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Chaos all throughout SCBA polls

In one-sided election, pro-AL lawyers win all posts

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

In a one-sided election marked by scuffles, chaos, police highhandedness, and ruckus raised by lawyers, the pro-Awami League lawyers have won all posts of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

Pro-BNP lawyers who didn't cast their votes demonstrated on the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) office premises yesterday, the second day of the two-day polls, demanding cancellation of what they said was a "farce of an election".

Pro-Awami League and pro-BNP lawyers shoved each other and engaged in scuffles during the demonstrations around 12:30pm and 4:00pm.

The pro-BNP lawyers demanded that a new date be fixed for holding the polls in a fair manner under an "acceptable" election-conducting committee.

Pro-AL lawyers' panel Bangabandhu Awami Ainjibi Parishad won all the 14 posts of the executive committee with incumbent President Md Montaz Uddin Fakir and incumbent Secretary Abdun Nur Dulal getting reelected, said Rabiul Hassan, administration officer of the SCBA.

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"I have never seen police enter the Supreme Court and attack people, not even during the military regime. I am ashamed of it. I don't know why we reached such a state."

— ZI Khan Panna



A mighty man's humble birthday

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

"I have never observed my birthday – at most my wife would present me a little gift on this day. I would try and stay at home on these days."

"I found in the newspaper that the Dhaka City Awami League is observing my birthday. Must be, because I am in jail! That I am someone whose birthday is even worth observing and is a news feature made me smile."

This was how Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then newly elected Awami League president, described his 47th birthday, which he spent in Dhaka Central Jail in 1967.

Mujib, later known as Bangabandhu – the father of the nation – described how the highlight of his birthday would be getting to meet his wife and children.

In jail, he used to note down his daily life in his diary. The diary, which was later turned into a book called "Karagarer Rojnamcha (Prison Diaries)", contains his memories of imprisonment during the Pakistan regime, especially between 1966 and 1968, and also between 1958 and 1960.

"My heart was telling me: it would be nice if Renu [Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib] would show up on this day with the children again. On the

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TEESTA WATER

Dhaka will first seek to know the facts on withdrawal

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is cautiously observing the situation and verifying media reports on India's plan to withdraw water from the Teesta for hydropower and irrigation projects in West Bengal, the foreign ministry said yesterday.

"The water resources ministry and the Joint River Commission are readying a paper, and we will try to know the facts from India. Then we shall take necessary measures," Seheri Sabrin, foreign ministry spokesperson, told journalists at the weekly media briefing at the ministry.

Indian newspaper The Telegraph last week reported that the West Bengal government decided to set up three hydropower plants in Darjeeling, and two of them are likely to reduce the volume of water in the Teesta.

It also reported that the West Bengal government acquired 1,000 acres to dig two canals and divert more water from the river to

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Pro-Awami League and pro-BNP lawyers scuffle on the last day of the election to Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday. The photo was taken on the Supreme Court premises around 4:00pm.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

13 jailed over Nasirnagar mayhem

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A Brahmanbaria court yesterday sentenced 13, including former Haripur Union Parishad chairman Dewan Atiqur Rahman Ankhi, to four years' imprisonment in a case filed over vandalising temples and carrying out arson attacks in Nasirnagar six years ago.

Chief Judicial Magistrate of Brahmanbaria Masud Parvez delivered the verdict, said Court Inspector Kazi Didarul Alam.

Other 12 convicts are: Mukhles Mia, Idhu Mia, Mofizul Haque, Nazir Rahman, Mafuz Miah, Saiham Rabbi Shyam, Mir Kashem, Tabarok Reza, Anis Miah, Khasru Miah, SK Abdul Ahad and Sajib Chowdhury.

On October 30, 2016, religious bigots vandalised and torched homes and temples of the Hindus in the upazila over a Facebook post "hurting religious sentiments".

The court inspector added that the case was filed in connection with

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'Cop was killed in my office, I wasn't there' Says 'Arav' on Facebook live from Dubai, thanks Shakib for not backing out

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Rabiul Islam AKA Arav, accused of killing a police inspector in 2018, has admitted that the officer was killed at his Banani office in the capital.

"There is a case against me," he said on Facebook live yesterday from Dubai.

Rabiul now goes by the alias Arav Khan and his criminal record came under the spotlight after he invited cricketer Shakib Al Hasan to open his jewellery store in Dubai on Wednesday.

The accused yesterday claimed that he was not in his office during the murder, and that he came to know about it from his assistant.

Special Branch Inspector Mamun Emran Khan was killed on July 7, 2018. Police in a probe report submitted to a Dhaka court said Rabiul brought a gunnysack and played a significant role in the dumping of the body.

Rabiul, who also goes by aliases Apan, Shohag and Redoy, admitted that he was arrested several times in arms cases filed against him.

A few days ago, he posted a video clip on Facebook where Shakib said that he was going to open Arav Jewellers in Dubai on March 15.

Similar videos of showbiz stars were also uploaded to his Facebook page.

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Rabiul Islam

Price hike in Ramadan an abominable act: Hasina



STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday came down heavily on a section of businesspeople for their unethical act of increasing the prices of essential commodities during Ramadan inflicting suffering on the common people.

"The Ramadan is ahead. Some unscrupulous businessmen are trying to increase the price of commodities. It is a very abominable task," she said.

"It is unnecessary to give people pain after increasing the prices of essentials when they will be busy with observing Ramadan and offering

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Chicken price UNTHINKABLE

Not likely to go down in months

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

With Ramadan less than a week away, the high prices of chicken and meat are not likely to come down anytime soon.

Yesterday, broiler chicken was sold for Tk 270 a kg in the capital, up from Tk 160 one and a half months ago.

"I have never seen broiler chicken being sold at such a high price. I'm worried that the price may cross the Tk 300-mark in Ramadan," said Shamim Alam, a banker, at the capital's Hatirpool kitchen market.

A trader charged Shamim Tk 510 for a broiler chicken.

"My daughter loves to eat chicken. Otherwise, I would have bought beef," Shamim told the trader.

Prices of all breeds of chicken started going up in the capital one and a half months ago.

Yesterday, the Sonalika breed was sold for Tk 370 per kg and local breed Tk 630 per kg, up from Tk 270 and Tk 500 one and a half months back, according to the market analysis of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Halima, a resident of Bhashantek slum, went to the kitchen market in the slum yesterday to buy chicken but returned home with chicken liver, head, neck, and feet which she bought at Tk 120 per kg.

The woman, who bought chicken a month ago, said, "I could not even think of such a high price of chicken."

Reajul Huq, director (administration) of the Department of Livestock Services, blamed high prices of chicks and feed and rise in demand for the price hike.

"The department cannot intervene in the market as it is an independent business," he told The Daily Star.

Halima, a resident of Bhashantek slum, went to the kitchen market in the slum yesterday to buy chicken but returned home with chicken liver, head, neck, and feet which she bought at Tk 120 per kg.

Moshiur Rahman, an accountant at a private firm, buys groceries every Friday.

"We live in a large joint family. We need at least eight chickens of local breed every week. The current price of eight chickens is about Tk 5,200. With this amount, I could buy about 7.5kg beef," he told this newspaper, adding that his family was switching from chicken to red meat.

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শুভ জন্মদিন

জাতির জনক বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান

তোমাকে ভালোবাসে বাংলাদেশ

From the house of KDS

APPAREL

TRIMS & PACKAGING

STEEL

TEXTILE

INLAND CONTAINER DEPOT & LOGISTICS

INSURANCE

SECURITIES

BANKING

ENERGY & MINERALS

Seven more abducted in Teknaf

Body found in Ukhiya

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Criminals have again abducted seven people when they went to collect firewood in Teknaf hills of Cox's Bazar and demanded ransom for their release, said the victims' family members.

This incident took place in Jahazpura hilly area in Baharchhara union of Teknaf around 12:30pm yesterday, said Mashiur Rahman, officer in charge of Baharchhara Police Investigation Centre under Teknaf Police Station.

The abductees are Gias Uddin, 17, Fazal Karim, 38, Jaberul Islam, 35, Arif Ullah, 22, Mohammad Rashid, 28, Mohammad Zafar, 38, Mohammad Zainal, 45, of Jahazpura village, said police.

Around 15 to 20 criminals wearing masks besieged a group of nine villagers, including two children, who went to the hill to collect firewood and held them hostage at gunpoint, said Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, a member of ward-6 of Baharchhara Union Parishad.

The two children escaped tactfully while the criminals were taking the villagers deep into the forest after an hour of the abduction, said the member.

The miscreants are demanding ransoms, Rafiqul said.

Abdul Halim, officer in charge of Teknaf Model Police Station, said, "Several police teams are conducting raids in the hills."

Locals are also cooperating with police in the operation, he added.

Inspector Moshiur, of Baharchhara Police Investigation Centre, said police were also trying to identify the perpetrators.

Forty-one people, including 17 Rohingyas and 24 locals, were abducted in Teknaf hills in the last six months.

Most of them returned after paying ransoms, locals claimed.

Meanwhile, a Rohingya man was found dead at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya yesterday morning, a day after an armed group abducted him.

The body of Mahbubur Rahman, 35, bore several stab wounds likely inflicted by sharp weapons, police said.

An inhabitant of Kutupalong camp-5, Mahbubur went to his father-in-law's house in Balukhali camp-9 on Wednesday morning when an armed group picked him up, said Amir Jalor, additional deputy inspector general of Armed Police Battalion-8.

Locals found his body near the bordering area of camp-9 this morning and informed police, the police official added.

Police are suspecting he was murdered over enmity centring establishing supremacy in the camps, the APBn official said.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.



People conditioning the hull of a trawler with bitumen and fire in Majerghat area along the Bakkhali river in Cox's Bazar town. Any vessel that stays in the sea for a long time gets infested with barnacles that cause drag and reduce the vessels efficiency. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVU

BLACK SEA DRONE INCIDENT

Pentagon releases de-classified video

Moscow says US directly participating in Ukraine war

REUTERS, Washington

In a rare move, the Pentagon yesterday released a de-classified video showing Russia's intercept of a US military surveillance drone downed over the Black Sea two days ago.

It was the first direct US-Russian incident since the Ukraine war began, worsening already tense relations between Washington and Moscow.

In the video, a Russian Su-27 fighter jet comes very close to the US MQ-9 drone and dumps fuel near it, in what US officials say was an apparent effort to damage the American aircraft as it flew over the Black Sea.

It also shows the loss of the video feed after another close Russian maneuver, which the Pentagon says resulted from the Russian jet's collision with the drone. It ends with images of the drone's damaged propeller, which the Pentagon says resulted from the collision, making the aircraft inoperable.

The video, which is about 40 seconds long, has been edited by the US military for length but shows events in a sequential order, the Pentagon said.

Russia has denied US accusations that its jets acted recklessly in the incident on

Tuesday over the Black Sea, and instead has blamed "sharp maneuvering" by the drone for the crash, claiming its jet did not make contact.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Russian ships had been seen near the area where the drone had crashed, though they did not appear to have recovered any parts of the drone yet. It was not clear if they were still in the area.

Washington has said that any recovery efforts relating to the drone would be difficult because of the depth of water in the region. It said it has taken measures to ensure that no sensitive information can be gleaned from the remains of the drone.

The release of the video followed separate calls on Wednesday between the top US general, Mark Milley, and his Russian counterpart, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, as well as between US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu.

In remarks to reporters on Wednesday, Milley said it was clear that the intercept and harassment of the drone by Russian jets was intentional, but it was unclear whether the Russian pilots meant to slam their aircraft into the drone -- a move that could also put the Russian aircraft at risk.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei

Shoigu told his US counterpart that US drone flights near Crimea's coast "were provocative in nature" and could lead to "an escalation ... in the Black Sea zone," a ministry statement said.

"The Americans keep saying they're not taking part in military operations. This is the latest confirmation that they are directly participating in these activities - in the war," Kremlin Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev said.

Russia, in a statement said, has "no interest" in escalation "but will in future react in due proportion" and the two countries should "act with a maximum of responsibility", including by having military lines of communication in a crisis.

In its daily intelligence update on the Ukraine war, Britain's defence ministry said Russian attempts to capture the town of Vuhledar, about 150 km (93 miles) southwest of Bakhmut, had "almost certainly slowed" after repeated, very costly failed attacks over the last three months.

President Vladimir Putin, meeting members of Russia's business elite yesterday for the first time since the invasion, urged them to invest in their country to help it weather what he called the West's "sanctions war".

Tourist's body found hanging in hotel room

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Police recovered the hanging body of a young woman from a hotel room in Cox's Bazar on Wednesday night.

Sharmin Akhter, 26, from Gopalganj's Kashiani, travelled to Cox's Bazar alone on Tuesday night and rented a room in the hotel.

The next night, a cleaner found her room locked from the inside and informed the hotel authorities.

On information, police arrived and broke down the door and found the body hanging from the ceiling fan.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Nazmul Huda, inspector (Investigation) of Cox's Bazar Sadar Model Police Station.

UP member hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A union parishad member succumbed to his injuries yesterday hours after he was hacked with sharp weapons in Kushtia's Daulatpur upazila.

Kajol Hosen, 42, was an elected member of ward no-7 of the upazila's Sadar union and a local Jubo League activist.

Around 6:00pm on Wednesday, unidentified criminals attacked Kajol at Sadarpara intersection and fled the scene, said Mujibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Daulatpur Police Station.

Locals rescued Kajol and admitted him to the hospital where he passed away around 5:00am.

The OC said Kajol had a dispute with the people in Sardarpara over establishing supremacy in the area.

No case has been filed in this connection yet.

SCIENCE LAB BLAST

Another victim dies, death toll now 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another victim of the explosion at a market near the capital's Science Lab intersection died yesterday, taking the death toll from the blast to five.

Johur Ali, 52, who suffered 44 percent burn injuries, passed away at Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery around 7:30pm, Samanta Lal Sen, chief coordinator of the hospital told The Daily Star.

On March 5, three people were killed and many others injured in the explosion at Shirin Mansion on Mirpur Road around 10:50am. Many were injured and suffered burns.

7-yr-old killed after being hit by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A child was killed after being hit by a train in Jamalpur Sadar upazila around 6:30pm yesterday.

Akash Mia, 7, son of Akram Hossain of Ranagachha village, was playing in the Ranagachha railway crossing area when a local train ran him over.

Locals rescued Akash and took him to a hospital where he was announced dead.

Hasina, Modi to inaugurate Indo-Bangla pipeline tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi will inaugurate the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline tomorrow at 5:00pm via video conference.

The first-cross border energy pipeline between the two countries has the capacity to transport one million tonnes per annum of high-speed diesel (HSD) and will supply the product initially to seven districts in northern Bangladesh, our New Delhi correspondent quoted the Indian PMO as saying yesterday.

The operation of the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline will put in place a sustainable, reliable, cost-effective and environment-

friendly mode of transporting HSD from India to Bangladesh and will further enhance cooperation in energy security between the two countries, read a statement from the Indian PMO.



Of the Rs 377 crore pipeline, the Bangladesh portion was built at a cost of approximately Rs 285 crore with help of an Indian grant.

A long-term agreement was signed in 2017 to import diesel

from India to Bangladesh through the pipeline which stretches from West Bengal's Siliguri to a Meghna petroleum depot in Dinajpur's Parbatipur.

The project missed the earlier deadline of June 2022 which was pushed back another year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pipeline stretches 125km inside Bangladesh's territory and 5km inside India.

In the past, Bangladesh used railway carriages to import diesel from India.

To facilitate the pipeline construction, India withdrew its objection to Dhaka building any establishment inside 150 yards of Bangladesh territory along the zero lines, foreign minister AK Abdul Momen had said recently.

Dhaka will first seek to know the facts

FROM PAGE 1

irrigate farms in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts.

Teesta water is crucial for irrigation in the northern part of Bangladesh, especially during the lean period between December and April.

Seheli said life and livelihood of the people in a large part of Bangladesh depend on the Teesta water. Therefore, Bangladesh has been trying for a water-sharing deal with India for many years.

In 2011, the two neighbours finalised the Teesta water-sharing agreement, but it was not signed due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's opposition during then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka.

Seheli said considering Bangladesh and India's excellent relationship, Bangladesh will continue to work to

resolve the issue through dialogue.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Water Resources Zaeed Farooque said India-Bangladesh Joint River Commission (JRC) members in Bangladesh have already prepared a letter that would be sent to India soon, seeking to learn officially the facts about the reported plan of diverting water from the Teesta by the West Bengal government.

"We have learnt about the plan of digging canals and withdrawing water. We want them [India] to officially tell us the facts. Then we will be sure if India is withdrawing water or not," he told journalists at the foreign ministry after a stakeholders' consultation on the UN Water Conference to be held in New York on March 22-24.

Farooque said he is expecting a JRC meeting before Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to New Delhi in

September.

He said in February, Bangladesh invited Indian Water Resources Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat for the JRC meeting in Dhaka. Last year, the JRC meeting was held in Delhi.

Regarding the Water Conference that will also be attended by Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Farooque, Seheli said they would highlight Bangladesh's rights to having water as a lower riparian country as well as impacts of climate change and seek support of the international community.

"Bangladesh will highlight the basin-wide water management of the international rivers. Bangladesh will focus that proper water management will be a major determinant of regional and international cooperation, peace and security," Seheli added.

Chaos all throughout SCBA polls

FROM PAGE 1

The signs that there would be chaos during the election were obvious: The pro-Awami League and pro-BNP camps formed two separate subcommittees to hold the election in what senior lawyers said was an unprecedented incident in the history of SCBA.

After the formation of the two committees by the two opposing camps, Supreme Court's Senior lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan on February 26 warned of chaos during the election.

"I have never seen more than one election sub-committee to conduct SCBA elections. Leaders from the two groups should immediately settle the dispute through discussion," he told The Daily Star then.

SCBA Secretary Md Abdun Nur Dulal who was elected from the pro-AL Bangabandhu Awami Ainjibi Parishad last year, issued a notice on February 23 forming a seven-member election subcommittee led by Shah Md Khasruzzaman.

On the same day, SCBA Senior Assistant Secretary Mahfuz Bin Yousuf, who was elected from the pro-BNP Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Oikya Panel last year, issued a separate circular forming another seven-member subcommittee led by AZM Fariduzzaman Farhad to conduct the election.

Amid controversies over the formation of two separate committees, both the camps reached a settlement, making senior lawyer and former justice Md Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury the head of a election conducting sub-committee.

But Munsurul resigned from the post citing personal reasons on March 13.

Later, the AL-backed SCBA members formed another sub-committee led by Moniruzzaman while the pro-BNP lawyers formed another committee led by ASM Moktar Kabir.

Pro-BNP lawyers then started demanding formation of a committee under someone who is "acceptable" to all.

Meanwhile, Wednesday's police assault on journalists and pro-BNP lawyers on Supreme Court premises was widely criticised with many raising questions about the sanctity of the apex judicial body.

Lawyer Zi Khan Panna said, "I have never seen police enter the Supreme

Court and attack people, not even during the military regime. I am ashamed of it. I don't know why we reached such a state."

A total of 4,137 lawyers cast their votes in the election conducted by the Moniruzzaman-led subcommittee formed by the pro-AL faction of the SCBA. The number of voters in the association is 8,589.

The 12 other winning candidates are Mohammad Ali Azam and Jasmine Sultana (vice presidents); Masud Alsm Chowdhury (Treasurer); Noor-Alam-Uzzal and Harunur Rashid (assistant secretaries); and Safayet Hossain Sajib, Mohiuddin Rudro, Shafique Raihan Sawon, Suvas Chandra Das, Nazmul Hossain Swapan, Delwar Hossain and Moniruzzaman Rana (executive members).

Yesterday, a large number of police were deployed on the Supreme Court premises.

Some lawyers formed a human chain in front of the SCBA office in protest of the assault on lawyers by the police.

Meanwhile, on the ground floor of the SCBA building, three to four lawyers, including Amatul Karim Swapna and Aynunnahar Siddiqua Lipi, engaged in a heated argument with some pro-AL lawyers over the presence of so many law enforcers. Attorney General AM Amin Uddin was seen trying to stop the fight.

Contacted, Mohammad Momtazul Islam Bhuiyan, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), said around 500 police personnel were deployed on the instruction of higher authorities.

Snatching of ballot papers and scuffles took place the night before the election day, he added.

Before resigning from the post of convenor of the subcommittee citing personal reasons, Munsurul on March 11 wrote to the DMP requesting deployment of an adequate number of law enforcers on the SCBA premises during the election.

There is no necessity for taking permission from the SC administration for deploying police at the SCBA, said the deputy commissioner.

A lawyer named Salahuddin Rigan was arrested on charges of stealing ballot papers and assaulting lawyers on Wednesday, he said.

Yesterday, SC Registrar General Md

Golam Rabbani told this correspondent that after learning about the deployment on Wednesday morning, he instructed the police not to take any action unless someone's life and properties were at risk.

DMP REGRETS

DMP Commissioner Khandker Golam Faruq yesterday expressed regret over the assault on journalists while Detective Branch chief Muhammad Harun Or Rashid said the attacks were unintentional.

Police will work to prevent such incidents in future, said Harun.

Pro-BNP lawyers met Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique and informed him what had happened on Wednesday. The chief justice was presiding over an eight-member full bench of the Appellate Division at the time.

In the morning, former attorney general AJ Mohammad Ali, a leader of the pro-BNP group, told the bench that "an unprecedented incident took place on the Supreme Court premises on Wednesday. It is still going on. Even today, there are police stationed in front of many of the lawyers' rooms."

Another pro-BNP lawyer Ruhul Qudus Kazal said, "I was attacked and my robe was torn. Today, I borrowed a robe and put it on. Thousands of police have been deployed. Lawyers were beaten up by the police and thrown out of the polling station. Why can't I be present at the polling station?"

Lawyer Mahbub Uddin Khokon said, "Police were kicking us. I am not able to stand properly because of the pain. Many lawyers and journalists were injured."

The chief justice then asked the pro-BNP lawyers to meet him at his office after court hours. The lawyers met the chief justice at his office and requested him to take measures over the incidents.

The chief justice told the lawyers that he would talk to Attorney General AM Amin Uddin.

Later in the day, Amin Uddin told reporters at his office that the chief justice has nothing to do with the situation that unfolded over the SCBA election.

Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and several other organisations yesterday condemned the police assault on lawyers and journalists and demanded investigations.

‘Will step down if polls not free, fair’

Says EC Alamgir on next general elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Md Alamgir yesterday guaranteed that the next general election will be free and fair, and if they are not able to hold such polls, they will step down from their positions.

Alamgir was talking to reporters at his EC office.

Asked about what happens if the commission has to compromise, he said, “You will not see us in this chair then. If we can’t do what we have pledged to do through oath, why should we remain in this chair?”

He said the other election commissioners also have similar thoughts regarding the matter.

Alamgir said it is possible to hold a free and fair election under a partisan government if the commission wants to do so. It depends on how well the Election Commission performs its duties, he added.

“The previous Election Commission can say why they could not do so in the past. The people of the previous and current commission are different from each other,” Alamgir said.

Asked whether they will take any initiative to bring an end to the ongoing political stalemate over joining the next general election, Alamgir said, “Has the constitution given the EC any such responsibilities?”

He said the EC has the power to take opinions from various stakeholders, civil society. Dialogue can be held with political parties, he added.

Alamgir said, “It is our responsibility that those who will participate in the elections can campaign freely; voters can come to the polling stations and vote for their preferred candidates.”



At the break of dawn, boatmen of the Buriganga were still asleep on their boats. To save the cost of accommodation from their modest income, they sleep inside these makeshift arrangements. The boats, that work as the source of their livelihoods during the day, also function as their home and shelter when the night falls. The photo was taken yesterday from Kamrangirchar.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Bangabandhu’s 103rd birth anniv today

BSS, Dhaka

The 103rd birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be observed across the country today.

The day is celebrated as the National Children’s Day. It is also a public holiday.

On this day in 1920, the architect of the nation was born in Tungipara of Gopalganj.

Through his dynamic leadership, Bangabandhu had organised the Bangalee nation to fight against exploitation and repression by the Pakistani rulers. The movement culminated in

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Wasa cannot hike water tariff until rule formulated: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday declared that authorities of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority cannot hike water tariff until a rule is formulated under the Wasa Act in this regard.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo delivered the verdict after hearing a petition filed by Consumer Association of Bangladesh, petitioner’s lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua told The Daily Star.

Details of the HC verdict could not be known as its full text was not released yet.

Wasa lawyer Sayed Mahshib Hossain told this correspondent that his client will move an appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court after receiving the HC verdict.

The HC also declared illegal the decision to award performance bonuses to employees of Dhaka Wasa.

According to the petition, in the 291st meeting of Dhaka Wasa board on April 27 last year, it was decided to give performance award (performance bonus) to its employees, which will be equal to three basic salaries.

The petition said the authorities of Dhaka Wasa cannot award performance

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DEATH OF FARDIN Bushra gets permanent bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted permanent bail to Amatullah Bushra in the case filed over the death of Buet student Fardin Noor Parash.

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

Bushra was present at the Metropolitan Magistrate’s Court today to submit a petition for permanent bail in the case.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shanto Islam Mallik granted her permanent bail and fixed April 16 as the next hearing of the case.

PRAYER
TIMING

MARCH 17

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5:00 12:30 4:30 6:14 7:45

JAMAAT 5:35 1:15 4:45 6:18 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

MY DHAKA

A treat for art AFICIONADOS

Murtaja Baseer’s artworks showcased in city gallery

One of the two unsold linocut prints of “Bloody 21st” by famous artist Murtaja Baseer is on display at Galleri Kaya’s exclusive group art exhibition, CLASSIC 10. This is exciting news for collectors and aficionados of Dhaka’s art scene. Also, on offer will be the classic linocut print “The shoe shine boy” by Baseer.

RBR

The historical background of “Bloody 21st” is passionate and nationalistic. Baseer was one of the protestors of February 21, 1952. The horror, fear, revolt, and tension of the event are all expressed in the artwork. The artist’s first-hand reaction is expressed in the compositional tension but Baseer himself was not aware of the historical impact the artwork would have in the future.

In 2006, Galleri Kaya took the initiative to print and declare the edition of Baseer.

PHOTO: GALLERI KAYA

Bloody 21st Linocut 25 x 17.5cm (10x7in) 1952

The exhibition will be inaugurated on March 18 at the Galleri Kaya premises in Uttara

Shoe shine boy Linocut 19.5 x 13cm (8x5in) 1954

The “The shoe shine boy” is a 1954 artwork, depicting the working class, and one of Baseer’s notable, earlier works. Basheer was into leftist politics and his subject matter and composition had a sense of social commitment to it. The artwork resonates with one’s heartstrings.

Besides Basheer’s work, on display will be maestro SM Sultan’s 1958 portrait of pastoral landscape. Shahbuddin Ahmed’s Lithograph on paper will also be part of the exhibition. Rich in terms of body of work, the exhibition is a must visit just to see the great artwork in person.

CLASSIC 10 at Galleri Kaya is a group art exhibition by 10 eminent, modern and contemporary artists of Bangladesh and feature artworks done between the year 1956 and 2023.

The list includes some of the most notable names in the art scene, including S M Sultan, Murtaja Baseer, Samarjit Roy Choudhury, Hashem Khan, Rafiqun Nabi, Hamiduzzaman Khan, Shahabuddin Ahmed, Chandra Shekhar Dey, Mohammad Eunus, and Ranjit Das.

The exhibition will be inaugurated on March 18 at the Galleri Kaya premises in Uttara.

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 rajfat@thedailystar.net

Fake vaccine factory busted in Keraniganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the outskirts of the capital, they set up a small factory in Keraniganj and started manufacturing fake Cervarix vaccines, used to prevent cervical cancer.

As raw materials, the group used hepatitis B vaccine brought illegally from India. They would then campaign at educational institutions in Dhaka and Gazipur through health foundations and vaccination centres. The group even sold the counterfeit products to different pharmacies, claimed police’s Detective Branch (DB).

Law enforcers, however, did not further elaborate about the process.

“In the last two years, around 6,000 girls and women of different educational institutions in Dhaka and Gazipur got these fake vaccines,” Muhammad Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner of DB of Dhaka Metropolitan Police,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Women must speak up

Speakers tell debate festival

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Debate Federation Bangladesh (NDF BD) hosted an event, titled “7th NDF BD Women Debate Festival ‘23” yesterday at Government College of Applied Human Science premises in Dhaka.

The festival featured 400 contestants overall from schools, colleges, universities, and open clubs.

During the opening ceremony, Tasmima Hossain, editor of The Daily Ittefaq, said, “Debate plays a significant role in reforming society. I’m glad there are so many female debaters here.”

“Women must practice speaking up and expressing their opinions to achieve true independence for women in our culture.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

SHARIF JAMIL
General Secretary of Bapa

Women of Bholganj in Sylhet's Companiganj upazila have been collecting wood for cooking from a forest close to the Bangladesh-India border for some time now. After the closure of Bholganj's stone quarry a couple of years ago, around 20,000 to 25,000 people became jobless. The traditional method of cooking with wood made a comeback in the area as a cost-cutting policy.

PHOTO: **SHEIKH NASIR**

Finds national survey on children's education in Bangladesh 2021

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Findings of the National Survey on Children's Education in Bangladesh 2021 were revealed

Shah Rezwan Hayat, director general of the Directorate of Primary Education, said, "The government took immediate measures to save the education sector. However, many students still dropped out of schools and faced learning losses. We have been

Besides, the study showed that a student studied for an average of 6 hours a day at home, school

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Nineteen scouts of Sunnydale School received President's Scout Award-2020 during the 51st annual general meeting of Bangladesh Scouts national council yesterday. A total of 626 scouts from across the country received the award.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Speakers tell event marking veteran politician's 2nd death anniv

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Noakhali*

“The former law minister was a ‘language soldier’ in 1952. He was not



পরিচালকের কার্যালয়

বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ



সূত্রঃ বঙ্গমুদ্রাবিধি/পটিক/১৪২/১১২৫(১)

প্রাইভেট কার ভাড়ার দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ক্রঃ নং	কাজের নাম	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র ঘোষণার তারিখ ও সময়
১	১৫০০ সিসির প্রাইভেট কার মাসিক চুক্তিতে ভাড়া সরবরাহ	২৭/০৩/২০২৩, বিকাল ৪.০০ ঘটিকা	২৮/০৩/২০২৩, দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা	২৮/০৩/২০২৩, দুপুর ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা

দরপত্রদাতার যোগ্যতা : ক) গাড়ীর রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদ, খ) আপটুডেট গাড়ীর ট্যাক্স সনদ, গ) আপটুডেট ফিটনেস সনদ, ঘ) ৪ আর্থ সাইজের গাড়ীর চতুর্দিকের ছবি।

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের নিজস্ব ওয়েবসাইট www.bsmrstu.edu.bd এ পাওয়া যাবে।


ড. মাসুদ
 উপ পরিচালক
 বঙ্গমুদ্রাবিধি, গোপালগঞ্জ
 ০১৭৫০-০৭২৮৮৪

রিডি-৪৯৮

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muhmaamd MA
 Tamim of Kushtia was
 named the winner for
 producing biogas from
 renewable energy. Arnab
 Mistry, from Bagerhat,
 was the first runner-up
 for producing paddy
 in fields with salinity.
 Ahasanul Baser Shuvo,
 from Manikganj, was
 the second runner-up
 for producing organic
 vegetables and helping
 farmers sell them at
 markets.

The winners received prize money, crests and certificates.

STAR REPORT

BRAC Healthcare will offer comprehensive dental services including regular check-ups, teeth cleanings, cosmetic fillings, tooth extractions, and more.

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116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1205
www.bscl.gov.bd

Date: 16.03.2023

CORRIGENDUM

The following amendments have been made for the Tender Notice No. 14.39.0000.012.07.001.23.36; Tender Publication Date: 15/03/2023 "Procurement of Multiple Carrier Per Channel (MCPC) Broadcast Platform". Tender closing date and time hereby amended as follows:

Sl. No.	Reference Clause of Tender Notice	Existing	Amended as
14.	Tender closing date and time	20/03/2023 Time: 12:05	30/03/2023 Time: 12:05
15.	Tender opening date and time	20/03/2023 Time: 12:20	30/03/2023 Time: 12:20

(Signed)
Md. Shafiqul Islam
Managing Director (Additional Charge)
Email: procurement@bscl.com.bd

GD-494

Government of Bangladesh

Department of Agricultural Extension

Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project

Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215

www.dae.gov.bd

Memo No. 12.01/0000.000.14.054.22/935
Date: 15/03/2023

e-Tender Notice

Open Tender Method (OTM)

e-Tender is invited the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the following works.

Sl. No.	Tender ID and Invitation Reference No.	Name of the works	Publication date and time	Last time and time for opening and closing
1	802931, DAE/FMP/WD-12/ot-1/932	Construction of Boundary wall (Front and Ditch Area side Length=242 RM) work at Kalakair, Gazpur under Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215.	15-Mar-2023 22:00:00	02-Apr-2023 15:30:00
2	802905, DAE/FMP/WD-10/ot-1/931	Land Development work (Ditch area) at Kalakair, Gazpur under Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215.	15-Mar-2023 22:00:00	02-Apr-2023 15:30:00
3	802893, DAE/FMP/WD-4/ot-1/930	Repair and Renovation of Dormitory Building at Jansaid Agriculture Training Institute under Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project.	15-Mar-2023 22:00:00	02-Apr-2023 15:30:00
4	800895, DAE/FMP/WD-5/ot-5/929	Repair and Renovation of Dormitory Building with New Toilet, Training Room and Store Building at Sherpur Agriculture Training Institute under Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project.	15-Mar-2023 22:00:00	02-Apr-2023 15:30:00
5	800876, DAE/FMP/WD-6/ot-4/928	Repair and Renovation of Dormitory Building, Training Room and Store Building at Barisal Agriculture Training Institute under Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project.	15-Mar-2023 22:00:00	02-Apr-2023 15:30:00
6	800859, DAE/FMP/WD-6/ot-3/927	Repair and Renovation of Dormitory Building, Training Room & Nos. New Toilet and Store Building at Sylhet Agriculture Training Institute under Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project.	15-Mar-2023 22:00:00	02-Apr-2023 15:30:00
7	800863, DAE/FMP/WD-6/ot-2/925	Repair and Renovation of Dormitory Building, Training Room with New Toilet and Store Building at Hahazari, Chattogram Agriculture Training Institute under Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project.	15-Mar-2023 22:00:00	02-Apr-2023 15:10:00
8	800836, DAE/FMP/WD-6/ot-1/925	Repair and Renovation of Training Room with Road and Store Building with Road at Rangamati Agriculture Training Institute under Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project.	15-Mar-2023 22:00:00	02-Apr-2023 15:00:00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is mandatory. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

The procuring entity reserve the right to accept or reject all tender/proposals without showing any cause.

Tarik Mahmudul Islam
 Project Director
 Farm Mechanization Through Integrated Management Project
 Department of Agricultural Extension
 Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215

Israeli raid in West Bank kills three

AFP, Ramallah

Israeli forces killed three Palestinians in a raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank yesterday, the Palestinian health ministry said.

There were “three martyrs from occupation (Israeli) bullets in Jenin,” a ministry statement said, while the Israeli army said that “security forces are currently operating in the Jenin refugee camp”.

On Wednesday, Israeli security forces killed a man suspected of planting a roadside bomb that injured a man near the occupied West Bank this week, the military said, adding that the suspect appeared to have been planning other attacks.

On Monday, an Israeli motorist was seriously hurt in an explosion on a road near the occupied West Bank, where Palestinian militant attacks have intensified in recent months.

Armenia fears Karabakh ‘genocide’ Seeks UN help

AFP, Yerevan

Armenia said yesterday it would appeal to the international community to help prevent “genocide” in Nagorno-Karabakh after criticising the role of Russian peacekeepers in the breakaway region in Azerbaijan.

The Caucasus-region arch foes have fought two wars for control of the mountainous Karabakh region since the 1990s, with both Moscow and the West playing mediation roles.

Yerevan has said that an Azerbaijani blockade of the only land link between the separatist stronghold and Armenia has spurred a humanitarian crisis there.

Baku has denied the accusations. “Azerbaijan’s political-military leadership is preparing an ethnic cleansing, a genocide in Karabakh,” Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told a meeting of his cabinet.

“Russian peacekeepers are the guarantors of the security of the population of Karabakh and if they can’t ensure it, they must turn to the UN Security Council to prevent genocide,” he said. Pashinyan added that he had instructed his foreign ministry to “launch mechanisms on preventing genocide.”

DEMOGRAPHIC WOES South Korea hits record-low weddings: data

AFP, Seoul

The number of South Koreans who tied the knot last year hit a record low, figures showed yesterday, compounding looming demographic woes in a country with the world’s lowest birth rate.

Some 192,000 couples got married last year, according to the data released by Statistics Korea yesterday, down by more than 40 percent from a decade earlier in 2012, when 327,000 couples had wed.

This is the lowest number of marriages in a year since records began in 1970.

The average age for men getting married for the first time was 33.7 years old, a record high, the data showed, while the age for brides also hit a record high of 31.3 years old for marriage.

They represent an increase of 1.6 years for men and 1.9 for women for first-time marriage from a decade earlier.

Nearly 80 percent of couples who got married last year were doing so for the first time.

The new data comes as South Korea is grappling with a chronic decline in its birth rate, with the lowest ever number of babies – 249,000 – born last year, breaking a previous record low in 2021.

South Korea had long ago passed the so-called replacement rate after which a population begins to shrink with a record-low 0.78 births per woman last year. The government has spent 280 trillion won since 2006 in an effort to boost birth rates but population is projected to fall from 52 million to 39 million by 2067.



An elderly woman stands near a burning building following shelling in Kostyantynivka, Donetsk region, on Wednesday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. PHOTO: AFP

BID TO TACKLE REGIONAL THREATS Japan, S Korea thaw ties

North Korea fires long range missile ahead of talks

AFP, Tokyo

Japan and South Korea announced the end of tit-for-tat trade measures and pledged renewed diplomacy as leaders of the two countries met in Tokyo Thursday for a summit to thaw long-frozen ties.

The neighbours, both key US partners in the region, have for years been locked in a bitter dispute over Japan’s use of wartime forced labour.

Relations deteriorated after South Korea’s Supreme Court in 2018 ordered Japanese firms to compensate victims of forced labour, but this month Seoul announced a plan to pay those affected without Tokyo’s involvement.

President Yoon Suk Yeol has been keen to end the spat and form a united front against regional challenges including North Korea, which launched a long-range missile just hours before Yoon’s arrival in Tokyo.

After talks, he and Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced the resumption of “shuttle diplomacy,” with the leaders agreeing to regular reciprocal visits to build confidence.

Japanese media said this could include Kishida inviting Yoon to the G7 summit in Hiroshima in May, and then visiting Seoul.

“Strengthening Japan-South Korea ties in the current strategic environment is urgent,” Kishida told reporters at a joint press conference with Yoon after talks.

“I hope this visit will nurture trust and friendship and significantly elevate Japan-South Korea relations.”

Tokyo’s trade ministry said earlier on Thursday it would end restrictions on exports to South Korea of key industrial materials needed for semiconductors, and Seoul said it would withdraw a complaint filed with the World Trade Organization.

Kishida said both countries wanted stronger deterrence capacities, and that suspended security and ministerial talks would now resume, along with

trilateral meetings with China.

And Yoon said the nations would revive a military intelligence agreement that Seoul paused when relations nosedived.

In a potent reminder of the security challenges that have pushed Seoul and Tokyo closer together, North Korea fired a long-range ballistic missile just hours before Yoon’s arrival.

“As seen from North Korea’s long-range ballistic missile launch this morning before I left for Tokyo, North Korea’s ever-increasing nuclear missile threat poses a great threat to peace and stability,” he said.

“Korea and Japan must closely cooperate in solidarity to wisely deal with these illegal threats.”

The two neighbours are US allies and economically developed democracies, but their relations have long been poisoned by history, particularly atrocities committed during Japan’s 35-year colonial rule, including the use of wartime sex slaves – euphemistically termed “comfort women” – and forced labour.

Japan rejected the 2018 Supreme Court ruling, arguing that colonial era disputes had been settled in 1965, when diplomatic ties were normalised and Tokyo gave Seoul loans and economic aid equivalent to several billion dollars today.

However, Yoon’s election, and growing concerns about North Korean sabre-rattling as well as Chinese military power, have driven momentum for reconciliation.

“South Korea can no longer afford to keep squabbling over specific bilateral issues,” Yuki Asaba, a professor of Korean studies at Doshisha University, told AFP.

Following their summit and press conference, Kishida will host a dinner for Yoon, who reportedly made a specific menu request: omurice, a Western-inspired Japanese comfort food featuring an omelette over rice.



MILITARY ARMS

India okays purchase of equipment worth \$8.5b

REUTERS, New Delhi

India yesterday approved purchases of missiles, helicopters, artillery guns and electronic warfare systems worth \$8.5 billion as it sought to add more teeth to its military.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), the top government body for capital acquisition approvals for the Indian military, approved the orders worth 705 billion rupees (\$8.52 billion) for all its services, the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

All orders would be placed with Indian companies, it said, keeping with a push by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government to boost domestic defence manufacturing.

Flanked by fellow nuclear-armed powers China and Pakistan and running tensions with Chinese troops along its disputed Himalayan frontier, India has been seeking to modernise its mostly Soviet-era military equipment.

The focus on the navy comes after India expressed concern last year over Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean.

ARREST WARRANT SUSPENSION

Pakistan trial court dismisses Imran’s plea

AFP, Islamabad

A Pakistan court declined yesterday to cancel an arrest warrant for former prime minister Imran Khan, one of his lawyers said, as hundreds of his supporters held a vigil at his home and vowed to stop police from detaining him.



Attempts by police this week to arrest the 70-year-old led to pitched battles with his supporters outside his home in the eastern city of Lahore before a court ordered authorities to stand down Wednesday.

Khan was ousted from office by a no-confidence vote last year and has been snarled in dozens of legal cases as he campaigns for early elections and a return to office.

“The court has dismissed our petition to suspend the non-bailable arrest warrant, which means that Khan can be arrested,” lawyer Sher Afzal Marwat told AFP.

It was not immediately clear, however, if police would move against Khan, whose lawyers gave an undertaking to the Islamabad court that he would appear on Saturday.

However, Shibli Faraz, a senior party leader, said he would need “foolproof security” to appear.

This particular case, brought by the Election Commission of Pakistan, centres on accusations Khan did not declare gifts received during his time as premier, or the profit made from selling them.

He denies the allegations.

MINE EXPLOSION

Death toll rises to 21 in Colombia

AFP, Bogotá

An explosion at a coal mine in central Colombia has left 21 miners dead after 10 more bodies were found in the pit, President Gustavo Petro said yesterday. “Sadly, 21 people lost their lives in this tragic accident in Sutatausa,” a municipality in Cundinamarca department, the Colombian leader wrote on Twitter. A build-up of methane gas apparently triggered the Tuesday night explosion in the underground complex, according to local officials. Rescuers had found 11 other bodies on Wednesday in the mine, which is some 45 miles north of Bogotá. Cundinamarca Governor Nicolas Garcia announced the search was over yesterday.

US ‘suppressing’ TikTok: China

AFP, Beijing

China urged the United States to stop “unreasonably suppressing” TikTok yesterday, after Washington gave the popular video-sharing app an ultimatum to part ways with its Chinese owners or face a nationwide ban.

The United States and the European Union have been taking an increasingly firm approach to the app, owned by the Chinese firm ByteDance, citing fears that user data could be used or abused by Chinese officials.

The White House was reported on Wednesday to have told the app that it will be banned in the United States if it continues to be owned by the Beijing-based tech firm. A TikTok spokesperson told AFP that “calls for a ban or divestment are unnecessary”.



Women clean mud-covered clothes next to tents donated by Turkish Turk Kizilay humanitarian organisation, following floods in Adiyaman, southeastern Turkey yesterday. Flash floods killed at least 10 people living in tents and containers set up across Turkey’s quake-hit southeast, according to media reports. PHOTO: AFP

ANIMAL TRIALS

Dengue treatment advances

AFP, Tokyo

A new dengue treatment that could become the first to prevent and treat the virus has proven effective in initial trials in monkeys, according to new research.

Dengue is transmitted by mosquitoes and affects tens of millions each year, producing brutal symptoms that have earned it the moniker “breakbone fever”.

It is endemic in dozens of countries, but no treatment exists.

Two years ago, researchers published work showing a compound could effectively prevent the virus from replicating in cell cultures and mice by preventing the interaction between two proteins. Now the team has refined the compound and tested it in both mice and monkeys, with “very encouraging” results, said Van Loock, lead for emerging pathogens at the Janssen Companies of Johnson & Johnson.

UKRAINIAN CHILDREN

Russian transfer
of kids amounts to
‘war crime’: UN

AFP, Geneva

Russia's forced transfer and deportation of Ukrainian children to areas under its control amounts to a war crime, UN investigators said yesterday, also warning of possible crimes against humanity.

In its first report, the high-level investigation team created by the UN Human Rights Council a year ago determined that Russia had committed a vast array of violations since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"Many of these amount to war crimes," the report by the so-called Commission of Inquiry said, highlighting the forced transfers of children.

"The commission has concluded that the situations it has examined concerning the transfer and deportation of children, within Ukraine and to the Russian Federation respectively, violate

international humanitarian law, and amount to a war crime," the report said.

According to Kyiv, 16,221 Ukrainian children were deported to Russia.

The investigators said they could not verify the figures but pointed to indications that Russian officials had taken measures to place transferred Ukrainian children in institutions and foster homes, and give them Russian citizenship.

The report pointed to a decree signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin facilitating the granting of Russian citizenship to some categories of children.

The report stressed that "international humanitarian law prohibits the evacuation of children by a party to the armed conflict," with few exceptions. The investigators reviewed incidents concerning the transfer of 164 children, aged four to 18, from the Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kherson regions.



New Zealand teachers and early childhood educators gather outside Wellington's Parliament House as part of a nationwide strike for better pay and conditions, in Wellington, New Zealand, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Won't meet
Erdogan

Says Syria's Assad
until Turkey ends its
'occupation'

AFP, Moscow

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has said he will only meet President Recep Tayyip Erdogan if Turkey withdraws troops from northern Syria, according to a Russian media interview published yesterday.

His comments come one day after he met Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is seeking to repair ties between Erdogan and Assad severed after the Syrian war broke out in 2011.

"(Any meeting) is linked to our reaching the point when Turkey is ready -- fully and without any uncertainty -- for a complete withdrawal from Syrian territory," Assad told Russia's state-run RIA-Novosti news agency.

The Syrian leader, who arrived in Moscow on Tuesday, demanded that alongside a withdrawal Turkey end "support for terrorism", a reference to rebel groups that control regions of northern Syria.

"This is the only way in which my meeting with Erdogan could take place," Assad was cited as saying.

"What significance would any kind of meeting have -- and why organise it -- if it doesn't lead to a conclusion of the war in Syria?" he added.

China's brokering of pact
'a good thing'

Says Blinken on Saudi-Iranian deal; UN says the pact opens door to peace in Yemen

AFP, Addis Ababa

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday offered guarded praise to China for brokering a deal between rival Middle East heavyweights Iran and Saudi Arabia, saying it could benefit the region.

"From our perspective, anything that can help reduce tensions, avoid conflict and deter in any way dangerous and destabilising actions by Iran is a good thing," Blinken told reporters on a visit to Ethiopia.

"I think it's valuable that countries, where they can, take action, take responsibility for advancing security, for advancing peaceful relations," he said.

China, a major oil importer, last week concluded the deal to restore relations between Iran, a US foe since the 1979 Islamic revolution, and Saudi Arabia, whose longtime partnership with Washington has frayed over human rights concerns by President Joe Biden.

The United States frequently denounces China's role in the world as destabilising, though it has also said that Beijing needs to take greater responsibility in international affairs if it wants to be a major power.

The surprise rapprochement between

Saudi Arabia and Iran should offer momentum toward peace by the warring parties in Yemen after eight years of conflict, UN officials said Wednesday.

Hans Grundberg, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Yemen, urged the parties to the conflict to "seize the opportunity" of this diplomatic breakthrough in the Gulf.

"Intense diplomatic efforts are ongoing at different levels to bring the conflict in Yemen to an end," Grundberg told the Security Council via videolink.

The Swedish diplomat was in Tehran this week, while his US counterpart Timothy Lenderking visited Riyadh and Oman on Tuesday, according to the State Department.

Grundberg welcomed a new "regional and international diplomatic momentum" to find a peaceful settlement in Yemen.

The 2014 seizure of the capital Sanaa by Iranian-linked Huthi rebels led to a 2015 intervention by neighboring Saudi Arabia, which leads a military coalition



supporting Yemeni government forces.

The war has since claimed hundreds of thousands of lives -- direct and indirect victims -- and displaced millions. A truce in force since April 2022 and renewed twice expired in October without the Yemeni government and the Huthis reaching an agreement to renew it.

But the situation on the ground has remained relatively calm for nearly a year.

Facing the press at the UN in New York, Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, also welcomed the rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran.

"This is clearly an opportunity (...) It is a big deal, to put it in diplomatic terms," he said. "We hope that this creates a climate that is conducive to enshrining a political path towards peace in Yemen."

However, this Iranian-Saudi detente will not bring a magic solution to Yemen, where the influence of the two regional powers on the protagonists is only one dimension of the conflict, analysts warn.

LIBYAN SITE

2.5 tonnes of
uranium missing

AFP, Vienna

The UN's nuclear watchdog said two and a half tonnes of natural uranium had gone missing from a Libyan site and "may present a radiological risk," according to a confidential report seen by AFP yesterday. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors on Tuesday found that "10 drums containing approximately 2.5 tonnes of natural uranium in the form of uranium ore concentrate... were not present" as previously declared at the location, it said. The site "is currently not under the regulatory control of Libya's state authority," the report said. The IAEA will conduct "further activities...to clarify the circumstances of the removal of the nuclear material" from the site and investigate the material's "current location".

Poland breaks up
Russian spy ring

AFP, Warsaw

Polish counter-intelligence has dismantled a Russian spy ring that gathered information on military equipment deliveries to Ukraine via the EU member, Poland's interior minister said yesterday. "The ABW counter-intelligence agency has arrested nine people suspected of working for the Russian secret service," Interior Minister Mariusz Kaminski told reporters. "The suspects had been conducting espionage activities against Poland and preparing acts of sabotage on behalf of Russian intelligence services," he added.



A petrol bomb explodes near riot police as they clash with protesters during a 24-hour nationwide strike over the country's deadliest train disaster last month, in Athens, Greece, yesterday. Flights to and from Greece were grounded, ships remained docked at ports, and public services and state schools were closed as workers joined the 24-hour strike called by Greece's largest labour unions, GSEE and ADEDY.

PHOTO: REUTERS



বিশেষ ক্রোড়পত্র

অঙ্গসজ্জা : চলচ্চিত্র ও প্রকাশনা অধিদপ্তর (ডিএফপি) ♦ সহযোগিতা : তথ্য অধিদফতর (পিআইডি), তথ্য ও সম্প্রচার মন্ত্রণালয়



বাণী

রাষ্ট্রপতি
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১৭ মার্চ বাঙালি জাতির ইতিহাসে একটি স্মরণীয় দিন। ১৯২০ সালের এই দিনে সর্বকালের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙালি স্বাধীন-সার্বভৌম বাংলাদেশের মহান স্বপ্ন প্রতি জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান গোপালগঞ্জের নিভৃতপল্লি টুঙ্গিপাড়ায় জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। জাতির পিতার ১০৩তম জন্মবার্ষিকী উপলক্ষে আমি মহান এ নেতার স্মৃতির প্রতি গভীর শ্রদ্ধা জানাচ্ছি।

গ্রামের কাদা-জল, মেঠো পথ আর প্রকৃতির খোলামেলা পরিবেশে বেড়ে ওঠা বঙ্গবন্ধু শৈশব থেকেই ছিলেন অত্যন্ত মানবদরিদ্র কিন্তু অধিকার আদায়ে আপসহীন। পরোপকার আর অন্যের দুঃখ-কষ্ট লাঘবে তিনি ছিলেন সদা তৎপর। জীবনের প্রতিটি ক্ষণে যেখানেই অন্যায়- অবিচার, শোষণ-নির্যাতন দেখেছেন, সেখানেই প্রতিবাদে নেমে পড়েছেন। মাত্র ১৪ বছর বয়সে ব্রিটিশ বিরোধী সভা-সমাবেশে অংশ নেন তিনি। এছাড়া গরিব ছাত্র-ছাত্রীদের লেখাপড়ার খরচ চালাতে ‘মুসলিম সেবা সমিতি’ পরিচালনা করেন। চক্কিশের দশকে এই তরুণ ছাত্রনেতা হোসেন শহীদ সোহরাওয়ার্দী, শেরে বাংলা এ কে ফজলুল হক ও মওলানা আবদুল হামিদ খান ভানুসারী সংস্পর্শে এসে সক্রিয় রাজনীতিতে সম্পৃক্ত হন।

১৯৪৭ সালে দেশ বিভাগের কিছুদিন পরই তরুণ নেতা শেখ মুজিব বুঝতে পেরেছিলেন, ব্রিটিশ পরাধীনতার কবল থেকে মুক্তি পেলেও বাঙালি নতুন করে পশ্চিমাদের শোষণের কপালে পড়েছে। শাসকশ্রেণী প্রথম আঘাত হানে বাঙালির মায়ের ভাষা ‘বাংলা’র উপর। বাংলা ভাষার দাবিতে ধর্মঘট পালনকালে ১৯৪৮ সালের ১১ মার্চ বঙ্গবন্ধু সচিবালয় গেট থেকে গ্রেফতার হন। এভাবে আন্দোলন-সংগ্রাম ও কারাভোগের মধ্য দিয়েই তিনি বাঙালির অধিকার আদায়ের পথে এগিয়ে চলেন। ১৯৪৮ সালে ‘সর্বদলীয় রাষ্ট্রভাষা সংগ্রাম পরিষদ’, ‘৫২ এর ভাষা আন্দোলন’, ‘৫৪ এর যুক্তফ্রন্ট নির্বাচন’, ‘৫৮ এর সামরিক শাসন বিরোধী আন্দোলন’, ‘৬৬ এর ৬-দফা’, ‘৬৯ এর গণঅভ্যুত্থান’, ৭০ এর নির্বাচনসহ বাঙালির মুক্তি ও অধিকার আদায়ে পরিচালিত প্রতিটি গণতান্ত্রিক ও স্বাধিকার আন্দোলনে তিনি নেতৃত্ব দেন। এজন্য তাঁকে বহুবার কারাবরণ করতে হয়েছে। সত্য করতে হয়েছে অমানুষিক নির্যাতন। কিন্তু বাঙালির অধিকারের প্রপ্লে তিনি কখনো শাসকশ্রেণীর সাথে আপস করেননি।

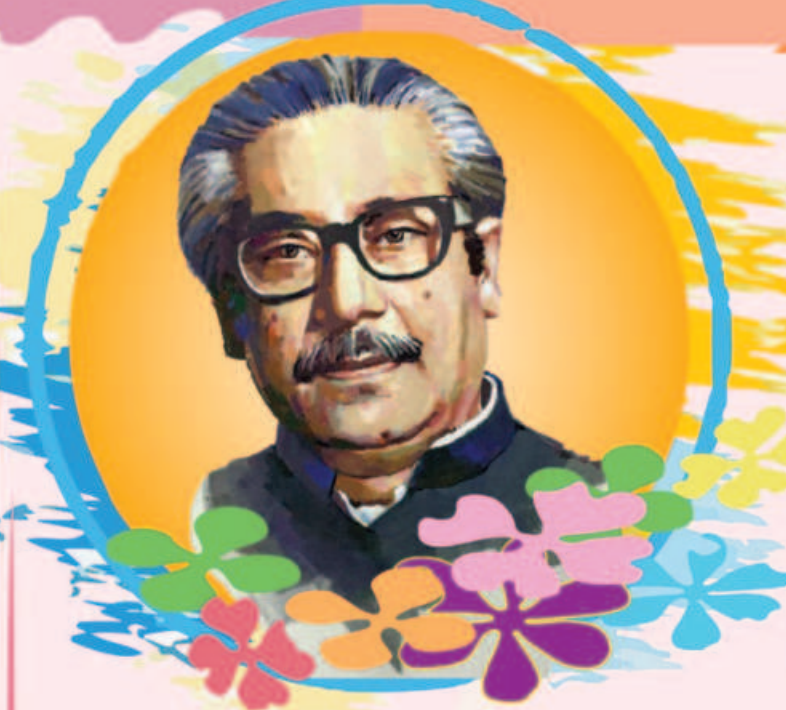
বঙ্গবন্ধু ১৯৭১ সালের ৭ মার্চ রেসকোর্স ময়দানে বাঙালির আবেগ ও আকাঙ্ক্ষাকে ধারণ করে বক্তৃষ্টে ঘোষণা করেন, “এবারের সংগ্রাম আমাদের মুক্তির সংগ্রাম, এবারের সংগ্রাম স্বাধীনতার সংগ্রাম”, যা ছিল মূলত স্বাধীনতার ডাক। একটি ভাষণ কীভাবে গোটা জাতিক জাগিয়ে তোলে, স্বাধীনতার জন্য মুক্তিযুদ্ধে কাঁপিয়ে পড়তে উৎসাহিত করে, বঙ্গবন্ধু ৭ মার্চের ভাষণ তার অনন্য উদাহরণ। এ ভাষণে বঙ্গবন্ধু শুধু স্বাধীনতার ডাকই দেননি বরং মুক্তিযুদ্ধের রূপরেখা ও ভবিষ্যৎ করণীয় সম্পর্কেও দিকনির্দেশনা দিয়ে গেছেন। ২৫ মার্চ রাতে পাকিস্তানি হানাদার বাহিনী অতর্কিতে নিরস্ত্র বাঙালির উপর আক্রমণ চালালে ২৬ মার্চ ১৯৭১ জাতির পিতা ঘোষণা করেন বাঙালি জাতির বহুকালকাল স্বাধীনতা। বঙ্গবন্ধুর নেতৃত্বে দীর্ঘ ন’মাস সশস্ত্র মুক্তিযুদ্ধের মাধ্যমে আমরা অর্জন করি স্বাধীন-সার্বভৌম বাংলাদেশ। মুক্তিযুদ্ধকালীন পাকিস্তানের কারাগারে বন্দি অবস্থায় শাসকশ্রেণী তাঁকে প্রহসনমূলক বিচারের মাধ্যমে ফাঁসি হুকুম দিয়েছিল। অকুতোভয় বঙ্গবন্ধু বলেছিলেন, “ফাঁসির মঞ্চে যাওয়ার সময় আমি বলব, আমি বাঙালি, বাংলা আমার দেশ, বাংলা আমার ভাষা”। দেশ ও জনগণের প্রতি তাঁর অসামান্য অবদানের জন্য বাংলা, বাংলাদেশ ও বঙ্গবন্ধু আজ এক ও অভিন্ন সত্তায় পরিণত হয়েছে। স্বাধীনতার পর পাকিস্তান কারাগার থেকে মুক্ত হয়ে জাতির পিতা ১০ জানুয়ারি স্বদেশে প্রত্যাবর্তন করেন। যুদ্ধবিরোধিত্ব অর্থনীতির পুনর্গঠনে তিনি সর্বশক্তি নিয়োগ করেন। দেশকে ‘সোনার বাংলা’ হিসেবে গড়ে তোলার সকল প্রকৃতি গ্রহণ করেন। কিন্তু স্বাধীনতারিরোধী ঘাতকচক্র ১৯৭৫ সালের ১৫ আগস্ট তাঁকে সপরিবারে হত্যার মাধ্যমে বঙ্গবন্ধুর সেই স্বপ্ন পূরণ হতে দেয়নি। কিন্তু হত্যারোনার দল বুঝতে পারেনি জীবিত বঙ্গবন্ধুর চেয়ে লোকান্তরের বঙ্গবন্ধু অনেক বেশি শক্তিশালী।

জলে-স্থলে-আকাশে বাংলাদেশের অবস্থান সুদৃঢ় করতে চেয়েছিলেন বঙ্গবন্ধু। বঙ্গবন্ধু আমাদের শিশিয়েছেন কীভাবে শত বাধা বিপত্তি পরিয়ে লক্ষ্যে পৌঁছা যায়। ঐতিহাসিক ৭ই মার্চের ভাষণে তিনি বলেছিলেন, “৭ কোটি মানুষকে দাবায়ে রাখতে পারা না”। বঙ্গবন্ধুর নেতৃত্বে যে দেশ স্বাধীন হয়েছিল, অনেক চড়াই-উতরাই পার হয়ে সেই বাংলাদেশ এখন উন্নয়নশীল দেশ। আজ সকল আশঙ্কা ও নেতিবাচক ভবিষ্যৎ বাণী ভুল প্রমাণ করে জাতির পিতার অসমাপ্ত স্বপ্ন বাস্তবায়ন করে চলেছেন তাঁর সুযোগ্য উত্তরসূরি প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা। তাঁর বলিষ্ঠ ও দূরদর্শী নেতৃত্বে আজ আমরা দুর্বার গতিতে এগিয়ে যাচ্ছি একটি উন্নত ও ‘স্মার্ট বাংলাদেশ’ পড়ার অভিমুখে।

বঙ্গবন্ধু বাঙালি জাতির চিরন্তন প্রেরণার উৎস। রাজনীতিতে তিনি ছিলেন নীতি ও আদর্শের প্রতীক। বাংলাদেশকে জানতে হলে বাঙালির মুক্তি সংগ্রাম ও মুক্তিযুদ্ধ সম্পর্কে জানতে হবে, বঙ্গবন্ধুকে জানতে হবে। মুক্তিযুদ্ধের চেতনা আর জাতির পিতার আদর্শকে ধারণ করে জাতি এগিয়ে যাক ক্ষুধা ও দারিদ্র্যমুক্ত সমৃদ্ধ বাংলাদেশ গড়ার পথে, নোঙ্গর ফেলুক বঙ্গবন্ধুর ‘সোনার বাংলায়’।

জয় বাংলা।
খোদা হাফেজ, বাংলাদেশ চিরজীবী হোক।

মোঃ আবদুল হামিদ



১৭ মার্চ জাতীয় শিশু দিবস জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের জন্মদিনে শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবের জন্ম হয়েছে বলেই
স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশের জন্ম হয়েছে
মোজাফফর হোসেন পক্টু

পর্যায়নতার নিকষ অঙ্ককারে নিমজ্জিত বাঙালি জাতির ভাষ্যাকাশে মুক্তির প্রভাকর রূপে জন্ম নেওয়া ‘খোকা’ নামের সেই শিশুটি শিক্ষাদীক্ষা মানবিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি, মহত্তম জীবনবোধ, সত্যতা, সাহস, দক্ষতা ও দূরদর্শী নেতৃত্বে হয়ে ওঠেন বাংলাদেশ নামক স্বাধীন-সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্রের মহান স্বপ্নটি, সর্বকালের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙালি এবং জাতির পিতা। সেই অবিসংবাদিত নেতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের ১০৩ তম জন্মবার্ষিকী আজ। বাঙালি জাতির এই মহান নেতা ১৯২০ সালের ১৭ মার্চ তদানীন্তন ফরিদপুর জেলার গোপালগঞ্জ মহাকুমার টুঙ্গিপাড়ায় জন্মগ্রহণ করেন।

শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান টুঙ্গিপাড়ার চিরায়ত গ্রামীণ সমাজের সুখ-সুখ, হাসি-কান্না, আবেগ-অনুভূতি শিক্তকাল থেকে গভীরভাবে প্রত্যক্ষ করেছেন। গ্রামের মাটি আর মানুষ তাঁকে প্রবলভাবে আকর্ষণ করত। শৈশব থেকে তৎকালীন সমাজ জীবনে তিনি জমিদার, তালুকদার-মহাজনদের অত্যাচার, শোষণ ও প্রজা পীড়ন দেখে চরমভাবে ব্যথিত হতেন গ্রামের হিন্দু, মুসলমানদের সম্মিলিত সম্প্রদায়ের সামাজিক আবেহ তিনি দীক্ষা পান অসাম্প্রদায়িক চেতনার। কিশোর বয়সেই তিনি সক্রিয় রাজনীতিতে অংশগ্রহণ করেন। গোপালগঞ্জের মিশন স্কুলে অষ্টম শ্রেণিতে অধ্যয়নকালে তৎকালীন ব্রিটিশবিরোধী আন্দোলনে যোগদানের কারণে শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান প্রথমবারের মতো গ্রেফতার হয়ে কারাবরণ করেন। এরপর থেকে শুরু হয় বঙ্গবন্ধুর আজীবন সংগ্রামী জীবনের অভিযাত্রা। তিনি সারা জীবন এদেশের মাটি ও মানুষের অধিকার আদায়ের জন্য সংগ্রাম করেছেন। বাঙালি জাতির মুক্তির জন্য জীবনের ১৪টি বছর পাকিস্তানি কারাগারের অন্ধকারে বন্দি থেকেছেন, দুই বার ফাঁসির মঞ্চে মৃত্যুর মুখোমুখি হয়েছেন। কিন্তু আত্মমর্যাদা ও বাঙালি জাতির অধিকার আদায়ের প্রপ্লে কখনও মাথা নত করেননি, পরাজয় মানেননি। দীর্ঘ ২৩ বছরের আন্দোলন-সংগ্রামের পথপরিক্রমায় বঙ্গবন্ধু তার সহকর্মীদের নিয়ে ১৯৪৮ সালের চার জানুয়ারি মুসলিম ছাত্রলীগ প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন এবং পরবর্তীতে ১৯৪৯ সালে আগুয়াই মুসলিম লীগ গঠনে কারাগারে বসেই বিশিষ্ট ভূমিকা রাখেন এবং যুগ্ম সম্পাদক নির্বাচিত হন।

১৯৫২-এর ভাষা আন্দোলন, ‘৫৪-এর যুক্তফ্রন্ট নির্বাচন, ‘৬২-এর শিক্ষা আন্দোলন, ‘৬৬-এর ছয় দফা আন্দোলন, ‘৬৯-এর গণঅভ্যুত্থান পরিয়ে ‘৭০ সালের ঐতিহাসিক নির্বাচনে বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান বাঙালি জাতির একক নেতা হিসেবে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হন। কারামুক্ত শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান জনমুগ্ধ ছাত্রসংগ্রাম পরিষদ কর্তৃক ভূষিত হন “বঙ্গবন্ধু” ও পরবর্তীতে “জাতির পিতা” খেতাবে। বঙ্গবন্ধুর সাহসী, দৃঢ়চেতা, আপোশহীন নেতৃত্ব ও বীরত্বপূর্ণ সংগ্রামে অনুপ্রাণিত হয়ে জেগে ওঠে শতবছরের নির্যাতিত-নিপীড়িত পরাধীন বাঙালি জাতি। মুক্তির অদম্য স্পৃহায় উত্ত্বজ করে তিনি বাঙালি জাতিকে স্বাধীনতার চূড়ান্ত সংগ্রামে এক্যবদ্ধ করে তোলেন।

অতঃপর ১৯৭১ সালের ৭ মার্চ বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান তৎকালীন রেসকোর্স ময়দানে ঐতিহাসিক ভাষণে ঘোষণা করলেন- “এবারের সংগ্রাম আমাদের মুক্তির সংগ্রাম- এবারের

পরবর্তী পৃষ্ঠার দেখুন



বাণী

প্রধানমন্ত্রী
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
০৩ চৈত্র ১৪২৯
১৭ মার্চ ২০২৩

সর্বকালের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙালি, জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের ১০৩তম জন্মবার্ষিকী এবং ‘জাতীয় শিশু দিবস-২০২৩’ উপলক্ষে তাঁর স্মৃতির প্রতি গভীর শ্রদ্ধা জানাচ্ছি এবং দেশের সকল শিশুসহ দেশবাসীকে জানাই আন্তরিক শুভেচ্ছা। জাতীয় শিশু দিবসে এ বছরের প্রতিপাদ্য- ‘স্মার্ট বাংলাদেশের স্বপ্নে বঙ্গবন্ধুর জন্মদিন, শিশুদের চোখ সমৃদ্ধির স্বপ্নে রক্তিন’ সময়োপযোগী হয়েছে বলে আমি মনে করি।

বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান ১৯২০ সালের ১৭ মার্চ গোপালগঞ্জ জেলার টুঙ্গিপাড়া গ্রামে ঐতিহ্যবাহী শেখ পরিবারে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। বাল্যকাল থেকেই তিনি ছিলেন নীতীক, দয়ালু এবং পরোপকারী। স্কুলে পড়ার সময়েই তাঁর নেতৃত্বের গুণাবলি বিকাশ লাভ করতে থাকে। প্রখর স্মৃতিশক্তির অধিকারী ও দূরদৃষ্টিসম্পন্ন এই বিশ্ববরেণ্য নেতার সুদীর্ঘ রাজনৈতিক জীবনের মূল লক্ষ্য ছিল বাঙালি জাতিকে পরাধীনতার শৃঙ্খল থেকে মুক্তকরা। ধীরে ধীরে তিনি হয়ে ওঠেন বাংলার নিপীড়িত মানুষের অধিকার আদায়ের শেষ আশ্রয়স্থল। হাজার বছরের শ্রেষ্ঠ এই বাঙালি বাংলা ভাষার মর্যাদা প্রতিষ্ঠার লড়াইয়ে নেতৃত্ব দেন। ১৯৪৮ সালে তাঁর প্রস্তাবে ছাত্রলীগ, তমদুন মজলিশ ও অন্যান্য ছাত্র সংগঠনের সমন্বয়ে গঠিত হয় রাষ্ট্রভাষা সংগ্রাম পরিষদ। ১৯৪৮ সালের ১১ মার্চ বাংলাকে রাষ্ট্রভাষা হিসেবে স্বীকৃতির দাবিতে সাধারণ ধর্মঘট পালনকালে বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়। ১৯৪৮ থেকে ১৯৫২ পর্যন্ত তিনি বারবার কারাবদ্ধ হন। কখনও জেলে থেকে কখনও বা জেলের বাইরে থেকে তিনি ভাষা আন্দোলনের নেতৃত্ব দেন। ১৯৫২ সালের ২১শে ফেব্রুয়ারির ছাত্র-জনতার চূড়ান্ত আন্দোলনে কারান্তরীণ অবস্থায় থেকে দিকনির্দেশনা প্রদান করেন। এরই ধারাবাহিকতায় ‘৫৪-র যুক্তফ্রন্ট নির্বাচন, ‘৫৮-র আইয়ুব খানের সামরিক শাসন বিরোধী আন্দোলন, ‘৬২-র শিক্ষা কমিশন বিরোধী আন্দোলন, ‘৬৬-র ছয় দফা, ‘৬৮-এর আগরতলা ষড়যন্ত্র মামলা, ‘৬৯-এর গণঅভ্যুত্থান, ‘৭০-এর নির্বাচন এবং ‘৭১-এর মুক্তিযুদ্ধ বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবের অবিসংবাদিত নেতৃত্বে পরিচালিত হয়।

শিশুদের প্রতি বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবের মমতা ছিল অপরিমীম। তিনি বিশ্বাস করতেন আজকের শিশুরাই আগামী দিনের ভবিষ্যৎ; শিশুরাই তাঁর স্বপ্নের সোনার বাংলাদেশ গড়ে তুলবে। শিশুদের ভবিষ্যৎ নিশ্চিত করতে হবে সবার আশে- এই ভাবনা থেকেই জাতিসংঘ শিশুসনদের ১৫ বছর আগে ১৯৭৪ সালে তিনি শিশু আইন প্রণয়ন করেন। শিশু শিক্ষার বিকাশ নিশ্চিত করতে প্রাথমিক শিক্ষাকে জাতীয়করণ করেন। শিশুরা যেন সুজননীল-মুক্তমনের মানুষ হিসেবে গড়ে ওঠে- তিনি সব সময় সেটাই চাইতেন। এজন্য তাঁর জন্মদিনকে শিশুদের জন্য উৎসর্গ করে আগুয়াই লীগ ১৯৯৬ সালে সরকার গঠন করে ১৭ মার্চকে ‘জাতীয় শিশু দিবস’ হিসেবে ঘোষণা করে।

আগুয়াই লীগ সরকার খ্রিয় মাভুজুমিকে শিশুদের জন্য নিরাপদ আবাসভূমিতে পরিণত করতে অঙ্গীকারবদ্ধ। শিশুদের কল্যাণের লক্ষ্যে আমরা একটি যুগোপযোগী ‘জাতীয় শিশুনীতি’ প্রণয়ন করেছি। শিক্ষার্থীদের বছরের শুরুতে বিনামূল্যে পাঠ্যপুস্তক প্রদান করা হচ্ছে। প্রায় শতভাগ শিশু আজ স্কুলে যাচ্ছে। আমরা শিশুদের জন্য জাতির পিতার জীবন ও কর্মভিত্তিক বই প্রকাশ এবং পাঠ্য বইয়ে মুক্তিযুদ্ধের প্রকৃত ইতিহাস তুলে ধরেছি। জাতীয় শিশু দিবসে জাতির পিতার প্রতি শ্রদ্ধা জানানোর পাশাপাশি মহান নেতার জীবন ও আদর্শ অনুসরণে এ দেশের শিশুদের যথাযোগ্য সুনামগরি হিসেবে গড়ে তোলাই আমাদের সরকারের মুখ্য লক্ষ্য। আমাদের শিশুরাই হবে ২০৪১ সালের মধ্যে স্মার্ট বাংলাদেশের স্বপ্ন পূরণের সারথি। শিশুদের মনে দেশপ্রেম জন্মিত করে তাদের ব্যক্তিগত গঠন, সুজননীলতার বিকাশ এবং আত্মবিশ্বাসী করে গড়ে তুলতে দল-মত নির্বিশেষে আমাদের সকলকে একযোগে কাজ করতে হবে।

আমি আগামী দিনের কর্ণধার শিশু-কিশোরদের উজ্জ্বল ভবিষ্যৎ কামনা করছি। আসুন, আমরা শিশুদের সুন্দর ভবিষ্যৎ ও কল্যাণে আমাদের বর্তমানকে উৎসর্গ করি এবং সকলে মিলে জাতির পিতার অসাম্প্রদায়িক, ক্ষুধা-দারিদ্র্যমুক্ত ও সুখী-সমৃদ্ধ স্বপ্নের সোনার বাংলাদেশ গড়ে তুলি।

আমি জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের ১০৩তম জন্মবার্ষিকী এবং ‘জাতীয় শিশু দিবস-২০২৩’ উপলক্ষে আয়োজিত সকল কর্মসূচির সার্বিক সাফল্য কামনা করছি।

জয় বাংলা, জয় বঙ্গবন্ধু
বাংলাদেশ চিরজীবী হোক।
শেখ হাসিনা

বাংলাদেশের অপর নাম শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান প্রফেসর আবদুল মান্নান

হাজার বছরের শ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙালি জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের আজ ১০৪তম জন্মদিন। স্বাভাবিক নিয়মে তাঁর যদি মৃত্যু হতো হাজারো প্রতিবছর আনন্দঘন পরিবেশে পরিবার আর জাতীয়ভাবে দিনটি পালিত হতো। কিন্তু ঘাতকরা জাতির পিতাকে ১৯৭৫ সালের ১৫ আগস্ট হত্যা করার পর দিনটিকে সেভাবে আর পালন করা হয় না। দিনটিকে এখন জাতীয় শিশু দিবস হিসেবে পালন করা হয়। বঙ্গবন্ধু শিশুদের খুব ভালোবাসতেন। সম্ভবত পরিবারে তাঁর সবচেয়ে আদরের ছিল তাঁর কনিষ্ঠ সন্তান শেখ রাসেল যাকে ১৫ আগস্ট ঘাতকরা নির্মমভাবে গুলি করে হত্যা করেছিল। শেখ রাসেলের মতো ১০ বছরের একজন শিশুকে কোনো মানুষ হত্যা করতে পারে, তা এক কথায়

অবিশ্বাস। তবে ১৫ আগস্টের ঘটকরা যত না মানুষ ছিলো তার চেয়ে বেশি ছিলো পিশাচ। পরবর্তীকালে যারা এই ঘটকদের আশ্রয়-প্রশ্রয় দিয়ে পুরস্কৃত করেছিল তাঁরাও তাদের সমগোত্রীয় বললে অত্যুক্তি হবে না। ১৯৭০ সালের সেই অগ্নিঝরা দিনে ১৭ মার্চ একজন বিদেশি সাংবাদিক বঙ্গবন্ধুকে মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন আজ তাঁর জন্মদিন। উত্তরে বঙ্গবন্ধু বলেছিলেন, তিনি তো কখনো তাঁর জন্মদিন পালন করেন না। পরবর্তীকালে সেই শেখ মুজিবের নামই হয়ে গেলে বাংলাদেশের অপর নাম। আজকের এই দিনে জাতির পিতাকে জানাই গভীর শ্রদ্ধা। চিরদিন তিনি বেঁচে থাকুন বাঙালির হৃদয়ে, অমর হয়ে।

বঙ্গবন্ধুর জন্মস্থান টুঙ্গিপাড়ায় তাঁর সমবয়সি যদি দুই-একজন এখনো বেঁচে থাকেন, তাঁদের কাছে বঙ্গবন্ধু এখনো জীবিত। অবশ্য মা-বাবার আদুরে নাম খোকা। হয়তো নিকটাত্মীয়রা শেখ মুজিবকে সেই নামেই ডাকতেন। বঙ্গবন্ধুর ‘অসমাপ্ত আত্মজীবনী’তেই লিখেছেন, তিনি এক মধ্যবিত্ত পরিবারে জন্মগ্রহণ করেছিলেন। সেই আমলে বাঙালি মধ্যবিত্তের অস্তিত্ব ছিল হয়ে গেলো। বঙ্গবন্ধু ছিলেন আজীবন প্রতিবাদী। স্কুলে পড়ার সময়ই শেখ মুজিব মনে করতেন ‘ইংরেজদের এ দেশে থাকার অধিকার নাই।’ তখন সারা ভারতবর্ষে স্বদেশি আন্দোলন চলছে। মুজিব সেই আন্দোলনে নিজেকে জড়িয়ে ফেলেছিলেন। বঙ্গবন্ধুর চরিত্র যে কিছুটা এককণ্ঠে স্বভাবের ছিল তা তিনি নিজেই স্বীকার করেছেন।

পাছন ঘিরে ঢাকালে বলতে হয়, তাঁর এককণ্ঠে স্বভাবই তাঁকে পূর্ব বাংলার মুজিব ম্যাট্রিক পরীক্ষা দিয়েছিলেন। পরীক্ষা প্রত্যাপনা অনুযায়ী না হওয়া সত্ত্বেও তিনি খিটখিট বিতর্কে পাশ করেছিলেন। পরীক্ষার পরপরই কিশোর মুজিব কলকাতায় যান। তখন পাকিস্তান আন্দোলন শুরু হয়ে গেছে। চক্কিশের দশকে যখন পাকিস্তান প্রতিষ্ঠার আন্দোলন শুরু হয়, সেই আন্দোলনের সঙ্গে তরুণ শেখ মুজিব নিজেকে জড়িয়ে ফেলেছিলেন। যোগ দেন মুসলিম লীগ আর মুসলিম ছাত্রলীগে। এ সময় মুসলিম লীগ নেতা হোসেন শহীদ সোহরাওয়ার্দী আর আবুল হাসিমের সান্নিধ্যে আসেন এবং সংগঠন সৃষ্টির তালিম নেন। দেশ স্বাধীন হওয়ার পর আবুল হাসিম ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে অনুষ্ঠিত এক অনুষ্ঠানে বলেছিলেন শেখ মুজিব একজন ভালো কর্মী ও সংগঠক ছিলেন। তিনি আরও বলেছিলেন শেখ মুজিবের মতো সংগঠক তিনি কখনো দেখেননি।

১৯৪১ সালে অসুস্থ শরীর নিয়ে শেখ মুজিব ম্যাট্রিক পরীক্ষা দিয়েছিলেন। পরীক্ষা প্রত্যাপনা অনুযায়ী না হওয়া সত্ত্বেও তিনি খিটখিট বিতর্কে পাশ করেছিলেন। পরীক্ষার পরপরই কিশোর মুজিব কলকাতায় যান। তখন পাকিস্তান আন্দোলন শুরু হয়ে গেছে। চক্কিশের দশকে যখন পাকিস্তান প্রতিষ্ঠার আন্দোলন শুরু হয়, সেই আন্দোলনের সঙ্গে তরুণ শেখ মুজিব নিজেকে জড়িয়ে ফেলেছিলেন। যোগ দেন মুসলিম লীগ আর মুসলিম ছাত্রলীগে। এ সময় মুসলিম লীগ নেতা হোসেন শহীদ সোহরাওয়ার্দী আর আবুল হাসিমের সান্নিধ্যে আসেন এবং সংগঠন সৃষ্টির তালিম নেন। দেশ স্বাধীন হওয়ার পর আবুল হাসিম ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে অনুষ্ঠিত এক অনুষ্ঠানে বলেছিলেন শেখ মুজিব একজন ভালো কর্মী ও সংগঠক ছিলেন। তিনি আরও বলেছিলেন শেখ মুজিবের মতো সংগঠক তিনি কখনো দেখেননি।

কলকাতার ইসলামিয়া কলেজের (বর্তমানে মওলানা আবদুল কলেজ) ছাত্র থাকার অবস্থায় শেখ মুজিবের রাজনৈতিক জীবনের বড়ো



পরবর্তী পৃষ্ঠার দেখুন

বিশেষ ক্রোড়পত্র

বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবের জন্ম হয়েছে বলেই...

সংগ্রাম স্বাধীনতার সংগ্রাম।" ৭ মার্চে বঙ্গবন্ধুর এই ঐতিহাসিক ঘোষণার পর দেশজুড়ে তরু হয় সর্বাঙ্গিক অসহযোগ আন্দোলন।

১৯৭১ সালের ২৬ মার্চের প্রথম প্রহরে পাকিস্তানি হানাদার বাহিনীর হাতে গ্রেফতার হওয়ার পূর্বে আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে বাংলাদেশের স্বাধীনতা ঘোষণা করেন বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান। মহান মুক্তিযুদ্ধের সর্বাধিনায়ক বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের নেতৃত্বে ৯ মাসব্যাপী রক্তক্ষয়ী সশস্ত্র যুদ্ধের মধ্য দিয়ে ৩০ লক্ষ শহিদের আত্মদান এবং ২ লক্ষ মা-বোনের সন্ত্রমহানির বিনিময়ে অর্জিত হয় স্বাধীনতা। বিশ্বমানচিত্রে অভ্যুদয় ঘটে স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশ নামক রাষ্ট্রের।

বাঙালি ও বাংলাদেশের পৌরবাঞ্ছল অধ্যায়ে বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান কালজয়ী নাম। বিশ্ববাঙালির গর্ব মৃত্যুঞ্জয়ী মহামানব বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিব। তিনি বাঙালি জাতীয়তাবাদের প্রকৃত প্রবক্তা ও বাঙালি মানসে জাতীয়তাবোধ সৃষ্টির নির্মাতা। দীর্ঘ আন্দোলন-সংগ্রাম এবং সীমাহীন প্রাণ-ভিত্তিকরণ মধ্য দিয়ে তিনি বাঙালি জাতির জন্য একটি স্বতন্ত্র রাষ্ট্র প্রতিষ্ঠা করেছেন।

১৯৭৫ সালের ১৫ আগস্টের কালরাত্রিতে বিশ্বাসঘাতকদের নির্মম বুলেটে বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান সপরিবারে নিহত হন। পরবর্তীতে অবৈধভাবে ক্ষমতাদখলকারী বঙ্গবন্ধুর খুনি খৈরশাসক স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশে পাকিস্তানি ভাবধারার বিকৃত ইতিহাস ও মূল্যবোধের বিস্তার ঘটানোর পায়তারা চালায়। খুনিরা ইতিহাসের পাতা থেকে বঙ্গবন্ধুর নাম মুছে ফেলতে জাতীয় ও আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে নানা ধরনের যড়যন্ত্রে লিপ্ত হয়। বঙ্গবন্ধু হত্যার পর স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশে সামরিক-ঐরারচার তিন দশক ধরে প্রজন্মের পর প্রজন্মকে মিথ্যা ইতিহাস শোখাবার অপচেষ্টা চালায়। খুনিরা বঙ্গবন্ধুকে হত্যা করে কিন্তু বঙ্গবন্ধুর চেতনা ও আদর্শকে মুছে ফেলতে পারেনি।

সত্যি-ই শহিদের রক্ত বুখা যায়নি। বাংলাদেশ আজ বিধে উন্নয়নের রোল মডেল। বাংলাদেশ স্বল্পোন্নত দেশ থেকে উন্নয়নশীল দেশে অত্বত্ত্বিক্তির জন্য জাতিসংঘের চূড়ান্ত সুপারিশ অর্জন করেছে। যা সম্ভব হয়েছে কেবল তাঁরই কন্যা মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনার নেতৃত্বের কারণে। আর এর ভিত্তি স্বাধীনতার পর জাতির পিতা-ই গড়ে দিয়ে যান।

বঙ্গবন্ধুর জন্মদিন অর্থাৎ ১৭ মার্চ দেশে জাতীয় শিশু দিবস হিসেবে পালন করা হয়ে থাকে। তিনি শিশুদের প্রচণ্ড ভালোবাসতেন। তাই ওইদিনটিতে তিনি আনুষ্ঠানিক জন্মদিন পালন না করে শিশুদের নিয়ে আনন্দঘন সময় কাটাতেন। বাংলাদেশে শিশু উন্নয়নে সুনির্দিষ্ট চারটি পদক্ষেপ নিয়েছিলেন বঙ্গবন্ধু। এক, শিশু কল্যাণের জন্য মায়েরদের সম্পৃক্ত করে প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন না ও শিশুকল্যাণ অধিদপ্তর। দুই, শিশুর সার্বিক উন্নতি নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয় শিশু একাডেমি। উল্লেখ্য, এ দুটো প্রতিষ্ঠান সংরক্ষিত ভাবনা-পরিকল্পনা বঙ্গবন্ধুর সব সময়ই ছিল।

তিন, শিশুর শিক্ষারের রাষ্ট্রীয় দায়িত্বের অত্বত্ত্বিক্ত করার লক্ষ্যে ১৯৭৩-এ ৩৭ হাজার প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয় জাতীয়করণ করা হয়। বাংলাদেশের সে সময়ের সার্বিক পরিস্থিতির প্রেক্ষাপটে সিদ্ধান্তটি ছিল সাহসী ও যুগান্তকারী। চার, ১৯৭৪-এর ২২ জুন শিশু আইন জারি করা হয়। এ আইন শিশু অধিকারের রক্ষাকবচ।

বঙ্গবন্ধু বেঁচে থাকলে আজ তাঁর ১০৪তম জন্মদিন উদযাপন করতাম আমরা। কিন্তু আমাদের দুর্ভাগ্য আমরা তাঁকে ধরে রাখতে পারিনি। এ প্রসঙ্গে ক্লেশ ভালোবাসার একটি স্মৃতিচারণ করছি। ১৩ আগস্ট বিকাল তিনটার দিকে আমাকে কোনো বললেন, "ঠিক পাঁচটার সময়ে গনভবনে দেখা করতে, সাথে তিনি এটাও বললেন, 'তার পাঁচটা না ঘড়ির পাঁচটা। আমি গনভবনে গেলাম। উনার একান্ত সচিব সৈয়দ রেজাউল হায়াৎ সাহেবকে বললাম বঙ্গবন্ধু আমাকে আসতে বলেছেন, হায়াৎ সাহেব বললেন তিনি বিশ্রামে আছেন। তখন আমি বঙ্গবন্ধুর কথাটার অবতারণা করে বললাম, বঙ্গবন্ধু কিন্তু আমার পাঁচটা নয় ঘড়ির পাঁচটা আসতে বলেছেন। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে উনি উপরে গেলেন এসে বললেন বঙ্গবন্ধু আপনাকে ডাকছেন। ওদিন বঙ্গবন্ধু অনেক সময় আমার সঙ্গে কথা বললেন। এক পর্যায়ে বললেন- দেখ মানুষকে তো বশ করতে পারলাম না, মাছকে কীভাবে বশ করছি সেটা তাকে দ্যাখাই। তখন আমি বললাম আপনি যদি মানুষকে বশ নাই করতে পারলেন তাহলে সাড়ে সাত কোটি মানুষ কিভাবে আপনার ডাকে অঙ্গ হাতে যুদ্ধ করে দেশটাকে স্বাধীন করলো। প্রতিউত্তর তিনি করলেন না। এরপর হাটতে হাটতে লেকের কাছে নিয়ে গেলেন, পানিতে হাত দিলেন আমি অনেকে মাছ তার হাতে চলে এলো। ঠিক এই সময়ে সহকারী সচিব শাহরিয়ার ইকবাল এসে বললেন স্যার ব্যারিস্টার মওদু আহমেদ এসেছেন দেখা করতে। যাই হোক আকাশিক বঙ্গবন্ধু তার হাতে থাকা লাঠি দিয়ে আমার পিঠে তিনটা বারি দিয়ে উপস্থিত লোকদের বললেন পল্টুকে তিনটা বারি দিলাম, যাতে বঙ্গবন্ধুর কথা গুর মনে থাকে। আসলেই বঙ্গবন্ধুর হৃদয় ছিল যেমন বিশাল তেমন শিশুর মতো সরল। তাঁর এই সরলরাকে কাজে লাগিয়েছে ঘাতকচক্র। যা আমাদের জন্য চরম দুর্ভাগ্যের।

বাংলাদেশের অপর নাম শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান

প্রতিবাদ করে বলেন, 'কোনো নেতা যদি অন্যায় কাজ করতে বলেন, তার প্রতিবাদ করা এবং তাঁকে বুঝিয়ে বলার অধিকার জনগণের আছে। বাংলা ভাষা ৫৬ শতাংশ লোকের মাতৃভাষা, পাকিস্তান গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্র, সংখ্যাগুরুদের দাবি মানতেই হবে। রাষ্ট্রভাষা বাংলা না হওয়া পর্যন্ত আমরা সংগ্রাম চালিয়ে যাব। তাতে যাই হোক না কেন, আমরা প্রস্তুত আছি।'

শেখ মুজিবের বাবা চাইতেন তাঁর ছেলে আইন পড়ুক। কিন্তু যুবক শেখ মুজিবের তাতে তেমন ব্যাক্তি আগ্রহ ছিল না। বাবা তাঁকে আইন পড়িয়েছিলেন, আইন পড়ার জন্য তিনি বিলেতেও যেতে পারেন। তাঁর ইচ্ছা ছেলে ব্যারিস্টার হবে। প্রয়োজনে তিনি জায়গা-জমি বিক্রি করতেও প্রস্তুত ছিলেন। শেখ মুজিব বাবাকে জানালেন, বিলেতে যাওয়ার চেয়ে মুসলিম লীগ নেতাদের বিরুদ্ধে আন্দোলন প্রতিবাদ করাটা তাঁর কাছে অনেক বেশি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। তিনি অক্ষেপ করতেন, যে পাকিস্তানের জন্য তিনি অন্যদের সঙ্গে আন্দোলন করেছেন আর খেই পাকিস্তান পেয়েছেন দুটির মধ্যে অনেক তফাৎ। তাঁকে গ্রামের সাধারণ মানুষ যখন প্রশ্ন করতেন যে পাকিস্তানে তারা নির্বাচন আর অবিচারের স্বীকার হন, সেই পাকিস্তানের জন্য তিনি কেন আন্দোলন করেছিলেন, তখন তিনি বেশ বিচলিত হতেন। তিনি এও বুঝেছিলেন, কোনো মুসলিম লীগ নেতা পাকিস্তানের রাষ্ট্রভাষা বাংলা হোক তা চাইতেন না। তিনি আরও দেখলেন কীভাবে পশ্চিম পাকিস্তানের উন্নয়ন হচ্ছে এবং পূর্ব বাংলা অবহেলিত হচ্ছে। শেখ মুজিব সবসময় এটি উপলব্ধি করতেন কোনো আন্দোলন প্রতিবাদ করতে হলে প্রয়োজন একটি দলক ও কার্যকর সংগঠন, যে কারণে তিনি ছাত্রলীগ প্রতিষ্ঠা করেছিলেন। কিন্তু এক পর্যায়ে ছাত্রলীগ খুবই প্রিয়মাণ হয়ে গিয়েছিল। তিনি গোপালগঞ্জ থেকে ঢাকায় ফিরে ছাত্রলীগকে আবার পুনর্গঠন করার দায়িত্ব নিলেন। ঢাকায় ছাত্রলীগের বার্ষিক সম্মেলন হলো শেখ মুজিবের সভাপতিত্বে নতুন কমিটি হলো। সেই কাউন্সিলে তিনি একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভাষণ দিয়ে বলেছিলেন, 'আজ থেকে আমি আর আপনাদের প্রতিষ্ঠানের সভা (এর আগে তিনি ছাত্রলীগের একজন সদস্য নাম ছিলেন) থাকবে না। ছাত্রপ্রতিষ্ঠানের সঙ্গে জড়িত থাকার আর আমার কোনো অধিকার নাই। আমি আপনাদের কাছ থেকে বিদায় নিচ্ছি। কারণ আমি ছাত্র নই।' এমন কথা এখন ভাবা যায়?

ছাত্রলীগনীতি থেকে অব্যাহতি নিয়ে শেখ মুজিব একটি রাজনৈতিক দল গঠনের দিকে নজর দেন। ১৯৪৯ সালের ২৩ জুন পূর্ব পাকিস্তান আওয়ামী মুসলিম লীগ প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। তরুণ শেখ মুজিবসহ অনেক ছাত্রনেতাই জড়িত ছিলেন। এতে টাঙ্গাইলের ছাত্রনেতা শামসুল হক বেশ সহায়তা করেন। একটি খসড়া ঘোষণাপত্র প্রস্তুত করা হয়। তাতে পূর্ব পাকিস্তানকে পূর্ণ আত্মলিক স্বায়ত্তশাসন দেওয়ার প্রস্তাব করা হয়। তদু দেশ রক্ষা, বৈদেশিক নীতি ও মুদ্রা কেন্দ্রের হাতে রাখার প্রস্তাব করা হয়। পরবর্তী সময় এই প্রস্তাবগুলোই ঐতিহাসিক ছয় দফার ভিত্তি রচনা করে। সবর থাকা ভালো আওয়ামী লীগ গঠন করার সময় শেখ মুজিব জেলে ছিলেন। জেল-জুপুসের মাধ্যমে পাকিস্তান সরকার সবসময় শেখ মুজিবের কণ্ঠ রুদ্ধ করে চেষ্টাছিল। পাকিস্তানের ২৩ বছরের শাসনকালে বঙ্গবন্ধু ১৮বার জেলে গেছেন, প্রায় ১৩ বছর জেলে কাটিয়েছেন। মৃত্যুর মুখোমুখি হয়েছেন দুইবার (১৯৬৮ সালের আগরতলা যড়যন্ত্র মামলা ও ১৯৭১ সালের পাকিস্তান ভেঙে বাংলাদেশ স্বাধীন করার যড়যন্ত্র মামলা)।

কাজের মানুষ শেখ মুজিব বুঝতে পারতেন কোন সময় কী কাজটা করতে হবে। তিনি ঠিকই বুঝেছিলেন, জনগণকে পাকিস্তানের শাসকশ্রেণীর বিরুদ্ধে এক করতে হলে তাদের সামনে শাসকদের কীকর্তৃকলাপ তুলে ধরার কোনো বিকল্প নেই। তিনি সোহরাওয়ার্দীসহ আওয়ামী লীগের অন্য নেতাদের নিয়ে পূর্ব বাংলার বিভিন্ন এলাকায় সভা-সমাবেশের মাধ্যমে মানুষের কাছে পাকিস্তানি শাসকশ্রেণীর শোষণ-শাসনের কথা তুলে ধরতেন। শহীদ সোহরাওয়ার্দীর গুণর সাধারণ মানুষের আস্থা ছিল নিরন্তর।

১৯৫৩ সাল নাগাদ দেশে একমাত্র রাজনৈতিক দল যা জনগণের দলে পরিণত হতে পেরেছিল, তা হচ্ছে আওয়ামী লীগ। এর অন্যতম কারণ ছিল, দলের সভাপতি মওলানা ভাসানী ও হোসেন শহীদ সোহরাওয়ার্দী জনগণের কাছে বেশ জনপ্রিয় ছিলেন। আর দলে শেখ মুজিব, শামসুল হক, মোস্তা জালালউদ্দিন, নইমউদ্দিন আহমেদ, খালেদ নেওয়াজ খানের মতো এককর্তৃক নেতার সমাবেশ হয়েছিল। মওলানা ভাসানী আসামের পাকিস্তানে অত্বত্ত্বিক্ত প্রাণে গণচোরেস সময় তাঁর ভূমিকার জন্য পূর্ব বাংলার মানুষের কাছে একটি পরিচিত ও জনপ্রিয় নাম হয়ে গিয়েছিলেন। ১৯৫৪ সালের নির্বাচন সামনে রেখে একটি যুক্তফ্রন্ট হতেছিল, যেখানে আওয়ামী লীগ ছাড়াও ছিল কৃষক প্রজা পাটি, নেজামে ইসলামী আর গণকর্তৃক দল। নেতৃত্ব ছিলেন মওলানা ভাসানী, শেরেবালা এ কে ফজলুল হক ও হোসেন শহীদ সোহরাওয়ার্দী। ১৯৫৮ সালে পাকিস্তানের একটি নির্দিষ্ট সরকারকে উত্থাপন করে দেশে সামরিক শাসনপর্ব শুরু হয়। সব রাজনৈতিক নেতাকে জেলে তেতে হয় আর নিষিদ্ধ হয় সব রাজনৈতিক দল ও তাদের কর্মকর্তা। সেনাশাসনে বেশি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয় আওয়ামী লীগ। কিন্তু দলটির তৃণমূল কর্মীরা শত বাধা-বিপত্তির মধ্যেও দলটিতে টিকিয়ে রাখেন।

১৯৬৬ সালে শেখ মুজিব কর্তৃক ঘোষিত বাঙালির মুক্তির সনদ ছয় দফায় আইয়ুব খান পাকিস্তান ভাঙার একটি নীল নকশা আঁকির করেন এবং কিছুদিন পরই শেখ মুজিবকে আটক করা হয়। তিনিসহ ৩৫ জন আওয়ামী লীগ নেতা, সামরিক-সোমরিক আমলার বিরুদ্ধে একটি রাষ্ট্রদ্রোহ মামলা (আগরতলা যড়যন্ত্র মামলা নামে খ্যাত) রুজু করা হয়। সেই

'৭৫ এর ১৫ আগস্টের নৃশংস এ হত্যাকাণ্ডের পর ব্রিটিশ এমপি জেমস ল্যামন্ড-এর খেদোক্তি ছিল, 'বঙ্গবন্ধুর হত্যাকাণ্ডে বাংলাদেশি শুধু এতিম হয়নি, বিশ্ববাসী একজন মহান সন্তানকে হারিয়েছে।' বঙ্গবন্ধু আজ আমাদের মাঝে নেই। কিন্তু তার আদর্শ রয়ে গেছে। তিনি স্বাধীন দেশ দিয়ে গেছেন আমাদের। তাঁর আদর্শ নিয়ে এগিয়ে যাবে বাংলাদেশ এই আমাদের প্রত্যাশা। ১০৪তম জন্মদিনে পিতার প্রতি জানাই অতল শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি।

মার্চ মাস বাঙালি জাতির জীবনে এক অবিস্মরণীয় মাস। এই মাসে অমোঘ বন্ধুত্বকে বাঙালি জননে স্বাধীনতার ডাক। সেই ডাক নিয়েছিলেন যে পুরুষোত্তম ব্যক্তিত্ব সেই ক্ষণজন্মা অবিসংবাদিত নেতা জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের জন্মদিন এ অগ্নিগর্ভ মার্চে। যে মার্চের শুরুতেই পাকিস্তানিদের যড়যন্ত্র যে মার্চেই গণহত্যা সেই মার্চেই মুক্তিসংগ্রামের মহানায়কের কণ্ঠে স্বাধীনতার ডাক এবং স্বাধীনতার ঘোষণা। ইতিহাসের কী অপূর্ব যোগসূত্র।

তাঁর হাত ধরেই বিশ্ব মানচিত্রে নতুন দেশ হিসেবে স্থান করে নেয় বাংলাদেশ। ২০২০ সালে তাঁর জন্মের শতবছর পূর্ণ হয়। এ বছর অর্থাৎ ২০২১ সালে তাঁর জন্মশতবার্ষিকী উদযাপন করেছে, পাশাপাশি স্বাধীনতার সুবর্ণজয়ন্তীও উদযাপন করেছে জাতি।

২৫শে মার্চের রাতে বঙ্গবন্ধুর স্বাধীনতা ঘোষণা নিয়ে সাংবাদিক ডেভিড লোশাক দ্য টেলিগ্রাফ পত্রিকায় লিখেন 'অন্ধকার নেমে আসার কিছুক্ষণ পর, সরকারি মালিকানাধীন পাকিস্তান রেডিওর তরঙ্গের কাছাকাছি একটি তরঙ্গের মাধ্যমে শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের ক্ষীণ কণ্ঠস্বর ভেসে আসে। শেখ মুজিবুর পূর্ব বাংলাকে গণপ্রজাতান্ত্রিক বাংলাদেশ বলে ঘোষণা করেছেন। তাঁর বাণী নিচুই ইতোপূর্বে রেকর্ড করা হয়েছিল এবং তাঁর কণ্ঠস্বর তখন তাই মনে হয়েছে। (তথ্যসূত্র: বাংলাদেশের স্বাধীনতায়ুদ্ধ দলিলপত্র: তৃতীয় খণ্ড, সম্পাদক: হাসান হাফিজুর রহমান)

বঙ্গবন্ধু পৃথিবীর নির্মাতা মানুষের নেতা, বিশ্বনেতা। গরিব-দুঃখী মানুষের প্রতি ভালোবাসা ও তাদের দুঃখ দূর করার প্রতিজ্ঞা এবং অন্যায়ের বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদী মানসিকতা তাঁকে রাজনীতিতে নিয়ে আসে। স্কুল থেকেই তিনি রাজনীতিতে জড়িয়ে পড়েন। গ্রামের স্কুলে তাঁর লেখাপড়ার হাতেখড়ি। ১৯২৭ সালে শেখ মুজিব গিমাডাঙ্গা প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ে পড়াশোনা শুরু করেন।

১৯২৯ সালে গোপালগঞ্জ পাবলিক স্কুলে ভর্তি হন এবং এখানেই ১৯৩৪ সাল পর্যন্ত পড়াশোনা করেন। ১৯৩৭ সালে গোপালগঞ্জ মিশন স্কুলে সপ্তম শ্রেণিতে ভর্তি হন। ১৯৪১ সালে অসুস্থ শরীর নিয়েই ম্যাট্রিক পরীক্ষা দেন। ছাত্রজীবনেই মানুষের অধিকার আদায়ে সংগ্রাম করেন তিনি। আর এভাবেই সক্রিয়ভাবে যুক্ত হয়ে যান রাজনীতিতে।

রাজনীতিতে যুক্ত হওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে তাঁর পিতা তাঁকে বাধা দেননি। যা নিজেই লিখেছেন তাঁর অসমাপ্ত আত্মজীবনীতে। বাবা শেখ লুৎফর রহমানের কথা উল্লেখ করে 'অসমাপ্ত আত্মজীবনী'তে বঙ্গবন্ধু লিখেছেন, 'বাবা রাজনীতি কর আপত্তি করব না, পাকিস্তানের জন্য সংগ্রাম করছ এতো সুখের কথা, তবে লেখাপড়া করতে ভুলিও না। লেখাপড়া না শিখলে মানুষ হতে পারবে না। আর একটা কথা মনে রেখ, 'sincerity of purpose and honesty of purpose' থাকলে জীবনে পরাজিত হবা না। একথা কোনদিন আমি ভুলি নাই।' (অসমাপ্ত আত্মজীবনী, পৃষ্ঠা-২২)

ম্যাট্রিক পাসের পর কিশোর মুজিব ভর্তি হন কলকাতার ইসলামিয়া কলেজে। সেখানকার ছাত্র থাকা অবস্থায় তাঁর রাজনৈতিক জীবনের বড়ো পরিবর্তনগুলো শুরু হয়। তিনি পাকিস্তান আন্দোলনে সক্রিয় হন এবং হোসেন শহীদ সোহরাওয়ার্দী, আবুল হাশিমের মতো নেতাদের সান্নিধ্যে আসেন। সোহরাওয়ার্দী ছিলেন বঙ্গীয় মুসলিম লীগের প্রেসিডেন্ট ও বাংলার মুখ্যমন্ত্রী। অপরদিকে আবুল হাশিম ছিলেন মুসলিম লীগের সেক্রেটারি। শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান

তখনই মুসলিম লীগের কাউন্সিলর।

আমি আগেই উল্লেখ করেছি যে, ১৯৬৬ এর ঐতিহাসিক ছয় দফা ভিত্তিক আন্দোলনের মাধ্যমে তিনি হয়ে ওঠেন বাঙালির অবিসংবাদিত নেতা। এ প্রসঙ্গে একটা কথা না বলেই পারছি না। আমরা যখন একাকি আন্দোলনার সুরোগ পেতাম তখন তিনি ছয় দফা সম্পর্কে বলতেন দ্যাব 'আমি কি চাই- আমার বাঙালী সেনা/সৌ/বিমান বাহিনী প্রথান হবে, পুলিশের আইজি হবে, সচিব হবে, মুখ্য সচিব হবে, বড় বড় শিল্প ঙ্গল-কারখানা, ব্যাংক-বীমার মালিক হবে'। তার মানে বঙ্গবন্ধুর কথায় ফুটে উঠতো তিনি কতোটা ধ্যানে স্বপ্নে বাঙালিভুক্তকে হৃদয়ে ধারণ করতেন।

নয় মাসের রক্তক্ষয়ী যুদ্ধ শেষে ১৬ ডিসেম্বর পাকিস্তানি বাহিনীর আত্মসমর্পণের মধ্য দিয়ে স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশের অভ্যুদয় ঘটে। এরপর পাকিস্তানের কারাগার থেকে মুক্তি পান বঙ্গবন্ধু। সেখান থেকে ইংল্যান্ড যান। এরপর সেখান থেকে দিল্লি হয়ে স্বদেশের মাটিতে তিনি পা রাখেন ১৯৭২ সালের ১০ জানুয়ারি। স্বাধীনতার স্থপতিকে বরণ করতে সেদিন লোকারণ্য ছিল ঢাকার পথ-ঘাট। পিতাকে কাছে পেয়ে বর্ণনাভীত কণ্ঠের মাঝেও নতুন করে সামনে এগিয়ে যাওয়ার স্বপ্ন দেখে সব হারানো বাঙালি জাতি। বিজয়ের উল্লাসে আনন্দপ্রস্র করেছিল। তাই তো দেশে ফিরেই রেসকোর্স ময়দানে (বর্তমানে সোহরাওয়ার্দী উদ্যান) তাঁর ভাষণে যুদ্ধ বিধ্বস্ত দেশটি গড়ে তুলতে সবার সহযোগিতা চান বঙ্গবন্ধু। জানান তাঁর পরিকল্পনার কথা। পাশাপাশি তাঁর ডাকে মানুষ যে মুক্তিযুদ্ধে ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়ে সেজনা সবার প্রতি কৃতজ্ঞতা ও ধন্যবাদ জানান তিনি।

বঙ্গবন্ধু বলেন, "বাংলাদেশ স্বাধীন রাষ্ট্র। বাংলাদেশ স্বাধীন থাকবে, বাংলাদেশকে কেউ দমাতে পারবে না। বাংলাদেশকে নিয়ে যড়যন্ত্র করে লাভ নাই। আমি যাবার আগে বলেছিলাম ও বাঙালি এবার তোমাদের সংগ্রাম মুক্তির সংগ্রাম। আমি বঙ্গোছিলাম, ঘরে ঘরে দুর্গ গড়ে তোলা, তোমরা ঘরে ঘরে দুর্গ গড়ে তুলে সংগ্রাম করবে। আমি আমার সহকর্মীদের মোবারকবাদ জানাই। আমার বড় ভাই বড় কই! আমার বড় মা-বোন আজ দুনিয়ায় নাই তাদের আমি দেখবো না।"

তিনি বলেন, "আমি আজ বাংলার মানুষকে দেখলাম, বাংলার মাটিকে দেখলাম, বাংলা'র আকাশকে দেখলাম বাংলার আবহাওয়ায়কে অনুভব করলাম। বাংলাকে আমি সালাম জানাই আমার সোনার বাংলা তোমায় আমি বড়ো ভালোবাসি বোধহয় তার জন্যই আমার ডেকে নিয়ে এসেছে।"

স্বাধীনতার পর অল্প সময় পেয়েছিলেন জাতির পিতা। তিনি ঠিক শূন্য থেকে শুরু করেছিলেন। সম্পদ বলতে তাঁর কিছুই ছিল না। ছিল শুধু জনগণ। জনগণের আস্থা। আর তা নিয়েই শুরু করেছিলেন পথচালা। আর সেই জনগণকেই দেশ গড়ার কাজে নেমে পড়ার আহ্বান জানান তিনি। বললেন, 'আজ থেকে আমার অনুরোধ, আজ থেকে আমার আদেশ, আজ থেকে আমার ছকুম ভাই হিসেবে, নেতা হিসেবে নয়, প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসেবে নয়, প্রেসিডেন্ট হিসেবে নয়। আমি তোমাদের ভাই, তোমরা আমার ভাই। এ স্বাধীনতা আমার পূর্ণ হবে না যদি বাংলার মানুষ পেট ভরে ভাত না পায়, এ স্বাধীনতা আমার পূর্ণ হবে না যদি বাংলার মা-বোনের কাপড় না পায়, এ স্বাধীনতা আমার পূর্ণ হবে না যদি এদেশের যুবক যারা আছে তারা আকরি না পায়। মুক্তিবাহিনী, ছাত্র সমাজ তোমাদের মোবারকবাদ জানাই তোমরা পেরিলা হয়েছে তোমরা রক্ত দিয়েছে, রক্ত বুখা যাবে না, রক্ত বুখা যায় নাই।'

সত্যি-ই শহিদের রক্ত বুখা যায়নি। বাংলাদেশ আজ বিধে উন্নয়নের রোল মডেল। বাংলাদেশ স্বল্পোন্নত দেশ থেকে উন্নয়নশীল দেশে অত্বত্ত্বিক্তির জন্য জাতিসংঘের চূড়ান্ত সুপারিশ অর্জন করেছে। যা সম্ভব হয়েছে কেবল তাঁরই কন্যা মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনার নেতৃত্বের কারণে। আর এর ভিত্তি স্বাধীনতার পর জাতির পিতা-ই গড়ে দিয়ে যান।

লেখক: সন্দ্যট-উপেন্দ্রা পরিষদ এবং চেয়ারম্যান কেন্দ্রীয় যুব ও ক্রীড়া উপ-কমিটি বাংলাদেশ আওয়ামী লীগ। ও সভাপতি বাংলাদেশ সংবাদপত্র পরিষদ (বিশিপি)



মামলার শেষ পরিণতি ছিল মৃত্যুদণ্ড। কিন্তু সারা দেশে আইয়ুব বিরোধী তুমুল ছাত্র আন্দোলনের (উনসত্ত্বের গণ-আন্দোলন) তেড়ে আইয়ুব খানের পতন ঘটে এবং শেখ মুজিব বঙ্গবন্ধু হিসেবে বাংলার রাজনীতিতে আত্মপ্রকাশ করেন। ততদিনে তিনি আওয়ামী লীগের সভাপতি, আর তাজউদ্দীন আহমেদ সাধারণ সম্পাদক।

আইয়ুব খান ক্ষমতাচ্যুত হওয়ার আগে জেনারেল ইয়াহিয়া খানের কাছে ক্ষমতা হস্তান্তর করেন। ইয়াহিয়া খান ঘোষণা করেন, ১৯৭০ সালের ডিসেম্বর মাসে দেশে একটি সাধারণ নির্বাচন অনুষ্ঠিত হবে এবং নির্বাচিত গণপ্রতিনিধিরা পাকিস্তানের জন্য একটি সংবিধান রচনা করবেন। মওলানা ভাসানীসহ অন্য বামপন্থী লোকেরা এই সেনাশাসকের আদেশে ওই নির্বাচনে যাওয়ার বিরোধী ছিলেন। কিন্তু বঙ্গবন্ধু ঠিকই বুঝতে পেরেছিলেন, এই নির্বাচনই বদলে দিতে পারে পাকিস্তানের ইতিহাস আর উপমহাদেশের মানচিত্র। পূর্ব বাংলার ১৬৯টি আসনের মধ্যে আওয়ামী লীগ বিজয়ী হয় ১৬৭টি আসনে।

বাঙালি পাকিস্তান শাসন করছে, তাতো পশ্চিম পাকিস্তানের শাসকশ্রেণী মানতে পারে না। ১৯৭১ সালের ৩ মার্চে ঢাকায় অনুষ্ঠিতব্য জাতীয় সংসদ অধিবেশন নির্ধারিত ছিল। ১ তারিখ ইয়াহিয়া খান এক রেডিও ঘোষণার মাধ্যমে তা স্থগিত করে জিন্মার পাকিস্তানের কফিনে শেখ পেরেকটি ঠোকেন। সারা বিশ্বকে আশঙ্ক করে দিয়ে পূর্ব বাংলার সিভিল প্রশাসনের ভার বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবের হাতে তুলে গিয়েছিল। ইয়াহিয়া খানের সংসদ সদস্যদের পদত্যাগ করতে বাধ্য করেছেন। আর সবচেয়ে বড়ো কথা হচ্ছে, তিনি রাষ্ট্রীয় ক্ষমতার চেয়ে দলকে বেশি গুরুত্ব দিয়েছেন। দলের সভাপতির পদ ছেড়ে দিয়ে দলকে শক্তিশালী করার দায়িত্ব দিয়েছিলেন কামারুজ্জামানের গুণর। বাংলার হাজার বছরের ইতিহাসে বঙ্গবন্ধু একজনই জনেছিলেন। আমরা তাঁকে বাচিয়ে রাখতে ব্যর্থ হয়েছি। তবে জন্ম জন্মান্তর ধরে যারা বাংলাদেশকে বিশ্বাস করে মুক্তিযুদ্ধের আদর্শ ধারণ করে, তাদের মাঝেই জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিব বেঁচে থাকবেন। বঙ্গবন্ধু ছিলেন এমন একজন নেতা যিনি যে কোনো স্থানে দাঁড়িয়ে ভুলে পরতেন ৫৬ হাজার বর্গ মাইলের ৩০ লাখ শহিদের রক্তে বিধৌত এই বাংলাদেশেরে কোকোনা স্থান যে কোনো সময়। জন্মদিনে তাঁকে আবারো বিনম্র শ্রদ্ধা।

৯ মাস রক্তক্ষয়ী মুক্তিযুদ্ধের মাধ্যমে ১৯৭১ সালের ১৬ ডিসেম্বর বাংলাদেশ পাকিস্তানি সৈন্যদের দখলমুক্ত হয়ে এক স্বাধীন দেশ হিসেবে আত্মপ্রকাশ করে। ১০ জানুয়ারি বঙ্গবন্ধু পাকিস্তান কারাগার থেকে স্বদেশে ফিরে আসেন। স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশে বঙ্গবন্ধু বেঁচে ছিলেন মাত্র সাড়ে তিন বছর। এই সাড়ে তিন বছরে তাঁর কীর্তি বাংলার ইতিহাসকে সজ্জ্ব করেছে। তাঁকে করেছে অমর। তবে যে বিষয়টির গুণর তাঁর সার্বজনিক দৃষ্টি ছিল সেটি হচ্ছে প্রশাসনকে দুর্নীতিগ্রস্ত করা। তিনি কখনো দুর্নীতিতে প্রশ্রয় দেননি। প্রয়োজনে তিনি দলের সংসদ সদস্যদের পদত্যাগ করতে বাধ্য করেছেন। আর সবচেয়ে বড়ো কথা হচ্ছে, তিনি রাষ্ট্রীয় ক্ষমতার চেয়ে দলকে বেশি গুরুত্ব দিয়েছেন। দলের সভাপতির পদ ছেড়ে দিয়ে দলকে শক্তিশালী করার দায়িত্ব দিয়েছিলেন কামারুজ্জামানের গুণর। বাংলার হাজার বছরের ইতিহাসে বঙ্গবন্ধু একজনই জনেছিলেন। আমরা তাঁকে বাচিয়ে রাখতে ব্যর্থ হয়েছি। তবে জন্ম জন্মান্তর ধরে যারা বাংলাদেশকে বিশ্বাস করে মুক্তিযুদ্ধের আদর্শ ধারণ করে, তাদের মাঝেই জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিব বেঁচে থাকবেন। বঙ্গবন্ধু ছিলেন এমন একজন নেতা যিনি যে কোনো স্থানে দাঁড়িয়ে ভুলে পরতেন ৫৬ হাজার বর্গ মাইলের ৩০ লাখ শহিদের রক্তে বিধৌত এই বাংলাদেশেরে কোকোনা স্থান যে কোনো সময়। জন্মদিনে তাঁকে আবারো বিনম্র শ্রদ্ধা।

লেখক: বালেক চেয়ারম্যান, বাংলাদেশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশন।

সতেরোই মার্চ পিতার শুভ জন্মদিন

আসলাম সানী

হে নতুন- শুভ আগামীর সাড়ে তিনহাজার বছরের গৌরবাঞ্ছিত বাঙালি বীর-

এখানে দাঁড়াও- ভালোবাসায় বুকেটা বাড়াও, এসো এই সবুজে- শ্যামলে এদিকে তাকাও স্বপ্নেই ফিরে চাও।

এই ব্রিটিশ নং ধানমন্ডির মহাকালের স্মৃতিময়- এই বাড়িটির দুয়ারে ধীর- স্থির দুঃদন্ত বসে যাও যদি তুমি দুরগামী যাত্রী হও -আগামীর।

পাবে তুমি সৌন্দর্য অপর দখিনা সরোবরে সৌন্দর্য শাপলার-

না-না কেবল শোক নয় দ্রোহে- শক্তিতে- ভক্তিতে জয় -হোক, তোমারই চির নিত্য ,

হে সুন্দর- স্বপ্নময়- কিশোর- তোমাকে ডাকছে- স্মৃতিভাণ্ডার জাতিপিতা- বঙ্গবন্ধু মুজিবর।

এসো বন্ধু- এসো ভাই হে প্রদীপ্ত যুবক ডিজিটলি বিশ্বে আগাই লিখে- পড়ে দেশকে সাজাই পিতার স্বপ্নের সোনার বাংলা স্মার্ট বাংলাদেশ খুঁজে পাই।

আনন্দ হাসি গানে এই স্মৃতিসৌধ- শহীদ মিনার থাক বাঙালির প্রতিপ্রাণে-

এই বারো আত্মশ্রম- শ্রী চৈতন্য- অতীশ দীপঙ্কর- এই পূণ্য ভূমি- এই মৃত্যুউপত্যকা - থাক চির ভাণ্ডার, পদ্মা- মেঘনা- যমুনা- মধুমতি তেরোশত নদী-বরনা-পাহাড় - বঙ্গোপসাগর-

এই গোপালগঞ্জ- টুঙ্গিপাড়ায় যেখানে পৃথিবীর স্বপ্ন- সাহস শ্রদ্ধা এসে দাড়ায়- দোয়েল- শালিক- ঘুঘুরা হারায় এই মুগ্ধ প্রবমানতায় মেঘোনা- বৃষ্টিরা ছুটে আসে ইশারায়।

এসো দেখো- পালাশ- শিমুল- কৃষ্ণচূড়ার লালে গদা লেখো,

এসো বঙ্গমাতার মুখ কামাল- জামাল- রাসেলের বুক- যাদের মহান ত্যাগে আত্মদানে এই বাঙালি আর বাংলাদেশের সুখ- একাত্ম হও অনুভবে-

ইতিহাস- গৌরবে হবে হবে তোমারই জয় হবে।

তুমি পাবে ঠাকুর মা'র স্থলি তনবে বুড়া অ্যাংলা ফিরের পুতুল পখের পাচালীর অপু- দুর্গার বুলি,

আপন মনে তুমি ছুটে যাবে- হে তুর্কন-ময়মনসিংহ গীতিকা মহুয়া- মল্লয়া- আলালের ঘরের দুলাল সুয়োরাণী দুয়োরাণীরা ভাবে।

খনা- চন্দ্রাবতী- আলাওল লালন- হাছন- রবি- নজরুল জীবনানন্দে- সুকান্তে পাবে মূল।

জাতির পিতার স্বপ্ন স্বাধীন- সার্বভৌম পাঠ এই অবন ঠাকুর- দক্ষিণারঞ্জন -লালী মজুমদার জসীমউদ্দীন নকশি কাথার মাঠ উদার সোজন বাদিয়ার ঘাট-

উন্নয়ন- উৎপাদনে শশা- ফসল- ধানে ধানে তুমি এগোবে সৌরভে গৌববে বাহান্ন একাত্তরের বিজয় উৎসবে

হে নতুন হে স্বাপ্নিক আগামীর হে প্রজন্ম শ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙালির সতেরোই মার্চ পিতার শুভ জন্মদিন হোক চির অমলিন,

আজ জাতীয় শিশু দিবস- শিশুরা হাসবে- খেলবে- গাইবে অস্তিত্বের নৌকা বাইবে ভবিষ্য খুঁজে পাইবে হে- কিশোর- তরুণ- যুবা তুমিও আগাইবে...।

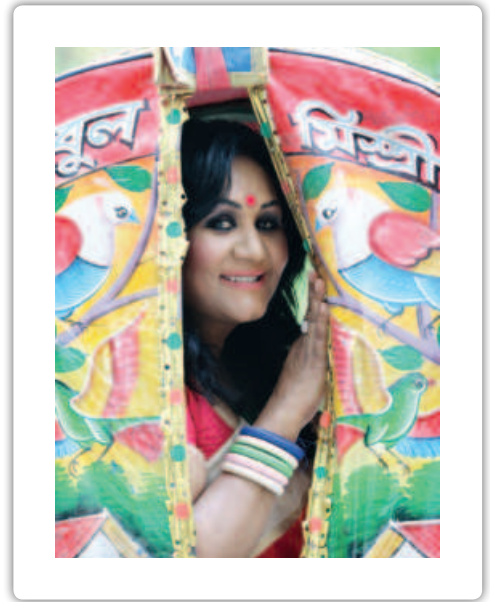
Playback music is a syndicate now

FAHMIDA NABI

ZAHID AKBAR

National Award-winning singer Fahmida Nabi has captured a place in the audience's heart with hits like *Ek Mutho Gaan*, *Dupure Ekla Pakhi*, *Lukochuri Golpo*, *Tobu Brishti Chai* and many more. She has collaborated with many notable artists and has lent her voice to many creations. She has recently released two new songs titled, *Jonaki Ahare* and *Shohor Chere*.

She sat down with The Daily Star to discuss her new music and her thoughts on playback singing in film.



You've recently released new music. Could you tell us more about that?

I'm a quiet and reserved person, I don't announce releases anymore. So far, I've been trying to do more modern Bangla songs. I feel like one day my songs will remain even when I leave. Thus, these two new songs were released. *Jonaki Ahare* was written by Hosne Ara Jolly and *Shohor Chere* has been penned by Sultana Nurjahan Rosy, composed by Sajib Das.

Once upon a time, a new release meant an album, containing 10 to 12 songs.

That doesn't happen anymore, now only singles are released. What do you think about that?

Everything changes with time, it is imperative to accept that change. Looking back, there used to be a time when musicians, lyricists and producers would work together in the studio to create an album. There was a lot of work, but also enjoyment involved in the process. That isn't there anymore and I find it saddening. However, like I said, it is important to change, that's the wisest thing to do. What remains, is to see if I have changed as well. From that perspective, I believe that I am still the same.

In 2007, you received the National Film Award for Best Female Playback singer, for Enamul Karim Nirjhar's "Aha", where you sang "Lukochuri Lukochuri Golpo". After that you weren't seen in the playback scene as much. Why was that?

Playback music is a syndicate. Our names are removed from the credits, without any reasoning. My father, Mahmudun Nabi also drifted away from playback singing after he received his National Film Award. I have come to terms with it now, what pains me is that because of such syndicates, the audiences cannot enjoy good songs in films anymore.

Have you ever wanted to pursue anything other than music?

I have only ever wanted to sing my whole life. Since my childhood, me and Shoma (Samina Chowdhury) had been asked what we wanted to be. She would answer that she wanted to be a doctor, while I have always said that I wanted to be a singer. I have fought to be here. Musicians have no retirement or breaks. A true artiste devotes their whole life to their art and its pursuit. There is no senior or junior in music, you just simply have to create. I want to create music and pursue it forever.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED.

Netflix announces documentary on Yo Yo Honey Singh



Netflix is planning to release a bare-it-all docu-film about the life of hip-hop artist and rapper Yo Yo Honey Singh.

The *Lungi Dance* singer revealed on his 40th birthday that a Netflix documentary about his life will be released later this year. It will be directed by Moez Singh and will be produced by recent Oscar winner Guneet Monga.

Honey Singh, born Hirdesh Singh in New Delhi, debuted as a Punjabi rapper in 2003. By 2011, he had hit songs like *Brown Rang*, *Desi Kalakaar*, and *Blue Eyes* and had also sang on Bollywood soundtracks.

Nusraat Faria sizzles in new music video

Get ready to groove with Nusraat Faria this Eid, as her latest video *Bujhina Toh Tai* is dropping this festive season. The actress has collaborated with Mumzy stranger and the peppy track will also feature DJ Lyan in the collaboration.

The *Operation Sundarban* actress announced the news on her social media recently.

Nusraat Faria looked scintillating in a blue halter neck one piece which she paired with a floral wrap-skirt and a back brushed hairdo which accentuated her beautiful jawline and her charming tattoos.



NEWS

AL leader held

FROM PAGE 16

chairman candidate.

As the information spread, Ratan was going to return the machine. But law enforcers detained him on the way to the polling centre and took him to Boalkhali Police Station.

Jahangir Hossain, Chattogram district election officer and also the returning officer of the by-polls, said they issued a show-cause notice to the presiding officer of the polling centre asking him to explain the matter.

"We have also instructed the police to take action in this regard. The presiding officer primarily informed us that the ballot unit was a spare one and it was not being used for taking votes."

Jahangir, however, said no election material can be taken out of a polling centre as per electoral rules. As the AL leader violated the rules, the EC would take action against him, he added.

Boalkhali Police Station OC Abdur Razzak said Ratan was detained for quizzing. He declined to make any further comments.

Expressing resentment about the issue and the overall atmosphere of the by-polls, independent chairman candidate Kazi Ayesha Farzana said, "The Election Commission and the local administration had assured us of fair by-polls, but we have seen today [yesterday] that all polling centres have been captured by ruling party men.

"My polling agents have been driven out of most of the voting centres. Even an Awami League leader dared to snatch an EVM from a polling centre which is unprecedented," she added.

Police yet to file

FROM PAGE 16

correspondent.

The three women were detained following the scuffle, he added.

Meanwhile, Md Mahabubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Babugan Police Station, claimed the allegations of custodial torture were false.

Asked why police have not yet filed the case against the official, Md Farhad Sardar, additional superintendent of police, said they were yet to receive the court order.

However, Md Yasin, a clerk of Judicial Magistrate's Court-3, said the court order had been delivered to the general register office three days ago.

Ministry asks Biman

FROM PAGE 16

hajj registration to March 21 as the number of people who registered fell short of the quota of 1.27 lakh pilgrims from Bangladesh.

The ministry in another circular in the evening said this would be the last of the deadline.

People willing to perform hajj had requested for the extension, said the statement signed by Deputy Secretary Abul Kashem Mohammad Shahin.

Earlier in the day, Kashem told reporters that high airfare, devaluation of taka against US dollar and Saudi riyal and several other factors made hajj packages expensive.

As the previous deadline ended last night, the number of registrations reached only about 1.08 lakh, according to Hajj Office data.

The ministry extended the deadline three times before to fill the quota agreed between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh.

Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (Haab) said many people didn't register for hajj because of the high cost.

To perform hajj, a Bangladeshi pilgrim will have to spend almost Tk 7 lakh, which is around Tk 1.61 lakh more than last year's cost.

The parliamentary committee on religious affairs ministry Wednesday asked Biman Bangladesh Airlines to fix the airfare at Tk 1.50 lakh.

The High Court on the same day asked Attorney General AM Amin Uddin to talk to the authorities concerned about the need for reducing the cost of hajj packages.

Cop was killed in my office

FROM PAGE 1

Video clips on social media showed that Shakib went to the shop accompanied by Rabiul in a luxury vehicle.

On Facebook live yesterday, Rabiul thanked Shakib.

"Even after hearing everything [media report on his criminal record], Shakib Al Hasan bhai did not step back. In fact, no one withdrew," he said.

"I am doing a large business. It is not a small one," he said, adding that he would soon open a branch of Arav Jewellers in the USA.

Detective Branch chief Additional Commissioner Muhammad Harun Or Rashid said Shakib and the other celebrities were informed about his criminal records.

The cricketer and others joined the inauguration of Arav Jewellers knowing that its owner is an absconding accused of murder with 12 arrest warrants, he said.

Replying to a query, Harun said if needed, detectives would interrogate the cricketer and others.

The DB chief said after consulting with the senior officials, steps will be taken to bring Rabiul back home through Interpol.

The charge sheet has been submitted in the murder case, he said.

The DB official said they would try to find out the people behind Rabiul's rise and gold business since Rabiul claims to be the son of a labourer who had trouble providing his family three meals a day.

On his Facebook page, it is mentioned that he made a falcon sculpture for his shop with 60kg gold and that he has a luxurious duplex with a swimming pool in Dubai and



Shakib Al Hasan and Arav Khan in a photo uploaded yesterday on the Facebook profile purportedly belonging to the latter.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

a flat on the 65th floor of the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest skyscraper.

Soon after the murder of inspector Mamun, Rabiul fled to India and hired Md Abu Yusuf to pose as him and surrender. Yusuf had been behind bars for nine months, Harun said.

In 2020, Rabiul managed an Indian passport and moved to Dubai. Yesterday, Rabiul claimed that he had visited Bangladesh.

Quoting police sources, several media outlets reported that Rabiul started his gold business in Dubai with financial help from a senior retired police officer.

Rabiul yesterday said some senior officials from Gopalganj helped him make his fortune and blamed a section

of the media for running "false news".

BCB CHIEF UNWARE

Bangladesh Cricket Board President Nazmul Hassan yesterday said he was not aware of Shakib's visit to Dubai.

He, however, said that a few days ago he learnt that Shakib would go abroad to inaugurate a gold shop. "But I was not aware where he was going," he told The Daily Star.

According to BCB cricket operations committee Chairman Jalal Yunus, Shakib will join the national team training in Sylhet today for the ODI series against Ireland.

Asked if Shakib returned, BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury said, "Yes, I heard he returned today [Thursday] from Dubai."

Won't join polls without caretaker govt

FROM PAGE 16

Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, had dinner hosted by Verma at his residence. They stayed there for two and a half hours.

The other members included party's standing committee members Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain and Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, vice-chairmen Abdul Awal Mintoo and Nitai Roy Chowdhury and Organising Secretary Shama Obayed.

Such a meeting was a first in more

than a decade and the discussions were candid, BNP leaders said.

Party leaders said there has been a gap between the BNP and the Indian government and the meeting could be a good start for closing that gap.

Neither the BNP nor the Indian high commission made any official comments last night.

Sources said the Indian high commissioner wanted to know about the BNP's ties with Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and Hefajat-e-Islam.

BNP leaders said Jamaat was BNP's electoral ally but now the BNP is in the movement alone.

They also told Verma that the government has a very good relationship with Hefajat, which even gave the prime minister the title: "Mother of Qawmi".

"We said that the government has shrunk the liberal space, creating more room for Islamist forces," said a BNP leader.

The Indian envoy wanted to know why the relationship between the

BNP and India deteriorated.

A senior leader responded by saying that India believes that the BNP was involved in the 10-truck arms haul, which is not true.

Verma then wanted to know about China-BNP relations and the BNP delegation said the party believes in friendly relations with everyone.

At the beginning of the talks, Verma wanted to know about BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's health.

BNP leaders said she needed better treatment immediately.

New spacesuit

FROM PAGE 16

cover layer in all black with blue and orange trim which Axiom Space said was required to "conceal the suit's proprietary design."

The final version will be in the traditional white used to reflect heat from the Sun and protect astronauts from the temperatures of the harsh lunar environment.

The suit is designed to be worn for up to eight hours at a time.

Vanessa Wyche, the Johnson Space Center director, said the new suit has "more functionality, more performance, more capability" than the bulky version worn by Apollo astronauts.

Two police officers shot dead in western Canada

AFP, Ottawa

Two police officers were shot dead in the line of duty early yesterday in Edmonton in Canada's western Alberta province, officials said.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau offered condolences to the families and colleagues of the officers, who local media reported were responding to a domestic call.

"Every day, police officers put themselves in harm's way to keep people safe. The news that two @EdmontonPolice officers have been killed in the line of duty reminds us of that reality," Trudeau tweeted.

The Edmonton Police Service said in a statement it was "mourning the loss of two of its patrol officers who were killed in the line of duty, while responding to a call earlier today."

Staff Sergeant Michael Elliott, former head of the Edmonton Police Association, said the officers were "killed near Inglewood," a residential neighbourhood in the north central part of the city.

"No words can describe what our members & their families are feeling at this moment. Our entire service & community are mourning & I'm devastated," he tweeted.

No other details of the incident were released, but television images showed a massive police deployment in the neighbourhood.

The city's police chief, Dale McFee, is scheduled to hold a news conference later in the morning.

Keep up the pressure on Myanmar

Don't let it delay the repatriation of Rohingya any further

A 17-member delegation from Myanmar is in Bangladesh now to verify the identities of Rohingya refugees in Teknaf, with the first batch of refugees reportedly expected to be repatriated in a few months. While this indicates that pressure from the international community has been effective to some extent, it is essential that the community does not take its foot off the pedal until Myanmar authorities live up to their responsibility of creating a safe environment for the return of the refugees, and completely end the persecution campaign against the Rohingya. It is also important to remember that Myanmar has backtracked on most of its previous commitments. Therefore, there is no reason to take its words at face value unless there are substantial actions taken to back them.

The reason for the ongoing visit by the Myanmar delegation, according to Bangladeshi officials, is that there were some issues regarding the earlier verification process. So, the delegation is apparently meeting the Rohingya in person and verifying their names, villages, towns, and other information. Foreign ministry officials say that Myanmar has shown growing interest about the repatriation in recent times, and also arranged a trip for the ambassadors of Asean countries as well as Bangladesh, India, and China to the Rakhine State last week to show them the conditions there. While all this sounds positive, we cannot ignore the fact that there have been two failed attempts of repatriation since 2017, when around 750,000 Rohingyas fled a military crackdown in Rakhine. And on both occasions, it was because of Myanmar authorities.

The latest visit comes ahead of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) planned hearing (scheduled for April 28) on the genocide case filed by The Gambia against Myanmar. And we sincerely hope that Myanmar's recent activities are not intended to somehow pull the wool over the court's eyes. However, that is not something that can be fully ruled out, as we have seen the Bangladeshi government appealing many times to the authorities in Myanmar to take steps for repatriation, only for it to be ignored. Moreover, we have seen Myanmar authorities delaying the repatriation process over and over again, using trivial excuses and arguments. In fact, every time there seemed to have been a breakthrough in the process, Myanmar found a way to throw a wrench into the whole thing.

After hosting the Rohingya for more than five years, Bangladesh is now in a position where it cannot afford any more delays in repatriation. That is why the government must work with the international community to continue the pressure on Myanmar authorities to expedite the repatriation process. Given the speed at which Myanmar seems to be working currently, it might take a whole decade for all the Rohingya to return to Myanmar. That would be completely unacceptable. While we cannot forget the humanitarian aspect of things, which means that safe conditions must be ensured for the Rohingya to return, the Myanmar authorities must be pressured to fulfil such conditions and complete the repatriation process much faster.

A most unlawfullike behaviour

Supreme Court lawyers engaging in violence a worrying sign for the country

We are alarmed to see the chaos and violence that took place on the Supreme Court premises during the two-day election of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA). On Wednesday, the first day of voting, rival lawyers from BNP and Awami League engaged in arguments and scuffles which later escalated. At one point, police intervened, and attacked pro-BNP lawyers and even journalists covering the election, injuring at least 25 people. Due to the situation, voting started two hours late and without the participation of pro-BNP lawyers. Such incidents are unprecedented in the history of SCBA elections.

Reportedly, tension was rising between the two groups of lawyers after one senior lawyer, Mansurul Haque Chowdhury, whom both sides had accepted as convener of the election sub-committee, resigned citing "personal" reasons, just a day before the election. As a new convener took charge, pro-BNP lawyers took issue with it, and demanded that the election be held under someone accepted by both sides. But that did not happen. Voting ended on Thursday amid continued scuffles and chanting, with a little less than 50 percent of votes cast.

Such conduct from lawyers – that, too, on the premises of our apex court – is most "unlawfullike" and objectionable. Those obscurantist elements that engaged in clashes may only be a segment of the legal fraternity, but they surely besmirched the good name of lawyers who have a rich history of fighting for pro-people and democratic causes in the country. If democratic practices are missing in institutions related to the apex court, what can we expect from other institutions? What signal does it give to the people about the state of our justice system?

Moreover, the way police entered the court premises and attacked pro-BNP lawyers and journalists is alarming. Noted Supreme Court lawyer ZI Khan Panna tells us that he has never seen police enter the court and attack people, not even during the military regime. Such behaviour is also extremely concerning ahead of the upcoming national election.

Reportedly, the DMP commissioner has regretted police attacks on journalists. That is not enough. The DMP must hold an investigation into the incident and punish those responsible as per the law. Police authorities should also explain whether police can enter SC premises without any prior permission and beat people.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time that SCBA elections were marred by chaos. Last year, we saw how it took an unusually long time to even declare the results of the election. If this chaotic trend holds, we have every reason to worry about the future of the legal profession in Bangladesh. We urge the relevant authorities to treat this matter with due seriousness. As for the SCBA election, we think proper actions should be taken so that both the electoral process and the results are acceptable to everyone.

103RD BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN

Remembering the Patriarch



Muhammad Nurul Huda is a former IGP of Bangladesh Police.

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

In the annals of the political struggles of Bangalees, March 17 shall forever occupy a special place as, on this day in 1920, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born. Bangabandhu, which means "friend of Bengal," as he was fondly addressed, was indeed special because without him, it is rightly doubted if the advent of a sovereign Bangladesh could have been a reality. To understand the import of such a belief, one has to trace the history of our pre-1971 political struggle.

Even a dispassionate study of our political emancipation would clearly show that years of political mobilisation by Bangabandhu – particularly after February 1966 when the historic Six-Point Programme was presented – had made Bangalees conscious of their identity. In Bangladesh's case, national sovereignty was inculcated into the consciousness of the masses through a deliberate political process. This mass character of consciousness-building provided the underlying strength to the nationalist movement. It also gave substance to the assertion of national sovereignty in March 1971 by Bangabandhu and the people of Bangladesh.

Bangabandhu, through an intense process of national consciousness-building, equipped a people politically to take up arms and be prepared to shed their blood to defend their newly acquired sovereignty. Herein lies his greatness, because in March 1971 "a sense of Bangladesh's sovereign status took root and people became psychologically prepared to defend their sovereignty" (Rehman Sobhan, *From Two Economies to Two Nations: My Journey to Bangladesh*). When the Pakistan Army launched its attack on the people of Bangladesh on the night of March 25, 1971, the entire population rose up to resist it in the absence of any coordinated military direction.

In 1971, Bangabandhu transcended conventional political reckoning, and his charisma dominated the political campaign. He became a symbol in his own lifetime and personified Bangalee nationalism, "just as Nasser personified Arab nationalism or the Quaid Muslim nationalism." He became the



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

PHOTO: COLLECTED

unchallenged spokesman of Bengal, and his voice was heard beyond Pakistan and within the international community. History chose him to lead Bengal's struggle for emancipation. "For the first time, since the Battle of Plassey, Bangalees awoke to the fact that they were ruling themselves through their freely elected representatives."

Bangladesh "owes a blood debt to the people who shed their blood for the liberation of (the country) and to the leader who played such a critical role in inculcating this sense of nationhood within the people." It is a tragedy that Bangabandhu, the symbol of our nationhood, was not only assassinated but also shamefully marginalised from our historical consciousness for 21 long years.

Bangabandhu's lifelong struggle was centred on establishing real democracy, as he believed that democracy expresses the long-suppressed desire of the people to govern themselves and to

the cynical exploitation of religion for bolstering the interest of the ruling elite. He believed in creating an environment in which all religious communities could coexist in harmony, free from discrimination and intolerance. In 1973, at the Non-Aligned Summit in Algiers, in response to a query from Libya's President Muammar Gaddafi as to why Bangladesh embodied secularism in its constitution, Bangabandhu replied, "Our secularism is not against religion. Our secularism stands for harmony among members of all religions. Indeed, in the opening of the Koran, Allah is described as *Rabbul Alameen*, the Lord of all creation, and not *Rabbul-Muslimin*, the Lord only of Muslims. This is the spirit which underlines our secularism" (Kamal Hossain, *Bangladesh: Quest for freedom and justice*).

Discerning observers would like to know if, in our political discourses, we

a lawful government by the majority, under the rule of abiding law, and with freedom of opposition and dissent. By upholding the spirit of moderation, we will surely be paying a fitting tribute to Bangabandhu's contribution to our democracy.

It is also time, in line with Bangabandhu's cherished goal, to create and strengthen an environment in which all religious communities would adequately live in harmony by rejecting the bigotry and hypocrisy of pre-1971 times. The struggle against communalism has to be fought relentlessly.

The verve and vigour of Bangabandhu's personality was brilliantly illustrated by his continuous wandering beyond the safe provision of personal gratification. He was in our midst for cohesiveness and dignity, and not for power and acquisitiveness. Salute to the great patriarch.

The role of Big Tech and influencers amid conflicts



Zaheen Tasfia Zuhair is a student.

ZAHEEN TASFIA ZUHAIR

Emma Watson is an anti-Semite, according to Twitter.

So is Gigi Hadid.

All the *Harry Potter* actor did to have people label her as anti-Semitic was make a post on Instagram showing support for Palestine ("Solidarity is a verb").

Meanwhile, Gigi Hadid pledged to donate her earnings from Fall 2022 shows to aid the war victims in Ukraine, as well as to continue to support those affected in Palestine. *Vogue* reposted Hadid's Instagram post. Angry comments about Hadid's "anti-Semitism" followed, and *Vogue* edited out Palestine from their post. Then came criticisms of censoring support for Palestine; *Vogue* amended their post to reflect Gigi Hadid's original intention.

But *Vogue* isn't the only one doing a little bit of censoring. On February 28, 2022, an 11-year-old Palestinian girl was hit in the face with a stun grenade by Israeli forces. The footage went viral on social media. Both Instagram and Twitter flag posts containing this video as "potentially sensitive content" and YouTube age-restricts it. I would defend these platforms by saying these videos are very disturbing, but so are the footage from Ukraine. Videos of bloodied victims of the Russia-Ukraine war are accessible for anyone with an account on these platforms – no barriers to see their sufferings (and

there shouldn't be).

When footballer Mesut Ozil spoke out against the treatment of Uyghurs, Arsenal said it was his "opinion" and that they adhered to the principle of not involving itself in politics. But when Hector Bellerin tweeted against Boris Johnson, why did Arsenal conveniently ditch its principles?

When influencers show their support for Ukraine, they are not labelled anti-Russia or anti-Christian. However, whenever an influencer speaks out for Palestine, the replies to their posts are rife with "anti-Semite" accusations.

Some influencers are punished for taking the "wrong" stance in conflicts – like when Arsenal was reprimanded for Ozil speaking out against the treatment of Uyghurs. Others may get their sponsorships or affiliations cancelled. Many influencers may cave in under the pressure of criticism and hate comments. Mark Ruffalo removed his post supporting Palestinians – not very Hulk of him. On the other hand, many refuse to back down, risking their careers for what they believe in.

The power celebrities hold cannot be underestimated. Fans of BTS, inspired by their idols, have initiated numerous charity drives. But there is a flip side. If a celebrity supports Russia, a country that is attacking another nation, many of the celebrity's fans may follow suit. They may change their mind about donating to Ukraine.

So whom a star advocates for affects many.

Just as powerful, or perhaps more so, are the brains behind Big Tech.

Meta allowed calls for violence against Russian soldiers in select countries on Facebook and Instagram in 2022. Posts like "death to Russian invaders" weren't a problem soon after the invasion of Ukraine – at least on Meta platforms. Reuters also reported that calls for the death of Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko were allowed in a limited number of countries. (Later, Meta reverted this decision, saying calls for death of a head of state are banned.)

While Putin obviously deserves reprimand, should social media and tech giants encourage violence?

YouTube said they were limiting reach on Russian media and were blocking access to Russian state media channels globally. Is this not censorship?

If Meta and YouTube could go against Russia because of the invasion and occupation of Ukraine, why did they not do the same against Israel for the invasion and occupation of Palestine?

Perhaps this bias can be explained by Big Tech's profit from war. According to a report by three American rights groups, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense have collectively spent at least \$44.5 billion on services from Amazon, Google, Microsoft, Facebook and Twitter. Tech giants helped America's conflicts through access to crucial databases, cloud computing services, drone technology, surveillance, and pushing narratives. Facebook ads helped government-owned platforms to promote stories on Islamic extremism.

If the reach that social media sites have is taken into account, we see

how easily they can manipulate global perceptions. As of December 2021, Facebook had approximately 2.91 billion monthly active users. YouTube had 2.3 billion, followed by Instagram's 1.22 billion and Twitter's 330 million active users.

Consequently, it is unsurprising that hundreds of former US government officials are involved in key positions of Big Tech companies. Greg Anderson, who used to run psychological operations for Nato, is now Livestream Policy manager for Europe, Middle East and Africa for TikTok. Ben Renda, director of Trust and Safety at Google, used to be Nato's strategic planner and Information Manager. The West knows the power of the internet and has made sure to place their representatives strategically.

Soon after Ukraine's invasion, Russia blocked Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Adam Mosseri, the head of Instagram, said this ban was "wrong" because this would cut off Russians from connecting with their loved ones.

Adam Mosseri is an influencer in his own right, boasting over 1.9 million followers on his Instagram. He did not, however, speak on the matter of how Meta allowed hate speech towards Russian soldiers. Of course, speaking against Meta's decision would be a blow to his career. This raises the question: how much risk should influencers take to stand up for what is right when it threatens their livelihood?

Both tech giants and influencers have the immense power to nudge public opinions in line with their own. Thus, they have a responsibility to ensure that their opinion is justified, fair and humane. Moreover, everyone should double-check any information they find online before propagating it. If one has the power to control information, they have the power to control the world.

‘We will do whatever is required for the welfare of the people’

So who determines what is ‘required’ to ensure that welfare?



THE THIRD VIEW

Mahfuz Anam
is the editor and publisher of
The Daily Star.

MAHFUZ ANAM

On many issues, we don’t see eye to eye with the prime minister. But when it comes to issues of sovereignty, national purpose, and dignity, we are her sincere supporters. When she says that Bangladeshis must stand tall in the world, it resonates in the heart of every one of us. Recently, when asked about outside pressure to hold a free and fair election, she replied, “No pressure will work on me,” and added, “We will do whatever is required for the welfare of the people.” On both counts, we are with her.

But the question, on which so much hangs, is: who is to determine what is “required for the welfare of the people”? The PM has made it clear that only the Awami League can deliver it. For the BNP, only the removal of AL from power will ensure people’s welfare. Theoretically, people are expected to decide what’s good for them. Free and fair elections are the only global and historically tested mechanism to ascertain “public will” that will ensure “public welfare.” And hence the need for its free and unhindered expression through a genuine election.

Nothing should be done just because our foreign friends are saying so, but because we want it, and we want it because we know its value and have fought for it (our War of Independence was for democracy and our right to vote, which Pakistanis denied us till 1970) and have suffered terribly due to its absence in the recent past.

National pride can be a great pusher for the positive. But it can

also make us insular and resistant to vital messages – both internal and external – that contribute to public welfare. The biggest example is the transformation of our RMG sector following the Rana Plaza tragedy. The buyers formed two groups – the Accord and Alliance – and literally forced upon us crucial reforms that benefited the whole sector to the extent that our global status, devastated by the deaths of 1,100-plus garment workers, is now largely restored, and presently we have the highest number of fully compliant “green” factories in the world.

While we are not particularly fans of the IMF, we welcome their conditionalities for granting the \$4.7 billion loan. We feel that our financial sector, especially the banking sector, may finally see some crucial reforms that hundreds of media reports, editorials, and columns could not bring about, as was also the case with enforced disappearances and custodial and crossfire deaths at the hands of Rab and police. Like magic, it almost disappeared. So much for internal accountability versus external actions.

In the present-day world, all of us are entwined in a web of interdependencies, some of which are apparent, but most are invisible. To drive home the point at a personal level, consider the operation of airlines in and out of Dhaka airport. The number of agreements that needed to be signed, protocols observed, clearances acquired, and compliance ensured before a single

flight could operate illustrates fully the nature of the present collaborative world. Every aspect of our lives, even for our remote villager who never ventures anywhere save the village *haat*, is determined by global agreements and legal frameworks and their meticulous compliance on everyone’s part, including ours.

Another example of the integrated

living together in a global village to derive maximum self-benefit.

Like in the world of trade and business, so also in the area of democracy, rights, freedoms, governance, especially in the specific area of democratic elections, there is a huge stack of laws and global practices formulated by the United Nations with our consent, at least

will be well advised to examine the questions and the scepticism that surround the last two parliamentary elections. These are not merely BNP propaganda or the work of what she frequently terms “conspirators trying to discredit her government.”

Whatever the faults of the past two elections were, Sheikh Hasina was able to weather the criticisms and

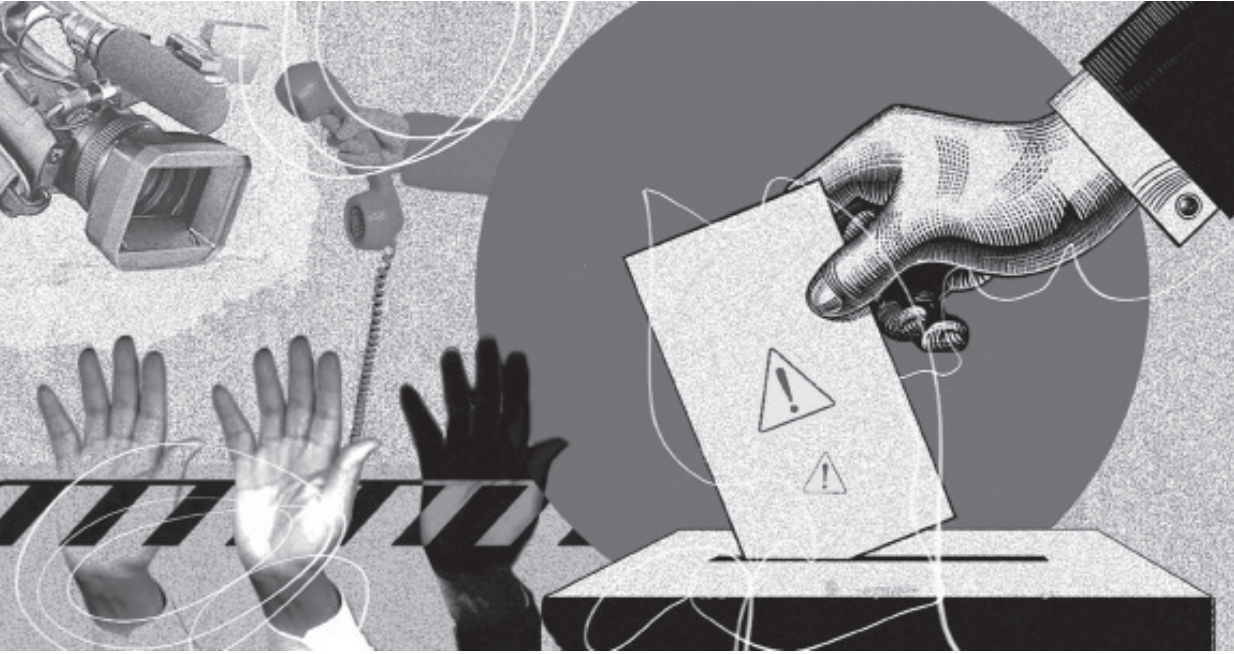
all – politicians, business leaders, senior and mid-level bureaucrats, law enforcement bodies, intelligence community, and other wielders of power including members of my own profession.

This formidable group forms the core of the nexus who are fundamentally opposed to a genuinely free and fair election in Bangladesh, and will do everything possible to subvert all attempts to go in that direction. They serve as an obstacle to any flexibility that the PM may be willing to exercise. (It is rumoured that in the last election, the PM was willing to share some number of seats with the opposition, but the plan was sabotaged at the operational level).

Returning to Sheikh Hasina’s assertion that “we will do whatever is necessary for the welfare of the people,” the question remains: what will serve “the welfare of the people” best – a controversial election or a free and fair one? The answer is embedded in the question itself – anything that is free and fair is infinitely better than that which is not. And that should be our option of choice – not to please this or that power, but to work “for the welfare of our people,” as the PM said.

Postscript

We are deeply disturbed by the happenings of the past two days. If elections to the Supreme Court Bar Association cannot be held peacefully on the sacred premises of our highest court, participated by those who practise law, then what can we expect in the national polls, where the stakes are so much higher and voters are both neutral and party supporters? These lawyers, practising in our highest court, did not confine their differences to be resolved through dialogue, but transformed themselves into bamboo-wielding violent activists, injuring journalists engaged in their professional work.



COLLAGE: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

world is our acceptance of the graduation process from being a Least Developed Country (LDC) to becoming a Developing Country. Who termed us an LDC? Shouldn’t our nationalistic pride have made us reject it, saying, “Who are you to stigmatise us as being ‘least developed’?” Why don’t we now declare ourselves a “developed” country without waiting for some international body’s consent? Not only did we comply, but requested two years’ extension so that we continue to enjoy concessions given to LDCs as we prepare to graduate. This is not surrendering to outside pressure, but

the ones professing democracy. Compliance with these practices gives global recognition to national elections that ultimately translate into respect and acceptance of national governments on the international stage. The most potent indicator of it is FDI, and for us the message should be unambiguous. In spite of us being termed a “super star of development” – by *The Economist* magazine – we have a very low FDI, notwithstanding road shows, visits, and conferences.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, regardless of her unmatched track record in the area of development,

carry on in power without difficulty. That has emboldened her as to her ability to hold elections, however flawed, and retain power. But far more damagingly – a point we want to stress – it has encouraged her fair-weather supporters, who are corrupt to the hilt, to operate in double shifts believing that they will remain above accountability as she will find some way through another election and retain power.

It is these elements who are far more opposed to a free and fair election than others, as their lives depend on a “managed” election. This group includes – many but not

IRAN-SAUDI DÉTENTE

Has a major shifting of the sands begun?



THE OVERTON WINDOW

Eresh Omar Jamal
is assistant editor at The Daily Star.
His Twitter handle is @EreshOmarJamal

ERESH OMAR JAMAL

On March 10, Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced a landmark deal – brokered by China in Beijing – to restore ties and reopen embassies seven years after severing relations with each other. In its most optimistic reading, the deal can be seen as a historic agreement, reflecting major changes happening in the region and in the world at large.

Sources familiar with the negotiations revealed to *The Cradle* that regional and domestic security and stability were the primary reasons for this deal, particularly for Saudi Arabia. And that was quite easy to spot, as the deal was struck between the Supreme National Security Council of Iran and Saudi Arabia, with the intelligence services from both countries in attendance. As such, confidential clauses were inserted in the agreement to assure that their security requirements would be met, including an understanding between the two countries that they would not engage in any activity that destabilised either of them at security, military, or media levels.

Saudi Arabia pledged not to fund media outlets that seek to destabilise Iran, such as Iran International. The Saudis also pledged not to fund organisations designated as terrorists by Iran, such as the People’s Mojahedin Organization (MEK), Kurdish groups based in Iraq, or militants operating out of Pakistan. Iran pledged to ensure that its allied organisations would not violate Saudi territory from inside Iraq. There were discussions during negotiations about the targeting of Saudi Arabia’s

Aramco facilities in 2019, and Iran guaranteed that there would be no similar strikes from Iraqi territory.

Hostility between the two sectarian rivals – predominantly Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia – has dominated Middle Eastern politics in recent years, spreading into Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen.

So, the final confidential clause includes the two sides agreeing to exert all possible efforts to resolve

Given the increasingly multipolar world and rising China-US tensions, the Iran-Saudi agreement illustrates how the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries – especially Saudi Arabia, which earlier slashed oil production by two million barrels per day, despite a request by US President Joe Biden to increase output – are manoeuvring to balance multiple interests and partnerships. And there are legitimate geostrategic reasons for it.

conflicts in the region, particularly the one raging in Yemen – although no details were agreed upon. And this, perhaps, is the most important part of the agreement, as it has the potential to bring some peace and stability to a region plagued by conflict and chaos.

The two countries that will clearly be unhappiest with the Saudi-Iran détente are the United States and Israel. According to *The Guardian*, the agreement has “potentially wide implications for the Iran nuclear deal” and “shows the new determination of Saudi Arabia to conduct a foreign

policy independent of the west.” To add to such concerns, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud recently said that he believed the Iran nuclear talks in their current form were moribund, and that it would be better to change the format so that other currently excluded regional powers were included in them. Additionally, the deal might also throw a wrench in the US-Israel plans to expand the so-called Abraham Accords introduced by former US President Donald Trump to include Saudi Arabia.

China’s role as the deal’s mediator is another major red flag for the US, particularly because, according to inside sources, Chinese President Xi Jinping did not merely aid an agreement that was already going on between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Chinese leader apparently

implemented properly? Is it because of its massive economic and energy interests in the oil-rich Middle East? Is it because China finally sees itself ready to exert its influence in a region predominantly considered as the United States’ sphere of influence, particularly with the US authority dwindling after Russia took a stand against it in Syria, where Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, backed by Iran and Russia, is now clearly winning? Or is it a combination of all of the above, and then some?

Given the increasingly multipolar world and rising China-US tensions, the Iran-Saudi agreement illustrates how the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries – especially Saudi Arabia, which earlier slashed oil production by two million barrels per day, despite a request by US President Joe Biden to increase output – are

manoeuvring to balance multiple interests and partnerships. And there are legitimate geostrategic reasons for it.

After the 1973 war between Egypt and Israel, the then Egyptian President Muhammad Anwar Sadat unceremoniously dumped his Soviet military and political backers and started looking towards US President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to get the occupied Sinai back from Israel and to get Egypt out of the cycle of disastrous Arab-Israeli wars. While explaining why he was flying to Washington all of a sudden instead of heading towards Moscow, Sadat said the US “has 99 percent of the cards.” What he meant was that it was the US alone which could conclude a peace between Cairo and Tel Aviv, as the Soviets did not have the same trust

from the Israelis as the Americans did.

Fifty years later, it seems to be the Chinese who now hold most of the cards when it comes to relations across the Gulf region.

The extremely hard line taken by the US against Iran, with a de facto global financial and trade embargo against its oil exports, has meant that the US basically has no influence over Iran. Its unconditional support for Israel, invasion of Iraq, and support for armed groups against the Syrian government means that it has also alienated them.

With Saudi Arabia now pursuing a more independent foreign policy, this agreement with Iran, mediated by China, might signal a sea change in the global political order, originating, ironically, from the deserts of the Middle East.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

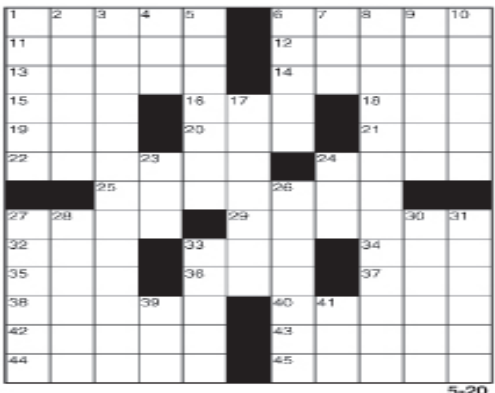
- 1 Pool floats
- 6 To this time
- 11 Knucklehead
- 12 Writer Walker
- 13 White of TV
- 14 Polite chaps
- 15 Easter find
- 16 Sauna site
- 18 “Scram!”
- 19 Even score
- 20 Holds
- 21 Cain’s mother
- 22 Icy dessert
- 24 Raised
- 25 Old layout work
- 27 Ice chunk
- 29 Unbroken
- 32 Quarterback Manning
- 33 __ Plaines
- 34 Lyricist

- Gershwin
- 35 Writer Beattie
- 36 Ensign’s org.
- 37 Habit inhabitant
- 38 New Testament book
- 40 Sean of “Rudy”
- 42 Bumbling
- 43 Oscar winner
- Witherspoon
- 44 Right now
- 45 Over

DOWN

- 1 Metal fasteners
- 2 Slow tempo
- 3 Like a booked suspect
- 4 Cargo unit
- 5 Hides away
- 6 Long tales

- 7 Flamenco call
- 8 Made some simple art
- 9 On the go
- 10 Took a breather
- 17 Burger joint supply
- 23 Do a checkout job
- 24 Except
- 26 Catch
- 27 “Scram!”
- 28 Climate-affecting current
- 30 Liner trip
- 31 Like many lifeguards
- 33 Not recently cleaned
- 39 __ tree
- 41 Capitol Bldg. worker



MARCH 10 ANSWERS

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Towards a gender-responsive criminal justice system

Law as an instrument of social change will have to be altered occasionally to deal with the changing social evils.

MEHER NIGAR

Gender-based violence against women creates a serious obstacle to achieving sustainable development. As stated in the UN Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (2006): "violence prevents women from contributing to, and benefiting from, development by restricting their choices and limiting their ability to act, which ultimately affects the overall developmental activities of a State. So, all UN Member States, including Bangladesh, is under a clear obligation to prevent violence against women and girls so that they can participate with their full potential in economic, social, and political spheres.

The government of Bangladesh has undertaken a number of initiatives legal and institutional, to ensure a violence-free life for women. However, these initiatives have not been translated into concrete improvements in the lives of most women who remain marginalised, discriminated against, and at a high-risk of being subjected to violence.

The absence of effective legal protection, lack of political will, absence of awareness, absence of gender-sensitive attitude among duty bearers, and many other socio-legal factors are considered to be the responsible factors behind this heinous occurrence. But the existing legal set-up and its ineffective role remains the major concern in the matter of dealing with violence against women. There is a pressing demand to review the existing legislation not only to ensure equal access to justice for victims of violence but also to allow a woman to live her life without violence. The starting point in this regard should be

revisiting the existing legislation to make sure that all acts of gender-based violence are effectively dealt with by law.

Stereotypical assumptions about gender roles, gender identities, and gender relations contribute to the continuance of gendered violence against women. Cultural stereotypes about the role of women and men that men are the ultimate decision makers, and they are superior to women in terms of intellect, strength, quality, etc. permit discrimination whether it is in the domestic sphere or in the public sector. In addition, these stereotypes find their ways in legislation while addressing certain offences, sometimes by sidestepping the offence or sometimes by maintaining ambiguity in defining the scope of the offence. Non-criminalising marital rape can be an example in this regard.

Unfortunately, even when conscious efforts are made to liberate legislation of these gender biased stereotypes, some other balanced provisions often compromise these efforts. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 prohibits child marriage (under 18 years for a female child and under 21 years for a male child). However, the Act introduces a special provision, exceptionally allowing child or underage marriages, where a court rules that such marriage is in the 'best interest of the child.' That means the prevalent cultural stereotypes regarding the status of women are so dominant that laws on gender-based violence are yet to achieve a gender-sensitive approach towards women.

The gender-insensitive approach is evident in many prevalent provisions in present gender-based violence laws in Bangladesh, such as, there is no provision for providing

training for officers, who are responsible for handling the victims on their way to justice, though a gender-sensitive justice system highly demands so. Consequently, in every stage of access to justice, ranging from reporting the violent incident to the police station to undergoing an intimate medical examination in a crowded hospital, mostly by male doctors, they (victim) may face discrimination, and harassment causing "secondary victimisation". These stereotypes help perpetuate violence against women, and hence immediate action is needed to address them through appropriate legislation.

Law as an instrument of social change will have to be altered occasionally to deal with the changing social evils. At the same time, the initiative must be coupled with the incorporation of gender-responsive provisions for better application of laws. A necessary prerequisite for the effective application of laws is that justice agents are gender sensitive and knowledgeable of human rights standards. In this regard, education, training, and awareness raising programmes are crucial.

It is recognised by the policymakers around the world that implementing fundamental, transformative reform is possible if law reforms actively promote equal rights for all. Hence, while designing and implementing laws, the voices, perspectives, and priorities of women and girls should be considered in ways that would ensure that the rights of women and girls are meaningfully protected, promoted, and implemented.

The Writer is an Assistant Professor at Department of Law, Premier University, Chittagong.

RIGHTS WATCH

Human rights concern over the statelessness of Shamima Begum

TASMIM JAHAN NEEHA

With the quashing of the citizenship of the former ISIS bride, Shamima Begum; the legal dilemma regarding statelessness has resurged. Ms. Begum, one of three east London schoolgirls who travelled to Syria in 2015 to support the terrorist organisation, ISIS; was born in the UK to parents of Bangladeshi heritage.

Ms. Begum's appeal was quashed on February 23, 2022, by the UK Supreme Court. The appeal was against the then Home Secretary's removal of her British citizenship on February 19, 2019. So, the verdict has confirmed her being stateless which goes against the standard of human rights.

Under the British Nationality Act of 1981, one can be stripped of their citizenship for "seriously prejudicial act" that goes against the public interest.

Now, the question is whether the verdict of the UK court violates Ms. Begum's human rights. To answer that, two pivotal points are to be determined:

- Whether Ms. Begum is to be punished for her affiliations with the ISIS though she herself has not committed any offence according to official records, and
- If Ms. Begum is to be punished, whether it requires the striking of her citizenship.

The United Nations has two major conventions on statelessness: the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. The 1961 Convention is the leading instrument in setting the rules for the non-withdrawal of citizenship to avoid statelessness. Whereas the 1954 Convention is significant as it has defined a "stateless person" as someone "who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law." It aims at ensuring certain rights of a stateless person. Again article



1(2) has provided certain conditions under which a person would not be considered a stateless person; one of such conditions is that the person has committed a war crime, crime against peace or crime against humanity. The UK Court has not decided on Ms. Begum's committing any of the offences. She has served as a sex slave in the ISIS and regardless of it being a terrorist organisation, she has not been found of any criminal offence since she moved to Syria.

According to section 40(2) the British Nationality Act, 1981, 'The Secretary of State may by order deprive a person of a citizenship status if the Secretary of State is satisfied that deprivation is conducive to the public good.' The Act also mentions that any act being prejudicial to the UK's interest will lead to deprivation of citizenship.

The Court had failed to investigate the matter from the perspective of a teenager who may possibly have been the victim of trafficking and radical brainwashing. Ms. Begum's lawyers argued on the point that if her age during which Ms. Begum went to 'serve' the ISIS was taken into consideration, the verdict could have been different. She was just fifteen at the time, legally a minor. Even if her acts are considered juvenile, that does not validate her being struck out of her citizenship as she can be held legally liable for those actions. Apart from being an ISIS bride, official records do not show her committing any offence during her stay in home and abroad.

European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) also imposes obligations concerning nationality. Certain case laws have also affirmed the protection granted under article 8 of the ECHR that nationality is part of one's social identity (*Karrashev v Finland*, 1999).

According to article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, every person has a right to nationality. Ms. Begum had only the UK citizenship and because of her being stripped of it, she is currently stateless. So, the verdict has violated the provisions of the UDHR too.

So, the verdict of the UK Supreme Court remains another stern and unjust approach to the so called 'War on Terror', violating human rights.

The Writer is a Student of Law, University of Dhaka.

LAW WATCH

Can a company have both a 'Managing Director' and a 'Chief Executive Officer'?

ASIF HASAN

It is customary for companies to have either a Managing Director (MD) or a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). But can a company have both MD and CEO posts hold by two separate individuals?

At the outset, the Companies Act, 1994 does not define, use or discuss the term "Chief Executive Officer". In practice, the terms "managing director" and "chief executive officer" are used interchangeably. Hence, the question arises as to whether the eligibility and functions of an MD and a CEO are the same. The consequential question that arises is whether in presence of an MD, a CEO can be appointed or vice versa. To address these questions, eligibility and functions of both these positions are to be examined. In this regard, as per section 2(m) of the Companies Act, 1994, a "managing director" is a director with powers of management entrusted to him by virtue of an agreement with the company, or of a resolution passed by the shareholders at their general meeting or by the board of directors. Hence, an MD occupies the dual capacity of being a director as well as an employee of the company. In contrast, a CEO is essentially a C-level executive, a member of senior leadership at the top of a company's corporate hierarchy. A CEO does not need to be a director of the board, he acts as a top employee of the company. So, the eligibility criteria of an MD and a CEO is distinct.



With regards to the functions, typically, a CEO has the responsibility to facilitate business and should also have a strategic vision to align the company, both internally and externally. He plays the role to guide the employees and the executive officers of a company, whereas an MD is the member of the Board with the power of managing hence described as a managing director. Despite the possibility of having some overlapping, the functions of a CEO and an MD are not necessarily the same or identical. As such, from a general point of view, there is no legal bar in appointing a CEO while having an MD so long as the roles and responsibilities of each person are defined. Having said that, if the company is a public limited company, the Corporate Governance

Code issued by the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange demands consideration. Section 4(a) of the Corporate Governance Code states, "The positions of the Chairperson of the Board and the Managing Director (MD) and/or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company shall be filled by different individuals." Section 4(d) states, "The Board shall clearly define respective roles and responsibilities of the Chairperson and the Managing Director and/or Chief Executive Officer". By using the expression "and/or" in between the terms "Managing Director" and "Chief Executive Officer", the Code essentially indicates that a public company may have both an MD and a CEO; and that if the positions are taken by different individuals, their roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined.

In addition to the above, the articles of association of the company requires to be examined to identify, if there is any direct or implied restriction to appoint a CEO in presence of an MD.

To reiterate, subject to the provisions in the articles of association of a company, different individuals for both the positions of CEO and MD can be appointed. However, it is of importance that the roles of these individuals are clearly defined to avoid any potential major overlapping.

The Writer is an Advocate and one of the Associates at Tanjib Alam and Associates.

Abahani, Gazi notch big wins

SPORTS REPORTER

Anamul Haque Bijoy continued from where he had left off in the Dhaka Premier League last season, hitting a ton in his very first game this season for his new side Abahani Limited during their resounding 124-run win over Brothers Union at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bijoy and out of favour national team T20I opener Mohammad Naim put on 157 for the opening stand to set up a big score of 372 for six.

Naim missed out on a ton, departing in the 26th over after a 74-ball 85 but Bijoy carried on and hit a 118-ball 123, laced with six fours and as many maximums. Bijoy also starred in a 101-run stand with Afif Hossain before Mohor Sheikh bagged his scalp in the 40th over.

Ahif's 47-ball 65 and Mosaddek's 27-ball 46 helped Abahani to a big total before bowlers contained Brothers to 258 for six despite a 116-ball 102 from skipper Mizanur Rahman and Myshukur Rahaman's 73.

Gazi Group also notched a high score as they romped to a 128-run victory against Mohammedan Sporting Club at Fatullah's Khan



Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium. After a fast start, Ravi Teja's 79-ball 66 along with fifties from Akbar Ali and Meherob Hasan propelled Gazi to 349 for 7. Khaled Ahmed bagged three for 75 for Mohammedan.

In reply, Soumya Sarkar, another who has fallen out of national team contention like Bijoy and Naim, was still finding form hard to come by. While Rony Talukdar, who got into the national team T20I setup in the England series, continued his form with a smashing 61-ball 80, hitting 12 fours and a six in chase of the big total, Soumya departed for 16. The left-hander's disappointment was apparent as he left his bat on the ground and sat in despair after a particularly low delivery from spinner Anamul Haque disturbed his woodwork.

While all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was unavailable for Mohammedan, Mahmudullah Riyad, rested from England ODIs, hit 57-ball 58 but did not have much impact in chasing the big target as Mohammedan were bundled out for 221.

In the other game of the day, fifties from Sangeeth Malundu and Aminul Islam, and Farhad Reza's 36 helped Shinepukur Cricket Club chase down Rupganj Tigers' 216 for six in a four-wicket win at the BKSP ground three.



In-form batters Najmul Hossain Shanto and Liton Das make their way out of the Osmani International Airport as Bangladesh team reach Sylhet on Thursday ahead of a full series against Ireland. A high-flying Bangladesh, brimming with confidence following a T20I series sweep over world champions England, will hope to carry their form into the ODI format when they begin the three-match ODI series tomorrow.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

ODI side lacked T20 unit's 'dynamics'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh had a lot of ambition going into the recently-concluded ODI series against England. Given their form at home and having secured a series win against India in their prior home series, there was a serious chance to thwart the world champions. But, as the ODI series showed, the game has been evolving and the Tigers were left with too many gaps to plug even in their strongest format.

On the other hand, T20Is have always been a thorn in Bangladesh's side and that a young crop would bring such vitality to record a 3-0 series sweep against the current T20I world champions was not exactly expected. Reporter Simon Burton of The Guardian was in Bangladesh to cover both the white-ball series and he opined that the T20I side had a dynamic that was missing in the ODI set-up.

"The T20 side appeared to have a bit more in terms of team dynamics but I guess there are lots of variables that are hard to quantify. Liton Das, for example, was abysmal in the ODI series and got out for two ducks. But in the third T20I, he played quite a magnificent innings. I think England have a better side in ODIs, stronger batting, so there's been a less impressive opponent in the T20 series," Simon told The Daily Star during the third T20I at Mirpur.

In the first ODI, the Tigers put up a fight and pushed England but a Dawid Malan ton denied them before Jason Roy left his mark on the second ODI. The batting approach from the hosts in the

second ODI lacked conviction as no one, bar Shakib Al Hasan, showed intent after a top-order collapse.

When it came to the T20Is, however, there was significant improvement in the batting approach compared to past T20 performances and the effort in fielding was a cut above the ODI unit. The squad also rallied around Shakib, who kept



England guessing throughout the T20Is.

Was the ODI side more traditional? "That's certainly what we are seeing," Simon said. "There is less energy. Lots of potential reasons for that."

The likes of Mahmudullah Riyad and Mushfiqur Rahim have been mainstays of the middle-order in the ODI team, but with them already out of the T20 set-up, new batters are showing the way. Were older

names responsible for fragile dynamics?

"That's the key question isn't it? Younger batters coming into the T20 side played well and batting in all the matches has been excellent. There have been very few disappointing performances and Shanto has been the one throughout both series who looked really strong. Whether you lay the blame on the older players is difficult to say. But clearly there is talent coming through," Simon opined.

For Simon, the conditions were not conducive to going for more runs in ODIs, which ends up as an issue away from home on better batting surfaces.

"I think that's maybe the issue with playing in these conditions when there are often low-scoring matches and you defend low scores. It doesn't encourage a team to be as aggressive as they need to be to become a force on the global stage. Obviously, you want to win games against big names on the international stage. But what you end up with is a kind of team with two faces – different as a prospect to face in home conditions than when away," he said.

Simon also watched both captains at work and when asked if Shakib was making a statement with his captaincy in terms of being more aggressive, he replied: "I think that's probably a fair comment. It's hard to judge over a short period and the England ODI side was stronger."

The England series has now made way for the Ireland series, slated to begin from March 18. With new faces like Rony Talukdar, Towhid Hridoy and the return of Yasir Ali to the ODI set-up, a change in dynamics is expected going forward.

Bangladesh get one foot in semis

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts Bangladesh recorded a third successive win in the Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi tournament with a 40-24 win against Nepal in a Group A encounter at the Shaheed Noor Hossain Volleyball Stadium in Paltan yesterday.

A third win takes the defending champions to the cusp of the semifinal. They currently have six points from three games, equal with Iraq. A win in either of their next two matches – against England and Iraq – would seal a last-four spot for Bangladesh.

The hosts toyed with Poland and Argentina in their first two matches, notching 50 and 72 points respectively, but faced a challenge from the Himalayan nation.

The hosts appeared cheerful to have kept their winning streak intact in the 12-team tournament on a day that also saw two-time runners-up Kenya taste their first victory after defeat in their first two matches.



Re-elected Infantino 'loves' his critics

AFP, Kigali

Gianni Infantino has been re-elected as president of FIFA until 2027 after standing unopposed at the congress of world football's governing body on Thursday.

The 52-year-old Swiss lawyer, who succeeded the disgraced Sepp Blatter in 2016, was waved in for a third term by acclamation, just as he was four years ago, by delegates from the 211 member federations.

"To all those who love me, and I know there are so many, and also those who hate me, I know there are a few: I love you all," Infantino told delegates in the Rwandan capital, where the voting system did not register the number of dissident voices.

While FIFA statutes currently limit a president to a maximum three four-year terms, Infantino has already prepared the ground to stay until 2031, declaring in December that his first three years at the helm did not count as a full term.

His re-election followed a long speech in which he triumphantly listed his achievements since taking office, alternating smoothly between English, French, Spanish and German.

"There is a lot to be looking forward to," Infantino said as he turned thoughts to the next four years and declared the 2026 World Cup, the first edition to be enlarged to 48 teams, will be "the most inclusive World Cup ever".

FIFA announced on Tuesday that the tournament in North America will feature 104 matches, a huge increase from the 64 at the most recent World Cup, as it will start with 12 groups of four teams.

The upcoming Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand later this year will be the first to feature 32 teams, up from 24 at the last edition in 2019.

It will also see overall prize money for participating teams increased to \$150 million, up sharply from \$50 million in 2019 and a huge rise on the \$15 million contributions in 2015.

Infantino has also announced projected income of \$1.1 billion in the four years to 2026, compared to \$7.5 billion in the last four-year cycle ending in 2022.

'Napoli will keep on dreaming'

AFP, Naples

Victor Osimhen says Napoli are dreaming of Champions League glory after his brace shot the Serie A leaders to a 3-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt and into the quarterfinals for the first time in their history on Wednesday.

With Napoli confirming their maiden Champions League quarters, it marks the first time in 17 years that three Serie A sides – also AC Milan and Inter Milan – have made it to the last eight of the competition.

Nigeria striker Osimhen struck either side of half-time to ensure no slip-ups in Naples and help his team secure a straightforward, and deserved, 5-0 aggregate win.

Piotr Zielinski added Napoli's third from the penalty spot on a perfect night for southern Italy's biggest club, who Osimhen believes can go all the way.

"It's amazing to make history with this win," said Osimhen to Amazon Prime.

"We will keep on dreaming, we have the squad to do so (win the Champions League). I think we are on the right path. We have a great coach. We will see what the future holds for us, I think we have a good chance."

Luciano Spalletti's side are close to securing their first Serie A title in over three decades and an already remarkable season got even better with a place in Friday's draw for the last eight of Europe's top club competition.

They have been powered to an almost certain domestic triumph and a deep run in Europe by the red-hot Osimhen, who has now netted 23 times in all competitions for possibly the

continent's most exciting team.

However Spalletti was less bullish about Napoli's chances than Osimhen, replying with a curt "no" when asked if he was flattered by Pep Guardiola saying his side were the best in Europe.



Teams qualified for Champions League quarterfinals:

Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, Manchester City, Chelsea, Napoli, AC Milan, Inter Milan, Benfica

** The draw for Champions League quarterfinals will be held in Nyon, Switzerland today.

"It's a game that people play to put pressure on other teams, it's a game that everyone knows by now," said an irritated Spalletti.

Eintracht were without suspended France forward Randal Kolo Muani following his sending off in the first leg and the Bundesliga outfit did very little to trouble Napoli.

Oliver Glasner's side head out of the

competition on a night in which their fans were involved in serious disorder after travelling to Naples despite no tickets for away fans being put on sale.

Eintracht had decided to not take up their ticket allocation for the match after Italian authorities produced two separate bans in a matter of days, fearing a repeat of the trouble in Frankfurt before the first leg.

That didn't stop the German club's hardcore fans however, who clashed with local police on a tense evening in Naples.

Three German football fans and five locals were arrested.

Around the stadium the atmosphere was less fraught as Napoli got through without any trouble.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia almost scored his second wonder goal in less than a week in the 19th minute after a brilliant tackle from Zielinski sent him charging towards goal.

But he was forced wide just as he looked for a shooting chance and ended up being denied smartly by Kevin Trapp, who did well again two minutes before the break to denied the Georgian.

However Trapp could do nothing to stop Osimhen putting Napoli ahead moments later, the Nigeria international showing why he is one of the most highly-rated strikers in the world with a perfectly timed leap and header from Matteo Politano's hanging cross.

And Osimhen struck again seven minutes after the break with a simpler finish, this time tapping in Giovanni Di Lorenzo's low cross after more good play from Politano and Kvaratskhelia.



Even though it was end-to-end stuff at the Santiago Bernabeu on Thursday, with Real Madrid posing the most threat, the only goal came from Karim Benzema that saw Los Blancos advance to the Champions League quarterfinals by sealing a 1-0 victory in the round of 16 second leg to wrap up a resounding 6-2 win on aggregate against Liverpool.

PHOTO: AFP



CUSTODIAL TORTURE Police yet to file case despite court order

Directive came after 3 women
detainees submitted injury note

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Even after a Barishal court on March 12 ordered that a case be filed against Babuganj police for torturing three women in custody, police are yet to record one.

Judicial Magistrate Md Nurul Amin passed the order that said the case must be filed within 24 hours.

After being detained for "playing loud music", the three women, Akashi Begum, Rashida and Mala Begum were tortured in police custody by officials of Babuganj Police Station on March 3.

The victims submitted an injury note from Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, attesting to the fact that they have injury marks on their hands, head and several other places.

On March 3, Babuganj police received a public nuisance complaint from the residents of Dehergati village saying there was a picnic in the locality, where loud music was being played late into the evening.

The police intervened and tried to confiscate the sound system, leading the party-goers to retaliate.

In a case filed by police, they alleged that the picnic attendees attacked and obstructed them, and injured a sub-inspector and some others, SI Hannan, of the police station and investigation officer of the case, told this

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THE SHY ONE ... A Bengal Slow Loris lives up to its Bangla name – lojjaboti banor (shy monkey) – after being spotted at Sylhet's Patharia Hill Reserve Forest. These timid primates, native to the Indian subcontinent and the Indochina region, are not only nocturnal but they like to remain hidden away from sight unless it's absolutely necessary (to find food, mates etc). As a matter of fact, when spotted, they tend to hide their faces with their hands. Evident from their English name, they are slow moving and are considered to be quite lazy. While they are generally harmless, these adorable primates can defend themselves with a venomous bite when needed. Arboreal creatures, the Bengal Slow Loris can be found in some forests in the country. However, due to deforestation and hunting, their numbers have been declining. As a result, the IUCN's Red List has categorised them as endangered species.

PHOTO: TIMU HOSSAIN

AL leader held after taking away EVM panel from centre



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday detained a local Awami League leader in Chattogram's Boalkhali upazila over taking the ballot unit of an Electronic Voting Machine out of a polling centre during the by-polls to the upazila chairman post.

The detainee, Ratan Chowdhury, is the president of Jayshtapura union AL, said police.

According to sources, Ratan took the ballot unit out of the polling centre at Jayshtapura Ramani Mohan High School during polling around noon.

He took the machine to an electoral camp of the AL's

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MEDITERRANEAN SHIPWRECK Faridpur families sink deeper into despair

No news yet on 11 missing youths

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

At least 11 young men from Faridpur who were believed to be onboard the recently capsized boat in the Mediterranean Sea remained missing as of yesterday.

Meanwhile, with each passing day, their family members back home sank deeper into despair without any news about the youths.

Thirty people feared to have drowned after the boat capsized in bad weather on Sunday. A total of 17 others were rescued in the shipwreck incident and brought ashore by the Italian authorities on Monday, Italy's coast guard told Reuters.

The missing youths are Al Amin Matubbar, 20, Mahfuz Mollah, 22, Nazmul Mollah, 23, and Akramul Bapari, 27, of Krishnanagar village; Sawpan Fakir, 27, son of Ishak Fakir of Basgari village; Shamim Kazi, 21, son of Seken Kazi, Bipul Matubbar, 25, son of Sorowar Matubbar, and Biltu Sheikh, 25, son of Malek Sheikh of Sankarpasha village; Miran Sheikh, 22, son of Soleman Sheikh and Tuhin Sheikh, 20, son of Isdrish Sheikh of Shrigal village; and Shaown Takukdar, 22, son of Kashem Talukdar of Naryahati village.

The youths, from Dangi union in the district's Nagarkanda upazila, were headed to Italy from Libya.

All of them went abroad illegally through Murad Fakir, a member of a human trafficking gang, said officials of local administration.

Topu Raihan, a local journalist,

said, "A total of 12 youths from the Dangi union were on that boat. Of them, four were from my village Shankarpasha. One of them, Mehedy Hasan, was rescued. He sent a message to his family saying that the three others could not make it to the shore."

Soleman Sheikh, father of Miran Sheikh, said, "I want my son back. We are losing sleep as we're worried sick about Miran."

Kashem Talukdar, father of Shaown Takukdar, said, "Murad and his men lied to us. They said they would send my son on a ship but they sent them on a small boat."

Bulbul Sardar, former chairman of Dangi union parishad, told The Daily Star, "It has been confirmed so far that 11 youths of Dangi union are missing. Their family members are in extreme anxiety."

The youths went abroad illegally on a contract of Tk 8 lakh per person through Murad Fakir of Krishnanagar village, he said.

Kazi Abul Kalam, chairman of Dangi union parishad, said, "Murad is a human trafficker. He sent at least 200 youths abroad illegally and earned a lot of money."

According to villagers, Murad has been involved in human trafficking with the help of several others in the district.

Miraj Hossain, officer-in-charge of Nagarkanda Police Station, said, "No one has filed a complaint in this regard so far. If a case is filed, the matter will be investigated."

HAJJ PACKAGE Ministry asks Biman to reduce airfare Hajj registration time extended again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The religious affairs ministry yesterday asked Biman to reduce the airfare so that pilgrims can perform hajj smoothly.

In a circular last night, the ministry said they had negative reactions from different quarters, including pilgrims, hajj agencies, and the media, immediately after fixing of the hajj package.

The airfare was fixed at Tk 1.97 lakh for pilgrimage.

The ministry asked the national flag carrier to bring the fare down to a reasonable level. It, however, didn't say anything about the fare.

It also mentioned that hajj registration was yet to be completed due to high airfare.

"A writ petition has been filed with the High Court over the hajj package. The court opined for reducing the airfare," said the ministry said, adding, "The parliamentary standing committee also recommended reducing the airfare."

In another development, the government earlier extended the deadline for

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New spacesuit for Artemis moon landing revealed

AFP, Houston

Nasa and the private aerospace company Axiom Space unveiled a prototype on Wednesday of the next-generation spacesuit that astronauts will wear on the next walk on the Moon.



The suit revealed at an event at the Johnson Space Center in Houston features greater flexibility and thermal protection than those worn by the Apollo astronauts who first stepped foot on the lunar surface more than 50 years ago.

The pressurised garment has multiple protective layers, a backpack with life support systems, and lights and a high definition video camera mounted on top of the bubble-shaped helmet.

The US space agency's Artemis programme aims to return humans to the Moon in late 2025 for the first time since the historic Apollo missions ended in 1972, an initial step towards an eventual voyage to Mars.

Axiom Space was awarded a \$228.5 million contract to design the suit -- the Axiom Extravehicular Mobility Unit in space jargon -- for the mission known as Artemis III.

Axiom Space chief engineer Jim Stein appeared on stage at the Nasa facility wearing the suit, waving his arms, performing squats and dropping to one knee to display the range of motion it provides.

The spacesuit modeled by Stein featured a

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১৭ মার্চ
জাতির পিতা
বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান এর
শুভ
জন্মদিন
৩
জাতীয় শিশু দিবস ২০২৩

‘যতকাল হবে পদ্মা, মেঘনা,
গৌরী, যমুনা বহমান
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