



"We should be prepared for a prolonged war, even if an early end would be desirable."

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Russia's invasion of Ukraine



WR1 Sitakunda's curse of industrial accidents



P10 City face Bayern in CL quarters



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P6 Meta maps way to 'kill' online deception campaigns

Become smart citizens

PM tells children on Bangabandhu's birth anniversary

UNB, Tungipara

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged children to grow up to be smart citizens following the ideals of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib is no longer with us, but he left his ideals for us to follow," she said at a National Children's Day programme.

"Every child will have to engage in sports and physical exercises, stay neat and clean, obey teachers and guardians..." she said.

The PM was addressing a discussion and cultural programme at Tungipara in Gopalganj, marking the

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina interacts with children at a function organised yesterday at Bangabandhu's mausoleum in Gopalganj's Tungipara on the occasion of the 103rd birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the National Children's Day.

PHOTO: PID

DUBAI PROPERTIES OWNED BY 459 BANGLADESHIS

Govt agencies fail to launch investigation

Sit idle despite HC order

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Despite the High Court order on January 15 to probe the purchase of Dubai real estate by 459 Bangladeshi nationals, the investigating agencies are yet to take any action.

The property purchase in the Gulf state -- with presumably laundered money -- came to the fore after the Centre for Advanced Defence Studies (CADSD), a Washington DC based non-profit organisation, published a working paper in May last year.

A total of 459 Bangladeshis purchased 972 properties in Dubai worth \$315 million without disclosing information. Of the properties, 64 are located in Dubai Marina and 19 in Palm Jumeirah, both premium locations. There are 100 villas and less than five buildings whose owners were identified to be Bangladeshi nationals.

Four to five Bangladeshis own properties worth about \$44 million.

Researchers however did not disclose any individual's identity.

After the report was published in a Bengali daily, the HC on January 15 ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), National Board of Revenue (NBR) and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to initiate a probe on the matter and give a report within one month.

The agencies are yet to start the probe as no written order has arrived. However, there are instances when the investigation agencies launched probes based on media reports and without an HC order.

In 2020 and 2021, ACC went through 2,167 media reports as its primary source of information and picked some for investigations.

Similarly, the other agencies also conducted probes on graft allegations based on media reports, documents show.

But in this case, they remain uninterested. Humayun Kabir, senior superintendent of Police of CID, said they are yet to get any copy of the HC's order on 459 Bangladeshis' properties in Dubai.

"Once we get the order, we will begin our work," he said. An official of the BFIU echoed the same.

Khairul Islam, director general of the NBR's Central Intelligence Cell, said he took charge only a few days back and could not say anything immediately.

"I have seen the report in the media," said Jahurul Haque, ACC's commissioner, while referring the correspondent to the agency's secretary.

Contacted, Mahbub Hossain, ACC's secretary, said: "As per the decision of the commission, next measures will be taken."

"This is a weak reason and disappointing -- and more so if the foot dragging is explained on the ground of non-receipt of a written court order," said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh.

The agencies are being asked to do something that they should have done proactively, regardless of the court's intervention, he said.

The inaction raises several concerns. "Is it a matter of lack of relevant professional expertise? Or is it too much of a task compared to their collective organisational capacity? Is it a matter of lack of coordination between themselves? Or is it because of

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WAR CRIMES IN UKRAINE

ICC issues arrest warrant against Putin

AGENCIES

The International Criminal Court (ICC) yesterday announced it had issued an arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin over alleged war crimes in Ukraine, including "unlawful deportation" of Ukrainian children.

The Hague-based ICC said it had also issued a warrant against Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's presidential commissioner for children's rights, on similar charges.

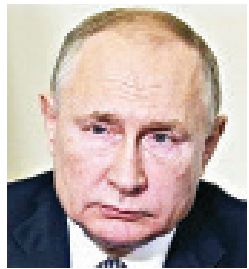
Russia is not a member of the ICC. It was unclear how the ICC planned to enforce the warrant. "Today, pre-Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Court issued warrants of arrest for two individuals in the context of the situation in Ukraine: Mr Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and Ms Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova," the ICC said in a statement.

Putin "is allegedly responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation of population (children) and that of unlawful transfer of population (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation."

The ICC said the crimes dated from February 24, 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine.

"There are reasonable grounds to believe that Mr Putin bears individual criminal responsibility for the aforementioned crimes," it said.

Putin was allegedly responsible both directly by



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Arav Khan's mysterious claims on Facebook

MUNTAKIM SAAD

For the last few days, the Facebook profile of Rabiul Islam AKA Arav Khan, which has now over 4.2 lakh followers, has been visited by many and scrutinised by some, which revealed some of the photos he posted were doctored.

Created on April 9, 2020, the profile was initially named Apon Arav before being changed to Arav Khan. His profile documents his journey from India to the UAE.

For example, a photo of him in front of London Bridge was found to be photoshopped, as was his another photo in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

He shared his photos taken in various locations around the world, including Sri Lanka, New Zealand, and Australia. But some of these have also been found to be doctored. A photo of him on a private plane and another in Switzerland are among them.

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'He hooked me with promises of stardom'

Says young man who landed in jail pretending to be Rabiul

SHARIFUL ISLAM and KHALID BIN NAZRUL

Abu Yusuf Limon's dream since childhood was to be in the national cricket team. That's why when a man promised him a spot in the team if he did him a favour, he readily agreed.

A young Limon was in awe of the man's extravagant lifestyle and thought putting a cricketer in the national team should not be impossible for a man who had that level of success.

The man is Rabiul Islam, now better known as Arav Khan, and the favour he asked for is: Limon go to a court pretending to be Rabiul and surrender.

Limon yesterday told The Daily Star that he was a gullible 22-year-old desperately chasing his dream after months of lockdown in 2020. And on October 21 that year, he went to a Dhaka court, not knowing that that would be the beginning of what he said was a prolonged nightmare.

Assuming the identity of Rabiul, he surrendered to the court as the accused in a murder case. He was immediately sent to jail and was not



Yusuf Limon



Rabiul Islam

released until nine months later.

Rabiul, an accused in a case filed over the killing of a police officer in July 2018, came under the spotlight on March 15 when he invited cricket superstar Shakib Al Hasan to inaugurate his jewellery store in Dubai.

Shakib went to the Gold Souk in Dubai to join the inauguration in a luxury car accompanied by Rabiul.

Limon yesterday said, "Arav [Rabiul] promised me that he would get me out of jail after one and a half months. Then he would do everything needed to make my dream come true... I knew nothing about how the legal system worked."

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SCBA POLLS

Days ahead to be turbulent

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The one-sided election of the Supreme Court Bar Association is likely to keep fueling the tension between the pro-Awami League and pro-BNP lawyers.

The pro-BNP lawyers, who did not cast votes, have already declared protest programmes and would continue their movement until their demand for a "fair SCBA election" is met.

At the same time, the pro-AL lawyers are getting ready to "politically and democratically resist any unrest or destabilising activities by pro-BNP lawyers on the Supreme Court premises".

The SCBA, the prime bar association of the country, which has been playing democratic and political roles since the anti-Ershad movement, witnessed the one-sided election for the first time amid police assault on journalists, lawyers, scuffles, violence and chaos on March 15 and 16.

Two separate criminal cases have already been filed against a number of pro-BNP lawyers following the incidents and one lawyer has been arrested.

In the election, the pro-Awami League lawyers' panel Bangabandhu Awami Ainjibi Parishad won all the 14 executive posts of the SCBA.

Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Ainjibi Forum (BJAF), the pro-BNP lawyers' body, will hold meetings at the district bar association premises across the country tomorrow in protest against police's entrance into SCBA premises, torturing lawyers and journalists, forcing candidates and agents of pro-BNP lawyers' panel to go out from the polling centres and filing "false cases" against lawyers.

Candidates of the pro-BNP lawyers' panel will hold a press conference at the SCBA premises at noon tomorrow.

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This photo shows the receiving terminal of the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline in Dinajpur's Parbatipur upazila. The project will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi today.

PHOTO: STAR

Hasina, Modi to open Indo-Bangla oil pipeline today

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi is set to formally inaugurate the newly built Indo-Bangla Friendship Pipeline today through videoconferencing.

The two neighbours have built the 131.57 km cross-border pipeline through which Bangladesh will import petroleum, especially diesel from India, reports UNB.

The Bangladeshi part of the pipeline is 126.57 km long. The remaining 5 km part of the pipeline is in India.

"All necessary works of the pipeline project have been completed and it's now ready for inauguration," said ABM Azad, chairman of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

The BPC, the state-

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Imran Khan's arrest warrant suspended

AFP, Lahore

An arrest warrant for former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan was suspended yesterday, his lawyers said, clearing the way for him to end a holdout at his residence that led to bloody clashes between supporters and police earlier this week.

Khan was ousted 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 warrant relates to his non-appearance in an Islamabad court to answer a case brought by the Election Commission of Pakistan accusing him of not declaring gifts received during his time as premier, or the profit made from selling them.

Attempts by police this week to arrest the 70-year-old former international cricket star in the eastern city of Lahore led to pitched battles with supporters outside his home.

After a day of legal wrangling in courts in both cities yesterday, the arrest warrant was suspended.

"The Islamabad High Court has suspended non-bailable arrest warrant," said Faisal Chaudhry, a senior member of Khan's legal team. "Now Imran will appear in the court tomorrow," he told AFP.

After the warrant was lifted, Khan left his home for the first time in days to appear in court in Lahore in a case related to this week's clashes.

Dozens of supporters mobbed his convoy as it slowly exited the compound, cheering and waving flags of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

Overnight Tuesday police and paramilitary rangers clashed repeatedly with PTI supporters in the plush Zaman Park neighbourhood, firing fusillades of teargas and dodging rocks thrown by angry crowds.

Since then, PTI supporters have kept a vigil outside his home, wary of police returning to arrest him.



FUN DAY OUT ... Orphans and street children beaming with joy as they got to roam around the capital on BRTC's open top double-decker buses, followed by their first-ever metro rail rides from Agargaon station to Uttara (north) station and back yesterday on the occasion of the 103rd birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the National Children's Day. The photo was taken from Agargaon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BATTLE FOR BAKHMUT

Ukraine holds out assaults

Kremlin confirms Xi's state visit next week

REUTERS, Near Bakhmut

Ukrainian forces continued to withstand Russian assaults yesterday on the ruined city of Bakhmut, as officials said China's President Xi Jinping will travel to Moscow next week to hold talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Xi's visit to Moscow is a diplomatic coup for Putin, whose country has been placed under unprecedented international sanctions since he sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Beijing and Moscow struck a "no limits" partnership shortly before the invasion and US and European leaders have said they are concerned Beijing may send arms to Russia.

China has denied any such plan, criticising Western weapon supplies to Ukraine, which will soon extend to fighter

jets after Poland and Slovakia this week approved deliveries. The Kremlin said the jets would simply be destroyed.

A Russian official said Xi and Putin would discuss the conflict in Ukraine as well as "military-technical cooperation". The Kremlin said earlier that "important" bilateral documents would be signed, without elaborating.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Xi's visit to Russia - his first in nearly four years - would strengthen economic partnerships and promote "peace", although he made no explicit mention of the Ukraine war.

An international agreement to allow the safe export of grain from several Ukrainian ports on the Black Sea expires today. Russia has agreed to extend the deal for 60 days while Ukraine, along with the

United Nations and Turkey which brokered the original deal, have called for a 120-day rollover.

Russia has not specifically said why it is insisting on the shorter period, although it has complained that its own food and fertilizer exports are being hindered by Western sanctions.

The United Nations Office in Geneva said yesterday that discussions were ongoing on the renewal of the deal, needed to prevent global food shortages because Ukraine is a big exporter. A shorter extension period would further restrict exports from Ukraine, which remain well below pre-invasion levels.

On the battleground, Reuters reporters roughly 1.5 km (1 mile) from the front lines could hear the constant boom of artillery and the crackle of small arms fire.

Govt agencies

FROM PAGE 1

the easily understandable reality that the people involved in such crimes of money laundering are powerful by any standard including financial, political and governmental connections - direct or indirect?"

The inaction despite the HC intervention given the credible exposure of illicit financial transfer and accumulation of wealth, which is a severely punishable offence by national and international laws, sends a message that the perpetrators of such crimes are eligible for impunity, he said.

If such institutions are influenced by an individual's identity and status it will only deepen and widen corruption in general and money laundering in particular, Iftekaruzzaman added.

In the last couple of years, the HC on several occasions expressed its discontent over the investigation agencies' inaction.

While hearing a writ petition on the issue on March 6 last year, an HC bench said: "It is unfortunate if it [the ACC] fails to stop money laundering. Please, comply with our directives to prevent money laundering. The people of Bangladesh are brilliant and hard-working. If corruption can be eradicated, the golden Bangla that Bangabandhu dreamt of can be established."

During the new year session of the parliament, two Jatiya Party lawmakers came down heavily on the government for its failure to stop money laundering.

JP MP Fakhru Imam said he "feels helpless when the head of a strong government like Sheikh Hasina does nothing to stop money laundering" even though billions of taka have already left the country.

Another JP MP Kazi Firoz Rashid complained that there is no exemplary punishment for irregularities in the financial sector.

"We have heard that someone left the country with Tk 158 crore. On the other hand, for a small loan, farmers were arrested. The government should think about this," he said.

The financial sector and real estate were the major beneficiaries of the laundered money, according to the C4ADS report.

Of the Bangladeshis who own properties in Dubai, 332 are men.

Of the Bangladeshis real estate owners in Dubai, 318 are aged between 35 years and 59 years, 42 are less than 34 years and 97 are more than 60 years.

'He hooked me with promises of stardom'

FROM PAGE 1

After three months of incarceration, Limon realised that Rabiul was not doing anything to get him out. He then managed to contact his parents, and they were the ones who were able to get him out of jail on bail after informing the court about his real identity.

The court then asked the Detective Branch of police to investigate the matter.

The detectives found that Limon was the son of Md Nuruzzaman and Halima Begum of Ainpur area in Kachua, Chandpur.

Police then accused Limon of fraud in a new case, which is still under trial. "My father earns very little from his job and he has already spent over Tk 5 lakh for my legal battle. He borrowed the money from a bank. I missed three court hearings because I had no money."

Limon now lives in a mess in the capital's Adabor and he makes rent from his earnings as a Pathao rider.

Arav Khan's mysterious claims on Facebook

FROM PAGE 1

On August 27 and 29 in 2020, he posted two photos claiming that he was in New Zealand and the UK, but it was later discovered that these were actually taken in Coco Beach in Panjim and Anjum Beach in Goa, India.

Rabiul went on Facebook live with singer Noble, who is also from Gopalganj, on May 25, 2021. He later claimed to have produced a music video with the singer.

In the profile, he claims to have graduated from King's College in London between 2015 and 2019. However, police said he could not even pass the SSC exams.

According to law enforcement officials, Rabiul, who also goes by aliases Shohag Molla, Apon and Ridoy, has another Facebook profile, named "Sheikh Hridi" that dates back to 2009.

The criminal record of Rabiul, accused of killing a police inspector in 2018, came under the spotlight after he invited cricketer Shakib Al Hasan to open his jewellery store in Dubai on Wednesday.

Soon after the murder, Rabiul fled to India and then managed to have an Indian passport. He is now living in Dubai.

RABIUL'S RISE

In a Facebook post on November 28, 2021, he said he got permanent residency in Dubai.

Rabiul uploaded photos and videos

Limon's mother Halima Begum said, "After he passed SSC in 2016, he enrolled for a diploma in Medical Assistant Training School in Cumilla where he studied for a few years. His father stopped providing for him after he left his studies and went to Dhaka to be a cricketer player."

In Dhaka, Limon got a chance to be in the 2nd division cricket league for Rayer Bazar Club. "But in 2020, I suffered a lot. I often struggled to buy food because I had no money."

"I followed Arav on Facebook and learnt more about him from Didar Pathan, who was a neighbour in Chandpur. One day, I messaged Arav about my struggles and my dream to be a cricketer. That was my undoing."

Limon denied taking money from Rabiul, which a police officer recently alleged.

BRINGING RABIUL BACK

Rabiul fled to India soon after the murder of the police officer. Police pressed charges against Rabiul and

nine others on April 11, 2019.

He obtained an Indian passport in 2020 and later travelled to Dubai, where he has a resident permit until the end of next year.

To bring him to book, the authorities will have to report India to ask the UAE to deport Rabiul, noted lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

If he is handed over to India, he could face charges of trespassing and forgery.

"He may then get six months. After he serves his time, India will deport him to Bangladesh," Khurshid added.

A police officer familiar with the process of bringing back suspects from abroad said it could be done through Interpol.

Bangladesh's focal point for Interpol, the National Central Bureau (NCB), will have to contact the New Delhi and Dubai NCBS, he said.

"The NCBS of the three countries will have to work together," said the officer, requesting not to be named.

page.

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

On Facebook live on Thursday, Rabiul thanked Shakib.

Tigers set

FROM PAGE 12

morning after being prescribed rest by an ophthalmologist. The CT scan report was good, according to BCB chief physician Debashish Chowdhury, which should be a relief to the Tigers.

Shakib Al Hasan also joined the side in Sylhet yesterday after a controversial visit to Dubai.

Bangladesh have won seven ODIs against Ireland and lost twice. They played one bilateral series at home, attaining a clean sweep in 2008, while an away series in 2010 was drawn one all.

Ireland were the only side to beat eventual world champions England in the T20 World Cup last year and Hathursingha stressed that Bangladesh would not be taking the visitors lightly.

"We respect Ireland just like England, but we don't fear any team. We are not going to treat Ireland any different than England," Hathursingha said as the Tigers, buoyed by their 3-0 clean sweep of England in T20s, look to translate that form into ODIs.

BCL leader found dead on railroad

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A union level Chhatra League leader was found dead on a railroad in Dinajpur's Phulbari yesterday.

His right leg was also found cut off, said police. Shifat Ahmed Shishir, 17, first-year student at Phulbari Shaheed Smriti Adarsha College, was the general secretary of ward 7 BCL at Kazihal union.

Victim's cousin Mezba Kamal said Shishir went out of home on Thursday morning for attending classes but did not return home.

Locals found his body on a railroad near Phulbari Railway Station yesterday morning, he added.

Police are yet to confirm the reason behind his death.

Railway Police recovered the body and sent it to M Abdur Rahim Medical College for autopsy, said AKM Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge of GRP in Dinajpur's Parbatipur.

Elderly man killed in clash over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

An elderly man was killed in a clash over land dispute in Thakurgaon's Haripur Thursday afternoon.

The dead is Hamidur Rahman, 62, of Malani Gedura village in the upazila, said police.

Yasin Ali and Mohammad Hashim had a long-standing dispute over a land. Hamidur was Yasin's brother-in-law, said Tajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Haripur Police Station.

Thursday, Yasin and Hashim locked into a clash. Hamidur received a serious blow in his head during the clash. He was later succumbed to his injuries, he added.

A case was filed in connection with the incident, he further said.

Rohingya boy stabbed to death by co-worker

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A 16-year-old Rohingya boy was stabbed to death allegedly by another Rohingya boy in Ukhiya of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The dead is Abdul Hafez, of Kutupalong Lombashia refugee camp, said Sheikh Mohammad Ali, officer-in-charge of Ukhiya Police Station.

Both the victim and the perpetrator used to work in a meat shop in Kutupalong Bazar beside Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway, the police official said.

A fight broke out between the two boys while working at the shop around 8:00am, he said, adding the 16-year-old co-worker, whose identity could not be confirmed yet, stabbed Abdul Hafez, leaving him critically injured.

Hafez was taken to nearby MSF Hospital where doctors declared him dead, the OC further said.

Become smart citizens

FROM PAGE 1

103rd birth anniversary of Father of Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the National Children's Day 2023.

The Women and Children Affairs Ministry arranged the programme under the management of Gopalganj district administration. This year, the theme of the day is "Smart Bangladesher Swapne Bangabandhur Janmadin, Shishuder Chokh Somridhir Swapne Rangin".

The PM thanked the Women and Children Affairs Ministry for picking this year's theme, adding that her government wants to transform the country into a smart Bangladesh by 2041.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Fazilatun Nessa Indira spoke on the occasion, while Women and Children Affairs Secretary Md Hasanuzzaman Kallol delivered the welcome speech at the event presided over by a child named Sniha Islam.

A documentary titled 'Bangabandhu and Children Rights' was screened.

The premier unveiled the cover of an illustrated book titled "Shishuder Sheikh Mujib," which was composed by Director General of Special Security Force (SSF) Major General Md Majibur Rahman.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday paid tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Tungipara.

The president and the prime minister paid their homage by placing wreaths at the mausoleum

of Bangabandhu at Tungipara at 10:42am.

President Hamid first laid a wreath at the Bangabandhu's mausoleum, followed by the prime minister.

After placing the wreaths, they stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of profound respect to the memory of the Father of the Nation.

A contingent drawn from Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force presented a guard of honour on the occasion.

Flanked by senior leaders of her party, Sheikh Hasina, also the Awami League President, placed another wreath at the mazar of Bangabandhu on behalf of the party.

Later, First Lady Rashida Khanam along with her son Rejwan Ahammed Taufiq, MP, as well as the premier along with her family members paid tributes to Bangabandhu by placing floral wreaths separately.

Hamid and Hasina offered Fateha and joined a munajat seeking eternal peace for the departed souls of Bangabandhu and other martyrs of the August 15 carnage.

Cabinet members, PM's advisers, parliament members and senior AL leaders were present.

The president also signed the visitor's book kept on the mausoleum premises.

On his arrival on the mausoleum premises, President Hamid was received by PM Hasina.

On this day in 1920, Bangabandhu, the architect of independent Bangladesh and the greatest Bangali of all times, was born at Tungipara in Gopalganj.

Hasina, Modi

FROM PAGE 1

run marketing agency of petroleum fuel, has been implementing the project under a government deal with India to annually import 250,000 tonnes to 400,000 tonnes of diesel from the neighbouring country through the pipeline.

Bangladesh needs to import 6.6 million tonnes to 7.7 million tonnes of petroleum to meet its annual demand.

Official documents show that Bangladesh will annually import 250,000 tonnes in the first three years, 300,000 tonnes annually in the 4th to 6th years, 350,000 tonnes annually in the 7th to 10th years and 400,000 tonnes annually from the 11th to 15th year.

Currently, Bangladesh imports 22,000 tonnes of diesel per month through railway wagons.



Abul Mansur Ahmad's 44th anniversary of death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 44th anniversary of Abul Mansur Ahmad, a renowned litterateur, journalist, and politician of the sub-continent. He died in 1979.

One of the greatest satirists of Bangla literature, he was also a pioneer of modern and progressive journalism. He worked for prominent newspapers such as Krishak, Nabajug, Sultan, and Mohammadi, and was editor of the Kolkata-based Daily Ittehad from 1946 to 1948.

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

The divider on this road that starts from the Khamarbari intersection and ends at Bijoy Sarani intersection is being expanded. The construction site was seen hosting a makeshift path for pedestrians to cross the road. Although there is a footbridge just some steps ahead of the divider, pedestrians cannot use it as it is currently under maintenance works as well. The photos were taken yesterday.



Two killed in separate road crashes in the capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people died in two separate road accidents in Dhaka's Kakrail and Jatrabari areas early yesterday.

One of the deceased was identified as Abdullah Limon, 26.

He was a battery and IPS trader, who hailed from Narayanganj.

The other deceased, aged around 35, could not be identified yet, said police.

Limon suffered critical injuries after a truck hit his motorcycle at Kakrail around 1:45am.

He was returning home after attending a wedding programme in Dhaka, his brother Mohammad Kazol said.

Limon was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, said sub-inspector Mujahidul Islam of Ramna Police Station.

Law enforcers seized the truck and detained its driver, said the police official.

Meanwhile in Matuail, a man died after an unidentified vehicle hit him around 3:30am.

Both the bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy, according to police.

Rainfall likely to increase in next 3 days

STAR REPORT

Rainfall or thunder showers may increase in the country in the next 72 hours, Bangladesh Meteorological Department said in a forecast yesterday.

The 24-hour forecast issued at 9:00am said that the trough of westerly low lies over West Bengal and adjoining area and the seasonal low lies over the South Bay.

The rain or thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rangpur, Barisal and Chattogram divisions, it added.

PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 18

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:00	12:45	4:30	6:14	7:45
JAMAAT 5:35	1:15	4:45	6:18	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

The sudden disappearance of e-tickets

Bus staffers unwilling to carry on with the service

MD ABBAS

Amid much hype and excitement, e-ticketing for all buses on the Mirpur route was launched to reduce conflicts between passengers and bus helpers over additional fares. However, just two months after its introduction, the service disappeared.

The initiative, which was appreciated by passengers, has been refused by bus helpers. They are refusing to use the POS (point of sales) machines provided by the bus owners association for e-tickets and collecting fares.

Moreover, a significant number of buses do not even have POS machines.

Upon boarding 15 buses in the Mirpur and Mohammadpur areas recently, this correspondent found that only 2 out of the 15 buses had POS machines for e-tickets, which were found in the helpers' pockets. In these two buses of Ayat and Shikar Paribahan, helpers were seen collecting fares manually instead of using the POS machines.

The remaining 13 buses did not have POS machines at all.

Md Arif Hossain, a private job holder and resident of Farmgate, shared his experience of boarding an Ayat Paribahan bus on the Chiriyakhana-Kamalapur route to



go to Mirpur 10.

"The supervisor took Tk 20. After a long altercation over an e-ticket, he brought out a machine from his pocket and gave me an e-ticket where the fare written was Tk 15," he said.

Hossain also mentioned that the helpers on the bus never willingly provided him with e-tickets and that he had to argue with them almost every time.

This correspondent boarded Malancha Paribahan on the Mohammadpur-Doyaganj, Ramjan Paribahan on the Mohammadpur-Demra staff quarter, and Midline Paribahan on the Mohammadpur-Khilaon routes. However, none of these

buses had POS machines to provide e-tickets.

A POS machine was found on a Paristhan Paribahan bus on the Bosila-Abdullahpur route, where the helper was seen collecting fares manually. Similar pictures were found of at least 15 buses in Shahbagh.

Mahbub Rahman Bhuiyan, a banker and resident of Bosila, got on Paristhan Paribahan from Mirpur 10 to go to Mohammadpur.

"Despite having a POS machine, the helper is collecting fares manually. He gave me an e-ticket only when I told him that I will not pay the fare without an e-ticket," he said.

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Bangladesh elected vice chair of CFM

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been unanimously elected as the vice chair of the Bureau of the 49th Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM).

Bangladesh's nominated candidate Sheepa Hafiza won the election of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) Commissioner from Asia Group together with Iran and Turkey during the CFM held in Nouakchott, Mauritania on March 16-17.

Taking part in the CFM, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen reiterated Bangladesh's continued engagements with the OIC.

This year, the CFM was themed "Moderation: Key to Security and Stability" where several political, economic, social, cultural and security issues have been discussed.

He expressed his deep concern over the lack of tolerance and surge of terrorism in various parts of the world together with the rise of islamophobia.

Momen particularly stressed taking proactive role by the member states and international actors to address the Rohingya issue and urged to remain involved to put continuous pressure on the Myanmar authorities to ensure safe and dignified return of the Rohingyas to their homeland.

Better monitoring need of the hour

Experts tell dialogue on preventing fire, explosions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lack of maintenance and monitoring, absence of punishment for responsible officials and employees, and failure to follow existing laws and regulations are the primary causes of increasing incidents of fire and explosions in Dhaka, said urban planning experts yesterday.

During a virtual programme organised by the Institute for Planning and Development (IPD), experts emphasised the need to prioritise people's lives from all walks of life and manage resources to fulfill their respective responsibilities to build a safe city by learning from past accidents.

The experts also blamed the absence of standard planning and development management for densely populated cities like Dhaka and Chattogram, making the cities less liveable and secure for its residents.

They called for the creation of a "Building Regulatory Authority" to ensure compliance with construction standards.

In his keynote presentation, Prof Adil Mohammad Khan, executive director of IPD, emphasised that the overall preparation to build a safe city is still weak.

To make buildings in Dhaka safe, Md Ashraful Islam, town planner of Rajuk, recommended building owners submit structural designs in addition to architectural designs.

Ashraf also said Rajuk is introducing "third Party Monitoring" to oversee the construction process and prevent irregularities.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Next national polls as per constitution Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the poisonous tree of communal forces must be uprooted for building the "Sonar Bangla" as dreamt by Bangabandhu.

He said this after paying rich tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi Road-32 in the morning, marking the late leader's 103rd birth anniversary and National Children's Day.

About the elections, Quader said Awami League wants the elections to be held as per the constitution and keeping the constitutional provisions intact.

Whenever BNP assumed power, it repeatedly defamed the constitution, he said, adding that Awami League will protect the dignity of the constitution and hold the next election accordingly.



AL destroyed electoral system Says Fakhrul, demands fresh SCBA polls

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday alleged that Awami League has put the last nail in the coffin of the electoral system of the country by holding a lopsided Supreme Court Bar Association election, using police and outsiders.

The party also demanded a fresh election to the SCBA cancelling the results of the "so-called" violence-marred polls for the sake of the sanctity of the country's apex court.

"Awami League has turned into such a bankrupt party politically that it has to use police and outsiders to announce its candidates as winners in the Supreme Court Bar Association elections. It's a matter of great shame," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Under the circumstances, Fakhrul said their party wants the chief justice to come forward and take necessary measures to protect the sanctity of the Supreme Court, the highest institution of the judiciary.

A day after the announcement of SCBA polls

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



A lifeline for low-income people



SAJJAD HOSSAIN

In the heart of the crowded Dhaka, is a very special kitchen market which has been serving low-income people for decades now.

According to the vendors, it all started when those living near the rail lines began collecting vegetables that fell off wagons or were thrown out for being "damaged". They took the scraps and sold them for less than half the price.

Soon, this bazar came to be known as "Fokinni Bazar".

Rickshaw-pullers, day-labourers, shopkeepers, and other people from low-income

groups in the area depend on the market located under Bijoy Sarani-Tejgaon Flyover, to put food on their tables.

The transient bazar is set up on both sides of the rail tracks, where people living in shanties nearby sell daily goods. The sold produce is not particularly in good condition but for many people this is the only affordable means of subsistence.

People don't shop here for the month. Sometimes, they don't even buy for the day, they visit the market thrice daily and just purchase enough to prepare the next meal.

Before the independence of Bangladesh, beggars in the



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

surrounding areas used to sell rice, lentils, onions, garlic, and vegetables collected from whole sellers at this market. Even then, the consumers of the market were low-income individuals.

Currently, the market consists of 30 shops which sell daily commodities and other necessities.

The customers are regulars and do not need to ask the price or bargain as they already know the current rate in the market.

Parvin Begum, a housekeeper, said, "I come here every day, and I know everyone who sells products here. They know me too. It's like a small family."

"We depend on it to survive," she added.

One of the shopkeepers, Shahidul Islam, buys four eggs for Tk 28 from Tejgaon wholesale market and sells them for Tk 30.

"I buy the eggs, which are slightly damaged or cracked during transportation, at low price and sell them with a minimal profit margin," he said.

He manages to sell around 200 eggs every day on average.

Shamima Begum is one of the vendors who has been selling items at "Fokinni Bazar" for almost five years.

From here, shoppers can purchase grocery items in lower

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



In memory of Bushra Hossain, 1975-2020



Chittagong Zoo welcomes a majestic pair of African lions and eight wildebeests from South Africa. The regal beasts are currently in quarantine, but soon they will grace the visitors with their presence. These photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN



Hindus living in fear after temples attacked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The Hindu community in Kurigram's Ulipur municipal area is living in fear as police could not arrest anyone involved in the vandalism of two temples over the last two days. They fear further attacks as the culprits are still on the loose.

On Wednesday night, the Khewarpar Battala Kali Mandir in Ulipur Municipal area was attacked and its idol vandalised.

The next morning, miscreants broke into the Joddarpara Sannyasitala Kali Mandir and took its idol away.

Police could not recover the missing idol.

Sudipta Dev Dhruvo, general secretary

of Sannyasitala Kali Mandir Committee, said just like every other day, he went to the temple on Thursday morning but saw the gate broken and the idol missing.

"We are panicking," he told this correspondent.

Soumendra Prasad Pandey Gaba, president of Ulipur Upazila Puja Udjapan Parishad, a group of criminals is carrying out these activities to create an untoward situation in the area.

He demanded the immediate arrest of the perpetrators.

Contacted, Sheikh Ashrafuzzaman, officers-in-charge (OC) of Ulipur Police Station, said they are trying to identify and arrest the culprits.

WDB digs canal, AL leaders sell

FROM PAGE 5

Akhtar replied, "I'm doing this for the people of my locality."

The other members of the group refused to comment on the issue.

Meanwhile, Mostafizur denied his involvement with the syndicate. He said some of the earth from the project site was indeed used elsewhere as it could not be accommodated on

the canal bank.

Contacted, Executive Engineer (Brahmanbaria) Manjur Rahman said, "A show

cause notice has been given to the contractor concerned over the matter. According to soil

management policy, there is no scope of selling canal earth. The earth can only be used for development of khas land."

"The earth must be dumped on the canal's bank. If excess, it can be sold only through auction," he added.

Contacted, Md Shahgir Alam, deputy commissioner of Brahmanbaria, said he has heard about the incident. "I have asked WDB executive engineer and UNO to take action in this regard."

Two students among The sudden disappearance

FROM PAGE 5

Police seized the bus and detained its driver, he added.

In Brahmanbaria, two people were killed as a tractor plunged into a roadside ditch in Kasba upazila.

The deceased were identified as Pavel Mia, 18, helper of the tractor's driver and Delwar Mia, 30, a pedestrian.

Mohammad Mohiuddin Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Kasba Police Station, said the

tractor was heading towards Tinkhpeer area. It fell into the ditch in Chandaisar area in the afternoon as the driver lost his control over the steering, leaving helper Pavel seriously injured. It also hit pedestrian Delwar, leaving him dead on the spot.

Pavel died on the way to Kasba Upazila Health Complex, said the OC. On information, police recovered the bodies and sent those to Brahmanbaria General Hospital morgue for autopsy, he added.

FROM PAGE 3

Asked about their reluctance to use POS machines, some helpers claimed that the machines often go out of order, while others said the paper rolls run out quickly.

Wishing anonymity, a helper of Midline Paribahan (which does not have a POS machine), stated that the machines were taken back by his company.

"It was difficult and time-consuming to operate the machines. Carrying it

constantly on our shoulders was painful as well," he said.

While talking with this correspondent, at least 10 passengers expressed their disappointment over the discontinuation of the service.

"When the service was launched, I thought it would give us relief," said Md Nurul Alam Shikdar, a resident of Mirpur 10.

Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association's secretary Enayet

Ullah has announced to launch the third phase of the e-ticketing service in 947 buses under 59 companies in Dhaka from March 1. This will bring the total number of buses under the service to 3,307.

The first phase of the e-ticketing service began on November 13, 2022, with 1,643 buses under 30 companies operating on the Mirpur route. The second phase was launched on January 10, covering 717 buses under 16 companies.

A lifeline for low-income people

FROM PAGE 3

quantities in comparison to regular grocery stores. She sells daily essentials in small polythene bags, which are available for Tk 10 to 30.

Another seller, Jahanara Begum, said the regulars depend on the market. It is critical for the customers to provide food for their families daily.

"The market's small shops sell items like cooking oil and lentils worth Tk 10, among other

items," she said.

Hena Begum, a housewife, recently visited this market to buy oil for Tk 10 and lentils for Tk 20. "It's the only place where I can buy food in such small quantities with the money I can spare," she said.

Hena said her husband, a rickshaw-puller in Tejgaon area, manages to earn Tk 200-Tk 300 by working for four-five hours in the morning. As the sole earning member of the family, he hands over the

earnings to Hena to buy groceries for lunch.

For Hena and her family, this market is a lifeline.

One of the market's regular customers, Tania Begum, said, "I prefer shopping from there because I can buy as little as I want. It's not possible in other stores."

"I'm a day-labourer, and I cannot afford to buy large quantities of food at once. This market is a godsend for me," another customer, Rahim Mia, said.

AL destroyed

FROM PAGE 3

results, he made the demand at a press conference at BNP's Nayapaltan Central office.

Fakhrul alleged that ruling party's candidates were declared elected "illegally" and "unilaterally"

by a farce in the name of polls. "I demand holding a fresh election."

Bangabandhu Awami Aijitibi Parishad, the panel of pro-Awami League lawyers, won all the 14 posts of the executive committee of the SCBA polls held on Wednesday and Thursday.

Voting took place on Wednesday and Thursday amid ruckus, violence, clashes, police action, and the allegations of ballot theft.

A ray of hope for Rohingya women

FROM PAGE 5

"I am working in this factory to support my three children. I spend the money earned from here on their education, medicine, food and cloth. This work gave me the courage to start anew," she added.

The centre's manager Urbi Chakma said, "We prioritise hiring Rohingya women who have experienced sexual assault, and physical challenges and are widows. We don't let employees work more than four hours every day because we want to provide as many ladies as possible the chance to get employment."

Six centres are in operation in the camp as part of our livelihood and skill development project,

according to Subrata Kumar Chakraborty, livelihood officer for UNHCR.

"The initiative to use jute bags in Rohingya camps will do a remarkable job in protecting the environment as thousands of people live close together in a dense area at the Rohingya camps," said Mohammad Kamal Hossain, a former professor of the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science at Chattogram University.

In 2020, a High Court directed the concerned authorities to ban single-use plastic in coastal areas and all hotels and motels across the country.

Besides, the Jute Packaging Act 2010 for six essential items

(paddy, rice, wheat, maize, fertiliser, sugar) promoted an alternative to plastic packaging.

Better

FROM PAGE 3

Dr Md Easir Arafat Khan, associate prof of Buet, said public interest isn't given sufficient importance when making laws and regulations in Bangladesh, unlike in Singapore where a worker was compensated Tk 10 crore due to employer's negligence.

Dr Chowdhury Md Jaber Sadek, director of IPD, emphasised the need for the state to take immediate action in necessary cases and implement laws related to building and fire regulations.

Abul Mansur Ahmad's 44th

FROM PAGE 3

He wrote about the language issue from early 1940s and contributed to the Language Movement as the editor of the Ittehad.

A very successful politician, Abul Mansur Ahmad played a key role in the formation of the Awami Muslim League. He served as vice-president of the organisation from 1953 to 1958.

Abul Mansur Ahmad was the author of the famous Ekush Dafa (21-point programme) election manifesto of Jukta Front in the 1954 elections, through which the Muslim League was ousted from power.

The Ekush Dafa was the first comprehensive articulation of the political, economic and cultural

demands of the Bangalees of the then eastern part of Pakistan.

He was elected a member of East Bengal Provincial Assembly in that election, and served as health minister in the United Front cabinet under Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq. In 1955, he was elected a member of Pakistan Constituent Assembly.

He was the minister for education in the United Front government of East Pakistan in 1956 and the minister for commerce and trade in 1956-1957. After the promulgation of martial law by Ayub Khan in 1958, he was imprisoned and subsequently released in 1962.

He then retired from politics.

Abul Mansur Ahmad was known for his strong stand in favour of regional autonomy of East Pakistan.

He also made remarkable contributions to industrialisation of the long neglected East Pakistan.

He always propagated secularism in a manner unparalleled in the forties, fifties and sixties.

Ahmad's publications include great satires like "Aina", "Asmani Purdah", "Gulliverer Safar Nama", "Food Conference". He also penned insightful works on social and political history of Bengal such as "Bangladesher Culture". He has two autobiographical writings -- "Atma Katha" and "Amar Dekha Rajnitir Panchash Bachar".

He was born in 1898 in Dhanikhola village of Trishal, Mymensingh.

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Tel: 02-997731725
Date: 16/03/2023

Ref. No. 57.03.5659.300.18.076.23-120

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Invitation for Re-Tender to be invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of the following goods:

Sl.	Re-Tender Id	Package No.	Description	Tender publishing date & time	Tender last selling date & time	Tender closing & opening date & time
1	802735	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-13	Supply of Books & Magazine (3211127)	20 March-2023 10:00	02-April-2023 13:00	02-April-2023 15:00
2	802749	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-14	Supply of Printing & Stationery (3255105)			
3	802756	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-06	Supply of Computer Modern Equipments (4112304) for IOT Lab			
4	802766	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-12	Supply of Cleanliness Materials (3211102)			

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Sl.	Tender Id	Package No.	Description	Tender publishing date & time	Tender last selling date & time	Tender closing & opening date & time
1	803720	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-21	Supply of Electromedical Modern Equipment (4112304) Imaging Lab	20 March-2023 10:00	04-April-2023 13:00	04-April-2023 15:00
2	803740	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-22	Supply of Electromedical Modern Equipment (4112304) Instrumentation Lab			
3	803745	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-23	Supply of Mechanical Modern Equipments (4112304) Machine shop			
4	803747	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-24	Supply of Mechanical Modern Equipments (4112304) Welding shop			
5	803749	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-25	Supply of Desktop Computer for Multimedia Lab & Network Lab-2, Computer Science and Technology (4112304)			
6	803751	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-20-1	Supply of Electromedical Modern Equipment (4112304) Biomedical Instrument Lab			
7	803754	MPI/Rev/22-23/PG-26	Supply of Desktop Computer Accessories for Multimedia Lab & Network Lab-2, Computer Science and Technology (4112304)			

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JUTE PACKAGING

A ray of hope for Rohingya women

SIFAYET ULLAH, City

A small factory in Cox's Bazar, situated in camp number 5, is employing 150 Rohingya women, to produce eco-friendly jute bags.

The bags are being used as an alternative to polythene, which was previously distributed in the camps by donor groups, contributing to environmental pollution.

The factory was launched in 2020 under the Rohingya Livelihood and Skill Development Project, with only 30 employees. It has since expanded and now produces 6 lakh jute bags per year. Workers earn Tk 200 per day for 4 hours of work.

The centre prioritises the employment of victims of sexual abuse, widows, and physically challenged women. The project is supported by the NGO Forum and UNHCR, and six similar centres are operating in the camp under UNHCR's livelihood and skill development project, employing around 1200 Rohingya, mostly women.



Mizanur Rahman, refugee relief and repatriation commissioner, said the government is developing a vocational training framework for the life skills of Rohingya and allowing development agencies to work in the camps to improve the skills of the Rohingya community.

Take the case of Halima Begum, 32, for instance. Displaced from Myanmar, she arrived in the Cox's Bazar camp in 2017. The factory gave her the chance to make extra money and become self-sufficient when all hope seemed lost.

"I have been working in this factory for two years. First, I received 40 days of training in producing jute bags. Now I earn Tk 200 every day, after only 4 hours of work."

Renuara Khatun, 28, is a Rohingya woman whose husband was shot dead by the Myanmar army in 2017. She too has been working as a labourer in this factory for two years.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

WDB digs canal, 'AL leaders sell earth'



MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

Let's start with why canals are excavated. Excavation project of a canal involves digging and removing soil and rock materials from the ground to create a trench or channel. The excavated soil is then used to form the embankments or sides of the canal. The purpose of this project is to create a waterway for transportation of goods, irrigation, and drainage.

Keeping this in mind, the Water Development Board started a project to excavate Nurpur canal in Brahmanbaria's Akhaura a year ago.

But rather than using the excavated soil to expand the canal's bank, the earth is being transported to different areas of the district by tractors, and being sold!

Locals have alleged that Awami League leaders are involved with this trade.

WDB started digging the 2.2km

canal from Nurpur graveyard to Titas river under Dharkhar union of Akhaura at a cost of Tk 1,28,69,000.

According to a work order given on April 6 2022, Chattogram based contractor firm Yunus & Brothers Private Limited has won the tender to dig the canal.



But they subcontracted the work to one Mustafizur Rahman, a Brahmanbaria-based contractor, and the work resumed recently, scheduled to be completed within June this year.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found many tractors

parked in the project area. Rather than dumping the excavated soil on the canal's bank, it was being loaded in those trucks. The tractors were then seen carrying away the excavated earth elsewhere along the road, adjacent to the canal.

Selim Miah, a labourer engaged in the project, said the soil was being loaded into the trucks on instructions of AL leaders Aktar Hossain Bhuiyan and Rasel Mia.

Locals, seeking anonymity, also said a syndicate led by Dharkhar union unit AL president Aktar Hossain Bhuiyan, Jasim Mia, Musa Mia, Rasel Miah and Nurul Islam is involved in selling soil in collaboration with contractor Mostafizur Rahman.

Contacted, Aktar said, "We are using soil from the project for the village graveyard. I am not selling those."

When this correspondent told him that legally he cannot do that, SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Two students among five killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Five people were killed in road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Bhola, three people -- including two college students -- died after a bus ramed a battery-run auto-rickshaw in Daulatkhan area.

Among the deceased, Rima Akter, 17, and Shima Begum, 17, were students of Halima Khatun Mohila Mohabiddalay. Another victim was identified as Abdul Kalam, 55.

The accident took place around 9:15am on Bhola-Charfesson road in Banglabazar area.

The three were heading towards Banglabazar on the auto-rickshaw when a bus from the opposite direction hit the vehicle. They died on the spot, said Assistant Sub-inspector Md Ahsan, also the duty officer of Daulatkhan Police Station.

The auto-rickshaw driver was rushed to a local hospital with critical injuries.

The two students were going to their college to attend a programme there, Jakir Hossain, a sub-inspector of Banglabazar Investigation Centre, told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

8 held while trying to loot Rab vehicle

UNB, Narayanganj

Eight members of a robbery gang have been arrested while trying to loot a Rab vehicle in Narayanganj.

Rab-II Company Commander and Deputy Director Monirul Alam confirmed the information at a press conference at its local camp in the city's Kalirbazar area yesterday afternoon.

"Two teams of Rab-II were on patrol duty on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in plainclothes on Thursday night. At that time, one team got stuck in traffic in the Char Bausia area in Munshiganj," he said.

"Armed robbers, thinking the Rab vehicle to be a normal passenger car, surrounded it. At one stage, they attacked the car. Rab members then arrested eight people, including the gang's leader," he said.

"Several locally-made weapons were seized from the robbers and legal actions are underway."

Khowai: a river or dumpster?
A story of neglect and pollution

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

Abdus Salek, a 62-year-old resident of Habiganj town's Khowai Mukh area, used to spend his childhood fishing in the Khowai river. However, he no longer visits its banks as it has now turned into a dumping ground for household and commercial waste.

"Four decades have passed since authorities took action to protect this river. The waterbody changed in a lot of ways during this time. Encroachments now endanger the river's existence. Khowai, which was once a natural treasury for the locals, has now become a social concern for the town's residents," said Tofazzal Sohel, the river's waterkeeper.

The pollution in Khowai not only affects its marine life but also degrades the living condition of the town's residents.

Saiful Islam, a master's student of Vrindavan Government College and resident of the town, said, "I used to bathe in this river about a decade ago. Now, because of the stench of rotting waste dumped on the banks, we can't even seek refuge from the smell even while staying indoors, keeping the doors and windows closed."

Husna, a house help in Shyamoli area, was found dumping household waste near the river. Asked why



she was polluting the river, Husna said, "Not just me, everyone throws waste here, even the municipality's garbage workers."

Most of the canals are blocked with waste dumped by locals or garbage collectors, while sewerage drains have also been connected to the river. Disposal of untreated waste further worsens the river's water quality, said activists.

"The townspeople are not just exposed to waterborne diseases, mosquito infestation and other pests are also worsening living conditions. We have been trying to save the river for a long time, but it seems that the authorities have turned a blind eye

to this issue," said Tahmina Begum Gini, vice president of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Habiganj unit.

The municipality's conservancy workers and locals are reportedly often seen dumping waste collected from the town into the river, despite having an allotted dumping ground located about four kilometres away from the main town.

Contacted, Habiganj Municipality Mayor Ataur Rahman Selim said, "I have strictly forbidden the locals and conservancy workers from dumping waste by the river. However, there are some who are still not following my orders. The garbage in Khowai Mukh will be removed very soon."

The townspeople are not just exposed to waterborne diseases, mosquito infestation and other pests are also worsening living conditions. We have been trying to save the river for a long time, but it seems that the authorities have turned a blind eye to this issue.

TAHMINA BEGUM
Gini Vice President Bapa,
Habiganj

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Meta maps way to 'kill' online deception campaigns

AFP, San Francisco

Meta on Thursday released a framework for exposing and combating malicious online campaigns from election lies to terrorist recruitment.

A paper authored by Meta's Ben Nimmo and Eric Hutchins details how to create a "kill chain" for targeting key links in deception operations aimed at duping people online.

"Human stupidity is one of the great powers in the universe, but this kill chain is trying to identify all the different kinds of operations that can try to target human weakness," Nimmo told AFP.

"The goal is to stop the attackers before ever reaching the target."

The hacker community has long joked that there is no patch for human gullibility, such as computer users being duped into clicking on booby-trapped links or sharing login credentials at bogus websites.

Advances in generative artificial intelligence that can crank out convincing but fake profile photos, voices and written replies give hackers, criminals and con artists more ways to deceive people online.

But there are ways to see through such trickery and cyber-defense teams can be taught what to look for and where, Nimmo said.

"Yes, the threat actors have learned a new trick, but so have the defenders," Nimmo said.

The Online Operations Kill Chain framework made public on Thursday proposes a more unified approach to analyze the gamut of nefarious campaigns including espionage, human trafficking, fraud, and election interference.

"Despite their many differences, online operations still have meaningful commonalities," Nimmo said.



This handout picture provided by the Iranian Army office yesterday shows warships during a joint military drill between Iran, Russia, and China in the Gulf of Oman.

PHOTO: AFP

UNREST OVER PENSIONS

Pressure mounts on Macron

French unions plan more strikes; opposition files no-confidence motion

REUTERS, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday faced the gravest challenge to his authority since the so-called Yellow Vest protests after his decision to push through a contested pension overhaul without a vote prompted violent unrest overnight.

Cars were torched in Paris and other French cities in the evening during otherwise peaceful demonstrations involving several thousand people. Trade unions yesterday urged workers to step up and briefly blocked the Paris ring road.

"Something fundamental happened, and that is that, immediately, spontaneous

mobilisations took place throughout the country," hard-left leader Jean-Luc Melenchon said. "It goes without saying that I encourage them, I think that's where it's happening."

The pension overhaul raises France's retirement age by two years to 64, which the government says is essential to ensure the system does not go bust. Unions, and most voters, disagree.

The French are deeply attached to keeping the official retirement age at 62, which is among the lowest in OECD countries.

More than eight out of 10 people are unhappy with the government's decision to skip a vote in parliament, and 65

percent want strikes and protests to continue, a Toluna Harris Interactive poll for RTL radio showed.

French opposition lawmakers yesterday filed a no-confidence motion against Macron's government.

Going ahead without a vote "is a denial of democracy... a total denial of what has been happening in the streets for several weeks," 52-year-old psychologist Nathalie Alquier said in Paris. "It's just unbearable."

A broad alliance of France's main unions said they would continue their mobilisation to try and force a u-turn on the changes. Protests took place in cities including Toulon yesterday, and more were planned for the weekend.

Japan's PM Kishida pledges aid to boost birthrate

AFP, Tokyo



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida yesterday pledged to boost child allowances and paid parental leave as he warned the country faced its "last chance" to tackle a declining population. Like many countries, Japan has been battling a falling birth rate for years, with just under 800,000 babies born last year. The country is the world's second oldest, after tiny Monaco, and in January Kishida warned Japan was on the verge of whether "we can continue to function" as a society. "Six to seven years from now is the last chance to reverse the declining birth rate trend," he told reporters. "I want to create a society where young people can marry as they wish, and everyone who wants to can have children and raise them without stress," he said. He unveiled proposals including increased allowances for younger children, efforts to boost wages for young people and measures to tackle the cost of higher education. Kishida said the government would now have a goal of 50 percent of new fathers taking parental leave by 2025. In 2021, under 14 percent of fathers took leave. To achieve the increase, he proposed measures including offering allowances to companies encouraging paternity leave, and also pledged more pay when both parents take leave.

Mamata, Akhilesh agree on new front

NDTV ONLINE

Three key opposition parties in India have agreed to keep both the Congress and the BJP at an arm's length, indicating they will follow a policy of treating the two parties equally. This was decided after Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav met Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata yesterday. Mamata, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, will also meet Naveen Patnaik, the Chief Minister of Odisha who heads the Biju Janata Dal, next week. The strategy is aimed at countering the BJP's attempt to portray Congress MP Rahul Gandhi as a key leader of a grouping of opposition parties. The BJP has been trying to get Gandhi to apologise after he alleged opposition leaders' microphones are muted in India's parliament during a speech in London recently. Other opposition parties now suspect the BJP has been targeting them using Gandhi.

ICC issues arrest

FROM PAGE 1

committing the acts and for "failure to exercise control properly over civilian and military subordinate who committed the acts, or allowed for their commission."

The arrest warrants are being kept secret to protect victims and witnesses, it said.

Moscow has repeatedly denied accusations of atrocities during its one-year-old invasion of its neighbour.

"The decisions of the International Criminal Court have no meaning for our country, including from a legal point of view," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on her Telegram channel. "Russia is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and bears no obligations under it."

Ukraine's Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin hailed the decision, reports Reuters.

"The world received a signal that the Russian regime is criminal and its leadership and henchmen will be held accountable," Kostin said in a statement on social media. "This is a

historic decision for Ukraine and the entire system of international law."

The ICC is a court of last resort for crimes that countries cannot or will not prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

ICC prosecutor Karim Khan launched an investigation into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine just days after Russia's invasion, reports AFP.

Khan said earlier this month after a visit to Ukraine that the alleged abductions of children "are being investigated by my office as a priority."

"Children cannot be treated as the spoils of war," he said in a statement on March 7.

Posting a picture of himself alongside empty cots, Khan said he had visited a care home for children in southern Ukraine that was "empty, a result of alleged deportation of children from Ukraine to the Russian Federation" or other occupied areas.

Khan also confirmed that the ICC was investigating

attacks on "critical civilian infrastructure" in Ukraine and that he had visited the sites of several such strikes.

Along with Ukraine's prosecutor general "we underlined our collective commitment to ensure that such acts are fully investigated and those responsible for alleged international crimes held to account," he added.

RUSSIA SLAMS ICC'S WARRANT

Russia does not recognise the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and considers its decisions null and void, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday, reports Russian news agency Tass.

"We consider the very formulation of the issue outrageous and unacceptable. Russia, as well as several other states, do not recognize the jurisdiction of this court and, accordingly, any decisions of this kind are null and void for Russia in terms of law," the Kremlin spokesman said.

"That is, in fact, the only thing I would and could tell you about this decision," he added.

Moscow

FROM PAGE 12

International Investments BV in gas exploration in Bangladesh.

The statement said the opportunities of purchasing Russian LNG, oil and oil products, cooperation in the coal industry, joint development of green energy sources particularly nuclear and solar energy were discussed.

They also underscored promising areas for exchange of technologies, establishing joint ventures, and cooperation in railway, metallurgy, and engineering sectors.

The mutual interest in strengthening relations in the ICT field and cybersecurity was expressed. The delegations also agreed to further increase mutual supplies of agricultural products and expand their range by approving the necessary veterinary and phytosanitary documentation.

Thetwosideshighlighted the intensification of ties between the academic circles and quota increase for Bangladeshi students in Russia. The focus was also on initiatives for the development of human resources and conducting geological and oceanographic research in Bangladesh.

The participants also discussed customs cooperation, standardisation and certification, civil aviation, communications, ICT, and mutual recognition of educational qualifications and academic degrees.

50 hurt

FROM PAGE 12

of rubber bullets to bring the situation under control, causing panic among locals.

Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of Bauphal police station, said additional police personnel were deployed to ward off further untoward incident.

Md Al Amin, upazila nirbahi officer, said both groups promised to hold their events in a peaceful manner but no one kept their word despite his request.

Days ahead to be turbulent

FROM PAGE 1

On Monday, BJAIF will stage a demonstration, bring out a procession and hold a meeting on the SC premises.

BNP Law Secretary and BJAIF's Secretary General Kayser Kamal told The Daily Star that their movement will continue until a fair election is held for the SCBA.

He said, "The government is destabilising all the institutions of the country by finishing off democracy. There has been no democracy and no free and fair election at any level for the last few years. However, elections were held duly at all bar associations. Therefore, we have seen and observed that lawyers were able to cast their votes freely."

"Since supporters of this unelected government are not being elected, they have snatched away the election process and created a system where an election is no longer necessary. State mechanism, particularly, the police force is executing the decisions of

pro-Awami League lawyers in the Supreme Court Bar Association election."

Lawyer Md Abdun Nur Dulal, a leader of pro-AL lawyers and incumbent and newly elected SCBA secretary, told this correspondent that they took preparation for holding a free, fair and credible election for the SCBA. But the pro-BNP lawyers intentionally and conspiringly did not participate in the election in order to make this election questionable and they have become successful in implementing their agenda, he said.

"They [pro-BNP lawyers] did not want to win in the SCBA election with malafid intentions. We will not sit idle if they try to make the court premises unstable..." he said.

Contacted, senior lawyer of the SC Manzil Murshid said the SCBA is involved in politics and therefore, the impact of this bar's election will continue until the next parliamentary elections and even after the national

elections.

Khurshid Alam Khan, another senior lawyer, said movements and counter-movements have been taking place for a long time on the SC premises centring the SCBA elections.

"Though pro-BNP lawyers did not boycott the SCBA election, they tried to resist the election. They did not succeed. Therefore, the SCBA election cannot be termed illegal. I cannot see any immediate solution to this crisis with the SCBA election and its impact may continue till the next parliamentary election," he added.

Movement

FROM PAGE 12

chairmen elected since 1991 when the BNP was voted to power and Chairperson Khaleeda Zia was elected prime minister for the first time.

Sources said that the BNP's top leadership has sent a message to the grassroots that the government must be unseated for a free and fair election or else the party will be in serious trouble.

Cosmic

FROM PAGE 12

"StarCrete doesn't need any of this and so it simplifies the mission and makes it cheaper and more feasible. And anyway, astronauts probably don't want to be living in houses made from scabs and urine."

The scientists calculated that a 25kg sack of crisps would contain enough starch to produce around half a tonne of StarCrete, which is roughly 213 bricks.

The salt needed to strengthen the material could also be obtained from the tears of astronauts, or from compounds found on the Martian surface.

The team has set up a startup called DeakinBio in order to continue improving and testing StarCrete, which they claim has the potential to be used for buildings on Earth as a more environmentally sustainable alternative to common concrete.

The research was detailed in a study, titled 'StarCrete: a starch-based biocomposite for off-world construction', published in the journal Open Engineering.

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

Memo No. 46.02.2614.000.014.2023-350
Date: 16/03/2023

Corrigendum Notice No. 01/2022-2023

This is to notify to all concern that e-Tender Notice No. 02/2022-2023 vide Memo No. 46.02.2614.000.014.2022-288 Dated: 02/03/2023 has been amended as follows due to unavoidable circumstances.

Description	As per Tender Notice	As per Amendment Notice
Number of Tender ID & Package No.	16 (Sixteen) Nos.	15 (Fifteen) Nos. (Except Tender ID No. 796843 Package No. e-Tender/Dham/UDF/2022-23/Kusura UP) SI No. 08

All other terms and conditions shall remain unchanged. This amended notice will be treated as the part of the tender documents.

Saleh Hasan Pramanik
Upazila Engineer
Dhamrai, Dhaka
E-mail: ue.dhamrai@lged.gov.bd

GD-501

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Lakshmipur
Phone: 01730-782657
E-mail: eelakshimpur@gmail.com

Memo No. 35.01.5100.441.05.007.2022-404
Date: 16/03/2023

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Tender document last selling date and time	Tender closing & opening date and time
01	803977	eGP-39/OTMLRD/PMP-Minor/2022-2023	02-Apr-2023 16:00	03-Apr-2023 12:30
02	803985	eGP-40/OTMLRD/PMP-Minor/2022-2023	02-Apr-2023 16:00	03-Apr-2023 12:30
03	803984	eGP-41/OTMLRD/PMP-Minor/2022-2023	02-Apr-2023 16:00	03-Apr-2023 12:30
04	803978	eGP-42/OTMLRD/PMP-Minor/2022-2023	02-Apr-2023 16:00	03-Apr-2023 12:30

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Zahirul Islam
ID No. 602150
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Lakshmipur

GD-500

THE SIAM sensation continues

SHARMIN JOYA

Siam Ahmed's parents were much more concerned about his career in law, rather than his acting. This changed when the actor received the National Film Award two times in a row. His dedication brought him the national level recognition, further elevating his career with one remarkable project after another. The actor is currently shooting for his first Tollywood film, where he will be sharing the screen with noted Indian actor Prosenjit Chatterjee.

We caught up with Siam for a cup of coffee, a photo-session and more!

How does it feel to have won the National Film Award for the second time?

This is such a recognition that gives my parents hope and confidence that their son is on the right track. Such an honour inspired them to support me to work even harder. In the beginning of my career, they were much more concerned about my future in law, I am lucky that they have taken this profession of mine seriously.

You are working with 'Bumba Da' (Prosenjit Chatterjee) in your Tollywood debut, how was the experience?

The characteristic of a great artiste is that they welcome others with a warm heart and help create a space for newcomers -- Bumba Da is surely one such artiste.

We have discussed our characters and expectations from each other. He has been providing me tips as well. I am hoping that this project will be a memorable one in my career.

You will be working in American filmmaker, Alka Raghuram's Hindi-language film, 'In the Ring: Story of a Burqa Boxer'. Could you share the story behind getting involved in the project?

One of my films was in the editing panel in Mumbai, and one of the executive producers of *In the Ring* saw my footage from the film, and collected my contact number from them. They called me and asked if I am interested to give a screen test for this film. This is how I got connected with the project. We had a language training for this project too.

Since you are the only Bangladeshi artiste in the movie, are you feeling nervous?

Not nervous, but I am concerned about the fact that I will be representing the entire fraternity I belong to. I have to give my best, so that I can make my industry proud. I will soon starting the shooting for this film.

A funny rumour you have heard about yourself...

Recently a director called me to say that he heard I had no schedule for the next two years! I was like, how come I don't know that? Where did all of the money go?

A rumour that annoyed you the most...

During my wedding, some media outlets reported that Puja Chery attempted suicide because of me! I got extremely annoyed. I called Puja and asked are you dead yet?

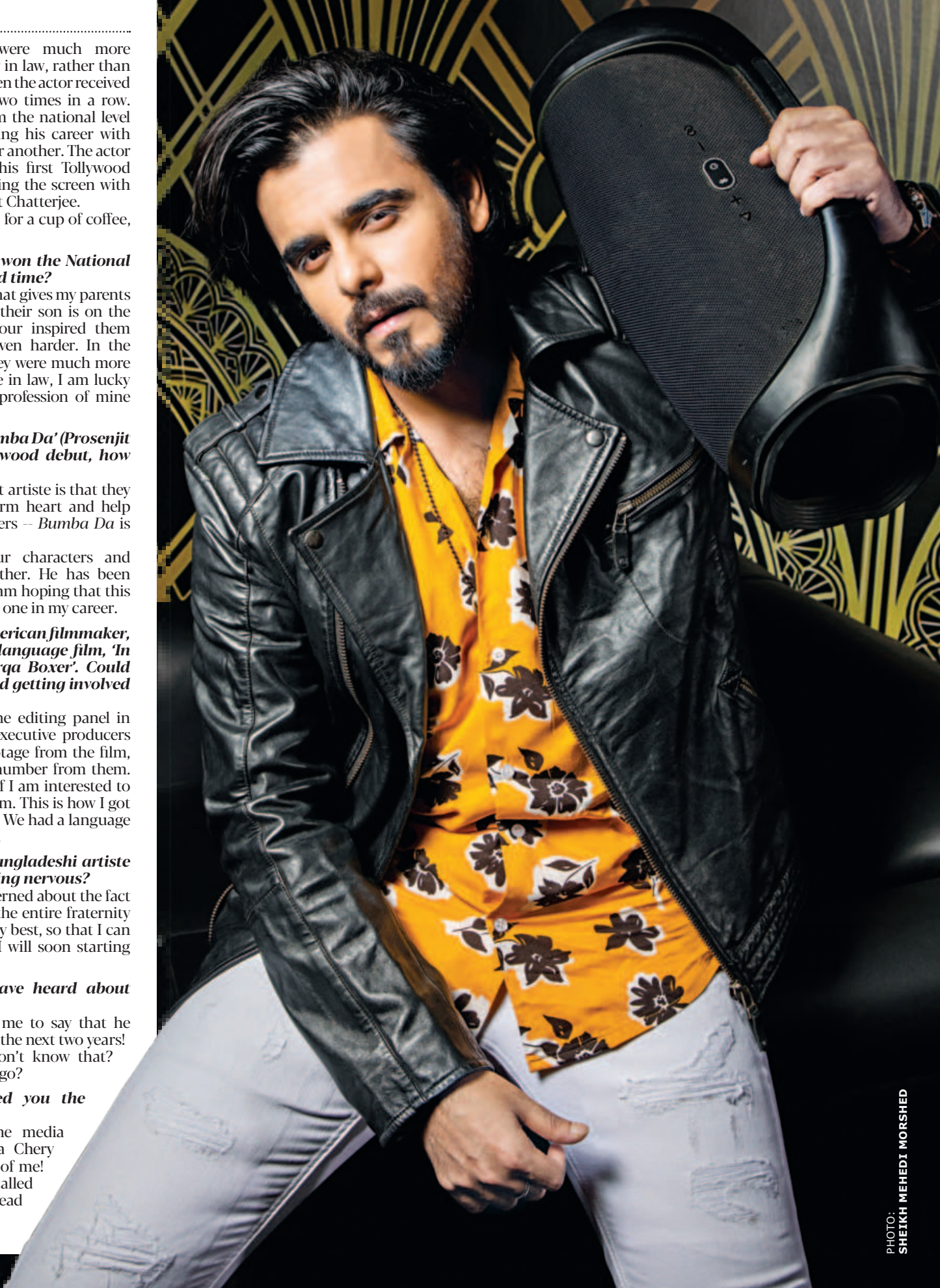


PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Out and about IN DHAKA



Goethe Cinema
March 20 | 5 pm
Goethe-Institut Bangladesh



Informal Desire
March 10-28 | 4 pm - 8 pm
Kala Kendra



Classical Night
March 18 | 6 pm - 11 pm
Satori Meditations

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Rana Naidu

Chorki
Overtrump

Hoichoi
Indubala Bhaater
Hotel

HBO Max
The Last of Us

Amazon Prime- Nope

TV TALKIES

THE LAST OF US

An ode to found family

Released 10 years ago as a zombie-Horror video game, Naughty Dog's *The Last of Us* (TLOU) is part of a revolution brought into the gaming industry, where developers vied to explore the worlds both outside and inside the human perception.

The 2023 HBO series of the same name follows the main characters, Ellie and Joel, who on their own, come together by fate and form a bond that resonates to everyone of us. Joel (Pedro Pascal), a survivor of the Cordyceps outbreak, somehow gets entangled with a militia group called 'The Fireflies', who entrust him to smuggle a special individual, Ellie (Bella Ramsay).

An orphan, Ellie gets captured by the Fireflies, who had

been fighting to liberate the remaining survivors from the fascist government, FEDRA. They have established quarantine zones all across the US to keep the minimal number

of human survivors safe.

The series, in all its seriousness, does not try to play gracious by showing the horrors of an outbreak. Instead, it is established through relationships.

It follows the famine, desperation and indeed the grisly 'Clickers', who prey on human beings.

TLOU, the series, follows how people pluck and care for each other in times of need, often going to great lengths at times to atone for their past mistakes, which creates a whole new meaning for the 'found family' trope.



WHAT'S ON THE GRAM



DEEPIKA PADUKONE

Deepika Padukone's glamorous avatar at the 95th Academy Awards gave an iconic tribute to Audrey Hepburn's iconic film, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. The actress looked magnificent as she donned a stunning off-the-shoulder, jet-black Louis Vuitton gown, channelling an old-school Hollywood glamour to her whole look. Deepika looked chic as she paired the look with a sleek hairdo and diamond jewellery, which added a little extra glam to her look.



The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

How much more must the Teesta bleed?

West Bengal's newest decision will be extremely damaging to Bangladesh

We are deeply disturbed by news reports that West Bengal is planning to dig two more canals under the Teesta Barrage Project to divert water for agricultural purposes in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. It has also reportedly decided to set up three hydropower projects in the Darjeeling hills, two of which are likely to reduce the volume of water in the Teesta that is available for irrigation. There is no doubt that this will only aggravate the already precarious condition of Bangladeshi farmers who have been paying a heavy price as a result of failed diplomacy between Bangladesh and India over the Teesta River for more than a decade.

What is most infuriating is that West Bengal made these decisions unilaterally, without so much as informing Dhaka of its intentions. We remember all too well the last minute refusal of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to sign a deal in June 2011, which would have allocated 42.5 percent of Teesta's water to India and 37.5 percent to Bangladesh. For over a decade, despite repeated promises that the Teesta issue will be resolved, there has been no progress at all, with Mamata insisting that there is no water to share in the first place. But if that really were the case, why would her government be pursuing these expensive projects to channel water to farmers on their side of the border?

After keeping almost 20 million people – who depend on the Teesta for their livelihoods – hanging for 12 years, India's unilateral move is a violation of all international norms of transboundary river water management, to say nothing of India's commitment to not construct any major structure for diversion of water for consumptive uses upstream of Gajoldoba barrage, made 13 years ago. Given our past and current relationship with India, which is supposed to be a friendly one, how are we to interpret the recent developments, if not as a breach of trust?

It is also frustrating that the Bangladesh government seems clueless about these developments. Our foreign ministry, apparently, "will try to know the facts from India" before proceeding further. We can't help but wonder what the role of our officials in Kolkata and Delhi are if they must wait for the Indian media reports to make their way to Bangladesh before they even start the process of "verifying" information.

For far too long, the plight of the ordinary people, particularly the farmers of the northern region, have been ignored by policymakers in both countries, who have prioritised their own agendas in bilateral meetings. According to Bangladesh-India Joint Rivers Commission, between 1973 and 1985 when the barrage was yet to be built in West Bengal, the daily average flow of water in the river during the last 10 days of March was 6,710 cusec (cubic feet per second), which is now as low as 1,200-1,500 cusecs during the dry season.

We urgently call upon the Bangladesh government to seriously revisit the Teesta issue. It is precisely because we have allowed the sufferings of our farmers and fishermen to fall through the cracks for so long that we are now being subjected to such unneighbourly treatment. We must demand greater transparency from India. The Indian government, on its end, must explain the secrecy behind such developments and engage with West Bengal to ensure that no projects are undertaken which violate its commitments to Bangladesh.

Island of corals turned into a cash cow

Campaign to rid St Martin's of illegal establishments must be seen through

It is deeply concerning that St Martin's Island, the lone coral island in Bangladesh, is under threat by the unplanned construction and operation of hundreds of illegal structures – i.e. resorts, hotels, and shops. Meanwhile, the residents of the island do not get permission to build homes for themselves. Instead, they must live in shanties while sizable commercial buildings have been put up in this Ecologically Critical Area (ECA). According to a recent report by Prothom Alo, a staggering 230 hotels, resorts, and restaurants exist on this island that is, as declared in January 2022 per the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012, a marine protected area. Of these 230 structures, 130 were built in the last two years alone. Most alarmingly, over the last 38 years, the number of coral species on the island has decreased from 141 to only 40. Tree-covered areas have also been disappearing at a disquieting rate.

We are, of course, disappointed at the lack of adequate action on the parts of the Department of Environment (DoE) and the relevant district and upazila administrations in protecting St Martin's Island. Reports have been coming in over the last year about how the authorities are finally evicting hundreds of the illegal establishments and halting the construction of new ones. But given that the island has been an ECA since the late 1990s, we must conclude that it is the irresponsibility and extensive oversight of the authorities that have been damaging St Martin's and its biodiversity. No doubt, corrupt quarters of the administrations have allowed influential to acquire land on the island and illegally put up commercial structures there. It is deeply saddening how the greed of land grabbers is eating away at our rivers and coasts alike, while the authorities quite literally watch on, with their sense of responsibility presumably tangled up in bank notes.

Though this should have happened decades ago, we must appreciate the ongoing campaign of the DoE and the Cox's Bazar district administration to tear down the existing illegal structures and prevent new ones from sprouting on St Martin's Island. We can only hope that the unabated construction of illegal structures and the resultant tourist activities of the last few decades have not done irreparable harm already. The island is a national treasure in terms of natural beauty and the array of living beings – from algae and corals to thousands of species of birds, snails, mussels, clams, crabs, and mammals – it harbours. Just as in the case of our dying, life-giving rivers, we urge the government and the authorities concerned not to let St Martin's Island become yet another bit of land for the profit hounds to exploit.

Banning hundi won't solve Bangladesh's forex problem

AN OPEN DIALOGUE



Dr. Abdullah Shibli is an economist and works for Change Healthcare, Inc., an information technology company. He also serves as senior research fellow at the US based International Sustainable Development Institute (ISDI).

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

Bangladesh's foreign exchange market has somehow gotten entangled in public discussion and the government's crusade against corruption. Corruption takes many forms: bribery or graft; embezzlement; money laundering, kickbacks (usually in dollars abroad); tax avoidance and under-invoicing; and finally, transfer of money to undeclared overseas accounts. All these sources of corruption are fuelling the secondary foreign exchange market, also known as hundi, driving it to new heights.

Consequently and in tandem with the dollar crisis, the hundi market has also been in the news in Bangladesh. This market has many other names. Some folks refer to it as the black market (which has an illicit connotation), whereas in academic circles, the preferred moniker is parallel, informal, or the kerb market. It may not be too far-fetched to consider the hundi market as a vital nexus that connects Bangladesh with the rest of the world.

Eminent economists have blamed the hundi market for the sorry state of Bangladesh's forex reserves and the downward pressure on our exchange rate. Remitters get a higher rate for their dollars in the hundi market. And this, along with the legal regulations and delays of the formal channels, provides strong incentives for one to opt for hundi.

A former chief economist of Bangladesh Bank has suggested that the hundi market be taken out, while others have been advocating for tightening the noose around it to choke off the blood circulation in that segment of the financial market. Another senior economist rues that "the central bank

and the economy of Bangladesh lose foreign exchange/reserves."

The government would like to see the supply of dollars go up and demand go down. One of the odd characteristics of the conversation on the prevalence of multiple exchange rates, capital flight, and the excess demand for the US dollar is the absence of a discussion on the sources of demand for the hundi dollars.

Hundi has existed for as long as I can remember. More than four decades ago, in 1982, I was travelling to India for a few weeks with my wife. I was working for the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and my salary was paid in dollars. Therefore, while I had dollars in my bank account in Washington, DC and in my American Express bank account in Motijheel, I could not carry the currency on my person while boarding the flight to Kolkata. "No problem," a knowledgeable friend said, and introduced me to a hundi merchant on Nawabpur Road, who gave me a little square paper, on which he scribbled something. I then took the chit to a dealer in Kolkata's Old Bazaar and exchanged the token for Indian rupees. I was told that this anachronistic

transaction mode is still in vogue for those who wish to take money out of the country. The details might be slightly different, but the basic rules are pretty much the same. Of course, you pay a premium price for convenience. The official exchange rate for a US dollar is now Tk 105, but the unofficial rate is Tk 120, and there is widespread apprehension that the latter may go

of Bangladesh's forex reserves and the downward pressure on our exchange rate. Remitters get a higher rate for their dollars in the hundi market. And this, along with the legal regulations and delays of the formal channels, provides strong incentives for one to opt for hundi. The premium the buyer pays is often more than 15 percent during peak periods, and has been



The hundi business has been around for a long time.

FILE PHOTO

higher after Ramadan.

Let's take a quick look at the supply and demand forces at play in the hundi market. Demand mostly comes from money launderers, and the supply mostly emanates from Bangladeshis who send money home to their families living in rural areas.

As we can see, the hundi market has two aspects: demand for taka by the overseas workers who wish to send money to their homes, and the demand for dollars mentioned above – for tourism, medical care, study abroad and registration fees, as well as for illegitimate purposes such as money laundering and buying property in the proverbial Begum Para. As Professor Selim Raihan correctly mentioned in a recent op ed in this daily, there is a misconception that the "remitters abroad are the ones who demand the services offered by the hundi business." One also needs to look into the domestic drivers of demand, and it would not be too far-fetched to assert that the market owes its lifeblood to the domestic cartels and oligarchs who sometimes need a safe harbour for their ill-gotten riches.

Eminent economists have blamed the hundi market for the sorry state

flagged as a "laundering charge" by Professor Rudi Dornbusch of MIT.

The higher rate is hardly affecting the demand for dollars in the hundi market, nor is there any shortage of \$100 bills. In contrast, the importers find it difficult to open letters of credit (LCs) with commercial banks to get the merchandise they need ahead of Ramadan and Eid, and face a conundrum.

The demand for dollars comes from many sources, but money laundering is like the white elephant in the room. A former chief of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) openly asked, "Who is laundering out all the money? There must be someone in the know."

It is an open secret that the NBR and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) have access to intelligence and other resources to initiate investigations. Bangladesh still has a long way to go before it can sit back and return to its old business-as-usual state, or the pre-pandemic modus operandi, and take off the import restrictions in place. And in light of the incoming national election, the government can use the opportunity to shake things up and put its house in order.

Bangabandhu: A miracle of history

Mahbub Uddin Ahmed, Bir Bikram, was a sub-divisional police officer of Jhenaidah during the Liberation War. He was in charge of presenting the guard of honour to the acting president of the government in exile, Syed Nazrul Islam, at the oath-taking ceremony on April 17, 1971.

MAHBUB UDDIN AHMED

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the dreamer and creator of independent Bangladesh, was born in the twilight zone of a mystical time. A budding yet intelligent politician, he was mature enough to smell the emerging rut of his own land through exploitation and realised one fact: the residents of East Pakistan were being trampled by the Punjabi hegemony in West Pakistan, which was determined to exploit us as a race and was there to wipe us out. And its physical demonstration was chalked out by General Yahya Khan and his cohort Zulfikar Ali Bhutto through the ignoble, dastardly, and genocidal Operation Searchlight launched on March 25, 1971.

But Bangabandhu, with his wisdom and tact, was ahead of everyone in the art of tactics and saved our nation from all nefarious moves by the Pakistan government. Against all odds, Bangabandhu realised his goal of leading his nation to independence. He had to cross many invincible hurdles laid out by the Pakistan Army machinery – the Pakistani generals resorted to mass murder, political trickery, and spiteful international diplomacy against



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

ILLUSTRATION: BIPOLO CHAKROBERTY

the then East Pakistan. But in the end, all those tricks failed, and the international humanitarian forces stood by Bangabandhu. His towering personality and an unending love for a suffering humanity carried the day.

Bangabandhu was unwavering even at the prospect of death and/or personal injury. At the hour of utmost need, the leader gave us a clarion call to unite. And we did unite ourselves with steely determination to defend our motherland at all costs. At that

hour of glory came the momentous declaration of independence: "From today, Bangladesh is independent." As he was imprisoned by the Pakistani bureaucracy and military oligarchy, Bangabandhu did not fail to pronounce his ultimate order to his nation of 75 million people: "Go and fight till the last drop of your blood" and "destroy the last of the enemies."

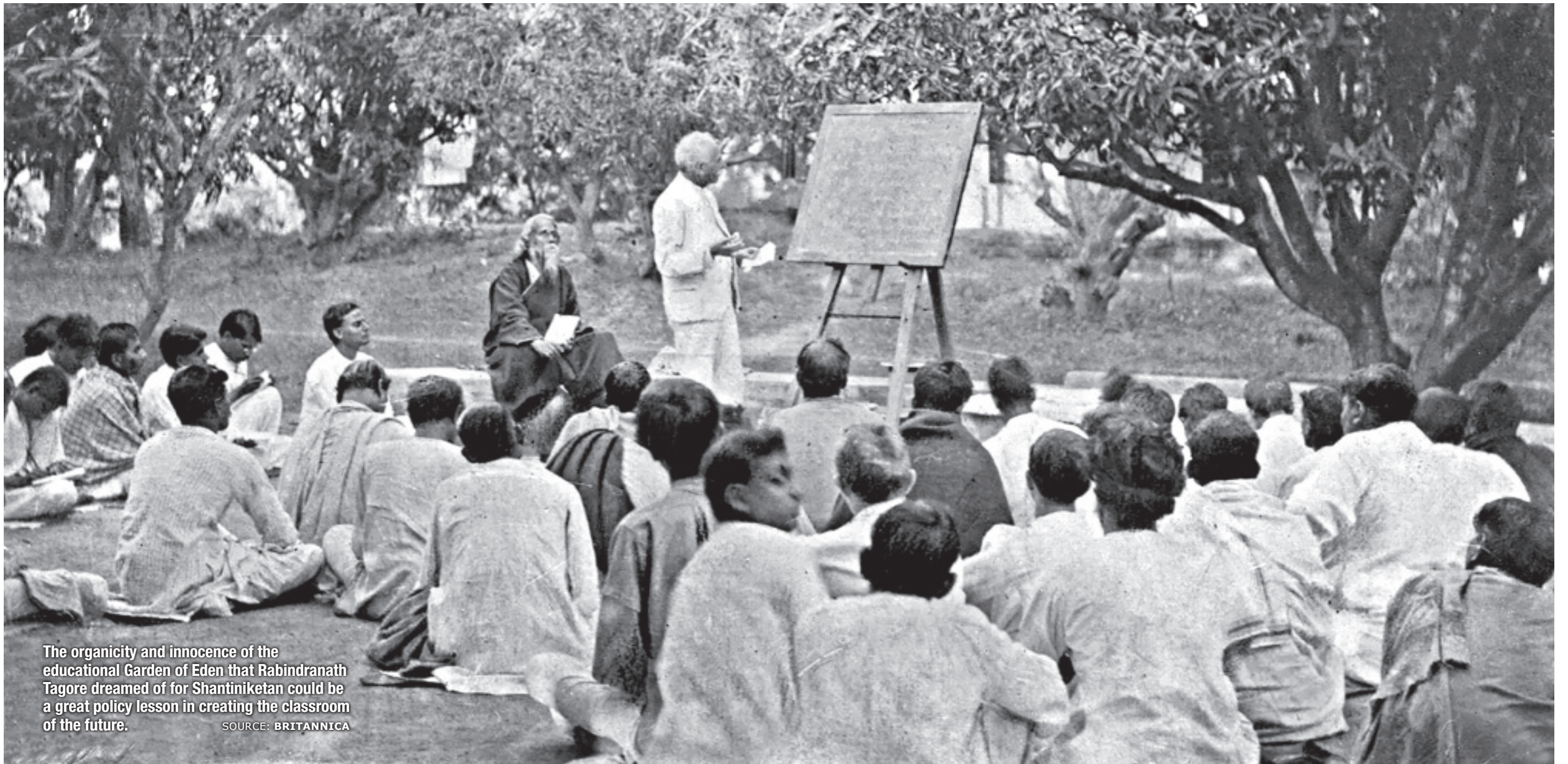
And the people responded to this call, coming out in hordes to face the enemies who had all the might at

their disposal and executed a planned attack with a full arsenal of modern weaponry. But to the collective wisdom, ferocity, and determination of a people led by Sheikh Mujib, the beneficiaries of evil had to fail. And fail it did, and the concomitant cost paid by the marauders went down in the annals of modern warfare as the most ignominious defeat of an army.

When a historian would try to depict this man, there would be no room to fumble. Bangabandhu was a giant, a magician, a poet of politics, a charismatic leader. If elucidated, each one of these titles could be sized into volumes without limit. And I reckon it is the duty of a historian to research in depth to find the right proportion and volume. I tried to understand him through the looking glass of a common participant in the writing of the most simple, short and robust history of my country, the Liberation War, its underlying philosophy, and the role of Sheikh Mujib. And I found myself engrossed in the life and story of a budding personality transforming himself into a giant of a man.

Bangabandhu lived to serve his fellow beings long tied to the unbearable clutch of poverty and diabolical restrictions to progress. The budding persona turned into a magician by dint of his long and relentless quest for a successful transformation of his people's fate. Looking at the achievements throughout his life, one can appreciate this man for what he truly was: a miracle of history.

Joy Bangla!



The organicity and innocence of the educational Garden of Eden that Rabindranath Tagore dreamed of for Shantiniketan could be a great policy lesson in creating the classroom of the future.
SOURCE: BRITANNICA

What makes a classroom great?

In face of the challenges with learning and teaching in the 21st-century, creating a classroom that is a perfect hub of knowledge-sharing requires some careful considerations. In the third part of a series that focuses on some of the most basic and important issues of higher education in Bangladesh, three veteran educators explore the elements that turn a conventional classroom into the optimal space of learning. The Daily Star welcomes and encourages any and all thoughts, ideas, and recommendations regarding these issues from our respected readers.



Dr Ahrar Ahmad
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AHRAR AHMAD

Obviously, ideal classrooms are discipline specific and defined by instruction levels. For upper-division offerings in the social sciences, arts and the humanities, a good classroom must facilitate interaction, allowing teachers to ask questions, invite discussions, and create a dynamic and lively atmosphere.

Teachers must be able to get off their “pedestals” to make students feel less intimidated and more validated. These pedestals can be both physical and psychological, and may serve as alienating devices that limit the imagination of students, invoke fear rather than respect, and disrupt the mental quickness and fluidity that is vital to provoking, as well as satisfying, their curiosities. Simply being identified by name by the teacher may change the students’ perceptions, and often their performance, in terms of a course. Students should also be able to address each other to initiate debates and discussions, clarify ideas, share information, present personal reflections, and foster a spirit of fairness, academic freedom, and inclusiveness.

But this environment of meaningful and productive engagement between professors and students depends on a pre-condition that must be fulfilled – the classrooms themselves must be conducive to a good learning experience. Thus, lighting, seating, airiness, cleanliness, acoustics, and other “material” conditions (such as the infrastructure of pedagogical paraphernalia, teaching tools, and appropriate technology) all become factors in making teachers and students feel welcome, comfortable, and supported. This demands adequate space, but also seating arrangements different from the usual rows of desks extending deep into the classroom (which may also nurture the “back-bencher” or, conversely, the “favourite student” syndromes).

In Bangladesh, these vital aspects of education usually receive insufficient attention.

Many universities are housed in older and apparently unkempt establishments where electric fans may be dysfunctional, air conditioners louder than they are efficient, lighting insufficient, outside noise distracting, and more students crammed into spaces than originally intended. The emphasis is usually on the lowest common denominator that will allow decision-makers to deflect or escape “blame,” and to manage with what is “good enough” rather than create what is “good.”

Public university authorities may occasionally give the impression that simply operating the institutions and providing classrooms are, by themselves, great favours they are bestowing on students and society. (Their pulse quickens only if there are “megaprojects” where they can expect some crumbs to fall on their plates as well.) On the other hand, a few private universities, at times functioning on business models which emphasise short-term cost-benefit calculations fixated on the immediate hypothetical “bottom line,” may remain blissfully – at times deliberately – indifferent to these imperatives.

University officials typically brag about the number of PhDs they have hired, the number of GPA-fivers they have admitted, or the number of students they have graduated. This probably indicates the misplaced nature of the priorities within which they function, and the misleading nature, if not the futility, of the numbers-obsessed ranking/rating systems they embrace. (After all, they know full well that no one will come in to check on the quality of their classrooms.)

The spatial organisation of the room, its physical geography, its internal design and architectonics, all play a not-insignificant role in supporting and shaping the shared intellectual journey of discovery, joy, and fulfilment in which the students (as well as the professors) have collectively embarked. These factors alone cannot promise a sufficient condition to ensure their personal and professional growth, but certainly a necessary condition in furthering those objectives.



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HALIMUR R KHAN

A great classroom is one that is conducive to learning. Let’s unpack this statement.

What are the most important components for one to learn something? Well, they can be sorted into two broad categories: internal/intellectual and external/physical.

The most important internal/character quality (based on research) that helps most in learning is *curiosity*, and the most important physical quality that fosters learning in the classroom is its environment or the *ambiance*. Curiosity is something that needs to be nurtured from the earliest years, as discussed in the previous article. Let’s then talk about creating a physical classroom environment that can encourage learning.

Above all, a classroom should be *safe* and *comfortable*. “Safe” means that each and every student entering a classroom (or any educational institution) should feel completely safe from any threat

– physical or emotional – from anyone including their teachers and cohorts. “Comfortable” means a student must have enough space around him/her to feel physically uninhabited and relaxed enough to be able to open up his/her mind to receive the learning.

Safe and comfortable also means a clean and well-maintained classroom – one that has appropriate lighting, proper temperature, and is protected from outside noise, pollution, and foul odours. Proper acoustics is vital if the classroom intends to accommodate a larger-than-average number of students. Heavy wooden chairs, tables, desks, and other furniture seen in a typical classroom in Bangladesh can not only be hazardous (for example, in case of a fire when the students might need to leave the classroom quickly) but a nuisance as well. Each time a chair needs to be moved, there’s a squeaking noise that can stop the classroom conversation

for a few seconds; each time a late-arriving student walks in, a series of desks need to be rearranged and the chorus of clangs and bangs continue for a couple of minutes.

These disruptions, when repeated often and continuously (which is so typical that I wouldn’t be surprised if a survey reveals that more than 10 minutes out of a normal 55-minute teaching time is lost in the process), can have a definite and detrimental effect on learning.

Next, a classroom that is conducive to learning must have its seating arranged in a way that each and every student gets the full view of what’s happening in the teaching process: from being able to see the professor at his/her full length, face all fellow students in the classroom, to being able to see the monitors, the projection boards, the writing space – everything! In a typical seating arrangement inside a typical Bangladeshi classroom, other than the first-row students, no one gets the full view of the instructor (unless he/she moves around – which is also a rare phenomenon), no student gets to see more than a fraction of other students. Students in the back rows may not even hear what a student from the front row is saying/asking. Rarely, if ever, have I seen a classroom that can simply be rearranged for every student to be able to see the others, for the

teacher to have enough space to move around, and for the visuals to be right in front of students.

A great classroom must have tools to “show” students more than to “tell” – dictate, narrate, describe, and so on. It must also have the ability for the students to get up from their seats, move around, discuss the learning material with others and be able to rehearse with/teach others. The Learning Pyramid, developed by the National Training Laboratories Institute in the United States, states that students remember only 10 percent of what they read from text, but retain almost 90 percent of what they teach others. This model suggests that, for deep and long-term learning, students must have the tools and space in the classroom to practise teaching.

Designing a great classroom must be the product of a thoughtful decision-making process: who are we teaching, how, and for what purpose? Are we allowing students to take centre stage in this space, or are we letting instructors play the dominating role? A poorly designed classroom will not produce good learning. A well-thought-out classroom, on the other hand, will bring joy and spontaneity among the learners, foster the spirit of learning, and make for happy and deep learners.



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ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

A great classroom has two teachers. We all know the first one who stands before the students and inspires them with his/her knowledge. The second is the classroom itself – the space of our learning. We are often oblivious to its profound influence on us. Defining the second “teacher” is not easy because it has multiple dimensions, among which are its physical environment and social climate.

The physical environment of the classroom can narrate a lot of stories about us, our attitude to learning, and the world we inhabit.

Rabindranath Tagore envisioned Shantiniketan (meaning “the abode of peace”) in the image of traditional Indian hermitages, which took shape in the forests of ancient India, arguing that the best humanistic learning is possible only when it occurs in harmony with nature. Tagore introduced an eco-psychological concept of nature to explain how

the forest symbolises the “diverse processes of renewal of life” and the precious freedoms that define it. In his 1909 essay “*Tapoban*” (“forest of purity”), he wrote, “India’s best ideas have come where man was in communion with trees and rivers and lakes, away from the crowds. The peace of the forest has helped the intellectual evolution of man.” In other words, the learner is most active and imaginative when in a natural environment – or at least in its best simulation.

Are Tagore’s ideas still relevant today? Possibly, as an inspiration. Today’s designers of schools may not situate a classroom in the forest, but they endeavour to capture its spirit in the form of natural light, natural ventilation, proximity to greenery, use of natural building materials, and, most importantly, an ethos of openness.

Around the world, designing a classroom today means designing

well-being, environmental

sustainability, resilience, recyclability, and renewable energy adaptiveness, among other factors. The organicity and innocence of the educational Garden of Eden that Tagore dreamed of for Shantiniketan could be a great policy lesson in creating the classroom of the future. Irrespective of what a student is studying, the physical set-up of the classroom must be inspiring, while also being safe, comfortable, and well-equipped. A space is inspiring when its experience induces a feeling of ecological consciousness and reminds the students of the need to be good citizens.

The social climate of the classroom is of utmost importance, too. Classrooms should teach us to be empathetic, community-oriented, and socially conscious. The ideal classroom is one that is gender-sensitive, equity-driven, and affords each student agency in the learning process by recalibrating the traditional uber-primacy of the teacher in the classroom matrix. The spatiality of the ideal classroom and its social environment should empower all students – irrespective of their economic class, gender, and religion – to think that each of them has a role to play in creating an equitable and healthy domain of learning.

As there is no universal formula for an ideal classroom, each university can prioritise configuring classrooms flexibly to inspire learning as a foundational act of worldmaking and an appreciation for democracy. Having a clean, accessible, and gender-friendly toilet – not far from the classroom – is an expression of social justice, spatially inscribed.

But how about technology in the classroom of the 21st century? How would the era of artificial intelligence or ChatGPT intersect with the idea of *tapoban*? The ideal classroom should be properly equipped with user-friendly audio-visual systems and other learning-focused technologies, insofar as technology serves as a tool to facilitate learning itself. In fact, research shows that classrooms in countries with the highest-performing students hardly feature technological marvels.

Having recently read *The World Is Our Classroom: How One Family Used Nature and Travel to Shape an Extraordinary Education* by Cindy Ross (2018), I am tempted to think that the best classroom is the one that knows how to break free from the intellectual claustrophobia of four walls. Such a classroom stops being a room, de-centres the learning process, and embraces the world and its immeasurable diversity as a free school out there.

BANGLADESH V IRELAND

HEAD-TO-HEAD IN ODIS
 Matches 10
 Bangladesh 7, Ireland 2
 No result 1

Bangladesh have won all four ODIs in Sylhet, with three wins against Zimbabwe and a solitary win against the West Indies.

Shakib Al Hasan has taken more ODI wickets than all Irish players in this squad put together.

Shakib Al Hasan is just 24 short of 7000 ODI runs. He will become only the second Bangladesh player to reach this landmark after Tamim Iqbal.

Harry Tector has been the man-in-form for Ireland as he scored three hundreds and four fifties in his last 8 ODI innings.

Liton Das smashed two centuries in the three ODIs against Zimbabwe in Sylhet in 2020.

Bangladesh won their latest ODI encounter against Ireland in Dublin in 2019 in a tri-series involving the West Indies.

“If we win a game, great, if we don't that's fine as long as we are playing a certain way and we are enjoying our cricket.”

Ireland skipper **Andrew Balbirnie** said he was okay with losing in Bangladesh ahead of their three-match ODI series, starting today in Sylhet.



Bangladesh ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal, T20I and Test captain Shakib Al Hasan, head coach Chandika Hathurusingha and veteran batter Mushfiqur Rahim were probably discussing ways to carry their recent form from the shortest format to ODIs in practice at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium on Friday. The Tigers begin their full series against Ireland with the first of the three ODIs in Sylhet today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Hakim-Diya to fight for gold

SPORTS REPORTER

Hakim Ahmed Rubel and Diya Siddiqui pair of Bangladesh moved into the final of recurve mixed team event in the Asia Cup World Ranking Tournament, beating their Australian opponents in the semifinals in Taiwan yesterday.

Hakim and Diya beat Australia by 5-1 sets in the semifinal after getting the better of Malaysia in the quarterfinals by 6-2 sets victory. The Bangladeshi pair will take on Kazakhstan in the final on Sunday.

However, the other events, especially the individual ones, did not quite go according to Bangladesh's expectations. Both Hakim and Diya lost their semifinal matches in their respective individual events.

Diya lost to Lin of Chinese Taipei in 6-0 sets in the women's individual recurve semifinal. Hakim, meanwhile, lost against Rahul of India by 6-4 sets.

While Hakim and Diya will compete for a gold medal in team event, they will have to fight for bronze in individual events.

In the compound group, Ashikuzzaman lost in pre-quarterfinals of men's individual event while Shyamoli Roy reached quarterfinals.

BCB to discuss Shakib controversy after Ireland series

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is unwilling to comment on the ongoing controversy surrounding Shakib Al Hasan after the premier all-rounder went Dubai alongside some other celebrities for the inauguration of Arav Jewellers, owned by Arav Khan, on Wednesday.

Rabiul Islam, alias Arav Khan, of Gopalganj's Kotalipara upazila, is a fugitive accused in the murder of a police official.

The star all-rounder joined Bangladesh's training camp in Sylhet on Friday, a day before the three-match ODI series against Ireland commences at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

"First of all, we were not aware of why and where Shakib went since he had not informed us anything regarding that issue. Like the others, we also got to know about the controversy through media. Since there was a break after the England series, Shakib was not in touch with us during that period," BCB cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to the BCB director, the board was yet to discuss the issue with Shakib given the impending start of the Ireland series. However, Jalal said that they would not be able to comment without first unearthing all the facts.

"We are yet to talk with Shakib since the Ireland series is going to start from tomorrow. Since our board president is out of the country to attend the ICC meeting, we will discuss the matter with the president after his return on March 21. At the moment, we can't comment," he added.

Mohammad Harun Or Rashid, chief of the Detective Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said that they had informed Shakib and other celebrities in attendance of Arav's criminal record, but that did not deter them from fulfilling his business commitments.

He also informed that the detective branch would interrogate Shakib and the other celebrities. On the other hand, Jalal informed that the detective branch had not yet contacted the BCB regarding the issue.

Focus on character and 'game within game'

ABDULLAH AL MEHEDI from Sylhet

In overcast conditions mimicking the 'English weather', the Tigers went about their practice session at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday with individuals looking to build on the confidence from the England series as they geared up for the ODI series against Ireland, slated to begin today.

Towhid Hridoy, Rony Talukdar, Najmul Hossain or Mushfiqur Rahim were following up on their routine of getting the style and technique right.

Shakib Al Hasan gave Chandika Hathurusingha some food for thought regarding batting stances and was soon talking to Shanto at the nets about getting onto the back foot in one fluid movement while clearing the front foot. "The ball will go further," Shakib was seen telling Shanto.

If reinvention is the necessity going forward, adding skills will be the priority. But match scenarios remain important for real growth to take place. "Cricket is the only game where you can't practice the way you want to play," Hathurusingha said in the press conference ahead of the net session yesterday.

The management were looking to increase the pool of players ahead of the ODI World Cup in India. Following the 2-1 ODI series loss to England, the Ireland series presented an opportunity to do

just that. For Hathurusingha, it was about finding the 'character' to rise to match scenarios.

Asked about his experience with the side over the past four weeks, Hathurusingha emphasised the quality of his experience through the two white-ball series against England. England are the best in business and the performances spoke to the Sri Lankan.



"Regardless of the win or loss, I look at different things like character, how they handle situations in the middle and who stands up under pressure. Performance can go up and down. [Jos] Butler is the best batter in the world in white-ball cricket. We really put him under pressure. We were very happy with our attitude, body language and fielding. Even if we had lost both series but I saw those things, I would know that going forward, we were in the right direction," he said.

He said he was trying to

introduce how the 'game within the game' impacted the team. While talking about Hasan Mahmud, he highlighted how the pacer removed Jos Buttler with an outstanding yorker and opened the doors for Mehedi Hasan Miraz to bowl to the lefties in the England line-up. Miraz bagged a career-best four for in that game.

"He [Mahmud] opened the game for us in the second T20I by getting Buttler out. If you look at the game within the game, that allowed us to bring Miraz into the game. The wicket brought out all their left-handers. If Buttler was still there, it would have been a different kind of a game in the end," he said.

"Those games within the game are very important. I am looking for people to stand up and do things. They get confidence from doing these things regularly. The team has confidence in their roles and trust each other to do things. Fizz's two big overs changed the momentum in the third T20I," he added on players turning up with key performances.

Essentially, players will be measuring this series based on how they face up to situations. Mahmudullah Riyad was left out of the squad and although Chandika reminded Riyad 'is still in the mix', performances will now be judged according to match scenarios and new inclusions will get opportunities.

Hosts storm into semifinals

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Bangladesh stormed into the semifinals of Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi tournament with an emphatic 55-27 points victory over England in their fourth match at the Shaheed Noor

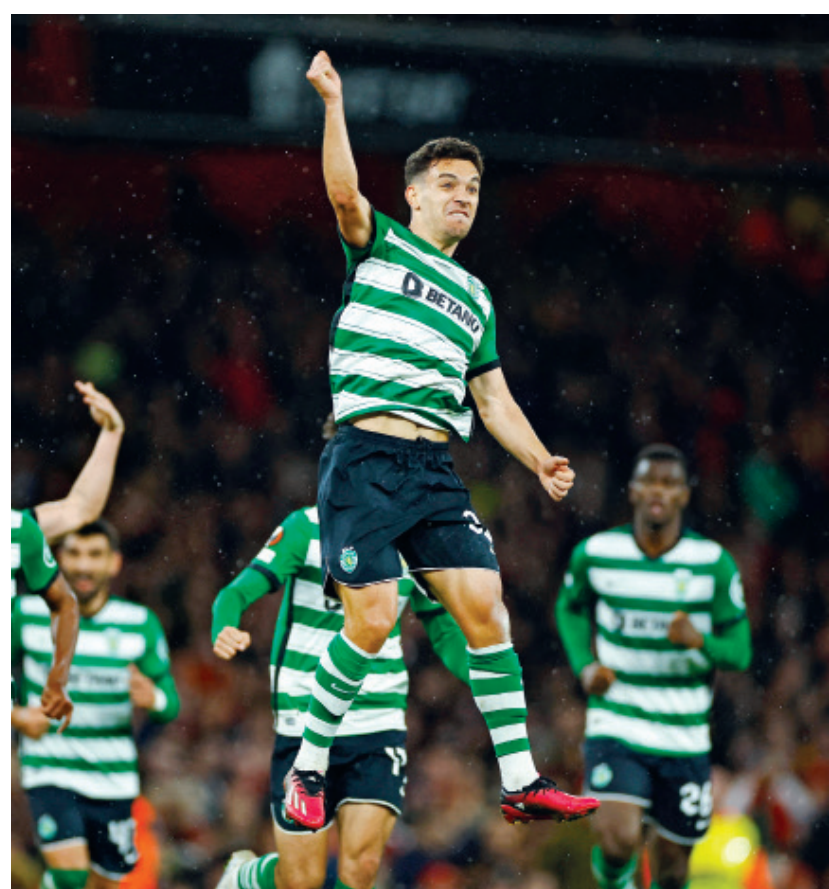
Hossain National Volleyball Stadium yesterday. Four straight wins put Bangladesh on top of Group A and they will face Iraq tomorrow in group-deciding match.

Like the previous matches against Poland, Argentina and Nepal, the men in red and green were unstoppable despite two crucial players - Roman Hossain and Rasel Hasan - sustaining head injuries following a collision between them while defending an opponent player in their own half.

Captain Tuhin Tarafder began the campaign with a point from raid but soon the hosts suffered a blow as Roman and Rasel were ruled out with cuts in their foreheads. However, the hosts secured points by earning two loas in the first half, putting them in the driving seat with a 29-10 points lead.

Raiders Al Amin and Mizanur Rahman carried the momentum in the second half with their successful raids which helped Bangladesh pile on the points. Mizanur collected 14 points in this match to raise his individual points-tally to 54 in four matches.

"I dedicate the victory to the Father of the Nation and we have attained our first goal of reaching the semifinals. Now we are more confident to turn our next goal into reality; we will now focus on reaching the final" said Bangladesh captain Tuhin.



Having caught Arsenal goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale off his line, Sporting Lisbon's Pedro Goncalves found the net with a breathtaking strike from 46 yards out to force extra-time, and an eventual penalty shootout that ended in the visitors' favour at Emirates Stadium on Thursday. The round of 16 second leg Europa League encounter ended level at 1-1 on the night and 3-3 on aggregate as Sporting sealed a spot in the quarterfinals.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Nagelsmann relishing City clash

REUTERS, Munich

Bayern Munich's Champions League quarterfinal clash against Manchester City next month is a massive challenge for the Bavarians but as contenders they need to eliminate big clubs en route to the title, coach Julian Nagelsmann said on Friday.

Bayern, aiming to become European champions for the seventh time, will face a City side whose Spanish coach Pep Guardiola sat on the Bundesliga club's bench from 2013-16 following the draw made in Nyon, Switzerland earlier in the day.

"We watched the draw together with the coaching staff and I think it is a challenging tie but I think it is good because if you end up winning the title ... no one can accuse you of having the luck of the draw," Nagelsmann told a news conference.

"Should there be a Champions League title at the end of the season it would be a great triumph," he said.

Bayern, who came through a group

that included Inter Milan and Barcelona, eliminated star-studded Paris St Germain with a 3-0 aggregate win over two legs in the Round of 16 with PSG's leading striker Kylian Mbappe shut out.

The winners of Bayern's quarterfinal will face either Real Madrid or Chelsea in the semifinals. Real and Chelsea will meet in another exciting quarterfinal clash.

"You have to eliminate these teams if you want to win," Nagelsmann added. "It was PSG, then it would be Manchester City then maybe Real or Chelsea and then in the final either a Portuguese or an Italian team."

"It would be a triumph which would have a high value, one of great mentality and quality."

AC Milan face Napoli and Inter take on Benfica in the other two quarterfinals.

"I take a lot of energy and joy. It is challenging but we will prepare for it. We want to advance even further so we have to win the game against City," Nagelsmann said.

Champions League Quarterfinal Fixtures

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

* First legs: April 11-12
 * Second legs: April 18-19

Guardiola up for good Kompany

AFP, London

Pep Guardiola says managing against Vincent Kompany makes him feel old as the Manchester City manager prepares to face his former captain, now in charge of Burnley, in the FA Cup quarterfinals.

Kompany, who left City after more than a decade's service in 2019, has made a huge impact since taking charge of second-tier Burnley last year. "He was an incredible figure here," said Guardiola, 52, whose club hosts the Championship side on Saturday. "He is one of the biggest legends I have had."

"On the other side, I'm concerned because when you start to play a game and the opponent on the touchline is a player that you had, you realise how old you are becoming."

"That is a little bit frustrating, but it's nice to see him. He wants to win, we want to win, and we will take it seriously."

Kompany lifted the Premier League trophy four times during a glittering career with City in which he also won two FA Cups and four League Cups.

He was an inspirational leader and remained highly influential even in his latter years at the club, when his game time was often limited by injury.

Spanish boss Guardiola, who took charge at City in 2016, also said Friday: "I have one little pity that he was injured for a lot of time when we were together, but the important thing was from day one how he helped me."

"I arrived here from another country, I didn't know the Premier League and he used to make a step forward in the locker room in the bad moments to help the team, and personally to me say the things he believed was best for the club."

"He was an exceptional captain, a top human being, and I'm really pleased (for him)."

"So far they (Arsenal) are the best team in the Premier League. We felt it a couple of weeks ago. The commitment, they are sharp. It will be a big, big battle. In the departments, you have to be ready."

Manchester City Coach
PEP GUARDIOLA



DOES ARSENAL'S REJUVENATED arsenal run deep enough?

Arsenal conceded the second-fastest goal in Premier League history and continued to leak chances in defence. But, when crunch time came, all that went out the window as it has done so this season for the Gunners. In fact, Arsenal have fought back from losing positions to claim 15 points this season, more than any other side.

SAMAMA RAHMAN

When Reiss Nelson's shot rippled the back of the Bournemouth net in the 97th minute and secured an unlikely 3-2 win at the start of March, it seemed that Arsenal had begun to harness the resolve of champions.

Across previous campaigns, the Gunners developed a reputation as a team that would contend for the top spot to start the season before trailing off near December or January and shifting their focus to securing a European spot.

It was a trend many expected Mikel Arteta's side to continue this season after they lost Gabriel Jesus, their defining player at the start of the season, to injury during the World Cup in Qatar last December.

The Brazilian had started all 14 of Arsenal's Premier League games and played a pivotal role, helping the side go five points clear. Arsenal, expected to implode in the aftermath, showed the fire in their belly when they refused to give up an inch, instead adapting perfectly.

Eddie Nketiah became the solution from within while Leandro Trossard was bought in the winter and began to contribute immediately. Others continued to grow

remarkably. Gabriel Martinelli, Bukayo Saka, and Martin Odegaard have all hit double figures for league goals, a feat only matched across Europe's top 10 leagues by the Parisien trident of Neymar, Lionel Messi, and Kylian Mbappe.

Aided by all that, Arsenal remain five points clear after 13 more games, and Jesus back on the cusp of the starting eleven.

There was a moment to remember just ahead of the clash against Bournemouth as well, with Arteta naming a starting XI



that featured no players who had played under Arsene Wenger, the first time since January of 1986.

Yes, Arsenal conceded the second-fastest goal in Premier League history and continued to leak chances in defence. But, when crunch time came, all that went out the window as it has done so this season for the Gunners. In fact, Arsenal have fought back from losing positions to claim 15 points this season, more than any other side.

Despite having one of the youngest first-team squads in the top flight and one of the youngest managers, the team has certainly not shown that 'soft underbelly' that more physical teams

often took advantage of in the past. Such a young group should ostensibly also have been more susceptible to crumbling under pressure in a battle to win the club's first league title in 19 years.

But while implementing broader changes at Arsenal has been an arduous process for Arteta, there was one clear moment when the mentality of the team changed.

Arsenal were chasing a top-four spot with three games to go at the end of last season when losses to Newcastle and Tottenham ended their hopes.

"We all have this fire burning inside because of what happened at the end of last season. The experiences at the end of last season are adding to our team spirit and mentality," goalkeeper Aaron

Ramsdale said. "The day I returned to pre-season, the standard of training had increased. People were demanding more of each other. There were always certain people who were upset when losing in training but now it is a collective."

With their sights on a prize so much greater, the path was bound to be tougher. And, as a cursory look at the fixture list and a precarious five-point lead shows, Arsenal's most trying days are yet to come.

They must first ensure that they do not drop points during their upcoming matches against a struggling Crystal Palace or relegation candidates Leeds United, West Ham (A), and Southampton. During that stint, they will also have to travel to Anfield to take

on Liverpool.

But over the last six games of the season, the task becomes truly monumental.

The Gunners must first travel to the Etihad and face Manchester City, a clash that could potentially define the season, before hosting Chelsea for a London derby. Immediately afterwards, they will be challenged by Newcastle and Brighton, both teams hoping to finish in the European spots.

By that time, they should have their full complement of players. But whether they can latch onto the burgeoning belief that they have discovered and find the fuel for the hard yards will determine if their title challenge will remain just that, or finally translate to something greater.



Race for top four hot up

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

League leaders Arsenal and their biggest competition of the ongoing season, Manchester City, have headlined the title-winning talks in the Premier League for the most part of the 2022-23 campaign but the next two spots that have Champions League qualification at stake have spurred on much more interesting discussions with as many as eight teams currently eyeing the coveted top-four spots.

EFL Cup champions Manchester United currently sit third with 50 points after 26 matches, followed by Tottenham Hotspur, who have 48, having played a match more.

A revitalised United under Erik ten Hag have made their mark on the Premier League but their resurgence has kept them in contention for each of the competitions they've played in. Having won the EFL Cup earlier, ten Hag will have his work cut out as his

side is competing for the Europa League, the FA Cup, and will also have to grind out results to keep their hold of a top-four position in the league.

On the other hand, a recent dip in form has had many question Tottenham's credentials for the top four, and a sucker punch from AC Milan which saw them crash out from the Round of 16 of the Champions League has only intensified those doubts doubled with the lack of urgency, and at times excitement, that Antonio Conte has struggled to deliver. With Liverpool and Newcastle breathing down their neck, Spurs, who have traditionally struggled to perform under pressure, will be feeling the heat while trying to maintain a Champions League spot. Crashing out of Europe perhaps came as a blessing for Conte, who can now channel all his expertise into securing a top-four spot.

Inconsistency has become



synonymous with Liverpool this season. A host of injuries combined with a fresh attacking line has made adjusting difficult for Jurgen Klopp's side, who are sixth on the table. The Reds handed rivals Manchester United a 7-0 mauling and the following week went down 1-0 to bottom-placed Bournemouth. Creating chances hasn't been an issue for Liverpool



but the finishing has. They are second to only City when it comes to creating big chances and top the charts for chances missed. They've hit the woodwork most times this season so far, with 15 coming off the bars and have had the most shots on target per game.

Klopp's men, who are six points off fourth-placed Tottenham, have a difficult run of upcoming fixtures

as they will take on Manchester City, Chelsea, and Arsenal in successive game weeks, which could eventually decide whether the Reds would make the top four or not. But facing the top-six sides haven't been an issue for Liverpool this season as they have thrashed Manchester United, and drew against Chelsea in the league but have given away points to Brighton, Wolves, Brentford, and of course, Bournemouth.

Fifth-placed Newcastle under Eddie Howe have been a revelation as things seemed to have fallen in place for The Magpies who, with the influx of some much-needed fund and the pathway of a project, have been able to turn things around. They have had the tightest defence in the league so far, with only 18 conceded in 25 games and have kept the joint-most clean sheets, 15 with Arsenal. They have not scored many but Howe's side have been stubborn and hard to beat. With technique

and pace upfront, with the likes of Miguel Almiron, Anthony Gordon and Callum Wilson, and an adept back four, it wouldn't be a surprise if Champions League football returns to St. James' Park.

While Brighton, Fulham, and Brentford make up 7th, 8th, and 9th positions on the table, Chelsea, who are 10th after 26 games, seem the most likely to push for at least a Europa League spot considering the sheer quality they have on their side. And with back-to-back wins against Leeds United and Leicester City, Graham Potter's side seems to have found that spark. Resorting back to a back-three has helped the Blues to click but it has to be the forwards who must carry their weight if Chelsea are to make a realistic push for a European spot as they have conceded 26 goals in the 26 matches played, which is only one behind league leaders Arsenal.

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Moscow wants banking relations with Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Russia has emphasised the need for establishing banking relations with Bangladesh and prompt creation of a safe and reliable system for trade following sanctions imposed by the West.

The issues were discussed during the fourth session of the Russia-Bangladesh Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (IGC) held virtually on March 13-15, according to a statement issued by the Russian embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

The Russian side was led by the head of the Federal Agency for Fisheries of the Russian Federation Ilya Shestakov and Bangladesh side was headed by Secretary of Economic Relations Division Sharifa Khan.

Both sides stated that there is a significant potential for trade and economic cooperation, despite the logistical and financial difficulties due to the unstable geopolitical situation, but noted with satisfaction the consistent implementation of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project and activity of Gazprom EP

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Rawhide being processed to make sandpaper beside Bheribadh Road in the capital's Hazaribagh. Most of the tanneries have moved to the Savar tannery estate but some factories are still in Hazaribagh polluting the environment. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

REMOVING EVM EC sues Jubo League leader

AL leader released after quizzing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

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

Ratan Chowdhury, president of AL's Jayshtapura union unit, detained Thursday afternoon, was released hours later after quizzing, said Abdur Razzak, officer-in-charge of Boalkhali Police Station.

"Ratan retrieved the machine and was going to return it. Law enforcers detained him on his way to the polling centre. He was released after quizzing," said the OC.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission yesterday filed a case against local Jubo League leader Nirmalendu Dey Sumon over the incident.

Sajal Das, presiding officer of the Jayshtapura Ramani Mohan High School polling centre, filed the case with the Boalkhali Police Station around 1:00am.

Nirmalendu, is the joint convener of Jubo League's Sreepur union unit, said Rafiqul Islam,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

TEESTA WATER

West Bengal to go ahead with canal plan

A minister of the state goes on record, claims it to be an old project

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A West Bengal state minister yesterday said two additional canals will be dug to divert water from the Teesta and irrigate farms in the northern parts of the state.

Sabina Yeasmin, West Bengal minister of state for irrigation and waterways, said this in her first official comment on the issue.

"This is an old project which was stuck due to some land acquisition-related problems and lack of funds from the central government. We have solved the land-related problems and sent a report to the centre," Yeasmin told PTI in Kolkata.

"These canals are being dug to help local agriculture. If we receive any complaint from the centre, we will share the scientific reasoning for the project with Delhi. But we must remember that the water sharing treaty is a matter between two countries [India and Bangladesh] and we have nothing to do with it."

Also yesterday, Bangladesh foreign ministry spokesperson Seheli Sabrin told reporters in Dhaka that the government was "cautiously observing the situation and verifying media reports. The water resources ministry and Joint River Commission are readying a paper, and we will seek to know the facts. Then we will take necessary measures."

Movement, not polls

BNP grassroots leaders want clear strategy for street agitation

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP's grassroots leaders have suggested the top leadership that the party should not take part in any polls under the incumbent government.

They have also recommended finalising the movement strategy to force the government to hold the next general election under a non-party interim government.

They said that the BNP should focus more on strengthening its organisational capacity by quelling all internal feuds before making a final push for its 10-point demand.

The grassroots leaders also stressed the need for programmes based on public interest to involve the people in the anti-government movement.

A total of 2,367 former and incumbent union parishad chairmen made these suggestions in 10 closed-door meetings with senior BNP leaders at the party chairperson's Gulshan office in the capital from February 23 to March 16.

"We tried to encourage our grassroots leaders to get involved in the movement more closely. We feel encouraged after listening to them as all participants suggested not to join any election under the incumbent government," Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, BNP standing committee member, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said that the union-level leaders suggested gradually gathering momentum for the movement.

Joining the meetings from London virtually, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman talked with the grassroots leaders. The party's standing committee members were also present.

Grassroots leaders opined that the party should identify the betrayers within so that the anti-government movement does not lose steam. They pledged to play an active role in future.

The union-level leaders recommended intensifying the movement in Dhaka and finalising the movement strategy considering the capital as the epicentre.

Sources said that although the grassroots leaders agreed on waging the movement, most of them could not say what exactly could be the strategy for it.

Many leaders talked about intra-party feud and expressed their grievances.

"Through this process [series of meetings], the former and current elected public representatives were being involved in the movement. They pledged to be on the streets. The party will stage protests even during Ramadan," said Emran Saleh Prince, acting office secretary of the BNP.

Sources said the initiative was taken keeping in mind that the former and present UP chairmen have influence in their respective areas, and that they have good ties with the grassroots people.

"If they lead the anti-government movement at the union level, it will have an impact on the ordinary people and ultimately encourage them to join the movement," said a senior BNP leader.

The party held meetings with the union-level leaders with an aim to engage them in the final phase of the movement to press home their 10-point demand, including national election under a non-party interim government and resignation of the incumbent government, he added.

Among the meeting participants were former UP

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

'Cosmic concrete' developed to build houses on Mars

INDEPENDENT ONLINE



Scientists have invented a new type of "cosmic concrete" made with extra-terrestrial dust that they say can be used to build habitats on the Moon and Mars.

Dubbed StarCrete, the material is twice the strength of ordinary concrete and bypasses the need to transport costly construction materials to off-world locations.

The team behind the discovery, based at the University of Manchester, had previously developed a concrete material that used the blood and urine of astronauts as a binding agent for the Martian soil, however this was seen as impractical for large-scale projects.

The new StarCrete instead uses potato starch and a pinch of salt - both of which are commonly found on space missions - in order to bind the simulated Martian dust.

"Since we will be producing starch as food for astronauts, it made sense to look at that as a binding agent rather than human blood. Also, current building technologies still need many years of development and require considerable energy and additional heavy processing equipment which all adds cost and complexity to a mission," said Dr Aled Roberts, Research Fellow at the Future Biomanufacturing Research Hub, and lead researcher for this project.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 8

50 hurt in AL infighting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 50 people were injured in a clash between two factions of the ruling Awami League during the celebration of the 103rd birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and National Children's Day in Patuakhali's Bauphal upazila yesterday.

While, the injured were admitted to local hospitals, Abdul Motaleb Hawlader, the Bauphal upazila unit AL general secretary, was sent to Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital with serious injuries.

On the occasion of Bangabandhu's birthday, local AL lawmaker ASM Feroz and Abdul Motaleb Hawlader, also the upazila chairman, announced separate programmes at the same place and time.

Motaleb and his followers brought out a celebratory procession around 11:00am.

Police obstructed the procession in front of the upazila parishad gate when it was marching towards the party office.

Suddenly, several hundred supporters of Faisal Ahmed Monir, nephew of the lawmaker and upazila unit AL President Feroz, attacked Motaleb and his men with sharp weapons when an altercation broke out between police and him.

Law enforcers fired at least 20 rounds

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Ukrainian soldiers of the Paratroopers' of 80th brigade fire a mortar shell at a frontline position near Bakhmut, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Donetsk region on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tigers set for new challenge

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Overcast conditions welcomed the Bangladesh ODI side at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday as they put in the final touches in practice ahead of the first ODI against Ireland, which will begin at 2:00PM today.

Bangladesh's unbeaten home record in ODIs ended with a 2-1 series defeat to England, but under coach Chandika Hathurusingha in his second reign, Bangladesh will be expected to return to winning ways. There were chances of light showers in the morning but sunny conditions may give way, according to weather forecast.

There were some clouds hovering over Bangladesh team management as well, with Mehedi Hasan Miraz having suffered an injury yesterday while the team played football during the warm-up as a ball hit him above the eye.

Captain Tamim Iqbal was also suffering from fever on Thursday, but batted and fielded during the session. "There's a little bit concern with his [Tamim's] health. Not fitness. I think he has some kind of viral infection. He will bat and field today. We will make the call afterwards," Hathurusingha said.

Miraz had a blood clot in his eye and will remain under observation till the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Sheema Oxygen Plant

Sitakunda's curse of industrial accidents



In Sonaichhari union alone – where both BM depot and Sheema Oxygen Plant are located – there are around 50 shipbreaking yards, several re-rolling mills, oxygen plants and one LP gas plant, said Union Parishad Chair Monir Ahmed. Most of these industries are located within residential areas.

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Three devastating explosions and fire incidents in Sitakunda's industrial units within nine months have created panic among its residents who live in close vicinity of such units.

Since the pre-liberation era, several industrial units have been set up in Chattogram's Sitakunda due to being close to the country's premier seaport and the Dhaka-Chattogram highway.

However, the upazila has been rapidly industrialised in the last couple of decades in an unplanned manner. Industrial units have been set up near the residential areas, that too without proper safety measures. All three latest catastrophic incidents unravelled the absence of workers' safety equipment and a lack of regular monitoring by the industry authorities, according to experts.

On June 4 last year, a fire and explosion at a private inland container depot (ICD) – BM Container Depot – at Keshabpur ward in Sonaichhari union, claimed the lives of 51 people. The incident left more than 200 injured and damaged a huge quantity of import



Cotton warehouse

Chhoto Kumira under Kumira union, took around 30 hours of frantic efforts of firefighters from the Fire Service and Civil Defence and members of the armed forces to douse the blaze.

The warehouse stored around 2,700 tonnes of cotton.

According to firefighters, the warehouse had no fire safety equipment to douse the primary blaze.

Sitakunda has frequently made headlines for accidents inside shipbreaking yards, steel re-rolling mills and other factories. In the past 18 years, 251 workers have been killed in accidents at shipbreaking yards in the upazila.

Among the seven deceased in the Sheema Oxygen Plant blast last week, two people died after metal fragments

from the blast flew and hit them at Kadamrusul Bazar and Saleh Carpet areas, both nearly half a kilometre away from the site.

In both incidents, the blasts were heard from several kilometres away and shattered windowpanes of houses nearly a kilometre away from the sites. Many of the injured in the Sheema plant blast suffered from a loss of hearing. Many residents complained of health-related problems due to toxic fumes from the BM Depot fire last year.

In Sonaichhari union alone – where both BM depot and Sheema Oxygen Plant are located – there are around 50 shipbreaking yards, several re-rolling mills, oxygen plants and one LP gas plant, said Union Parishad Chair Monir Ahmed. Most of these industries are located within residential areas.

"Previously, we witnessed accidents inside factory premises. But now residents in nearby areas are also getting killed or injured," Monir said.

A homemaker, who resides on the ground floor of a three-story building within 200 yards of Sheema Plant, said several windowpanes of the building got damaged due to the blast last week.

"Metal pieces flew and landed in the front yard of the house where our children play. It seems we are now not

safe at all even at our homes," she said.

Salim Ullah, a resident of Kadamrusul area, who was on the balcony of his rented house around half a kilometre from the oxygen plant during the blast, said he could feel the impact as though a strong earthquake had hit.

He also said the place where the metal fragment landed and killed a person is not far from his house.

"My family is in a state of constant panic. I feel like we are sitting on bombs," he said.

Shamsul Alam, a resident of Keshabpur, built a house around four years ago just 500 feet away from Sheema Oxygen Plant. During last year's explosion at BM Depot, two window panes of his house were damaged, which have recently been repaired.

However, during the oxygen plant blast, metal fragments hit different parts of his house, damaging the walls, the main gate and the window panes.

"I was about to go out when I heard

the blast. My wife fainted after hearing the sound," said the 65-year-old.

There are four to five factories, including two oxygen plants, in close vicinity of his house, said Shamsul.

Sitakunda Upazila Chairman SM Al Mamun said most of these industries were set up in an unplanned manner near the residential areas.

"The government is developing economic zones and those are suitable places for such heavy industries. Regular monitoring by the respective authorities of these units can avert such deadly accidents," he added.

Meanwhile, no relevant government body has the exact figure on how many industrial units are in the upazila.

Officials of the Department of Inspections for Factories and Establishments (DIFE)

failed to provide the data when the deputy commissioner (DC)

of Chattogram asked for it during a meeting on March 5, following the blast in the oxygen plant.

According to a DIFE official, a total of 335 industries are currently in operation in Barabkunda, Sonaichhari

Bhatiary and Fouzderhat areas of the upazila. Among these, there are 85 shipbreaking yards, 37 steel re-rolling mills, three oxygen plants and 204 other small and large industries, he mentioned, wishing anonymity.

However, according to Sitakunda Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shahadat Hossain, around 480 small and large industries are located here.

As many as 12 LP gas plants have been set up in only two villages of the upazila, leaving villagers worried about their safety, said sources.

Contacted, Chattogram DC Abul Bashar Mohammad Fakhruzzaman admitted that the data provided by the UNO is not updated.

"We are going to start a survey in this regard and initiate drives soon to ensure fire safety and other compliances in the Sitakunda industrial unit," said the DC.



BM Depot

and export containers.

On March 4, exactly nine months later, at least seven people were killed and over 25 were injured after a huge explosion at Sheema Oxygen Plant in the same ward and within less than one kilometre away from the BM Depot.

The latest incident occurred on Saturday morning. A massive fire that broke out at a cotton warehouse, owned by Unitex Spinning Mill at



BM Depot

FEATURE

On Coke Studio Bangla x Meghdol's 'BONOBIBI' and music as a form of storytelling

"Our folk literature, which includes narratives and lyrics, as well as epigrammatic verses, have survived because they express something significant in our lives", says Professor Kaiser Haq

MAISHA SYEDA, HRISHIK ROY

When Coke Studio Bangla released Meghdol's *Bonobibi*, their second song of season 2, listeners found themselves torn between loving the song and questioning it. Questioning as to why the song was done under the banner of Coke Studio, a project funded by an American-based multinational corporation; questioning what qualifies Meghdol, a band known for singing about urban life in Dhaka city, to sing about tales originating in the Sundarbans; and why the song didn't delve deeper into the history and background of the stories they were trying to tell. It has raised a wider question about how music plays a role in storytelling.

There are no notable books that compile the parables of Khona, which serves as part of the inspiration for the Coke Studio Bangla song. Khona's adages, which reportedly originated in the Indian subcontinent, have recently been compiled only in a handful of books like *Khonar Bochon* (Ovro Prokash, 2021) by Sabbir Hafez, and her origin story examined in books like Purvi Basu's *Kingbodontir Khona O Khonar Bochon*

called Ibrahim", the play recounts for Kanai, "a childless but pious Muslim who led the austere life of a Sufi faqir. Through the intervention of the archangel Gabriel, Ibrahim became the father of blessed twins, Bon Bibi and Shah Jongoli." The archangel informs the twins that "they were to travel from Arabia to the country of eighteen tides" — athhero bhatir desh — in order to make it fit for human habitation." Bonbibbi's arrival in the jungle is accompanied by a prayer call, an azaan, and as the twins are attacked by—and win over—the demon king Dokkhin Rai, Bonbibbi is seen to be generous in victory. One half of the tide country she leaves as forests to be ruled by Dokkhin Rai.

As SK Mandal writes, the story of *Banbibir Keramati* and *Banbibir Jahuranama* (or *The Glory of Bonbibbi* as it appears in *The Hungry Tide*) has since been recreated in plays, musicals, and reworked to form parts of or the entirety of other narratives, though not to the extent that would allow them to gain mainstream recognition.

As poet, academic and literary critic Professor Kaiser Haq addressed in his session on The Goddesses of Bengal at this year's Dhaka Lit Fest, "Bonbibbi

were looking for were regional folklores about women empowerment that often fall through the cracks compared to dominant and more popular literature.

However, *Bonobibi* is not the first instance in which stories have taken musical forms to reach out to a wider audience in South Asia. One of the most prominent examples is the genre of Qawwali, which often incorporates poetic verses and discusses historical figures and themes such as divine love and spiritual redemption.

Even though the use of musical instruments in Qawwali was initially prohibited and the form meant to be strictly lyrical due to its devotional nature, elements from Indian classical music travelling into Qawwali helped the genre evolve into its present form. One of its most significant influences was the poet and musician Amir Khusrau, whose devotional poem, *Chhaap Tilak Sab Chheeni*, has been adapted by notable qawwals across centuries, including the likes of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Sabri Brothers.

Other prominent poems-turned-songs from the region include *Shikwa* and *Jawab-e-Shikwa* by Muhammad



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

intercultural exchange across religious, cultural and class divides.

As Anuradha Bhattacharjee and Shadab Alam note in their article "The Origin and Journey of Qawwali: From Sacred Ritual to Entertainment?", in the *Journal of Creative Communications* (2012), "Music was first formalized in India in connection with preserving the sruti texts, primarily the four Vedas."

Often, musical narrations of mythological tales, including the likes of the *Ramayanas* and the *Mahabharatas*, allow younger audiences to learn the more important parts of vast epics, which plays an important role in these stories being passed down from one generation to another.

"Our folk literature, which includes narratives and lyrics, as well as epigrammatic verses, have survived because they express something significant in our lives", says Professor Kaiser Haq, who authored *The Triumph of The Snake Goddess* (Harvard University Press, 2015). "Thus ... at the end of [the month of] Shraavan, there are performances of the Manasa tales in many villages."

When these stories are adapted to platforms like Coke Studio—which has built rapport over several years from their Pakistani and Indian counterparts—or when popular bands like Bangla or Lalon sing about the teachings of Lalon Shah, they become relatable for a wider range of audiences. Such adaptation from one medium to another has been carried across for centuries, for instance, Kazi Toufikul Islam Emon recreating Akhtaruzzaman Elias's 1996 novel *Khwabnama* as a theatre production for Prachyanat. It is, therefore, only natural transition that folktales be adapted to contemporary poetry and music.

However, questions may arise as to whether these stories, packed with geopolitical, social, and cultural nuances, are being appropriated—for instance, if and when they're not told by the locals of the originating story, or if feminist discourses are told by men, and so forth.

Sohini Alam of the band Khiyo believes that, "It is not a matter of who is allowed to tell what story, as long as the story gets amplified." She talked about the London-based, women-run Komola Collective arts company and their theatre adaptation of Bonbibbi's story in *Daughter of the Forest*, which recreates the tale for a UK-based audience. Khiyo worked on the music for the play.

The band worked under the assumption that their mostly white,

English-speaking and/or UK-based audience would not understand the lyrics. "So we give a one line synopsis of the song and what we mostly focus on is not necessarily the meaning of the lines but the overall vibe".

She explains, "Dance and music, they're languages already [...] and if you can connect with people on an emotional level, the fact that they don't understand every single word is less of a barrier."

Kaiser Haq echoes this idea: "The fact that our pop bands are using folk materials testify to the endurance of our folk culture. I am not bothered by charges of (mis)appropriation. We should simply respond critically to a song and appreciate it if it uses the folk material interestingly."

"It's a sign of good health in a culture when those involved in different media (music, theatre, film, writing) produce new versions of traditional stuff", he says.

Shibu Kumar Shill adds, "It is connection and relatability to a story through emotions that win over, and adapting to different artforms, especially music, adds dimensions and new perspectives to traditional stories—that is what we intended with *Bonobibi*."

In their song, the celebration of powerful women like Bonbibbi and Khona from traditional folktales converge to create a narrative that emphasises the roles these characters play in nature, as well as in forming the cornerstones of various cultural practices.

"Joishtho te tara fote / tobe janbe borsha bote (when stars shine during the month of Joishtho, it signals of Monsoon)", Meghdol sings in *Bonobibi*, and as listeners, we get a sense of the prowess Khona possessed. When we realise that this adage originated sometime between 800 to 1200 AD and is based on later scientific findings, it attests to us the power of nature and of the entity who channels such power. Their lyrics further say, "Ei prithibir mora ghaashe, tobu muktir phul fote" (Flowers of freedom still grow from the wilted grass of the Earth)". The verses remind us that a withering, war-torn Earth can still birth new life and hopes of freedom. In not so many words, the song echoes the innate force of mother nature and of Bissho Mata (Mother Earth), and shows us why we refer to the Earth as a mighty feminine entity.

Maisha Syeda is the sub editor of Daily Star Books. Hrishik Roy is an intern at Daily Star Books.



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRIYAR

(Onopokash, 2015). The story narrates the prophetic powers of a girl who appears to Bengali king Bikram Aditya when his kingdom faces difficulties with their harvest due to unpredictable weather; her witty predictions help him turn his misfortune around.

Nor can one find the story of Bonbibbi in its full, "verified" form in a recent novel; these stories exist primarily as word of mouth, while only a handful of widely recognised writers, such as Amitav Ghosh, have touched upon the story of Bonbibbi in their works, such as in *The Hungry Tide*, *Gun Island*, and in his verse retelling of *Junglenama*.

As SK Mandal writes in *Banbibir Pala* (Gangchil Publisher, 2016), the first recorded texts mentioning Bonbibbi were that of poets Bayanuddin and Munshi Mohammad Khater, circa 19th century, and it is thought that the tale originated in the Sundarban region around the 15th century with the emergence of Islam.

Through a stage play enacted in the Sundarban village of Lusibari in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh's protagonist Kanai learns how the story originated in Medina. "[H]ere lived a man

is revered by everyone who lives in the Sundarbans. No one will venture into the forest, whether Hindu or Muslim, without going to the Bonbibbi shrine and doing something ritualistic. She is the protector. Dokkhin Rai, the tiger god, is the threat. This is part of their daily life. This is the only example in Bangladesh where you have this kind of a cult which is still very alive. Elsewhere, Hindus have their own practices, Muslims have their own practices."

And so, these stories have persevered. "We are not here to talk [exclusively] about Bonbibbi, or about Khona's teachings, or even [SM] Sultan", Shibu Kumer Shill tells us, speaking about Meghdol's motivation to adapt Bonbibbi and Khona's parables to contemporary Bangladeshi music. "We wanted to bring to the foreground the idea that even in [mediaeval] times, a narrative centred around a female protagonist existed—even before the Women's Rights Movement."

Meghdol's intention with *Bonobibi* was to identify and highlight women centric discourses that have been passed down for generations through oral traditions of storytelling. What they

lqbal, which have been sung not only by the above-mentioned qawwals, but also in Coke Studio Pakistan.

As Fared Ayaz and Abu Mohammad's raw vocals merge into Natasha Baig's Sufi rock music in Coke Studio Pakistan's adaptation of the poems, one cannot help but be in awe of the fusion created.

The poetic and devotional lyrics such as "Ai Khuda shikwa e- arbab e-wafa bhi sun le" (O God listen to the complaint of these loyal mortals) converging with the intense melody created by rock instruments adds a new dimension to the poetry; it shows the room for experimentation available with such poetic verses. Additionally, the seemingly rebellious nature of the poem *Shikwa* is given more depth by the electric guitar and the unconventional way in which it is sung, seeming to defy traditional modes of incorporating poetry into music. These experiments make the poems much more potent for a younger audience.

Such inclusion of literature in music has often allowed stories from one culture to be introduced within different groups of people, which has fostered

POETRY

Will you hear my wishes

RAIAN ABEDIN

Today, I am no dead man. But I am not happy, I will not lie to you. I know I spoke to you last summer, and my voice must have tasted like the breeze between seasons, all soft and kind. Those are the only two things you ever seemed to like. I know that because I've sat one foot across from you on days when you would allow me to look at you. And all I would ever do is look, too scared to even have our hands touch, but it did almost

happen a few times. In the haze of the bright Sun, my mind was a city of daydreams made of smaller dreams; they seemed to be all about you, I wanted to sit next to you, across from you, anywhere where your eyes could fall easily to. Hear you talk about how you think the things everyone likes are overrated, hear you talk about the food you like cooking, how you think that walking around at 11pm is the most fun thing to do in this unfun city. I'd like to listen to the days

pass by and I'd like to be greedy and I'd like to ask you to hold me and bring our days close together, bit by bit by bit. Love is a decision only to be made after you've seen the sorrow in each other's hearts so look at me, see me, grow to know me, tell me how I can see the sorrow you hold on to. Show me if your grief can live with mine, tell me a story over mundane food neither of us like. Love is a decision We live past the unhappiness of today, we

always do. Even in death we outlive it all. So live through it, hold my shaky hand and hear my shaky voice I exist under your sighs, waiting to see the lines under your eyes crinkle up in a smile one day, when the sun doesn't burn as much, when the curse of the days lessen on us— when we're tired of saying 'I'm tired' to each other— I'd like to sit across from you again, then.

Raian Abedin is a contributor and a regular at SHOUTxDSBooks Slam Poetry Nights.



DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI



THE 'NO-PLAN' nomadic life



**VESPA
Ilario Lavarra**

This is the reason I travel with my Vespa, because at 60kmph you can escape nothing. You cannot escape from your fears, you cannot escape from the sun, you cannot escape from the rain.

SAKEB SUBHAN

For those of us wedded and welded to our routine-ruled existences, there is an almost jealous fascination about people like Vespa Ilario Lavarra.

And of course, there are many more of us than there are those like him. We are in the vast majority because the human mind seems to have (de)volved past the age-old practice of nomadic wandering. But a small minority finds richness and something approaching true freedom in the nomadic ways of old.

We take stories like Vespa's as fantasies. People who have traversed large swathes of the world on bicycles or on foot, or sailed seas alone on sailboats, or gotten on a Vespa almost six years ago, and did not look back. Or maybe they look back, but the desire to look ahead is greater.

Most of the time, these are stories we hear about from others, see on YouTube, read about in travel articles.

When brought face to face with such an individual, however, the sense of detached wonderment gives way to genuine curiosity, much like suddenly discovering that actual people are enacting the scenes behind the screen of a movie hall in real time, and that along with the glamour, the bruises are real.

When Vespa was last home in Milan, Donald Trump was still president of the US,



for almost two years [on another Vespa that is now in a museum in Italy]. From New York to Alaska, then to Argentina and back to New York again. Twenty-one countries, and 82,000km.

"When I came back from this long journey, I went back to work and I decided, with my savings, I would visit the rest of the world."

The question was inevitable. What would a "normal" person need to do to just start on a journey like his?

"The most important preparation is not physical. The most important preparation is mental. Because you have to face a lot of bad situations on your journey. So, if you are not well-trained mentally, at the first problem you go back home. All your values, your comfort zone, you have to forget them. And for sure, at the beginning, to be reborn from zero is not easy at all... you have to change your point of view of the world, you have to change your habits. You have to change yourself. And when you are ready, you say, let's go around the world, it's a beautiful experience."

But he is quick to remind you that it is not all beauty. There is a lot of pain, both emotional and physical. There is of course the pain of leaving behind friends and family, as well as saying goodbye to friends made on the road.

"This is the most difficult part. To be free... what I read once was, freedom is not free, and that is the point. You have to handle the bonds, you have to handle the good and bad moments, and you have to pay sometimes for freedom."

"I had a girlfriend and we split after I had been on the road for three years. It was 2020, just a few weeks before Covid. It was very painful because I was alone and we had been together for 10 years. But of course, we cannot continue like that," the 40-year-old Italian said with the air of someone who had processed

the pain, and gotten back on the Vespa.

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, he was stuck in Iran for eight months, then Turkey for another eight. But he only used those times building friendships and delving into local culture.

He also talked about going through countries where there were ongoing conflicts, and the dangers that held - from travelling through the jungles of Cameroon in 2017 despite being warned by locals that rebels kill people inside the forest every day, to staying in a police station in Yemen for a week because he could go no farther as there was a war going on.

Going through Africa, he contracted malaria in Angola and recovered in Namibia. He suffered from Typhus fever in Guinea.

"I was in Conakry, Guinea. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. I remember I was very sick, in a lot of pain, in a hospital in that little village. It was a hospital without electricity, with chicken going around the room. In Africa, you are not able to say whether you will be alive tomorrow. In the end, this is my philosophy - this is my day-by-day life."

And so, we come to the real reason he does this.

"But the balance is, every day you have new experiences, you meet new people, you enjoy new food, you feel you are living your life. I always say 'one life, live it'. I will go on, carry on as long as the positive is more than the negative. Till my desire of discovering something new is more than my sadness and pain to leave everything behind."

"I don't want to just see the world. I want to get my hands dirty with the world. This is the reason I travel with my Vespa, because at 60kmph you can escape nothing. You cannot escape from your fears, you cannot escape from the sun, you cannot escape from the rain. That's what I want to live... I want to experience every aspect of this world. This is the reason I am travelling low budget [around 10 to 15 euros per day] with this 50-year-old Vespa that has a maximum speed of 60kmph."

He said he chose to travel on Vespas also because he has a passion for the two-wheelers, it's easy to make running repairs and spare parts are available everywhere. As importantly, people love the Vespa and its non-threatening presence, and Vespa lovers, like in the Vespa Club Bangladesh, welcome him with open arms.

Perhaps it is this near primal urge to be

one with the world he travels through that when asked about the most stunning sights he has seen, he does not come up with obvious answers.

"I love the Iguazu Falls [in Argentina], which are huge, but with more levels and they are very impressive."

"Landscapes in general, I really love Bolivia, or the Tajikistan mountains or even north part of Pakistan. This kind of unique, remote areas where you are in the middle of nature."

"I crossed the desert at night in Saudi Arabia because it was May and it was 50 degrees during the day. So, I spent one night crossing 1,000km of desert. Me alone, this dark sky, with these dunes, and this silence. I remember when I switched off my Vespa, there was an airplane high in the sky and I could hear its engine. No sounds all around me, and it was an amazing experience because you are really in touch with the elements, nature and the world."

He has also developed a special place in his heart for Bangladesh. "What surprised me or what I liked most were the paddy fields, it is something unique. Okay, for you maybe it's nothing but for a traveller who comes here and is surrounded by this green ocean of palm trees and these beautiful fields, water, and people dressed in colourful clothes - these are some of the things that most impressed me."

"And I really loved the tea gardens in Sylhet, and the long beach of Cox's Bazar with these wonderful boats, colourful boats with these strange shapes I have never seen in my life."

Having already crossed 185,000km on this journey, he plans to travel to Australia, then take a flight to the US before circling back to Europe.

Would he then go back home?

"Mine is a no-plan life. I know this is the most difficult thing for normal people to understand because normal people have schedules from eight in the morning, so you



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PHOTOS:
VESPANDA ILARIO
LAVARRA



the Big Five were a big thing in Bangladesh cricket, Ukraine was only metaphorically in Vladimir Putin's crosshairs, and the term "global pandemic" was associated with something that happened a 100 years ago.

Since September 16, 2017, Vespa has been on his 1968 Vespa and gone to Norway, then down to Spain, down and up the continent of Africa, into Turkey, the middle east, and central Asia. Recently he came to Bangladesh, the 97th country on this most epic of journeys. He entered through Satkhira, and over more than 40 days went to Barishal, Kuakata, Cox's Bazar, Saint Martin's Island, Dhaka, and Sylhet before going back through the capital to Satkhira and back into India.

"I had a degree in economics and worked in an office, but this was not my goal in life," Vespa said during the interview with The Daily Star. "My goal is to travel as much as I can, enjoy my life as much as I can. So, I put together my two passions - travelling and Vespa."

"This is the second long journey because 10 years ago I was in the Americas. I travelled



cannot imagine how you can live without a plan. But the only point is you have to live this journey and just follow the flow."

One can only hope that he continues on this incredible journey where beauty and pain go hand in hand and struggle for primacy, and that the positive outweighs the negative for as long as possible.

To know more about Vespa's travels, to buy merchandise or support him, visit vespanda.com or look him up on Facebook (Vespa - Ilario Lavarra), Instagram (@vespanda_ilario.lavarra) or Youtube (Vespa Ilario Lavarra)





Team can only win if board officials are shown on TV during matches: study

“If you notice, when matches are being played in England, India or Sri Lanka ... basically anywhere else in the world, the cameras focus on the crowds when they pan away from the action on the field,” said Abul Babul

UNSPORTING CORRESPONDENT

Chapasthan's national cricket team has recently gone on an unexpected winning streak, romping to victory in matches against opposition no one expected them to beat.

Experts, pundits, ex-cricketers, and teastall and armchair experts have been trying to unearth the reason behind this run of success. People have been pointing to factors ranging from a change in coach to injection of youth that has allowed them to play a more fearless brand of cricket.

Days of speculation ended when a group of researchers released a study yesterday, and the results were not really shocking.

The study by Bombshell Brothers, the research group that insists that each of their published study be referred to by the adjective “bombshell”, found that unlike anywhere else in the world, the cameras in Chapasthan are always focused on the cricket board officials

during home matches.

“If you notice, when matches are being played in England, India or Sri Lanka ... basically anywhere else in the world, the cameras focus on the crowds when they pan away from the action on the field,” said Abul Babul, the lead researcher.

“But in Chapasthan, it has been the practice to focus on the board officials in the VIP box and not the passionate supporters. While this has always been the case, recently the prevalence has increased by 258 percent, and cameramen have been focusing especially on the board president, Kamrul Hasan Phapa.

“We believe this is the reason for the recent uptick in results,” said the research by Bombshell Brothers, which is funded by Board, Cricket Board (B,CB).

When asked for the reason behind this, Abul said it was obvious. “In other countries, it is the passion of the fans that bring success. Players are eager to impress the fans so that they can

get popular and net lucrative sponsorships.

“But in Chapasthan, the fans will support them no matter how badly the team plays. Here, the players really want to impress the board members, especially B,CB President Phapa. So, he has asked the camera operators to always focus on him, whether or not the team are doing well. And it has worked.”

A player, requesting anonymity, said whenever they see Phapa on the big screen, they get scared straight.

“If we are doing poorly, or if someone has dropped a catch, Phapa enormous face on the enormous screen scares the player half to death. It makes a big difference to know that he is watching.”

In related news, sales of masks bearing Phapa's images have gone through the roof in the leadup to the next round of matches, as fans are eager to fulfil their dream of being shown on live TV.

The masks are produced by the B,CB.

Content creator rules her own universe of 5

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

A content creator recently declared that she had made her own social media universe where everything revolves around the number 5.

The story began with the creation of a Facebook page in just 5 minutes and the appointment of 5 moderators, but little did she know that 5 minutes of hard work would eventually pay off in less than 5 years.

She sat for the HSC exams and the fairytale continued when she secured golden GPA-5, a most desired result-sheet allegedly made of 5 carats of gold.

Her friends insisted that she have a grand party in a 5 star hotel. At that stage of the story, she was still unaware of her own universe.

The medical admission test approached and she released a video just 5 days before the exam day, showing people how she was so calm before the storm.

She sat for admission test and waited for the result as if neither she nor we knew what score was coming! Yes, it was 5 again and she eventually understood the mysterious universe she has been living in.

After her stellar result came to light, those who used to troll her became fans overnight and considered her the “Iron woman” who created her own universe all by herself. One of the fans, refusing to opine in English, said in Bangla, “Aapu amader onupreron.”

“I would get panicked on nights before exams until I saw her video where she danced with visible peace on her face despite heading to one of the biggest exams of her life in just 5 days,” Tausif, arguably the biggest fan of this content creator, said.

Our Satireday correspondent found after hectic research that her content helped people remain serene even if when they were under tremendous pressure. Her content gave people the ability to make videos for social media, regardless of whether they were going to an exam hall or shopping mall.



PHOTO: FREEPIK.COM

Finally, our correspondent tried to contact the content creator. After the first four calls were unanswered, she picked up on the fifth try. When asked if she had long been aware of the unusual activities in her universe, she said, “No, I was totally unaware of the matter until I scored 5 despite studying 5 minutes daily. Later, I understood that if my five minutes could earn me 5 marks, I could have easily scored 100, had I studied 100 minutes a day.”

When asked if it was possible to study 100 minutes a day in the universe of 5, she said, “Yeah, you just need to sit to study twenty times a day.”

“Hey guys, I am just going to hit the 5 lakh milestone soon. Help me reach that milestone. It will not take more than 5 seconds to find my page and hit the like button,” she said when asked for a message to her fans.

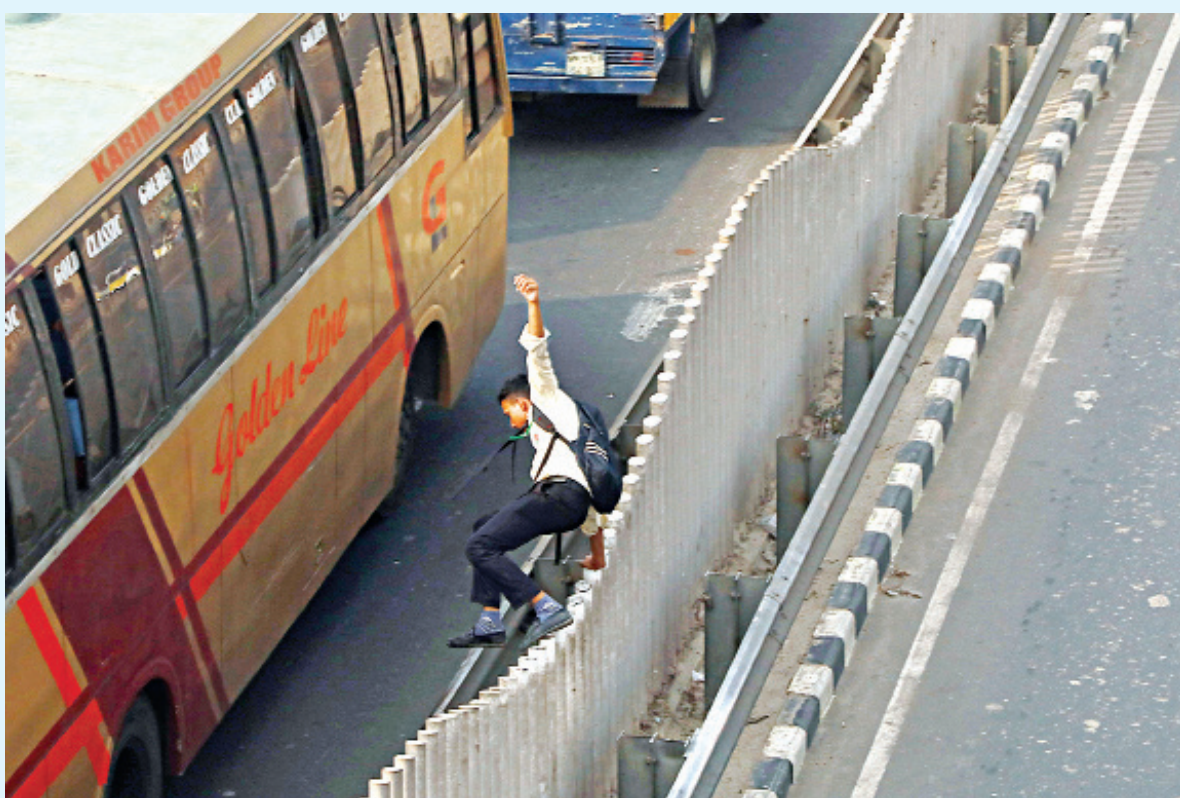


PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



PHOTO: STS

PARKOUR!

The city corporation has started a noble initiative to improve the fitness and wherewithal of the city dwellers. “Mission Parkour!” will encourage residents to jump over central reservations, dodge buses, trucks, rickshaws, private cars, CNG-run auto-rickshaws and other pedestrians as they go about their daily business in the city. CC officials said that to achieve this aim, pavements are being dug up and sewers opened up to dissuade pedestrians from walking on “designated” areas. This will ensure that pedestrians are walking among the vehicular traffic and that will in turn make them fitter as they have to perform acrobatics to survive. Their heart health will also improve as they will learn to cope with the shock of almost being killed (if they are lucky) on a daily basis.