



The Daily Star

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

SECOND EDITION

"I've been hearing now for the past three months (that) China is going to provide significant weapons to Russia... They haven't yet."

US President Joe Biden



DHAKA SUNDAY MARCH 26, 2023

Plus 4 pages on Independence Day Special

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXIII No. 71

CHAITRA 12, 1429 BS

www.thedailystar.net

RAMADAN 3, 1444 HJRI

20 PAGES : Tk 15.00



B4
People won't benefit soon from gas line



P15
'Bangladesh needed this victory'



P11
Water needs to be at centre of global political agenda, says UN chief



P7
The price of blood: Veteran actors reminisce independence

Recognise March 25 as Int'l Genocide Day

PM urges UN

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon all international communities, including the United Nations, to recognise March 25 as International Genocide Day.

She made the call while speaking at a meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Nomination Board at the Gono Bhaban, reports UNB.

On the night of March 25 in 1971, Pakistani military junta resorted to mass killings and arson in Dhaka to implement their blueprint to thwart AL's assumption of office following its victory in the 1970 general election.

The night also witnessed Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's proclamation of independence before he was arrested by Pakistani troops and subsequently taken to West Pakistan.

Hasina, also the Awami League president, said that Bangladesh started its journey with these "wounds". She noted how Pakistani occupational forces committed genocide on unarmed Bangladeshis.

"They unleashed attacks on the people of Bangladesh in a horrific way and killed people for nine long months."

The AL chief said some 30 lakh people were martyred, and three crore became homeless.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Anti-war crimes campaigners hold a torch vigil at the Central Shaheed Minar last night as they pay respect to the martyrs of March 25, 1971, on the 53rd Genocide Day. They led a procession from the Shaheed Minar grounds to Dhaka University's Jagannath Hall.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

THE WORD 'BANGLADESH' A journey from literature to politics

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Bangladesh today proudly steps into its 53rd year of independence.

When the first constitution was drafted and adopted on November 4, 1972, the country was constitutionally named "People's Republic of Bangladesh".

The etymology of the word "Bangladesh", however, goes back decades before independence.

INDEPENDENCE DAY TODAY

So, how did it come to be the name of our land?

Even though the dreamers of a sovereign state brought the name into popular discourse, it was the poets and the writers who first used it.

It was in the 1960s that the demands for carving a sovereign country out of Pakistan and renaming the nation-state as "Bangladesh" were raised prominently.

"Bangladesh" made its way into the slogans after the mass upsurge of 1969,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Budget likely on June 1

Polls, Eid holidays cited as reasons for early submission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national budget for the fiscal year 2023-2024 will be placed and passed in parliament earlier than usual this year, as lawmakers plan to spend the Eid-ul-Azha holiday in their constituencies ahead of the general polls.

The Eid-ul-Azha holiday will begin on June 28 this year, according to the government holiday schedule.

Meanwhile, because there is a constitutional obligation that the national budget be passed by June 30, this year's budget is expected to be passed in parliament by June 26.

Typically, the finance minister presents the budget proposal to parliament on the first or second Thursday of June.

This year, it is likely to be June 1, which is the first Thursday of the month.

A finance ministry official said there is a time constraint on holding the discussion on the proposed budget in the national parliament.

As the national budget is expected to be passed early, the discussion on

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BNP might not take part in polls

Hasina tells AL parliamentary board; 'BNP strategy mysterious'

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the BNP might not participate in the next general election.

She termed the activities and strategy of the opposition party "mysterious".

Hasina, also the prime minister, made the observation at a meeting of the AL's Parliamentary Nomination Board at the Gono Bhaban, said meeting sources.

She made the comments after an AL leader expressed an assumption that the BNP would join the parliamentary polls despite everything.

The next Jatiya Sangsad polls is scheduled to be held in late December or early January.

The AL chief said the BNP's strategy is different this time, and their next course of action is totally uncertain.

"I think the BNP may not participate in the election this time," a leader who was present at the meeting quoted Hasina as saying.

The PM rejected the US state department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices which was released last week. The report, citing polls observers, said the December 2018 elections in Bangladesh were neither free nor fair because they were marred by serious irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters.

The premier told the meeting that her government would protest the report. She, however, didn't disclose how the government would counter it.

Hasina said the 2018 election was not questionable, and the BNP was going to take part in it, but it opted to boycott halfway through, which was not the government's failure in any way.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

২৬শে মার্চ ১৯৭১

মুক্তির প্রতিজ্ঞায় উদ্দীপ্ত হওয়ার ইতিহাস।

From the house of KDS

APPAREL

TRIMS & PACKAGING

STEEL

TEXTILE

INLAND CONTAINER DEPOT & LOGISTICS

INSURANCE

SECURITIES

BANKING

ENERGY & MINERALS

দৃঢ় প্রতিজ্ঞা নিয়ে স্বাধীন বাংলাদেশকে

নিরাপদ রেখে গড়ছি আগামী ভবিষ্যৎ

100% REFINED STEEL

Police cancel their iftar party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Police has cancelled its pre-scheduled iftar mehfil on March 29 at Police Staff College Convention Hall in the capital's Mirpur.

Police took the decision expressing solidarity with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's request for not holding iftar parties, reads a press release signed by Manjur Rahman, assistant inspector general (media) of Police Headquarters.

The prime minister has instructed her partymen not to organise iftar mehfls. Instead, she urged them to distribute iftar items among the poor," said Obaidul Quader, in front of the AL's Bangabandhu Avenue central office in the capital yesterday.

Lenin made AL's advisory council member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former presidium member of the ruling Awami League Nooh-UI-Alam Lenin has been made a member of the party's advisory council.

Lenin was notified of the development on Friday night through a letter signed by the AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

"Sheikh Hasina, the president of the organisation, has nominated you as a member of the advisory council of Awami League according to Article 1 of the Constitution of Awami League (26)," read the letter.

Lenin confirmed The Daily Star that he received the letter.

Lenin was elected as the president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union in 1973. He was the general secretary of Bangladesh Krishak Samiti and presidium member of Undivided Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) until the 90's. After joining the Awami League in 1997, Lenin was made a member of the central committee.

He was later elected information and research affairs secretary, publicity and publications Secretary in the next council and presidium member in the 2016 council. Since 2010, he has been serving as the publisher and editor of Awami League's party mouthpiece 'Uttaran'.



Family members break down in tears while forming a human-chain demanding justice over the killing of two SSC candidates of Indrakul Secondary School in Bauphal upazila of Patuakhali. The photo was taken in front of Aswini Kumar Town Hall in Barishal yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

UN accuses Russia, Ukraine forces of ‘summary executions’ of prisoners

Kyiv ‘managing to stabilise’ battle in Bakhmut

AFP, Kyiv

The United Nations said Friday it was “deeply concerned” by what it said were summary executions of prisoners of war by both Russian and Ukrainian forces on the battlefield.

The head of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Matilda Bogner, said that her organisation had recently recorded killings by both sides.

“We are deeply concerned about (the) summary execution of up to 25 Russian prisoners of war and persons hors de combat by the Ukrainian armed forces, which we have documented,” Bogner said at a press conference in Kyiv on Friday.

“This was often perpetrated immediately upon capture on the battlefield,” she said. “While we are aware of ongoing

investigations by Ukraine authorities into five cases involving 22 victims, we are not aware of any prosecution of the perpetrators,” she added.

Bogner also expressed “deep” concern over the alleged executions of 15 Ukrainian prisoners by Russian armed forces after their capture.

She said the Wagner mercenary group, which claims to be leading Russia’s assault for Bakhmut – the longest and bloodiest battle of the war – was responsible for 11 of those killings.

In response to the UN report, Kyiv’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it was “unacceptable” to hold the “victim of aggression” responsible.

One UN report issued Friday claimed Ukrainian military personnel had subjected prisoners of war to death

threats, mock executions or threats of sexual violence. Some beatings were “purely retaliatory,” it said.

The Ukrainian parliament’s human rights commissioner Dmytro Lubinets said Friday that he was “surprised” by the allegations against Ukrainian troops and said he had not been informed of them in advance.

On Telegram, he wrote that he wanted to “know the facts and the indisputable arguments on which the conclusions” of the UN report were based.

In a separate statement on Friday, Kyiv’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs thanked the UN monitors for their work but emphasised that Ukraine “expects that the UN mission will avoid any steps that may be interpreted as equalising the victim and the aggressor”.

Recognise March 25 as Int’l Genocide Day

FROM PAGE 1

She recalled how Bangabandhu built a country ravaged by the war.

“We got the recognition as the least developed country during his three years and seven months in power. It was unfortunate that the father of the nation was killed brutally.”

She said that the blood of the martyrs would never go in vain.

In the March 25 attack, dubbed “Operation Searchlight”, the Pakistani forces killed Bangalee members of the East Pakistan Rifles and police, students, teachers and ordinary people.

They set houses on fire and looted businesses, leaving a trail of destruction.

The day was observed as Genocide Day yesterday for the seventh time in the country since parliament unanimously adopted a resolution on March 11, 2017.

Meanwhile, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday issued separate messages on the eve of the Independence today.

The president in his message said people-oriented and sustainable development, good governance, social justice, transparency and accountability must be ensured in the country in order to achieve the desired goal of independence, reports BSS.

“It is our sacred duty to ensure a safe, happy, beautiful and prosperous Bangladesh for the new generation,” he said.

The PM in a recorded radio and televised message urged all to work for building a golden Bangladesh free from hunger and poverty.

She extended her sincere greetings to all Bangladeshis at home and abroad.

Budget likely

FROM PAGE 1

the proposed budget will also start early, the official added.

The finance minister has already held three separate pre-budget discussions with economists, businesspersons, and editors of print and electronic media outlets.

The finance minister is unlikely to hold any further pre-budget sessions this year aside from a joint consultative pre-budget meeting with FBCCI and NBR.

Officials have said that their budget preparation will end by May.

A journey from literature to politics

FROM PAGE 1

led by the students under the banner of Sarbadaliya Chhatra Sangram Parishad.

In 1969, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proposed the name Bangladesh for the independent country he had been dreaming of, and during the 1970 polls, Chhatra League pledged the creation of an independent country called Bangladesh.

However, modern political movements aside, undivided Bengal was referred to as “Bangladesh” in literature that goes as far back as the 19th century.

Following the Partition of Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore wrote a number of patriotic “swadeshi” songs in protest.

One of these songs was called “Bangladesh”.

“Aji Bangladesher hridoy hote kokhon aponi, tumi ei oporup rupe bahir hole jononi.”

Translated, it stands: “When did you come out of the heart of Bangladesh, o, Mother dear, with such inexplicable splendour!”

Another song penned during this time was “Amar Sonar Bangla, ami tomay bhalobashi (my golden Bangla, I love you)”, which later became the national anthem of Bangladesh.

But this too was not the first time that he called this landmass “Bangladesh”, with many of his writings mentioning this word.

Speaking to the Daily Star, Dr Soumitra Sekhar Dey, vice-chancellor of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, said, “The way Bangladesh is written, in its modern spelling, first came from the writings of Rabindranath.”

Earlier, the writings of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Peary Chand Mitra and Rangalal Bandopadhyay wrote about this land as “Bangodesh”, he said, referring to Bankim Chandra’s book, titled “Bangodesher Krishok” (Farmers of Bangodesh), as an example. Soumitra, also professor of the Bangla department at Dhaka University, added, “Rabindranath Tagore portrayed this land as being a fertile, green country, fed by a crisscrossing network of rivers and canals (shujola, shufola, shashya, shyamala).”

In a letter by famous poet Jibanananda Das to Tagore in 1929, the word Bangladesh was mentioned (Patralap: Jibanananda Das, Provat Kumar Das).

In it, he wrote, “It is the utmost good fortune of the writers of Bangladesh that the brightest sun shining above their heads is the modern world’s greatest prodigy.”

Then in 1932, Kazi Nazrul Islam, later made the national poet of Bangladesh, composed 71 patriotic songs in a book named “Bonogiti”, where he too mentioned the word “Bangladesh”.

“Nomo nomo nomo, Bangladesh momo, chiro monorom, chiro modhur.”

Translated, the song pays homage to Bangladesh as the sweetest, the most beautiful.

Poet Sukanta Bhattacharya wrote revolutionary poems, which were published in 1950, three years after his death. One of the poems, written in 1937, mentioned the dream of a great land called Bangladesh.



“Himaloy thekey Sundarban, hothat Bangladesh; kepe kepe uthey Padmar uchhashey.”

Translated, it says – “Between the Himalayas and the Sundarbans, lies Bangladesh; shaking and trembling in the exhilaration of the Padma”.

The word “Bangladesh” came into political use when the dream of a sovereign state arose in the early 60s.

During the students’ movement against the Sharif Education Policy, declared by the then Pakistan government in 1962, a new organisation named Apurba Sangsad (Asthayi Purba Banga Sarkar - Temporary Government of East Bengal) was born.

This organisation unveiled the formation of a government it envisioned with renowned poet Begum Sufia Kamal as president and Chhatra League leader Abdul Aziz Bagmar as prime minister.

It also released three Istehars (manifestoes) demanding the freedom of the then East Pakistan.

In the first Istehar, released on December 21, 1963, the organisation demanded freedom from Pakistani discriminations. The second one, released on January 1, 1964, described the long history of the exploitation of the Bangalees.

The last Istehar was released on October 1, 1965, in which the organisation wrote about the ways to bring about an “independent Bangladesh”.

It proposed that East Pakistan be renamed “Bangladesh”.

Dr Ahmed Sharif, a Dhaka University teacher at that time, had written the Istehars for Apurba Sangsad (Protinayak Serajul Alam Khan: Mohiuddin Ahmad).

Then came the slogans with the word “Bangladesh” in full use.

Those that roared through the nation at that time – “Bir Bangalee Ostro Dhoro, Bangladesh Swadhin Koro (Valiant Bangalees, take up arms



and free Bangladesh)”, “Swadhin Koro, Swadhin Koro, Bangladesh Swadhin Koro (Liberate, liberate, liberate Bangladesh)”, “Tomar Desh, Amar Desh Bangladesh, Bangladesh (your country, my country, Bangladesh, Bangladesh)”.

On December 5, 1969, in a memorial meeting marking the fifth death anniversary of Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said East Bengal from then on would be called “Bangladesh”.

“Once, attempts were made to erase the name ‘Bangla’ forever from the pages of the map and the heart of this land. Except for the Bay of Bengal, the word could not be found in any usage of anything that had to do with the country... On behalf of the people of Bangladesh, I now declare that the eastern province of the country will no longer be called ‘East Pakistan’; from henceforth it will be known as ‘Bangladesh’.” (Karagarer Rojnamcha: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman).

Before the 1970 general election, a leaflet titled “Election - Bangladesh and Chhatra Samaj” was distributed on behalf of Chhatra League’s Central Committee, endorsed by its then president Nur-e Alam Siddiqui and general secretary Shahjahan Siraj.

Schoolboy killed in road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A schoolboy was killed in a road accident in Jhenidah’s Kaliganj upazila around 10:00am yesterday.

The dead is Tariqul Islam, 14, said police. Tariqul was riding his uncle’s motorcycle on the pillion. At one point, an earth laden truck hit the motorcycle in Barobazar area, said Mohidul Islam, sub-inspector of Subarnashara police camp.

Tariqul died on the spot while his uncle Mahbubur Rahman, a schoolteacher, suffered injuries, said the police official.

Three hurt as stones hurled at trains

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three people, including a locomotive driver, were hurt as unidentified people hurled stones at trains on Joydevpur-Bangabandhu Bridge rail route in Tangail’s Mirzapur upazila on Friday.

After the incident, Ferdous Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Kamalapur Railway Police Station, and Fazlur Rahman, assistant sub-inspector of Gharinda Railway Police Outpost, visited the spot with a police team yesterday.

Two passengers of Chitra Express and the locomotive driver of Maitre Express were hurt on the same day, said Kamrul Islam, station master of Mirzapur Railway Station.

A general diary was lodged with Kamalapur Railway Police Station in connection with the incidents, said Ferdous.

Man held with 35,000 yaba pills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested a man with 35,000 yaba pills in Chattogram’s Lohagara upazila yesterday morning.

The arrestee is Mohammad Jalal, 34, of Cox’s Bazar, said police.

On information, a police team intercepted Jalal’s car on Chattogram-Cox’s Bazar road. The pills were recovered from a hidden compartment behind the fuel tank of the car, said Atiqur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Lohagara Police Station.

“We filed a case in this connection and the arrestee will be taken to remand for quizzing,” he added.

BNP might not

FROM PAGE 1

She also criticised the report for mentioning that the government’s facilities for the specially abled people and ethnic minorities were inadequate. The PM said the AL government did a lot for the ethnic minorities and the specially abled people, and that they were enjoying various government benefits.

Hasina said the human rights situation in the USA is questionable.

About price hike of essentials, the PM said prices were increasing across the world and Bangladesh was enduring its effects. She said her government would do everything to bring the prices within the reach of the ordinary people.

Hasina said her government would give priority to the food and agriculture sectors for the sake of the people.

Referring to shutting of banks in the USA, the premier said banks in countries like Bangladesh are struggling to keep their heads about water due to the global turmoil in the banking sector.

The meeting nominated Chattogram city AL Organising Secretary Noman Al Mahmud as the party candidate for the April 27 by-polls to Chattogram-8.

The parliamentary seat fell vacant following the death of AL MP Moslem Uddin Ahmed.

Putin ally proposes banning ICC in Russia

REUTERS

Russia’s parliament speaker yesterday proposed banning the activities of the International Criminal Court (ICC) after the court issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin, accusing him of the war crimes.

Vyacheslav Volodin, an ally of Putin’s, said that Russian legislation should be amended to prohibit any activity of the ICC in Russia and to punish any who gave “assistance and support” to the ICC.

“It is necessary to work out amendments to legislation prohibiting any activity of the ICC on the territory of our country,” Volodin said in a Telegram post.

Volodin said that the United States had legislated to prevent its citizens ever being tried by the Hague court and that Russia should continue that work.



SEAMASTER AQUA TERRA SHADES
Co-Axial Master Chronometer

EVERY SHADE OF YOU

With the Aqua Terra Shades collection, Eddie Redmayne has embraced the power of colour to express his personal style. Just like the actor, these OMEGA watches have mastered a variety of roles, offering different tones to match the mood you're in. Discover the 38 mm range in stainless steel, which includes five exclusive choices, all backed by the trusted precision of a Co-Axial Master Chronometer movement. Whichever look you desire, there's a shade to tell your story.



AVAILABLE AT: SACO WATCH CO: Iqbal Center, Banani • Tel: 01868985756
Bashundhara City • Tel: 01703254435 • Jamuna Future Park • Tel. 01714082196

SWADHINATA MUSEUM

A journey through Bangladesh’s struggle for independence

DIPAN NANDY and ARAFAT RAHMAN

The word “Swadhinata” evokes a powerful image of Bangladesh's journey to independence, and the Swadhinata Museum, located at Dhaka’s Suhrawardy Udyan is a testament to that journey, embodying the spirit of freedom.

Upon entering the museum, one will be led underground through a sloping ramp that gives the impression of entering a deep tunnel. The atmosphere makes visitors feel like they’re on a journey through time.

The first thing one will see is a photograph of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivering his historic March 7 speech, setting the tone for the rest of the museum.

The museum takes one on a journey through the struggles and triumphs of the Bangladeshi people, from the pre-liberation era to the victory of December 16, 1971.

Besides, one will also learn about the ancient Pundra Kingdom and the ruins of Wari-Bateshwar, the Indigo Revolt, the Santal Rebellion, the Sepoy Revolt, the Partition of Bengal, and India's independence in this place.

The museum is divided into three sections, each containing over 300 historic photographs in 144 glass panels, along with numerous information plates.

The first part covers the origin of the Bangla language, the origin of Bangla, and the independence movement, ending with the portrait of Bangabandhu.

The second part depicts the brutality, torture, and massacre of the Pakistani occupation forces with some

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Inside the Swadhinata Museum, visitors are greeted with a striking photograph of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivering his iconic March 7 speech. The museum features over 300 historic photographs arranged in 144 glass panels, taking visitors on a journey from the pre-liberation era to the ultimate victory of the Bangladeshi people during 1971. This picture was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

BIWTA officials ‘attacked’ during drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Miscreants threw bricks at Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) officials while they were demolishing an illegal establishment of Metro Courier Express Limited on the Turag River in Dhaka’s Mirpur area yesterday.

During the demolition of the illegally constructed warehouse, which started at noon, miscreants threw bricks, prompting BIWTA officials to stop their operation and leave the spot immediately.

Before the demolition drive, the BIWTA chairman and his team had identified the illegal installation during a boat inspection of the Turag River. However, a conflict arose between BIWTA officials and miscreants during discussions about the illegal installation.

Deputy Director of BIWTA Mustafizur Rahman said miscreants threw bricks during the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Community policing crucial to address extremism

Speakers tell seminar
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Engaging community and beat policing to combat extremism and terrorism is essential as it can address the root cause quickly and eliminate threats, said top police officials and foreign diplomats at a seminar yesterday.

They stated that Bangladesh’s strategic location is crucial for regional peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, and Canada has been actively involved in partnering with the country.

The Anti-Terrorism Unit of the Police and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime jointly organised the project inception programme at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel yesterday, for community and beat policing to counter violent extremism and terrorism. The project is being carried out in partnership with the Canadian government.

Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun said Bangladesh Police have adopted a multi-dimensional approach that focuses on both law enforcement and community engagement with aims to prevent radicalisation and recruitment of young people into violent extremist groups, disrupt terrorist plots, and support the rehabilitation and reintegration of those who have been involved in violent activities.

Involving beat and community policing in countering terrorism will add a new dimension to our fight against the menace, he said.

Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Lilly Nicholls highlighted the shared values of democracy, secularism and free trade between Bangladesh and Canada, as well as their shared commitment to peacekeeping.

She emphasised that the project demonstrates the continuation of the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PRAYER TIMING						
MARCH 26						
	Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN	4:45	12:45	4:45	6:20	7:45	
JAMAAT	5:20	1:15	5:00	6:25	8:15	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION						
SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING						
RAMADAN	MARCH	SEHRI	IFTAR			
3	26		6:15			
4	27	4:35	6:16			
5	28	4:34	6:16			

NATIONAL GENOCIDE DAY

‘Recognise genocide in Bangladesh in 1971’

Demand cabinet members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two cabinet members yesterday said friendly countries should play a pioneering role so that Bangladesh can get recognition for the genocide committed by Pakistan during Bangladesh’s Liberation War in 1971.

Addressing a programme marking National Genocide Day, they said some of these friendly countries, who even opposed Bangladesh during the Liberation War, should also play a similar role in this regard.

The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Liberation War Museum arranged a discussion at the office of the Liberation War Museum.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said due to political and other reasons, many countries supported Pakistan during Bangladesh’s Liberation War. Now, these countries strongly push many other countries to establish democracy and rule of law.

“These countries talk about many internal matters of Bangladesh whether we want it or not. But now we will look for what they are saying for the recognition of the genocide in

Bangladesh in 1971. They termed the ongoing events of Myanmar as genocide...”

“We urge them to play a pioneering role so that the genocide in Bangladesh gets international recognition,” the state minister said.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Huq said good

US government and the UK were against Bangladesh, citizens of these countries were in favour of Bangladesh during the Liberation War.

Both cabinet members said the government will continue its diplomatic efforts to earn recognition of the genocide in Bangladesh.

These countries [the US and the UK] talk about many internal matters of Bangladesh whether we want it or not. But now we will look for what they are saying for the recognition of the genocide in Bangladesh in 1971. They termed the ongoing events of Myanmar as genocide. We urge them to play a pioneering role so that the genocide in Bangladesh gets international recognition.

SHAHRIAR ALAM
State Minister for Foreign Affairs

senses need to prevail among the world's leading countries about recognising the genocide of Bangladesh.

“They have recognised the genocide in Myanmar. But they don’t recognise the genocide Bangladesh went through,” he said.

He added that although the

President of Asia Justice and Rights Patrick Burgess, also an international human rights expert, in his key presentation emphasised the need for forming an official truth and reconciliation commission on the Bangladesh genocide.

He said Bangladesh needed to be creative in sharing the story,

and facts of genocide with the rest of the world.

“I find that people know very little about the Bangladesh genocide and they become interested when the facts surrounding it are presented to them.”

“We can use theatre, artwork and more to keep the memory of what happened in Bangladesh in 1971 alive and share it with the rest of the world,” he added.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Liberation War Affairs Ministry Chairman Shahjahan Khan, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, and Liberation War Museum Trustee Mohidul Hoque, among others, spoke at the event.

The country observed genocide day yesterday, commemorating the tragic night when the Pakistan army attacked the unarmed people of Bangladesh in 1971.

The Pakistani army initiated a crackdown on unarmed citizens on the night of March 25.

Between March 25 and December 16 when Bangladesh achieved independence, the occupation army killed 30 lakh people, raped over 2 lakh women, and forced over 10 million people to take refuge in India.

UN expert, int’l orgs condemn attack on journo’s brother

STAR REPORT

A UN expert on human rights defenders and different international organisations have condemned the attack on UK based Bangladeshi journalist Zulkarnain Saer Khan Sami’s brother and demanded a fair probe.

In a tweet on Friday night, Mary Lawlor, UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, said she was very concerned to hear reports of an assault in Dhaka on Mahinur Khan, Zulkarnain’s brother.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said Bangladesh authorities must conduct an immediate and impartial investigation into the attack on Zulkarnain’s brother Mahinur and ensure his family’s safety in a statement yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

54 BNP leaders, activists arrested as per law: IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun yesterday said the recent arrests of 54 BNP leaders and activists from a city club were per the law.

Asked whether dining at a club is a crime and what kind of “anti-state” and “subversive activities” they were planning there, the IGP said a case was filed in this regard and the FIR mentions the charges slapped on them.

“Further investigation will bring out more,” he said while replying to questions from journalists after a programme at Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel in Dhaka.

When the IGP was questioned why the arrests were made without any warrants and whether it

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

RAMADAN IN DU DORMS

Iftar away from home

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

For many residential university students, Ramadan entails staying miles away from home and missing out on homemade dishes. But residential students of Dhaka University have found solace in their “second home” at the campus dorms.

For them, having iftar together has become a cherished ritual, where they come together in small or large groups, either in their dorm rooms, the canteen or on the green fields under the open sky.

The festive ambience is enhanced by the aroma of piyaju, beguni, jilapi, and other delicious iftar delicacies. However, the students could not help but miss their family members and reminisced about past Ramadan celebrations spent with them.

Shohidul Shaan, a residential student of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall, said, “Yes, we miss having iftar at home, surrounded by our loved ones. But the campus is our second home. When the dorms were closed during the pandemic, we realised how much we missed hall life. We are like one giant family here, composed of seniors and juniors.”

Before iftar, the students collect money from each other and buy food from hall canteens. Some even go to the extent of bringing traditional iftar items from Old Dhaka to share with their peers.

Hundreds of makeshift shops have been set up near the DU residential halls, taking the shape of large iftar bazaars, the ones we see across the capital during this month. Staffers of hall canteens become part-time

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Residential students of Dhaka University gather to buy iftar items from makeshift shops near their halls, creating a festive atmosphere. This photo was taken from the Bijoy Ekattor Hall area yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Craftsmen show off their prepared shital pati, while others are seen busy making them in the background. This photo was taken from Hinganagar village in Tangail's Delduar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Century-old craft under threat

Tangail's shital pati makers struggle for lack of capital, as demand for plastic mat rises

MIRZA SHAKIL

The traditional craft of making shital pati mats in Tangail is facing a severe threat due to the shortage of raw materials and rising production costs. The lack of necessary capital has made matters worse for the craftsmen involved in this ancestral profession.

Shital pati mats, made with a special plant fibre that feels cool on the surface, have offered comfort to people in Bengal for ages, particularly during the summer. However, the demand for these mats has drastically fallen with the

availability of cheaper plastic and other types of mats.

The shital pati industry, which involves around 1,000 families in several villages, including Hinganagar, Mushuria, Goziabari, Atia, and Elasin, is facing an uncertain future, according to the Delduar upazila administration.

The increased prices of raw materials, especially cane, and a lack of investment, are putting the century-old profession under threat, they added.

During a recent visit to Hinganagar village, local shital pati makers expressed their plight,

saying that apart from the summer season, they have to sit almost idle. Local pati sellers said different types of shital patis are sold from Tk 500 to Tk 10,000.

However, due to the availability of cheaper alternatives, the sale of shital pati mats has reduced drastically, they added.

A shital pati market sits at Hinganagar village every Friday and Saturday, where wholesalers from across the country come and buy shital patis and sell those in different parts of the country.

The financial crisis is the biggest

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Pundit Dey gets Swadhinata Padak 2023

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

This year, renowned veteran tabla maestro, Pundit Pabitra



Mohan Dey, has received the Swadhinata Padak 2023 (Independence Award) for his outstanding contribution to the country.

The government has recently honoured nine individuals and an organisation with the prestigious award for their remarkable contributions in different fields.

Pundit Dey, 86, from Mymensingh, was nominated for Swadhinata Padak 2023, under the "culture" category, for his notable role with the rhythmic instrument.

He was born to Pyarimohan Dey and Shyama Sundari Dey in the city's Akua Chukaitola area in May 1937.

At the age of seven, he started getting his tabla lessons from his elder brother Mithun Dey, who was a renowned classical maestro in the country.

His father was an eminent flute player, while his uncle Madan Mohan Dey was a cornet player.

Earlier, Ustad Dey was honoured by Mymensingh Shilpakala Academy, Udichi, Mymensingh unit, and Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sammilan Parishad in Dhaka, for his lifelong contribution to the field of rhythmic music.

Dey played the tabla with numerous eminent artists of this sub-continent like Salamat Ali Khan, Nazakat Ali Khan, Ali Akbar Khan,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Around 50 shops burnt to ashes in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

More than 50 shops were gutted in a fire at Thanchi Bazar in Bandarban's Thanchi upazila yesterday morning.

The fire broke out at 8:00am and spread to the adjoining establishments, said Thoiha Mong Marma, chairman of

Thanchi upazila.

Two firefighting units worked about three hours to bring the blaze under control, said the chairman.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohd Abul Mansoor said this is the second incident of fire in Thanchi upazila in last three days.

প্রিমিয়ার ব্যাংক

সেবাই প্রথম

স্বাধীনতার পূর্ণতা আসে অর্থনীতির অগ্রগতিতে

অর্থনৈতিক সমৃদ্ধিই লাখ শহীদে রক্তের বিনিময়ে অর্জিত স্বাধীনতার
পূর্ণতা দিতে পারে। আর অর্থনৈতিক মুক্তির অঙ্গীকার নিয়ে স্বনির্ভর বাংলাদেশ
বিনির্মাণে নিরলসভাবে কাজ করে যাচ্ছে প্রিমিয়ার ব্যাংক।

সবাইকে স্বাধীনতা ও জাতীয় দিবসের শুভেচ্ছা।

ThePremierBankLimited www.premierbankltd.com

দি প্রিমিয়ার ব্যাংক লিমিটেড

মহান স্বাধীনতার ৫২তম বার্ষিকীতে
টেকসই পুঁজিবাজার গঠনের প্রত্যয়ে

২৬ মার্চ

মহান স্বাধীনতা ও জাতীয় দিবস

বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন
Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission



Raisul Islam Asad



Pijush Bandyopadhyay



Tariq Anam Khan



Mamunur Rashid

PHOTOS: STAR

THE PRICE OF BLOOD

Veteran actors reminisce independence

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

March is pivotal in the history of our liberation. The three important dates in this month are March 7, when Bangabandhu gave his historic speech, March 25, when the Pakistani Army launched a shameless massacre on us, and March 26, when our independence was declared.

Today, as the country commemorates Independence Day, noted actors Raisul Islam Asad, Pijush Bandyopadhyay, Tariq Anam Khan and Mamunur Rashid reminisced about the momentous day.

Raisul Islam Asad

In 1971, Asad was an intermediate student at Jagannath College and lived in Paltan. On the night of March 25, when the Pakistani military suddenly attacked unarmed Bangalees, Asad was deeply anxious about the situation outside.

"I still remember the night of March 26. That time, our house was near Rajarbag Police Line. After the black night of March 25, our police started

fighting against the atrocious Pakistan Army with their rifles. Some of them who had run out of bullets took shelter in our house. They also left behind their weapons," said Asad.

"After March 26, I ran to Puran Dhaka to check up on my friends, especially my Hindu friends. The situation I saw at that time was indescribable. There were only dead bodies covered with blood. English road was burned down," he added.

Asad then recalled how he was desperately trying to find his friend, Ranjit at Thatari Bajar, and what motivated him to join the liberation war.

"There were dead bodies on the lawn of Ranjit's house. I was trying to find him but couldn't find his body. Later I found out, he fled to India with his parents before March 25. That time, I decided to join the liberation war.

Pijush Bandyopadhyay

After listening to the the historic speech of March 7, I went back to my hometown, Faridpur. I realized that the liberation war will be started soon. I

started to take preparation. Suddenly, on March 25, the Pakistani army attacked the Bangalees with heavy armory. That night, someone knocked on my door and gave me a note, telling me that Bangabandhu had declared independence. Then, we, those who were in favor of Bangladesh and loved Bangabandhu, gathered in Faridpur. We started the procession in the early hours of March 26. That memory is still vivid in my heart. I will remember this memory forever.

Tariq Anam Khan

It's been 52 years of our independence. We got an independent nation because Bangabandhu led us in the war.

After the historic speech of Bangabandhu on March 7, the Pakistanis realized that us Bangalees will never give up. That's why, they carried out the massacre on March 25. At that time, I was studying in college in Shatkhira. When I heard about the massacre by the Pakistanis, I felt an intense rage against them. I was then inspired to join the cause of our liberation.

Mamunur Rashid

In 1971, after completing my university life, I was writing dramas and screenplays for movies. So, on March 25th, I was at Green Road, at actress Rozi Samad's residence. I was planning to write screenplays for movies all night long, t I could see that tanks were going to Pilkhana in the afternoon, via Green Road.

Then the night came, and I could hear the sounds of gunfire. I have never witnessed such a terrible situation – I stayed awake all night. During the Fajr Azan, I thought as they were Muslims, now they would stop firing. However, it didn't happen.

Then, on March 26, the curfew went on. I was stuck in that house all day. It was dangerous to go out. Dhaka city was turned into hell by the Pakistani military. There was the smell of dead bodies all around.

On March 27, I went out and ran to Gulistan. Then, I went across the river because if I stayed there, I would have died. Later, I went to Tangail with great difficulty. I still remember the day.

I have a personal affinity towards ghost stories: Puja Chery



Scheduled to be released this upcoming Eid, *Jin* starring Puja Chery is set to terrify the audiences in theatres. Directed by Nader Chowdhury and produced by Jaaz multimedia, the film also stars Shajal Noor, Ziaul Roshan among others.

Speaking about the film, Puja Chery told The Daily Star, "I have worked in this film from my personal affinity towards ghost stories. Every artiste wants to work in different characters throughout their career. I have already worked in romance, action and a lot of other genres. I wanted to work with a horror plot and thus I ended up in *Jin*."

On the other hand, Puja's co-star in *Jin*, Shajal Noor had recently sat down for an interview, where he informed briefly that the plot of the film is indeed based on true events. Furthermore, this will mark his first ever pairing with Puja Chery.

Ash and Pikachu's journey ends after 26 years

Ash Ketchum and Pikachu, two characters who have been at the heart of the *Pokémon* franchise since its inception in 1997, finally aired its final episode yesterday.

The story ended in Pallet Town, where his journey began, and included several references to the early episodes of the series.

The Pokémon Company International announced in December that the two would be ending their run with *Pokémon Ultimate Journeys: The Series*, and that two new trainers named Liko and Roy would take over as the series' stars in *Pokémon Horizons*.



NEWS

Driver killed

FROM PAGE 16

The SUV Samrat used to drive is owned by a rental company named RDB. It was used by NIKIMT-Atomstroy, a construction firm working at the nuclear power plant, said police.

The victim used to chauffeur for a high official of the firm, said Mohsin Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kumarkhali Police Station.

On Thursday, Samrat dropped off the official at work and then went missing.

The next day, owner of the rental service, Anisur Rahman, reported the matter to Ishwardi Police Station, said OC Arbinda.

Yesterday morning, residents of the remote Char Sadipur area called police after noting a strong stench coming out of a white vehicle left on the bank for over a day.

Kumarkhali police then rushed to the spot and recovered the body, the OC said, adding that the body was handed over to Ishwardi Police Station after autopsy at Kushtia General Hospital morgue.

[Our correspondents from Pabna and Kushtia contributed to the report.]

Cancer cells

FROM PAGE 16

of the disease in the early sixties.

"The last 15 years, however, have revolutionised our understanding of the biological complexity of these tumours, with exciting potential new therapies entering clinical trial at last.

"Experiments such as D(MG)2 aboard the International Space Station will improve our understanding of how cancer cells interact with each other within three-dimensional structures, and hopefully lead to new ideas for disrupting tumour growth that we can take forward back in the lab."

Diffuse midline glioma is an aggressive and incurable brain tumour that most commonly presents in children.

It has a poor prognosis – most children die within 18 months of being diagnosed.

The researchers want the experiments to be conducted in microgravity because they believe the conditions will allow their 3D cultures to grow to much larger sizes than on Earth.

They're too afraid

FROM PAGE 16

Chowdhury, activist Tabassum Islam and several others tortured her for staying at the Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall without their "permission". The BCL women allegedly tortured her from 11:00pm to 3:30am.

Seeking anonymity, several students said that Sanjida and her supporters on many occasions misbehaved with other students. She even called their families to complain about them.

One such victim is a student of the 2017-18 session. She said one of the acolytes of Sanjida called her family and made false allegations about her character and activities on campus.

Students complained that BCL leaders and activists barred them from having a hall seat even after the authorities' approval. Some leaders of the pro-Awami League student front even extorted money from students to permit them to stay at dormitories.

An honours third-year student (2018-19 session) of Lalon Shah Hall said he was granted permission to be a resident of the dormitory about a year ago.

After repeated requests, the hall authorities in the presence of an assistant proctor showed him his seat in July last year.

"When I went to the room the next morning, Chhatra League leaders barred me from taking my seat. They said that I have to stay in the Gono Room and be active on campus with the seniors. Only then I would be allowed to have a seat," he added.

The IU student said he later went to a Chhatra League leader who demanded Tk 5,000 for the seat.

"I know at least eight students who have managed seats at the Lalon Shah Hall after paying Tk 3,500 to Tk 7,000 each," he told The Daily Star.

He said he couldn't stay at the hall even after being allocated a seat by the university authorities. "Many Chhatra League activists were occupying others' seats."

The student then informed the hall provost about the problem, but he asked him to write another application.

Contacted, Hall Provost Prof Obaidul Islam said he didn't receive specific complaints "officially". "We take steps only after getting specific complaints."

He said he was not aware of any

student failing to have a seat and facing harassment and mental torture.

Asked about the BCL's obstruction, he said: "Many conversations take place regarding the matter. I don't know about that."

On October 20 last year, some BCL activists beat up a female student of the 2016-17 session of Khaleda Zia Hall near the main gate of the university.

The victim and other senior students informed the matter to the hall authorities that day.

Saima Rahman, a student of the 2020-21 session, at one point called his friend, who is also a Chhatra League leader. The friend along with some other BCL men assaulted the victim.

This newspaper obtained a copy of the written complaint submitted to the hall authority on October 21 by over 150 students. It said that Saima misbehaved with the victim and some other seniors.

They demanded punishment for Saima and her friend.

"Chhatra League never did this," said Nasim Ahmed Joy, general secretary of IU Chhatra League.

He said if anyone gets involved in ragging, that person will have to take responsibility for it.

"We never bar anyone from having a seat. We as students' representatives rather try our best to help the administration," he added.

Asked about the BCL's involvement in ragging and harassment, IU Vice Chancellor Shaikh Abdus Salam said they are not aware of all the incidents.

"We show 'zero tolerance' to ragging and harassment. We have formed an anti-ragging committee to run a campaign and motivate students to stay away from ragging," he added.

The ruling party-backed student fronts mainly devise different ways to show their muscle power on campuses, said Nur Khan, executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra, a national legal aid and human rights organisation.

"Ragging is one of the ways of showing strength. There is an atmosphere of fear across society. The situation at Islamic University is nothing different. No one on the campus dares to talk about the issue."

This newspaper could not reach Saima for comments as she did not respond to calls.

Modi scared

FROM PAGE 16

would not bow to intimidation.

"I will do whatever I have to do to defend the democratic nature of this country," he told reporters.

"They are used to everybody being scared of them," he said, in reference to the ruling party. "I am not scared of them."

The removal from the parliament of Modi's chief opponent comes at a time when the prime minister's relationship with Gautam Adani, one of India's most powerful industrialists, has been under scrutiny.

Modi has been a close associate of Adani for decades but the latter's business empire has been subject of renewed attention this year after a US investment firm accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud.

Gandhi's opposition Congress party has for weeks demanded a proper investigation by parliament on the allegations.

"I have been disqualified because the prime minister... is scared of the next speech that is going to come on Adani," Gandhi told reporters.

"I will continue to ask the question – what is the prime minister's relationship with Mr. Adani?"

Congress supporters held small protests in several cities around the country on Saturday to protest against Gandhi's removal as a lawmaker.

Gandhi is the leading face of Congress, once the dominant force of Indian politics but now a shadow of its former self.

He is the scion of India's most famous political dynasty and the son, grandson and great-grandson of former prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru.

But he has struggled to challenge the electoral juggernaut of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its nationalist appeals to the country's Hindu majority.

The lower house of parliament ruled him ineligible to continue sitting as an MP on Friday, a day after his conviction in the defamation case.

The prosecution stemmed from a remark made during the 2019 election campaign in which Gandhi had asked why "all thieves have Modi as (their) common surname".

His comments were seen as a slur against the prime minister, who went on to win the election in a landslide.

Funding snag

FROM PAGE 16

missing links: one is the Padma Bridge and the other the Kalna Bridge, formally named Madhumoti Bridge, in Narail, which was open to traffic last October.

But the road from Bhanga to Benapole via Jashore is a two-lane highway, which is failing to meet the growing demands, as a major shift in the movement of vehicles, including those for cross-border trade, has been taking place since the opening of the two bridges.

Bangladesh in October 2017 signed a \$4.5 billion LoC agreement with India, which is the third such deal between the two countries. The Bhanga-Jashore-Benapole road expansion is among the projects to be financed from the third LoC, RHD officials said.

According to the Planning Commission's document, although the pre-DPP of the project mentioned "LoC and other sources" as possible

sources for foreign loan, the DPP mentioned the LoC as the only source.

"The DPP didn't mentioned any information about how much loan the LoC authorities will provide for the project and in this given situation, the meeting can discuss how to ensure foreign funding," it added.

A top RHD official said they usually send a DPP, which is supposed to be implemented with foreign loan, to the Planning Commission upon getting confirmation about funding from the particular agency, although loan agreements are often signed after the approval of a project by the Ecneec.

"But this project [Bhanga-Benapole] is different as there is a bilateral commitment between the two countries," he said, wishing not to be named.

He added, "The meeting is actually called to know about the latest finance-related issues from the ERD and discuss the next steps regarding the project."

Relief to some of middle class

FROM PAGE 16

Tk 10 per piece.

While visiting some points where cheaper milk, meat and eggs were being sold this morning, this correspondent spoke with people waiting to buy the products and found that there were more people with jobs and steady incomes than those with low incomes.

Although prices have been fixed at a rate cheaper than the market rate, they were still out of reach for most.

Mazedur Rahman, who works at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has come to the mobile sales centre on the road opposite the Bangladesh Secretariat. He had planned to purchase chicken and eggs at lower prices but he returned home only with a dozen eggs and one kg of chicken.

Another Secretariat staffer, Kaizul Haque, bought 30 eggs, 1 kg beef and 1 kg chicken from the van. But he could not purchase mutton as the meat was sold out.

Md Jashim, a banker, was in the middle of the line at the Segunbagicha sales centre. He bought milk, eggs, and meat around 10:30am yesterday.

He said the beef was Tk 750 to Tk 800 outside. "It is a relief that we are getting the daily essentials here at a cheap rate."

Arohi, a housewife, said the way the prices of daily commodities have increased, it is difficult to manage the

Special Supplement

Art & Design : Department of Films & Publications (DFP) ♦ Assistance : Press Information Department (PID), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting



Message

Today 26th March. The great Independence and National Day. On this occasion, I extend my heartfelt greetings and warm felicitations to my fellow countrymen living at home and abroad.

On this day, I remember with profound respect the architect of our independent Bangladesh, the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On the fateful night of March 25, 1971, the invading forces of Pakistan suddenly attacked the unarmed Bangladeshis. In the early hours of March 26, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman officially declared the Independence of Bangladesh. We achieved an independent and sovereign Bangladesh through a nine-month long Liberation War under the able leadership of Bangabandhu. I recall with deep respect the millions of martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the War of Liberation and thus we achieved our Independence for their supreme sacrifice. I recall with deep reverence our Four National Leaders, heroic freedom-fighters, organizers, supporters, foreign friends and people from all walks of life who made contributions to attain our right to self-determination and freedom movement.

Bangabandhu always cherished a dream of building a happy and prosperous country along with attaining political emancipation. The present government has been rendering untiring efforts in materializing the dream of Bangabandhu. Today, Bangladesh is moving towards the highway of development at an inexorable pace. We have achieved enormous success in various areas of socio-economic development including poverty alleviation, education, health, human resource development, women empowerment, reduction of child and maternal mortality rates, elimination of gender discrimination and increase in average life expectancy. Rate of poverty has been dropped whereas per capita income has increased. A huge number of landless and homeless people are being rehabilitated. The Padma Bridge, constructed by our own resources and the Metrorail has already been opened for traffic. Works of Payra Deep Sea Port, Karnafuli Tunnel, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's Third Terminal and Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant are also progressing uninterruptedly. Bangladesh has already elevated from a least developed country to a developing country. With the continuation of development process, Bangladesh will turn into a developed, smart and prosperous country in the world by 2041, InshaAllah.

Government has been able to maintain the economic growth for timely and courageous steps taken by Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina despite the world economy is facing negative impact due to COVID-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war. The economy has turned around as a result of various socio-economic and investment projects, programs and initiatives taken by the government to ensure sustainable and inclusive development. Huge amount of remittances sent by expatriate Bangladeshis has made an important contribution to keep the wheel of the economy rolling during this time. To deal with this crisis, we also have to be frugal in the use of resources and follow austerity in luxury. I hope, based on the unprecedented achievements of the government in the country's overall development activities and socio-economic indicators in the past years, we will be able to face these challenges in the days to come, InshaAllah.

The government has been consistent in upholding our foreign policy "Friendship to all, malice towards none" as enunciated by the Father of the Nation. Our achievement in the international arena, including the establishment of world peace, is also commendable. Despite being a densely populated country, Bangladesh has set a unique example of humanity in the world by sheltering millions of Rohingyas who have been tortured and forcibly deported from Myanmar. In Bhasanchar, accommodation has been provided with all kinds of facilities for the Rohingyas. Bangladesh believes in a peaceful solution to this problem. I call upon the United Nations and the international community, including Myanmar, to take early and effective measures for permanent solution to this problem.

In order to achieve the desired goal of Independence, we must ensure people-oriented and sustainable development, good governance, social justice, transparency and accountability. Forbearance, human rights and rule of law have to be consolidated for institutionalizing democracy. It is our sacred duty to ensure a safe, happy, beautiful and prosperous Bangladesh for the new generation. By assassinating Bangabandhu on 15 August 1975, anti-liberation forces tried to erase his policy, ideology as well as to stop the trend of development and progress of the country forever. But the Bengali is a nation of heroes. Nothing could suppress the Bangladeshis. Bangabandhu has become the conqueror of death. Death has not dissipated him but has made him brighter and more glorious in the minds of Bangladeshis. It is our obligation to make the new and future generation understand that the way they are treading forward today is paved by our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The path shown by him will be the step of development and progress in the future as well.

To speed up the progress of the country, let the nation embrace the spirit of the liberation war and the ideals of the Father of the Nation and move forward on the path of building 'Golden Bangla' dreamt by Bangabandhu - this is my expectation on the great Independence Day.

Joi Bangla.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid

Bangabandhu's Words Still Ring in My Ears: "You bring me 151 seats, I shall then show you"

Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, MP

Bangabandhu came to Cox's Bazar towards the end of December 1969. I arranged a dinner in his honour at Hotel Saimon, which was owned by me. Many leaders were present at the event including M A Aziz, Zahur Ahmad Chowdhury, M A Hannan and Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser of Chattogram as well as Dr. M A Mannan and Mirza Abu Mansur of Cox's Bazar. We all went to Motel Probal with him after the dinner. He was lying down on his bed, and we all were standing around him. He was talking about different subjects. At one stage of the discussion, Bangabandhu asked Advocate Noor Ahmad, "Noor Ahmad, will you be able to defeat Moulana Farid?" Noor Ahmad replied, "Honourable Bangabandhu, I shall certainly beat him if you pray for me." Bangabandhu immediately said, "You bring me 151 seats, I shall then show you."

It may be mentioned that Moulana Farid was one of the best parliamentarians in the then assembly. Nobody failed to understand what Bangabandhu's words implied. We could realize from those utterances how profoundly the words self-determination and freedom remained embedded in his mind.

Bangabandhu had actually declared the country's independence through his 7 March speech. That became clear from his infallible words, "The struggle this time is for freedom, the struggle this time is for independence." Those utterances at Motel Probal of Cox's Bazar, "You bring me 151 seats, then I shall show you", and the articulation, "The struggle this time is for freedom, the struggle this time is for independence" were tied with the same thread. We found exceptional similarity between those two sentences. I could understand that Bangabandhu was hinting at independence; and independence was not possible without an armed people's war. After that speech, the whole population of the country became enthused with the new mantra of freedom.

The Shubhopur Bridge at Mirsarai was then the only route for transportation between Dhaka and Chattogram. I felt that the Pakistani troops would not be able to enter Chattogram if the Shubhopur Bridge could be blown up. We could then continue the war by keeping Chattogram free. But we would have to procure explosives for the purpose. I had some friends in Sylhet from whom explosives could be obtained. I needed to inform Bangabandhu about this plan of mine. I therefore met Bangabandhu at road-32 accompanied by Jane Alam



26 March Independence and National Day of Bangladesh



Dobhash on 17 March morning. The day was Bangabandhu's birthday. The moment I informed Bangabandhu about my plan, he put his hand on my chest and said, "Bravo, you blow up the Shubhopur Bridge with half the collected explosives, and keep the remaining half in Dhaka."

After coming out of road-32, I went to my friends in Sylhet. But although my friends had explosives, the detonators could not be found. Consequently, I went back to Chattogram disheartened. A labourers' meeting was organized under the leadership of M A Hannan on 24 March afternoon at the port premises, so that arms could not be unloaded from the Pakistani ship 'Swat'. The Pakistani forces killed a number of workers on that day. We received report on 25 March that the Pakistani troops had started for Chattogram with 26 armoured vehicles from the Cumilla Cantonment. Without wasting any time, I headed towards Mirsarai. I reached the Shubhopur Bridge in the evening of 25 March. There were two guards on two sides of the bridge. They left when we asked them to go away. As I could not obtain any explosives for destroying the bridge, I collected huge quantities of Bitumen and Kerosene. After that, we set fire to the wooden part of the bridge by pouring Kerosene on the Bitumen. The wooden part of the bridge was completely burnt up by the huge fire. As a result, the bridge was almost destroyed and became unfit for vehicular movement. After the bridge's destruction, I swiftly headed for Chattogram.

I saw innumerable people across the highway on the way to Chattogram. I told them, "You please create obstacles on the road through whatever means at your disposal including by cutting trees, so that the Pakistani troops cannot enter Chattogram." On hearing me, the freedom-seeking people started to put up barricades on the road by cutting the roadside trees and putting their branches on the highway. I reached Baratakia towards 2 am after midnight. An employee of the Baratakia railway station told me that Bangabandhu had declared independence at 12 midnight via wireless. I reached Chattogram town towards dawn. Meanwhile, the 26 armoured vehicles from Cumilla Cantonment faced obstacles when they arrived at Shubhopur Bridge. The Pakistani troops had to spend lot of time for making the bridge fit for movement and for removing the trees and branches piled up on the highway. They reached Kumira in the evening of 26 March.

A fierce battle took place here between the Pakistani troops and the EPR forces accompanied by freedom-seeking people. This battle is well-known as the 'Battle of Kumira'. Following this battle, the Pakistani troops entered Chattogram towards 28/29 March after removing barricades from Dhaka-Chattogram highway. As a result, Chattogram was free for a few days at the very beginning of liberation war and huge losses of lives and properties could be averted. I went to the Awami League office at Andarkilla in the morning of 26 March. I met Hannan Bhai, Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, the Chhatra League leaders Shahjahan Chowdhury and Rakhal Chandra Banik. We discussed the overall situation for a long time. Meanwhile, Zahur Ahmad Chowdhury had also received the declaration of independence by Bangabandhu in the morning. We decided to broadcast Bangabandhu's declaration of independence over radio. We then sped towards the Kalurghat radio station from Agrabad on a jeep. We also took along a technician who was working at Bahaddarhat radio station. We reached Kalurghat radio station towards 2 pm noon. The Awami League leader M A Hannan read out Bangabandhu's declaration over radio at about 2.15 pm noon.

The announcement by M A Hannan was repeatedly broadcast from the station. At this time, the public leader Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, the students' leader Rakhal Chandra Banik, Shahjahan Chowdhury and I were present. Meanwhile, arrangements were made for distributing Bangabandhu's declaration after making cyclostyle copies from the Jupiter House residence of Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu. A number of people including the peon of Awami League office Nurul Haque publicised and distributed the independence declaration through public announcements over microphone in Chattogram town. The residence of Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury was used as my control room up to 26 March. After that, our Nandan Kanan residence was used as the control room from 27 March.

The Pakistani forces took control of the DC Hill in the morning of 28 March. M A Hannan, M R Siddiqui, Zahur Ahmad Chowdhury, Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser and I came out of my house and went to Kaiser's house at Chandanpura via Andarkilla. At one stage while holding discussions there, we heard a controversial statement by Major Zia on radio. A number of people among those present including M R Siddiqui reacted after hearing this statement. It was then decided to talk to Zia about the matter. We then went to the Kalurghat radio station swiftly. When we asked Major Zia about his controversial statement, he told us, "I could not appreciate the political context. You please give me a draft. I shall read out accordingly." M R Siddiqui then drafted Bangabandhu's declaration in English, and Ziaur Rahman read it out in the same manner. The announcement, "I Major Ziaur Rahman hereby declare the independence of Bangladesh on behalf of our great leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.....Joy Bangla" was then broadcast a number of times.

Writer : Presidium Member, Bangladesh Awami League.

Translation: Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed



Message

Today is the great Independence and National Day. Bangladesh entered its 52nd year after the golden jubilee of independence. On this auspicious occasion, I extend my sincere greetings and congratulations to all the Bangladeshi citizens living in the country and abroad.

I remember with the most profound respect the greatest Bengali of all time, the great architect of Bangladesh, the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose firm and far-sighted leadership we got an independent country. I remember the four national leaders, including the war organizers, who steered the liberation war with their able guidance. The debt of the blood of 3 million martyrs of the liberation war and the self-sacrifice of 2 hundred thousand mothers and sisters will never be repaid. I pay my deep respects to all the fearless freedom fighters, including the war-wounded. I am grateful to all the friendly countries, organizations, institutions, and individuals, particularly the then Prime Minister of India, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, for their generous support during the War.

Young student leader Sheikh Mujib, who was studying in the Department of Law at Dhaka University, had dreamed of establishing a sovereign state in this land since the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Pakistanis' social, economic, and political discriminatory attitudes became clear day by day. Sheikh Mujib remained steadfast in defending the rights and dignity of the Bengalis in return for any sacrifice. The two organizations of his far-reaching thoughts are the Chhatra League and the Awami League, where he was deeply involved from the beginning until the end of his life. From the language movement of '52 to the victory of the United Front election of '54, the anti-Ayub movement of '62, six points of '66, and the mass upsurge of '69, these two organizations had an immense role in the struggles. In the face of public outrage, Ayub Khan was forced to repeal the Agartala conspiracy case. Sheikh Mujib became the beacon of hope and aspiration of Bengalis, Bangabandhu. On December 5, 1969, on the death anniversary of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib declared, "From today, the name of this eastern part of Pakistan will be solely Bangladesh, instead of East Pakistan."

The Awami League, led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, won a single majority in the National Assembly in the '70 elections. However, the Pak-military junta started procrastinating without transferring power. Sheikh Mujib called for a non-cooperation movement and, in his historic speech on March 7, gave a clear outline of the goal of liberation from the long 23 years of rule and exploitation. On March 23, the flag emblazoned with the map of Bangladesh was hoisted all over the country. At midnight on March 25, Pakistani troops started killing unarmed Bengalis in the name of 'Operation Search Light'. Pak junta arrested Sheikh Mujib at an early hour on March 26. He made the official declaration of independence before he was arrested. The Bengali leader of the people was imprisoned in the Mianwali jail in Pakistan and subjected to inhumane torture. At the call of the Father of the Nation, the freedom-loving people of Bengal, inspired by the slogan 'Joy Bangla,' started fighting, taking up arms for the liberation of the motherland. On April 17, the Mujibnagar government swore in designating Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as President, Syed Nazrul Islam as Vice President, Tajuddin Ahmad as Prime Minister, Captain M Mansur Ali, and AHM Kamaruzzaman as Minister. After a long 9-month armed struggle, independent sovereign Bangladesh was liberated on December 16 with the help of the allied forces.

The Father of the Bengali Nation, President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was released from Pakistan, returned to his beloved independent motherland on January 10, 1972, and devoted himself to rebuilding the war-torn country. With the help of allies, though there was an empty treasury, he rehabilitated the displaced people, restored and developed the infrastructure, and put the production sector and the economy on a solid foundation. He approved a constitution within nine months of independence. He made the country the Least Developed Country in just three and a half years; the UN endorsed that. Bangladesh gained recognition from 123 countries and membership in 27 international organizations through his diplomatic efforts. But our misfortune is that the defeated anti-independence clique of '71 continues to conspire against him. Incumbent President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was martyred along with his family members on August 15, 1975, by the brutal bullet of the assassin. The murderous Mostafiz-Zia and their successors illegally seized power and established a dictatorship in the country. The BNP tarnished the proud history of the Bengali nation by placing the perpetrators of the infernal massacre on March 25, criminals against humanity, war criminals, and killers of the Father of the Nation, in the government.

Bangladesh Awami League, after a long 21 years, in 1996, won the people's mandate and got the responsibility of running the government. We took on the mission of transforming the lives of poor and marginalized people by introducing social security programs; making the country self-sufficient in food production; setting up community clinics to provide primary health care to marginalized people; and building houses for homeless people by taking shelter projects. We strengthened the local government system; and made mobile phones and computer technology readily available. Our government signed a 30-year Ganges water-sharing agreement with India in 1996. To establish peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, we signed the historic peace agreement in 1997 and repatriated the Chakma refugees who had taken refuge in India to Bangladesh. On March 8, 1997, we announced the women's development policy. Awami League provided approval for launching privately-owned terrestrial and satellite television channels. We started the trial for killing the Father of the Nation by repealing the Indemnity Ordinance; established the independence of the judiciary, the rule of law, and human rights; and re-established the liberation war values in society and national life by preventing distortion of history. Our government's 1996-2001 term was a journey towards a brighter future, breaking the shackle of backwardness, underdevelopment, and poverty.

Bangladesh Awami League has been running the government since 2009 with the people's unwavering support in all the national elections. We transformed Bangladesh into a developing country by implementing Vision 2021, created a digital Bangladesh, and brought 100 percent of people under electricity coverage. Our government opened the door to the blue economy by establishing sovereignty over the vast sea area. Implementing the land boundary agreement with India ended the enclaves' long-standing misery. We have constructed the Padma Bridge with our own funds and inaugurated Metrorail. Besides, mega-projects like Matarbari Power Project, Rooppur Nuclear Power Station, Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel under Karnaphuli, Sonadia Deep Sea Port, Elevated Expressway, and so on are also progressing faster. We launched the Bangabandhu-1 satellite into space; and inaugurated 100 bridges and 100 roads and highways in a single day. Currently, our per capita income has risen to US\$ 2,824. We formulated the Second Perspective Plan, Vision-2041, for the next 20 years and have started implementing it. Bangladesh in 2041 will be a 'Smart Bangladesh'. We are implementing the 'Bangladesh Delta Plan-2100' for our future generation.

We established the rule of law in the country by enforcing the verdict on trial against the killers of the Father of the Nation and the war criminals against humanity. We published four volumes of the 'Records of Proceedings, Agartala Conspiracy Case' filed by Pakistani rulers against Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, 11 volumes out of 14 of the 'Secret Documents of Intelligence Branch on Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1948-1971)', including The Unfinished Memories, The Prison Diaries, and New China 1952. I believe that by reading these books, the new generation will clearly understand the firm footprints of the Father of the Nation in the history of independence.

Awami League government believes in the philosophy of upgrading the fate of the people. We are running our government through immediate, short, medium, and long-term plans to make life easier for ordinary people and develop the country. Moreover, we regularly monitor the implementation progress of our election manifesto. Due to these reasons, people's trust and strong support for Awami League continues.

On this auspicious occasion of Independence Day and National Day, I call upon all Bangladeshis to nurture the spirit and ideals of the Great Liberation War and participate in building the hunger-poverty-free, self-confident, and self-respecting 'Golden Bangladesh' of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's dream.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Sheikh Hasina

Special Supplement

Independence and National Day of Bangladesh

Sunday 26th March 2023

Dream of Independence Day

Muhammed Zafar Iqbal

Independence Day is one of the most joyous and glorious days for a state. All the states of the world have some important days to commemorate their history and traditions, but very few countries have such eventful, varied and emotional days like ours. Independence Day is supposed to be blissful, but the day when the then East Pakistan became an independent state named Bangladesh moments after a proclamation by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not a joyous moment for this country. On that day, the Pakistani military force launched the worst genocide in the history against the people of Bangladesh. A large number of people were shot dead by the Pakistani military in a very short span of time. It is hard to find such an example of brutality in any other country in the world. A handful of the people, who have been bearing the horrific memories of March 25 night for half a century now, will never forget the black night. How many countries in the world have made such a great sacrifice for independence? The London Times aptly said, "If blood is considered as the price of independence, no country in the world paid such a huge price for the independence as Bangladesh did".

After the declaration of independence, began our Liberation War to achieve independence. The history of our liberation is a history of sacrifice, indomitable courage, valor and achievement. On one hand, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was kept confined in a Pakistani jail, waiting for an unforeseen future, his voice, on the other hand, led and inspired the people of Bangladesh to continue the Liberation War. Our Liberation War of 1971 was in true sense a war of mass people with people irrespective of caste and creed and class including farmers, day-laborers, students, police, EPR (East Pakistan Rifles), Ansar and indigenous people spontaneously participating in it. Our women not only helped the freedom fighters taking enormous risks but also took up firearms in their hands and fought on the front line. With no clothes, shoes, even food and modern weapons in their hands, the freedom fighters were just instructed to snatch away arms and ammunition from the Pakistani military and keep on fighting. Even they did not have training for the battle. According to Sector Commander Khaled Musharraf, freedom fighters would have their training on



the battlefield as they moved on with their battle. The teenage boy, who was supposed to go to school, took up arms instead and joined the war against the heinous military force of the world. It may sound unbelievable but it was the deepest love for the country that was the biggest weapon of the freedom fighters. Before going to the battlefield, the freedom fighters used to stand in line together and sing the national anthem 'Amar Sonar Bangla' in unison. But they did not know why tears welled up in their eyes while singing the song. It is not even known to many that the eyes of the freedom fighters, who fought the liberation war over 50 years ago, welled up with tears when they heard that line -- 'Amar Sonar Bangla'.

History acts in mysterious way. Pakistan, the country that carried out the worst genocide in the history and committed the heinous crime of violating women, has now plunged into the deepest crisis of history. Pakistan unleashed its military force in the name of saving its existence in 1971, and that military force has now emerged as a poisonous cancer in the country's politics, misappropriating the country's resources. Faced with a deep economic crisis, the country is seeking alms from one country to another in vain. Is it the inefficiency and failure of the country's leadership that no government could complete its tenure in Pakistan, or is it a curse of millions of Bangladeshi mothers, who lost their children, wives, who lost their husbands, sons who lost their fathers, and women, who were raped, in 1971?

Every moment we realize how lucky we are to have got an undisputed leader of the Bangalees and a towering figure like Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in our land. We could dare to dream for an independent Bangladesh just because of his extraordinary political wisdom. He gave us an independent and sovereign country with the help of his very efficient co-fighters, colleagues, and a huge number of general masses. How many countries exist in the world where a leader and a state are synonymous?

On the eve of Independence Day, if we look back, we don't just see Bangladesh's gradual progress over the last five decades, but also see



conspiracies, brutalities, and change of state power. The history of 21 years after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members is a history of going backward and a history of deviating from ideologies. None could imagine that the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would not just stop after the mindless brutality, they even enacted indemnity law so that they could not be tried, and the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman could be erased from history.

We could see that the perpetrators, who were against the liberation war and killed the freedom fighters by joining hands with Pakistani forces, later assumed state power after assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We are very lucky that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's daughter Sheikh Hasina has brought an end to the stigmatized history by trying the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the war criminals.

Fifty-two years have already passed since independence and we all wish to know where we have reached in the last 52 years. At the same time, we all wish to know where the world has reached by this time. No matter how hard we try to be ignorant, we all can realize that the world is not in a good state right now. We have witnessed in utter dismay that the top 10 billionaires in the world have doubled their wealth during Covid-19 pandemic while around 99 percent of the world's total population have become even poorer during this period. We don't need to become Einstein to understand that the wealth of such large numbers of poor people have gone to the pockets of a few billionaires. As the people in the world started getting respite from the blow of Covid-19, started the



Russia-Ukraine war. The developing countries like Bangladesh are the worst victims of the war's multifaceted impacts. Both World Wars in the last century began from Europe. But we had to pay for it. Even Winston Churchill stopped food supply to this region during the Second World War, causing an artificial famine and claiming the lives of around 3 million people.

Now, the issue of climate change has become the major cause for concern for all the countries in the world. We don't need to go through scientific data and statistics to understand that the world is getting warmer; everyone is already feeling it. The world's temperature is rising due to excessive emission of Carbon dioxide because of the luxurious lifestyle of the people of so-called developed nations. Ice in the world's polar region is melting gradually due to global warming, causing sea level rise. Bangladesh is one of the few countries that remains under the risk of getting submerged by sea water due to the impact of climate change.

The Western countries have wreaked havoc on the Middle Eastern countries. As a result of which, thousands of refugees are heading towards Europe for shelter. Many European countries have set up barbed wire fences to prevent refugees from entering. Right at that time, Bangladesh did a great humanitarian job by giving shelters to some 1.3 million Rohingya people, who fled from neighboring country Myanmar in the face of military crackdown. Has any country in the world done anything except for showing sympathy?

It is at this juncture we are hearing about the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In the past, many criticized us for joining the First Industrial Revolution that mainly focused on shifting from an agrarian economy to a manufacturing economy. But does everybody know the fact that Britain took away the money for the First



Industrial Revolution from this region by making us its colony. Even so, it took around 100 years for the industrial revolution's impact to spread beyond Britain. The Second Industrial Revolution's main focus was to use electricity. But it is a matter of concern that around 20 percent of the world's total population are still out of electricity coverage. We can consider the use of the Internet as the major feature of the Third Industrial Revolution. Unfortunately, around half of the world's total population still don't have access to the internet.

On one hand, the industrial revolution caused significant advancement of technology. But it also created discrimination among people. Will the upcoming Fourth Industrial Revolution be like its predecessors? Is it a matter of hope or concern for us? The main pillar of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is Artificial Intelligence (AI). A large amount of data and computing power are required for making Artificial Intelligence effective, but we have none of the capacities right now. So, the question arises whether we will become puppets at the hands of giant ICT companies. Will we just keep seeing that the giant ICT companies are taking away our talents?

None will disagree with the fact that the current world is cruel and selfish. We will have to survive; we will have to move forward as well. So, what will we do?

All of us know the answer of how we will survive in this world: we will have to gradually turn Bangladesh into a knowledge-based country. But it is really challenging for us because Bangladesh now ranks the 120th position among 145 knowledge-based countries. We rank below the average position. Our main weakness is in the research sector. In order to make a knowledge-based country, putting utmost importance on science education is a must. However, we are still lagging far behind in the science area and we are ranking 61th position. It is a matter of utter regret that we spend only 2 percent of our total GDP in education, although 6 percent of the GDP was supposed to be spent on education. Another problem is that our meritorious students leave the country after completing their education with government expenses without any repentance.



Therefore, we can take the challenge of building a knowledge-based country. We have some exceptional characteristics that are unavailable in many other countries. For example, we have a huge number of students. The total number of students at all levels including schools, colleges, universities and madrasas would be around 50 million, a feat that fewer countries in the word can meet. Around half of them in our country are female.

Those who mostly study at different reputed universities tend to migrate abroad. But a large number of students are studying at different educational institutions under the National University. They want to live in Bangladesh. So, more emphasis should be given on them. If they can be provided with more quality education, they will be turned into a huge human resource pool.

We have sufficient numbers of universities. So, without building new universities, we need to set up more technical education institutions. Many of us know that the technical education institutions significantly contribute to the country's development. Modernization of school-level education was essential in our country. Private coaching centers are running businesses taking the chance of a memory-based education system. But it does not bring any good for students. Now, we are seeing new initiatives being taken to bring fundamental changes in our education system. We hope that students will learn with joy, if the new system is introduced.

The most important step for building a knowledge-based society is research. But we are still lagging behind in the area of research. There is no shortcut way for development in this sector. We can follow examples of the countries that are well ahead in the area of research. Then many of our brilliant researchers, who are now living abroad, will return to home and engage themselves in research. Our GDP growth is higher than neighboring country India. In many cases, our brilliant students are doing better than Indian students in different international Olympiads. We had to buy a rocket from SpaceX to send the Bangabandhu Satellite to space. But India can send a spaceship to Mars at a lower cost than the expenses they bear for making a film in Hollywood. Are we not still capable enough to achieve such capacity?

Our government has now aimed to establish a 'Smart Bangladesh' after achieving the plans laid out for making 'Digital Bangladesh'. I would like to think it one step further. Only the use of smart technologies will not solve all the problems and improve quality of lives. Rather, all the children must be grown as Smart Citizens with proper knowledge on science and research for leading the country in future. Smart Bangladesh will be the country of Smart People. On Independence Day, this is the dream for Bangladesh. □

Writer : Educationist and Novelist

The article was translated by Pankag Karmakar, Assistant Professor, Press Institute Bangladesh (PIB)

You Just Called Us

Mohammad Nurul Huda

You called us out with our homeland opening eyes like the lilies
You called us out with Bangladesh smiling under the moving sun
You called us out with the rivers, birds and animals set in motion
You called us out with the heroes of Bengal rising up in fair intention
You called us out with the sovereign Bengalis' pointing finger
You called us out with the all-conquering outcry of 'Joy Bangla'.

You called us out with the battles fought in the war of freedom
You called us out with the invaders' thighs shaking badly in fear
You called us out with the country-fighters, the winning ghazis
You called us out with the fighters willing for the people's war
You called us out with public-fighters, the militias invincible
You called us out with Scorpion soldiers, the everyday-winners

You called us out with the flag kept on flying red and green
You called us out with the wheel of growth and parity turning
You called us out with nationhood and the grassroots masses
You called us out with the nation freed well into democracy
You called us out with the people's war lasting long for months
You called us out paving the way for living in national concord

You called us out with good days befalling upon the Bengalis
You called us out with the pure-hearted Bengalis turned out free
You called us out with all Bengalis' dwelling home liberated
You called us out with the realm of liberty in the free world
You called us out with the call of freeness along the universe
The Bengalis are a free nation forcing the world to turn aback.

You called us out with the time, with which you do flow and run
You are the Saviour, Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.



TORNADO, STORMS 23 killed in Mississippi

AFP, Washington

At least 23 people died as violent storms and at least one tornado ripped through the US state of Mississippi, tearing off roofs and flattening neighborhoods, officials and residents said yesterday.

The southern state's emergency management agency said at least four people were missing and dozens were injured, while tens of thousands of people in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee were without power.

"At least 23 Mississippians were killed by last night's violent tornadoes. We know that many more are injured. Search and rescue teams are still active," Governor Tate Reeves said on Twitter.

"The loss will be felt in these towns forever. Please pray for God's hand to be over all who lost family and friends."

Confirming the death toll at 23, the emergency management agency cautioned: "Unfortunately, these numbers are expected to change."

Search and rescue operations were underway in Sharkey and Humphreys counties, about 70 miles (110 kilometers) north of the state capital Jackson, the agency said on Twitter.

"My city is gone," Rolling Fork Mayor Eldridge Walker, whose town is located in Sharkey county, told CNN.

He told CBS affiliate WJTV that when he was able to leave his home, "what we found is devastation all around us."

Woodrow Johnson, a local official in Humphreys County, told CNN his wife woke him up and they heard what sounded like a train.

"It was a very scary thing," Johnson said, adding his neighbor's house, a trailer, was "completely gone."

The National Weather Service warned residents that as clean-up operations continue, "dangers remain even after the storms move on."

TV footage showed homes levelled and debris strewn across roads as emergency services attempted to get to those who needed help.



Supporters of India's main opposition Congress party hold placards and raise slogans after the party's leader Rahul Gandhi was disqualified as a lawmaker by India's parliament on Friday, at the party's headquarter in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Rahul Gandhi: 'Princeling' heir to once-powerful Indian dynasty

AFP, New Delhi

Being born into India's most famous political dynasty is traditionally a guaranteed ticket to the prime minister's office, but Rahul Gandhi's chances of fulfilling his family destiny now look smaller than ever.

The 52-year-old, who was expelled from parliament Friday after a defamation conviction, is the son, grandson and great-grandson of former Indian leaders.

But his family legacy has not equipped him to compete against the electoral juggernaut of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose party holds a near-monopoly on power through nationalist appeals to the country's Hindu majority.

Modi has revelled in casting his chief opponent, dubbed an "empty suit" in leaked US embassy cables from 2005, as an out-of-touch princeling more interested in luxury and self-indulgence than fighting to help

the world's biggest democracy.

His Congress party was a once mighty force with a proud role in ending British colonial rule 75 years ago, but under his stewardship it has become a shadow of its former self, plagued by infighting and defections.

Rahul was born in 1970 into India's equivalent of the Kennedy clan in the United States, with its own history of elite prestige, political power and tragedy.

At the time his grandmother Indira Gandhi — daughter of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and no relation to fellow independence hero Mahatma Gandhi — was premier.

Indira was shot dead by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984 in retaliation for ordering a military assault on the Golden Temple,

the faith's holiest shrine, earlier that year.

She was succeeded by her son Rajiv Gandhi, Rahul's father. Rajiv was assassinated in 1991 by a Tamil suicide bomber when Rahul was 20.

Rahul was enrolled at Harvard but dropped out after a year following his father's death.

He later graduated from Rollins College, Florida and in 1994 earned a master's degree from Cambridge.

While in his 20s, he lived in London, where he worked at a management consultancy for a time as his mother Sonia, Rajiv's widow, took charge of Congress.

She worked to groom her son for top office but by the time he was ready to lead, the political fortunes of the charismatic Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party

were fast on the rise.

He steered Congress to two landslide election defeats, with Modi openly mocking his privileged upbringing at campaign rallies and comparing it to his own humble origins as "a son of the soil".

His exhortations of religious tolerance and India's secular traditions also failed to dent the BJP's muscular advocacy for the Hindu majority, at a time of rising intolerance against Muslims.

Gandhi stepped down as opposition leader in 2019 after the second loss and his mother also vacated the party presidency last year.

But analysts say the family remain in de facto control of the party and are still its most recognised faces.

And Gandhi remains the most likely candidate to defeat Modi in next year's election, even if political experts consider another BJP landslide a near certainty.



BLASPHEMY CHARGES

Pak court sentences man to death

AFP, Peshawar

An anti-terrorism court in northwest Pakistan has convicted and sentenced a Muslim man to death after he was accused of posting blasphemous content in a WhatsApp group. Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in Muslim-majority Pakistan, where even unproven allegations can stir mobs and violence. Syed Muhammad Zeeshan was convicted under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act and Anti-Terrorist Act by the court in Peshawar on Friday. Zeeshan, who is a resident of the northwest city of Mardan, was also fined 12 million rupees (\$4,300) and handed a total of 23 years imprisonment. He has the right to appeal. The case arose after Muhammad Saeed, a resident of Talagang in Punjab province filed an application with the Federal Investigation Agency two years ago accusing Zeeshan of posting blasphemous content in a WhatsApp group. While Pakistan's laws prohibiting blasphemy can carry a potential death sentence, so far it has never been enforced for the crime. Although many cases involve Muslims accusing fellow Muslims, rights activists have warned that religious minorities are often caught in the crossfire, with blasphemy charges used to settle personal scores. According to the National Commission of Justice and Peace, a human rights and legal aid group in Pakistan, 774 Muslims and 760 members of various minority religious groups were accused of blasphemy in the last 20 years.



EU, Germany reach deal to phaseout fossil fuel cars

AFP, Brussels

The European Union and Germany yesterday said they had struck a deal after a dispute over the planned phaseout by 2035 of the sale of cars using fossil fuels. A landmark deal to prohibit new sales of fossil fuel cars from 2035 is key to the bloc's ambitious plan to become a "climate-neutral" economy by 2050, with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. But in an unprecedented move earlier this month, leading car producer Germany blocked the agreement at the last minute after it had already been approved under the traditional EU legislative process. Berlin demanded that Brussels provide assurances the law would allow the sales of new cars with combustion engines that run on synthetic fuels, the focus of the breakthrough announced on Saturday. German Transport Minister Volker Wissing said on Twitter that vehicles with combustion engines could continue to be registered after 2035 if they only use fuels that are neutral in their CO2 emissions.

আলহাজ্ব সর্বশক্তিমান

জয় বাংলা
জয় গণতন্ত্র

একটি
বাংলাদেশ
হুমি জাতির জনতার
সারা বিশ্বের বিশ্বাস
হুমি আমার
অহংকার

২০২৫
বার্ষিক
সাধারণ
সভা

যাদের আত্মত্যাগে
আজ এই
স্বাধীনতা
তাদের প্রতি-
শ্রদ্ধা

আলহাজ্ব আসাদুর রহমান কিরণ
মেয়র (ভারপ্রাপ্ত), গাজীপুর সিটি কর্পোরেশন।

Why won't the UN recognise '71 genocide?

The ICJ must hold the war criminals accountable

We join the PM's call to the United Nations to recognise March 25 as the International Genocide Day. The failure of the UN to officially recognise the genocide of 1971 has been a painful reality for the people of Bangladesh. It is mindboggling that despite overwhelming evidence of the atrocities committed by Pakistani Army against unarmed civilians of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) – which included the most brutal forms of torture, murder and sexual violence, driven by racial hatred and bigotry – the UN has consistently chosen not to term these crimes against humanity as genocide. This in the backdrop of the international body recognising other genocides, such as those in Armenia, Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda.

The acts listed by the 1948 Genocide Convention that constitute genocide include killing members of a group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, and deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part. All these acts and many more were committed in 1971, as a state unleashed unspeakable horror on its own citizens. By all standards, these acts constitute genocide. So why this illogical refusal to recognise it as such?

Most significantly, the Bangladesh genocide of 1971 was amply documented by foreign media outlets and journalists covering the war then. Pakistani journalist Anthony Mascarenhas published a detailed report titled "Genocide" which was published in the UK's *Sunday Times* on June 13, 1971. An article in the *Time* magazine, published in August 1971, quoted a US official who referred to the anti-Bengali racism as being the fuel that made the soldiers "willing executioners". The chilling accounts of Archer K Blood, the US consul general in Dhaka at the time, describe the horrific sight of bodies of women who had been raped, shot and hung by the heels in the ceilings of Rokeya Hall. There were other foreign correspondents on the ground, such as Simon Dring and Mark Tully, who reported extensively on Pakistani brutalities.

In addition, there have been countless books, newspaper articles and reports based on eyewitness accounts of what happened during the nine months of the Liberation War. The details of "Operation Searchlight", which systematically targeted Bengalis (especially of Hindu faith), have been documented in numerous books, journals and newspapers. It included seeking out intellectuals, picking them up with the help of local collaborators, and subjecting them to merciless torture before killing them.

Are these facts/evidence not authentic enough for the UN to recognise the genocide? Even after 51 years, Pakistan has not formally apologised for the crimes of its army. It has not tried the 195 war criminals identified by Bangladesh in 1972. It is, therefore, incumbent on the UN to recognise the genocide in Bangladesh. Pakistan must offer its unconditional apology and commitment to try the war criminals who were part of this diabolical plan to eliminate a race. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has enough material to put on trial the main perpetrators behind the genocide. The UN and the ICJ have a moral obligation to recognise and seek justice for this genocide.

Level crossings need better coordination

Relevant agencies must work together to improve their safety

The threat of unsafe level crossings has once again come to the fore after a recent train-bus collision at a crossing right at the heart of Dhaka, which thankfully caused no fatalities but temporarily suspended rail communications between the capital and the rest of the country. The fact is, most crossings in Bangladesh are still unprotected, and therefore remain highly susceptible to accidents, even after repeated warnings, deadly collisions as well as assurances of preventive action. A recent survey jointly conducted by Bangladesh Railway (BR) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) also highlighted the danger, and made recommendations that deserve proper attention.

Bangladesh has about 3,111 level crossings. Of them, 1,886 are authorised, even though a large number of them remain unmanned. In addition, there are 1,225 crossings that are both unauthorised and unmanned. Thus, the survey has underscored the urgency of improving their safety through various measures. For example, it recommended building overpasses or underpasses at 47 crossings, and installing an automated system at 194 unmanned crossings so that a warning bell goes off when a train approaches. Other recommendations include setting up gate barriers, putting in place electricity and telephone lines and other basic facilities at 1,436 more crossings. The survey also suggested shutting down 62 closely located crossings. Moreover, given the acute shortage of staff to operate the crossings, it suggested recruiting 5,772 people.

It should be noted that in the first two months of this year, at least 37 people were killed in 36 rail-related accidents, according to the Road Safety Foundation. Last year, at least 326 people were killed and 113 were injured in 354 such accidents, most of which took place at level crossings. All this calls for drastic reforms, and those changes/reforms suggested by the survey can indeed help reduce crossing-related accidents. However, as we know from past experience, addressing lack of infrastructure or staff alone will not be enough. We also need to address the lack of coordination among the agencies involved with crossings, especially the unauthorised ones.

Reportedly, at least nine government bodies were involved in building the unauthorised level crossings, with the LGED having constructed the highest 516. It is a common tendency for the BR and those agencies to trade blame or to try to avert responsibility after every collision. In the absence of systemic coordination among them, unprotected crossings continue to throw up dead bodies every now and then. It is, therefore, vital that there is a central administrative wing in charge of all level crossings, authorised or not. It should supervise all decisions related to them and ensure proper follow-up. A central command would be ideally placed to fast-track such activities and ensure collaboration.

We, therefore, urge the higher authorities to undertake these reforms with the highest priority. Given the current risk, there is no time to dilly-dally in this regard.

Protecting a generation in danger



Dr Manzoor Ahmed
is professor emeritus at Brac University, chair of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), and vice chair of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE). The views expressed are his own.

MANZOOR AHMED

Education Watch and others have been sounding the alarm bell about the learning loss from disrupted schooling for two academic years due to the pandemic. They have been urging remedial actions. The decision-makers have been in denial about the losses and have been bent on returning to normal school routine. Two recent studies under government auspices have confirmed the warnings given by Education Watch.

A study, designed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) with European Union support and conducted on 3,000 primary schools and 20,000 students of classes 2 to 5 was completed in October, 2022. Its findings apparently have caused the authorities to be hesitant about releasing the report. However, *Daily Janakantha* revealed the findings in its cover story on March 21 under the heading, "Corona impact on education – Children in distress." The study found many class 2 students did not recognise the alphabet, and class four students could not do simple addition or subtraction. The situation was worse for disadvantaged groups, such as the ethnic minorities in the hills.

Another survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) with Unicef support under the title, "National Survey on Children's Education in Bangladesh 2021", carried out in 9,000 households was officially released on March 16. The survey was conducted between December 21, 2021 and January 10, 2022. The aim was to investigate school attendance, dropout, engagement in learning activities and other effects of the pandemic as schools re-opened after the long closure.

This study, following the methodology of Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) used for survey of children by Unicef and BBS, found that among children aged 7-14 years, about half could correctly answer simple comprehension questions after reading a simple story, thus demonstrating overall foundational reading skills. Foundational numeracy skills among children aged 7-14 years were acquired by a quarter of students (25.8 percent) who could read numbers, understand smaller and larger values and do simple addition. This study provided a snapshot after schools reopened in late 2021, rather than an estimate of loss.

It showed that only about one in five (18.7 percent) school-going children (regardless of education level) attended online or other distance mode learning during the school closure. The primary level participation rate (13.1 percent) was lower compared to lower and



PHOTO: UNICEF

upper secondary levels (20.3 and 23.7 percent, respectively).

The adjusted attendance ratio in primary school was reported to be high (80.5 percent) when schools reopened, but considerably less in lower and upper secondary school (59.6 percent and 50.5 percent, respectively). The corresponding pre-Covid attendance ratios three years earlier were higher at primary level (85.9 percent) but were comparable at lower secondary (57.8 percent) and upper secondary levels (48.1 percent).

The NCTB study mentioned above attempted to compare students' learning outcome in 2022 with a pre-Covid assessment undertaken by NCTB in 2019. For example, class four students were tested on their knowledge in class three curricular content in 2019 and 2022. The results were not satisfactory in 2019 – a large proportion of students (40 percent in Bangla, 37 percent in English and 44 percent in Mathematics) showed "severe" lag in 2019 compared to expected grade-level knowledge and skills. The post-Covid results in 2022 were even less satisfactory – "severe" lags for class four students were found for 44 percent in Bangla, 49 percent in English, and 39 percent in mathematics. The relatively better math outcome for class four was an exception, because for other classes, according to the findings, post-Covid

results were uniformly worse. The point to be noted is that pre-Covid results with around 40 percent students not achieving essential competencies were not acceptable; but the post-Covid outcomes were worse.

A third study, Education Watch 2022 report (EW22), titled, "Post-Pandemic Education: Recovery and Renewal of School Education," again

teachers to cope with the new grade level lessons and to avoid cumulative deficits and widening learning gaps, EW22 recommends the following steps:

- A grade-wise rapid assessment of student status in core skills/competencies (Bangla and math at the primary level; and Bangla, English, math and science at the secondary

supported by the European Union, now being finalised and to be released shortly, also provides a snapshot of the school operations and outcomes in the last quarter of 2022. It, among other things, undertook an assessment of knowledge and competency of a sample of class eight and nine students, testing them on expected outcomes in Bangla, English and Mathematics based on class eight curriculum. The findings are largely similar to the NCTB study findings at the primary level.

The Education Watch study concluded that at least one-third of the class eight and nine students were not able to cope with their lessons in the classes they were placed in the post-Covid period. The premise that students should be promoted to the higher classes without letting them lose any school year due to the pandemic disruption or the assumption that somehow students would manage at their class level were not well-founded. Class nine students, tested on class eight materials, did not do much better than class eight students, suggesting a cumulative deficit in learning.

The key recommendation of EW22 is that bringing students up to grade level within a year should be the priority. It urges that grade-wise and school-based recovery plan should be initiated. To assist students and

level) should be undertaken.

- Students should be grouped by performance level determined by the rapid assessment and assisted to bring them up to a minimum grade level competency within a year.

- Simple assessment tools should be developed to be used in each school as well as teaching guides and content for remedial lessons by groups.

- Supporting teachers and schools to carry out the assessment and remedial learning activities.

- Teachers should be provided in print and on-line with simple and well-structured pedagogy tools for lessons to serve different ability groups.

The final draft of the NCTB-sponsored study also recommends a recovery and remedial action plan to be jointly formulated by the Directorate of Primary Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and NCTB for primary education. It should include elements, such as priority to foundational skills, extending learning hours, preparing grade and subject-specific remedial packages, recruiting local volunteer teachers and para-teachers to assist classroom teachers, and working with parents and community.

It would be logical to consider similar steps also for the secondary level. Given the convergence of views of researchers and stakeholders, will the decision-makers now listen?

The global banking crisis and world economy



Jeffrey D Sachs
is a world-renowned economist, academic, and public policy analyst who serves as the director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University.

JEFFREY D SACHS

The banking crisis that hit Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) recently has spread. We recall with a shudder two recent financial contagions: the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, which led to a deep Asian recession, and the 2008 Great Recession, which led to a global downturn. The new banking crisis hits a world economy already disrupted by pandemic, war, sanctions, geopolitical tensions, and climate shocks.

At the root of the current banking crisis is the tightening of monetary conditions by the Fed and the European Central Bank (ECB) after years of expansionary monetary policy. In recent years, both the Fed and ECB held interest rates near zero and flooded the economy with liquidity, especially in response to the pandemic. Easy money resulted in inflation in 2022, and both central banks are now tightening monetary policy and raising interest rates to staunch inflation.

Banks like SVB take in short-term deposits and use the deposits to make long-term investments. The banks pay interest on the deposits and aim

for higher returns on the long-term investments. When the central banks raises short-term interest rates, rates paid on deposits may exceed the earnings on long-term investments. In that case, the banks' earnings and capital fall. Banks may need to raise more capital to stay safe and in operation. In extreme cases, some banks may fail.

Even a solvent bank may fail if depositors panic and suddenly try to withdraw their deposits, an event known as a bank run. Each depositor dashes to withdraw deposits ahead of the other depositors. Since the bank's assets are tied up in long-term investments, the bank lacks the liquidity to provide ready cash to the panicked depositors. SVB succumbed to such a bank run and was quickly taken over by the US government.

Bank runs are a standard risk but can be avoided in three ways. First, banks should keep enough capital to absorb losses. Second, in the event of a bank run, central banks should provide banks with emergency liquidity, thereby ending the panic. Third,

government deposit insurance should calm depositors.

All three mechanisms may have failed in the case of SVB. First, SVB apparently allowed its balance sheet to become seriously impaired, and regulators did not react in time. Second, for unclear reasons, US regulators closed SVB rather than provide emergency central bank liquidity. Third, US deposit insurance guaranteed deposits only up to \$250,000, and so did not stop a run by large depositors. After the run, US regulators announced they would guarantee all deposits.

The immediate question is whether SVB's failure is the start of a more general bank crisis. The rise of market interest rates caused by Fed and ECB tightening has impaired other banks as well. Now that a banking crisis has occurred, panics by depositors are more likely.

Future bank runs can be avoided if the world's central banks provide ample liquidity to banks facing runs. The Swiss central bank provided a loan to Credit Suisse for exactly this reason. The Federal Reserve has provided \$152 billion in new lending to US banks in recent days.

Emergency lending, however, partly offsets the central banks' efforts to control inflation. Central banks are in a quandary. By pushing up interest rates, they make bank runs more likely. If they keep interest rates too low, however, inflationary pressures are likely to persist.

The central banks will try to have it both ways: higher interest rates plus emergency liquidity, if needed. This is the right approach but comes with costs. The US and European economies were already experiencing stagflation: high inflation and slowing growth. The banking crisis will worsen the stagflation and possibly tip the US and Europe into recession.

Some of the stagflation was the consequence of Covid-19, which induced the central banks to pump in massive liquidity in 2020, causing inflation in 2022. Some of the stagflation is the result of shocks caused by long-term climate change. Climate shocks could become worse this year if a new El Niño develops in the Pacific, as scientists say is increasingly likely.

Yet stagflation has also been intensified by economic disruptions caused by the Ukraine War, US and EU sanctions against Russia, and rising tensions between the US and China. These geopolitical factors have disrupted the world economy by hitting supply chains, pushing up costs and prices while hindering output.

We should regard diplomacy as a key macroeconomic tool. If diplomacy is used to end the Ukraine War, phase out the costly sanctions on Russia, and reduce tensions between the US and China, not only will the world be much safer, but stagflation will also be eased. Peace and cooperation are the best remedies to rising economic risks.

52 YEARS OF BANGLADESH’S INDEPENDENCE



ILLUSTRATION: MANAN MORSHED

The fight for people’s freedom



Anu Muhammad
is a professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University.

ANU MUHAMMAD

The fight for people’s freedom in Bangladesh neither began nor ended in 1971. It has been going on for many years, and 1971 was a major phase of it. It was not only major, but it was also enormous, glorious, and horrific all at the same time.

The basis of the Liberation War of 1971 was built through numerous movements that took place in the 1950s and 1960s. New thoughts and new demands sprouted, and through the sacrifice of many lives, people became organised. A vision for the future was developed in the minds of the people. The main point of this vision was that a state must be established that would not be built in the model of Pakistan.

Throughout the unrest of the 1950s and 1960s, the mass uprising of 1969 and eventually the Liberation War, the people developed an idea of a set of characteristics of the Pakistani state that they wanted to avoid for their own state. Firstly, all the protests featured the rhetoric that it was a fight against the “22 families”. At that time, there was a centralisation of wealth in Pakistan surrounding a group of families known as the “22 families”. They held sway over the politics and economics of Pakistan. The abolition of this type of centralisation of wealth was a major objective of the movements during that time.

The second objective was the eradication of all sorts of discrimination that was rife in Pakistan. Discrimination between the East and the West, the existence of two economies in one country, discrimination based on regional origin, nationality, religion – these are the things that were being fought against. The goal was to get to a stage where people were ruled by the democratic process, where groups like the “22 families” and their military and civilian accomplices don’t have authority, where the country belongs to the people, where public rights can be established. The centrepiece of all of this was democracy.

During these movements, another central factor that strongly came to the fore was jute. Jute was produced in massive amounts in Bangladesh, an industry existed based on jute, but the profits earned from it went entirely to West Pakistan. A desire to make jute the centre of future industrialisation materialised at that time. A desire materialised for the people of this region to reach a place of prosperity with jute as the main driver.

Other than these, there was a desire in the cultural sphere that all people, no matter their ethnic or linguistic identity, would be able to practise and celebrate their own cultures without anything being forced on them. Even though it didn’t appear directly among the six-point demands, it was made clear in the eleven-point demands as

well as during the mass uprising of 1969 that this region would not bow its head to imperialism or any sort of domination. This region wanted to exist freely as a strong entity among other nations of the world.

These desires encapsulate what the people rejected about the state of Pakistan and the thoughts that were taking hold in their mind for the model of a new state. The desire grew louder during the Liberation War of 1971, and a sense of achieving this new state through this war became prevalent. The rejection of Pakistan started to become clear from the beginning of March, and once the Pakistani army initiated a genocide on the night of March 25, the people of Bangladesh were in no way going to stay with Pakistan afterwards.

No matter the exact date of the declaration of independence, starting from the night of March 25, people from all walks of life, regardless of profession, gender, religious beliefs and ethnicity, fought with the goal of achieving that desired state.

Over 50 years have passed since, and we can now take a look at the things about the Pakistan model that people had rejected, fought against, and died in the process of doing so. This is a major question, a place to evaluate and self-reflect. It is our responsibility as citizens of Bangladesh to pose these questions.

The centralisation of wealth that occurred with the “22 families” in Pakistan can be seen occurring in an even more intense way in Bangladesh. In Pakistan, the criticism was that it had two economies. Similarly in Bangladesh, because of the centralisation of wealth in the hands of a select few, a huge majority of people’s lives are full of struggle and suffering. On the other hand, the select few that own this wealth have lives and prospects for the future that are disproportionately different from the rest. This discrimination was exactly what we fought against.

In every movement for education in the 1960s, the main point was that the state would take the responsibility for universal education. The demand was that everyone would receive the same education that was aligned towards the same goals, that the responsibility for it should be taken by the state and that education would not become commercialised. Similar things were said about healthcare too. But since independence, we have moved towards the opposite direction on these matters.

In the 50-odd years since independence, Bangladesh has become immensely wealthy. We have prospered in the agricultural and industrial sectors, we have way more roads and buildings than we used to. But we have moved towards the opposite direction from the

desire and the spirit that drove the Liberation War, the ways in which our state was supposed to be different from the Pakistani model.

We have seen the flourishing of a capitalist system here, but at its core are three main characteristics. First is the centralisation of wealth, second is the increase in all sorts of discrimination, and third is the brutal destruction of nature. Rivers, streams, canals, lakes, forests, our air, and the biodiversity of our nature have all been under constant attack. A scope has been created to generate profit at all costs, even at the cost of our nature.

The central desire was that this new state will be for the people, that the people will have agency. The people here include the environment in which they live, where their power resides. The institutions and the democratic process should have been for the people and run by the people. Democracy is not an abstract concept. It can be thought of clearly and in a concrete manner as a system where the people have the power. This is written down in the Constitution, but Bangladesh today is still far from that reality. Bangladesh was supposed to be a country run by its people, but we are dangerously moving towards a country being run by a coterie.

The reason we don’t lose hope and courage after making such evaluations is that a country where the Liberation War of 1971 can take place, where the people can fight against such a terrifying military power, where the people don’t take a step back from sacrificing everything in their fight, where the scope is created to realise the people’s desire to establish a new state, is not a country where there is any reason for the situation to remain this way. That is also the reason why this evaluation is necessary.

We were shown an illusion of development during the time of Ayub Khan, like the Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Plant that displaced hundreds of thousands of people, a development project that was the source of decades of conflict in that region. The plan for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant was also initiated during that time, which is now being implemented on a much bigger scale. Are there any lessons for us here?

So, on Independence Day or when we are talking about independence in general, it is important to pose these questions and make these evaluations so that we can make sure we are not covered in the shroud of illusory development once more. By posing these important questions, we can explore our long history of protest, of fighting for our rights, of the desire to make our dreams come true. This history provides us with the inner strength that personally makes me believe that the situation will change.

The goals and the desires that have empowered people to fight this fight, have turned each of them into strong individuals with an indomitable spirit. This inner strength will carry Bangladesh to a place where we can make the necessary changes for people.

Transcribed and translated by
Azmin Azran

Stories that we tell ourselves



Shuprova Tasneem
is a Bangladeshi journalist. Her Twitter handle is @ShuprovaTasneem.

SHUPROVA TASNEEM

How should a nation memorialise its history? How should a people respectfully bear witness to the trauma and violence of the past, while also celebrating their achievements? And as recent memory becomes distant history, and generations drift further and further away from the events that shaped their nation’s identity, how can we stop these remembrances from becoming hollow and tokenistic?

At the risk of sounding clichéd, when Dickens wrote, “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times”, he could just as easily be talking about 1971 as the French Revolution. The most ordinary people did extraordinary things during the Liberation War. It was a time of great hope for the people of this country, whose resilience, courage and spirit led to the birth of an independent country.

But it was also a time of unthinkable bloodshed and slaughter. The barbarity of the Pakistani soldiers’ attacks on Bangalees/Bangladeshis, especially from Hindu communities, has been well documented. It is difficult to forget some of the images taken by photojournalists during 1971, reflecting the horrific and indiscriminate torture and murder of ordinary civilians. The country is still dotted by unmarked graves, and many of those who survived the war continue to carry its scars with them today.

And every year, as we celebrate our Independence and Victory Days, so close on the heels of March 25 and December 14 – days that mark the beginning of the genocide against the Bangladeshi (then East Pakistani) population by the Pakistani military forces, and the targeted mass killing of Bangalee intellectuals – I can’t help but wonder, have we been able to properly retell the stories of the “best and worst” time in our national history?

Do the post-1971 generations really understand what it means for a country to have faced genocide and the enormity of what ordinary Bangladeshis achieved? Or do they only know dates and names from a period in history because their schoolteachers forced them to memorise it?

The reality is that, the further removed the younger generations become from the events of 1971, the harder it will become for them to connect to them. It won’t matter how many art competitions we hold every year, or how many patriotic songs children learn in school, and how often we wear red and green outfits to mark our national days – if we fail to tell them stories of the Liberation War that they can form an emotional attachment to, it will stop being real to them.

In this regard, there is a lot more that needs to be done. As a nation, we have made a mess of how we remember history. At different points in time, political parties and military dictatorships that once held power

have misrepresented history, or told a biased version of it. I remember when I was in school, our private educators decided to skip the chapters on 1971 altogether in order to “avoid conflict”.

Although this is in the process of being rectified, it is possible that the younger generations now know even less about history prior to 1971, and next to nothing about Partition and colonial rule in Bengal. While the crucial events of the Liberation War are now common knowledge, the stories of farmers and day labourers who secretly trained for combat, of boatmen who ferried weapons, families who risked everything to hide freedom fighters in their homes, and the everyday stories of courage and resistance, I do not believe, are common knowledge to younger generations in Bangladesh.

And how would they be known? As far as I am aware, the Liberation War Museum is the only

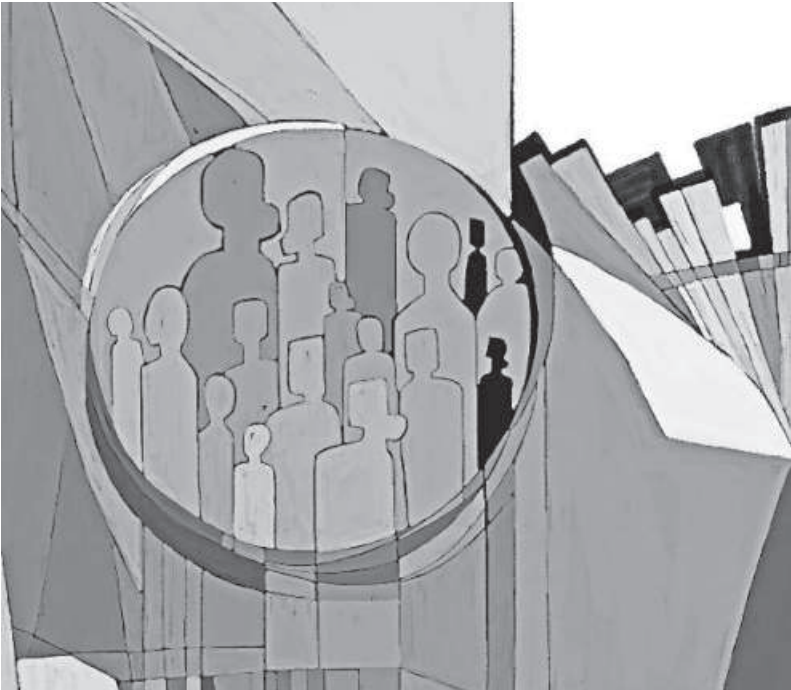


ILLUSTRATION: MANAN MORSHED

organisation in the country that has conducted a nationwide drive to collect oral histories from 1971 by asking schoolchildren to interview someone from their locality/village who survived the war, write down their stories, and send to the museum. This archive is now a treasure trove that brought together a winning combination – children who harnessed the power of storytelling to record the stories of their communities, thus exercising their agency and feeling connected to their local histories in the process.

Local memorials can also play an important role in creating these connections. The fact that almost every locality in the country has a Shaheed Minar definitely has an impact in keeping the Language Movement alive, and in many unions and district towns, they have become centres for the community’s congregations and movements as well. So why are there not more memorials to the Liberation War

and the MuktiBahini? What about memorials for the Birangana? Why is there not at least a plaque commemorating every known site of killings during 1971?

Of course, certain local memorials have been put up in recent years, such as the monument in Syedpur to commemorate the Golahat train massacre. One hopes this points to a realisation from the administration of the value of such national symbols, and of empowering communities to remember that they too are a part of this country’s shared history.

Unfortunately, where we have failed most spectacularly is in using the most powerful tool available to us in the modern world – the mass media. Many people around the world are aware of the genocides in Rwanda and Cambodia because of movies like *Hotel Rwanda* and *The Killing Fields*. Despite the First World War having taken place over a hundred years ago, the movie *All Quiet on the Western Front* still made it to this year’s list of Oscar-nominated films.

I’m not suggesting that we should be making content of this calibre by the end of this year. But there is definitely reason for us to ask why our film and TV industry has had so little success in bringing stories, at least to native viewers, of a period of history that is such a huge part of who we are.

The stories that we tell ourselves, and tell the world about ourselves, are a crucial part of nation-building, and of the process of constructing a national identity. They can help a nation process the trauma of living through genocide, and at least lead to a certain symbolic justice through the recognition of said genocide from the outside world. And remembering the tragic waste of human life that is the end result of any war can then become an important tool to remind future generations of the idea of “never again”.

As we move forward as a country, if we truly want the 1971 genocide to be remembered and recognised, we need to make sure our stories are heard – not just the mainstream narratives of dates, events and actors as copied down in textbooks, but the tales of ordinary Bangladeshis who, despite the odds stacked against them, struggled against a cruel and unjust system of power and brought it to its knees.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

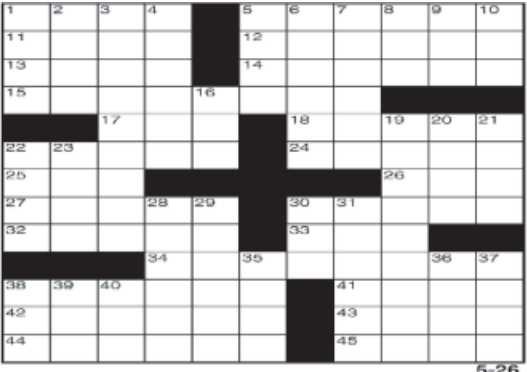
- 1 Buds
- 5 Indulge (in)
- 11 At the drop of—
- 12 Scaly pet
- 13 Antifur org.
- 14 Sounded hoarse
- 15 February birthstone
- 17 Regret
- 18 Did some tailoring
- 22 Command
- 24 Steamed
- 25 Yacht spot
- 26 Due follower
- 27 Gate feature
- 30 Alacrity
- 32 “Carmen,” for one

- 33 Hole number
- 34 At risk
- 38 Redress
- 41 Poll numbers
- 42 Carter’s successor
- 43 Resting on
- 44 Taxi devices
- 45 Dispatched

DOWN

- 1 One of a bear trio
- 2 Attention-getting sound
- 3 Future time
- 4 Rodin creation
- 5 Lean and sinewy
- 6 Tennis star
- Andre
- 7 Sheen

- 8 Pool unit
- 9 Binary digit
- 10 Gum mass
- 16 That woman
- 19 Historic hotel
- 20 To be, to Balzac
- 21 Title paper
- 22 Ibsen’s home
- 23 Take in
- 28 Shrink in fear
- 29 Plane’s place
- 30 Sauna site
- 31 Bamboo eaters
- 35 Bears’ lairs
- 36 School near Windsor
- 37 All ears
- 38 Ulna’s place
- 39 Victory sign
- 40 “Dig in!”



YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

J	A	M	S		Q	U	A	V	E	R			
O	B	O	E					U	N	W	I	S	E
B	L	U	E		A	L	E	P	P	O			
S	E	T		F	R	E	D						
	H	A	R	T	S		S	A	X				
S	A	P	P		S	C	O	U	R				
A	S	A	P				L	U	N	A			
F	I	R	S	T		B	A	T	T	Y			
E	A	T		A	L	E	P	H					
		S	T	A	G		P	A	L				
S	P	R	I	T	Z		B	A	J	A			
O	R	A	C	L	E		I	R	A	N			
B	O	N	K	E	D		O	K	R	A			

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

DID YOU KNOW?

You could reverse your diabetes!

STAR HEALTH DESK

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic disease occurring when the body does not process blood sugar correctly. It either does not produce enough insulin, or it resists insulin. Millions of adults in the world are at high risk for developing this condition. The best way to prevent or manage type 2 diabetes is through diet, exercise, and maintaining a healthy weight.

However, certain rare genetic mutations may offer protection against developing diabetes. A study published in Nature Genetics discovered 12 protein-truncating mutations on the SLC30A8 gene that are associated with a 65% reduction in type 2 diabetes risk. These variants were present in less than 0.1% of the population. They inactivate one copy of the

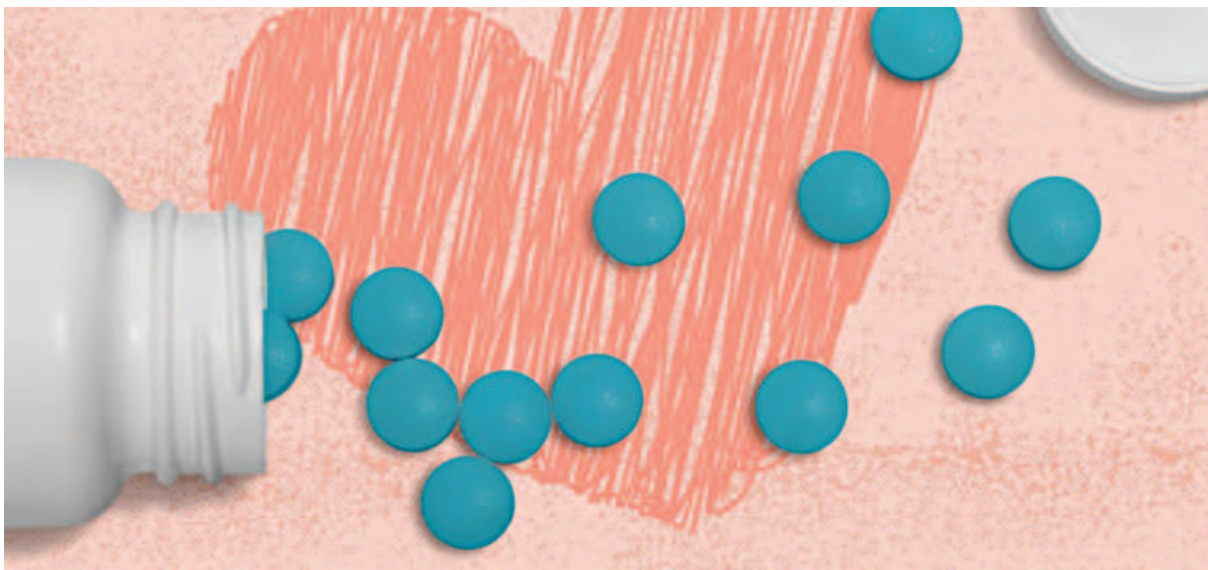


SLC3048 gene, suggesting that future treatments for diabetes could target the SLC3048 gene as well.

Again, diabetic retinopathy is a leading cause of blurred vision and blindness but can often be reduced with proper glucose management. Understanding the molecular mechanisms that cause eye damage will go a long way to helping doctors treat the condition.

For example, although high glucose is known to cause diabetic eye damage, there is some evidence that periods of low glucose make diabetic retinopathy worse. The authors of a new study published in *Cell Reports* tease out a cascade of molecular events that may explain this observation.

This research suggests that stabilising glucose levels may be as important as lowering them, especially for those already experiencing eye damage.



BLOOD THINNERS

Tips for taking them safely

STAR HEALTH DESK

If you are taking a blood thinner prescribed by your doctor to prevent blood clots, it is important to take some precautions:

Avoid bumps and falls: The blood thinner keep clots from forming in your heart or blood vessels can help prevent a heart attack and stroke. But because these drugs make it hard for you to stop bleeding, a minor injury can turn serious. Avoid contact sports and other activities where you are likely to get hurt. Walk, swim, or do other, safer exercises instead.

Stick to a schedule: Take your medicine at the same time each day. Some blood thinners do not work right if you are not consistent. Use a pill organizer or the calendar to remind yourself. If you forget, take it as soon as you remember. Do not skip a pill. If you do not realise until the next day that you missed a dose, ask your doctor what to do. Do not double-up.

Know your medicines: Before you bring home any new prescription or over-the-counter medicine, check with your doctor or pharmacist to make sure it is safe to take with your blood thinner. Even vitamins and supplements can change the way

some blood thinners work or add to their side effects. For example, if you take a pain reliever or cold medicine with aspirin in it, your bleeding risk could go up.

Cut carefully: Blood thinners can turn a tiny cut into a major bleed. Wear gloves when you work with knives, garden shears, or other sharp tools. Be extra careful when shaving. Use an electric razor, if possible, so you can not nick yourself. Don't trim your nails too close to the skin. When you do cut yourself, apply pressure until the bleeding stops. If it does not, get medical help.

Watch your vitamin K: Too much can make a common blood thinner called warfarin less effective. You should talk to your doctor about how much of food containing vitamin K is safe for you to eat.

Get tested: While you are on certain blood thinners, you may need regular blood tests to measure how fast your blood clots. The results help your doctor decide whether to change your dose or switch you to another drug.

Alert your medical team: Tell every doctor you visit that you take blood thinners, especially before you have a medical procedure or when you

get a new prescription. They need to know you are at extra risk for bleeding.

Be gentle with your teeth: Your gums are delicate, so clean your mouth with a lighter touch. Use a soft toothbrush, and do not scrub. Choose a waxed dental floss; slide it carefully between your teeth. Let your dentist know you take blood thinners. They will take extra care during check-ups and may also give you medicines to reduce bleeding during dental procedures.

Watch for side effects: Sometimes blood thinners might cause:

- Bleeding gums
 - Bruises you can not explain
 - Dizziness
 - Heavier-than-normal periods
 - Red or dark brown urine or stools
- Call your doctor if you notice any of the above cases.

Keep supplies handy: Have a stash of bandages and dressings at home. Always carry some with you, in case you get a cut. Special powder can stop a bleed quickly and keep it under control until you are able to get medical help. You can buy these products without a prescription at your local drugstore. And they are safe to use while you are on blood thinners.

HAVE A NICE DAY

The psychology behind social media

DR RUBAUL MURSHED

Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the world wide web (www) talked about its first 30 years, the rise of the toxic internet, and whether Facebook needs to be broken up.

By now scientists proved that social media triggers the same center in our brain, which is responsible for rewards. In other words, the center of pleasure. Every time we see a bigger number of likes, our brain initiates a huge increase in the hormone called dopamine. But, why do people show off on Facebook? Sometimes, people with an ego usually feel the need to impress others with how powerful or beautiful, or how qualified they are(!) and their ability to demean others. Some researchers think it is due to 'insecurity' – a common reason behind showiness when trying to prove that they are important.

Some may consider it as an 'attention-seeking disorder'. Some want too much attention from their colleagues, friends, or close ones. This could be a mental illness, known as 'Histrionic Personality Disorder' (HPD) marked by uneven emotions, a distorted self-image, and a desire to be noticed. They often behave improperly to get attention. Attention-seeking behaviour may breed from jealousy, low confidence, or as a result of a personality disorder. The main characteristics of a histrionic personality are – constantly seeking attention, and being irritating in situations where they are not the center of attention.

As we started with Berners-Lee, he quietly recalled his reaction to the Web's recent abuses. He was sad and said, "Actually, physically – my mind and body were in a different state." It is really painful to watch his creation so distorted.

E-mail: rubaulmurshed@shomman.org



Nutritional effects on pregnancy

DR MUHAMMAD TOREQUL ISLAM & TAWHID ISLAM

During pregnancy, nutrition is more important than ever. Because a pregnant woman needs more of many important nutrients than a normal, non-pregnant woman. It should be noted that a lactating woman requires additional nutritional support. Therefore, the selection and consumption of healthy foods will help to give birth to healthy babies, i.e., babies with proper body weight and proper physiological functions. This also helps to maintain the health of pregnant women.

During pregnancy, one should take in some special nutrients, such as more folic acid, iron, calcium,

Both normal, pregnant, and lactating women should get 600 IU (international units) of vitamin D per day. Adequate water intake (hydration) is also an important concern during pregnancy.

In pregnancy, the body needs more water to stay hydrated and support the life inside the womb. So, drinking quality mineral water or enough fluids every day is very important.

However, we should keep in mind that taking too many of these supplements might be harmful. Vitamin A, for example, causes birth defects at extremely high levels, whereas vitamin D causes an increase in bone fracture rates. Other substances to avoid during pregnancy include: alcohol, fish



and vitamin D. It is because folic acid prevents certain birth defects (e.g., brain, spine, or spinal cord). Normally, 400 mcg (micrograms) are needed per day, but during pregnancy and the lactating period, 600 mcg/day are required. Iron is another important mineral for the babies' growth and brain development.

Pregnancy increases the amount of blood in the mother's body; therefore, more iron is needed for the mother and for the growing baby. A pregnant woman should get 27 mg (milligrams) of iron a day. During pregnancy, calcium reduces the risk of preeclampsia (a serious medical condition that increases sudden blood pressure). This mineral also builds up the bones and teeth of babies. Pregnant adults and teenagers should get 1,000 and 1,300 mg of calcium a day, respectively.

Vitamin D helps calcium absorption, thus ensuring its proper functioning in our bodies.

containing high levels of mercury and contaminated foods (e.g., refrigerated smoked ; hot dogs; unpasteurised milk or juices; store-made salads, etc.).

Moreover, drinking high amounts of caffeine is also harmful for the fetus. Less than 200 mg of caffeine (about 12 ounces of coffee) has been recommended as a safe dose during pregnancy.

As a result, when selecting and purchasing diets for a pregnant lady, more consideration should be given. Consultation with a physician is highly suggested to guarantee a balanced diet and obtain particular vitamins and mineral supplements.

Dr Muhammad Torequl Islam is an Assistant Professor of Pharmacy at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University. E-mail: dmt.islam@gmail.com

Tawhid Islam is a student of Pharmacy at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University. E-mail: tawhidislam2021@yahoo.com

YES!
WE CAN END TB
WORLD TB DAY 2023

74 million lives saved since 2000 by global efforts to end TB

10.6 million people fell ill with TB in 2021

1.6 million people died of TB in 2021

World TB Day 2023, with the theme 'Yes! We can end TB', aims to inspire hope and encourage high-level leadership, increased investments, faster uptake of new recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO), adoption of innovations, accelerated action, and multisectoral collaboration to combat the TB epidemic.

This year is critical, with opportunities to raise visibility and political commitment at the 2023 UN High-Level Meeting on TB. The spotlight of World TB Day was on urging countries to ramp up progress in the lead-up to the 2023 UN High-Level Meeting on TB.

WHO also issued a call to action with partners urging Member States to accelerate the rollout of the new WHO-recommended shorter all-oral treatment regimens for drug-resistant TB.

World TB Day is observed annually on March 24 to raise awareness about TB and efforts to end the global epidemic, marking the day in 1882 when the bacterium causing TB was discovered.

Every child is special

They only need proper affection, care and comprehensive management to unleash their potential

- * Developmental Assessment & Therapy
- * Psychological Assessment
- * Special Clinics for Child Development



Appointment
02 22 22 67 486
10666



United Healthcare Brands



‘This team needed a win today’

SPORTS REPORTER FROM SYLHET

The FIFA-sanctioned friendly against Seychelles yesterday produced a lot of firsts, including Bangladesh's first taste of glory against an African nation at their fifth attempt.

It was also the first time naturalised citizen Eleta Kingsley donned the red and green. Midfielder Mojibor Rahman Jonny and defender Tariq Kazi also got in on the act, the former making his debut and the latter scoring his first goal for the national team.

Head coach Javier Cabrera was happy with the result, but far from ecstatic about his team's performance. "It was a difficult game, but it was an important win and that was the target we had set yesterday. This team needed a win today. We needed to prove ourselves and we did. That is the most important," Cabrera said at the post-match conference yesterday.

"We had a quiet start. As expected, the opponents were competitive and physical, but after we found our game, they could not create good chances to get back into the match. We need to be proud of this win," the 37-year-old said, adding that they would only celebrate after winning the upcoming friendly against the same opposition. Bangladesh failed to carry their

momentum from the first half into the second and survived a few scares against the team that had held them to a 1-1 draw in Sri Lanka in 2021. "I will say we played good football for 20-25 minutes in the first half but struggled for 25-30 minutes in the second half, bar the first five minutes," Cabrera said. "They defended man-to-man, which made it quite difficult for us to find our game. They followed every midfielder inside, which was very difficult."

The Spaniard said that they would analyse the footage of the second half and work on deficiencies before the second match on Tuesday.

Cabrera also expressed satisfaction with Kingsley and the others. "I am happy with Eleta. He is working hard. Everyone is working hard. The way we played, we needed the strikers to score. There are things to improve on but he had clear chances to score today. The day after tomorrow he may score. We have to be supportive."

Seychelles coach Neville Both said that Bangladesh did not deserve to win the match and that a draw would have been a fairer outcome since Seychelles conceded the winning goal due to defensive errors.



Bangladesh players celebrate their 1-0 win over Seychelles in a FIFA friendly match at the Sylhet District Stadium yesterday. (Inset) Tariq Kazi scored the decisive goal for the hosts which was also his first international goal. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

‘England have players to win Euro 2024’

REUTERS

England defender Harry Maguire said not winning next year's European Championship would be a failure for the team, after their progress in recent major tournaments.

Manchester United captain Maguire, who has 54 caps, has been a mainstay in England's defence under manager Gareth Southgate and started every game at the World Cup in Qatar, where they were knocked out in the quarterfinals by France.

Maguire, who was also part of the teams that reached the Euro 2020 final and the 2018 World Cup semifinals, branded triumph at Euro 2024 in Germany as the only measure of success.

"I believe we have the players to win it," Maguire, 30, told British media. "I'm with a mindset of, 'If we don't win the tournament, it's been a failure.' I've been at three major tournaments now and I've come so close."

England began their Euro 2024 qualifying campaign with a 2-1 win over reigning champions Italy on Thursday. They will face Ukraine at Wembley Stadium on Sunday.

What fate awaits undercooked Rishad?

SPORTS REPORTER

Leg-spinner Rishad Hossain's inclusion in the 14-member squad for the upcoming three-match T20I series against Ireland, set to begin from tomorrow in Chattogram, raised some questions. But perhaps it was not as surprising to those familiar with head coach Chandika Hathurusingha's modus operandi.

During his first stint as Bangladesh's head coach, the Sri Lankan had done something similar when he called up leg-spinner Jubair Hossain for a series against Zimbabwe. Jubair impressed on his debut series, but gradually lost his place in the side, with him now being a prime example whenever the dearth of leg spinners in Bangladesh is discussed.

Is Rishad's case going to be similar?

"We have been observing Rishad's leg-spin for a while now. Maybe he has not done anything big yet, but he does not perform that badly in the domestic circuit. He did okay whenever he got the chance. The team management and everyone concerned want to make a leg spinner settle into the side. That's why we are looking through our best possible options," BCB selector

Habibul Bashar told The Daily Star when asked what the mindset behind Rishad's inclusion.

As Bashar said, it is true that Rishad has been around the national team set-up for the past two years or so. But still, with domestic sides' reluctance to include leg-spinners coupled with the age-old history of leg-spinners not being consistent in their performances, matches have been hard to come by for the leggie.

The 20-year-old has played only 13 first-class matches after debuting in December 2018. His only List A game was last year during the Dhaka Premier League and he bowled only around five overs in first-class cricket this season.

According to renowned spin-bowling coach Wahidul Gani, Rishad is still 'not ready' for international exposure.

"The management knows best why they included Rishad. I have not seen him play [regularly] in domestic cricket, at least that's my experience. Maybe they have included him after observing him bowling in the nets. But as a former right-arm leg-spinner myself, I can say that Rishad has not developed the ability to bowl against top batters in international cricket. According to me, he is not ready," Wahidul told

The Daily Star on Saturday.

Gani agreed that a major factor that could work towards the team management's aim of having a settled leg-spinner would be giving up-and-coming prospects as much game time as possible in the domestic circuit.

"[As a leg spinner] You need different ingredients to excel at the international level, such as turn, bounce, control, the right cricketing brain and vast experience, which a player can gain only by playing regularly in the domestic circuit or at the lower level. Rishad does not possess these," he said.

Gani, however, mentioned that Rishad's inclusion made sense considering that the team management was looking to see how he would fare against a weaker side.

"Maybe their perception is to see how he does if he makes debut against a side that is not a top spin-playing side. So in that regard, it makes sense. Or maybe it's a [T20 game] where he would need to bowl four overs, and that's why maybe they want to try him out," he added.

Rishad's figures of two for 50 in seven overs with an economy rate over seven in the practice game between BCB XI and Ireland earlier this month does not bode well for the youngster. How things will turn out is unpredictable, but the more important thing is what plans the team management have chalked out for him if he fails.



Antoine Griezmann rides on the back of Kylian Mbappe during France's 4-0 rout of the Netherlands in their European Qualifiers fixture in Paris on Friday. Mbappe, the new France captain, netted twice while Griezmann and Dayot Upamecano scored a goal apiece. PHOTO: FFF



Believe me or not, I was a bit dumbstruck in the first 30 seconds of our first discussion. I didn't know what we were talking about. It became clear that it was for right now. I was completely surprised. The timing was surprising. There was no contact beforehand.

Newly-appointed Bayern Munich coach Thomas Tuchel

Mominul hits another 50

SPORTS REPORTER

Mominul Haque continued his fine form in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League, with the left-hander scoring his third half-century to help Rugganj Tigers Cricket Club to a five-wicket win over Dhaka Leopard at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali stadium in Fatullah yesterday.

Leopard managed to post 247 for eight in 50 overs after electing to bat, thanks to Pinak Ghosh's 102-ball 79. Rugganj, in reply, rode on Mominul's 75 off 94 balls which featured five fours and a six while Indian recruit Amandeep Khare remained unbeaten on 51 runs as Rugganj registered their second win in four games.

Abahani, meanwhile, registered their fourth consecutive victory, beating Gazi Group Cricketers by eight wickets at BKSP-3 ground.

After bundling out Gazi for 153, Abahani reached the target in 30.2 overs losing just two wickets, with Naim Sheikh remaining unbeaten on 74 off 100 balls with four fours and a six.

At BKSP-4 ground, Agrani Bank clinched an 18-run win over City Club after posting 291 for eight, courtesy of Azmir Ahmed's 89-run knock. City, in reply, posted 273 for nine in 50 overs.





SUBSIDISED MEAT, EGGS Relief to some of middle class

DIPAN NANDY

MA Khair Chowdhury passed the Segunbagicha kitchen market disappointed.

"It's quite impossible to buy daily essentials from the market due to the high prices."

He walked a few steps and then, in front of Segun Restora, heard about a van of the Department of Livestock parked nearby. He rushed to the spot and bought 1 kg beef and a dozen eggs from the refrigerated van.

He said, "I heard about these vans meant to provide goods to people with low incomes."

However, even those who seemed to have higher incomes were buying products from the van, because of the price hikes of the daily commodities, Khair said.

On the first day of Ramadan, the Department of Livestock started selling products at reasonable prices at 20 places in the capital. Beef can be purchased at Tk 640 a kg, mutton at Tk 940 a kg, dressed broiler at Tk 340 a kg, milk at Tk 80 a litre, and egg at

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5



Boatloads of watermelons arrive in the capital from Barishal, Patuakhali, and Khulna. Farmers sell the popular summer fruit for Tk 8 to 10 per kg. But, the price rises to Tk 40 to 60 per kg when they reach the city. The photo was taken from Badamatoli Ghat on the banks of the Buriganga yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

RAGGING IN IU They're too afraid to speak up

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Starting university is always a very exciting and important step in a student's life. But Mahmud (not his real name) remembers his initial days on the campus for all the wrong reasons.

Soon after he joined the Islamic University campus in Kushtia in 2018, he was ragged several times by seniors, mostly belonging to Chhatra League. This instilled a sense of fear in him.

"They took me to the roof of a dormitory and forced me to smoke. They asked me whether I smoke weed. At one stage, a senior started throwing a ball and I had to dive to catch it. They made sure that I was only wearing underwear," said the IU student of the 2017-18 session.

"At one stage, a senior started throwing a ball and I had to dive to catch it. They made sure that I was only wearing underwear."

An IU student

He alleged that the seniors used to insult the freshers in front of fellow students even for the slightest mistakes.

"Sometimes they would order the newcomers to dance or sing. If anyone refused to comply, the seniors would slap the fresher's face."

The victims, however, didn't dare to inform the university authorities about the harassment fearing reprisal.

Mahmud's harassment is not a single case as such abuse of freshers at the hands of seniors still goes on at the public university. Two dozen more students alleged that most of the freshers face such ragging.

They shared with The Daily Star their bad experiences in the wake of the torture of their fellow first-year student Phulpori Khatun on the night of February 12.

Phulpori on February 14 wrote to the IU authorities alleging that Chhatra League leader Sanjida

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2

BHANGA-BENAPOLE HIGHWAY EXPANSION

Funding snag holds off project

Planning Commission calls meeting

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

A problem over funding the expansion of the Bhangra-Jashore-Benapole highway project is raising concerns that the work of the much-needed project may take more time to kick off.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has submitted a Development Project Proposal (DPP) to the Planning Commission, saying that it would require Tk 13,834.11 crore for the project.

Out of the total, Tk 11,082.52 crore (\$1,056 million) is expected to come from Indian lines of credit (LoC), as per the proposal.

But Indian authorities, so far, have only given "preliminary consent" to \$100 million for the project, shows a planning ministry document.

Given the situation, the Planning Commission has called a meeting tomorrow (Monday). Top officials from the Economic Relations Division (ERD), which mobilises external resources for development projects; Road Transport and Highways Division; and the RHD are expected to join the meeting, sources said.

RHD's Chief Engineer Md Ishaque yesterday told this correspondent that the meeting has been scheduled but did not give details.

The country is failing to reap the maximum benefits of the enhanced connectivity after the opening of the Padma and Madhumati bridges last year as the road from Faridpur's Bhangra to Jashore's Benapole is still not ready for increased vehicular movement.

A plan for turning the two-lane

Bhangra-Benapole road into a four-lane highway was chalked out long ago but it saw little progress, mainly due to the uncertainty over funding, officials said.

RHD has prepared two separate DPPs – one for acquiring land and relocating utility lines while another for physical work for expanding the road.

The estimated cost for land acquisition and utility relocation is Tk 4,236.60 crore. The commission has already held meeting over the land acquisition project's DPP early this month and asked the RHD to recast it, sources said.

On the other hand, the RHD first submitted a DPP for turning the 129.17km highway into a four-lane one with service roads on both sides at a cost of Tk 11,050.04 crore. But it has to recast the DPP, after the RHD rate schedule-2022 came into force, taking the estimated cost of the project to Tk 13,841.11 crore.

So, the total cost of the road's expansion would be Tk 18,077.71 crore – making it the costliest RHD project.

WHY SO IMPORTANT?

The opening of the long cherished Padma Bridge in June last year created a direct link between the capital and the country's southwestern region, cutting the travel time significantly. The bridge is also a key component of the Asian Highway-1, which is expected to boost the economic growth of Asia and improve the country's standing in the continent.

The AH-1, connecting Meghalaya with West Bengal of India via Tamabil-Sylhet-Dhaka-Narail-Jashore, had two

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

Cancer cells to be sent to space for research



INDEPENDENT ONLINE

Cancer cells will be heading to space as part of UK scientific experiments to understand more about an incurable childhood tumour.

Researchers from The Institute of Cancer Research are sending samples of diffuse midline glioma to the International Space Station (ISS) to see how it spreads in microgravity.

The scientists said their study – dubbed D(MG)2 – could pave the way to understanding more about the disease that led to the death of Karen Armstrong, the daughter of late US astronaut Neil Armstrong.

Chris Jones, leader of the D(MG)2 study and professor of Childhood Cancer Biology at the Institute of Cancer Research in London, said: "Unfortunately, survival rates for patients with diffuse midline glioma have not changed substantially since Neil Armstrong's daughter died

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Driver killed, left inside SUV

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday recovered the body of a driver from inside an SUV on the bank of the Padma in Kushtia's Kumarkhali, and a woman admitted to killing him with her husband over an affair.

Samrat Hossain, 29, chauffeur for a high official of a contractor of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, was a resident of Alhaz Camp village under Pabna's Ishwardi upazila. He was last seen alive on Thursday, police said.



In primary interrogation, Seema Khatun told officers that she and her husband Abdul Momin had killed Samrat by hitting him in the head with a hammer, said Arbinda Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station.

Police first went to Momin and Seema's home in Basherbada area of Ishwardi yesterday morning after a vehicle rental company reported a missing SUV and a driver, he said, adding that officers learnt that Samrat's last known location was that house.

Police found only Seema at home and detained her early in the morning.

Later in the day, Masud Alom, additional superintendent of police in Pabna, said, "Seema admitted to killing Samrat with her husband at her home around 10:00pm on Thursday."

"Seema's husband Momin is also a driver by profession. After the killing, the couple put the body in a sack and took it to the vehicle. Then, they drove for around 30 kilometres and left the vehicle on the bank of Padma."

It seems the motive behind the murder is an affair, he said, adding that police are looking for Seema's husband Momin.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Modi scared of my speech on Adani

Says Rahul Gandhi as he vows to keep fighting after removal from parliament

AFP, New Delhi

Top Indian opposition figure Rahul Gandhi yesterday said he would keep fighting for democracy after blaming his expulsion from parliament on his demands for a probe into a key business ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Gandhi, 52, was stripped of his parliamentary seat on Friday, a day after he was convicted of defamation in Modi's home state of Gujarat for a 2019 campaign-trail remark seen as an insult to the premier.

Modi's government has been widely accused by political opponents and rights groups of using the law to target and silence critics, but Gandhi said he

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



২৬ মার্চ মহান
স্বাধীনতা
ও
জাতীয় দিবস



দেশের জন্য আত্মোৎসর্গকারী
সকল শহীদ ও
বীর মুক্তিযোদ্ধাদের প্রতি
চিন্মু শ্রদ্ধা



সোনালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
উদ্ভাবনী ব্যাংকিং এ আপনার বিশ্বস্ত সঙ্গী
www.sonalibank.com.bd

জনতা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
উন্নয়নে আপনার বিশ্বস্ত অংশীদার
www.jb.com.bd

অগ্রণী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
দেশ ও জাতির সেবায় প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ
www.agranibank.org

রূপালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
উত্তম সেবার নিশ্চয়তা
www.rupalibank.com.bd