scenario like this, but here I was, sharing a room with three different strangers. I looked at the unrecognisable ceilings, talking only when needed. It didn't take long to go from there to a place where my internal voice screamed, "I WANNA GO HOME!"

After the initial phase of denial, I slowly



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

realised that we were living, studying, sharing notes, borrowing each other's tools, and helping each other out every day without realising it consciously. The people living in the hall became the most familiar faces. It did feel like home. That night, my roommate felt like family.

Is family really the word for it? Leaving our loved ones elsewhere, dorms do create a new family for everyone, where you live with each other and become more than friends. Not that there aren't any struggles. Just like a real family, a dorm family involves people from different backgrounds, beliefs, and habits. Nights without classes the next day can result in a night-long storytelling epic, sharing one's most embarrassing or emotional memories.

Romanticising my hall life doesn't mean I want to shy away from the fact that in many universities the dorm life is not so rosy, due to issues as ragging and student politics. But these experiences have given me the privilege to create a new family in a safe place and for that, I'm extremely grateful.

Sadman, as the name suggests is indeed a sad man. He got sorted in Hufflepuff at pottermore and has been sad ever since. Send him happy quotes at siamahmed09944@gmail.com

Transforming futures: The power of Uttoron's youth training and employment programme

SAUDIA AFRIN

"It wasn't easy to endure the mistreatment of society for being an unemployed youth," said 24-year-old Nahidul Islam, sharing the difficulty he faced in finding employment after completing his SSC.

He also completed a basic computer course, but the certificate did not prove helpful in securing a job due to its lack of validation.

However, Nahidul didn't lose hope.

He was able to improve his financial situation by completing advanced and basic welding trainings under the Swisscontact project Uttoron in partnership with Khulna Shipyard.

The high-quality training allowed him to discover new career opportunities, and with his enhanced skills, Nahidul now prefers to freelance for higher earnings instead of settling for a permanent job.

Currently, he works as a welder in the Gazi Pipe Factory, building steel shades.

Uttoron - a promising initiative

The skill development initiative Uttoron is a joint project between Swisscontact and Chevron, with financial support from the latter.

Chevron runs three gas fields in the northeast region of the country and has a goal of enhancing the lives and livelihoods of the local residents, particularly by empowering young people. Swisscontact, on the other hand, places a significant emphasis on skill development programmes such as upskilling, reskilling, and introductory vocational training, with youth advancement being one of its key objectives. The partnership between these two organisations on the Uttoron project was formed with the common aim of promoting youth skill development.

Nadia Afrin Shams, the Team Leader for Swisscontact's Uttoron Project, noted that annually, 6.6 million individuals enter the

workforce, both in formal and informal settings, but many lack fundamental training and skills, making it challenging for them to enter the industry. The aim of Uttoron is to enhance the technical skills of young people through vocational training, make training more accessible, and bring new ideas to the national skills sector.

The Uttoron project began in 2016 and its second phase, which lasted three years, was completed in 2022.

Under this project, basic training in eight different trades, such as welding, Packaging and Finishing Operation (PFO), electrical installation and maintenance, plumbing pipe fitting, mobile phone servicing, housekeeping, refrigeration and air conditioning, and machinist were provided. These three-month courses offered over 300 hours of learning and training opportunities, with locations in Dhaka, Sylhet, Habiganj, and Moulvibazar.

Dulal Krishna Saha, former head of the National Skills Development Authority, praised Uttoron for its innovative approach. He noted that many well-educated young people struggle to fully utilise their abilities because they lack hands-on experience. He stressed the importance of programmes like Uttoron that provide not only theoretical education but also practical apprenticeships for students to apply their knowledge.

Facilitating advanced courses

Nadia Afrin highlighted the issue of hiring welding workers from outside due to a shortage of formally skilled workers in Bangladesh. To address this, Uttoron and the Khulna Shipyard Technical Training Center, a leading government technical facility, joined forces to provide advanced welding training to 50 basic welding trainees using internationally standardised methods, she informed.

Swisscontact supported the training programme by providing trainers up-to-



date machinery and test equipment to set up a modern lab facility at the Khulna Shipyard Technical Training Center as well as a comprehensive curriculum for advanced welding training. The training was conducted by the Khulna Shipyard Technical Training Center.

According to Captain Abul Kalam Azad, General Manager of Khulna Shipyard, the students not only received training to improve their prospects, but also gained practical experience by building ships at the shipyard. This combination of theory and practical knowledge is crucial for success in technical and vocational education and training, as well as future recruitment.

The students were certified by Bureau Veritas (BV), a highly recognised global certification institute, giving them a better chance of being accepted by large companies. In addition, Uttoron established the

national standard for the welding inspector profession in partnership with the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) and introduced an android app in Bangla to enhance the soft skills of unskilled and semi-skilled youth in the formal job market.

Creating new job opportunities for women
Fahima Akhter, who was pursuing her honours degree in Political Science, started teaching at a local kindergarten school to support her family. However, she was struggling to make ends meet as her earnings were not sufficient.

To try her luck in the technical sector, Fahima participated in a three-month-long Packaging and Finishing Operation (PFO) trade program under project Uttoron. She quickly landed a job at PRAN RFL, Habiganj Industrial Park as an assistant operator, thanks to her strong grasp of both theory and

practice she acquired through the training. a

Fahima expressed her gratitude, saying, "With the earnings from this job, I am now able to support my family."

The female-friendly Packaging and Finishing Operation (PFO) training programme has provided a new opportunity for underprivileged women in remote areas of Bangladesh to participate in the economy through the packaging sector.

Along with PFO, women and men were trained in other trades. In 2022, a total of 1931 graduates of Uttoron completed vocational training programs, with 24 percent of them being women.

Permanent training facility established

To increase access to vocational training for young people of all backgrounds, Uttoron and the Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) joined forces in 2022 by establishing a permanent training facility. The goal of the collaboration is to create a training centre managed by SCC, providing convenient access to vocational training.

Ariful Haque Choudhury emphasised the high expatriate presence in the SCC demographics and stated, "To maintain economic growth in my region and fulfill labour demands with local resources, while also meeting external demands, we must focus on skill development. We need more public-private initiatives like Uttoron." The SCC is working to link the training institute with industry for hands-on learning experiences.

To build a skilled nation, it is crucial to adopt an integrated approach involving the government, private organisations, and NGOs to provide quality training. The Uttoron project provides a valuable model, combining training facilities, skill development opportunities, and public-private partnerships, which can be emulated to drive progress in Bangladesh.

INTERNATIONAL

Imran banned from airwaves

The Pak ex-PM moves Lahore HC against the move

AGENCIES

Pakistan TV stations have been banned from broadcasting speeches by former prime minister Imran Khan, the state media watchdog said, the latest hurdle facing the politician as he campaigns for early elections.

Khan was routed from office in a no-confidence motion last year and has been pressuring the fragile coalition which replaced him with daily speeches, regular rallies and allegations of corruption.

Meanwhile, the 70-year-old former cricketing superstar has been tangled in a slew of elaborate legal cases, a frequent fixture in Pakistan's mudslinging politics.

Late Sunday, as police attempted to arrest Khan in connection with a corruption case, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) banned his live speeches and reruns with immediate effect.

The order came after Khan addressed hundreds of supporters outside his house. "I am being summoned in fake cases and the nation should know about them," he said.

"It will be a bad omen for the country if the nation does not stand against the corrupt rulers."

PEMRA said he was "levelling baseless allegations and spreading hate speech... against state institutions and officers" which are "likely to disturb public peace".

Hours after the notice, PEMRA also suspended private TV station ARY News, which backs Khan.

Khan yesterday moved the Lahore High Court (LHC) against the Pemra's decision. A hearing will take place today, reported Dawn.

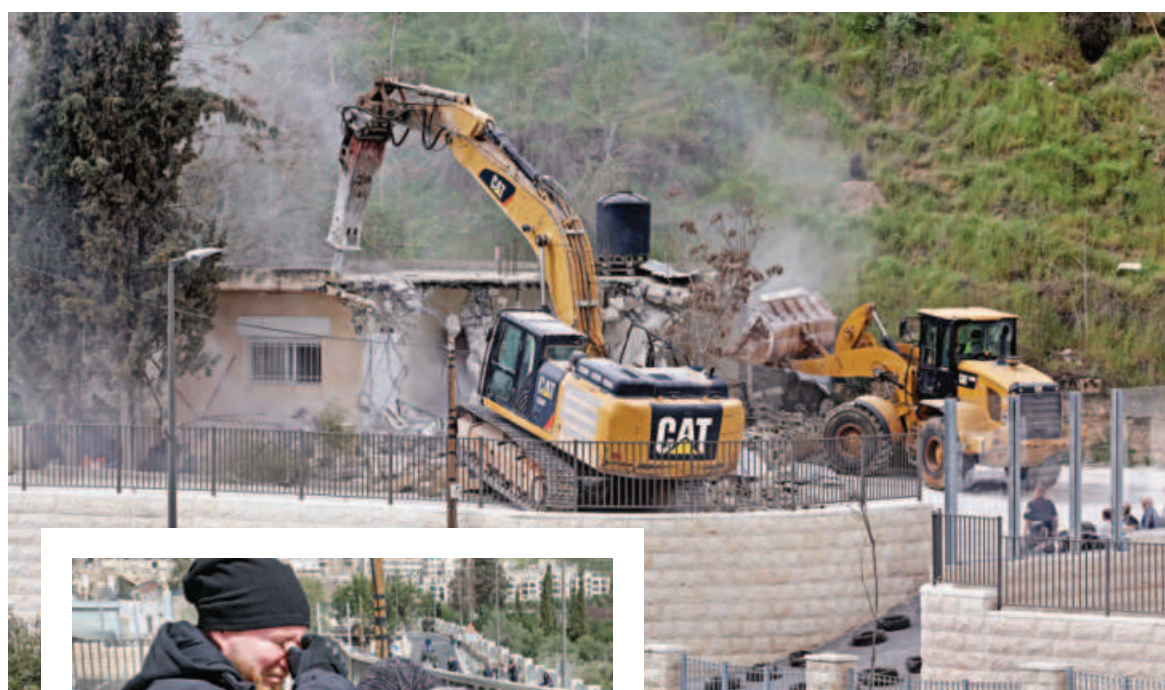
Sunday's directives were the third such ban of Imran's speeches and press talks. The first such restriction was set aside by the Islamabad High Court on Sept 6, 2022 and the other was withdrawn hours after being imposed by the government.

Pakistan has stringent speech controls. The constitution allows free speech to be restricted in the interests of "public order, decency or morality", a provision rights groups say is designed to quash dissent.

TV channels are regularly ordered to modify their coverage for political reasons, and last month the Wikipedia website was briefly blocked for allegedly hosting "blasphemous content".

Islamabad police officers, who travelled to Khan's home in Lahore, were ultimately unsuccessful in their attempt to detain him on Sunday after he failed to appear in a corruption case late last month. He is accused of failing to declare gifts received during his time in office.

In 2018, Khan swept to power thanks to an electorate weary of the dynastic politics of Pakistan's two major parties. He promised to do away with entrenched corruption and cronyism, but has become bogged down in like-for-like allegations with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Nonetheless, Khan remains hugely popular among the nation's youth.



Israeli military bulldozers demolish a house of a Palestinian family, built without the municipality's permission, in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Wadi al-Joz yesterday. Inset, Palestinian family members react as their house is being demolished by the bulldozers.

PHOTO: AFP

GLOBAL GREENHOUSE GASES

UN takes step towards new way of tracking

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations announced yesterday that it had taken a significant step towards trying to fill a key gap in the fight against climate change: standardised, real-time tracking of greenhouse gases.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization has come up with a new Global Greenhouse Gas Monitoring Infrastructure that aims to provide better ways of measuring planet-warming pollution and help inform policy choices.

The WMO's new platform will integrate space-based and surface-based observing systems, and seek to clarify uncertainties about where

greenhouse gas emissions end up.

It should result in much faster and sharper data on how the planet's atmosphere is changing.

"We know from our measurements that greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere are at record high," WMO chief Petteri Taalas said.

The three major greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. Of those, CO2 accounts for around 66 percent of the warming effect on the climate.



"The increase in CO2 levels from 2020 to 2021 was higher than the average growth rate over the past decade, and methane saw the biggest year-on-year jump," Taalas said.

The 2015 Paris Agreement saw countries agree to cap global warming at "well below" two degrees Celsius above levels measured between 1850 and 1900 – and 1.5C if possible. WMO said there needed to be stronger underpinnings of climate change mitigation actions taken under the agreement.

Govt to sit again

FROM PAGE 12

said that there have not been benefits from the law, but I don't believe that to be true."

"When we saw that the law was being abused, we communicated with the United Nations Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and had a virtual meeting with them. Then I went to Geneva and spoke with the high commissioner," he explained, adding that since then they have been trying to identify good examples across the world.

"We have formed a committee along with the OHCHR comprised of officers from the law ministry, foreign ministry, home ministry and ICT division. The UN office has given some suggestions and the government is looking into it," said the minister.

He added, "I will not say that this law does not have any flaws. All laws have some procedural flaws and some problems in implementation. When there is a problem in implementation, then that can be fixed through a discussion. If we can solve the problem by changing any clauses, then we will do so."

"The way civil society adheres to the constitution, we do too. We too do not want that there be any law that goes against the constitution," he said, adding that the DSA was not formulated to violate the right to freedom of expression or independent journalism.

He said that DSA is only meant to curb digital crimes. "It is regrettable that many are abusing and misusing the law after it was made."

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, Jyotirmoy Barua, Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, and academic Professor CR Abrar also spoke at the event while Randy Ali, deputy mission director of USAID, attended as the special guest.

Shakib denies England breakthrough.

FROM PAGE 12

Mushfiqur, the latter looking good to score a ton until he perished to an Adil Rashid googly.

Suddenly, the Tigers' innings started to flounder. Mahmudullah Riyad, Afif Hossain and Mehedi Hasan Miraz were dismissed cheaply, but Shakib held on, playing some immense shots on a difficult wicket with the deliveries often slowing down. Having completed his fifty, he edged the score to something defensible along with the tail-enders before departing for a 71-ball 75 as the hosts managed 246 all out.

England started their chase solidly and Phil Salt looked like he could take the game away after a fifty-run stand but Shakib turned up with the ball as well, getting the first

Many pointing at conflict

FROM PAGE 12

Salvation Army (Arsa) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) engaged in several clashes since January over control of the Rohingya camps. The first of those clashes was at Konarpara Rohingya Camp in Tambaru of Bandarban's Naikkhanchhari upazila in January.

The RSO maintained a strong presence in blocks A, B, and D of camp-II in Ukhiya since January. The Arsa was trying to establish its supremacy in those blocks for the last few days, the sources added.

Suicide blast

FROM PAGE 12

had been providing security.

There has been no claim of responsibility for the attack. "Terrorism in Balochistan is part of a nefarious agenda to destabilise the country," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said in a statement released by his office.

The country is facing overlapping political, economic and environmental crises, as well as a worsening

breakthrough.

From solidity, England fell into chaos as three wickets fell in the space of one run. After Salt, Ebadot Hossain left a good impression by getting David Malan out for a duck in the 10th over. Shakib then rattled Jason Roy's stumps with first ball of the next over and within a shout of a hat-trick, but Curran kept the delivery out.

Curran and James Vince put up another threatening partnership before Mehedi Miraz bagged the former. Shakib then produced a ripper of a delivery to send back Vince.

After Ebadot went through Moeen Ali's defences, the pressure on England was starting to tell. Jos Buttler was accelerating before he fell prey to Taijul Islam after a 24-ball 26 and

Three killed as bus, train

FROM PAGE 12

"Attaching oil tankers from the Padma, Meghna and Jamuna depots in Patenga, the train was heading out. The train hit the bus leaving two dead on the spot," Deputy Commissioner of Chattogram Metropolitan Police Port Division Shakila Soltana told The Daily Star.

An injured passenger of the bus died on the way to Chattogram Medical College Hospital, she added.

At least 7 to 8 injured people were taken to the CMCH, she said. The bus flipped on its side on impact.

The bodies were sent to the CMCH morgue.

Intel agencies

FROM PAGE 12

six months.... Different intelligence agencies do it. The prime minister through experts is also carrying out a survey. The surveys are now being conducted in every three months."

Quader said they were also getting feedback from the party leaders assigned to look after organisational activities at the divisional level.

"Considering everything, our decision is to nominate candidates who are the most acceptable to the people."

Asked whether the AL as a political party can use government agencies for its political works, Quader said, "When a government is in power, it is the duty of the intelligence agencies to file report on who is good, who is bad, who is acceptable, who has lost acceptance, or who is doing misdeeds. They have filed reports on misdeeds."

The minister said it is not that the AL would pick candidates only on the basis of the report of intelligence agencies.

Tajjul soon pegged back Rashid's stumps to give Tigers a real shout against England's tall order.

Shakib reached the magical figure of 300 ODI wickets – becoming the first bowler from the country to achieve the feat – with the wicket of Rehan Ahmed before Mustafizur Rahman finished Chris Woakes' gritty knock to hand Bangladesh an incredible win.

"He was phenomenal, especially the way he batted with the tail enders," Tamim said at the press conference yesterday about Shakib.

"We showed a lot of character. We could have rolled over and lost three-nil but we fought to the end and we got the win," Shakib said after inspiring the Tigers to a win that will help regain some lost confidence.

3 students die

FROM PAGE 12

the spot, said Badrul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Hatikumrul Highway Police Station in Sirajganj.

They were returning to Pabna after attending a religious programme, he added.

Police are trying to identify the vehicle, he said. The bodies of the victims have been handed over to their relatives without autopsies, he added.

Building had no fire safety

FROM PAGE 12

reasons," Brig Gen Md Main Uddin, director general of the fire service, said, while talking to reporters after attending an event in Mirpur yesterday.

The bomb disposal unit of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime found no sign of explosive substances but found the presence of gas at the scene.

The CTCIC suspect the explosion might have originated from the office of the insurance company.

Meanwhile, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) declared the Shirin Mansion as "risky" and put up a banner, restricting entry to the building.

Six injured employees of the insurance company were admitted to the

'The culprits still around you'

FROM PAGE 12

chaotic situation around him. He later announced he would see to bringing the attackers to book and left the area.

Seeking anonymity, a victim said, "We could identify at least one person who led the arson attack on our area on Friday, and he was right here when the minister came to us today [yesterday]."

"We have shared the attacker's name with the law enforcers."

Earlier, around 11:00am, the minister visited Ahmednagar, another village of the Ahmadiyyas, and distributed relief among the victims.

At that time, Motalab Hossain Khan, a community leader, said, "We are grateful to you [for the relief]. But we don't want relief. Rather, we want security so that we can live here peacefully. We want justice."

Speaking at the relief distribution event, the railways minister claimed BNP-Jamaat forces carried out the attacks.

"The government is investigating the incident to check whether there were any administrative weakness or if law enforcers

Dollar crisis

FROM PAGE 1

The reason could be that exporters are not bringing in their proceeds to the country holding out for a better exchange rate. Exporters get the lowest rate for dollar.

As per rules, exporters are supposed to cash in their proceeds within four months.

An exporter gets Tk 104 per dollar now, whereas the official exchange rate is Tk 106.9.

At the same time, portfolio investment, which is investment in the country's stock market by foreign investors, crashed 95.5 percent in January from the previous month.

Both short-term and long-term loans have dropped exponentially, in perhaps a reflection of Moody's putting the Bangladesh's sovereign rating and that of seven Bangladeshi banks under review for downgrade.

Commercial banks are also liquidating their nostro accounts with foreign banks to clear their dues.

"Money is flowing out everywhere. There are more outflows than inflows," Hussain said.

As a result, reserves are not looking up.

As of March 1, foreign reserves stood at \$32.3 billion, down 29.8 percent from a year earlier, according to BB.

Reserves are poised to come down to about \$31 billion after the forthcoming \$1.05 billion payment to the Asian Clearing Union for imports from the Saarc region.

"What is there to be done from the administrative side has already been done but it is not bringing any change in improvement. Stick didn't work – now it

is time for carrot."

In the absence of any major policy changes, it is unlikely that the government would be able to meet one of the mandatory conditions to get the second tranche of the \$4.7 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, Hussain said.

As per the condition set for June and December, Bangladesh's net international reserves (NIR) cannot be below \$22.9 billion in March, \$24.5 billion in June, \$25.3 billion in September and \$26.8 billion in December.

At present, Bangladesh's NIR is in the neighbourhood of \$24 billion.

If exporters do not cash in their proceeds within the stipulated time and remittance inflows do not increase much, it would be tough to meet the IMF's condition.

"If you put more curbs on imports, what will happen to the economy? There is no space to put more curbs."

Moody's forecast GDP growth will slow to 5 percent this fiscal year and 5.5 percent next fiscal year, down from 7.2 percent registered for fiscal 2021-22.

In January, the World Bank pared back Bangladesh's growth forecast for this fiscal year by 1.5 percent to 5.2 percent.

Earlier in December, the government revised down the growth forecast from 7.2 percent to 6.5 percent due to the impacts of the Ukraine war, bringing it in line with the projection made by the Asian Development Bank (6.6 percent) in September last year and the IMF (6 percent) the following month.

were negligent in their duties during the violence."

Meanwhile, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, also AL general secretary, at a Dhaka programme said the government will probe into the Panchagarh violence and identify who incited the attacks.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan also told reporters at his Secretariat office yesterday that BNP-Jamaat people were responsible for the attacks.

Visiting three villages – Ahmednagar, Shalsheri and Phultala – yesterday, this correspondent noticed that people of the Ahmadiyya community were still in a state of panic.

Although two schools were open yesterday, the children did not attend as parents remained in fear of further attacks, locals said.

Even the area's lone medical centre, Ahmadiyya Medical and Diagnostic Centre, has been nonfunctional since the attack.

Meanwhile, six cases were filed with Panchagarh Police Station in connection with the violence, accusing 31 named and around

8,200 unnamed people.

Abdul Latif Miah, officer-in-charge of Panchagarh Police Station, said 81 people have so far been arrested and additional forces have been deployed in the area to maintain law and order.

On Friday, two people were killed and at least 30 others, including seven policemen, injured in a clash between law enforcers and supporters of Islamist organisations demonstrating against the Ahmadiyya community.

The agitators set fire to many houses and four shops belonging to the members of the community. They also attacked a local police station, vehicles of law enforcers and a traffic police office.

The Ahmadiyyas claimed that some 150 houses were looted and vandalised before being torched.

Members of several Islamist organisations, including the Islamic Andolon Bangladesh, were staging demonstrations since Thursday, demanding cancellation of the three-day-long Jalsa Salana, an annual gathering of the Ahmadiyya community.

Meanwhile, shop owners of the building are worried.

"There were goods worth Tk 50 lakh inside my two shops. Ramadan and Eid are coming up fast. The frequent college student clashes on top of the Covid pandemic have already done enough damage to our business. Now, this is another massive blow," said Mahabub Mollick, proprietor of two shops in the market.

Shafiqul Gani Shabu, officer-in-charge of New Market Police Station, said, "As far as we've come to know, the owner of the building – Shirin Chowdhury lives abroad. We have yet to contact her."

An unnatural death case was filed over the incident last night.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

No respite for the Rohingya

Faced with fund shortages, they must now deal with another devastating event

The future of thousands of Rohingya refugees looks even bleaker after a massive fire ripped through a crammed refugee camp in the Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar on Sunday. Reportedly, nearly 2,000 shelters were burned to the ground by the fire, rendering around 15,000 Rohingya homeless before it was brought under control. Although the extent of the damage is yet to be fully determined, as well as the cause of the fire, it is obvious that the affected refugees need urgent assistance and humanitarian support.

According to reports, the authorities there have been working with international and local humanitarian organisations to provide food and temporary shelters to those who have lost their homes. Aside from houses, the fire also burnt down around 90 facilities including hospitals, learning centres and mosques, and robbed hundreds of families of whatever belongings they had. Such devastation will only increase the suffering of the refugees, who have been stuck in a cycle of relentless problems for more than five years.

The latest setback comes at a time when the international community has been reducing their support for the Rohingya ever since the pandemic started in 2020. Only recently, this newspaper reported that the United Nations was preparing to cut food aid to the Rohingya refugees. In fact, starting this month, the UN's World Food Programme plans to reduce the value of its food assistance to only \$10 per person, from what was already a meagre \$12. Despite two UN special rapporteurs calling this move "unconscionable" – saying it will have devastating impacts on the refugees – we have not yet heard of any change to this plan, nor of wealthier nations stepping up to cover for the shortage of funds.

The recent fire should once again be a reminder to the whole world about just how vulnerable the life of Rohingya refugees is, and the type of support they require. This is the third major fire in three years in the Rohingya camps, and time and again we have seen the Rohingya struggle, trying to overcome their misfortunes. The least the world community can do is provide them with adequate humanitarian support following such a major disaster. But that's not all; this fire is also a clear reminder that such makeshift refugee camps can never guarantee a sustainable and safe future for the Rohingya. The international community should get back to working on a permanent solution to the Rohingya refugee crisis – something that has been put on the back-burner of agendas for quite some time.

The Bangladesh government, while appealing for urgent aid from the international community, also needs to reevaluate the make-up of the refugee camps. Because the huts in these camps are mostly made up of bamboo and tarpaulin – all closely packed together – they are particularly susceptible to fires. Perhaps some redesigning of the camps is in order so that such devastating fires can be avoided in the future. This, of course, will require expensive rebuilding and rehabilitation, and consequently increased – rather than decreased – funding.

Thugs in the making?

Habitually sparring college students raise concerns about the state of education

We're deeply alarmed by the manner in which young students are increasingly getting involved in violent activities. On Sunday, students of Ideal College and Dhaka College, together with City College, clashed on the streets. As a result, a number of students were injured, while traffic was held up for several hours near the Science Lab and Green Road areas, causing huge public suffering. Earlier, on Thursday, students from the same colleges also clashed, again closing off nearby roads. Two incidents within the space of a week indicate a degree of animosity between these closely located institutions. But this also goes beyond simple college rivalry, with students in many other tertiary and pre-tertiary institutions showing a similar penchant for violence.

The question is, why is this happening? Why are young men increasingly adopting violent tactics, instead of healthier alternatives, to resolve their disputes? Often, it is seen that violence flares up on the flimsiest of excuses. In case of the two recent clashes, as per a report by Prothom Alo, it started after a group of students of Dhaka College apparently hacked their Ideal College peers by calling them "farm chickens", leading to the latter vandalising a bus of Dhaka College. In retribution, DC students extracted the nameplate of Ideal College. Attacks and counterattacks followed. The picture that emerges from this scenario is of a deeply troubling educational landscape where there is little discipline. It's worrying how easily young men are set off these days, and how quickly it escalates into violence, often using lethal weapons.

It's easy to blame these students. After all, as young adults, they should be able to make better choices, and be held responsible for the consequences of their action. But to suggest the blame lies squarely with them will be unwise. They are but the product of a time when intolerance is being encouraged from the highest seats of power, when democratic institutions are crumbling because of lack of accountability and rule of law, when criminals are getting away with heinous crimes, and when thuggery is incentivised and merit is deprioritised. Add to that the politicisation of educational institutions like colleges and universities – traditional powerhouses that are now being used as training grounds for political recruits. This is, thus, also a failure of our educational policy that no longer promotes pursuit of enlightenment – only material development.

In such a situation, students, without proper role models and a proper learning environment, are at risk of getting derailed off their path, which doesn't bode well for our future as a nation. Over the years, we have seen how far the rot has spread. Even in schools you hear of children getting involved in crimes and violence. We must stop and reverse this destructive trend. We urge the authorities to critically examine the state of our education sector, and ensure that it produces the kind of citizens and leaders we need going forward.

HISTORIC MARCH 7 SPEECH

The fiery call for freedom



Mir Aftabuddin Ahmed is a columnist and policy analyst.

MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

Suhrawardy Udyan, or what was known as Ramna Race Course back in the day, is closely linked with Bangladesh's history. It was where Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with a sense of passion, a vigour for democracy, and an anticipation for change, made the most iconic declaration of his life on March 7, 1971, and subsequently etched his name in the history books unlike any before or after him. He showed his political guile, moved people with his captivating voice, and in a matter of 19 minutes, went from being the leader of the Awami League to the country's greatest national asset.

The idea of Pakistan that Bangabandhu and many of his colleagues had envisioned in 1947 was wholeheartedly unfulfilled. The efforts of the likes of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy or Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haq in stamping the authority of Bangalee leadership in the national politics of Pakistan culminated in Sheikh Mujib's victory in the 1970 parliamentary elections. The debate on whether this nation wanted independence or autonomy prior to March 7 is one for which historians, not politicians, are required to perform greater research and analysis to resolve. But if one is to analyse Bangabandhu's speech, it becomes clear that the search for autonomy was very much enshrined with a subtle, if not vocal, ultimatum for independence.

Bangabandhu did not encourage a military conflict, nor did he push the country to the brink of war in his speech. His address is surely indicative of his desire to achieve independence through a peaceful, cooperative and dialogical process. He lit a fire in the heart of the average Bangalee. It was President Yahya Khan's actions and Operation Searchlight that resulted in the grievous nine-month war, but Bangabandhu's address motivated the country into defending itself unequivocally.

In his address to the masses, Bangabandhu acted in the most decent and humane way possible. On March 7, 1971, he was still unsure about the path his country was going to take, and the dilly-dallying from the Yahya regime only made the situation more difficult. As such, Bangabandhu tackled the question of independence in the most delicate way possible. He referred to



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bangabandhu's March 7 speech speaks volumes of the magnanimity and skill he had as a politician.

himself as the leader of not only East Pakistan, but of the majority party of Pakistan. He spoke respectfully of his dialogues with President Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Bangabandhu's entire argument was based on how, when and why he demanded that the laws and constitutional requirements of the Pakistani state be fulfilled. None of the points he brought forth were utopian or unconstitutional, even in the fragile legal architecture of Pakistan. He demanded the basic democratic rights of lifting martial law, withdrawing military personnel to their barracks, transference of power to elected representatives, and an inquiry into the loss of life during the prevailing conflict.

In order to protest Yahya Khan's severe violations of democratic rights, Bangabandhu gave several non-cooperation directives. He suggested that government officials and East Pakistani institutions should observe strikes while the people should refrain from paying taxes. None of this explicitly mentioned a call to take up arms. He understood how violent and

repressive an armed conflict would become.

Henceforth, Bangabandhu's pronouncements on March 7 only go to show the gravity, political acumen and wisdom that made him such a great leader. His method of protest and the content of his address puts light on what Pakistan was lacking in its struggle towards democracy, and he

non-bloody route towards a settlement.

On March 7, he did a political double. With the last sentence of his address, he gave the de facto green signal to the young student leaders to prepare for armed conflict if needed be, while simultaneously prioritising a non-violent means to end the ensuing crisis. It was a political masterclass from Bangabandhu.

should have been a shining example to the entire country. Yet, Yahya Khan faltered terribly on March 25.

The entire nation of Bangladesh knows the allusive statement, "Our struggle this time is a struggle for our freedom. Our struggle this time is a struggle for our independence. Joy Bangla!" Even then, there are those who question Bangabandhu's personal desire for independence. To suggest that he never wanted an independent Bangladesh is inaccurate. The man had fought his entire life for his beloved countrymen. He had suffered in jail under military autocrats. In the end, his trust towards his own people cost him his life.

There can be debates around the idea of a pre-emptive war versus a defensive war. Debates can arise as to when, rather than if, Sheikh Mujib wanted independence. But in no uncertain terms, Bangabandhu did what was best for his nation. There were young leaders who were willing to jump into the battlefield and initiate the struggle for independence. On the other hand, Bangabandhu wanted a political and

Then again, it is important to reiterate that historical evidence suggests that Bangabandhu did not want mothers to lose their sons in the battlefields; he did not want to leave children as orphans. He did his best to prevent a war. Which great leader would not? Nevertheless, when it came to it on March 25, he remained resolute and confident that he may have done enough to spur the vigour that would allow the country to fight back and achieve independence. Bangabandhu remained in jail under military supervision throughout the entirety of the nine-month war. But his vision, aims, personality, and influence directly guided Bangladesh to victory. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a patriot. He was undoubtedly the only person capable enough to vociferously inspire the country towards independence. His March 7 speech speaks volumes of the magnanimity and skill he had as a politician. People from all walks of life should not think twice in respecting the man for who he was – a visionary, an icon, a leader.

Lit Fest and Boi Mela: A linguistic, cultural apartheid?



Ashfaq Swapan is a writer and editor based in Atlanta, US.

ASHFAQ SWAPAN

My occasional trips to the storied Ekushey Boi Mela have always been a special joy. In recent years, this has been augmented by the occasional opportunity to experience the charms of a relatively new kid on the block: the Dhaka Lit Fest (DLF).

Books are the lifeblood of a culture, and these two events provide telling insights into our cultural locus.

Take the Dhaka Lit Fest. Over the years, it has morphed – and has since dropped one of its international affiliations. It gives bibliophiles a great opportunity to meet internationally recognised authors in person. This year, I was excited to be able to listen to Amitav Ghosh and Nobel Laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah. The festival casts a wide net – actor Tilda Swinton, cricketer Gordon Greenidge or Australian master chef Kishwar Chowdhury aren't exactly famous authors – yet it offers a welcome window into world culture. I give the festival special credit for organising remarkably well-stocked bookstores, carrying many titles that are otherwise hard to get, of many of its featured international participants. This adds considerable cultural heft to the event that could have easily been limited to

an ephemeral cultural jamboree – here now, forgotten tomorrow.

For all the plaudits that the DLF richly deserves, the basic concept of the festival is a bit troubling for me. Similar to its cultural cohorts in India, like the Jaipur Literature Festival and Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival, the DLF, when you think about it, is a curious cultural confection. It's a literary festival where the main language of its readers takes a back seat.

To be sure, DLF has added Bangla panel discussions now, but it still appears to be an afterthought.

Then there is Ekushey Boi Mela. It's hard not to feel a surge of pride at the mammoth scale of the book fair. A closer look, however, reveals a less salubrious fact: the books on sale are a mixture of wheat and chaff – and there's a lot of chaff. As a passionate book-fair-goer for over half a century, I'm nostalgic for the book fair of several decades back. It was smallish, the handful of bookstalls fit comfortably in the Bangla Academy premises, and most publishers appeared to look upon their trade as a calling rather than a means of making a quick buck.

This year, I found a few good publishing houses that rekindled my

hopes of publishing in Bangladesh. There was my old favourite UPL; we go back half a century when I used to ride my bike to its Motijheel offices to grab a new title. UPL's booklist remains solid: serious, thoughtful books on Bangladesh's history, politics and culture including an excellent list of Bangla translations. Prothoma, I'm pleased to see, has grown into an elegant publishing house with a wide, impressive list of Bangla titles with excellent production values. A book, one must not forget, is an aesthetic artefact as well as a vehicle for thought. Chattogram-based Baatighar is another favourite publisher of mine.

My own impressions do not suggest massive book sales. I was heartened, however, to see some assiduous browsing. On the other hand, I was taken aback by what is a new phenomenon to an old-timer like me. I suppose you could call it the "book selfie." For the uninitiated, the reader – I use the term quite loosely – appears more pleased to have his/her photo taken with a book than actually owning (or presumably reading) it.

Both the Dhaka Lit Fest and Ekushey Boi Mela offer sobering insights into the underlying socioeconomic challenges that have hamstrung Bangla publishing.

The DLF offers stark evidence that the dissociation of a huge chunk of Dhaka's elite from Bangla is complete. This festival is a symptom rather than a cause. A section of today's youth are culturally illiterate in Bangla, which has resulted in a new educated elite whose first language is English. You can make the case that beyond this

thin sliver of elite are the huge masses of Bangla readers. True enough, but for at least half a century, the economics of Bangla book publishing has been becoming more and more impossible. As the disposable income of the middle class – the main constituency of Bangla books – gets more and more squeezed, the price of paper and ancillary costs of publishing keep going up and up.

Today, Bangla publishing – and more broadly Bangla culture – confronts a linguistic cultural apartheid, while we need the exact opposite. Mass schooling should offer every high school student the tools to master the rudiments of English; English-medium schools should ensure students leave school with at least a high-school level command of Bangla.

It's not at all as improbable as it sounds. In fact, we lived through such a time. Ironically, it was during the days of the colonial British, that my father finished high school from Mymensingh Zilla School. His English teacher was a keen reader of Shakespeare. The upshot was that my father had a formidable command of both Bangla and English. We must not forget that Buddhadeva Bose taught English literature at Dhaka University – and poet Shamsur Rahman was his student. Both are titans in Bangla literature.

Proficiency in Bangla and English need not be mutually exclusive; there was a time when it was, for part of the intelligentsia, mutually inclusive. Not only for the sake of Bangla publishing, but for our overall cultural development, we need to find a way to reach that goal again.



VISUAL: STAR

Why every woman must ask for more



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SEUTY SABUR

Every Women's Day, I suffer from this ambivalent feeling of euphoria and despair. I am euphoric about the things we have achieved over the years through relentless efforts of women's/feminist movements, yet dumbfounded by these commodified, spiritless Women's Day celebrations. It is fascinating to see how quickly the neoliberal economy could digest the spirit of collective socialist movements – for fair wages, “bread and peace,” universal suffrage, and reproductive rights – to throw up “empowerment” and individual entitlement, putting the onus on the individual to fight for her/their autonomy. The purple and orange-clad middle-class women at the workplace, in seminars and cafés celebrating one day of “free to be/do whatever” has turned into a full-blown spectacle. And every year, you will find that one naïve male colleague, friend, acquaintance or extended family member who will casually ask, “How much more do you need? All of you are doing so well, look at our indicators, you even have a special day for yourself!”

Now, being a woman in mid-40s, I can either choose to rekindle my young feminist self and give these individuals an earful, or simply disengage. But why let the chance slide if you can deal with it with a little humour and poise? After all, I am a “respectable woman,” who happens to be an academic, is married and has held a family despite pursuing her hobbies (!), like “activism” and “sports.” Even some of my feminist friends recognise these as some sort of semblance in life, and it is difficult to explain to anyone that all of this is the result of excruciatingly painful negotiations that come with a steep price. Women who are just keeping their nose above the water are thought to be able to do so either because they are born with privileges, or because they have an enabling family (or both) – completely discrediting both the individual and collective struggles of women over generations.

Unfortunately, neither such privileges nor having a “sensible” family translates into equity in life chances, domestic work or the distribution of resources. This circus that we call work-life balance is a neoliberal trap that pivots on appropriating women's labour (either our own or what we can “outsource”), while men can continue their roles as providers and remain uninvolved. What women get in return is zero recognition for domestic work, almost no rights over our children, and not even an equal share of the house/property that they spend their lifetimes to sustain. I can only receive part of the property of my parents or my partner if they are “benevolent,” not inherently as a rightful equal partner. How sad and humiliating is this?

From domestic workers to CEOs, regardless of their class, women

cannot unburden themselves from care work or domesticity. We have just finished preliminary research on women working in the informal sector, which shows that 50-60 percent of their earnings goes into raising their children, while the rest goes towards family expenses (including clearing their husbands' debts); meanwhile, most of my friends and family are spending a fair share of their income to “buy out” independence, outsourcing the domestic and care work to these same informal workers. This appropriation of women's labour is much easier than making the men and the rest of the family share the burden. This also means that we, the privileged ones, would much rather avoid the uncomfortable negotiation with our partners/family, as long as we can have our “me time,” hang out with our friends, pursue our hobbies (read: activism) and buy whatever we please for ourselves and our loved ones.

Our first generation of feminists

The question of gender justice was central to the Bangladesh Constitution in 1972. Articles 28, 29 (1) and 19 (3) promise equal rights and opportunities for every citizen regardless of gender, class, and ethnicity. The constitution also recognises the necessity of women's participation in making decisions both in the private and public spheres. Yet, after five decades of collaborative efforts by women's movement, civil society and UN organisations, women have failed to emerge as equal citizens.

were not very different; they demanded equal rights in the streets while continuing to be the domestic goddess at home – an impossible standard to achieve. Hence they have raised us to be strong and independent women as long as we are mindful of the comfort of our loved ones, while our fathers, brothers and husbands can be enablers without sacrificing any privileges. This is a perfect trope that allows neoliberalism to invisibilise the appropriation of labour and make women feel inept in every sphere (never good enough), all while celebrating “womanhood.”

These may well read as the “personal” problems of a particular class of women, but like everything else, they are part of a much larger structure of intersecting inequalities. By retaining the status quo at home, we are also allowing laws that sustain institutionalised discrimination against women – reducing every woman to a second-class citizen – to prevail, in particular discriminatory and mostly religion-based laws regarding marriage, divorce, dowry, maintenance, child custody and guardianship, adoption, inheritance,

and property rights. Our activists have thus always believed that changing the law would change the status of women; such convictions led Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and other rights-based organisations to propose a Uniform Family Code in the 1980s, which is still waiting for legislative approval.

Meanwhile my fellow activists have fought a good fight, initiating laws like the Dowry Prohibition Act (1980), the Family Courts Ordinance (1985), the Cruelty to Women (Deterrent Punishment) Ordinance (1983), the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (2000), and the Evidence (Amendment) Bill (2022), to name a few. I may be critical of some of their methods, but the fact remains that whatever rights we have as women were accomplished by our foremothers and elder sisters, through a long, collective fight. They have also shown that “the law” is not etched in stone; it can and must change to meet the need of the hour.

The question of gender justice was central to the Bangladesh Constitution in 1972. Articles 28, 29 (1) and 19 (3) promise equal rights and opportunities for every citizen regardless of gender, class, and ethnicity. The constitution also recognises the necessity of women's participation in making decisions both in the private and public spheres. Yet, after five decades of collaborative efforts by women's

movement, civil society and UN organisations, women have failed to emerge as equal citizens. Perhaps it's time we recognised that keeping women as subservient second-class citizens benefits society, which can extort their labour in the name of love and care. Perhaps pandering to the state for law reform or fighting against “fundamentalist” forces may not be the only battles we ought to be fighting. The bigger battle yet is to rattle the cage of domesticity, which ties women down and lets men run free.

So what if, instead of these spiritless Women's Day celebrations, we were to call on all women to go on general strike for a week? Refuse to cook, clean or instruct the house help, chaperone our children, care for the elderly, or go to the office; let's get some real “me time” for a change, and remind society/state of the everyday violence they inflict on women. Make everyone who upholds patriarchy bequeath their privileges to make way for an enabling and nurturing space for all. Women must ask for all of these and more, from the family, society and state, if we are to truly “embrace equity.”

Using innovation and technology for gender equality



Stefan Liller is resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bangladesh.

STEFAN LILLER

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated a global digital and data-driven transformation, with digital technologies now being leveraged for work, leisure, and learning. Digital literacy has become almost as important as traditional literacy. As we move towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) – defined by the increasing use of automation and artificial intelligence – digital skills have never been as prized as now. However, in many parts of the world, including Bangladesh, the digital revolution has left behind a critical part of society: our women and girls.

While Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in increasing access to digital technology for women and girls, a persistent gender-based digital divide has left many unable to reap the benefits of digitalisation. According to the 2020 GSMA report on mobile gender gap, women in Bangladesh are 29 percent less likely than men to own a mobile phone and 52 percent less likely than men to use mobile internet. Especially rural women, compared to their urban counterparts, find themselves more disenfranchised from technology – limiting their access to information, digital services, and opportunities. And when women and girls are connected to the digital world, many find themselves exposed to cyber violence that deters them from digital participation in political, social, and cultural life.

According to UN Women's 2022 Gender Snapshot, women's exclusion from the digital world has caused a loss of \$1 trillion for the economies of developing countries in the last decade – a loss that will increase by 50 percent by 2025 if nothing is done in this regard. Besides economic benefits, enhancing women's safe and equal access to digital technologies offers immense opportunities to address development and humanitarian challenges and spark innovative and creative solutions that meet women's needs and promote their empowerment.

Women's participation in the digital sphere is therefore not just a matter of gender equality – it is a prerequisite for sustainable development. And as the country moves towards “Smart Bangladesh” by 2041, as envisioned by the government, this vision cannot be achieved without women and girls playing active roles.

So, how can we harness the transformative potential of digital technology for women and girls in Bangladesh, while mitigating the potentially harmful risks associated with its use?

As a starting point, we must make greater and more sustained investments in increasing women and girls' digital literacy and familiarity with technology. This will enable them to participate effectively in the digital economy and gain access to digital services

such as education, healthcare, and online banking. E-commerce and technology-based businesses offer women more flexibility, helping them to manage both paid and unpaid work, which is essential for economic empowerment. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been working with the government and our partners to develop and implement innovative solutions that can bridge the gender digital divide in Bangladesh. For example, our *Aspire to Innovate* (a2i) initiative is providing training on digital literacy to thousands of female entrepreneurs, and through our teacher's portal, more than 200,000 female teachers now have access to high-quality online educational materials. We have also utilised digital technology to launch

women and girls.

And lastly, we must make online spaces safe for women and girls. According to a 2022 survey by ActionAid, almost 64 percent out of 359 surveyed women in Bangladesh reported having faced cyber violence. Unfortunately, cyber harassment and violence against women and girls are often not taken seriously, deterring them from using the internet and threatening their online freedom of expression. We must tackle the harmful social norms at the root of these acts of violence and set up legal and policy frameworks that educate and protect girls and women from cybercrimes. Besides helping women and girls to recognise, report, and recover from online abuse, we must also intensify our civic education, work directly with the perpetrators, often boys and men, to uproot harmful social norms and power dynamics that underlie their actions. UNDP has been working to reduce the adverse effects of cyberbullying by creating peer support networks, offering free digital security courses that aim to make the digital space safer for women and girls and extending



VISUAL: ABIR HOSSAIN

Anondomela, an online marketplace that enables women entrepreneurs to access new markets.

However, basic skills will not be sufficient; we must also promote women and girls in the ICT sector by developing their skills in areas such as coding, where they are still critically underrepresented. Together with the government and our partners, we provide ICT training to women to bring them into the country's IT sector. By enhancing their digital skills and presenting them with female role models, we can also increase their opportunities to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) – a field that reportedly 75 percent of jobs will relate to by 2050. This will require concerted efforts by the government, academia, civil society and, crucially, the private sector.

Critically, women also need to be involved in the creation of and decision-making around digital technology. We must ensure that today's emerging data-driven solutions do not perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and patterns of discrimination. Online content and technology need to be developed with and for women and girls in a way that responds to their specific needs and priorities within a regulatory framework that prioritises, protects, and promotes the human rights of

technical support to the Bangladesh police for strengthening cybercrime investigations.

This year's International Women's Day, under the theme “DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality,” serves as an important reminder of the immense potential that digital transformation holds for accelerating gender equality and women's empowerment, but also the risk it bears for repeating and amplifying existing patterns of gender inequality.

As the world is evolving to become more digital, we must ensure we can keep up the pace and unleash the potential of women and girls to become active agents of change in this transformation. Digital technologies need to be used to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and gender equality, not to set us further back. A “Smart Bangladesh” with women and girls at the centre will help us eliminate the digital gender divide, not only in Bangladesh but worldwide, given the cross-border nature of digital transformation. To this end, UNDP, together with the United Nations family, remains a committed partner of Bangladesh in harnessing digital technology and innovation to advance gender equality and sustainable development for all.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Humiliate
 - 6 Racket
 - 10 Henry VIII's house
 - 11 Slow tempo
 - 12 Accumulate
 - 13 Look forward to
 - 14 Tiara adorns
 - 15 Hurry
 - 16 Memorable time
 - 17 Sailing hazard
 - 18 Twisty fish
 - 19 Source of vitamin D
 - 22 Antlered animal
 - 23 Metal sources
 - 26 Classic
- DOWN**
- 1 Play places
 - 2 Arm bone
 - 3 Inflexible
 - 4 Terrarium growth
 - 5 Hosp. sections
 - 6 Shop tools
 - 7 Packing box
 - 8 Like tumblers
 - 9 Tourist stop
 - 11 Treat as if a joke
 - 15 Greedy one
 - 17 Statuette
 - 20 Fall back
 - 21 Half of hex-
 - 24 Goaded
 - 25 Broadcast
 - 27 Pay stub line
 - 28 Flings
 - 29 Sachet scent
 - 30 Letter after psi
 - 31 Lennon hit
 - 35 Staff symbol
 - 36 Rural sight
 - 38 Yoga need



SUNDAY'S ANSWERS

S I M B A T A R P S
T R I A D A M P O R E
E A S T H A M P T O N
A T T E W E A R E
D E S I R E S T A G
B E D F E T A
S I R E S P E D A L
P R I X B A A
R E D D A R T E R S
A P E A L I N E T
L A T I N G E E S E
S T O P S S C R E W

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

What to WATCH

Tuesday
Sony Sports 2
 UEFA Champions League
 Chelsea vs Dortmund
 Live from 2:00 am
 (Wednesday)
Sony Sports 1
 UEFA Champions League
 Benfica vs Club Brugge

Live from 2:00 am
 (Wednesday)
T Sports
 Pakistan Super League
 Peshawar vs Lahore
 Live from 3:00 pm
 Islamabad vs Multan
 Live from
 8:00 pm

Wednesday
Sony Sports 2
 UEFA Champions League
 Bayern Munich vs PSG
 Live from 2:00 am (Thursday)
Sony Sports 1
 UEFA Champions League
 Tottenham vs AC Milan
 Live from 2:00 am (Thursday)

'We expect 100s, not 50s, from the top-order'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh clinched a 50-run win over England in the third and final ODI courtesy of an all-round performance from Shakib Al Hasan at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday to avoid a whitewash, having lost both prior games.

The win kept Bangladesh's record of not facing a whitewash at home in a bilateral series since 2014 intact. More so, it was Bangladesh's biggest win over England in the 50-over format, which will certainly boost morale as they move to the T20I series.

Shakib stole the show both with bat and ball, again making and breaking a few records. He bagged his 300th ODI wicket -- the most by a Bangladeshi in the format and 14th overall to the mark.

He became only the third player with 6,000 runs and 300 wickets in ODIs after Sanath Jayasuriya and Shahid Afridi. It was the ninth time that Shakib had scored a 50 and taken at least three wickets in the same ODI -- more than anyone else in history. He was earlier level with Shahid Afridi and Shoaib Malik, who had each done so eight times.

Shakib scored 75 off 71 balls with the help of seven fours and helped Bangladesh post a fighting total of 246 after yet another failure from the top order.

The left-arm spinner remained instrumental with the ball during England's chase as well, scalping four wickets for 35 runs from his 10 overs, as the visitors were bundled out for 196 runs in 43.1 overs.

Although Shakib praised his side for showing character and fighting despite knowing the series was lost, he also pointed out a few areas that the Tigers could improve on in the coming days.

"We have been very good at home for the past 5-7 years. Unfortunately, we lost this series. But I think we showed a lot of character today (Monday) so we can take credit. We thought we were 20-30 runs short and, given the situation we were in, we could have scored more. Our bowlers spoke about stepping up and getting the job done. Luckily, they did the job for us. We expect our top-order players to score 100s, not 50s. So, I guess that's an area we can improve on," Shakib said during the post-match presentation ceremony.

Meanwhile, skipper Tamim Iqbal was relieved to finish the series on a positive note, but he also pointed out the Tigers needed to challenge themselves and adapt to different conditions in the coming days.

"Lots of room for improvement. We are a good team in ODIs but there's a lot of room for improvement when we go overseas. We need to challenge ourselves and adapt to different conditions. There are some exciting players coming into the T20 squad and I wish them all the best," Tamim said.



"It felt good throughout the series, not just myself but I thought we bowled well as a collective unit in these conditions. [Rehan?] He's got something special about him. Hopefully as time goes on, he'll develop his game and get better."

England spinner Adil Rashid



Bangladesh wicketkeeper-batter Mushfiqur Rahim found himself back among runs to register a ODI fifty after eight outings, while another stalwart Shakib Al Hasan scored 75, five more than Mushfiqur, to help Bangladesh pile up 246 against England in the third and final ODI in Chattogram yesterday. [Bottom] Fast bowler Ebadot Hossain returned to impress with two scalps, of Dawid Malan and Moeen Ali, and did not allow the Tigers to miss the presence of their pace spearhead Taskin Ahmed as Bangladesh eventually earned a comfortable 50-run victory.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

The question regarding SHAKIB AT NO. 5

SPORTS REPORTER

In the 45th over of the Bangladesh innings, with the slog overs upon them, it looked like a platform had been set. But Shakib Al Hasan appeared stranded at one end with Taijul Islam at the other after seven wickets had fallen. It begged the question whether the all-rounder was being allowed to play through the innings to his full potential.

Shakib went on to score 75, just as the number on the back of his jersey, and was batting in a position where he has for a long time in his career. But his role in the recent past, especially since the 2019 ODI World Cup, has been at No. 3, a position currently occupied by Najmul Hossain Shanto. But as one of the team's most explosive batters that peaked at No. 3, was it damage control the team management was asking for?

Shakib lost Taijul Islam soon after and then had to stave the strike away from Ebadot Hossain by not running singles. He traded in boundaries before perishing as Bangladesh managed a total of 246, perhaps a few short of what they should have managed.

During Chandika Hathurusingha's first talk with the players in his second stint, he had reminded the players that the team's needs came first, even if that did not quite match an individual's personal preferences.



SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh: 246 all out in 48.5 overs (Shakib 75, Mushfiqur 70, Shanto 53; Archer 3-35, Curran 2-51, Rashid 2-21)
England: 196 all out in 43.1 overs (Vince 38, Salt 35, Woakes 34; Shakib 4-35, Ebadot 2-38, Taijul 2-52)
Result: Bangladesh won by 50 runs
Series: England won 2-1
Player-of-the-match: Shakib Al Hasan
Player-of-the-series: Adil Rashid

Thus, after five years and 29 matches, Shakib came in to bat at No. 5 in the England series. Before Chandika's arrival, he had come in at No. 4 twice during the India series. Yesterday, skipper Tamim Iqbal said: "His batting position will be four or five, it's fixed."

The team management had not

been very interested in changing Najmul's batting position and the left-hander answered their calls by managing two fifties against England, including one in the 50-run win in the third ODI.

Shakib had thrived at No. 3 regardless in recent times, most crucially during the ODI series in South Africa when he reversed the roles on the Proteas' seam attack to tactically manoeuvre a death-over scheme.

It is well known that Shakib had asked for the No. 3 slot very keenly in the 2019 World Cup and that the management had to compromise on their own ideas to accommodate the premier all-rounder. Individually, he was among the brightest lights, scoring 606 runs at an average of just over 86 and a strike rate of just a tad over 96. He has scored over 1,500 runs at an average of over 50 batting at No. 3.

The plan to employ Shakib at No. 5 raises questions about how much it benefits the team.

The idea may be to bolster a middle-order that has not found runs lately. Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Afif Hossain have not always looked commendable and Shakib may have to contend with No.5 simply to shore up the defences.

The question is whether No. 5 is the best position for Shakib. Does it help the team more if he cannot quite play to his rhythm?

Bellingham the key for Dortmund at Chelsea

AFP, Berlin

If Borussia Dortmund's remarkable 2023 run is to continue at Chelsea on Tuesday, midfield master Jude Bellingham, 19, will need to be front and centre.

Dortmund travel to London as European football's most in-form team, having chalked up ten wins from ten games to start 2023.

Nine points behind leaders Bayern Munich at Christmas, Dortmund have closed the gap and now sit second on goal difference.

A hard-fought 1-0 win in the opening tie means Dortmund will make it through to the Champions League quarter finals if they avoid defeat on Tuesday evening.

While Marco Reus' likely inclusion means Bellingham, captain in Dortmund's first leg victory, may not wear the armband at Stamford Bridge, the English teenager will unquestionably be one of the side's on-field leaders.

In what has been a breakout season for the English teenager bookending an impressive Qatar World Cup showing, Bellingham has saved his best performances for the biggest stage.

In six Champions League games this season -- two of which as captain -- Bellingham, has scored four goals and laid on an assist.

A starring performance in his Champions League debut in London, and just his third club match on English soil since arriving in Dortmund, will be the next milestone in an astonishing run for the policeman's son from Stourbridge.

Dortmund manager Edin Terzic, who brought Bellingham into a three-man leadership group alongside Reus and World Cup-winning defender Mats Hummels, has frequently described the Birmingham City junior as "the oldest 19-year-old player in the world."

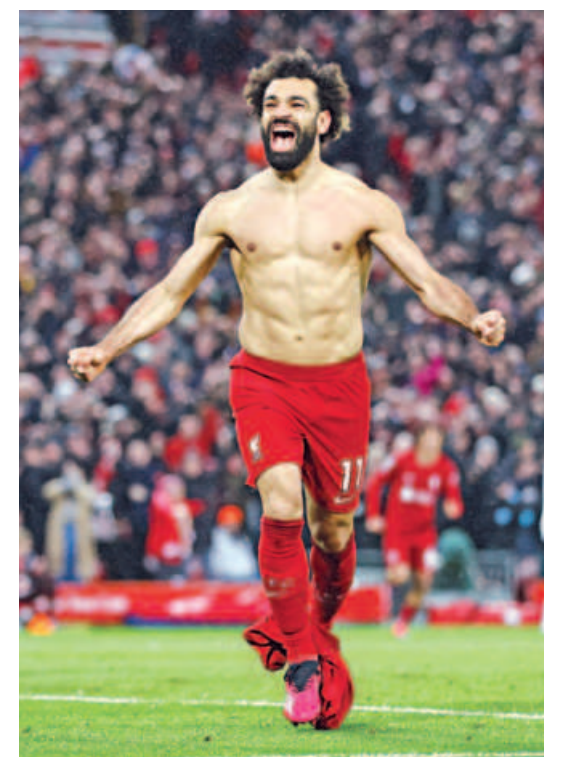


PHOTO: REUTERS

Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah became the club's record goalscorer in the Premier League with two goals during a 7-0 thrashing of Manchester United at Anfield on Sunday. Salah reached 129 goals for Liverpool in the Premier League, taking him past the mark of Englishman Robbie Fowler. "I cannot describe it. This is one of the best days of my life, and I broke the record that I was seeking from the day I came to the club," the Egyptian striker said after the match.

'Still alive' Jony now thriving on his journey

ANISUR RAHMAN

Although Mojibur Rahman Jony got into Bangladesh's 27-member preliminary squad on the back of only 10 Bangladesh Premier League matches worth of experience, the 19-year-old attacking midfielder had to face serious hurdles on his journey so far, including a death-scare.

Jony has been playing the country's top-flight football for the first time for newly promoted Fortis FC following his well-deserved performance for the BFF Elite Academy in the Bangladesh Championship League's last edition.

"As I represented national age-group teams at the international stage before, I dreamt of representing the senior team. To fulfil my dream, I joined Fortis this season after getting assurances to get some game time," Jony told The Daily Star on Sunday before flying to Saudi Arabia for the national team's preparation camp ahead of the 2023 Tri Nations Cup this month.

However, the national call-up did not surprise the promising midfielder when it eventually arrived.

"I did well in practice and got selected for the playing eleven in all 10 league matches of Fortis FC, thus I got a national call-up.



"I think this call up was not unexpected for me as my once age-group teammates like Fahim [Ahmed] and Yeasin [Arafat] have made their national debut much earlier than me," he added.

Possessing good dribbling and the capacity to hold the ball upfront, Jony is expecting to secure a place in the final squad for the tri-nation tournament at home, involving Seychelles and Brunei.

"I will try my level-best to get into the 23-member squad as well as stay in the national team for a long time," he hoped.

Jony recalled the death-scare he survived four years ago when his appendix had burst and it left his relatives to dwell on the possibility of the worst-case scenario.

"I stayed back from football a bit because of the appendix operation, and lagged further behind than others due to the distance between Dhaka and Dinajpur.

"It took me around five to six months to recover from the [appendix] operation. Alhamdulillah, I'm still alive

and playing football," he said.

Jony's journey has been far from an easy one as he once had to set aside his footballing aspirations to alleviate the poverty of their family.

"At one stage I stopped training football following the pressure from my poverty-stricken family. I started helping my mother to sell Chittoi Pitha (traditional cake) at a roadside food cart. Mizan uncle noticed my long absence in training and turned up at our home to convince my mother that I can go far playing football," said the former BKSP student.

Jony had begun playing football in 2009 before his uncle bought him his first pair of boots while his day-labour father, who worked at a rice mill, and elder brother provided everything for Jony to pursue a footballing career.

The lad from Dinajpur also participated in the NSC (National Sports Council) Cup and got selected for the advanced training in Gopalganj, Khulna, and Barishal before he got admitted to BKSP in 2017. Jony also represented national U-15 and U-16 teams in the SAFF Championship and AFC Championship Qualifiers before representing the national U-20 team in the AFC U-20 Asia Cup in 2022, in which he also struck a goal against Nepal and registered two assists in four matches.

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NEXT NAT'L POLLS Intel agencies helping AL find suitable candidates

Says Obaidul Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different intelligence agencies have been conducting surveys regularly to help Awami League find acceptable candidates for the next national election, said AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader.



This was being done in addition to the party's internal mechanism, he said at a press conference at his Secretariat office yesterday.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said he does not find anything wrong in using government agencies for a political party.

Asked about the AL's roadmap for the general election, he said, "We usually get a survey report in every

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5



Sand-filling in a wetland, also considered a flood zone, goes on unabated in Khilgaon's Nagdarpar area in the capital. Land grabbers have put up signs on water bodies and built structures there to develop housing settlements. Experts have warned that filling up marshlands would make the capital highly vulnerable to earthquake hazards and other natural disasters, while Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on numerous occasions urged that lowlands and flood zones be kept safe. However, her request seems to have fallen on deaf ears. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ATTACK ON AHMADIYYAS 'The culprits are around you'

Victims scream as railways minister visits affected areas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Railways Minister Md Nurul Islam Sujon yesterday faced an outraged Ahmadiyyas community, who came under attacks by Islamist outfits on Friday, during his visit to the affected areas in Panchagarh.

Around noon, the minister, also Panchagarh-2 lawmaker and president of the district Awami League, visited Shalshiri village, where members of the Ahmadiyya community live, to express his sympathies to the victim families.

The victims alleged to him that some of the attackers were present there right at that time.

Many of them shouted, "The attackers are still around you [minister]." After that, they began chanting slogans, demanding punishment to the culprits.

The minister appeared to be embarrassed with the

SEE PAGE 7 COL 6

BLAST IN SCIENCE LAB AREA Building had no fire safety system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shirin Mansion, the three storey commercial building in the capital's Science Lab area, where a deadly explosion took place on Sunday, lacked any fire safety features or other means of preventing a fire, said a top fire service official.

The walls and roof of the building caved in and projectiles and glass shards shot across the area after the blast on the second floor around 10:50am, killing three people and injuring at least 50 others.

There were offices of an insurance company and a stationery product supplier on the second floor.

"There was no fire safety equipment or anything that could stop a fire in the building...The second floor has been so damaged that it needs to be reconstructed," said Hafizur Rahman, deputy assistant director at Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence, who led the rescue operation at the scene on Sunday.

Fire service officials said they were yet to form a probe body over the incident.

"We primarily suspect gas accumulation to be the reason behind the blast. We are investigating it further and looking into other possible

SEE PAGE 7 COL 6

AMENDING DSA Govt to sit again with stakeholders

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law minister has suggested that the government sits again with stakeholders to identify the problem areas of the Digital Security Act.

"Let us sit together to mark out the problems concerning the law and work together for a solution," said Law Minister Anisul Huq, speaking at a seminar organised by International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law and Counterpart International.

"This meeting can even happen before Ramadan. Anyone can give their opinions there."

The minister, while addressing the audience of "Shaping of Third Sector - Laws and Policies" at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, said, "Repealing the law is not a logical solution. Many have

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

FIRE AT ROHINGYA CAMPS Many pointing at conflict between Arsa, RSO

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Sunday's fire that made 12,000 stateless Rohingyas homeless in a Cox's Bazar refugee camp was the result of enmity between armed groups Arsa and RSO, said sources inside the camp.

Rohingyas said they became victims of the fighting between the two groups.

Officials, however, said the fire was possibly an act of sabotage.

"It could be sabotage. We have got some video clips and we are suspecting that the fire was set off intentionally. We got information that a shooting took place before the fire incident in the area," Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, refugee relief and repatriation commissioner, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said that a seven-member committee, headed by Cox's Bazar Additional District Magistrate Abu Sufian, was formed to investigate the incident. It was asked to submit a report within three working days.

"Once we receive the probe report, it will be clear to us whether it was sabotage. Stern action will be taken against the perpetrators if it is found to be sabotage," Mizanur added.

Sources said members of Arakan Rohingya

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2

Three killed as bus, train collide in Ctg

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed after a bus got on a level crossing and was hit by a train pulling tankers in the EPZ area of Chattogram yesterday.

The deceased are: Md Azizul Haque, 30, a pointsman for Bangladesh Railway, bus passengers Md Asaduzzaman, 30, and Miton Kanti Dey, 25.

The bus went on to the level crossing ignoring Azizul's signal to stop in front of the Meghna Oil Company depot on Airport Road around 9:40pm.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5



Shakib Al Hasan and teammates celebrate following the dismissal of England debutant Rehan Ahmed in the third and final ODI in Chattogram yesterday as the Tigers' talisman became the first Bangladesh cricketer to bag 300 wickets in ODIs. Shakib fired on all cylinders to inspire his side to a 50-run win and deny the visitors a clean series sweep.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

3 students die in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Three students were killed after an unidentified vehicle hit their motorcycle in Sirajganj's Tarash upazila early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Md. Alamgir Hossain, 22, of village Gograhali in Belkuchi upazila of Sirajganj, Md. Sujon Hossain, 21, and Siam Ahmed, 22, of village Nondonpur in Puthia upazila of Rajshahi. The victims are students of Nobab Siraj-Ud-Doula College, Natore.

The students were heading toward Natore from Sirajganj on a bike when a vehicle hit them at Mannan Nagar area around 6:30am, leaving them dead on

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

Suicide blast kills 9 Pak police officers

AFP, Quetta

A suicide bomber killed nine police officers and wounded 16 others yesterday in an attack on their truck in southwestern Pakistan, officials said.

Security forces have been battling a years-long insurgency by militants in Balochistan demanding a bigger share of the province's wealth, as well as attacks by the Pakistan Taliban (TTP). "The suicide bomber was riding a motorbike and hit the truck from behind," senior police official Abdul Hai Aamir told AFP.

The incident took place near Dhadar, the main town of Kachhi district, about 120 kilometres southeast of Quetta in Balochistan. Photos of the aftermath showed the police truck upside down on the road with its windows shattered.

Mehmood Notezai, police chief for Kachhi district, told AFP the officers were returning from a week-long cattle show where they

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2

Shakib denies England

SPORTS REPORTER

It was Shakib Al Hasan's day and that led to Bangladesh winning the dead rubber third ODI against England by 50 runs at Chattogram's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday, denying England a clean sweep.

Usually, the venue is packed to the rafters when Bangladesh play, but with the series already lost ahead of the game, empty stands greeted players during training sessions and the game itself. But Bangladesh were motivated to do well, evidenced by skipper Tamim Iqbal's words at the presser after the game: "We know we are a good ODI side and we wanted to win against a very, very good team."

With the bat, Shakib held up the innings at one end and then proved equally crucial with the ball as he scalped a four-fer in an incredible win.

Having elected to bat, the Tigers were in early trouble after Sam Curran removed Liton Das and Tamim. Mushfiqur Rahim has been struggling and he looked patchy at the start of his innings, as did Najmul Hossain Shanto.

But they weathered that period as England looked to force errors. Once they settled, the pair managed to put on a crucial partnership of 98 which ended with the unfortunate run-out of Najmul after he made 53.

Shakib came to the crease and produced another partnership with

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2

Major (Retd) Sadek Ali
(1942-2023)

We Mourn

Major (Retd) Sadek Ali passed away peacefully in United Hospital on Monday, 6th March 2023 at 3:35 pm. Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ellaihi Rajoun.

Born in 1942, Sadek Ali was educated in St. Gregory's High School, Dhaka College and Dhaka University, from where he obtained a BA (Hons) & MA in English. He joined the Army Education Corps and took voluntary retirement as Major in order to pursue other careers. He was the Managing Director of Gumti Enterprises, Chairman of Kasba T. Ali College, Honorary Consul of Lebanon and more. He leaves behind his wife, Advocate Salma Ali, the President of the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), daughter Amna Ali, granddaughters Suha and Zaha, and a host of relatives, friends and admirers.

He was the son of former Minister and Ambassador, President of Supreme Court Bar Association (twice) the late Tafazzal Ali, and Mrs. Sarah Ali.

His Namaz-e-Janaza will be held at the Azad Mosque on Tuesday, 7th March after Zuhr prayers, and he will be buried at Banani Graveyard.

- Bereaved family members