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IMF'S LOAN CONDITIONS Tax collection target for June may be missed

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is on track to meeting the International Monetary Fund's tax collection target for March but may miss the mark in June.

As part of the \$4.7 billion loan, the Washington-based multilateral lender has stipulated a minimum tax collection goal as an indicative target.

Failure to meet an indicative target largely does not lead to any hold-up in the approval of further tranches; the IMF executive board makes exceptions if it is convinced that the programme is on course to meet the objectives.

By March, the government needs to collect at least Tk 207,380 crore in tax, as per the IMF's task sheet for Bangladesh. Come to the end of June, tax collection needs to be at least Tk 345,630 crore.

As of February, the National Board of Revenue has collected Tk 196,037.5 crore. The non-NBR tax collection stands at Tk 3,563 crore in the first half of fiscal 2022-23, according to data from the finance ministry.

Data on collections up to March is not available yet, but from the trends in NBR and non-NBR receipts, it is safe to infer that March's target would be met comfortably.

FY23 REVENUE SNAPSHOT

- Govt target Tk **387,999cr**
- IMF target Tk **345,630cr**
- Tax revenue in 1st half Tk **144,569cr**
- Tax revenue down **3.5pc** in 1st half
- Non-NBR revenue up **22pc** in 1st half
- NBR revenue down **4pc** in 1st half

"We are hopeful of getting close to June's target," said a finance ministry official on the condition of anonymity as he is not authorised to speak with the media.

This fiscal year, the government has set a tax revenue collection of Tk 387,999 crore, with the NBR tasked with bringing in Tk 370,000 crore. Another Tk 17,999 crore has been targeted from non-NBR sources.

The non-NBR revenue collection has been revised down to Tk 16,000 crore, which is the same as in fiscal 2021-22. To achieve the NBR's target -- which was not revised -- receipts need to be 28.8 percent more than fiscal 2021-22's collection of Tk 287,223 crore.

In the past five years, NBR's average collection growth has been 12.12 percent.

Going by the trend, tax revenue collection would be in touching distance of the IMF's floor on tax revenue.

"The IMF target is very unambitious and quite achievable -- our inability to collect tax is the problem," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

Complicating matters is the drop in tax collections from November last year on the back of reduced economic activities on account of strained dollar reserves and elevated inflation.

On March 29, foreign currency reserves stood at \$31.1 billion, down 29.9 percent from a year earlier, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank. This is enough to cover up to four months' import bills.

In the first eight months of the fiscal year, inflation averaged 8.74 percent, way above the budgetary target

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Activists of Gonotantrik Chhatra Jote, a platform of left-leaning student organisations, bring out a torchlight march at Dhaka University to demand the repeal of the Digital Security Act and justice for Prothom Alo correspondent Samsuzzaman Shams, now in jail, and Sultana Jasmine, who died in Rab custody. Both were accused in DSA cases.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Her silence a yell for justice

Shams's mother joins demonstration for his release; protests continue nationwide

STAR REPORT

Karimon Nesa, mother of Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams, came all the way to Dhamrai from her Manikganj home to attend a human chain demanding the release of her son and scrapping of the controversial Digital Security Act.

But she could not utter a single word. She stood there shedding tears in silence.

Shams's cousin Faruk Hossain, said, "The honesty of Shams' family is known to people in their village. People in this family made supreme sacrifices for the country."

Karimon's son Rabiul Karim, who was an assistant commissioner of police, was killed in the Holey Artisan attack in 2016.

The human chain was organised by Dhamrai Reporters' Club and Dhamrai



PHOTO: AKLAKUR RAHMAN

Karimon Nesa, mother of Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams, waiting for the release of her son.

Upazila Press Club in the Dautia area by Dhaka-Aricha highway.

Umme Salma, widow of Rabiul, told The Daily Star that Karimon almost stopped eating after Shams was picked up from his home on Wednesday. "She cries all the time. Shams is all she has."

Demonstrations by journalists, political parties, and cultural and social organisations continued in different parts of the country demanding release of Shams and abolition of the Digital Security Act (DSA).

While posting on social media a report written by Shams on March 26, the Independence Day, Prothom Alo made a "card" with a quote of a labourer named Zakir Hossain. Though the card contained Zakir's

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Shams was arrested for 'child abuse, exploitation'

Says foreign ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry yesterday said Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams was arrested for "child abuse" and "child exploitation" and the claim that he was arrested for reporting on the cost of living crisis in Bangladesh was "false".

In a press release issued on Friday, it said reports by foreign media saying Samsuzzaman was arrested for his reporting were "fabricated".

He was sent to jail on Thursday in a case filed with Ramna Police Station under three sections of the Digital Security Act -- 25(2), 31 and 35.

In another DSA case, filed with Tejgaon Police Station a few hours before being picked up from his Savar home, Shams was charged under the same

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Resolution commending Bangladesh in US Congress

American diplomat says the country a model for world

STAR REPORT

The United States Congress has introduced a resolution recognising and commending Bangladesh and its remarkable socioeconomic progress under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Republican Congressman Joe Wilson of South Carolina, co-chair of the Congressional Bangladesh Caucus, tabled the resolution at the Congress on March 29 on the occasion of Bangladesh's 52nd anniversary of independence, reports UNB.

Wilson has been serving as the US representative for South Carolina's second congressional district since 2001.

While placing the resolution, the congressman recalled that 51 years ago on April 4, 1972, the USA recognised Bangladesh's independence.

During the nine-month Liberation War,

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SULTANA'S DEATH Let a case be filed for the sake of justice

Say eminent citizens of Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

No case has been filed yet for the death of Sultana Jasmine, which may delay justice for the victim's family, said a group of eminent citizens in Rajshahi yesterday.

Sultana Jasmine was detained in a case filed under the Digital Security Act and had been in Rab custody until her death on March 24.

At a press conference in the office of Rajshahi Union of Journalists around noon, the three-member group demanded legal action against the plaintiff of the DSA case filed against Sultana and the quick filing of a case over her death.

"If no case is filed for her death, justice will remain elusive for her family."

Led by prominent writer Mahbub

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Forty train carriages, bought from South Korea for Bangladesh Railway, getting last minute touch-ups at the Railway Carriage and Wagon Workshop in Chattogram's Pahartali yesterday. These carriages are supposed to replace the old ones of the Subarna Express ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. Meanwhile, the old carriages are being repaired so that they can be used again later.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

BUSINESS

Inland water cargo vessel operations in Bangladesh have declined 30 per cent over the past six to eight months as imports have fallen significantly amid global economic uncertainties stemming from the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, according to industry insiders.

STORY ON BI

সাবেক সসেন্দ সদস্য,
বীর মুক্তিযোদ্ধা, স্বাধীন বাংলা ছাত্র সংগ্রাম পরিষদ নেতা
নূরে আলম সিদ্দিকীর মৃত্যুতে
আমরা গভীরভাবে শোকাহত

শোকসন্তপ্ত পরিবারের প্রতি গভীর সমবেদনা এবং
মরহমের আত্মার মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি।

KDS

BFUJ, DUJ decry Prothom Alo report, use of DSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two factions of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) yesterday expressed deep concern over the situation arising from "irresponsible and unprofessional journalism of the Prothom Alo".

In a joint statement, the two organisations said circulation of a photocard which was made using a child's photo with a quote from a different person is an example of "professional failure" of the editor and the newsroom of that newspaper. "Though the photocard was withdrawn soon, the task of creating confusion in people's mind had already been done. There are enough reasons to think that the quote of a different person was used with the child's picture deliberately. Providing financial assistance to that child and using him as an item of journalism are also not acceptable from the perspective of professional journalism," read the statement signed by Akter Hossain, general secretary of DUJ.

"An allegation should be sent to the Press Council to determine the prima facie of the allegation before enforcing the law against any media outlet or journalist."

They also said the intimidating situation which was created through the use of the Digital Security Act could have been avoided.

"An allegation should be sent to the Press Council to determine the prima facie of the allegation before enforcing the law against any media outlet or journalist. Some sections of the law should be amended by taking our recommendations into account. Before taking all these measures, steps should be taken to stop abuse of the law," added the statement.

Terminating the joint statement of diplomats of 12 countries on the issue "unwarranted", the journalists' platforms said, "The journalist community believes that their unwarranted intervention in this issue is tantamount to intervening in the states' sovereignty and independence."

They said if anyone makes a mistake or commits a crime, there is law of the land to address those. But the foreign diplomats' intervention in the country's internal issues is a reason for concern, they added.

The BFUJ and DUJ factions hoped that the foreign diplomats would carry out their duties in compliance with the Vienna Convention.



Three-wheelers, which are banned from highways, illegally plying the wrong side of the Dhaka-Aricha Highway, while authorities concerned remain oblivious. Such irresponsible driving often leads to tragic accidents. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

THE MALDIVES LABOUR MARKET

Unskilled worker recruitment stalled for over 3 years

JAMIL MAHMUD

The labour market in the Maldives for new Bangladeshi workers has remained suspended for about three-and-a-half years now, despite Bangladesh's continuous efforts to reopen it.

In September 2019, the Maldives imposed a ban on bringing in new Bangladeshi labourers reportedly citing that the quota for Bangladeshi workers was reached.

The ban, however, was not imposed on hiring professionals and skilled workers like chefs and nurses, said an official of the Bangladesh High Commission in Malé.

The Maldives is just currently not hiring low-skilled workers from Bangladesh because of the already large number of undocumented Bangladeshi workers residing there, which has been a major hurdle in reopening the market, the official said.

Sohel Parvez, counsellor (labour) of the Bangladesh mission, recently said they were hopeful about reopening the labour market in the Maldives.

He said following their requests about reopening the labour market, Maldives officials expressed their assurance on

several occasions.

When imposing the ban in 2019, Maldives Economic Development Minister Fayyaz Ismail announced a quota of 150,000 individuals as migrants per country, to be able to reside in the Maldives at any given time, according to media reports.

A large number of undocumented workers from Bangladesh already reside in the Maldives, and it has been a major hurdle in reopening the market.

However, at present, there is a ceiling of 100,000 foreign workers per country in the Maldives, according to its "Employment Act", an unofficially translated English version of which (amended in 2022) is available online.

Counsellor Sohel Parvez said previously an estimated 100,000 Bangladeshi workers were living in Maldives but their number dropped after several thousand of them returned home amid the pandemic.

At present, Bangladeshis are the largest foreign national community in the

Maldives with most of them involved in the construction sector.

In 2019, Minister Fayyaz Ismail also announced a regularisation programme to reduce undocumented foreign workers in Maldives.

Following the initiative, around 45,000 undocumented Bangladeshi workers applied for registration with the Maldives government in 2019.

So far, around 20,000 of them were regularised under the programme, Counsellor Sohel Parvez told this newspaper over the phone.

He said reducing undocumented workers could help reopen the labour market.

For its part, the Bangladesh mission has been providing different support services to the workers to speed up their documentation process, including providing them with the necessary information and issuing passports as soon as possible, the official added.

For regularisation, a worker's employer has to apply for a "work permit" from the Maldives' Economic Development Ministry, said a notice of the Bangladesh High Commission last month.

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Man stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

An activist of the Awami League was stabbed to death by his rivals following factional clashes in Jhenidah's Harinakunda upazila on Friday.

Victim Rabiul Islam, 50 of Jorapukuria village, was a driver of a battery-run three-wheeler, said police.

There was a long-standing feud between Jamal Uddin and Kabir Uddin, two leaders of the ruling party, over establishing supremacy in Jorapukuria, said locals.

Rabiul, a supporter of Jamal, was hacked by Kabir's followers around 5:00pm on Friday. He died on his way to Dhaka, said locals.

After the death, local Chhatra League leaders torched houses of five of Kabir's followers.

Additional policemen were deployed in the area to avert further clash, said Aktaruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Harinakunda Police Station.

'Smuggler' killed in BGB firing in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A man was shot dead and another suffered bullet wounds when Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) fired on a "gang of smugglers" along the Baromari border in Netrakona's Durgapur upazila on Friday night.

The dead is Aminul Islam, 30, son of Abdul Berek of Laxmipur village in Durgapur.

The injured, Jahidul Islam, 38, is undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said Lt Col Mohammad Arifur Rahman, commanding officer of BGB Netrakona-31.

"Acting on a tip-off that a gang of smugglers were smuggling betel nut from Bangladesh to India through Baromari bordering area in Durgapur around 8:30pm, a patrol team of BGB led by Minhaz Uddin conducted a drive there," he said.

BGB recovered seven sacks of betel nut from the spot.

Rohingya man shot dead

UNB, Cox's Bazar

A 60-old Rohingya national was shot dead during a clash between two terrorist groups at a camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The dead is Syed Alam, an inhabitant of Kutupalong camp 8. He used to work as a night guard of the camp.

Sheikh Mohammad Ali, officer-in-charge of Ukhiya Police Station, said Syed sustained severe injuries when terrorist group Arakan Salvation Army and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) traded bullets over establishing supremacy in the camp around 1:00am.

He was rushed to a local hospital where physicians declared him dead, the OC said, adding that the body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Resolution commending Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

members of the Pakistan Armed Forces and pro-Pakistani militias killed hundreds of thousands of people and injured many more, the resolution said.

The war for independence was a struggle for democracy and freedom led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, it noted.

It said Bangladesh has made enormous strides in the last five decades from one of the poorest nations to having one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with the GDP per capita increasing to \$2,457 in 2021 according to the World Bank which now exceeds that of its regional neighbours.

Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh's economy has grown from \$9 billion to \$450 billion, life expectancy has risen from 47 years to 73 years, and the adult literacy rate has risen to more than 75 percent, the resolution mentioned.

Bangladesh, under the leadership of PM Hasina, has made substantial socioeconomic progress in food production, disaster resilience, poverty reduction, improved health, education, and women's empowerment, it read.

According to the resolution, Bangladesh has successfully maintained a moderate Muslim society and curbed extremism, and its people have sought to maintain support for democracy and rule of law rather than descending into authoritarian rule.

It said the US and Bangladesh have extensive cooperation on matters of regional and global security, counter terrorism, and climate change.

The US is the largest export market for Bangladesh and one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment, the resolution said, adding that Bangladesh has also contributed to the US economy through bilateral trade and international security cooperation in return.

The American people appreciate the generous and indispensable role that Bangladesh performs in accepting and sheltering more

than one million Rohingya people from a genocide perpetrated by its neighbour, Myanmar. The US has contributed the largest amount of humanitarian aid to address this crisis, totalling more than \$2 billion, it added.

It said that the American people welcome that Bangladesh is one of the world's largest contributors to the United Nations' peacekeeping efforts globally. Both countries seek to enhance their people-to-people and government-to-government relationship for shared prosperity.

The resolution mentioned that Bangladesh has expressed gratitude to the USA for contributing more than 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine to its people.

It stated that the American people recognise and commend the nation and people of Bangladesh as they celebrate five decades of independence.

The US extends its sincere determination to remain a constructive partner of Bangladesh in achieving mutual economic, social and national security objectives now and into the future, the resolution added.

'BANGLADESH A MODEL'

US Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration Julieta Valls Noyes has said that Bangladesh serves as a model for the rest of the world in rebuilding the country after the 1971 war, and now forging the path towards economic growth, inclusion and development.

She also applauded Bangladesh's generosity as a host of over one million Rohingya refugees, said a press release of the Bangladesh embassy in Washington.

Noyes was addressing a reception hosted by the embassy on Thursday on the occasion of the 53rd Independence and National Day.

The US diplomat said Bangladesh and the USA have strengthened cooperation across broad range sectors. The two countries have built close trade and investment ties, she added.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the

USA Muhammad Imran in his speech said Bangladesh considers the USA an important and valuable partner in its journey towards emerging as a peaceful and prosperous nation.

He said Bangladesh looks forward to working closely with the USA for stronger economic ties.

Bangladesh attaches high importance to its long-standing partnership with the USA, the envoy added.

Let a case be filed

FROM PAGE 1

Siddiki, also president of Heritage Rajshahi, a history-based research organisation, a three-member group of citizens visited Naogaon, where Sultana was from, on Friday.

Other members were Prof Iftekharul Alam Mas-ud, a teacher of the Arabic language department in Rajshahi University, and Hasnat Beg, a lawyer and convener of Rastra Sangskar Andolon.

Sultana's family told the group about its fear of filing a case.

"It appeared to us that Sultana's family has been living in fear of harassment," Siddiki said, adding, "If not the family, the police could have recorded a case, but nothing was done."

Prof Mas-ud said they talked to two eyewitnesses of Sultana's detention, who informed them that no female Rab member was present while she was being detained.

The group did not mention the names of the witnesses but did say that one of the witnesses was a lawyer and the other a journalist.

The witnesses further said that on March 22, the day she was detained, some plain clothes law enforcers, all of whom were men, dragged Sultana into a microbus against her will.

Hasnat Beg demanded legal action against Enamul Haque, director of local government at the Rajshahi divisional commissioner's office, who filed the case against Sultana.

"Despite being a high official, Enamul Haque illegally used Rab to detain an employee under his jurisdiction and [made them] interrogate her in a manner that led to her death."

Tax collection target for June

FROM PAGE 1

of 5.6 percent, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

"Imports are falling and corporate profits are shrinking. This is a matter of concern. Where would the extra tax revenue come from? The macro environment is not good, so not much revenue growth is not possible," said Mansur, also the chairman of Brac Bank.

He went on to forecast that the tax collection would be in the neighbourhood of Tk 336,000 crore.

"When the NBR chairman and the finance ministry put pressure on the tax commissioners, they might manage the Tk 10,000 crore needed to cross the line."

But that would come at a cost: the NBR would crank up the pressure on the taxpayers and get people to pay advance taxes by dangling the carrot of paying lesser amounts of tax next year.

This means next year's tax receipts

will be impacted.

"It will be tough to meet IMF's target — the revenue situation should not collapse further," said Mansur, also a former economist of the IMF.

In the first half of the fiscal year, tax revenue was down 3.5 percent year-on-year, while NBR's revenue was 4 percent lower than a year earlier.

The trend seen up to March and the growth typically seen in the fourth quarter indicate that the IMF's tax revenue target for June is unlikely to be achieved, said Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

There is a three-pronged beating on the NBR's revenue collection: a drop in imports to safeguard the strained dollar stockpile, shrunken aggregate demand for elevated inflation, and reduced development works for fiscal tightening.

Development spending in the first eight months of the fiscal year has been the lowest in 12 years, according

to data from the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division.

In the first seven months of the fiscal year, imports were down 5.7 percent year-on-year.

Letters of credit openings, which is an indicator of future imports, at the end of December were down 22.5 percent from a year earlier, according to data from BB.

Save for petroleum, LC openings for consumer goods, capital machinery, intermediate goods, industrial raw materials and others dropped, indicating further diminishing economic activities in future.

Tax collection growth so far has not been more than the rate of inflation, according to Rahman.

"It shows the collection is bad." Subsequently, it might be necessary to revise the tax revenue targets with the IMF in June, Rahman added.

At the end of April, an IMF mission is due in the country to monitor the progress of the programme.

Shams was arrested

FROM PAGE 1

three sections and two more — sections 26(2) and 29.

However, none of these five sections deals with child exploitation or abuse.

Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiuur Rahman was also accused in the case filed with Ramna police.

"Many media [platforms] have been continuously reporting on the cost of living in Bangladesh since the beginning of the Ukraine war, which has created a global rise in the cost of living. No one was arrested for such reporting," the release said.

"The said journalist [Samsuzzaman] was arrested because of child abuse and child exploitation, as he offered Tk 10 to a 9-year-old boy and then expressed his own views in the child's name.

"Secondly, he tried to undermine

the independence of Bangladesh on the great Independence Day. These acts are surely tantamount to punishable crimes," it added.

The release further read, "The government of Bangladesh is committed to uphold the freedom of expression for all its citizens and the media. However, creating social unrest by undertaking such a fraudulent act is contrary to the spirit of honest journalism."

The foreign ministry said that as a party to the UN Convention on the Right of the Child, the government would not tolerate any act of exploiting children.

According to the first information report of the DSA case filed with Ramna police, Shams, Matiuur and unnamed others were accused of using print, online, and electronic media to tarnish the image of the state.

Iran orders arrest of women allegedly attacked for not wearing hijab

AFP, Tehran

Iranian authorities ordered the arrest of two women, the judiciary said yesterday, after a viral video appeared to show them being attacked by a man for not wearing the hijab.

Video footage widely shared on social media in Iran appeared to show the two female customers, who were not wearing the mandatory hijab or headscarf, in a shop being assaulted by a man after a verbal altercation.

The footage shows the man pouring a bucket of what appears to be yogurt on the two women's heads before he is confronted by the shopkeeper.

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How music galvanised the struggle for freedom

Unique research looks into impact of music in Bangladesh's mass movements

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Music plays an integral role during every mass movement in Bangladesh. Whenever Bangalees wanted to be united to achieve freedom, self-determination and justice, music was one of the key factors that brought the nation together.

Music became a weapon during the Language Movement, Liberation War, the struggle for democracy in the 90s, and more recently, the Shahbagh movement.

Shabnam Azim, an associate professor of Dhaka University's department of mass communication and journalism, presented this very picture in her research article titled "Music of Politics-Bangladesh: A Journey of Musical Movements".

The article has been included as a chapter of the book titled "Music and Engagement in the Asian Political Space", published by renowned academic publisher IGI Global.

To conduct the research, Shabnam reviewed a vast amount of literature and interviewed cultural activists, organisers and eyewitnesses of the movements to understand how music influenced their activism.

She said, "Many popular protest songs were composed during the turbulent

“ Many popular protest songs were composed during the turbulent times of the Language Movement, and interestingly, many of the songs were composed not only in Dhaka but also in relatively smaller towns such as Netrakona, Pabna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, etc.

SHABNAM AZIM
Associate professor of DU

times of the Language Movement, and interestingly, many of the songs were composed not only in Dhaka but also in relatively smaller towns such as Netrakona, Pabna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, etc.”

Shabnam, in her research, showed correlation between organisation of Bangalee cultural front and mass upheaval of 1969, which deposed the autocratic government of Ayub Khan.

She said, "When General Ayub took over power in 1958, cultural activists along with common people took to the streets to resist the autocracy. Three of the

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For some areas in Dhaka, drainage is so poor that just within an hour of a sudden drizzle, the roads get clogged with water. This exact situation was spotted on the road running from Tejturi Bazar area to Farmgate, as the afternoon's drizzle led to the road to be inundated in muddy water. This photo was taken in front of Government Science College in Tejgaon yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION Dhaka seeks greater Dutch support

UNB, Dhaka

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Mohammad Tofazzel Hossain Miah has sought support from the Netherlands towards the sustainable repatriation of the Rohingyas and a political solution to the issue in Myanmar.

He made the request while calling on Dutch Prime Minister's Foreign and Security Adviser Geoffrey Van Leeuwen on March 31 2023, according to a release yesterday.

He also lauded the Dutch government's intention to deepen cooperation with Bangladesh beyond the water sector.

The principal secretary, accompanied by Bangladesh Ambassador to the Netherlands M Riaz Hamidullah, apprised Bangladesh's journey in building a pluralist and liberal society, advancing women and commitment to strengthening functioning democratic institutions in Bangladesh.

Leeuwen lauded Bangladesh's continued journey in development under the leadership of PM Hasina.

He also reiterated the Dutch prime minister's invitation to Hasina to visit the Netherlands.

The principal secretary also proposed instituting a Public-Private Dialogue mechanism with the Netherlands which the Dutch side welcomed.

Tofazzel is leading a high-level Bangladesh delegation comprising Commerce Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh, BGMEA President Faruque Hassan,

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Plagued with irregularities

Migrant workers suffer due to lack of monitoring of health check-up centres

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Nesar Mia, an aspirant migrant who was supposed to go to Qatar for work, was faced with a nightmare when he tested positive for tuberculosis at the Stenz Health Care BD Pvt Ltd in Dhaka around June last year.

However, he was sceptical of the test results and again submitted his samples to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, where he tested negative for TB.

Stenz is one of 133 health check-up centres in the country that are authorised by the Gulf Health Council, where he paid Tk 8,500 for his medical examination before going to Qatar. When he contacted Stenz regarding the results, officials proposed that he could be shown as TB negative if he paid them Tk 1 lakh.

As Nesar did not agree to the proposal and filed a complaint at Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), the centre uploaded a report that showed him TB positive to the official database of the GHC.

As a result, he could not go to Qatar to join his job.

"That was a nightmare for our family. Talking about it is no good. My husband is in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) now," the wife of Nesar Mia said over the phone.

A lack of coordination and proactiveness of the regulatory bodies to oversee more than a hundred health check-up centres in the country has been causing suffering to numerous aspirant migrants willing to migrate to the gulf countries.

Many migration-seekers were victims of anomalies by some of the service providers. They have been blackmailed and charged additional money in the name of different charges, found an investigation by DGHS.

"Migration-seekers have been victims to such anomalies and the majority of them don't complain to avoid the hassle," said Shariful Hasan, head of migration at Brac.

The DGHS received a similar allegation against Mohameed Medical Center in Gulshan around November last year. This centre is also enlisted by the Gulf Health Council.

In both cases, DGHS completed its duty just by issuing suspension orders and show-cause notices. The suspension orders, however, were withdrawn a few days later.

"If we receive any allegation, we can do only what is in our jurisdiction," said Dr Sheikh Daud Adnan, DGHS director (Hospitals and Clinics).

There is no uniformity of the medical centres that serve the migration workers. As a result, some are taking the opportunity. The government should come forward to ensure accountability here.

SHARIFUL HASAN
Head of migration, Brac

A source at the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment confirmed that the ministry has received at least nine such allegations in the last year.

Moimul Hasan, a deputy secretary at the monitoring and enforcement wing at the ministry of expatriate welfare and overseas employment, said, "They received no such allegations in the past six months."

He, however, agreed that the ministry has no official channel dedicated to receiving such complaints. "Probably, this is why many don't come to us. But they can complain to us."

During a recent visit to a health check-up centre in Dhaka's CR Dutta Road,

this newspaper also found merit to such allegations.

An Oman-bound expatriate worker Sajib Mia, for example, had to pay Tk 6,000 in addition to the fixed payment of Tk 8,500 meant for the check-up service at the Amir Jahan Medical Center in mid-February.

"They said the additional money was meant for the embassy fee. But I'm not sure about it. To avoid the hassle, I paid them the extra amount," Sajib said.

Like a dozen others, he said he had to pay Tk 1,500 to his recruiting agency to be registered with the GHC database for the health check-up.

Wafid (www.wafid.com) is a programme under the umbrella of the Gulf Health Council that enables individuals bound to work or reside in the GCC to book their medical check-up appointments and ensure that they are fit.

To enter any of the Gulf countries -- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE -- any Bangladeshi willing to get a work or residency visa, needs a health clearance from any of the GHC-listed 133 medical centres in the country.

To get a GHC registration, the medical centres are required to be licensed with the DGHS and ensure compliance set by the GHC. The health centres need to pay Tk 5 lakh and, once they get registered, GHC charges Tk 3 lakh annually.

In return, a team of the GHC comes to Bangladesh to inspect those medical centres once a year.

Officials of both DGHS and the expatriate ministry, on the other hand, said they have no active surveillance mechanism to oversee if anybody becomes a victim at these medical centres.

Ahmed Munir Salehin, Senior Secretary of the expatriate ministry, said, "We can take action if anyone informs us officially."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Bangladesh calls for urgent action to protect climate migrants

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has urged the international community to scale up global actions, including climate financing for protecting persons displaced by climate change and associated disasters.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen made the call while speaking at a panel discussion organised by IOM during its 2023 International Dialogue on Migration held at the United Nations Headquarters on Friday, according to yesterday's press release.

“ The recently adopted UN General Assembly Resolution requesting for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on obligations of States recognises the link between climate change and displacement of affected persons.

MASUD BIN MOMEN
Foreign Secretary

The foreign secretary also called upon development partners to extend financial support for implementing the recently launched Bangladesh's national adaptation plan 2023-2050.

"The recently adopted UN General Assembly Resolution requesting for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on obligations of States recognises the link between climate change and displacement of affected persons," he said.

Masud shared various initiatives undertaken by the Bangladesh government in addressing the impact of climate change, including the Eighth Five Year Plan, incorporating action points to address the environment, climate change

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Saiful, the man pulling this van full of water containers runs a small business. He fills up these empty containers from Wasa pumps and sells them at a rate of Tk 15-20 to roadside stalls. After the containers are empty, he collects and refills them with drinking water to the same customers. This photo was taken in Postogola area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 2

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:40	12:45	4:45	6:21	7:45
JAMAAT 5:15	1:15	5:00	6:24	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
10	02		6:19
11	03	4:27	6:19
12	04	4:26	6:19

USAID Bangladesh Advancing Development and Growth through Energy (BADGE)

গ্যারান্টি ফান্ড এর জন্য আবেদন আহ্বান

বাংলাদেশে ইউনাইটেড স্টেটস এজেন্সি ফর ইন্টারন্যাশনাল ডেভেলপমেন্ট (ইউএসএআইডি)-এর অর্থায়নে পরিচালিত বাংলাদেশ আভ্যনসিং ডেভেলপমেন্ট অ্যান্ড গ্রোথ থ্রু এনার্জি (BADGE) এর বাস্তবায়নকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান টেট্রা টেক (Tetra Tech)। BADGE প্রকল্পের আওতায় টেট্রা টেক বাংলাদেশের স্থানীয় বাসে নারীর অংশগ্রহণ বৃদ্ধি, অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়ন, এবং নারী পুরুষের সমতা বৃদ্ধিতে সহায়তা করে এমন কার্যক্রমে গ্যারান্টি ফান্ড প্রদানের বিজ্ঞপ্তি ঘোষণা করছে। এ উদ্দেশ্যে টেট্রা টেক স্থানীয় তৃণমূল সমন্বিত, সুশীল সমাজ, কমিউনিটি গ্রুপ, স্থানীয় উদ্যোক্তা, গ্রাইডেট কোম্পানি, অলাভজনক প্রতিষ্ঠান, শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠান, এবং গবেষণা ও উন্নয়নমূলক প্রতিষ্ঠান যা নারী-মালিকানাধীন, নারী-নেতৃত্বাধীন, এবং যে সকল প্রতিষ্ঠান বিদ্যুৎ-এর মাধ্যমে নারীদের আর পুঙ্খমূলক সেবা/পণ্য সরবরাহ কর্মকাণ্ডে নিয়োজিত আছে, সে সকল প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে গ্যারান্টি ফান্ড এর জন্য আবেদন আহ্বান (Request for Application - RFA) করছে। বিস্তারিত জানতে, www.bjjobs.com-এর টেন্ডার/ ইওআই (EOI) সেকশনে দেখুন।

Solicitation of Notice of Funding Opportunity

Tetra Tech ES, Inc., is the implementing organization of the Bangladesh Advancing Development and Growth through Energy (BADGE) project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Tetra Tech announces a Notice of Funding Opportunity and solicits Request for Applications (RFA) to support increase women's economic empowerment, women's participation, gender equality and equity in the energy sector in Bangladesh. In this regard, Tetra Tech is requesting for Grant Applications from local grass-root organizations, civil societies, community groups, local entrepreneurs, private companies, non-profits, academics, and research & development institutions, which are women-owned and/or women-led, and/or organizations that benefit women's income-generating activities through energy. For details, please visit Tender/EOI section of www.bjjobs.com.

Hedayetullah passes away

STAR REPORT

SHedayetullah, managing director of Taj Jute Backing Ltd and chairman of Vincent Group, passed away on March 31, said a press release.

A resident of House-4, Road-59, Gulshan-2, Dhaka, Hedayetullah was one of the founder presidents of Gulshan Club Dhaka Ltd and past president of Rotary Club of Dhaka North.

He also held the position of executive committee member of the Gulshan Society Mosque and a senior member of Gulshan Society.

He left behind his only son S Rumi Saifullah, two granddaughters, daughter-in-law and a host of relatives, friends and well-wishers to pray for his departed soul.

Hedayetullah was buried in Banani graveyard following a namaz-e-janaza held at Gulshan Society Mosque, Road-63 after the Zohr prayers yesterday.



"Nana Halim" is a name well-known not just among Khulna locals, but also people from the outskirts. Since 1993, Hazrat Ali has been serving hot pots of halim at a rate of Tk 300 per kilo, serving a lot of 130-140 kilos of halim per day. This photo was taken in Khulna's South Central Road recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Sutang in death grip Tk 750cr project

FROM PAGE 5 Katakhal village under Habiganj Sadar upazila, said, "Rice seedlings die when we use the river water to irrigate paddy fields. Even, our cattle are infected with disease, if we fed them the river water."

"Stench emits from the river water round the clock. We have to use face masks when we come nearer to the river," said Alauddin, former chairman of Rajiura Union Parishad in Sadar upazila.

"We have informed the matter to the district administration. But no effective action has been taken so far," said Abdul Kaium, a resident of Shahpur area in Madhabpur upazila and an environmental activist.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) Habiganj district unit, said, "Sutang river's pollution began around a decade ago because of discharging industrial toxic waste. The pollution is gradually increasing day by day."

Pollution must be ended immediately for protecting biodiversity and human lives in this area, said Mutachirul Islam, chairman of Habiganj Sadar Upazila Parishad. Contacted, Habiganj deputy commissioner (DC) Ishrat Jahan said, "We have already directed authorities of all the factories to ensure the use of ETP. Besides, we will take other necessary measures for freeing the river from pollution."

Now around one lakh farmers and locals from three unions under Amtali upazila are seeing a ray of hope to recover losses, following the project inauguration. Shahabuddin Panna, a development activist, said Sugandhi canal is very important for the area as it is connected to the Ramnabad channel and the Payra river.

In 2009, several dams were constructed on this canal to stop its normal flow, he said. This 71km long canal with several branches has gradually been polluted and grabbed, obstructing its normal flow.

Shahabuddin Panna, executive director of Nazrul Smriti Sangsad, a local NGO, said, "We conducted a survey three years ago." According to its findings, about one lakh farmers in Chowra, Haludiya, Amtali and a part of Amtali municipality incur a loss of about Tk 250 crore annually due to less crop production.

Sudipta Chowdhury, sub-divisional engineer of Barguna Water Development Board, said the project is expected to be completed on December 24 at a cost of Tk 751 crore.

FROM PAGE 5 Sugandhi canal will be removed, 12 sluice gates will be installed, five culverts will be constructed, and 61km of canals will be re-excavated, said officials. Local farmers said the dykes hamper irrigation in the area, resulting in less crop production.

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editor of the book and associate professor of digital journalism at the Department of Communication of University of South Alabama, USA, said, "Bangladesh is a pioneer in utilising the power of music in the struggle for freedom and self-determination. 'Concert for Bangladesh' is the first charity concert in the world that was arranged to raise awareness about a war and genocide."

"What Shabnam has found out in her research is very unique, and her work will make way for further research in this rather unexplored but extremely resourceful part of Bangladesh's history," added Delaware.

FROM PAGE 3 About bringing all the health check-up centres under the ministry's supervision, he said, "We have no contact with the GHC. But we will work on it."

"There is no uniformity of the medical centres that serve the migration workers. As a result, some are taking the opportunity. The government should come forward to ensure

Dhaka seeks

FROM PAGE 3 former MCCI president Barrister Nihad Kabir and Secretary General Farooq Ahmed.

During the day, the delegation held several meetings at the Dutch Foreign Ministry where the two sides discussed wide-ranging issues, including the extension of EU GSP facilities towards Bangladesh apparel sector beyond graduation as an LDC, collaboration on the implementation of transformative projects under Bangladesh Delta Plan (BDP), facilitating Dutch investment financing in the private sector, especially across diverse sectors of Bangladesh agriculture, and innovative Dutch water solutions to Bangladesh.

He also met with representatives of leading Dutch financial institutions and the Eindhoven-based Brainport.

Drug dealer

FROM PAGE 5 Abdur Rob fled to Cox's Bazar after injuring a DB policeman on March 18. There are 4 cases against him, including 3 drug cases in Chattogram and Barguna.

On March 18, when a DB Police team went on a drug raid in Munsirhat area of Barguna's Patharghata around 2:30pm, drug dealers attacked them with sharp weapons. Md Prince, 30, a member of the DB Police, and 3 people were injured in this.

A case was filed against 3 people, including Abdur Rob in Patharghata police station.

How music galvanised the struggle

FROM PAGE 3 renowned cultural organisations which played a vital role in all future movements, including the Liberation War, were formed at that period."

"Chhayanat Sangeet Vidyaniyat was established in 1961, Kranti Shilpi Goshthi in 1967, and Udichi Shilpi Goshthi was formed in 1968," she added. Shabnam analysed the massive influence of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra in organising the Liberation War and in keeping up the morale of the freedom fighters by performing a wide range of songs.

She found out in her research that besides patriotic and war songs, folk songs played an equally important role in encouraging rural populace to join the Liberation War.

For instance, Bangladesh Mukti Shangrami Shilpi Shangstha, which was later featured in the famous documentary "Muktir Gaan", used to travel to places such as refugee camps, camps of the freedom fighters and places of unoccupied Bangladesh and performed folk and patriotic songs.

The research also sheds light on the influence of music during the mass uprising of the 90s and during the recent protest for the capital punishment of the war criminals, known as Shahbagh movement.

Shabnam said, "Shammilito Shangkritik Jote was formed in 1984 and played a vital role in organising demonstrations against the then dictatorial government of General Ershad. Various pop songs such as 'Rail Line Er Oi

Bostite', 'Emon Ekta Ma De Na' and 'O Sokhina' depicted the struggles of exploited, impoverished people." "Although publicised as pop songs, these songs silently became the weapons of protests and demonstration for the young generation at that time," she opined.

"Similarly, during the Shabbagh movement, the young generation became united by the songs of Kabir Shuman and Mahmud Selim. Various musical bands also performed at 'Gana Jagoron Mancha' to express their solidarity with the movement. More than 122 songs were composed and performed during the Shahbagh movement, which need to be preserved as historical assets," Shabnam mentioned.

Delaware Arif, an

Historical Sindurmoti Mela held in Lalmonirhat

S DILIP ROY

Traditional Sindurmoti Mela was held at surrounding the historical Sindurmoti pond at Sindurmati village of Panchagram union in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila on Thursday and Friday. Thousands of devotees from different areas of greater Rangpur and other parts of the country, along with people from India took part in the fair.

Hindu people prayed at temple and took bath in the pond water. Devotees believe that bathing in the pond water brings peace and wipes away sin.

Bidhubhuson Roy, member of Sindurmoti Fair Celebration Committee, said the fair started around 300 years ago. A local religious leader introduced the fair and since then, it's being held in Chaitra or on the first week of every Bangla year.

Devotees' attendance this year was higher than any other year, he said.

Chandra Bala Roy, 69, said, "I've been attending Sindurmoti fair for the last 45 years to seek divine blessings."



Debdendra Nath Roy, 75, who came from Baro Nachina village under Dinhatata Police Station of Cooch Behar district in West Bengal, said, "A large number of devotees came from India to celebrate the historical fair."

"We've been attending the fair for the last twenty years. We feel great after bathing in the water of Sindurmoti pond," he said.

Besides Hindus, Muslims of the region also gather at the fair for the festivities. They exchange greetings with their neighbours and purchase different items from the fair.

Mahir Uddin, 55, said, "We come to the fair because we enjoy it. Besides, we can meet and greet our Hindu friends during the festival."

Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ershadul Alam said law enforcers took adequate security measures to ensure peaceful celebrations. Sindurmoti fair is historical and it is the biggest fair in the region, he added.

Man arrested over rape of 11-year-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Rab in Mymensingh arrested a man from Munshiganj's Gazaria area on Friday night for allegedly raping an 11-year-old girl nine days ago.

The arrestee was identified as Kamal Mia, 42, a motor mechanic in Mymensingh city's Thanarghat area.

Md Anwar Hossain, senior assistant director of Rab-14, said Kamal, a neighbour, with the help of another neighbouring woman named Payel raped her in the city's Khaghdahor Gunti area on March 24.

Kamal also threatened her with life if she disclosed the matter.

After returning home in the evening, she became sick and narrated the whole incident to her family.

Later, she was admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

The victim's mother filed a case with Kotwali Police Station against Kamal and Payel on March 28. The medical test of the girl was conducted at MMCH that day, police said.

Meanwhile, a Mymensingh court sent Kamal to jail after police produced him before it yesterday afternoon, said Officer-in-Charge Shah Kamal Akanda.

Fatehpuri

FROM PAGE 5 Committee (Committee for Commissioning Books on Architecture).

The committee Chairman Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, also former vice chancellor of Dhaka University, presided over the meeting.

He said Nuruddin Fatehpuri enlightened the society by spreading knowledge of stone inscription and architecture.

Dr Abu Sayeed M Ahmed, president of ARCASIA Council, a platform of the presidents of National Institutes of Architects in Asia, said Nuruddin Fatehpuri used to visit historical mosques in both town and urban areas for deciphering ancient stones with inscriptions.

He unveiled a new horizon of stone inscription in Bangladesh, viewed Sayeed.

Mohammad Mosharrif Hossain, former director of the Department of Archaeology, said Nuruddin Fatehpuri played a vital role in advancing the country's archaeological sector through his research and works.

Despite being a madrasa teacher, Nuruddin Fatehpuri had a great contribution in deciphering ancient stone inscriptions.

Several academicians, researchers, and journalists, among others, also spoke at the programme.

Patients find

FROM PAGE 5 breaking their fasts with food provided by DMCH, passing plates.

One attendant, Joyal Kazi, spoke about how he and his family observed fast and bought food from outside to share with others. He had admitted his sister with gastric issues.

DMCH sources estimated that the total number of attendants and patients during Ramadan would exceed 10,000. To cater to this demand, makeshift shops selling Sehri and Iftar items were set up, along with

restaurants and hotels. Street vendors like Abdul Jalil were taking advantage of this surge in demand.

He said, "We used to sell regular foods at other times. But as it's Ramadan time, there is an increase in customers, so we started selling these items."

DMCH Director Brig Gen Nazmul Haque said that there were over 3,500 patients admitted to the hospital at present. As most patients could not fast due to their physical conditions, the hospital doesn't provide extra food for Sehri or Iftar.

Plagued with

FROM PAGE 3 About bringing all the health check-up centres under the ministry's supervision, he said, "We have no contact with the GHC. But we will work on it."

"There is no uniformity of the medical centres that serve the migration workers. As a result, some are taking the opportunity. The government should come forward to ensure

accountability here," said Brac Head of Migration Shariful Hasan.

Recently, the ministry of expatriates has published a guideline to establish health check-up centres for migrant workers in the country on its website.

The GHC authorised health centres are yet to be brought under the guideline, according to the officials.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Principal
Faridpur Engineering College, Faridpur
Website: www.fec.ac.bd

Ref. No: FEC/STORE/2023/44 Date: 01 April, 2023

e-Tender Notice: FEC/2022-2023/02

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

Tender ID No.	Reference No./Package No.	Description	Online Publication Date	Online Tender Closing Date
809401	FEC/2022-2023/GD-02 (Re-tender)	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Electronic Universal Testing Machine(UTM) with Front Loading jaw (Hydraulic) for Strength of Materials Lab.	02-Apr-2023 12:00:00	16-Apr-2023 12:00:00
809275	FEC/2022-2023/GD-05 (Re-tender)	Supply and Installation of Engineering Machinery for Different Labs in Civil Engineering Department	02-Apr-2023 12:00:00	16-Apr-2023 13:00:00
809366	FEC/2022-2023/GD-12	Supply and Installation of Engineering Machinery for Computer Lab and Advanced Computer Network Lab in EEE and CSE Dept.	02-Apr-2023 12:00:00	17-Apr-2023 12:00:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank Branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd, +8809609112233, +880176262528-31).

01-Apr-2023
(Prof. Dr. Engr. Md. Mizanur Rahman)
Principal (Additional Charge)
Faridpur Engineering College, Faridpur
E-mail: principal.fec@gmail.com
principal@fec.ac.bd

GD- 602

Office of the Mirkadim Paurashava
District: Munshiganj.

Memo No. Mka/pau/Eng/10-39/22-63 Date: 29/03/2023

e-Tender Notice (OTM) No. 3/2022-23

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

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of the work
01	805817	LGCRRP/Mirkadim/2022-23/W-01	A) Construction of RCC Drain from South Vubangara Jame Mosque to Khaleq Saheb House (Ch.0.00m to +220.00m) Under Mirkadim Paurashava, Munshiganj. B) Rehabilitation of BC Road from Babu Adam Masjid to MCO Area (Ch.0.00m to +370m) at Dargabari Under Mirkadim Paurashava, Munshiganj.
02	805818	LGCRRP/Mirkadim/2022-23/W-02	A) Improvement of Existing BC Road by RCC form Zirandopatti Idrish Miah House to Nagar Kariela Molla Ben. (Ch. 0.00m- 330.00m) in Ward no.08, Under Mirkadim Paurashava. B) Construction of RCC Drain from Zirandopatti Khali to Existing Bricks Drain, Ch.0+00-0+90m in Ward No.-08, Under Mirkadim Paurashava. (Ward-08)

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

29.03.2023
(Mohammad Ali)
Executive Engineer
Mirkadim Paurashava
Munshiganj.

GD- 603



The Sutang river, once a source of living for hundreds of locals, has now turned into a cesspool of diseases and stench. This is because factories set up around the river have been directly discharging toxic waste into the river over the last decade and most of them don't have effluent treatment plants (ETP).

PHOTO: STAR

Sutang in death grip

River's water is so polluted that stench emanates, water-borne diseases occur

MINTU DESHWARA

The Sutang river, which was a blessing of nature for the people surrounding it, has now become a curse due to extreme pollution.

Many people living on the bank of Sutang used to earn a livelihood by fishing in the river. But now its water has turned into a source of disease and germs.

Even, crops are affected, if the river water is used for irrigation. Humans and cattle are infected with different types of diseases if they consume or use the river water. Stench emits round the clock, said locals.

The Sutang is a transboundary river shared with India. Its length is around 82 kilometres in Bangladesh part. It goes through three upazilas in Habiganj. Its average width is around 36 metres, according to environmentalists.

The reason for this is that several hundred factories have been set up on

the bank of the river over the last decade, mainly contributing to polluting the river by discharging toxic wastes. Most of the factories don't have effluent treatment plants (ETP), said locals.

Villagers alleged that the administration turns a blind eye to the nuisance.

A recent study by Rivers and Delta Research Centre (RDRC) has found that at least 56 rivers flowing through different parts of the country are suffering from extreme pollution during the lean period – when the natural flow of rivers is at its lowest.

The Sutang has a dissolved oxygen (DO) level of 0.4 when the standard is 4.5 to 8 mg per litre, according to the study.

Environmentalists and locals say the lives of two lakh people of more than one hundred villages in Habiganj will be endangered.

"Once, the river was filled with different kinds of fish. Many people mainly depended on the river for their livelihood. But now the river has become so toxic that no fish can survive here," said Md Shafiqur Rahman, 65, a resident of Uchail village in Habiganj Sadar upazila.

"Even, we get infected with different types of skin diseases, if we use the water," he added.

Md Ershad Miah, a farmer of Paschim

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Five BNP men held while protesting price hike of essentials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Rajshahi

Police arrested BNP's Rajshahi district unit convenor Abu Sayeed Chand and four other party activists yesterday afternoon while they were protesting the spiralling price of essentials.

The police arrested the five BNP men on charges of creating public suffering by an illegal gathering and obstructing government services, said Rafiqul Alam, an additional deputy commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

As part of their countrywide programme to protest unbearable prices of essentials, the city and district units of BNP jointly brought out a procession from the city's Sagarpara area at 3:45pm.

Police intercepted the BNP activists 15 minutes later when the BNP procession ended and the protestors began holding a street rally in the city's Gonokpara Mor.

As the chief guest, former lawmaker Harun-ur Rashid began addressing the rally.

At that point of time, police dispersed the rally using batons and caught five BNP men from the scene.

Plying the roads despite HC ban

Battery-run rickshaws cause traffic jams, power outages in Tangail

MIRZA SHAKIL

Several thousand battery-powered rickshaws are causing unbearable traffic jams in Tangail town, despite a ban from the higher court. Residents are struggling with regular traffic jams due to the large number of illegal vehicles on the roads.

Furthermore, these vehicles are required to be charged, which in turn causes frequent power outages. The owners and drivers of these rickshaws claim that they are operating legally after obtaining licences from the municipal authorities.

According to the licencing department of Tangail municipality, there are 5000 licensed pedal-operated rickshaws in the town. However, almost all the rickshaws seen on the streets are battery-operated. The municipal authority claims that battery-run rickshaws are plying with the licence of pedal-operated rickshaws after adding batteries.

However, rickshaw pullers and owners claim that they paid a large sum of money to the municipality's licencing section to get approval for their battery-powered vehicles.

Tangail Municipality set the licencing cost for a pedal-run rickshaw at Tk 1,000. However, the officials charged from Tk 10,000 up to Tk 25,000 per rickshaw, alleged battery-run rickshaw

owners. According to them, the extra money was taken as bribes to disregard these rickshaws that already had batteries installed.

The one-year licenses signed by the current mayor of Tangail Municipality SM Sirajul Haque Alamgir were approved in 2021 in the first phase. This means some

"First the authorities confiscated our rickshaws. Then they made us pay a fat amount of money as licencing fees. I paid Tk 12,000 to get my vehicle back," said rickshaw driver Jasim Miah of Akurtakurpara.

Hazrat Ali, another rickshaw driver from Basakhanpur area,

normal due to the large number of vehicles plying the roads. However, they have not got any instructions from the relevant authorities to seize these vehicles, said Tangail traffic inspector Delwar Hossain.

"The previous mayor of the municipality had given licenses to 4,000 battery-operated easy

The previous mayor of the municipality had given licenses to 4,000 battery-operated easy bikes illegally. The current mayor is continuing the trend. These vehicles have caused regular gridlocks and power outages in the town, making our life unbearable.

ARMAN KABIR
Resident of College Para area



rickshaw licences have already expired. The rickshaw licenses signed in the second phase in 2022 are valid till June 2023.

Similar anomalies have been alleged in licencing of battery-powered easy bikes (three-wheelers). Battery-powered easy bike owners have claimed that although the licencing fee for a three-wheeler is Tk 10,500, the municipality has taken Tk 1 lakh from them. However, easy bike licencing was done under the previous municipality authority.

said, "I have got the licence by paying Tk 20,000 as easy bike was written in the licence book."

These battery-powered vehicles are causing acute traffic jams in many areas of the town, including the Main Road, Baby Stand, Shantikunja Intersection, Nirala Intersection, Parkbazar Intersection, Capsule Market, Old Bus Stand, Supari Bagan Intersection, Kumudini College Gate, and New Bus Terminal areas.

The traffic police department is struggling to keep traffic in the city

bikes illegally. The current mayor is continuing the trend. These vehicles have caused regular gridlocks and power outages in the town, making our life unbearable," said Arman Kabir, a resident of College Para area.

The municipality mayor, SM Sirajul Haque Alamgir, claims that he has not issued any battery-powered rickshaw licences.

"Earlier, when we seized these battery-run vehicles, we had to release them on request of the higher authorities."

Drug dealer accused of stabbing DB police arrested in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Drug dealer Abdur Rob, an accused in the case filed over the stabbing of a DB police in Barguna's Patharghata, has been arrested from Chattagram in a joint drive by Rab-7 and Rab-8 on March 31 from the Patia-Anwara link road, while he was going to his rented house in Chattagram from Cox's Bazar.

Later, he was handed over to the Patharghata Police Station yesterday afternoon, confirmed Patuakhali Rab-8's company commander and assistant Superintendent of Police Tuhin Reza.

He said although Abdur Rob's house is in Barguna's Patharghata, he lives in a rented house in Chattagram's Steel Mill area. He is one of the members of the gang who collects drugs from Chattagram and Cox's Bazar and sells it at various places in Barguna and Barisal divisions.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Tk 750cr project for irrigation launched in Barguna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A Tk 751 crore project has begun in Barguna to facilitate agricultural activities, including irrigation to a large extent in the area.

Bangladesh Water Development Board has initiated the project in Amtali upazila, to ease sufferings of locals including farmers.

Local lawmaker Dharendra Debnath Shambhu inaugurated the work on March 24 in presence of WDB Southern Region Chief Engineer and Project Director, Mojibur Rahman.

Amtali Municipality Mayor, Matiar Rahman, was the special guest at the inaugural session.

Under the project, four dams constructed on

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Fatehpuri unveiled a new horizon of stone inscription

Say speakers at memorial meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Maulana Muhammad Nuruddin Fatehpuri will be admired forever for his memorable contributions to deciphering ancient stone inscriptions, said discussants at a programme yesterday.

He could reach an unparalleled height by works in deciphering Arabic, Farsi and Urdu inscriptions. His demise is an irreparable loss for the nation, they viewed.

They were speaking at a meeting commemorating Nuruddin Fatehpuri, who breathed his last on January 17, at the Kobi Sufia Kamal Auditorium of the national museum in Dhaka, organised by Dhakar Sthapatya Bishayak Grantha Pronayon

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

IFTAR AT DMCH

Patients find strength in shared devotion

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

It was a Friday evening, and the atmosphere at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) was one of serenity and devotion. The patients and their attendants were breaking their fasts together.

Among them was seventy-year-old Harun Or Rashid, hailing from Kaptai in Rangamati. He had been admitted to DMCH for urology problems and was waiting alone with a bowl of food, counting down the minutes until iftar.

Harun spoke with a sense of calm and determination. "Doctors said they will conduct an operation in the coming week, so I am observing fast till then," he explained. Despite the hardship he was going through, he was determined to continue fasting until his operation.

His family could not stay with him due to financial constraints, so he broke his fast alone. However, he was not truly alone as other patients and their attendants were also fasting and breaking their fasts together.

DMCH provided basic breakfast items such as eggs, bread, and bananas, which patients and attendants stored for iftar. Rice was provided for their sheri and dinner.

The hospital was buzzing with activity during iftar time. Patients and their attendants were seen sitting together in groups,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Despite being away from home, patients and attendants at DMCH come together to break their fast during Ramadan every evening. In this photo, they gather on the floor in front of a ward to share iftar meals, provided by the hospital and brought from outside vendors. Many of them are facing financial struggles and health issues, but the spirit of Ramadan unites them in their observance of the holy month.

PHOTO: STAR



Dads Evolve

Bangladeshi two-man band reach for international glory

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

AAQIB HASIB

Just recently, Dads in the Park returned from Indonesia, where they had travelled to perform at the Hammersonic Festival in Indonesia—where they got to perform alongside the likes of Slipknot, Trivium, Amon Amarth, Saosin, Tiny Moving Parts, Story of the Year and many more.

Having closely followed their journey on the way to their first international performance, The Daily Star decided to interview the duo of Tajwar Ul Islam and Ishmam Salim—the two men behind the band. The two performed along with their friends—Samuel Adhikary on drums,

Shahriar Shams on bass and Zafiran Islam Mon on keyboards—who went as touring members.

You guys only recently returned from performing at the Hammersonic Festival. How was the experience?

Ishmam: The overall experience was emotionally overwhelming for both of us. When we started out by making our music in English, we had always dreamed of going international.

I remember even until the last moments, when everything was being confirmed, I did not share this news with anyone because I was worried about jinxing it.

Tajwar: This was not just an opportunity for us, it was the biggest stepping stone that would make a significant difference in our careers.

The community really came forward to support you guys on your journey to Hammersonic. How did that make you feel as a band?

Ishmam: We are eternally grateful for the support we received from the fans, our sponsors and the media.

Tajwar: Personally, I grew up in the industry and many seniors often told us to start making music in Bangla instead of English. But due to our own plans, we were always going to stick to English. We love Bangla music, but that was not our target. So, when we got this opportunity, I thought many would be skeptical. But the support that came instantly was amazing. The donations from our fans really helped us a lot. Even someone who donated as little as BDT 20

helped us on our journey. Some of my friends even got me strings, guitar straps, guitar cases, processors, bags, clothes, etc. all of that helped. Everyone reached out to us with the intention of helping us and that was amazing.

I noticed that many Indonesian locals were sharing pictures of you online or videos of you performing. How was the crowd at the show?

The crowd was amazing. They were cheering our performances from the very beginning. Even when we finished our set, they were chanting for one more song from us. But we wanted to be professional and did not want to exceed the time slot we had been allotted. They also asked us for our guitar picks when we were leaving and we gave it to them. A lot of fans also took pictures with us once we got off stage.

The best part though, was this one guy who was singing all of our songs, from *Lullaby* to *Afecnolove*. The next day, when we returned to watch the other performers, this guy messaged us on Facebook and asked us to meet him. When we met, he bought merch from us and showed his support. It was just amazing to see that people enjoyed our music.

What is next on the horizon for Dads in the Park?

Going forward, our short-term plan is to release three songs, which we currently have in the pipeline, as soon as possible. Some of the songs will also have collaborations with other musicians and bands.



Arbovirus releases first song without Sufi



Popular rock band Arbovirus released a lyrical music video of a new song, *Onubhuti* on their official YouTube page. This is their first song after the vocalist of the band, Sufi Maveric left last year.

The song has been voiced by Shahan Kamal Uday, their new vocalist.

The track is the first release of their fourth studio album *Republic of Arbovirus*. The second song of the album, *Obastob*, will be released this month, according to the band's announcement.

The song is now available on Spotify, Apple Music, YouTube, and all other streaming platforms.

'Allen Swapan' sends friend requests on Facebook

In what is considered to be a unique way to promote a web series, a Facebook account named Allen Swapan has started to send friend requests to netizens.



Perhaps it is a ploy of money laundering kingpin Allen Swapan to increase his network?

Chorki has announced *Myself Allen Swapan*, a spinoff of the wildly popular character, conceived by the same director. Fans of the character will be elated to know that the series will delve into both his past, and the future.

Besides Nasir Uddin Khan playing Allen Swapan, the series stars Mithila, Sentu, Shimla and Sumon Anwar, amongst others.

The series will release on Eid-ul-Fitr.

Philomena is phenomenal

LUBABA MAHJABIN PRIMA

"The ancient Greeks invented lots of things we still have today, like medicine and olives. And lots of things that have died out, like democracy and pillars."

As Cunk walks across the shore and talks in *Cunk on Earth*, one gets all the vibes of a documentary. Except for the fact that it isn't.

After being premiered on BBC Two in September 2022, and released on Netflix in January 2023, the British mockumentary television series, *Cunk on Earth* has taken the internet by storm. The series follows the journey of Philomena Cunk—an ill-informed investigative reporter. The amazing cinematography, the knowledgeable insights and most importantly, Cunk make it something you can't miss!

The character Cunk first arrived on *Charlie Brooker's Weekly Wipe*, a BBC satirical news show in the year 2013. The character became popular and soon had longer segments on the show. This eventually led to spinoffs and even a book, *Cunk on Everything*, released in 2019.

Diane Morgan plays her character with impeccable perfection. Her nonchalant and flat delivery brings conviction to the believability of Cunk, which truly binds the whole series together.

The best part about the humour in this series is the

approach of the episodes. The background music, the phrases, the cinematic shots, all seem like they are part of any other documentary. The interviews of the experts add a whole new dimension to the series. On one hand, this makes the watch a truly educational one. But the questions they face from Cunk are extremely hilarious, and make the interviews unique in their own right.

The humour takes a dig at the spontaneity and sheer coincidences that shaped our civilisation. Steps in the journey of mankind that are considered beyond any humour are hit as well. This makes the whole series a lot more important, because not only does it take us through historically accurate facts, but it also narrates the philosophical insignificance of man.

Apart from all of this, the character Cunk also offers a form of catharsis. "A lot of people fantasise about being able to say whatever they want and not care," Morgan said in an interview. "She just genuinely does not give a toss, and that's almost like a superpower."

In a constantly polarising world, this ability to speak one's heart out, to be unabashed is indeed a good feeling. However, the rising post truth era propagandas are also parts of our lives now, and the series hints at that, too.

"Is there a great roof of China?" is something you can certainly blurt out next time!



Bidya Sinha Mim serves customers at Bidyanondo store

"I've seen you in films," exclaimed one of the customers present at the 'Happiness Store' run by Bidyanondo Foundation. The actress was mainly present at the venue to inaugurate the store, that provides grocery items for lower income citizens at a cheaper cost.

The non-profit foundation took to their social media to commend the actress for her admirable behaviour. Mim was present at the store, helping with billing and packaging content for customers.

Recently, singer Tahsan and internet personality Rafsan the Chotobhai were also spotted serving iftar to fasting citizens, joining in with the volunteers who are working to ensure good food for underprivileged individuals this Ramadan.

"Noishobde Ekattor" The Stories of the Liberation War through the Lens of Theatre

Portraying stories that led to the birth of Bangladesh through disability-theatre

In the month of independence, the disability-inclusive theatre play "Noishobde Ekattor" (71 in Silence) was staged on 9 and 10 March at National Theatre, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. Produced by the British Council in partnership with Dhaka Theatre, the performance features 15 artists with disabilities from eight divisional cities of Bangladesh and focuses on the country's Liberation War through different acting methods.

When it comes to theatre practices in Bangladesh, disability-inclusive theatre in general is still an area which is in its developing phase in Bangladesh, and the British Council Bangladesh is currently leading the works of disability arts since 2013 when it comes to inclusive theatre. "Noishobde Ekattor" is one of those productions which tried to portray the calibre of the artists with disabilities by introducing different theatrical methods on stage which is not quite common in the local theatre arena. A silent theatre piece that portrays the story of the birth of Bangladesh – how it was before, how the war started and the consequences of the war; "Noishobde Ekattor" tells a journey which is narrated using physical storytelling techniques on stage.

Physical Storytelling tends to be a bit more abstract than the regular theatre and focuses on involving improvisational move-

ments to depict the stories on stage. As the theatre piece, "Noishobde Ekattor" did not have any specific dialogue, it was an experiment to narrate the scenarios, the stories through the movement of the performers. There were artists with speech and hearing impairments, physical disabilities and visually challenged artists who have dedicatedly worked on learning the processes to display it on stage.

The theatre piece is directed by Ramesh Meyyappan, a Glasgow-based theatre maker who develops performances using an eclectic mix of visual and physical theatre styles. Ramesh continually seeks to develop and extend his theatrical visual vocabulary. He enjoys the challenge of creating strong narrative visual work.

"When I was explained the significance of the sign name of Bangladesh, I realised the true passion behind the nation's history. The eagerness this bold ensemble has shown in portraying this history through eloquent expression of pain and suffering is truly unmatched. I would like to thank the audience for coming and for seeing the show to give this group of people an opportunity to use their voices – taking us a step closer to ensuring that all voices are heard and seen", said Ramesh.

"I knew nothing about the war and the plight of the people here

during that time, I was not surprised by the ensemble groups eagerness to explore this more and tell the story. 1971 as presented by this ensemble is their understanding of their history, their war, their suffering and genocide. They wanted people to know the stories of the Bengali women who faced double discrimination; having suffered multiple rape from the Pakistani armies they were then ostracized by their own people. These women bore the greatest burden of war", he added.

Noishobde Ekattor has been produced as a part of celebrating The British Council's 70th anniversary in Bangladesh and also Bangladesh's 50th year of independence. This play is a part of the DARE (Disability Arts Redefining Empowerment) project led by the British Council in partnership with Dhaka Theatre. DARE was launched in 2019 in partnership with Dhaka Theatre. Since then, it has been working in eight divisional cities in Bangladesh where both artists with disabilities and artists from local theatre organisations are participating together in order to get a better idea about how to work on disability theatre to create a sustainable platform on disability arts. The performers of this theatre piece have been selected through the inclusive theatre workshops in all eight divisional cities during the past couple of years.



Advertorial

INTERNATIONAL

CHINESE COMBAT
READINESS PATROLS10 aircraft
cross Taiwan
Strait median
line

AGENCIES

Ten Chinese aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, normally an unofficial barrier between the two sides, Taiwan's defence ministry said yesterday, as Beijing continues its military activities near the island.

This is the second day in a row that Chinese aircraft crossed the median line carrying out combat readiness patrols.

Nine Chinese fighter jets and one military drone crossed the median line in the 24 hours to 6 am yesterday (2000 GMT on Friday), the ministry said in its daily report on Chinese military activities, reports Reuters.

Taiwan sent aircraft to warn away the Chinese aircraft, while missile systems monitored them, the ministry said, using standard wording for its response.

Separately, nine Chinese aircraft had crossed the median line on Friday carrying out combat readiness patrols, a move that Taiwan's defence ministry said has "deliberately created tension" and undermined peace and stability, Reuters adds.

Meanwhile, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen arrived in Guatemala Friday on a visit to shore up ties with dwindling allies, reports AFP.

Tsai's visit to Guatemala and its Central American neighbor Belize comes after Honduras became the latest country to cut diplomatic ties with Taipei in favor of Beijing.



Environmental activists of Last Generation (Ultima Generazione) shows the Barcaccia Fountain at Piazza di Spagna in Rome's historic centre, after the activists poured black liquid made out of vegetable-based carbon into the water as part of a campaign to raise awareness about climate change yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

RUSSIA'S ARREST OF US JOURNO
US threats will 'reap
whirlwind': Moscow

Biden asks to let Gershkovich go

AGENCIES

Russia said on Friday that if the United States threatened Moscow over its arrest of Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reporter Evan Gershkovich, it would reap a "whirlwind", the state-owned news agency RIA reported.

US President Joe Biden urged Moscow on Friday to "let him go", after his administration said on Thursday it was unacceptable for Russia to target US citizens and urged all Americans in Russia to leave at once, reports Reuters.

The WSJ denied that Gershkovich was a spy. The WSJ's board of opinion

editors called in a piece published Thursday afternoon for the expulsion of Russia's ambassador to the United States, as well as "all Russian journalists working here," describing the move as "the minimum to expect."

"The timing of the arrest looks like a calculated provocation to embarrass the US and intimidate the foreign press still working in Russia," it added, according to AFP.

The Journal's editor in chief, Emma Tucker, sent a note to

the newspaper's staff Friday, saying that "we will carry on doing everything in our power to secure Evan's release."

"Your safety and security are what matters most to me, and we will continue to protect that no matter where you may be reporting from," she added, AFP adds.

Speaking to reporters before leaving to view tornado damage in Mississippi, Biden said that expelling Russian journalists was "not the plan right now."

AIR STRIKE
8 civilians
killed in
Myanmar

REUTERS

Eight civilians including children were killed in an air strike on a village in northwest Myanmar, according to a human rights group, ethnic minority rebels and media, the latest violence as the ruling military battles to consolidate power.

The air strike took place on Thursday, with four bombs dropped on Khaufa, a village in Chin State, bordering India, according to the Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO) and the Chin National Front. Two children, ages three and nine, were among the dead.

Her silence

FROM PAGE 1
quote, it had the photo of an adolescent boy taken from behind.

The mistake was noticed within 17 minutes, and the card was removed. Besides, corrections were made to the report and the news was again published online mentioning the corrections.

Around 4:00am on March 29, Shams was picked up by law enforcers in plainclothes, hours after he was sued under the DSA.

Apart from Shams, Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiuur Rahman, an unnamed photographer, and unnamed others were accused later in another case filed under the DSA.

In a statement yesterday, Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad urged the government to suspend the application of the DSA, saying that the act was being used to harass the minority communities.

Former students of Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday demonstrated in front of Bangladesh National Museum in the capital's Shabbagh, demanding that the DSA be scrapped immediately.

Kallol Banik, a JU alumni, said Shams reported on the struggle of low-income people amid the rising prices of daily commodities.

"Shams acted responsibly. He was sent to jail for performing his duties as a journalist. Today, we are here to thank him [for the report]."

Demanding the abolition of the DSA, another JU alumni named Nasir Uddin Prince said suppression of freedom of expression, media, and dissent is a threat to democracy.

Friends of Shams, also a JU alumni, said they would launch a tough movement if Shams was not released soon.

Activists of Narayanganj Sangskritik Jote

demonstrated in the morning in front of Narayanganj Press Club.

Rafiuur Rabbi, adviser to the organisation, said the DSA is contradictory to the constitution.

"The entire process of Shams' arrest and imprisonment is unlawful," he added.

At a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club, Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon, said low-income people are being hit hard by the soaring prices of daily essentials. Corrupt people, money launderers and bank robbers are responsible for this. Instead of taking measures against them, the government wants to suppress the voice of the people.

Since the people's sufferings are reported in the media, the government is afraid of possible public anger, he said, adding that the DSA was being used as a tool of repression.

Dhaka University's panel of pro-BNP-Jamaat teachers expressed deep concern over the filing of a case against the Prothom Alo editor and the arrest of Shams.

In a statement, signed by Prof Md Lutfar Rahman, the White Panel teachers demanded abolition of the DSA, saying that the government does not believe in freedom of the press.

Activists of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, members of Prothom Alo Bondhushava, and local journalists formed a human chain in front of Dinajpur Press Club with their faces covered in black cloth.

The filing of cases against the Prothom Alo journalists is politically motivated, said the speakers.

Demonstrations also took place in Patuakhali, Bauphal, Sarishabari, Nilphamari and Tangail.

Shams was moved back to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj from Kashimpur Central Jail 1 yesterday.

Unskilled

FROM PAGE 2

In September last year, Bangladesh High Commissioner in Maldives Rear Admiral SM Abul Kalam Azad during a courtesy call on Minister Fayyaz Ismail requested the Maldives government to recruit new workers from Bangladesh, according to a Facebook post of the Bangladesh mission.

During the meeting, the envoy also stressed the speedy regularisation of Bangladeshi undocumented workers there.

In response, the Maldivian minister urged undocumented Bangladeshi workers to avail themselves of the opportunity under the regularisation programme.

Once they are documented, the workers get legal and health insurance benefits. Besides, they can remit money home using their own documents through banking channels, helping increase inward remittance.

In a meeting in January this year, Counsellor Sohail Parvez urged Maldives Mariyam Nazima, deputy minister at the Ministry of Economic Development, to recruit new workers from Bangladesh, read another Facebook post of the mission.

However, an email requesting comment on the labour market's reopening was not immediately answered by the Maldives High Commission in Dhaka.

NSU student

FROM PAGE 12

hours after the crash, said MM Morshed, officer-in-charge of Lalbagh Police Station.

Police have detained the lorry driver named Shamim and motorcycle rider named Mehedi, he added.

Sanjida was about to migrate to Canada soon after the Ramadan, family members said, adding that she was the youngest child of Abu Taher, an expatriate.

Her elder brother Sayem said Sanjida was about to get married after this Eid and the family members were shopping for her wedding.

"My mother fainted after hearing the news and is still unconscious. We do not know what to do now," he said.

8 unidentified

FROM PAGE 12

during goods packing and transporting. Include off-docks to Chittagong Port and hold a regular meeting of the monitoring committee. Provide training to the firefighters to follow the IMDG code.

Customs later served a notice to the managing director of BM Depot Container Limited on September 15 asking why its private bonded warehouse license should not be cancelled following the deadly blast

Prothom Alo, BNP

FROM PAGE 12

news is false, fabricated, and conspiratorial," said the AL general secretary.

He said having a quote from a seven-year-old child by "bribing him Tk 10" is not journalism.

"Independence Day is a unique day to create a sense of patriotism among the young generation. Isn't publishing a news with an aim to setting a special political agenda not tantamount to denying the independence, the principles and achievements of the Liberation War?"

Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams was arrested in a case filed under the Digital Security Act and was sent to jail on Thursday. The DSA case was also filed against the paper's Editor Matiuur Rahman.

Quader said ridiculing the country's achievements on the Independence Day is not just a mistake.

"This is not only an immoral act, but also a criminal offense. There is a clear provocation [in that report] to divide the nation... Can the Prothom Alo editor and publisher deny the responsibility?"

"Have they regretted or apologised for their grievous crime? They have shown extreme audacity... no one is above the law," the AL leader said.

Regarding the statement of Reporters Without Borders, the road transport and bridges minister said, "This organisation says that the government has filed such a case against the Prothom Alo editor to intimidate journalists. I would like to say that the government didn't file any case in this regard. An ordinary citizen can also file a case."

The AL at yesterday's meeting decided that it won't hold "counter programmes" to that of the BNP's.

The ruling party would rather organise iftar distribution programmes every day, and through

those it would try to hold gatherings to deal with the BNP on the streets, party insiders said.

At the meeting, a central AL leader proposed the party leaders reconsider attending different events of Prothom Alo.

Quader in reply said they would take a decision in this regard very soon.

Responding to a question from another central leader whether socio-cultural organisations should take to the streets to protest against Prothom Alo, the AL general secretary said yes.

PROTEST AT SHAHBAGH
A group of Chhatra League leaders and activists from Dhaka University blocked the Shahbagh intersection in the city for about an hour from 11:00am yesterday, demanding immediate arrest and punishment of the Prothom Alo editor.

They accused Matiuur Rahman of being a conspirator against the state in the guise of journalism, running a media outlet for politically motivated yellow journalism, exploiting children in violation of international law, and continuously spreading false news and rumours about the country's independence.

The protest was organised under the banner of "Dhaka Bissobidalayer Shadharan Shikharthibrindo", which caused traffic congestion in the area.

BCL leaders from its various DU hall units led the protest. Among the leaders were Imam Hossain Zihad, joint general secretary of Shahid Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall BCL, Ainul Islam Mahabub, joint general secretary of Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall BCL, Shakil Reja, joint general secretary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall BCL, and former BCL leader Tania Akhter Taposhi.

They BCL members also burned an effigy of the Prothom Alo editor.

UNSC concerned

FROM PAGE 12

fighting off a Russian invasion for more than a year.

"Let us be clear: No other country has raised the prospect of nuclear use in this conflict," said Deputy British Ambassador James Kariuki, referring to the Ukraine invasion.

"No one is threatening Russia's sovereignty," he added, condemning Putin's statement as "his latest attempt to intimidate and coerce."

"This has not worked and will not work. We will continue to support Ukraine's efforts to defend itself," he said.

Russia, however, stuck to its position that there was no difference between what it plans to do in Belarus, and NATO's deployment of American nuclear weapons in Europe, AFP adds.

Western allies have called the analogy "misleading."

China and Brazil warned of the dangers of nuclear proliferation.

Govt planning

FROM PAGE 12

As part of the ongoing simultaneous movement, BNP's Dhaka south and north city units jointly staged the sit-in from 2:00pm to 4:00pm in front of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in the capital.

The BNP, its associate bodies and like-minded parties observed a two-hour sit-in programme in all divisional cities and district towns yesterday to press home the 10 point demand they unveiled in December — the most important one being elections under a non-party caretaker government.

The programme was also meant for registering the party's protest against the rise in the prices of power, gas and essential items and the AL government's all-pervading corruption.

Apart from BNP, Jatiyatobadi Samamona Jote, Gonoforum and People's Party, Peshajibi Ganatantrik Jote, 12-party alliance, Labour Party, Bam Ganatantrik Oikya and LDP also observed the programme separately in different areas of the capital.

Describing the current government as fascist, Fakhru said it does not believe in democracy nor does it give any importance to people's opinions, as its only goal is to stay in power by force instead of votes if necessary.

He deplored that the administration, police, and other law enforcement agencies are helping the ruling party to cling to power illegally as it has no relations with the people.

The BNP leader warned that the people of the country have never accepted injustice indefinitely. "They have always fought against injustice and they truly fought for democracy."

Trump due in court
on Tuesday

Will plead not guilty, lawyer says

REUTERS, New York

Donald Trump is due to be fingerprinted and photographed in a New York courthouse on Tuesday as he becomes the first former US president to face criminal charges in a case involving a 2016 hush money payment to Stormy Daniels.

Trump plans to fly to New York on Monday from his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida and spend the night at

Trump Tower before appearing in court early on Tuesday, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Trump plans to return to Florida afterward, the source said.

Susan Necheles, a Trump attorney, told Reuters he will plead not guilty. Necheles said she did not expect the charges to be unsealed until Tuesday.

"I am not afraid of what's to come," Trump said in a fundraising email on Friday.

27 hurt in clashes

FROM PAGE 12

For about 20 minutes, the two groups engaged in chases and counter-chases, as well as brickbat throwing, said the district's Additional Superintendent of Police ATM Mainul Islam.

Later, police arrived on the scene and brought the situation under control.

"We heard two rounds of gunfire during the clash. We are yet to confirm if anyone was injured. We will take legal action following an investigation into the incident," he said.

Shariful Islam Ramzan, secretary of Natore district unit AL, said, "The BNP men were the first to throw bricks and stones at Awami League leaders and activists. When Awami League men protested, local BNP leader Shahiul Islam Bachchu fired two shots from his revolver, but fortunately, no one was injured."

Contacted, Shahiul Islam Bachchu, convener of the district unit BNP, said, "Three BNP activists were shot, and fifty others were injured after Awami League men launched an attack on the BNP's peaceful program."

Meanwhile, in Khulna, at least 12 party men were injured when police and BNP leaders and activists clashed.

This happened when police tried to stop BNP activists from going to the sit-in and rally at KD Gosh Road.

Witnesses said that when BNP leaders and activists from around the district gathered at the party office area around 3:00pm, police tried to drive them away, resulting in a clash.

Shafiqul Alam Mana, convener of the city unit BNP, said police charged batons to disperse BNP leaders and activists, injuring 12 party men.

Tajul Islam, deputy commissioner (south) of Khulna Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that police fired 35 rounds from a shotgun and 20 rounds of tear shells to control the

situation.

"Police were forced to take action as some BNP men suddenly started throwing bricks at our personnel," he added.

Eight people were arrested at the scene of the incident.

In Pirojpur town, at least five Chhatra Dal activists were injured when they were going to join BNP's sit-in programme in an attack allegedly carried out by Bangladesh Chhatra League men.

Ahmed Sohel Manjur Sumon, convener of Bhandaria upazila unit BNP, said, "Chhatra League men also vandalised his private car at Pirojpur Government High School field around 3:45pm."

Contacted, Aniruzzaman Anik, president of district unit BCL, said, "When BNP members attacked them on their way back to town from a program, Chhatra League members protested."

Superintendent of Police Md Saidur Rahman said a car was vandalised when a clash took place between two groups. "Later, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control," he said.

Meanwhile, in Jamalpur, 20 BNP and Jamaat-Shibir men, arrested Friday afternoon, were sued yesterday on charges of attempting to sabotage government properties.

Jamalpur Police Station Sub-Inspector Debashish filed the case under the Special Powers Act, said Abdul Awal, investigating officer of the case.

The arrestees included Liaquat Ali, president of Jamalpur town unit BNP, Mizanur Rahman, former secretary of district unit Jubo Dal, and Kamrul Islam Kabul, joint general secretary of district unit Chhatra Dal.

(Our correspondents from Natore, Khulna, Pirojpur, and Jamalpur contributed to this report.)

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Bloomberg's praise of PM's timely steps

Economic uncertainty will keep us on our toes

We are heartened by the Bloomberg news agency's recognition of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's "timely reform steps" which have acted as a buffer against the negative impacts of an international economic crisis. After tackling its crippling effects on our economy during the pandemic, Bangladesh had to face continuous challenges created by the prolonged war in Ukraine. These included a protracted energy crisis leading to the rise in import costs and consequently the costs of all commodities, including daily essentials. The unprecedented depreciation of the taka and the dramatic drop in forex reserves have been a source of great concern for industries dependent on the international market.

As Bloomberg's article has mentioned, it was a prudent move of the PM to get a \$4.7 billion IMF loan in January this year, which helped to bring about some economic stability against the backdrop of a volatile international market. Though it was not the most popular decision, the government went ahead with it and raised energy prices which prompted the IMF to give Bangladesh the loan first, among the three countries that had asked for it. This may well have helped to avert a deeper economic crisis in the country.

The IMF loan, no doubt, has prompted other international donors to step in; recall the \$2 billion budget support from a co-funding initiative led by the Asian Development Bank. These funds will help ease the continued pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

Of course, all these funds have been given with the condition of initiating certain reforms. Further funds can be ensured if the government can bring about reforms in the financial sector such as the central bank's adopting an independent monetary policy, reducing non-performing loans, boosting climate change funding, and so on.

While the PM and her government's efforts to bring about stability in such an economically turbulent time in the world is laudable, we must remind ourselves that the uncertainty that we are facing is far from over. The PM has reiterated the need to maintain food security during these difficult times, and we think it is wise to prioritise this when food inflation is a global phenomenon and has reached our shores quite punishingly. With no signs of the Russia-Ukraine war abating, the ripple effects of this catastrophe will continue to disrupt economies and keep us on our toes. As the world threatens to go into recession, our industries that depend on the international market will be more vulnerable. This will then affect employment, consumption and the cost of living. Thus, the focus should be kept on the most marginalised groups, who are already heavily affected. Reforms required in the financial sector must also be carried out on an urgent basis.

Bangladesh, despite being such a small country in terms of land area with a population of over 160 million, has shown remarkable economic resilience in the face of the pandemic and the war. We hope that the government will continue to take timely steps and ensure proper follow-ups so that this resilience is maintained and nurtured.

Heed UN's call for DSA moratorium

A law used only to punish critics has no place in democracy

We stand by the call for an immediate moratorium on the use of the Digital Security Act (DSA) by the human rights chief of the United Nations. In a statement released after the editor of *Prothom Alo* and one of its reporters were sued for a report critical of high food prices, he called upon the authorities to suspend any further application of the law. He also urged them to comprehensively reform its overly broad and ill-defined provisions which have been frequently abused to intimidate journalists and muzzle critical voices online.

The UN is the latest to join the ever-growing chorus of rights institutions from home and abroad who are concerned about the government's refusal to honour its own commitment to ensure responsible use of the law. Meanwhile, the US State Department, which earlier released a report highlighting the impediments to freedom of expression and the internet in Bangladesh, has also reiterated its concern, saying that "no members of the press should be threatened, harassed, physically attacked, or arrested for simply doing their job." Unfortunately, even as these concerns are being raised, there is little indication they are reaching the ears of the authorities.

As per latest media reports, two cases have been filed against a correspondent of *Desh TV* in Khulna following a report on a beauty parlour. The cases were lodged with the Khulna Cyber Tribunal on March 21 and 28, respectively. Such assault on journalists using the DSA has been persistent throughout its first four years of existence, as a review by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) has shown earlier this year. An estimate by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) now reminds us that the threat has not been limited to just a law. It says that over the last three months alone, at least 56 journalists from different media outlets have been attacked in various ways. This illustrates how widespread the repression of journalists has been, with the DSA emerging as the crown jewel of all instruments of repression.

The question is, how long will the government continue to resist calls for reforming or repealing this law? Freedom of expression, including for members of the press, is especially important in an election year. Citizens need reliable information to assess the performance of their government. They need the insights of journalists and activists to get a sense of what is happening around so that they can hold their representatives accountable. But if restrictions are placed on these vital sources of information and analysis, including through closing down critical media outlets, it is the citizens who are deprived the most, which is the opposite of how democracy works.

We, therefore, urge the government to urgently heed calls for an immediate moratorium on the DSA. With the national election approaching fast, this is also a chance for the government to reaffirm its commitment to democracy.

State should investigate all deaths in custody



THE OVERTON WINDOW

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

ERESH OMAR JAMAL

On March 22, Sultana Jasmine, 38, a single mother, was picked up by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at around 10am while she was on her way to the Chandipur Union Land Office, where she worked as an office assistant. Some 48 hours later, on March 24, she was declared dead at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

In her death certificate, the cause of death has been stated as "irreversible cardio-respiratory failure due to intracerebral haemorrhage". Reportedly, she had suffered a head injury along with brain haemorrhages. But what caused it remains a mystery.

Sultana was initially admitted to the Naogaon hospital at 1:15pm on March 22, which means she was taken there within a few short hours of her detention. According to Rab, soon after her arrest, Sultana had fallen sick and was rushed there. As for her head injury, Rab said she had fallen down.

Sultana's relatives, however, claimed that she was a perfectly healthy individual and alleged that Rab must have tortured her in custody. The reasons why people might be inclined to share their suspicions over the claims made by Rab are plenty. Number one among them is the frequency with which individuals in custody of our law enforcement agencies suddenly fall ill or succumb to "fatal" accidents or injuries. Even if we are to believe these claims of freak "accidents", mustn't we ask why our law enforcement agencies handle detainees so poorly? And shouldn't the law enforcers be held responsible for being so careless?

What is also interesting is that Rab recorded a case against her under the Digital Security Act (DSA) – for "syphoning off" money from job seekers using a Facebook account – more than 31 hours after she had been picked up and when she was unresponsive in a hospital bed. Without first recording the case, what justification did Rab have for detaining her? According to rights bodies, after Sultana was detained in a case, she was illegally interrogated and police were not informed. These are the worst examples of violation of the constitution, fundamentals of human rights, Supreme Court directives, existing laws, and misuse of power, the Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) said in a statement.



Sultana Jasmine.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Exactly a week before Sultana's death, on March 17, a 65-year-old man was shot dead and another was shot in the legs during a raid by Rab in a village of Sonargaon upazila of Narayanganj. According to a Rab commanding officer, law enforcers opened fire "in self-defence" after miscreants opened fire on them and tried to snatch a murder suspect from them. Multiple witnesses, however, have said that the deceased and others present at the scene were unarmed. They also said the law enforcers were wearing plainclothes – in violation of a High Court ruling – and opened fire when villagers, who were unaware of the presence of Rab and thought some crime was taking place, came out to figure out what was going on.

Once again, Rab's version of the story is completely contradictory to what numerous eye witnesses have claimed. And so far, we have heard nothing about there being an independent investigation to find out why an innocent old man, who had nothing to do with the case that brought Rab to that location, had to die.

Back in 2019, the United Nations

Committee against Torture (CAT), upon receiving the government's overdue and lacklustre initial State Report under Article 19 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT), said that it was "concerned at information it received alleging the widespread and routine commission

In the absence of independent investigations, the domestic and international perceptions that our law enforcing agencies are involved in widespread human rights violations will continue to persist, further tarnishing the image of the country. So why are our government high-ups, who claim to be so concerned about preserving Bangladesh's image on the world stage,

of torture and ill-treatment... by law enforcement officials for the purpose of obtaining confessions" in Bangladesh. These allegations included 1,335 people being extrajudicially killed by law enforcing agencies through crossfire between January 2014 and May 2019 and the alleged deaths of 348 prisoners in jail custody during that time, among other human rights violations recorded by local and international rights organisations, UN agencies and others.

Similarly, in its 2015 annual report, the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh reported that 70 percent of the complaints it received "alleged a human rights violation by law enforcement agencies and about half of all complaints concerned torture allegations." In spite of that, the CAT was provided information by the Bangladeshi delegation about the filing of only 17 cases under the Anti-Torture Act against members of the law enforcing agencies, which shows the lack of willingness on part of the government to investigate – let alone hold to account – law enforcers alleged to have been involved in some of the worst human rights violations.

least concerned about it? Is it so that they can use the same law enforcing agencies and the same tactics to silence any dissent against the government? Is it so that they can use the law enforcing agencies to illegally suppress opposition political parties, as alleged by multiple international rights organisations?

The government would be well-advised to keep in mind that our security forces are under increased scrutiny following the designation of human rights sanctions by the US government and in the lead-up to general elections slated for early 2024. Therefore, by continuing to provide such leeway to alleged human rights violators from within our security forces, it risks further criticism and actions against our country from the international community.

More importantly, a sense of injustice being perpetrated against them by state actors is increasingly building up among the common people. And it might only be a matter of time before they consider this injustice to be too much to bear, which certainly raises risks of social disharmony and dissatisfaction among the population.

The Global Game of ChessGo



Andrew Sheng is a distinguished fellow of Asia Global Institute, University of Hong Kong, and chief adviser to the China Banking Regulatory Commission.

ANDREW SHENG

Games are imitations of real life. They teach players how to think how the other would act, with better players learning to appreciate how the other player reads them. As all games are defined by rules, two-player games are actually far simpler than multi-player games. That is exactly where the global game has shifted, from a unipolar single dominant player who determines the rules-based order, to one in which the others want voice and power to change the rules.

So, we are back to how *Numero Uno* reads the game, and how the others read him.

The kiddie's game of checkers teaches players to think linearly, but smart players quickly learn that if you offer the other side a quick win and he takes it, you crush him by anticipating several moves ahead of him. The game of chess is much more complicated, with pieces that have different power, and can be promoted (pawn to become queen). The moves are much more complicated with psychology and stamina key to who wins.

The game of Go, popular in the East, has only black or white pieces, but is far more complex, because you have to think spatially, manoeuvring your pieces to outwit your opponent. Today, computers can be taught and self-taught to outplay the best human

players, which is why the Great Powers are in a Chip War, investing in computer semiconductors and processing power to simulate war games with each other, plus upgrading the accuracy and firepower of smart weapons.

But the smartest of weapons can be wielded by dumb users, leading to accidental conflicts. We are in that dangerous phase right now.

The Ukraine war is a litmus test of Principle over Practicality, with Nato (basically US calling the shots), having a mindset that the principle of sovereignty over-rides everything else. The 20th anniversary of the illegal invasion of Iraq reminded the Rest of the World that Nato does not necessarily follow its own principles consistently.

The Ukraine war is a massive tragedy, because from a practical point of view, Ukraine will pay for that principle to the last Ukrainian, if not being completely flattened by unceasing conflict. The underlying US objective of the Ukraine war is to weaken Russia, as revealed by US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin.

History teaches us that all wars, just or unjust, end up with negotiations, so war is a conflict to strengthen your bargaining position for best or least-worst outcome. Principles end up with pragmatism. In the nuclear game, either you negotiate or everyone gets annihilated.

So, what is the game of ChessGo

all about? Basically, on the global chessboard, can the West (Nato and allies) contain the rise of its perceived "existential rivals", namely, Russia and China? In essence, the Rest (non-West or East) will decide who has the upper hand.

ChessGo therefore is the game of thrones where all powers position themselves over the long haul so that they will be able to defend themselves or at least thwart their rivals. Chess is the linear projection of power from the player point of view, Go is how to surround your opponent by moving anywhere in the chessboard.

From a perspective of people, wealth and land/sea resources, it is too early to tell who will win. Population-wise, the West has 1.2 billion out of 8 billion, whereas China and Russia have 1.5 billion and the Rest 5.2 billion. The West is rich in terms of GDP, but that also depends on whether you measure by market exchange rate or Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). However, if you combine land area plus Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the West has 46.4 million sq kilometres, compared with 35.9 million for China and Russia. The Brics countries have combined 53.5 million sq.km.

The Americans won the Cold War by containing the Soviet Union through pulling China out of the Soviet camp, so that it became two versus one. Today, by identifying China and Russia as "existential threat", Nato achieved what historical military-strategists have always feared – fighting against two rivals, but one contiguous Eurasian land-mass which no single navy can surround.

The Ukraine war revealed that Russia is not a "gas station" with the GDP of Texas. She has a nuclear power with the largest land area in the world, with

everything she needs in terms of food, energy and mineral resources. China has economic and people clout, but lacks natural resources to power her economy. By pushing Russia and China together, Nato has created a formidable self-sufficient set of rivals. Kissinger was wise to balance power to two-to-one. Biden's blinking foreign policy is to take on both Russia and China with an internally divided nation, united only in being anti-China.

This global rivalry is already becoming a Hundred Year Marathon, not a quick win for anyone. Europe and the Rest will side with the winner. Europe is now clearly deeply weakened by the Ukraine war, having its cheap food, energy and mineral sources cut off by alienation of Russia. European costs will go up, and she fears migration from Africa and Asia when climate change drives the young population to move West and North to Europe. If the Ukraine war continues to drag on, Europe will not recover economically. The outcome may be a global recession reminiscent of the 1930s.

America remains the fortress defended by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. But how long can she maintain the largest military in the world if the global economy moves into recession?

War cannot be the solution to global peace and prosperity. War and more defence spending will not get us out of climate warming, inflation, debt distress, financial crises and job-disruption from technology.

There is no endgame in war, only wealth and health destruction. Better sense will prevail when everyone loses sufficiently from the fever of war and get back to practical living with each other. ChessGo is not going to end anytime soon.

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Before Trashing the Trash Culture...



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

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SHAMSAD MORTUZA

One noted thespian has come under public scrutiny for an off-stage speech. Theatre activist and the founder of Aranyak, Mamunur Rashid, lashed out against what he finds a "famine of aesthetic taste" that is plaguing our cultural scene. He was referring to the phenomenal rise of Hero Alom as a social media hero.

The phrase alludes to Zainul Abedin, who used the phrase in the 1950s to highlight the absence of aesthetic sensibility against which he had to paint his famous sketches on the great famines during British rule. As the founder of the Faculty of Fine Arts (established as the Institute of Arts and Crafts in 1948), Zainul's contribution to Bangladeshi modern art is immense. His generation paved the way for a "culture" with a home-grown signature. It is marked by deference from the western import of imperial culture that was confined to the colonial rulers and their local associates. The exclusivity and deference allowed Zainul to become a high priest of our culture, moving away from the cultural habits and preferences of the aristocrats. The appropriation of local figures catapults Zainul into an emerging art scene that was redefining our artistic contour. If Zainul's statement on "famine of tastes" is the birth cry of high culture, Mamun's observation is the lament over the death of such a culture.

Mamun is pained to see the growth of trash culture that has become the consequence of

what was known as low culture. High culture, by design, is exclusive and accessible to an academically literate or culturally sensible audience. Low culture, in contrast, includes various types of popular culture that are characterised by their mass appeal. There are times when the boundary between the high and the low can be blurred. A commercial film with a huge public appeal can now be nominated for a Cannes award to get the high-brow seal.

The rejection of Hero Alom as a cultural entity hints at deep-seated social anxiety. It is not the first time he has been thrown out of the mainstream culture loop administered by some cultural police. In one instance, he was nabbed and humiliated by a police officer for wearing a police uniform in one of his B-movies. Alom was sanctioned for trying to sing Tagore's songs out of tune. Somehow, this self-starter uses this bad publicity to promote himself as a subaltern. He poses himself as someone who is taking arms against "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." He is not a prince who is born with a silver spoon. He does not have the look or social standing. Yet he has the desire for social mobility. In a democratic culture, such desire is usually encouraged. He exercised his right to be a spokesperson for the mass by becoming a public representative. He managed to give the impression that he had been wronged at so many different levels, prompting public

sympathy and attention.

When Mamun critiqued Hero Alom as a symptom of the trash culture that is eroding our cultural norms and practices, the reaction is forked. At one extreme, there are the sympathisers of the high priests who lament the glory days of high culture. At the other extreme, we have the defenders of Hero Alom who are critical of Mamun and co. for not allowing the downtrodden to move up

six decades. He was shot to fame for his stage performances in Shakespearean dramas and modern theatre. The high-brow actor is now a popular cult figure for his performance as Gandalf the magician in *The Lord of the Rings* or as Magneto in *X-Men* films. The fulcrum of the mass has shifted.

Those who have been traditionally performing public piety must reassess their roles amid the changing culture. Hero

credit for his ambition. Instead of curating his artistic desire or channelling his energy into something productive, the cultural and political police have constantly side-lined him only to confirm his victimhood.

When I started attending Jahangirnagar University as a freshman student of English literature, we had many cultural activists coming from small provincial towns. They were the ones who reigned the amphitheatre, and dominated the cultural and political organisations. Those of us who travelled from Dhaka could sense the condescending attitudes they would have toward us. Likewise, we would hold them as a bit rustic to our taste. Then there were the students from the locality. Even among my friends, despite our hours of hangouts, I could sense the invisible barriers of social upbringing, cultural orientation, and economic condition. We outgrew the silent resentment by spending more time together, and by understanding one another.

The problem that we are now facing is that of subtle racism. The high brows like Mamun consider the Hero Aloms as "upstart crows beautified with our feathers," a remark that Elizabethan playwright Greene made about the rural Shakespeare who was trying to join their league. The tendency to trash the trash culture while highlighting the sweetness and light of high culture is an age-old phenomenon. It was Matthew Arnold who thought of culture as the best thoughts created by bee-like artists who gather sweet honey and waxed candlelight. Now we know the culture as a way of life, a set of practices that endeavour to make meaning for a group. The social media rebels are doing the same. They are no less different than the artists who searched for artistic meanings in life.

Instead of cancelling each other, it is time that we try to learn from each other. We are, after all, on the threshold of a huge cultural leap.



VISUAL: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

the socio-cultural ladder. With the rise of internet users, the second group is winning the verbal battle as they are making more noise. A TikTok artist or a YouTube influencer has more followers than the number of people who would go to Bailey Road or Shilpakala Academy to watch a play.

Take the instance of the British actor Sir Ian Murray McKellen. His career spanned over

Alom knows that there is a glass ceiling that stops someone from a humble origin to move up. His rustic accent, skinny figure, and apparently talentless performance work against him. To compensate for his shortcomings, he appeals to those in his condition: a multitude that wants to change their lot. Alom plays the victim to pose as a martyr in the culture wars. I guess, he deserves

How the poor dodge the pangs of hunger



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

Dr Abdullah Shibli
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International Sustainable Development Institute (ISDI).

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

One of the takeaways from the finance minister's March 19 pre-budget session with economists was the unanimous appeal to the government to address the budget's impact on the common people. It will not be an exaggeration to contend that the budget of the ordinary person has taken a big hit in the post-Covid era. Families in the lower-income categories have seen their real income decline due to geopolitical tensions, food insecurity, global inflation and supply chain gnarls. "Shrinkflation" has forced millions to go without

line, a slogan, repeatedly brandished in the past, particularly during an election year, has now lost its lustre.

One needs to be wary of confusing the two threats that the poor face: "death by starvation" and the "pangs of hunger". They are different. First, government statistics may not reveal any death by starvation, but the pains of hunger and malnutrition are omnipresent. Secondly, the effects of starvation and hunger are clinically quite different, and attempts to equate them are akin to comparing apples and oranges. Let's consider starvation first.

have been forced, at times during the year, to also reduce the quantity of food they would normally eat, while those experiencing severe levels would have gone for entire days without eating, due to lack of money or other resources to obtain food. It's not a big surprise to me that many of our poor and low-income people are cutting back on their budget for food and all the items they purchase.

To understand this phenomenon, known as shrinkflation, let's us consider the budget of an urban family with a household income of Tk 22,000 per month. He is the family's sole bread earner, paying Tk 6,000 for housing and spending the rest on food, transportation, school supplies, fuel, entertainment and clothing. For this family of four, the food budget eats up more than half of the income, and its share could have increased if he had some savings. Over the last year, prices of rice, wheat, pulses, edible oils, sugar, salt, protein diets, milk, and baby food have increased by 20-40 percent. But now they have cut back on food since all other bills have gone up. The urban poor, including the rickshaw pullers, service employees, and small business owners, are all confronted with this lose-lose situation.

The human toll, as pinpointed by World Economic Forum's Saadia Zahidi, a Forum Managing Director, may be severe: "Real wages are falling and can't keep pace with surging prices. In low and medium-income countries, food and energy security could easily lead to social unrest."

The impact on rural and urban poor may show some odd patterns. In recent times, in general, urban people have been facing a higher rate of food inflation relative to the rural population, while the picture is the opposite in the case of non-food inflation.

To combat the current situation, our social welfare programmes must reach out to the target groups, including eligible senior citizens. Policymakers should use social welfare policies to protect the poorest from rising prices. Allowances under social safety net programmes for the poor should be increased.

These policies could include targeted safety nets such as cash transfers, food, and in-kind transfers, school feeding programmes, and public works programmes. Research also shows that calculating inflation indexes for different income groups provides better information on inflation actually experienced by the poor and should inform the design of social safety nets.

Finally, ask the leaders, instead of parroting, "nobody dies of hunger", why couldn't we raise the bar and say, "there is not a single child who suffers from malnutrition. There is not a single person who dies from a

lack of medical care and there's not a single elderly who goes hungry?"

The other day, I asked a rickshaw puller, "Can you tell me if there are any days when you go without a meal?" he demurred. "I have a large family, and

some of them have to make sacrifices," he added.

When I asked him if his earnings had increased with the rising economic prosperity level, he said, "No, sir. I hope you understand how

we, the poor make a living, but most importantly, how we make our ends meet." In other words, they said, we're trying to make do in this day of inflation with less or, as some people said, "I have *barkat* in my family".

IBA Institute of Business Administration



BBA ADMISSION TEST

31ST BATCH (SESSION 2022-2023)

BBA Admission Test (Session 2022-23) of the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka will be held on **Friday, 05 May 2023 from 03:30 pm to 05:30 pm.**

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

1. For Applicants Who Have Passed SSC and HSC or Equivalent Exams:

Only students who have passed their SSC or equivalent exam during 2017-2020 and HSC or equivalent exam held in 2022 are eligible to apply for 2022-2023 academic session. They must have a minimum **8.0** as total of SSC & HSC GPA (including the 4th subject). Candidates must secure at least **3.5** GPA in both the exams to be eligible to apply.

2. For Applicants Who Have Passed IGCSE/O-Level and IAL/GCEA-Level or Equivalent Exams:

Students who have passed IGCSE/O-level exam in at least 5 subjects (including mathematics) during 2017-2020 and IAL/GCEA-Level exam in at least 2 subjects (final result of at least one subject must have been published in 2022) are eligible to apply. Out of the 7 subjects in IGCSE/O-Level and IAL/GCEA-Level, candidates should get minimum **2 A grades, 3 B grades and 2 C grades.**

Candidates from O-level, A-level or from all other boards outside the country have to obtain "Equivalence Certificate" from DU at the beginning of their application process. To get equivalence certificate, please visit the DU admission website: <https://admission.eis.du.ac.bd>. Those who have already received their equivalence certificate in the process of applying in different units of DU, do not need to apply for the equivalence certificate again. If an applicant faces any difficulty to obtain "Equivalence Certificate" from DU, s/he is requested to contact "IBA Helpdesk" immediately.

3. No candidate is eligible to sit for this year's admission test, if s/he had appeared in any admission test of the University of Dhaka, including IBA in 2022 or before.

SELECTION PROCEDURE

All **Bangladeshi** applicants must take the Admission Test. The test has two components: Written and Communication. The components of the Written Test evaluate applicant's aptitude in: Language, Mathematics, and Analytical ability. In order to pass the Written Test, an applicant must obtain a minimum qualifying score in all sections. Applicants will be selected for the Communication Test, on the basis of their performance in the Written Test.

Foreign nationals with a score of at least 1265 out of 1600 in SAT Reasoning Test (with at least 600 in Math and 575 in reading and writing) may be exempted from the Written Test, but must appear in the Communication Test.

HOW TO APPLY

The application is to be made online (at <http://admission.eis.du.ac.bd>) starting from **Friday, 31 March 2023 (from 4:00 PM) to Tuesday, 18 April 2023 (till 3:00 PM)**. Application fees of Tk. 1250/- (including online processing fees & bank service charge) is to be paid latest by **Tuesday, 18 April 2023 (till 3:00 PM)**.

Admit card can be downloaded from **Thursday, 27 April 2023 to Thursday, 04 May 2023 (till 3:00 PM)**. For detailed application procedure, visit the IBA website at <https://www.iba-du.edu> or the DU admission website: <http://admission.eis.du.ac.bd>

For further information, contact the IBA Helpdesk at 01772563303 or 01871130956 between 10:00 am - 3:00 pm any day or email at bba-admission@iba-du.edu.

Director
Institute of Business Administration
University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000

To combat the current situation, our social welfare programmes must reach out to the target groups, including eligible senior citizens. Policymakers should use social welfare policies to protect the poorest from rising prices. Allowances under social safety net programmes for the poor should be increased.

two decent meals and cut back on the consumption of fish, meat and eggs, which provide essential nutrients for their body. In today's comments, I will focus on hunger and malnutrition affecting the working poor.

While the government is declaring a victory over poverty, citing the forthcoming Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), eminent independent social scientists in Bangladesh and economists at the March 19 conclave strongly disagreed. "The way that the price level is increasing, and the impact it had on low and middle-income people, it is counter-intuitive that the number of people below the poverty line would decline," said Professor Mustafizur Rahman of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). Research by South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM) in March only confirmed my view that many more poor people are going hungry now than before.

At a recent gathering in the City of Cambridge in Massachusetts, USA, the visiting foreign minister of Bangladesh was questioned on the country's economic conditions. He did not flinch for a second before he declared, "Nobody in the country dies of hunger". This oft-quoted

Last week, the head of the United Nations World Food Programme warned that up to 345 million people worldwide - or roughly 50 times the number known to have died from Covid so far - could face starvation as food prices soar and shortages increase. This figure represents a doubling in global food insecurity since early 2020. Bangladesh's poor did not escape this global scourge's wrath. The landless casual workers in rural areas and the urban poor face a bleak prospect. Already, roughly 20 million people in the country are facing acute malnutrition.

Various news accounts highlight the coping strategy devised by the low-income and the poor to survive the ire of inflation. Families on a tight budget have turned to kitchen markets known as "Fokinni Bazar" which have sprung up in many slum and poverty-stricken areas. One such market that has gained prominence is located under Bijoy Sarani Tejgaon Flyover and is frequented by rickshaw pullers, day-labourers, shopkeepers, and other people from low-income groups in the area.

People experiencing moderate levels of food insecurity will typically eat low-quality diets and might



Sudden health problems after 50

STAR HEALTH DESK

As people age, they may experience sudden and painful ailments, some of which may indicate more significant health problems. These include:

Heart attack: Heart disease affects 735,000 people annually, and a 50-year-old man has a 50% chance of developing it. Common signs include chest pain, shortness of breath, and pain in the back, shoulders, or neck, accompanied by sweating, dizziness, or nausea. Maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, and regular exercise can lower the risk.

Stroke: A stroke happens when blood flow to the brain is blocked, causing brain cells to die. Act fast if you experience weakness, numbness, confusion, or trouble speaking. Prevent strokes by controlling blood pressure, eating healthy, managing stress, exercising, and quitting smoking.

Aneurysm: Lifestyle changes to reduce heart disease and stroke risk may also lower the chances of developing an aneurysm. An aneurysm occurs when an artery's weak wall bulges outward, potentially causing internal bleeding or stroke. Symptoms include pain, nausea, dizziness, clammy skin, and rapid heartbeat.

Gallstones: Gallstones are hard pieces of bile that can cause intense upper abdominal pain. Obesity, diabetes, Crohn's disease, and lack of exercise increase the risk of developing them.

Acute pancreatitis: Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas causing severe stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, fever and can be life-threatening. Gallstones, heavy

drinking, high calcium levels or high triglycerides can cause it. Seek immediate medical help if you have these symptoms.

Broken bones: Bones may become brittle and break as you age, especially in women who commonly experience osteoporosis. Calcium, vitamin D, and drugs can slow down or prevent further bone loss.

Vertigo: Vertigo can occur when tiny crystals in your inner ear that help with balance get dislodged, especially as you age. A doctor can treat it with head movements to reposition the crystals.

cause pain, bleeding, infections, or blockage of urine. Drinking plenty of water can help prevent them. They're more common in men than women.

Pneumonia: Bacterial pneumonia is more prevalent in people over 50. It is called pneumococcal pneumonia. As you age, your immune system weakens, making older people more susceptible. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests a vaccine for everyone over 65.

Spinal stenosis: It develops slowly but appears abruptly. Arthritis narrows the spinal cord and nerve pathway in your backbone. Pinching or squeezing nerves can cause lower back or neck pain, numbness, or spasms. Drugs, manual therapy, or surgery may help.

Gout: This disease causes sudden pain and swelling in a joint, usually the big toe. Uric acid accumulation causes it. You are at risk if you eat red meat and shellfish, drink alcohol, or take certain high blood pressure medicines. Fructose, a soda sweetener, and fat also increase risk.

Pulmonary embolism: This condition occurs when a blood clot becomes lodged in a lung blood vessel. After 50, your odds of having one increase, so seek medical attention if you have chest pain, shortness of breath, or dizziness. You may also experience a cough with blood, leg aches, and clammy or bluish skin. An early sign of a blood clot is swelling or ache in one of your calf muscles. If you have heart illness, recent surgery, or were in a restricted position like an aeroplane or car for a long time, your risk increases.



Detached retina: If your retina detaches from your eye's outer wall, it will not get enough oxygen and can cause vision loss. Seek medical attention immediately if you experience floaters or flashes of light. This is more prevalent in individuals with severe near-sightedness or a history of eye conditions such as cataract surgery.

Kidney stones: Kidney stones are hard calcium clumps that can

Depressive symptoms as a risk factor for stroke

STAR HEALTH DESK

Depression is a common mental health problem that affects many people worldwide. A recent study looked at the relationship between depressive symptoms and stroke, which is a serious health condition that affects the brain. The study found that people who had symptoms of depression in the 12 months before having a stroke were more likely to have a worse outcome than those without depressive symptoms.

The study, published in the journal *Neurology* involved more than 26,000 participants from 32 different countries. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire about their depressive symptoms. The study found that people who reported having depressive symptoms before a stroke were more likely to have a worse outcome after the stroke. This includes having more difficulty with daily activities and a higher chance of dying within the first month after the stroke.

The study did not find a clear reason why depressive symptoms might increase the risk of stroke. It is possible that depression may cause changes in the body that make people more susceptible to stroke. Alternatively, people who are depressed may be less likely to take their medications or follow their doctors' recommendations, which could increase their risk of stroke.

The study's findings suggest that people who have depressive symptoms may be at increased risk for stroke and should take steps to manage their mental health. It is not clear whether treating depression will reduce the risk of stroke, but it is always important to seek help if you are feeling down or depressed.

HAVE A NICE DAY The sound of SILENCE

DR RUBAUL MURSHED



"If you do not understand my silence; you will not understand my voice" – to make these words easier to understand, 'Rumi', a great thinker and most popular poet of North

America said, "Silence is the language of the creator, all else is poor translation." The hidden powers of silence have a beauty that benefits those who practice it. This non-verbal communication which carries symbolic significance could be the best answer to anger or the right answer to an unwise person.

In the 21st century, studies are saying that silence and periods of calm stimulate brain cells and relieve tension, which can result in a higher sense of well-being, as people can then feel more relaxed and when this occurs, sleep quality also improves which is a vital issue in today's life.

Neuroscientists have found in animal studies that with silence each day, new cells develop in the hippocampus – a brain region that is linked to our memory, emotions, and ability to learn. A relatively older but reliable study also found that just 2 minutes of silence can be more calming than listening to relaxing music. This was attributed to changes in blood pressure and blood circulation to the brain.

These days, most of us are not good listeners; not interested to hear others' opinions. Sometimes, silence could be a golden strategy not only for us but for others too.

According to researcher Brent Metcalf (Tennessee), 'when we allow ourselves to be in silence, we allow our brains to hit the reset button and be refreshed by just slowing down.' This was judged to significantly improve mood states and reduce everyday stress and anxiety from all the chaos in our lives.

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Social health, brain reserve, and cognition

In a study conducted in Sweden, researchers analysed the impact of social health and brain reserve on the cognitive abilities of 368 individuals aged 60 years or above, who did not have dementia at the beginning of the study.

The participants' social health was categorised as poor or moderate-good based on questionnaire and interview responses, which included information on networking, engagement, and support. The researchers used total brain tissue volume (TBTv) as a measure of brain reserve, which is the sum of grey and white matter volume. Grey matter and white matter are two types of brain tissue.

The findings showed that individuals with moderate-good social health had better cognitive performance at baseline and slower cognitive decline than those with poor social health. Similarly, individuals with moderate-large TBTv had better cognitive performance at baseline and slower cognitive decline than those with small TBTv. However, moderate-good social health did not affect cognitive decline in individuals with moderate-large TBTv.

These results suggest that promoting social networking, engagement, and support, along with other healthy lifestyle behaviours, could promote brain health. Future studies that include biomarkers and a more diverse study population may help clarify the relationship between social health and brain reserve.



TB THERAPY how short can we go?

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Researchers have conducted a phase 2-3 open-label noninferiority trial to determine if a shorter treatment duration is possible for drug-susceptible pulmonary tuberculosis (TB). The trial compared the standard 6-month regimen of rifampin, isoniazid, pyrazinamide, and ethambutol (RIPE) to four different regimens that included rifampin-linezolid, rifampin-clofazimine, rifampin-linezolid, or bedaquiline-linezolid. All regimens were given along with isoniazid, pyrazinamide, and ethambutol, with the experimental regimens being administered in an initial 8-week course that was extended by 4 more weeks in patients with ongoing symptoms and a positive sputum smear. Patients who still had symptoms or relapsed were switched to standard treatment. Two regimens were discontinued on a pragmatic basis, and the remaining regimens were compared to the control group.

The trial enrolled 674 participants and the primary composite endpoint, which included death, ongoing therapy, or active infection at 96 weeks, was used to evaluate the efficacy of the regimens. The control arm had a 3.9% incidence rate of the primary composite endpoint, while the rifampin-linezolid and bedaquiline-linezolid arms had incidence rates of 11.4% and 5.8%, respectively. The bedaquiline-linezolid regimen

met the predefined noninferiority criteria, meaning that it was not significantly worse than the standard RIPE regimen. The mean total duration of therapy was 180 days for the control arm, 106 days for the rifampin-linezolid arm, and 85 days for the bedaquiline-linezolid arm. The incidence of adverse events was similar among the three groups, but acquired resistance to bedaquiline was observed in two patients in the bedaquiline-linezolid arm.

The trial's small sample size and relatively short follow-up period for TB mean that the results must be viewed with caution. However, the results offer hope that shorter TB treatment options will eventually become available, likely in a redesigned treatment strategy. The trial's findings also suggest that the concerns about the toxicity of bedaquiline and linezolid may be unwarranted, but the potential for drug resistance to bedaquiline is a cause for concern. Bedaquiline has a terminal half-life with subtherapeutic levels that can last several months, which may contribute to the development of resistance.

In conclusion, the trial's results suggest that shorter TB treatment options may be possible, but further research is necessary to confirm these findings. The development of drug resistance is a significant concern, and new treatment strategies must address this issue. Overall, the trial's findings are promising and offer hope for improved TB treatment options in the future.



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Imrul leads MSC to season's first win

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club skipper Imrul Kayes led his side to their first win of the Dhaka Premier League as his 101-ball 86 helped set up a 22-run win over defending champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club at the BKSP Ground-4 yesterday.

Imrul hit 10 fours and two sixes while Mahmudullah Riyad scored a 51-ball 48 to help Mohammedan post 290 for seven after being put into bat first.

Ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan misfired with the bat as he was dismissed for a nine-ball five by off-spinner Parvez Rasool, but the all-rounder kept things tight with the ball, going wicketless while giving away just 31 from his full quota.

The 37-year-old, however, couldn't enjoy his team's first win as he left for Dhaka in a helicopter before the conclusion of the match.

Sheikh Jamal got off to a solid start in reply as openers Saif Hassan and Shykat Ali put together an 83-run stand before the former fell to the left-arm wrist-spin of Jake Lintott after scoring a 67-ball 58.

Fazle Mahmud looked good for his 36 before he was run out by Shakib, and Towhid Hridoy and skipper Nurul Hasan failed to deliver as Sheikh Jamal lost half their side for 173 runs.



Rasool, who was his team's best bowler on the day, also provided the goods with the bat as he smashed a 56-ball 63 that featured three fours and two sixes.

But it wasn't enough as Sheikh Jamal were bundled out for 268.

Mohammedan's Abu Jayed Chowdhury and Lintott picked up three wickets each, with the latter taking home the player of the match award.

In the other match between Gazi Group Cricketers and Legends of Rugganj at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Narayanganj, Chirag Jani's all-round exploits helped Legends to their sixth win on the trot.

Gazi batter Ravi Teja scored a 111-ball 103 but Al Amin Hossain's fifer and Chirag's two scalps helped Legends bundle Gazi out for 277 before fifties from Sabbir Rahman (66), Chirag (68), and Irfan Shukkur ensured a successful chase for Legends.

At the BKSP Ground-3, a dominant display from Prime Bank Cricket Club saw them beat Rugganj Tigers Cricket Club by 124 runs.

Batting first, Yasir Ali's 96 and Nasir Hossain's 53 helped Prime Bank post 332 for eight.

Mominul Haque's 76 was the only highlight of Rugganj's chase as their innings came to a halt at 208 for nine, with Mukidul Islam failing to come out to bat due to an injury.



Shakib Al Hasan featured for Mohammedan Sporting Club for the first time in 12 years in the 50-over format yesterday as the domestic powerhouse registered their first win of the ongoing Dhaka Premier League by beating Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club by 22 runs at BKSP-4. Shakib, who misfired with the bat but conceded just 31 runs in his 10 overs, including a maiden, left for the capital for a commercial engagement by a helicopter before the match concluded.

PHOTO: STAR

BCB sends clear message

SPORTS REPORTER

There were murmurs around the country's cricket fraternity that Bangladesh's Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan would skip the upcoming one-off Test against Ireland, starting in Mirpur from Tuesday, to make himself available from the beginning of the Indian Premier League, where he is set to represent Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR).

But all that speculation was put to rest after the selectors announced the squad for the Test yesterday, including Shakib, thereby backing up the words from Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon, who had maintained the stance that the all-rounder would not be allowed to skip the lone Test against Ireland. Liton Das, who was also drafted by KKR for the ongoing IPL, was also named in the squad.

The clear message from the board seems to be that national commitments come ahead of anything else and is a welcome reversal of instances in the past when the BCB chose to be lenient and allowed Shakib to skip national commitments to take part in the IPL.

In 2021, Shakib opted to sit out of a tour of Sri Lanka to play in the IPL after being granted permission by the BCB.

"He [Shakib] sent us a letter seeking permission to sit out the Sri Lanka tour because he wanted to play in the IPL. We gave him permission. If someone doesn't want to play, it doesn't make sense to force them," BCB's then cricket operations committee chairman Akram Khan told the media.

But the BCB's stance seems to change over the past couple of years, especially after Chandika Hathurusingha was reappointed head coach since the Sri



Lankan's main priority was to create a healthy dressing room atmosphere.

Many thought that the BCB would allow Shakib to join KKR right from the start of the tournament since the Tigers will be playing against a relatively weak opponent at home, but both Hathurusingha and the BCB stuck to their guns.

"There is no doubt that it will definitely help their skills if they play in the IPL since it's a high-class tournament. But their first priority is to play for the country. I think Mustafizur Rahman will also play in the [IPL], so a total of three players," Hathurusingha had told the media ahead of the T20I series against Ireland.

Another reason for not allowing Shakib to skip the national commitment could be the fact that the Tigers will be playing their first Test this year. Regardless of opposition, Bangladesh's performances in the longest format of the game have

remained a big area of concern.

However, Shakib clarified what his deal with the BCB was, saying yesterday: "When the BCCI wanted to know which time I would be available for, the BCB informed that we would not be get an NOC during any international commitments. And that is how we are getting the NOC. Mustafizur wouldn't get it either but, fortunately or unfortunately, he isn't in the Test side."

Despite a historic Test win against New Zealand at Mount Maunganui to begin 2022, Bangladesh were unable to win any of their next nine Tests that year.

The Tigers have recently adopted a fearless approach and the intention behind forming a full-strength squad for the Test against Ireland is to take that positive approach forward. As the captain of the Test side, Shakib's presence definitely matters when it comes to showing others the way.

Shadman's 'second debut'

SPORTS REPORTER

Having returned to the Bangladesh squad for the one-off Test against Ireland after getting sidelined for almost a year, opener Shadman Islam is geared up for a fresh start.

"It really felt great ... I can compare my feeling with the debut Test match. I'm excited as I returned to the Test side again after a long break. Now I want to make a new start," said Shadman, who was included in the 14-member squad announced yesterday.



Opener Tamim Iqbal made his return to the Test side as expected but the injury of Zakir Hasan – who made a debut hundred against India in the last home series in December last year – paved the way for 27-year-old Shadman, who missed the Tigers' last three series – against Sri Lanka, West Indies and India – after playing his last Test in South Africa in March-April last year.

"I knew the time would come for me. I worked really hard to get back my rhythm in the domestic competitions and now I'm ready to take the new challenge," said Shadman, who so far played 13 Tests with an average of 23.29 since making debut against the West Indies in 2018.

The other notable inclusion in the team is pacer Shoriful Islam while Nurul Hasan Sohan, Yasir Ali and Nasum Ahmed were axed from the squad that played against India.

SQUAD

Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Liton Das (vice-captain), Tamim Iqbal, Shadman Islam, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Tajjul Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Khaled Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain, and Shoriful Islam.

'Impact Player makes it tougher'

REUTERS

Gujarat Titans captain Hardik Pandya said the Indian Premier League's new "Impact Player" rule makes his job difficult because there are several options to choose from.

For the first time in IPL's history, teams this season will be allowed to make a tactical substitution with an Impact Player coming in to bat or bowl as needed.

Led by Pandya, Gujarat began their title defence with a five-wicket victory over four-times champions Chennai Super Kings in the season-opening match in Ahmedabad on Friday.

Chennai set Gujarat a target of 179 after Ruturaj Gaikwad scored a sensational 92, but his heroics went in vain as Shubman Gill's 63, combined with late cameos by Rashid Khan and Rahul Tewatia, helped the defending champions seal a win.

Chennai's Tushar Deshpande became the first Impact Player when he came in for Ambati Rayudu during their defence, while Gujarat's Sai Sudharsan replaced New Zealand's Kane Williamson and batted at no. 3 after he injured his knee while fielding.

"To be very honest, having this impact rule makes my job quite difficult because when you have too many options, you have to pick the right option, and I think because of this reason, someone will bowl less," Pandya said.

"I had to just pick and kind of back (my instinct), where I felt that going hard lengths was the plan for me, and it kind of worked, so yeah, some of the bowlers came late but they did the job for us."

Messi return would be 'ultimate last dance'

AGENCIES, Barcelona

Xavi believes Lionel Messi's potential Barcelona return in the summer would be similar to Michael Jordan's 'last dance' with the Chicago Bulls.

Messi, who starred for Barcelona from 2004 to 2021, has been linked with a move back to his former side as his Paris Saint-Germain contract expires in the summer.

Xavi has stated his "love" for his former Barcelona teammate while suggesting the Argentinian's return could prove to be of the same success as when Jordan returned to the Bulls two years after his first retirement from basketball.

In the 1997-98 season, Jordan led the Bulls to his second three-peat on his return, which entailed winning the NBA championship three years in a row.

Xavi, speaking ahead of Barcelona's La Liga match at Elche, said of Messi: "Don't misunderstand us, but of course I'm in love with Leo Messi. I've seen him grow up. He is exemplary. It's normal that there is excitement. The ultimate 'last dance', like

Michael Jordan. It's normal for people to be excited," he said.

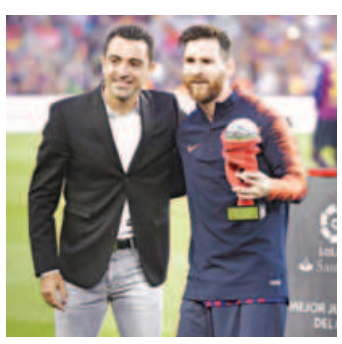
"It's important that the Cule are excited. The best thermometer is Camp Nou. There can be criticism, circumstances, but Camp Nou doesn't fail. People would be excited, happy in the street. It makes me proud."

Xavi added that he hoped to see Messi return, but conceded that it was out of his hands.

"I hope to be able to see Leo back at Barcelona in whatever form it takes. I would be the first to be happy to see him return. It's the club of his life, he's the best player in history, but now is not the time to talk.

"It doesn't depend on me, it depends on Messi, on his happiness, on whether he wants to return and has the will to do so. I have a relationship of friendship and trust and, if he decides to come back, I'll be delighted. I'll be the first to encourage him to come back.

"There is nothing for the moment. We are doing Leo and the club a disservice. It will depend on many factors. We are at the expense of fair-play, but above all of Leo's will," he said.



Kevin De Bruyne scored one and assisted another during Manchester City's 4-1 win over Liverpool in the Premier League at the Etihad Stadium on Saturday. Julian Alvarez, Ilkay Gundogan and Jack Grealish were also on target as the defending champions, unfazed by the absence of Erling Haaland, kept the title race alive.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Govt planning to con people with early polls

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said that the Awami League government might be devising a different strategy to con the people again by going for an early election.



Speaking at the party's sit-in programme, he called on people from all walks of life to be vocal against the misdeeds of the government if they want to get rid of AL's repression and suppression.

"They (government) won't go easily. A meeting was held in the Election Commission the day before yesterday (Thursday) where the Chief Election Commissioner talked about taking all measures for the election, if necessary for early an election. That means they now want to take a different strategy," the BNP leader said.

As per that strategy, he feared that the government will hold an early election and announce themselves the winners "as they did in the past by fooling people".

"We would like to clearly say that people won't allow any of your (government's) strategies to succeed, and they won't fall into any trap. This time the public will put up a resistance and foil all your plans," Fakhrul warned the incumbents.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



The KD Ghosh Road area of Khulna city took on the appearance of a battleground yesterday after a clash broke out between police and BNP men during the party's sit-in protest to press home their 10-point demand. With police charging batons and firing tear shells, and BNP men throwing brickbats, the two groups chased each other around.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

BNP'S SIT-IN 27 hurt in clashes with cops, AL men

STAR REPORT

At least 27 people were injured in three separate clashes yesterday involving members of the BNP, the Awami League, and the police in Natore, Khulna, and Pirojpur.

The incidents occurred during the BNP's nationwide sit-in programmes and rallies to protest price hikes on daily necessities and to press home their 10-point demands, including holding the next general election under a caretaker government.

In Natore, at least ten people from both the BNP and the AL were injured in the clash in the town's Alaipur area, which occurred around 1:30pm when both parties, which were scheduled to hold rallies nearby, came face-to-face.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

Prothom Alo, BNP 'supplement' each other

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday alleged that an attempt was made to implement the agenda of a certain quarter to catch fish in troubled waters through a report of Bangla daily Prothom Alo.



"The Prothom Alo ran the report quoting a labourer. It is time to think about whether it is a statement of an ordinary labourer or one given by the Prothom Alo," he said.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, made the remarks before attending a joint meeting of the party at its central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

Coming down heavily on the newspaper, he said the Prothom Alo and the BNP "supplement" each other.

"Their target is Sheikh Hasina, [their] target is the government and the people. The target is to foil the next election."

He said on the Independence Day, the media in every country encourage its people to love the country in a new way through running inspiring news on that country.

"But the Prothom Alo is trying to incite frustration and anger among the young generation by presenting false news before the nation."

"There is no doubt local and foreign conspiracies are aggravating the political crisis. There is no doubt this

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2

BM CONTAINER DEPOT BLAST 8 unidentified bodies still in mortuaries

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Eight bodies, charred in the fire at BM Container Depot Limited in Chattogram's Sitakunda, have been kept in different mortuaries for almost nine months without being identified.

Besides, there is no significant headway in the case filed by police against eight officials of BM depot over the officials' sheer negligence that killed 51 people and injured 250 on June 4, 2022.

Ashraf Siddique, sub-inspector of Sitakunda Model Police Station, filed the case on June 8, 2022. The name of BM depot's owner was excluded from the case documents.

The Detective Branch of Chattogram district police is now investigating the case.

Asked, Md Asaduzzaman, additional superintendent of police (DB and Industrial zone) in Chattogram, said, "We will be able to tell you who is responsible for the incident once the investigation is over."

DB Inspector Mostaq Ahmed Chowdhury, also the investigation officer of the case, said the bodies were kept in mortuaries as they were yet to be identified.

"We have tested the DNA samples with the missing people's family members, but none of the samples matched."

Asked, he said, police did not arrest any of the accused till the filing of this report. "Our investigation is still ongoing."

The eight accused are Nurul Akter, deputy general manager (operations), Khaledur Rahman, manager (admin), Abbas Ullah, assistant admin officer, Md Nasir

"We have matched the DNA samples with the missing people's family members, but none of the samples matched."

Uddin, senior executive (admin and complains), Md Abdul Aziz, assistant manager (inland container depot), Saidul Islam, in-charge (container freight station), Nazrul Islam, container freight station, and Nazmul Akter Khan, deputy general manager (sales and marketing).

Police filed the case under Sections 337/338/304(ka) and 427. In the case statement, police

said the deaths and casualties were due to the fire and explosion that happened because the accused stored hazardous chemicals in the depot without taking any necessary and precautionary steps. The negligence of the accused damaged their wealth and properties.

A probe committee, led by Chattogram Additional Commissioner Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, mentioned 20 recommendations to avoid recurrence of any such incident in its 19-page report with 300 pages attachment.

Following the report, Mohammed Delwar Hossain, deputy secretary of Cabinet Division, on July 25 last year, issued letters to eight departments including the commerce ministry, energy and minerals ministry, defence ministry, shipping ministry, and ministry of industries.

The probe committee also proposed to fulfill the DCIO (DG Cargo Inspection Office) with trained manpower and asked to field inspection of the cargo before issuing NOC.

Apart from that, appointment of trained manpower by exporter

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Plants make clicking sounds Study finds

CNN ONLINE



Plants make popping sounds that are undetectable to the human ear, according to recordings made in a new study — and they make more sounds when thirsty or under other kinds of stress.

The research shakes up what most botanists thought they knew about the plant kingdom,

which had been considered largely silent, and suggests the world around us is a cacophony of plant sounds, said the study co-author Lilach Hadany.

She said she had long been skeptical that plants were completely noiseless.

"There's so many organisms that respond to sound, I thought there was no good reason for plants to be deaf and mute," said Hadany, a professor at the School of Plant Sciences and Food Security and programme head of the George S Wise Faculty of Life Sciences at Tel Aviv University.

To figure out whether plants actually were emitting sounds, Hadany and her team commissioned soundproofed acoustic boxes.

The researchers placed tobacco and tomato plants in the boxes, rigged with ultrasonic

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2

NSU student dies in bike crash



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A business student of North South University was killed early yesterday after a lorry rammed into a motorcycle in the capital's Lalbagh Beribadh.

Sanjida Akter Tamanna, 27, was a final-year student of BBA.

She was going home to Kamrangirchar from Kalabagan, riding as a pillion passenger of the motorcycle of a ride-hailing service, police said.

She died around 1:00am at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, around three

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



The once-bustling Shimulia launch terminal in Munshiganj is now almost deserted. Since the opening of the Padma Bridge, the area's business and employment have been steadily declining. Most water vessels now sit idle, where as more than 300 speedboats and launches used to operate there daily ferrying people and goods across the river.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

UNSC concerned over Russian nukes in Belarus Moscow's UNSC presidency 'symbolic blow': Kyiv

AGENCIES

The UN Security Council was divided Friday as Western nations expressed concern about Moscow's announcement it will deploy tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus, but permanent Council member Russia remained defiant.

Meanwhile, a top Ukrainian official yesterday criticised the 'symbolic blow' of Russia assuming the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council.

"It's not just a shame. It is another symbolic blow to the rules-based system of international relations," Andriy Yermak, the Ukrainian president's chief of staff, wrote in English on Twitter, reports Reuters.

Russia took over the presidency of the UN's top security body yesterday, which rotates every month. The last time Moscow held the post was in February 2022, when its troops launched a full scale invasion of Ukraine.

China and Brazil, for their part, condemned nuclear proliferation in general as the UN Security Council met to discuss the March 25 announcement from Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to AFP.

"This is a further blow to the arms control architecture, to strategic stability in Europe, and to international peace and security," French Ambassador Nicolas de Riviere said at the meeting requested by Ukraine, which has been

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