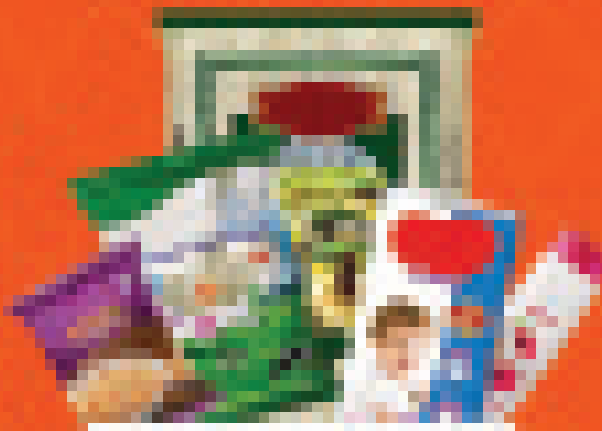


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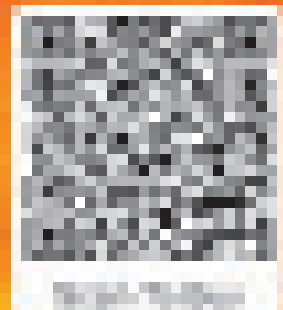


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B1

Ceramics sales go down



P13

Test aggression on agenda for Tigers



P11

Gujarat court grants bail to Rahul Gandhi



P6

Indebted to my family for everything I have: Oyshee

No EVM in next JS polls

EC to hold the elections in all constituencies with paper ballots, transparent ballot boxes

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission has decided not to use Electronic Voting Machines in the next parliamentary election.

Major opposition political parties, including the BNP, are dead against the use of the machines.

The decision is a major deviation from the EC's work plan for the next polls. It had planned to use EVMs in up to 150 constituencies.

After a meeting of the election commissioners yesterday, EC Secretary Jahangir Alam revealed the decision. He said that a lack of funding by the government to buy new machines and refurbish the old ones is a reason behind the decision.

Jahangir told reporters that paper ballots and transparent ballot boxes would be used in all 300 constituencies during the polls, slated for late December or early January 2024.

On the EC's earlier plans to use EVMs in up to 150 constituencies, he said a Tk 8,000 crore project was undertaken in this regard, but the Planning Commission did not let the project go further.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams walks out of Dhaka Central Jail on bail yesterday evening. He was picked up on March 29 from his Savar home hours after a case was filed against him under the Digital Security Act.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

5 cities to go to polls from May to June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Gazipur City Corporation election will be held on May 25, while for Khulna and Barishal city corporations, it will take place on June 12. Rajshahi and Sylhet city corporations will go to polls on June 21.

Voting in all five cities will be held from 8:00am to 4:00pm through electronic voting machines, said Md Jahangir Alam, secretary of the Election Commission, yesterday.

CCTV cameras will also be installed in all the polling centres, he added.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the EC yesterday, with Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal in the chair.

Election Commissioners Ahsan Habib Khan, Rasheda Sultana, Md

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Unease in BNP over city polls

It fears some party men may join the polls defying directives

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Though the BNP has said it will not take part in the coming elections to five city corporations, the party fears that some of its leaders may run in the polls violating its directive.

Going beyond the party's decision, BNP leaders Taimur Alam Khandaker and Monirul Haque Sakku had contested the last polls to Narayanganj and Cumilla city corporations as independents and both of them were defeated.

Party insiders said local BNP leaders who have been working in their electoral areas for a long time may join the city polls.

"We have decided that we will not take part in any election under the incumbent government. So, if anyone violates the party's order, we will take steps after seeing the situation," Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the BNP, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said those who contested city polls previously going against the party's decision were expelled. "We are in a movement. So, there is no question of joining any polls under the incumbent government."

The Election Commission has already announced the schedule for the polls to five city corporations - Gazipur, Sylhet, Khulna, Barishal and Rajshahi. In the 2018 polls to those five city corporations, AL candidates won four mayoral posts while the BNP's nominee became victorious in one.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

FY24 BUDGET

Inflation to determine social safety budget

Allocation likely to be 15pc more

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is set to increase the amount of allowance under the social safety net programme in the next budget to cushion the poor from the impacts of high inflation.

Inflation averaged 8.74 percent in the first eight months of the fiscal year, way above the budgetary target of 5.6 percent, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

"If inflation shoots up by 5 percentage points, we will increase the allowance by the same proportion," Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal told The Daily Star yesterday.

The amount of allowance is likely to be increased by Tk 50 to Tk 100 in different safety net programmes, as per a decision taken at the meeting of the cabinet committee on social safety presided over by Kamal.

The global economy has been impacted by the Ukraine war.



"If inflation shoots up by 5 percentage points, we will increase the allowance by the same proportion,"

AHM Mustafa Kamal
Finance Minister

"We are struggling to move forward amid this crisis period," Kamal said.

The government has targeted to broaden its safety net programme to cover about 8 lakh people under three programmes: old age allowance, allowance for widowed, deserted and destitute women and allowance for the financially insolvent disabled.

"Different ministries have made demands and we are addressing those with our limited resources," he said.

Subsequently, the allocation for the social safety net programme will increase by about 15 percent to Tk 1.3 lakh crore in the upcoming budget.

The social safety net budget also includes pensions for retired government employees and their families. This took up about 25 percent of this year's social safety budget of Tk 1.13 lakh crore.

Subsequently, the International Monetary

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Shams freed on bail after 5 days

Vows to continue ethical journalism

STAR REPORT

Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams yesterday said his ordeal won't be able to stop him from telling the truth.

He said this while talking to his colleagues at the newspaper office after his release from Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

Five days after his detention from his Savar home, Shams walked out of the jail at 6:22pm.

Earlier in the day, a Dhaka court granted him bail until submission of the police report in a case filed under the Digital Security Act with Ramna Police Station.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Muhammad Asaduzzaman Noor, around 3:00pm, came up with the bail order upon Tk 20,000 bond with two guarantors, Chaitanya Chandra Halder, one of Shams' counsels, told The Daily Star.

Upon his release, Shams came to the Prothom Alo office in the capital's Karwan Bazar, where his colleagues greeted him with flowers.

He expressed his gratitude to everyone who wished him well during his ordeal.

"I am not worried at all. But I felt bad twice - when I saw the picture of my mother crying and then when I saw Moti Bhai in court," he said.

"I will continue to tell the truth and do ethical journalism," Shams added.

He said he was treated well by different authorities during his ordeal. "As a member of the Prothom Alo family, I would look forward to doing the journalism properly," he said, adding that he tried several jobs earlier, but came back to Prothom Alo because it was a family to him.

Congratulating Shams on his return, Prothom Alo Editor Matiuur Rahman said, "This is a very happy moment. There are more tests ahead."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BUSINESS

Tax evasion costing dearly: CPD

Bangladesh is losing potential taxes from as low as Tk 41,800 crore to as high as Tk 223,000 crore every year because of tax evasion committed by individuals and corporates, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday.

The amount of tax losses rises when tax avoidance is taken into consideration. "The amount of tax evasion is estimated to be eight times the social safety net and welfare expenditures," said CPD Research Director Khondaker Golam Moazzem.

STORY ON B1



People save their spots in a queue by placing their bags on the divider of the road where an OMS truck (not in the picture) was parked in the capital's Mirpur-2 yesterday. They do it so they could wait under the shade of roadside trees a few yards away. Consumers from the low-income group have to wait from morning to late afternoon to get essentials at subsidised prices, and the scorching noon sun sometimes becomes unbearable to withstand.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Sultana died from brain haemorrhage

Say forensic experts; family still blaming Rab for death

ANWAR ALL, Rajshahi

The cause of Sultana Jasmine's death was brain haemorrhage due to excessive stress and a sudden rise in blood pressure, forensic experts of Rajshahi Medical College said yesterday.

"As her blood pressure shot up due to stress, two blood vessels inside her brain swelled up and ruptured, causing internal bleeding," Kafil Uddin, associate professor and head of RMC's forensic medicine department, said while explaining the outcome of the autopsy to reporters who went to the hospital for updates.

"Ultimately, her body went into a shock," he said, adding that shock is a medical condition when the brain stops receiving oxygen and other nutrients.

Meanwhile, Sultana's maternal uncle Nazmul Haque Montu held the Rab members, who kept her in custody till her burial, responsible for the death.

"While in their custody, they obviously did something that caused her death," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sultana, 41, an office assistant of Naogaon's Chandipur union land office, died on March 24, two days after she

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



No need for UN help over nat'l polls

Says Momen

STAR REPORT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said that Bangladesh is mature enough and there is no need to take help from the United Nations for the country's national election.

He, however, said the government has no objection to election observation by foreign observers.

"There is no need for us to take any cooperation from the United Nations. We are mature enough. We have founded those institutions that are needed for a fair, transparent and acceptable election," he said.

The minister made the remarks while speaking to reporters after a meeting with UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Gwyn Lewis yesterday, reports UNB.

Momen said foreign observers should see how fair and transparent elections are held in Bangladesh in a festive atmosphere. He said that foreign observers can learn from the polls in Bangladesh.

Responding to a question about the detention of Prothom Alo reporter Shamsuzzaman Shams, the minister said he was arrested for "child exploitation".

"The second issue is that he made fun of our independence. The people of Bangladesh won't accept it," he added.

Talking about the Rohingya issue, he praised the US for providing continuous support to the refugees.

"United States has been cooperating since the first day, and it is still doing so. They have showed no negligence. But many other countries gave a lot of aid in the past, and now they have cut much of the aid."

'RAB NOT USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES'

Asked about a recent Deutsche Welle (DW) documentary that claimed that the Rab was "used politically", Momen said it was "a source of fun".

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



A Palestinian kicks a teargas canister back at Israeli soldiers during clashes following a raid by Israeli forces in the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ukraine army still 'holds' Bakhmut

Says Kyiv; Moscow to move tactical nuke weapons to Belarus' west

AGENCIES

Ukraine's military said its troops were locked in combat with Russian forces around the administration building of Bakhmut yesterday, and it poured scorn on Russian claims that mercenary fighters had captured the eastern city after months of warfare.

"The enemy has not stopped its assault of Bakhmut. However, Ukrainian defenders are courageously holding the city as they repel numerous enemy attacks," the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said on its Facebook page.

A Ukrainian spokesman said the Russians had raised a victory flag not over the building but over "some kind of toilet".

In Moscow, the Kremlin accused Ukraine of being behind a bomb blast at a cafe in St Petersburg on Sunday that killed a prominent Russian pro-war blogger. Russia said it had arrested a woman

suspected of blowing up the blogger.

The battle for Bakhmut has been one of the bloodiest of the conflict, now in its second year, with many casualties on both sides and much of the eastern city destroyed by bombardments.

Front lines have shifted backwards and forwards in street-by-street fighting.

The head of the Wagner mercenary force, which has spearheaded the Kremlin's campaign to encircle and capture Bakhmut, said on Sunday his troops had raised a Russian flag on the administrative building in the city centre.

Yevgeny Prigozhin acknowledged that Ukrainian troops were still holding some positions. But he said in video posted on Telegram: "From a legal point of view, Bakhmut has been taken. The enemy is concentrated in the western parts."

Prigozhin has previously made claims that were premature.

The Ukrainian military however said yesterday that fighting was still going on in Bakhmut as well as in several other towns.

Serhiy Cherevatyi, spokesperson for the eastern military command, said the Russian claim to have captured the city was false. Clashes were taking place around the city council building, he said.

"Bakhmut is Ukrainian and they have not captured anything and are very far from doing that, to put it mildly," he told Reuters.

"They raised the flag over some kind of toilet. They attached it to the side of who knows what, hung their rag and said they had captured the city. Well good, let them think they've taken it," Cherevatyi said by telephone.

Meanwhile Moscow's ambassador to Minsk said on Sunday that Russia would move nuclear weapons close to the western borders of Belarus - a move that would place them at Nato's threshold.

One dies after being hit by train in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A man died after he was hit by a train in Joypurhat town last morning.

The deceased Jahidul Islam, 55, was a resident of Masterpara village under the Sadar upazila.

"The Rajshahi-bound Uttara Express that left Parbatipur, hit the victim as he was crossing the Dakbanga level crossing in the early hours, killing him on the spot" Santahar Railway Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Moktar Hossain told The Daily Star.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Joypurhat Modern Hospital.

Man jailed for 10 years in Lakshmipur drugs case

BSS, Lakshmipur

A Lakshmipur court yesterday sentenced a man to 10 years imprisonment in a 2018 narcotics case.

The court also fined the convict Md Salam, 30, Tk 10,000, in default of which, he would have to spend another six months in jail.

District and Sessions Judge Court Judge Md Rahibul Islam pronounced the verdict in the afternoon.

According to the case statement, on October 30, 2018, Salam was arrested with 1,500 yaba pills in the Sadar upazila's Dalabazar area.

The same day, Sub-Inspector Abu Naser of Lakshmipur Sadar Model Police Station filed a case against him under the Narcotics Control Act.

3 get life imprisonment in Bagerhat rape case

UNB, Bagerhat

A Bagerhat court sentenced three men to life imprisonment for raping a girl in 2020 in the district's Fakirhat upazila.

The convicts are Md Mamun, Md Feroz Nikari, and Ibrahim Biswas.

Judge of Bagerhat Women and Child Repression Prevention Tribunal-1 SM Saiful Islam delivered the judgment on Sunday.

At the same time, the court fined the convicts Tk 10,00,000, in default of which, they would have to spend one more year in prison.

According to the prosecution, an NGO worker was raped and photographed in a rented house in 2020 by a few men at Mait Kamra village of Fakirhat upazila. The next day, the woman filed a case with Fakirhat Police Station mentioning the three names.

Shams freed on bail after 5 days

FROM PAGE 1

Shams passed the test. Shams has many good friends and well-wishers. Everyone was with him. There was great support at home and abroad."

Praising Shams' mother for her patience, courage and strength, the Prothom Alo editor said Shams' reuniting with her mother is the biggest reward.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam was present at the Prothom Alo office to greet Shams.

"We believe in journalism with values. We believe in independent and objective journalism. We are neither in favour nor against anyone. We are for the country. Danger befell Shams while he was doing this brand of journalism. It's part of the profession," The Daily Star editor said.

Prothom Alo Managing Editor Anisul Haque said Shams will not stop writing. Freedom means telling people's stories and stories of hunger.

After meeting his colleagues, Shams left the Prothom Alo office for his home around 9:00pm.

The 37-year-old is the younger brother of the slain Detective Branch assistant commissioner Robiul



Karim, who died at the Holey Artisan Bakery attack on July 1, 2016.

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

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 Matiur Rahman, an unnamed photographer, and unnamed others were accused later in another case filed under the DSA.

Journalist organisations and rights bodies condemned the incident and demanded his immediate release.

No EVM in next JS polls

FROM PAGE 1

EVM supplier, Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory, had said Tk 1,260 crore would be needed to refurbish 1.1 lakh EVMs. The commission had sought the money from the finance ministry, but the ministry expressed its inability to pay that amount, he said.

Jahangir added that the EC does not have the money needed to refurbish the EVMs and that imports of required components take time, which the EC does not have either.

"Moreover, many political parties could not reach a consensus on the use of EVMs in the national election. The commission may have made the decision considering all this."

The EVM issue came to the fore after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at an Awami League meeting on May 7 last year said voting machines would be used in all 300 constituencies.

The EC in late August decided to use EVMs in up to 150 constituencies. It had then the capacity to use EVMs in at best 70 constituencies as about 30 percent of the 1.5 lakh machines it had were serviceable.

On August 24, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal said, "The decision to use EVMs was the Election Commission's. The commission will handle the polls, not the political parties. It is the commission's big responsibility to conduct the election."

The EC made the decision despite opposition from major political parties, like the BNP and the main opposition in parliament Jatiya Party (Ershad), Gono Forum and Communist Party of Bangladesh and others.

At least 19 of the 39 registered political parties directly opposed the use of EVMs. At least 10 of them voiced their opposition during their talks with the EC between July 17 and July 31 last year.

Nine parties, including the BNP, skipped the talks and opposed the EVM use. The BNP and several other parties also stayed away from another EC dialogue over the use of EVMs in June.

During the EC's talks, only three parties - ruling Awami League, Samyabadi Dal and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh - said they want the machines used in the polls.

Thirty-nine eminent citizens on September 6 issued a statement urging the EC not to use EVMs. The statement said that use of the machines might provoke political

debate and erode people's confidence in the commission.

After deciding to use the EVMs in August, the EC prepared a project involving Tk 8,711 crore to buy 2 lakh new machines, but the Planning Commission in January this year sent back the proposal, saying the government could not afford it "in the current global context".

Many had then criticised the EC move to spend half a billion dollars amid an economic crisis.

The EC in February sought Tk 1,260 crore from the government to repair the old machines.

The ministry declined the EC proposal in a letter, which was read out at yesterday's meeting, sources said.

Several officials who attended the meeting said one commissioner wanted the EVMs used in some constituencies, but in the end, the commissioners were unanimous in their decision not to use EVMs.

WHAT PARTIES SAY

AL presidium member Abdur Rahman yesterday said the EC has met the BNP's demand. "I hope they will take part in the election since their demand has been met. We are not unhappy..."

The BNP and like-minded political parties have been pressing for a 10-point demand that includes the formation of an impartial caretaker or interim government that would form a neutral EC to ensure a level-playing field for all parties.

"Election using EVMs or paper ballots is not the issue. We will not participate in any election under the incumbent government. The Election Commission's decision does not make any sense to us," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir told this newspaper yesterday.

Jatiya Party Secretary General Mujibul Haque said his party welcomed the EC's decision. "Election will take place using ballot papers and it's all right. But how will the Election Commission be able to create a conducive atmosphere for a holding free, fair and neutral election?" he said.

Communist Party of Bangladesh President Ruhin Hossain Prince said that on paper the EC is independent but the reality is different. "... The EC would not be able to hold a free and fair election under a partisan government even if it wanted to do so... so we need to overhaul the existing election system."

Sultana died

FROM PAGE 1

was detained on her way to work.

A day after her death, a three-member medical board, led by Prof Kafil, conducted the autopsy and finalised the report on April 1 after laboratory tests.

On Sunday afternoon, the final report was handed over to Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

Rofikul Alam, an additional deputy commissioner of RMP, said the report would be placed before the High Court.

The final autopsy report said, "The mentioned injuries in the autopsy report were not sufficient to cause the death of the deceased."

It also mentioned there was "a small laceration" on the left side of her forehead and cannula prick marks on her right elbow.

Montu said Sultana was completely healthy before her detention.

"When she was admitted to hospital, it was the Rab members who surrounded her. When she died, it was them who performed the religious rites of showering the body and putting it into a coffin. They were present till she was buried."

"They are responsible for her death," he pressed.

Sultana was buried in a graveyard near her parents' home in Naogaon town on March 25.

Despite several attempts, The Daily Star could not reach Rab-5 Director Lt Col Riaz Shahriar over the phone.

Meanwhile, a Rab investigation team went to Naogaon town and talked to Sultana's son and one of her brothers-in-law. Both gave the team written statements regarding what they had learnt and experienced since her detention, Montu said.

US storm death toll rises to 32

AFP, Washington

The death toll from weekend storms that raked across parts of the US South and Midwest has risen by three to 32, according to official counts, with more extreme weather forecast for yesterday and today.

Tennessee, one of the hardest-hit states since the storms unleashed tornadoes, fierce winds and flooding beginning Friday, earlier reported 12 weather-related fatalities Sunday and later raised that figure to 15.

Scenes of devastation were left in the path of the Tennessee tornado, which uprooted trees, flattened homes into piles of wooden boards and flipped vehicles.

Inflation to determine

FROM PAGE 1

Fund has called for excluding the pension scheme from the social safety budget as part of its \$4.7 billion loan programme.

Social safety net programme is meant for the poor people only, it said.

In that vein, the government is planning to increase the old age allowance by Tk 100 to Tk 600 in the incoming fiscal year.

At the same time, the government plans to increase the number of beneficiaries by one lakh to about 58 lakhs although the social welfare ministry has sought to expand the beneficiary count by 12 lakh. This will cost the government an additional Tk 761.42 crore, so the allocation for this programme will increase to Tk 4,305 crore.

The allowance for widowed, deserted and destitute women is proposed to increase by Tk 50 to Tk 550.

The finance division has recommended increasing the number of beneficiaries by one lakh to 25.75 lakh though the Social Welfare Ministry pushed to increase the tally by 6.9 lakh.

The government will have to spend Tk 216 crore more. The allocation for this programme in fiscal 2023-24 is

likely to be Tk 1,711.4 crore.

The number of disabled persons to get government handouts will increase by 5.35 lakh to 29 lakh.

Though the total amount of allowance is increased to Tk 2,978 crore from Tk 2,429 crore, the beneficiaries will receive the allowance at the current rate as the additional allocation will be spent for the extended coverage.

Right now, disabled persons get Tk 850 per month.

The social welfare ministry proposed to increase the allowance by Tk 1,000 crore.

No change is brought to the stipend for disabled students. The social welfare ministry proposed to increase the amount by Tk 300.

Finance ministry officials said decisions were not made on all programmes including those for freedom fighters and for improving the livelihoods of transgender, bedridden and disadvantaged community.

Besides the allowances, the government will spend more on open market sales and various employment generation programmes.

The government plans to increase allocation by Tk 5,000 to Tk 24,600 crore in the next fiscal for employment generation programmes.

US House speaker to meet Taiwanese president in US

AFP, Washington

Republican US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy confirmed he would meet Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen in California on Wednesday, defying dire warnings from China that he would be "playing with fire."

Tsai is stopping over in the United States en route to Central America, where she has met the leaders of Guatemala and is visiting Belize before meeting with McCarthy.

His office said yesterday the "bipartisan" meeting will take place at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, just outside Los Angeles.

China has warned the United States over Tsai's trip and in August carried out major military exercises around the island of Taiwan, a self-governing democracy it claims as part of its territory.

McCarthy, the top Republican in Congress who as House speaker is second in line to the presidency after the vice president, had earlier vowed to follow Democrat Nancy Pelosi, whom he succeeded as speaker, by traveling to Taiwan.

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SIDDIKBAZAR EXPLOSION

Investigators yet to find where gas accumulated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It has been a month since the Siddikbazar explosion but investigators are yet to ascertain from where the gas accumulated in the multi-storey building that led to the incident, leaving at least 25 people dead.

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said an explosion occurred due to the accumulation of gas in the building.

A CTTC team of DMP yesterday visited the spot to find the source from where the gas accumulated. Officials from Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited were also present at the time.

The CTTC team went to the spot around 10:30am and examined the site for two and a half hours.

During the visit, CTTC officials spoke with Titas officials about the gas connection line. Later, the investigation team dug up the line with some local workers.

Mishuk Chakma, deputy commissioner of the special action group of the CTTC unit, said, "We are now trying to find the exact source of the gas."

"There used to be a commercial gas connection on the ground floor of that building. We are digging up the underground gas connection to see if the gas accumulated from the previous connection," he added.

Engineer Moshirur Rahman of Titas Gas, however, said no leak was found in the connection line set up by Titas.

He also said the explosion might have taken place due to the accumulation of gas from the toilet line.

"There was once a commercial gas line under the
SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Ambassador of France to Bangladesh Marie Masdupuy paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Gono Bhaban yesterday. Climate change, Rohingya crisis and other issues were discussed during the meet.

PHOTO: BSS

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

BANGLADESH-FRANCE

Ties inching to strategic partnership

Says PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed satisfaction over the growing relationship between Bangladesh and France, saying it has extended further towards the objective of a strategic partnership.

"France is always a trusted partner of Bangladesh. The relation has extended further towards the objective of a strategic partnership guided by our common goals of sustainable development," the premier said.

The premier made the remarks when newly-appointed Ambassador of France to Bangladesh Marie Masdupuy paid a courtesy call on her at the PM's official Gono Bhaban residence.

Why is 'Joy Bangabandhu' not part of nat'l slogan?

HC asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain why it should not be directed to include "Joy Bangabandhu" along with "Joy Bangla" as the national slogan in the gazette notification of the government.

Secretaries at the ministries of cabinet division, law and education have been made respondents to the rule. They have to reply in four weeks.

The HC bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Khizir Hayat Liza issued the rule following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Mohammed Abdullah Al Harun Bhuiyan Russel, seeking necessary directives.

He submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC in November last year, saying that a gazette notification has been issued containing "Joy Bangla" as a national slogan in compliance with its directive, however, the slogan "Joy Bangabandhu" was not included in the gazette notification.

Petitioner Mohammed Abdullah Al Harun Bhuiyan Russel himself moved the petition while Deputy Attorney General Abdullah Al-Mahmud Bashar represented the state during yesterday's hearing.

MONEY LAUNDERING

His occupation computer operator, net wealth Tk 9.94cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has found evidence of money laundering of Tk 13 crore against Nurul Islam, a former contractual computer operator who used to work at Teknaf land port.

Investigators said Nurul, who used to get a daily wage of Tk 130, became the owner of crores after getting involved with illegal narcotics trade and currency-counterfeiting.

CID filed a case under the money laundering act with Adabar Police Station last Friday against Nurul and his wife Razia Islam.

Md Moniruzzaman, an inspector of CID's financial crime unit, confirmed the development to The Daily Star yesterday.

"Nurul and his wife tried to legalise their illegal earnings by submitting tax returns against three companies that only exist on paper," he said.

Moniruzzaman said they are now conducting a drive to arrest Nurul and his wife Razia, who are currently on the run.

Sources said Nurul took the job at the land port in 2001 and left it in 2009.

After resigning, he allegedly formed a racket of brokers, got involved in narcotics smuggling, and amassed crores over a decade. His criminal activities first came to the fore after Nurul was arrested by Rapid

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Nurul and his wife tried to legalise their illegal earnings by submitting tax returns against three companies that only exist on paper.

MD MONIRUZZAMAN
Inspector of CID's financial crime unit

683 buildings storing flammable items in basements

Finds Rajuk's survey in eight zones

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), the capital's building-regulation authority, has found that 683 buildings in eight zones of the capital are using their basements to store flammable items, violating building-construction rules.

Rajuk asked its eight zone offices to conduct a survey soon after the blast in Gulistan's Siddikbazar, which left 25 dead on March 8. The report was submitted to the Rajuk chairman yesterday. The eight zones of Rajuk inspected a total of 2,204 buildings.

This newspaper has obtained a copy of the report with the survey findings. It mentions that 683 buildings are using their basements as storehouses of various flammable goods, while 750 are using basements for purposes other than parking.

"During the inspection, owners of 1,944 buildings could not show their building design. Around 1,163 buildings are using their basements as parking spaces," the report finds.

However, when asked about the numbers not adding up, a Rajuk official involved with the survey said they are trying to sort the issue.

Tonmoy Das, member (development control) of Rajuk, said they received the report.

"We have already started issuing

notice to the building owners to remove the flammable goods on an emergency basis. We will allow them a maximum of a week or two to comply with our notice. If they fail to comply, we will launch drives against the building owners," he added.

We have already started issuing notice to the building owners to remove the flammable goods on an emergency basis. We will allow them a maximum of a week or two to comply with our notice. If they fail to comply, we will launch drives against the building owners.

TONMOY DAS
Member of Rajuk

Tonmoy also said the drive against shopping centres using their basements to store goods will be conducted after Eid, as they don't want to create panic during Ramadan when the Eid shopping spree is gaining pace.

Adil Mohammad Khan, a faculty member at urban and regional planning department of Jahangirnagar University, told The Daily Star that the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'Irresponsible, anti-people'

Stakeholders protest ministry's statement on hajj package prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Stakeholders in the hajj sector have come down heavily on a statement of the Ministry of Religious Affairs on the hajj package price, terming it "irresponsible" and "anti-people".

The ministry on Sunday said this year's hajj package is the cheapest considering the overall issues.

"There has been a problem regarding renting hotels this year due to the recent global situation and the demolition of various hotels near Haram Sharif in Saudi Arabia. That is why the hotels are being rented for more money...The cost of hajj packages will increase further in the coming years," said the ministry's statement.

Leaders of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB) and Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) yesterday criticised the statement and urged the government to take steps to reduce the hajj cost.

The stakeholders stressed that many aspirants will be unable to perform hajj this year due to the huge cost of the packages.

ATAB Secretary General Abdus Salam Aref said the religious affairs ministry's decision to increase hajj cost is unfair.

"If the Saudi government reduces transportation costs, visa fees, cost to travel to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

The stakeholders stressed that many aspirants will be unable to perform hajj this year due to the huge cost of the packages.



New Market is yet to see its typical rush of customers even though Eid is right around the corner. Traders are assuming that this decline may be due to the overall rise of commodity prices.

PHOTO: STAR

NEW MARKET

High prices dampen Eid shopping spirit

Traders, customers link low turnout with rise in cost of living

MD ABBAS

With only 18 days left until one of the biggest religious festivals in the country, sales are yet to pick up at New Market, the largest clothing market in the city. Traders have reported a decline in customers compared to previous years and attributed this to the high prices of all things, including raw materials.

Shahidul Alam Shaheed, owner of Fariha Boutique at New Market, stated that although Eid shopping has begun, it has yet to gain momentum. He hopes to see the proper flow of customers after the 15th day of Ramadan.

This correspondent noticed Md Lal Miah, a staffer at Shari Gallery, sitting at the entrance of the shop. When asked

about the sales, he expressed concern about the low turnout of customers. He also gestured towards other shops adjacent to his, where no customers were present, and stated that the market used to be so crowded during this time of the year that they couldn't move. However, this year, on the 11th day of Ramadan, they were not experiencing a good customer flow.

Explaining the reason behind the low turnout, Mohammad Rasel, a staffer at Kashfia Fabrics, said, "Most of the people who come to the market are from middle and lower-middle-income groups. If they have extra money after buying essentials, only then people buy clothes."

Traders at various shops in the New Market area echoed this sentiment and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 4

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
12	04		6:19
13	05	4:24	6:20
14	06	4:24	6:20



TACKLING THE MENACE... A city-corporation worker sprays insecticide down the holes of the slab, into the drains -- a breeding spot for mosquitoes. This photo was taken in Sylhet City's Shagor Dighipar area yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

High prices dampen HC orders IO's suspension

FROM PAGE 3
shared similar experiences. Several customers who preferred shopping at affordable prices in those shops have expressed their dissatisfaction with the unusually high prices this year.

Nurjahan Akhter, accompanied by her husband and eight-year-old daughter, visited Nurjahan Super Market to purchase clothes for her

daughter and in-laws. She stated that the prices are exorbitant compared to previous years, and that she has to increase her budget for Eid shopping. Nurjahan also mentioned that she did not find any frocks below Tk 700. This correspondent spoke to at least 10 other customers who made similar claims regarding the increased prices.

FROM PAGE 5
investigation and recording of the statements of the case's witnesses. Meanwhile, the magistrate, who recorded a confessional statement from accused Sohoh alias Nurunabi, said IO Masudur was present before his court along with accused Sohoh from 11:00am to 3:00pm on the same day. Earlier in the day, the HC bench blasted Masudur for his hurried charge sheet presented before the HC bench.

The bench fixed June 5 for the hearing of further orders on the matter. Accused Sohoh, and Champa filed the petition

with the HC on March 5, seeking its directive to summon the case documents before it. They submitted the petition annexing a report published on national daily Prothom Alo on March 2 under the headline "Lash Uddhar Theke Ovijigpotro: 42 Ghotay Abissshasso Todonto (Charge sheet from the recovery of a dead body: Unbelievable investigation in 42 hours".

The HC bench on March 14 summoned SI Masudur directing him to appear before the bench with the case documents and explain his role. During the hearing of

the petition yesterday, petitioners' counsel Mohammad Shishir Manir told the HC that Masudur conducted a "perfunctory" investigation and submitted a charge sheet at an unbelievable speed, which needs to be scrapped and a fresh investigation should be conducted for this murder case.

Deputy Attorney General Sujit Chatterjee Bappi and Apurba Kumar Bhattacharya represented the state during the hearing. DAG Sujit Chatterjee told The Daily Star that an appeal will be filed with the Supreme Court against the HC order.

100 sacks VGF rice

FROM PAGE 5
the house to facilitate distribution among the people. "The house is close to the fishers' colonies. Considering the convenience of all, I have

instructed to keep the rice there," he added. Betagi UNO Md Suhrid Saleheen stated that necessary measures would be taken following an investigation into the incident.

683 buildings storing

FROM PAGE 3
core responsibility of Rajuk is to make sure the buildings are following the codes and construction rules. "So many building owners are using their basements for storing

flammable items just because there was no monitoring on Rajuk's part. They only take action after every major incident, whereas the monitoring should have been a part of their regular work," said Adil.

Investigators yet

FROM PAGE 3
building. But in 2000, it was closed and a residential gas connection was provided. There is no gas connection from the ground floor to the third floor of the building," said Moshir.

Earlier on March 7, more than 100 people were injured in the explosion at the seven-storey building in Dhaka's Siddikbazar. The basement, first and second floors of the building collapsed in the explosion.

Two killed, one injured in road

FROM PAGE 5
training centre. On the way to the training centre, the accident occurred as a trolley collided with their motorcycle coming from opposite side." Meanwhile in Gopalganj,

a man was killed in a road crash on Bhatiyapara-Majkandi road at Khayerhat area around 12:30pm yesterday. The deceased is Manowar Sikdar, 50, a resident of Khayerhat village under

Kashiani upazila. He was a vegetable trader. Firaz Alam, officer in-charge of Kashiani Police Station, said, "The accident took place when Manowar was crossing the road and a truck ran over him."

His occupation computer

FROM PAGE 3
Action Battalion (Rab) on September 14, 2021.

According to the first information report (FIR) of the case against him, the income tax return submitted on June 30, 2009 showed that Nurul's net wealth was Tk 8.50 lakh.

Just after 11 years, the tax return submitted on June 30, 2020 showed Nurul's net wealth to be

Tk 9.94 crore. The tax return submitted on June 30, 2021, showed his wife Razia's net wealth as Tk 3.51 crore, read the FIR. The couple tried to show that the wealth was earned through three companies - MS AL Nahian Enterprise, Miftahul Enterprise, and Alka Enterprise. However, during its investigation, CID did not find any physical presence of these

three companies. According to the FIR, Nurul has four houses in the capital's Mohammadpur. He and his wife Razia own three-katha land in Mohammadpur's Ramchandrapur, a 7.47-decimal land in the same area, 53 decimals of land in Savar's Amin Bazar, 20.67 decimals in Teknaf-2, and 2.46 decimals in Teknaf-1.

Growing medicinal plants sees

FROM PAGE 5
Aloe vera leaves are used in producing different types of cosmetics and medicines.

Many like to consume it with the hope to get relief from different diseases like costiveness, skin diseases and urinary problems, herbal doctors said. Local agriculture

officials said aloe vera farming needs proper care, and farmers can earn a good profit from it as it can be harvested a couple of times a month.

Aloe vera leaves are thick and fleshy, and one can harvest 30 to 35 maunds of the leaves from 20,000 plants.

Each maund of aloe vera is sold at Tk 700 to 800, farmers said, adding that they can yield aloe vera after 18 months of plantation.

Moreover, six to seven additional saplings grow

from each plant. Farmer Monnas Ali from Mahuntinagar in Madhupur said earlier, he used to cultivate pineapple or banana on his three bighas land.

But, after getting advice from the local agriculture officials he started aloe vera cultivation on the same land a couple of years ago.

Tangail DAE Additional Deputy Director Mahmudul Hasan said although aloe vera has a huge demand, local growers do not get fair prices for lack of proper marketing facilities.

Two held after filing of case

FROM PAGE 5
Police arrested two accused - Zafar, 37, and Shamim, 32 - from their residences on Sunday night and produced them before the court yesterday, which sent them to jail, Baulal police station Officer-in-Charge ATM Arichul Haque confirmed to The Daily Star.

On March 17, two factions of Baulal upazila Awami League clashed over separate programmes organised on the occasion of Bangabandhu Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman's birth anniversary and National Children's Day. Abdul Howladar was beaten and severely injured during the clash. At least 50 others were also hurt.

Contacted, lawmaker ASM Feroz said Motalab and his followers created the scene to politically humiliate him in his constituency.

The case statement mentioned that on March 17, party leaders and

activists, led by Motalab, were going towards the upazila AL office at Janata Bhaban with a rally from Baulal Government Model Secondary School. When they arrived in front of the Upazila Parishad around 11:30am, a mob, led by Feroz's two nephews, attacked them with iron rods and sharp weapons.

Motalab was severely injured in the attack and is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital in the capital.

Ties inching to strategic

FROM PAGE 3
During the meeting, the French envoy expressed France's keenness to enhance cooperation with Bangladesh, particularly in areas of aviation and aerospace.

France is also eager to work with Bangladesh in maritime security, she added.

Masdupuy also expressed her country's interest to construct Bangladesh's second satellite.

During the meeting, climate change was prominently discussed, where the French

During the meeting, the French envoy expressed France's keenness to enhance cooperation with Bangladesh, particularly in areas of aviation and aerospace.

ambassador said France has been working on this issue and it can share its experience with Bangladesh.

About the Rohingya crisis, Hasina said

the forcibly-displaced Myanmar nationals sheltered in Cox's Bazar will have to return to their homeland as they have become a burden for Bangladesh.

Referring to construction of an international standard airport in Cox's Bazar, the PM said her government is transforming the airport into an international hub for refuelling and linking Asia and Europe.

She also thanked the French president for inviting her to attend the Climate Summit to be held in Paris on June 22 and 23.

Irresponsible, anti-people

FROM PAGE 3
Mina-Arafat-Muzdalifah, and other services that are done in exchange for money, then the cost of the hajj package will naturally decrease," he said.

Meanwhile, even after multiple deadline extensions, the required number of hajj pilgrims are yet to complete registration.

The deadline for registration ends tomorrow.

Sources at the hajj office in Dhaka said a total of 1,18,489 aspirant pilgrims have so far registered as of yesterday. According to an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh, a total of 1.27 lakh Bangladeshis will be able to perform hajj this year.

Of the total, 9,949 registered under

government hajj-management services and 1,08,540 under private hajj management services.

Due to the poor response, the government has so far extended the deadline for hajj registration seven times.

The ATAB secretary general said although the government is telling that 1.18 lakh aspirant pilgrims have registered, the actual number is lower, as five percent of those registered will not perform hajj, meaning they have registered on behalf of other aspirant pilgrims who are uncertain regarding whether they will perform the hajj or not.

HAAB and ATAB leaders said despite the huge interest of people in performing hajj, people have less interest in

registering due to the high cost of hajj packages this year.

A Bangladeshi will have to spend around Tk 7 lakh to perform hajj, which increased by around Tk 1.61 lakh compared to the previous year.

Both ATAB and HAAB leaders said this year's airfare was very high for which the costs of hajj packages have increased significantly.

"The airfare of Biman was Tk 1.40 lakh last year. However, this year, it is around Tk 1.98 lakh which is very high," said HAAB President M Shahadat Hossain Taslim.

HAAB on Sunday demanded that the government form a technical committee to fix the airfare of hajj from next year.

No hike in fertiliser price

FROM PAGE 5
Besides, there is a demand for 7.5 lakh tonnes of TSP fertiliser and 9 lakh tonnes of MOP fertiliser, he added.

Replying to a question on the current fertiliser stock, the minister said there are four lakh tonnes of urea fertiliser in stock and 2 lakh tonnes of TSP, 2.5 lakh tonnes of DAP,

2 lakh tonnes of MoP production suspended due to shortage of gas," said Razzaque.

"If the gas supply remains undisturbed, a small amount of fertiliser will have to be imported from abroad as the capability of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) has been increased. But many factories keep their

production suspended due to shortage of gas," said Razzaque.

He also assured of holding a high-level meeting to produce urea fertiliser locally and the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources will be requested to provide sufficient gas to the fertiliser factories.

Country's poverty rate comes

FROM PAGE 5
programme by placing a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on BFDC

premises. Subsequently, he joined the rally with film artists and inaugurated the day's events by releasing pigeons and balloons. Film

actresses Rojina and Anjana, Film Director Kazi Hayat and BFDC Managing Director Nujhat Yeasmin joined the rally, among others.

TODAY MARKS THE 27TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF
Late Salahuddin Ahmad
(May 6, 1926-April 4, 1996)

Your memory has not dimmed, your presence felt evermore.....May Allah (SW) grant you Jannatul Ferdous and rest your soul in eternal peace.

We humbly request all our relatives, friends and acquaintances to remember late Salahuddin Ahmad in their prayers.

Wife, children and grandchildren

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শুভাশীষ বসু
প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা, আইসিএবি

Two killed, one injured in road crashes

STAR REPORT

A school student was killed and another injured as a trolley collided with a motorcycle in Dakkhin Daora village area in Narsingdi's Palash upazila around 9:00am yesterday.

The deceased is Sakibur Rahman alias Sakib, a 10th-grader at the area's Parulia High School.

Md Elias, officer-in-charge of Palash police station, confirmed the matter.

"The victim's brother Rakibul Islam, 18, was also injured in the incident. After rescuing him, locals rushed the boy to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital. No one was arrested, as the trolley driver fled the scene with the trolley and just the victim's motorcycle was recovered from the spot," he added.

Akram Sheikh, Parulia Union Parishad member, said, "To secure a job in abroad, Sakib was receiving training from a local

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



When there's traffic ahead, many motorbike riders have built a habit of obstructing pedestrian movement by plying their bikes on the footpaths to save time. As a result, sometimes, even the footpaths get clogged with traffic due to the two-wheelers. Such activities go on unabated, as authorities can hardly intervene. This photo was taken in Banglamotor area yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

'Country's poverty rate comes down to 16 percent'

Claims Hasan Mahmud

BSS, Dhaka

Information and Communication Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday said the country's poverty rate has come down to 16 percent from over 20 percent of the total population.

"Our per capita income has surpassed that of India. We are the 35th country in terms of GDP in the world and our economy has ranked 31st in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)," he said.

However, he did not elaborate further on the timeline and sources of the data.

Dr Hasan, also Awami League (AL) joint general secretary, said this while addressing a discussion as the chief guest at Jahir Raihan Color Lab Auditorium of Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) in the city, marking the National Film Day.

Bangladesh is now a bigger economic country than Malaysia in terms of GDP and in the next few years the country will be the 27th economy in the globe, he said.

Earlier, the information minister started the day's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Growing medicinal plants sees bright prospects

MIRZA SHAKIL

Farmers of different hilly areas in Tangail's Madhupur and Ghatail upazilas are cultivating various types of medicinal plants like tulsi (basil) and aloe vera commercially and earning good profits.

Seeing the success of some, other farmers are also getting interested in this field. Meanwhile, the local agriculture department sees a bright prospect for commercial cultivation of medicinal plants on a large scale.

The soil of the hilly areas is favourable for such cultivation, and such plants have a great demand, both at home and abroad, they said.

Farming of medicinal plants is easy and it costs much lower than growing other crops, growers said.

But some syndicates of buyers are depriving the farmers of fair prices due to lack of marketing facilities and proper monitoring, they alleged.

TULSI

Commercial cultivation of tulsi has been gaining popularity among local farmers in different remote areas of the district, due to low cultivation cost and good market prices.

The tulsi plant is known for its many health benefits since ancient times. There was a time when one or two plants could be seen in the backyard of many families. Now, it is being cultivated on a large scale.

Farmer Mohammad Abdullah

of Fatiyari village in Ghatail said he cultivated tulsi on two acres of land, spending Tk 35,000, as it is more profitable than rice cultivation.

Dried-up tulsi leaves are sold at a designated collection point, and each maund of leaves is sold at Tk 1,600, he said.

Abdullah also earns some

Kalmegh (green chiretta) and its wide use as an "alternative to quinine" is increasing nowadays.

Many farmers in Madhupur and Ghatail upazilas are getting benefits from cultivating the medicinal plant.

Kalmegh, which tastes bitter, has been a common medicine in Bangladesh since ancient

secondary crop as it grows more in shaded areas, they said. At least 12 to 15 maunds of Kalmegh can be produced on each bigha land.

In the peak season, each maund of Kalmegh is being sold at Tk 18,000 to 20,000.

Wholesalers from Dhaka's Karwan Bazar come to the areas to buy Kalmegh, which is also



Farmers tend to an aloe vera and a Kalmegh field in Tangail's Madhupur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

extra money by selling tulsi seeds at Tk 2,000 per kilo.

Local agriculture officials said tulsi plantation requires no chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The entire farming is done with organic fertilisers, and hardly any weed grows.

Ghatail Upazila Agriculture Officer Dilshad Jahan said tulsi is called the "queen" of all herbal plants.

Inspired by Abdullah's success, many farmers in the upazila are now leaning towards tulsi cultivation, she said.

KALMEGH Commercial production of

times. Due to favourable weather conditions, Kalmegh grows everywhere in the country.

Kalmegh is being cultivated commercially at Jangalia, Maguntinagar, Sholakuri, Beribaid, Phulbagchala, Mahishmara and Aushnara village in Madhupur.

Farmers Hyder Ali, Mujibur Rahman, Dulal Miah, Rustam Ali and Muslem Uddin said Kalmegh cultivation does not require any special care.

Mature seeds fall from the trees on the ground and automatically grow.

The plant can be grown as a

exported to India, they said.

If the agriculture department comes forward by providing agricultural loans and forest department by leasing out land, many will take up Kalmegh cultivation, they added.

Madhupur Upazila Agriculture Officer Al Mamun said Kalmegh farming is a good initiative and they are ready to provide all kinds of cooperation.

ALOE VERA

Farmers are cultivating aloe vera, a plant with herbal qualities, after being inspired by the agriculture department.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Ctg mobile court fines biscuit factory Tk 2 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mobile court during a raid at Chattogram's Karnaphuli upazila yesterday fined a biscuit factory Tk 2 lakh for using BSTI seal on packets of unlicensed products.

The mobile court led by Karnaphuli Upazila Assistant Commissioner (Land) Pijush Kumar Chowdhury conducted the drive at Freshway Food & Beverage Limited at Charpatharghata area in Karnaphuli upazila.

During the drive, the mobile court found that bakery items were being produced in an unhygienic way, said Pijush.

He said the drive was conducted upon a number of complaints received.

Besides, there is evidence of the company not having BSTI licence and manufacturing products under different brand names illegally, he added.

No hike in fertiliser price in coming yrs Says agriculture minister

UNB, Dhaka

The government has no plan to raise the prices of fertilisers in the coming years, said Agriculture Minister Dr Muhammad Abdur Razzaque on Sunday.

"The prices of fertilisers will not increase further and the government will ensure that farmers get enough fertilisers," he said, while talking to reporters after attending the meeting of "National Coordination and Advisory Committee on Fertiliser" at the Secretariat.

"We will not allow for a crisis to occur over fertiliser for the continuation of food production and the government will take measures so that the farmers don't face any harassment in this regard. If they face any harassment, we will see poor crop production," he said.

"There is a demand for 27 lakh tonnes of urea fertiliser. Meanwhile, the demand for DAP fertiliser is 5-6 lakh tonnes in the 2023-24 fiscal. However, the government has now fixed it to 16 lakh tonnes," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

“ We will not allow for a crisis to occur over fertiliser for the continuation of food production and the government will take measures so that the farmers don't face any harassment in this regard. If they face any harassment, we will see poor crop production. ”



Protesting the recent arrest of journalists and the case filed against Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman under the Digital Security Act, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists held a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

RUBEL MURDER CASE HC orders IO's suspension for 'perfunctory' probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered to suspend Manikganj Sadar Police Station Sub-inspector Masudur Rahman for conducting a "perfunctory" investigation of a murder case in Manikganj, submitting the charge sheet hurriedly, and providing false information about it before the court.

In response to a petition, the HC scrapped the investigation done by Masudur in the case filed for killing Md Rubel, a hatchery worker in September last year, and directed PBI to conduct a fresh probe into the case and submit the report to the court within two months.

A PBI officer not below the rank of superintendent of police (SP) will investigate the case, the HC said.

The PBI officer has been ordered to investigate whether SI Masudur had any involvement with any third party in conducting his probe and whether Champa Aktar alias Anjona, wife of deceased Rubel, actually filed a murder case against her brother Sohel alias Nurunabi for the killing her husband.

The SP of Manikganj has been directed to keep Masudur suspended from service till further order, for completing the probe in only 24 hours and submitting the charge sheet in 42 hours, along with recording statements of 13 witnesses in around 130 minutes from the time of the murder of Md Rubel, 22, in a hatchery at 12:10am on September 24 last year.

SI Masudur, the then investigation officer of the case, yesterday told the HC that he was at the crime scene from 10:30am to 3:00pm on September 25 for the inquest,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

ASSAULT ON UP CHAIRMAN Two held after filing of case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A case was filed against 46 men with Baulal police station on Saturday in connection with the attack on Abdul Motalab Howladar, chairman of Baulal Upazila Parishad and general secretary of the upazila Awami League unit.

The case was filed 14 days after the incident. Boga Union Jubo League general secretary Didarul Islam filed the case as the plaintiff.

Lawmaker ASM Feroz's nephew SM Faisal Ahmed alias Monir Hossain Mollah, who is the general secretary of the upazila Jubo League and chairman of Kalaia Union Parishad, has been made the main accused.

In the case, 16 accused have been named and 25-30 others have remained unnamed, most of whom are followers of ASM Feroz.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

100 sacks VGF rice seized in Barguna's Betagi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Local administration has seized 100 sacks or 500 kilos of VGF (vulnerable group deeding) rice from a house at Betagi in Barguna.

Upazila Fisheries Officer Samapti Saha, on the orders of the upazila nirbahi officer, seized the rice that was allotted to fishers and was being stocked in a house on Sunday night.

The rice had not been distributed to the intended recipients. However, no arrests were made at the time of seizure.

According to locals, the rice was being stored in a house by Gazi Jalal Ahmed, chairman of Mokamia Union Parishad.

Contacted, the chairman said it was stored in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Indebted to my family for everything I have: Oyshee

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

In her relatively young career, Oyshee has recorded multiple hit albums, won the National Film Award for her playback singing, and spawned multiple blockbusters including *Dushtu Polapain* and *Garir Mechanic*. Recently, she started a new chapter in her life. We talk to the talented singer for more.

Congratulations on your engagement! How did you meet your fiancé?

I met my fiancé, Arefin Sakib Zilani, at a get-together two years ago. After we got to know each other, our families decided that it is now the perfect time to get engaged. He works at a pharmaceutical company. I am very happy, and waiting for both the families to get to know each other better. Please pray for us.

Your parents have been incredibly supportive of your career.

Absolutely, I would be nowhere without them. My late father, Abdul Mannan Milan, gracefully managed everything for me. He coached me about how to carry myself, how to talk to the media, every gesture and every movement.

He was a teacher for me and my siblings. Now that he is no more, I barely know what to say – his absence is disorienting for me. My mother has now taken over that responsibility.

For a girl like me, it would be impossible to stay in the industry and do playback singing without my family's support.

You are now managed by TM Galaxy, I believe. Many believe that you are working exclusively with Gaan Bangla and TM Music. Is that true?
That could not be further from the truth.

I am working with everyone, its just that they now have to contact me through my management company, TM Galaxy. I feel like every artiste should have a professional manager, and I am glad that they are looking over my shows, recordings and contracts. Outside of that, anyone can approach my management company for work.

'Dushtu Polapain' elevated your career in a sense. Do you fear getting stuck in this genre?

Dushtu Polapain was released in December 2021, and I haven't even recovered from that song yet – people all over the country have given it tremendous love. I definitely will do other genres, as I have in the past, and my Gaan Bangla family, especially Taposh bhai, has a strategy set for that. I believe in them wholeheartedly.

It is important for musicians to not stay in their bubbles and think about what 80 percent of the population wants.

Do you have anything to say to your fans?

I have been incredibly lucky to have not just supportive fans, but also well-wishers in media and journalism who have supported me so selflessly. They have genuinely made my life

easier. There is frankly no reason we cannot take Bangla music to an international level before – if Korea can do it with K-pop, so can we! Just believe.



PHOTO: COURTESY



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

Badhan, Tushi, Sabila performing in 'Ityadi' Eid special

Popular stars Azmeri Haque Badhan, Nazifa Tushi and Sabila Nur will be performing in the Eid special episode of *Ityadi*. They will be a part of short plays that will raise social awareness amongst the audience.

Apart from them, three members of the audience (selected by lottery) will also accompany them on stage.

"Our society is polluted with various social problems. To eliminate these types of social issues, we designed the episode so that it can raise awareness," said the authorities.

Apart from this, this year's show will feature thematic dance recitals, choreographed by the famed dance maestros Shamim Ara Nipa and Shibli Mohammad. Moreover, the current Bangladesh Women's National Football Team, along with the Bangladesh Women's National Cricket Team will be part of a special episode called *Desh Gaan*.

Apu Biswas' film will release in 35 Shilpakala Academies

The Apu Biswas starrer, *Prem Pritir Bandhan*, directed by Solaiman Ali Lebu, will be releasing this Eid in theatres. In this film, Joy Chowdhury stars opposite Dhallywood actress Apu Biswas.

"The film received censor board clearance last week. Now, we are all ready to release the film in theatres. We have booked 20 halls already. Apart from this, the film will also be screened at 35 branches of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy all over the country. If the audience wants to taste a different film without Shakib Khan, they can watch this movie. We have left no stone unturned for this film," said Joy to The Daily Star.



NEWS

Mob beats UPDF

FROM PAGE 14

treatment around 10:30pm, the OC added.

Speaking on the matter, UPDF spokesperson Aongya Marma said, "Hlachingmong Marma went to the Schoolpara area for organisational activities around 3:30pm on Sunday.

"Around 10-12 Bangalee settlers led by some unknown people beat him up mercilessly leaving him seriously injured. Later, he died at Khagrachhari hospital."

A procession was brought out in protest of the incident, he said adding that, UPDF would file a case in this regard on Tuesday.

Finland to join Nato

FROM PAGE 14

Turkey continues to hold up Sweden's application. It says that Stockholm harbours members of what Ankara considers terrorist groups – a charge Sweden denies – and has demanded their extradition as a step toward ratifying Swedish membership.

Hungary is also holding up Sweden's admission, citing grievances over criticism of Prime Minister Viktor Orban's policies. But Nato diplomats say they expect Budapest will approve Sweden's bid if it sees Turkey moving to do so.

Stoltenberg pledged to work hard to get Sweden into Nato as soon as possible. He also stressed that Nato and Swedish officials were already working to bring Sweden closer to the alliance even as they wait for membership to be finalised.

In Moscow, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said Russia will boost its forces in its west and northwest.

No need for UN help

FROM PAGE 2

"They are not used for political purposes. They are used for security purposes," the minister said.

He added that the force was formed as per suggestions of the US government and the European Union following the rise of extremists like "Bangla Bhai" back in 2003.

In this regard, the minister mentioned the blasts of bombs in 63 districts in 2003.

"They [Rab] might have done excesses at the beginning. But now they have become very mature," he said.

PM lauds country's

FROM PAGE 14

PM's Deputy Press Secretary KM Shakhawat Moon briefed reporters after the meeting.

Hasina said her government has reached healthcare services to every doorstep following the footsteps of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She said her government has given the highest priority to extending healthcare services to the people.

The physicians who have recently performed the first successful transplantation of organs from brain-dead patient Sara Islam were present at the meeting along with Sara's mother. Also present were Shamima Akhter and Shabnam Sultana, who successfully received the kidneys donated by Sara.

Unease in BNP

FROM PAGE 1

The opposition party's candidates won all five mayoral polls in those cities in 2013.

Party sources said there are many qualified and popular central and local BNP leaders, including former ministers, lawmakers and mayors, who are eying mayoral posts in those five city corporations.

They may contest the polls for at least two reasons – being cornered in the party, and not having a good portfolio in the BNP.

"So, some party leaders can take part in the polls out of grievances," said a senior BNP leader, wishing not to be named.

He also said the AL may entice local BNP leaders to take part in the elections and Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan is an example of that.

Sattar, who resigned from parliament and the BNP, was re-elected MP from Brahmanbaria-2 as an independent candidate in the by-election to the parliamentary constituency in February. Many AL leaders campaigned for Sattar as the party didn't field any candidate in that by-polls.

"So, the government will try to replicate the Brahmanbaria model in the five city corporations. And it is a challenge for the BNP to protect its leaders from falling into the trap

of such a plot," said the senior BNP leader.

A section of party leaders, however, believe that the electoral field should not be left empty, and the BNP should contest the coming city polls to prove that free and fair election is not possible under the incumbent government.

They said that many local BNP leaders worked for the rebel AL candidates in various local elections, and some of them even worked for the ruling party candidates to avoid police harassment.

So, the five city polls could be an opportunity for the party to bring its leaders out from those traps, they added.

Hasan Uddin Sarkar, BNP's mayoral candidate in Gazipur city polls in 2018, said, "The party has decided not to participate in the polls. So, I will not take part in the election. But the party men may run for councillor posts."

Nazrul Islam Manju, who contested Khulna city mayoral polls in 2018, said, "I think the party should review its decision of not participating in the local government elections."

Asked whether he would run for mayor, he said, "I am under pressure from my party colleagues to contest the polls, but I am yet to make a decision in this regard."

Scrap DSA

FROM PAGE 14

January to March this year.

The network claimed that violations of human rights and extrajudicial killings by law enforcement agencies are still ongoing.

They also demanded a trial of law enforcement agency members, if they are found responsible for the death of Sultana Jasmine, 38, an office assistant of Naogaon's Chandipur union land office, who died in the custody of Rab on March 24, two days after she was detained by the battalion.

Meanwhile, in a separate statement yesterday, the cultural organisation Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi also expressed deep concern over the case against Matiur Rahman and demanded repealing of the DSA.

Udichi thinks the DSA is a major tool for curbing freedom of speech and democracy.

"Attempts are going on to gag the voices that go in favour of people," said the statement.

"Journalists, teachers, artists, intellectuals, students, and common people are being harassed by misusing the act," it added.

Udichi demanded repealing the act and releasing all who are kept arrested under this act.

Similarly in Bandarban, a group of journalists also demanded the withdrawal of the case against Prothom Alo editor and the scrapping of the DSA.

They came up with the demand at a human chain in front of the Bandarban press club yesterday.

Covering their face with black cloth, they joined the hour-long programme protesting the DSA, which they termed as a tool for harassing journalists.

Meanwhile in Pabna, a group of journalists and civil society members yesterday formed a human chain in front of the district press club, demanding an end to harassing journalists under DSA.

They also demanded repealing of the act and the withdrawal of the case filed against Matiur Rahman, Samsuzzaman Shams and other journalists.

Single entry exam

FROM PAGE 14

in the interest of students and parents.

"There will be a discussion with university deans and the examination committees regarding the new system. It will be ensured that the single test will be inclusive and will not hurt the uniqueness and autonomy of a university," she added.

Currently, 22 general, science, and other public universities hold a central admission test under a cluster. Besides, seven agriculture and three engineering and technology universities hold tests in two different clusters.

Nine universities – including Dhaka University, Buet, Jahangirnagar University and Chittagong University – are still out of the cluster system.

Asked whether Dhaka University, Buet, Jahangirnagar University and Chittagong University will be part of the new system, Alamgir said, "We are hopeful that they will join it."

Dhaka University Pro VC Prof ASM

Maksud Kamal told this newspaper that at the meeting, he said they would be able to take a final decision on joining the single test only after discussions at the DU academic council and other decision-making bodies.

"If the classes of all higher education institutions start at the same time, it will be good for students," he also said.

At the meeting, UGC member Prof Dil Afroza Begum gave a presentation on the single test method.

According to it, applicants will have the opportunity to migrate to their subject or university of choice only once. But for this, they have to complete the process within five days after the admission process is completed.

Teachers and other individuals involved in the entry test will receive an honorarium through the sale of application forms.

It will be possible to start classes within a month after the admission completes, said the members in her presentation.

Scientists film

FROM PAGE 14

as part of a 10-year study into the deepest fish populations in the world. Snailfish are members of Liparidae family, and while most snailfish live in shallow water, others survive at some of the greatest depths ever recorded, Jamieson said.

During the two-month survey last year, three "landers" – automatic sea robots fitted with high-resolution cameras – were dropped into three trenches – the Japan, Izu Ogasawara and Ryukyu trenches – at varying depths.

In the Izu-Ogasawara trench, footage showed the deepest snailfish hovering calmly alongside other crustaceans on the seabed.

Jamieson classified the fish as a juvenile and said younger deep sea snailfish often stay as deep as possible to avoid being eaten by bigger predators that swim at shallower depths.

Another clip shot at between 7,500 and 8,200 metres in the same trench showed a colony of fish and crustaceans munching at bait tied to an undersea robot.

5 cities

FROM PAGE 1

Alamgir and Md Anisur Rahman were present at the meeting.

As per the decisions, the EC staffers will keep the commission updated about the elections through tablet PCs.

The commission's staffers will perform the duties of returning officers in all city elections.

GAZIPUR

According to the schedule, the last date for the submission of nomination papers for the Gazipur city corporation election is April 27. The papers will be scrutinised on April 30.

The last date for withdrawal of candidacy is May 8.

KHULNA AND BARISHAL

The last date for submission of nomination papers for Khulna and Barishal city corporation polls is May 16, and the scrutiny of the papers will take place on May 18. The last date for withdrawal of nomination is May 25.

RAJSHAHI AND SYLHET

The deadline for nomination paper submission is May 23, and they will be scrutinised on May 25. Candidates can withdraw the nominations by June 1.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

What it takes to get into DU A unit

The enormous pressure a candidate feels during this season is to be expected. I had friends who were stellar performers in the mocks but panicked at the last moment and could not give their best in the real test. Knowing how to manage stress in the exam hall plays a vital role while you're trying to give your possible best.

MASHIYAT NAWAR SAMIHA

Seeing my older brother go through the university admission journey almost five years before me gave me a sneak peek into the rigorosity of the process. As someone who belongs to a batch of students who had lost about a year to Covid-19, stepping into the realm of admission tests was an overwhelming experience, maybe more so than for anyone else.

Dhaka University's A unit admission test is the path that leads to studying engineering, pure science, life science, and other science-related subjects. The test has two major sections: 60 multiple-choice questions in 45 minutes and another 45 minutes for the written part. In the test, students must answer questions on the main subjects they had in their HSC, and then they get to choose between English, Bangla, and their fourth subject. Since I was determined to pursue something related to Biology in my undergrad, I went for Biology. For students who don't want to study Biology related subjects, and have a good command of English, choosing to answer the English section is a good idea. This way, the chance to study engineering and other science subjects remains open.

As I advanced with my preparation, the trickiest part of the test for me was to solve the mathematical problems without a calculator. As I was taking preparation for the engineering admission test alongside DU A unit prep, knowing how to use the calculator efficiently was a crucial skill to adapt. What helped me to get better at doing complex calculations without a calculator was sitting for practice tests every day for a month or so before the actual exam. Getting used to doing calculations in my head or relying on the elimination method for answering multiple choice questions helped me to be more

efficient at solving problems.

For both Chemistry and Physics, it is important to have a clear understanding of basic concepts and accuracy in descriptive writing since the written part has recently been added to the test. Chemistry in the multiple-choice section mostly tests a student's theoretical knowledge, so reading the textbook contents intensively can help them ace it. As I did not have to sit for Biology in my HSC, I had to put extra effort into maintaining a regular revision routine to carry out preparation in Biology alongside the other subjects. Making flashcards of the content that I was struggling to remember and going through them regularly helped me a lot.

Analysing previous years' questions

This applies to almost every admission test you're going to sit for. Analysing the questions from the previous ten years or so gives a rough idea about the actual test. Since the written section is a comparatively newer addition to the test, it's safer to develop equal expertise on both the theoretical and mathematical problems.

Stress management

The enormous pressure a candidate feels during this season is to be expected. I had friends who were stellar performers in the mocks but panicked at the last moment and could not give their best in the real test. Knowing how to manage stress in the exam hall plays a vital role while you're trying to give your very best. To handle the overwhelming feelings, it is a must to attend as many mocks as possible and to give them equal importance as to that of the actual test. Simulating the exam hall environment at the test centre or even at home when giving mocks will help to identify exactly what part of the exam a student is losing concentration or getting perplexed.

Time management

Admission tests generally have a tendency to go in unpredictable directions. So, it comes in handy if students have a preferable sequence of subjects to approach each section. Starting with the subject one is most confident with will give them an early boost in the examination hall. Some subjects require more time to answer than others. Mapping that out in the head beforehand and having a backup plan will reduce some stress.

Knowing how to skip

This is the skill I undermined the most at the beginning of my admission journey. The test is about how accurately students can answer the questions in a very limited time. It is important to accept that one might have to skip a question midway to prevent wasting too much time on one single problem. This will also help in not getting overwhelmed if a question is too difficult to solve on the first try.

Tracking error

The main objective of mock tests is to help students identify their weaknesses and strengths. Keeping track of all the errors made in the practice tests and analysing them is definitely a game changer to utilising the mocks to their best.

Although the rationality of judging one's capability by a ninety-minute-long examination remains questionable, a good deal of luck with hard work is what can get you through this. The end result of success in the DU A unit exam is the opportunity to study some exciting topics with some of the top minds in the country, so putting in the hard work may well be worth it.

The writer is a student of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Dhaka University

How you can use ChatGPT for studying

KOUSHIN UNBER

AI development is progressing at an exponential rate. Whether it's art generators or language models, AI is being used everywhere these days. Amongst all the AI-powered tools available to the public today, the one that's been making the most headlines is OpenAI's chatbot ChatGPT.

From generating YouTube scripts to writing blog posts, ChatGPT can do it all. Amongst its innumerable uses, ChatGPT has also proven to be extremely useful as a supplement to studying. Here's how.

Ask ChatGPT to act as someone

To keep your learning session from getting monotonous, you can ask ChatGPT to imitate a role, profession, or even a fictional character to suit your learning needs. One of my favourite ways to comprehend a topic that seems too difficult is by asking ChatGPT to explain said topic to me as if I am a five-year-old.

This creates some interesting analogies and metaphors for a topic that you might be studying. For example, when asked to simplify nucleophilic substitution, it compared the atoms to players in a game of tag.

Test yourself

You can customise tests to recall crucial bits of a topic you're studying. By running a prompt that specifies what topic you want to test yourself on, the question format, number of options given to you (for multiple choice questions), and the difficulty of those questions, you can devise the AI to test your progress as you go about learning difficult topics.



DESIGN: FAISAL BIN IQBAL

Ask for step-by-step instructions

ChatGPT is modelled to summarise answers by default. Oftentimes you may come across a Physics or Maths problem that you need a thorough explanation for.

Inputting a prompt that starts with something like "give me step by step solutions for..." will generate responses with detailed instructions on how to solve a problem.

The best thing about using AI tools for studying is that they provide very specific solutions, something that your typical Google search fails to do.

Make mnemonics or songs to memorise better
ChatGPT can easily come up with catchy songs, poems, jokes, or verses to help you remember lists or formulae that would otherwise be hard to recall.

You will find that the best decision is to use ChatGPT as an appendage to your core learning instead of depending on it solely for learning new information. The language model has some significant limitations when it comes to providing accurate information, so you might have to cross check some facts through a quick Google search or your textbooks.

It can be dangerous to blindly trust the AI model at all times, so use it as a tool to approach your studies and help understand topics in ways that are unique to you and are not readily available in the real world.

Koushin currently keeps 3 screens turned on in front of her to prevent the chance of a thought occurring. Replenish her fugitive attention span at koushinunber27@gmail.com

Preparing for O levels without attending COACHING CLASSES

AZNEEF CHOWDHURY

If you've been a student in the last ten years or so, chances are you've probably invested a significant amount of time chasing ruthless coaching schedules. Coaching culture is nothing new in Bangladesh, but the cult-like reverence it has gained certainly is. In the eyes of many parents and students, preparing for your board exams without after-school help is the same as not preparing at all.

Despite this, I've had the rare opportunity to prepare for my O levels without attending coaching classes at all.

Whilst the mere idea of having to study without after-school help might seem daunting to some, my experience has been painless and straightforward. Granted, I've had to put a reasonable amount of attention into my school classes, but apart from that, the internet and books are all I've needed to keep up my grades. For O and A levels, online resources are widespread and publicly available for everyone to access, and arguably a better experience than external



coaching, partly because you can pace yourself accordingly instead of following a pedagogy crafted for a more diverse demographic.

A major advantage of not attending coaching classes is the amount of liberty it has offered me. Instead of spending hours stuck in traffic and rushing

everywhere to attend coaching classes, I've been able to find time to indulge in activities that interest me and develop my extracurriculars. The liberty of studying on my own has skyrocketed my productivity and made studying less stressful than it is for my peers.

Of course, not attending coaching classes has its drawbacks too. For many, the initial stages of self-studying are akin to the effects of withdrawal one gets by quitting an addiction. Untethering yourself from the coaching culture seems unfathomably difficult in the early days, as you struggle to settle in and find a track in your curriculum. Thankfully, this subsides quickly as you get adjusted to your new lifestyle and discover what suits you best.

One problem that persists in my experience is distraction. A rough day, a stressful exam, or even just a foul mood can sometimes result in my pace dwindling and cause lethargy to overwhelm my motivation, which can become particularly detrimental considering the limited time students get to prepare for their exams.

Another side-effect of not going to coaching classes is the loneliness it often harbours within people. These classes are not just for studying. They're also hubs for socialising. Many of my peers credit their coaching for the people they share bonds with today. Not going to coaching classes often mean missing out on such things.

Study leaves at school become boring and frustrating, and social media simply serves as proof of your isolation, bringing out the worst of your mental health and making you feel miserable. Fortunately, all of this only lasts for an incredibly short time, and spending free time with your friends instantly recharges your battery.

Not going to coaching classes isn't for everyone, but if it works for you, having the freedom and liberty of not relying on external help may well be the greatest privilege you'll have in your academic career.

Azneef keeps switching from one incomplete task to another. Remind him to finish his work at itsazneefchowdhury@gmail.com

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Remittance is again our saving grace

There is still scope to increase remittance inflow through the official channel

We are pleased to know that remittance inflow into Bangladesh rose to a seven-month high in March. According to data from Bangladesh Bank, remitters sent home \$2.02 billion last month, the highest since September last year when \$1.53 billion came into the country. It is important to remember that remittance usually goes up before Eid-ul-Fitr, which will be celebrated in the fourth week of this month. Therefore, it would be unwise for us to get too carried away by this increase. However, at a time when there is growing pressure on our foreign exchange reserves, the increased flow will provide some much-needed relief for the country.

Another reason which could have encouraged greater remittance inflow is the fact that banks have been offering remitters a higher rate for the dollar than the one set by the Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association (Bafeda). Data from Bangladesh Bank shows that remittance inflow through the banking channel rose by 29.29 percent in March compared to the previous month. Still, there is much more that can be done to further increase it by encouraging the use of official channels and reducing demand for sending remittance through unofficial channels like hundi. And we hope the concerned authorities are looking at that from all possible angles.

Given the crucial contribution that migrant workers continue to make to our economy, the government should also do more to help them in terms of sending money back to the country, and to ensure hassle-free migration. Additionally, as instructed by the prime minister on Sunday, the concerned authorities should try and find new destination countries to send our aspiring migrant workers to. Not only can this increase our remittance earnings, but by diversifying destination countries for migrants, it can increase their employment opportunities as well.

At the same time, however, it is disappointing that export earnings have dropped for the first time in five months in March. Last month, exporters brought in \$4.64 billion, down nearly 2.5 percent from a year earlier, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB). However, the bigger picture shows that our overall export earnings have been in the positive territory between July and March of the current fiscal year, with receipts growing 8.07 percent year-on-year to \$41.72 billion. This growth, unsurprisingly, has been primarily driven by the readymade garments sector, which saw a 12.17 percent growth in the same period, according to the EPB. But apart from the garments sector, most other major sectors registered a negative growth year-on-year. The authorities should take a closer look at why that is the case and try to rectify it.

With the global economy continuing to struggle, and our foreign exchange reserves still at a lower-than-adequate level, increasing our remittance and exports earnings is more crucial now than ever before. The government should try to reduce the costs and hassles of migration and travel for our aspiring migrant workers, and make sure they are provided with all the necessary incentives – financial incentives in particular – to send in remittance through the banking channel.

Sutang River demands urgent attention

Its water has become so polluted that it can no longer be used

Yet another river is in grave danger. Sutang, a transboundary river that stretches about 82km into Bangladesh's territory connecting three upazilas of Habiganj, is reportedly in such a pathetic state that it can no longer be classified as a natural source of water. At a time when we have become accustomed to such painful accounts of our rivers on a regular basis, the news of another one meeting the same fate is perhaps not shocking. But this has real consequences for the people who live nearby, and by extension the whole country as it turns from a once-fabled land of rivers into one of dying rivers.

A report by this daily quotes villagers and local community leaders who described how Sutang, which was a source of livelihood for fishing folks and enriched surrounding croplands for centuries, is now little more than a big dump. Over the last decade, several hundred factories have sprung up on the banks of the river, and they discharge their waste there indiscriminately. Among them are tiles, dyeing, chemical and battery factories. Their waste has led to the water turning "blacker and thicker than tar", as per a recent BBC report. The result is, fish can hardly survive there, while crops are being affected when the water is used for irrigation. Humans and cattle are also infected with different diseases if they consume it. And then there is the awful stench. As a former chairman said, "We have to use face masks when we come nearer to the river."

Sutang is one of the three rivers believed to be in the worst state among the 56 that were surveyed by the Rivers and Delta Research Centre (RDRC) as part of a year-long study. Its findings, unveiled in mid-March, showed massive levels of pollution during the lean period when the natural flow of rivers is at its lowest. Key pollutants including microplastics have been found in all of them, with industrial and municipal wastes dumped in rivers near cities and towns flowing into those in far-flung coastal areas. Sutang, according to the RDRC study, has a dissolved oxygen level of 0.4 when the standard is 4.5 to 8 mg per litre. It is feared that the lives of about two lakh people from more than one hundred villages in Habiganj will be endangered if the authorities fail to check its continued decline.

Untreated industrial waste has been frequently flagged as a major source of river pollution in Bangladesh. Even though factories near rivers are supposed to treat their waste before discharging them, most don't even have effluent treatment plants (ETP), and they can get away with it thanks to lax enforcement of relevant regulations. But the state of rivers like Sutang demands immediate interventions. We urge the concerned authorities to take stern action against those illegally dumping waste in rivers and thus slowly killing them.

When hunger strikes...



Dr Selim Raihan is professor at the Department of Economics of the University of Dhaka, and executive director at the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem).

SELIM RAIHAN

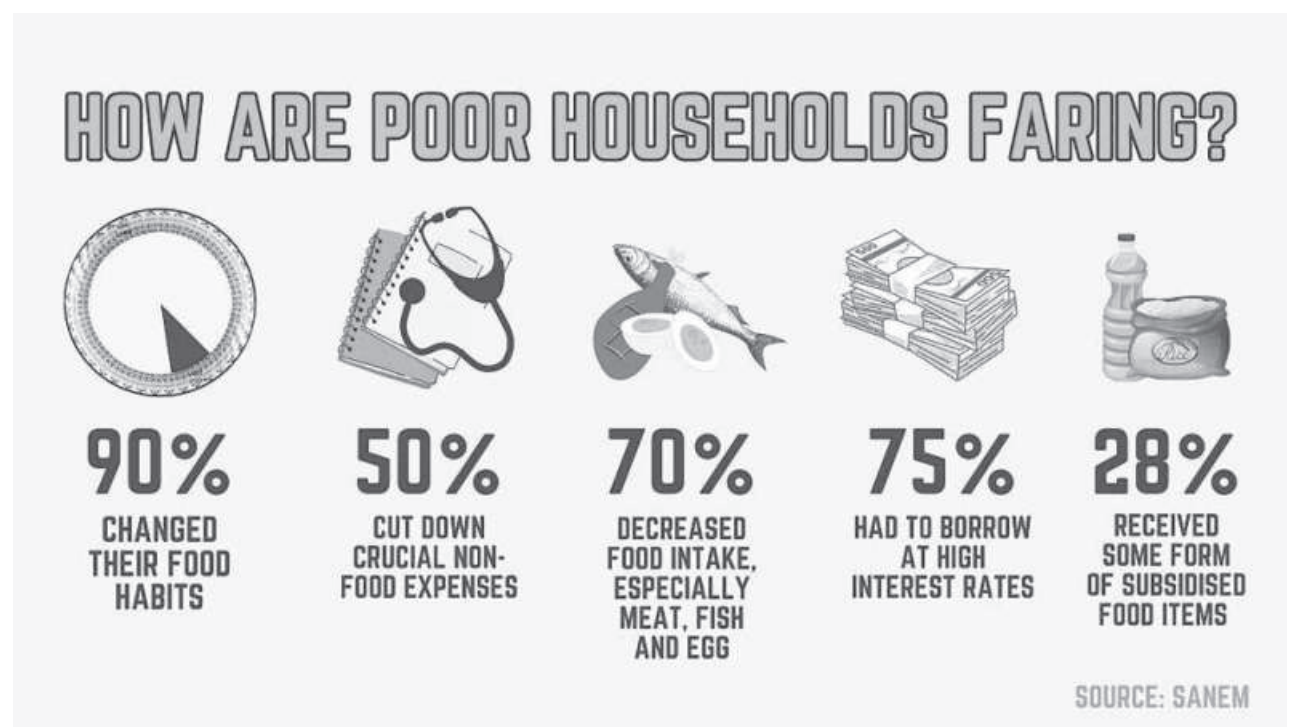
Uncertainty faces the poor people in Bangladesh due to the erratic nature of commodity prices in both the domestic and international markets. The staggering rise in food prices combined with the decline in real income is making it difficult for them to buy the food they need. From February 2022 to February 2023, the country's annual inflation rate (point to point) increased from 6.2 percent to 8.8 percent. In some months during this period, it went well above nine percent.

The current inflation rate in Bangladesh is the highest in 11 years. Real income is eroded by inflation, which lowers the poor's purchasing power. Those who have limited employment opportunities and those who work in the informal sector continue to struggle. The great majority of the poor live in uncertain situations since their income or salaries aren't adjusted for excessive inflation. Many poor people are compelled to use their savings or loans to pay for their daily necessities. For many others, such options are also very limited.

While the officially reported inflation rates are still high, there are concerns that the actual inflation rate may be much higher for low-income households. A recent analysis by the South Asian Network for Economic Modeling (Sanem) shows that poor people in Bangladesh face much higher rates of inflation than the official rate. A large part of their income is spent on food products. Another concern is that the inflationary conditions seem unlikely to improve soon.

The reasons behind this soaring inflation in recent months include escalated prices of food, fuel, and other commodities in the global market, shortage of domestic production, supply-side disruptions as well as imperfections and anomalies in the local markets, and depreciation of the taka. Problems in domestic economic and market management are as much to blame as the global issues for this persistent inflationary pressure.

To investigate the effect of inflation on the livelihoods of poor households, Sanem recently surveyed 1,600 low-income households across eight divisions – 800 households in urban



and 800 households in rural areas. The survey was conducted between March 9 and 18 this year. Some of the major findings of this survey are striking and alarming.

First, while on average the poor households reported that their monthly income didn't rise over the past six months (in fact, in some cases it declined), their monthly total expenditure rose by 13 percent and food expenditure rose by 17 percent. It is important to note that poor households can't afford to increase monthly expenditures much, as their expenditures are constrained by limited incomes.

Second, the major coping strategies of these poor households included changing food habits, borrowing, cutting down expenditures on health, education, and clothing, and exhausting savings. Ninety percent of the poor households reported having changed their food habits, and more than 50 percent of households cut down important non-food expenditures. Also, 75 percent of poor households had to rely on borrowing from different microcredit and other informal sources at high interest rates, which escalated the risk of

falling into a debt trap. Third, more than 70 percent of poor households had to make downward adjustments in food intake, especially meat, fish and egg, and switched to low quality food, which made them more food insecure now compared to six months ago. Fourth, a majority of the surveyed

pressure and the resulting food insecurity of the poorer households need to be the top priority now. There is a need to ensure adequate supply of food items in the market by substantially increasing domestic production of food crops, facilitating timely sourcing of critical food imports, and finding alternative

households were not under any social protection programmes, and only 28 percent of them were receiving subsidised food items under the government's OMS programme or TCB cards. The frequency of receiving food items in a month at subsidised prices through OMS/TCB was very low, and most of the poor households had to spend hours receiving such support. This suggests that the coverage of the government's social protection programmes remained largely insufficient during the crisis time.

Fifth, the future outlook of poor households seemed to be bleak. Eighty-five percent of these households were reported to be in danger of falling into a deeper debt trap.

The aforementioned analysis suggests that it has been a challenging time for poor households in the country throughout the enlarged phase of high inflationary pressure. The uncertain global economic situation and domestic economic crisis may prolong the woes of the poor. Under these circumstances, what needs to be done? Addressing the inflationary

import sources. The government's social protection programmes for the underprivileged need to be significantly expanded as well. Food support programmes and the number of TCB cards have to be increased substantially. The amount and frequency of distribution of subsidised food items need to be enhanced. All poor people should be brought under the government's social protection programmes.

In this regard, issues such as underallocation of resources, targeting errors, lack of coordination among ministries, and corruption and institutional weaknesses must be addressed. The domestic market management in terms of market monitoring and enforcing rules and regulation to prevent anti-competitive practices remain very weak in Bangladesh, which often contribute to escalated food prices without any proper reason. Therefore, the market monitoring mechanism needs to be strengthened. At the same time, the capacity and independence of government agencies responsible for preventing anti-competitive practices by large corporations in the market need to be enhanced.

How to make sure women entrepreneurs continue to thrive

Humayra Anjumi Nabila is a research associate at Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID).
Lamia Shams is a senior research associate at Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID).

HUMAYRA ANJUMI NABILA and LAMIA SHAMS

In Bangladesh, women are taking on a pivotal role in the nation's ambitious drive towards achieving the developed country status by 2041. Over the last decades, Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in reducing infant and child mortality rates, alleviating poverty, promoting women's entrepreneurship, and improving access to education and healthcare. These accomplishments have garnered extensive recognition, with Bangladesh topping the list of South Asian countries in gender equality, as per the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index 2022. Bangladesh has demonstrated exceptional regional performance, having effectively bridged over 69 percent of its gender gap, thereby securing the 71st position globally among 146 countries.

The increase in the number of young female students has been substantial. At present, girls account for 49.5 percent of students in primary schools, indicating a marked departure from numbers of previous years. Meanwhile, in terms of net enrolment, female students come out on top with 97.44 percent in the primary and 79.09 percent in the secondary level in 2021. The introduction of different incentive packages (including stipend programmes for girls, provision of separate toilets, and midday meals) have encouraged female students to attend school. Additionally,

Bangladesh is on track to achieve gender parity in tertiary education, which has increased from 0.37 in 1991 to 0.80 in 2021. The increased enrolment of women in educational institutions has facilitated a surge in their participation within the labour market, signifying momentous development for Bangladesh. The expansion of educational opportunities has empowered women to perform more significant roles within the workforce.

Bangladeshi women have made notable progress in terms of their participation in the labour force over the last decade. The country's flagship export sector, the readymade garments (RMG) industry, has been a driving force for women's employment in the mainstream economy. Since the 1990s, women's labour force participation has more than doubled. However, it is currently stagnant at a low level of 36 percent. Though this is still higher than in other South Asian countries such as India (22 percent), Pakistan (22 percent), and Sri Lanka (35 percent), our share of women's labour force participation is much lower than Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia (76 percent), Indonesia (53 percent), the Philippines (43 percent), Thailand (59 percent), and Vietnam (63 percent).

Despite the increased participation of women in different sectors, there remains a lack of dynamism in their employment. More women

entrepreneurs have initiated their own businesses and created employment opportunities for other women, but they are encountering several challenges. Meanwhile, due to the pandemic, 41 percent of women-led businesses had to completely shut down their operation. Those who continued had to either reduce in size or relocate to smaller/cheaper premises. About 17 percent of the women-led Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) had to completely close down and one-third of women entrepreneurs had to reduce business operations.

To cushion the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government rolled out stimulus packages for businesses. But, of the total loan disbursement, only 2.65 percent was received by 4,913 women entrepreneurs.

Women's access to financial services is constrained by their limited asset ownership, lack of awareness regarding credit facilities, and general social exclusion. Cumbersome documentation procedures, distance from bank branches, unsuitable financial products, and negative attitudes of staff towards women are also factors that limit women from accessing necessary capital and credit facilities required for running a business. Additionally, women's mobility constraints, socio-cultural factors, and travel safety are important considerations in work-related decisions. The poor physical infrastructure in most semi-urban, urban, and rural areas pose challenges to women's mobility outside their home. Due to this, women often struggle to access the marketplace to purchase the required resources. Moreover, while women in Bangladesh can legally sign a contract, open a

bank account, register a business, and apply for loans without the consent of husbands, there are banks and programmes that continue to require consent from male relatives or husbands. Women even face significant legal barriers to running businesses, particularly those that are deemed to be physically arduous or "dangerous" for them.

The government of Bangladesh, along with other government agencies, has implemented multiple policies and strategies aimed at addressing the difficulties confronted by women entrepreneurs to ensure a supportive environment for female-led businesses. In light of the various obstacles encountered by women entrepreneurs, a gender-sensitive approach must be taken to lessen the challenges. Meanwhile, burdensome documentation requirements need to be streamlined through automation and simpler procedural requirements.

Given the multifarious challenges of women's access to finance for their businesses, one potential solution could be to offer collateral-free loans through close collaboration with district women chambers. To facilitate such lending practices, the experience of SME Foundation in credit wholesaling could be explored, particularly for easing the financial constraints experienced by exporters. Despite policy support provided by national plans and the central bank, many women entrepreneurs are unable to access loans due to procedural barriers. In order to address this, loan application procedures could be simplified and more lenient payment terms could be offered. In addition, a dedicated business promotion and capacity building intervention should be undertaken to promote women's participation in businesses.



The condition of Karatoa River in Bogura, shrunk into a canal-like state due to rampant encroachment and subsequent pollution, depicts the reality of rivers in Bangladesh.

FILE PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Spare our rivers from certain death



Anu Muhammad is a professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University.

ANU MUHAMMAD

Recently, a minister commented that rivers in Bangladesh were too wide. He went on to say that we don't need such wide rivers, and that we have to narrow them down and recover land from the riverbanks to build resorts and roads and implement other forms of development.

Initially, I thought it was one of those times when our ministers make irresponsible statements. But as it turned out, these were not mere comments.

For years, big projects have been planned around rivers with the aim to improve the rivers' navigability and waterflow by shrinking them. According to the latest media report, the Jamuna River will be narrowed at the estimated cost of more than Tk 1,000 crore, of which more than Tk 800 crore will be provided by the World Bank as a loan.

There are a lot of aspects of this project: there will be studies, visits to foreign countries, workshops, seminars, and construction. A lot of interests are attached to this project, so this is great news for many of the stakeholders involved. This is not the first time this is happening either; there is also another project around the Brahmaputra River, also being funded by the World Bank.

We are currently deprived of water in the Teesta River, and there is no news of progress in signing the Teesta water-sharing deal. As the situation stands right now, there are numerous obstacles being built on the Teesta's upstream in India. In

Many initiatives and discussions could have been undertaken on this issue; there could have been multilateral meetings, if not bilateral, but nothing of the sort has been done. Instead, a megaproject has been planned with China's involvement where the Teesta's banks will be pulled in to make it narrower, the river will be dredged, and resorts will be built on the land that's recovered. There is a craze surrounding resorts all of a sudden – that they need to

Our rivers need to be at the forefront of all economic, political, and social discussions. Those who care even slightly about the rights of Bangladeshi people, the existence of Bangladesh, and the future of our country, must oppose the development projects that are detrimental to our rivers, the aggression towards the rivers and the encroachment of the rivers.

be built so people can visit them and generate tourism. And for that, rivers need to be narrowed down.

There are plans with the Meghna and the Brahmaputra as well. Some of them are in partnership with India, and the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are involved, too. Many Bangladeshi water resource experts are also involved with these. Most importantly, the organisation that is responsible for ensuring waterflow through the rivers in Bangladesh, that is responsible for looking after the health of our rivers and for taking the necessary steps against river erosion – the Bangladesh Water Development Board – is the one undertaking these projects.

Rivers aren't separate from our collective existence; rivers are connected to the existence of Bangladesh itself. If Bangladesh has an important strategic resource, it has to be our water. Our agriculture, livelihood, soil fertility, biodiversity are all dependent on our rivers. And these rivers are now under attack.

These attacks are coming from three directions. The first kind is coming from India with its barrages and river connection projects. The second is Bangladesh's own projects that are being undertaken in the name of development. Some projects are filling up the riverbeds, some are disrupting the waterflow with sluice gates, and some projects are impeding the rivers' free flow of water with construction along the banks. Coal-based projects and other similar undertakings are polluting the rivers as well.

The third kind is coming from powerful individuals in Bangladesh – those who are close to power. They are encroaching on the rivers, turning them into drains by polluting them. If one travelled around Bangladesh today, they'd come upon many bridges across rivers that have no water in them.

In the late 1980s, a Flood Action Plan (FAP) was introduced, in partnership with the World Bank. The plan was to create 4,000km of walls and dams along the Padma, the Meghna, and the Brahmaputra to control the waterflow. It's difficult to understand the level of scientific and intellectual thought that led to this plan. The driving force behind it seemed to have been that the bigger the plans are, the more economic opportunity is created for those involved, such as construction companies, engineers, economists, consultants, experts, firms affiliated with the organisations that provide loans, etc.

The authorities were unable to implement the FAP because there were protests at that time. But they've been doing the same thing under different names since. Right now, the Delta Plan that is being implemented is somewhat similar.

The condition our rivers are in right now is a threat to our existence. The government has a simple way to resolve the river dispute with India. In 1997, an international water convention was held by the United Nations. The convention clearly states what rights are held by the countries upstream and downstream. Bangladesh has not yet ratified this convention – neither has India. It makes sense for India to not ratify it as they are an upstream country, but Bangladesh needs to ratify the convention quickly. After doing that, Bangladesh can bring this issue to the international community. This is an easy way to ensure waterflow of the Teesta, the Meghna, the Jamuna, the Brahmaputra, and all other shared rivers, especially as bilateral discussions with India have not led to an agreement in many years. The fact that the government hasn't ratified the UN convention yet is a big problem.

Looking within the country, development projects have a dangerous aspect as they are destructive to our rivers. These are the projects that will narrow rivers down as they progress. This may increase our GDP, by filling up rivers, building resorts and growing tourism. But when a river's natural course is interfered with, the river will die. Many rivers have already been murdered like this.

Our rivers need to be at the forefront of all economic, political, and social discussions. Those who care even slightly about the rights of Bangladeshi people, the existence of Bangladesh, and the future of our country, must oppose the development projects that are detrimental to our rivers, the aggression towards the rivers and the encroachment of the rivers. On the one hand, we see the High Court ruling that rivers are living entities, and on the other hand, we see repeated attacks on these living entities. Thus, voices should be raised and discussions ought to be had on this issue from all quarters. We must also raise our voice against those experts who are involved in such destructive initiatives and are giving them credibility.

Transcribed and translated by Azmin Azran.

DSA and the quest for an obliged press



Meer Ahsan Habib is a Hubert Humphrey Fellow at Arizona State University. His Twitter handle is @meeriyadh

MEER AHSAN HABIB

The use of the Digital Security Act (DSA) to target journalists in Bangladesh is deeply concerning and goes against the principles of free journalism and freedom of expression. A free and independent press is essential for any democratic society, and journalists must be allowed to report on issues of public interest without fear of retaliation or censorship.

The use of DSA to suppress critical reporting is particularly troubling as it can be interpreted broadly and lead to the criminalisation of legitimate journalism. This not only stifles press freedom, but also undermines the ability of citizens to access accurate and timely information, which is essential to hold governments and other powerful actors accountable.

The recent case filed against Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman and the arrest of its reporter Samsuzzaman Shams are examples of the harassment and intimidation that is being used to curb bold journalism by the newspaper. The case must be withdrawn, as with all cases filed against journalists under the DSA.

The law minister has talked about amending the DSA to prevent its misuse, and also promised that the law won't be used arbitrarily against journalists. However, cases are still being filed against journalists under this law, which is a clear threat to the freedom of press. Samsuzzaman was sent to jail after his bail petition was rejected initially (he was granted bail in one of the cases against him on April 3). Filing cases under the DSA one after another is a significant blow to the country's newspaper industry and freedom of expression.

There have been worrying incidents of violence and intimidation against journalists reported recently, such as attacks on reporters covering the Supreme Court elections, an assault on the brother of a journalist of Al-Jazeera, an attack on a photojournalist of Dhaka Tribune. These events demonstrate a concerning trend that poses a threat to the safety of journalists. It is essential to denounce such acts of violence and ensure that journalists are protected when carrying out their critical work.

Arrests of and criminal proceedings against journalists in any country warrant particular scrutiny and attention. The authorities should investigate each of these instances promptly and impartially if they truly believe in the rule of law, democracy, and freedom of the press.

It is unacceptable that Samsuzzaman Shams was missing for 30 hours after being taken into custody and before being presented in court. The law stipulates that a person who is lawfully detained must be produced before a court within

24 hours; the law enforcement agency that detained Shams clearly failed to adhere to this requirement. Moreover, it is concerning that the case for which the reporter was brought to court was filed more than 20 hours after he was initially apprehended.

These actions raise serious questions about the treatment of detainees and adherence to legal protocols, and it is imperative that they are investigated thoroughly to ensure that such violations don't occur again in the future.

If any media outlet publishes a report that goes against the ethics of journalism, aggrieved parties should address their concerns through the Bangladesh Press Council. The direct arrest of a reporter under non-bailable sections of the DSA without regard for the Press Council demonstrates the government's intention to exert control over the media and punish those who express criticism or dissent.

It is pertinent to mention that the Bangladesh Press Council is a statutory body established under the Bangladesh Press Council Act, 1974, with the mandate to promote and maintain freedom of the press, improve journalistic standards, and adjudicate complaints against newspapers and news agencies.

Sadly, the council is largely seen as being ineffective in addressing cases of media censorship, harassment, and violence against journalists. Many journalists and media organisations have criticised the council's slow and bureaucratic procedures, as well as its perceived bias towards government interests.

The self-styled ineffectiveness of the Press Council has created a regulatory void in the media landscape, leaving journalists and media outlets vulnerable. This has led to a chilling effect on the media, with journalists increasingly facing intimidation and harassment, and media outlets self-censoring to avoid government reprisals. Strengthening the Press Council and ensuring its independence from government influence is essential to creating a more conducive environment for free and independent journalism in Bangladesh.

As the 12th parliamentary election in Bangladesh is less than a year away, it is crucial for the government to uphold journalistic pluralism and independence. Failure to do so will undermine the democratic legitimacy of the election.

The arrest of Samsuzzaman Shams and the case filed against Matiur Rahman reflect a broader pattern of media crackdowns in Bangladesh. The arrest of Shams also violates his constitutional right to safety as a citizen and sets a negative example of media control and punishment.

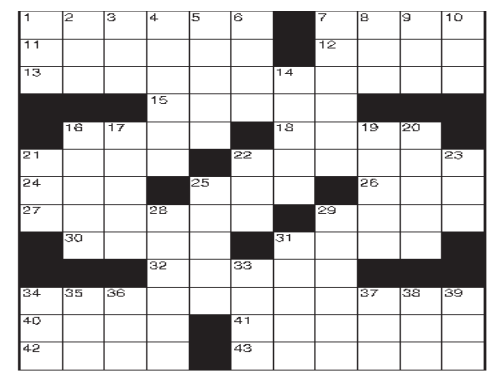
The increasing use of the DSA against journalists is concerning. The cases filed against journalists under the DSA must be withdrawn, and repressive laws like the DSA act must be abolished to uphold the freedom of mass media and expression.

Bangladesh successfully qualifies the definition of "Hybrid Regime." The last remaining resistance is the "Partly Free" press. Does the state want an obliged one?



CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Full and new, for two
 - 7 Sketch
 - 11 Tie down
 - 12 Part to play
 - 13 Hard to control
 - 15 Camera setting
 - 16 On the house
 - 18 Sunset setting
 - 21 Multi-colored
 - 22 Piece that moves diagonally
 - 24 Sty resident
 - 25 Manx or Siamese
 - 26 Mine matter
 - 27 Preplexed
 - 29 Sign of disuse
 - 30 Guinness
 - 31 Dorothy's dog
 - 32 Violinist's need
 - 34 Like some
 - 17 Majestic
 - 19 Holler
 - 20 Statue subject
 - 21 Letter after upsilon
 - 22 Chips buy
 - 23 Parrot or puppy
 - 25 Winter quaff
 - 28 Weasel's kin
 - 29 Nancy's hubby
 - 31 Cover words
 - 33 Wound reminder
 - 34 Ewe's mate
 - 35 Inventor Whitney
 - 36 Great weight
 - 37 Life story, for short
 - 38 Director Spike
 - 39 Curvy letter



FRIDAY'S ANSWERS



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

Killing of war blogger was terrorist act

Says Kremlin, cites evidence linking Ukraine to bombing; woman suspect held

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia yesterday accused Ukraine of organising the murder of a prominent war blogger in a St Petersburg cafe and arrested a young Russian woman shown in a police video admitting planting the bomb that killed him and injured over 30 others.

The Kremlin called Vladlen Tatarsky's murder a "terrorist act," citing the statement from the National Anti-terrorism Committee as evidence that Ukraine might have been behind the killing. "The active phase of the investigation is now under way," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"We see quite vigorous steps to detain suspects. Let's be patient and wait for the next announcements from our special services, which are working on this."

Ukraine, which did not take responsibility for Sunday's attack, blamed "domestic terrorism" for the murder of Maxim Fomin, a Russian military blogger and cheerleader for Russia's invasion of Ukraine who called himself Vladlen Tatarsky.

Darya Trepova, the 26-year-old Russian woman arrested over his murder, confessed in a video released by the interior ministry that she had planted the bomb that killed him.

But unconfirmed Russian media reports said she had told investigators that she had been set up and had not known she was carrying a bomb.

Footage of the moment the blast ripped through the cafe released by the Fontanka.ru news outlet showed a powerful explosion shaking the length of the ground floor venue, bringing down parts of its outside terrace in the process.

Tatarsky's murder appeared to be the second assassination on Russian soil of a figure closely connected to the conflict in Ukraine, after the car bomb killing of Darya Dugina, daughter of a nationalist ideologue, outside Moscow last summer. Russia also accused Ukraine at the time. Kyiv denied involvement.

With over 500,000 followers on the Telegram messaging service, Tatarsky - who had himself fought in Ukraine in the past - mixed ultra-nationalist messaging with criticism of the way Moscow is prosecuting what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine.



A visitor stands next to children drawings in the basement of a school where villagers were kept for almost a month by Russian troops in the village of Yahidne, north of Kyiv, a year after the liberation of the settlement, yesterday amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

'Duty to deter Israeli escalation' in Jerusalem: Jordan King

AFP, Amman

Jordan's King Abdullah II expressed on Sunday a commitment to "safeguard" Jerusalem's holy sites, in a meeting in Amman with Muslim and Christian religious leaders from the city.

A statement from the royal court said the king told the delegation, led by Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, that Jordan "will always be with you".

"It is the duty of every Muslim to deter Israeli escalations against... holy sites in Jerusalem," the king said according to the statement.

The meeting follows tensions with the Israeli government over a minister's remarks denying the existence of the Palestinian people and fears of a flare-up in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan,

which began on March 23.

The king touted a long-term commitment to preserving "peace and harmony" at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound - Islam's third holiest site which Jordan administers. It is built on top of what Jews call the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site.

On Friday, Israeli police shot dead an Arab Israeli medical student at the compound. The force said he had grabbed and fired an officer's gun, a claim Mohammed al-Asibi's family rejects.

King Abdullah also hailed "Jerusalemites'... efforts to safeguard" the holy sites and "stressed the need to stop the displacement of Christians, as well as the repeated attacks on churches, religious figures and Christian property in Jerusalem", according to the statement.

On Friday, church leaders in Jerusalem appealed to the Israeli government to ensure Christians are able to worship freely during Easter and its run-up, expressing concern at mounting violence and acts of desecration over the past year.

During Sunday's meeting the Jordanian king "called on the international community to take a stand against the exclusionary and racist statements made recently by some Israeli officials", the statement said.

Last month, the foreign ministry in Amman said it had summoned Israel's ambassador to receive a "strongly worded letter of protest" following a widely condemned speech by far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

At an event in Paris, Smotrich said "there isn't a Palestinian people".

NABLUS RAID Israeli forces kill two Palestinians

AFP, Nablus

Israeli forces shot dead two Palestinians yesterday in a morning raid in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said, in what the army described as "counterterrorism activity". "Two martyrs shot by the occupation (Israel) in Nablus," the ministry confirmed in a brief statement, without elaborating on their identities. The Israeli army said it had carried out the raid to apprehend two individuals linked to a shooting attack in which two Israeli soldiers were injured last month in the West Bank town of Huwara. "During the activity, a number of armed gunmen fired at the forces who responded with live fire. Hits were identified," the army statement said, adding that two individuals were arrested. Israeli forces have carried out a number of deadly raids in the flashpoint city of Nablus in recent months with the emergence of a militant group Lions' Den, which has been blamed for a number of attacks on Israeli targets. The Lions' Den said its members were involved in "confronting the occupation forces' storming of the city of Nablus". The raid came two days after a peak in violence that saw two killed in confrontations with Israeli forces.

Trump to fly to NY for court surrender

REUTERS, NEW YORK

Former US President Donald Trump was set to fly from Florida to New York City yesterday, ahead of his scheduled arraignment related to hush money paid to a porn star before the 2016 election, as security tightens in Manhattan. Trump, the first former US president to face criminal charges, is due to be arraigned, fingerprinted and photographed at the downtown Manhattan courthouse today. His lawyers have said he will enter a plea of not guilty. The specific charges included in the grand jury indictment have not been disclosed; today's arraignment marks Trump's first appearance in court in the case. In a social media post late on Sunday, Trump said he planned to leave his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach at noon for the Trump Tower in Manhattan before heading to the courthouse this morning. A court official said the arraignment was planned for 2:15 pm (18:15 GMT) today. Trump then will return to Florida and deliver remarks at Mar-a-Lago at 8:15 pm today, his office said.



Families hold a banner reading "justice for the families; stop to the killing of our children" during a white march following an overnight flare up in drug gang violence in Le Castellat district of Marseille, southern France, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US journalist appeals Russian detention

AFP, Moscow

US journalist Evan Gershkovich, who was arrested in Russia last week on spying claims that he denies, is appealing his detention, a Moscow court said yesterday.

Gershkovich, 31, is believed to be the first foreign journalist arrested on spying allegations since the collapse of the Soviet Union. His arrest has drawn outrage from the West.

A spokeswoman for Moscow's Lefortovo district court said: "The date of the hearing on his detention appeal will be announced this week."

Advertisement for Bangladesh Sycamore Light Company Limited (BSCL) regarding recruitment and company information.

ECONOMIC WOES Egypt's Sisi makes snap KSA visit

AFP, Riyadh

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi met Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler on a brief visit late on Sunday, state media said, as the North African country grapples with severe economic difficulties.

Sisi was greeted at Jeddah airport by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and was waved off again several hours later by the 37-year-old, according to the Saudi Press Agency.

Few details were given about the meeting, but import-dependent Egypt's economic fortunes have plunged since Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent wheat prices soaring, fuelling rampant inflation.

Saudi Arabia, which will host an Arab League summit next month, is also engaging in significant de-escalation in the turbulent region, signalling a return to diplomatic relations with arch-rival Iran after a seven-year gap.

"They discussed developments in the regional and international situation and the efforts exerted in addressing them, in addition to tackling all issues of common concern," SPA said.

Sisi's visit comes after Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan said in January that oil-rich Riyadh would stop providing unconditional aid to Egypt, setting off a brief spat between state-linked media in both countries.

Official notice from Bangladesh regarding recruitment for the National Election Commission (NEC) and related information.

S CHINA SEA ROW Ready to negotiate with China Says Malaysian PM

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said yesterday that Malaysia was prepared to negotiate the South China Sea dispute with Beijing to safeguard the country's energy exploration efforts.

China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea — a strategic waterway through which trillions of dollars in trade pass annually — despite an international court ruling that Beijing's assertion has no legal basis.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei all have overlapping claims in the sea, while the United States sends naval vessels through it to assert freedom of navigation in international waters.

Anwar — who was on a visit to Beijing recently — said the "sensitive" issue was raised at a meeting with President Xi Jinping.

Malaysia axes mandatory death penalty

REUTERS, KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia's parliament yesterday passed sweeping legal reforms to remove the mandatory death penalty, trim the number of offences punishable by death, and abolish natural life prison sentences, a move cautiously welcomed by rights groups.

Malaysia has had a moratorium on executions since 2018, when it first promised to abolish capital punishment entirely.

The government, however, faced political pressure from some parties and rowed back on the pledge a year later, saying it would retain the death penalty but allow courts to replace it with other punishments at their discretion.

Under the amendments passed, alternatives to the death penalty include whipping and imprisonment of between 30 to 40 years. The new jail term will replace all previous provisions that call for imprisonment for the duration of the offender's natural life.

Life imprisonment sentences, defined by Malaysian law as a fixed term of 30 years, will be retained.

Capital punishment will also be removed as an option for some serious crimes that do not cause death, such as discharging and trafficking of a firearm and kidnapping.



Activists of All India Fishermen Congress take part in a protest against the disqualification of India's Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi from the Indian parliament after his conviction in a defamation case, in New Delhi yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

DEFAMATION CASE

Rahul Gandhi gets bail

Gujarat court pauses his two-year jail sentence

STAR REPORT

India's Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi was granted bail yesterday in a 2019 defamation case and his two-year jail sentence was paused until a decision on his appeal challenging his conviction.

The Gujarat court of Additional Sessions Judge R P Mogera said it would hear Rahul's plea for suspension of conviction on April 13 after issuing a notice to complainant Purnesh Modi, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lawyer in Gujarat and former Gujarat cabinet minister.

The sessions court asked the Purnesh Modi and Gujarat government to file their replies by April 10, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

On March 22, Rahul, the 52-year-old scion of the Gandhi family, was convicted by a magistrate's court in Surat and sentenced to prison for two years last month for a speech in which he reportedly said "why all thieves have Modi as surname."

While convicting Rahul, the magistrate court had granted him bail for 30 days to appeal against the verdict. A day later, he was disqualified as a member of the Lok Sabha.

The application at the sessions court seeking suspension of

Rahul's conviction is important for him to get back his membership of Lok Sabha from where he was disqualified with effect from March 23, a day after his conviction.

As per a Supreme Court order of 2013, the disqualification of membership of a lawmaker is automatic from the date of his conviction and a punishment of two or more years of imprisonment.

Unless the conviction against Congress leader Rahul is suspended, he will remain disqualified in Lok Sabha, two lawyers

defending Rahul Gandhi in the defamation case told reporters in Surat.

Rahul's lawyers said the sessions court exempted Rahul to appear before it on the next date of hearing on April 13.

Earlier in the day, Rahul, the 52-year-old Congress leader, reached Surat via a scheduled commercial flight along with his sister and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and a galaxy of senior party leaders like Chief Ministers of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh.

The Congress said the presence of the party leaders in Surat is not a "show of strength", but a "symbol of support" for Gandhi.

"It's not a show of strength. He

is fighting for the country. They are going with him to support him in his fight," said Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge.

The party also alleged that "illegal arrests" were being made to prevent party leaders and workers from going to Surat, reports NDTV.

"There are continuous reports of illegal arrests by the BJP government in Gujarat to prevent Congress leaders and workers from going to Surat," party leader Jairam Ramesh tweeted in Hindi.

Two more defamation cases have been filed elsewhere against Gandhi for the same comment and he is due to appear in court in one of them in the eastern city of Patna on April 12, reports Reuters.

Gandhi is at the centre of opposition politics and the main target of Modi's BJP even though Gandhi's Congress party is a shadow of its former self and the BJP looks set to dominate the next general election.

Opposition politicians say his trial and his disqualification from parliament are the latest example of the government's strong-arm tactics, following various investigations and legal troubles faced recently by some opposition members.

BJP leaders reject that and say Gandhi's case represents the Congress party's arrogance and its readiness to hurt sections of society to settle political scores with the prime minister.

Gandhi's Wayanad seat in Kerala is now vacant following his removal from the office.

Thai polls hopefuls register

AFP, Bangkok

Candidates yesterday began registering for Thailand's upcoming general election, in which Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha faces a tough fight against opposition parties vowing to rewrite the kingdom's army-scripted constitution.

Former army chief Prayut, who came to power in a coup in 2014, insisted the country needed an experienced leader as he accompanied prospective MPs from his United Thai Nation.

He faces a difficult challenge from a resurgent opposition fronted by Paetongtarn Shinawatra, daughter of billionaire former PM Thaksin Shinawatra.

Prayut, 69, arrived on an open-top truck with supporters and candidates in lively scenes at a Bangkok sports hall.

Thailand "needs people who know how to do the job. If they have never done it, they can't do it," Prayut told Thairath TV.

Thais go to the polls on May 14 for the first election since the kingdom was rocked by major protests in 2020. Prayut and his party are lagging in the polls behind Paetongtarn's Pheu Thai and the progressive Move Forward Party.

US MILITARY PACT

Philippines reveals sites of new bases

AFP, Manila

The Philippines yesterday announced the location of four additional military bases to be used by US troops, with one site near the hotly disputed South China Sea and another not far from Taiwan.

The longtime treaty allies agreed in February to expand cooperation in "strategic areas" of the Philippines as they seek to counter China's growing assertiveness over self-governed Taiwan and the building of Chinese bases in the South China Sea.

The 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, known as EDCA, gave US forces access to five Philippine bases.

It was expanded to nine, but the locations of the four additional bases were withheld until yesterday while the government consulted with local officials.

The four sites had been assessed by the Philippine military and deemed "suitable and mutually beneficial", the Presidential Communications Office said in a statement.

It said the bases would also be used for humanitarian and relief operations during disasters.

A US official confirmed that the locations announced by the palace were the new EDCA sites.

Three of the sites are in the northern Philippines, including a naval base and airport in Cagayan province and an army camp in the neighbouring province of Isabela, the Philippine statement said. The naval base at Cagayan's Santa Ana is about 400 kilometres (250 miles) from Taiwan. Another site will be an air base on Balabac Island, off the southern tip of Palawan Island, near the South China Sea. Cagayan governor opposed having EDCA sites in his province.

RIGHTS ABUSES

UN experts name S Sudan officials

AFP, Nairobi

A panel of UN rights experts yesterday named several high-ranking South Sudanese officials they say warrant criminal investigation and prosecution for their part in grave atrocities against civilians. Top government and military leaders were identified in a new report by the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan that details state responsibility for widespread murder, rape and sexual slavery. The commission, which conducted a year-long investigation across six states in South Sudan, and released a partial summary of its findings in March, said none of those named in the final report had faced any accountability for their crimes.

Arctic scientists race to preserve 'ice memory'

AFP, Paris

Arctic scientists are set to start drilling to save samples of ancient ice for analysis before the frozen layers melt away due to climate change, mission organisers said yesterday. Italian, French and Norwegian researchers have set up camp in Norway's Svalbard archipelago in what they called a race against time to preserve crucial ice records for analysing past environmental conditions.

They will extract ice in a series of tubes from as far as 125 metres (137 yards) below the surface, containing frozen geochemical traces dating back three centuries. Analysis of chemicals in deep "ice cores" provides scientists with valuable data about past environmental conditions. But experts warn water from melting ice is leaking down and altering geochemical records preserved in ancient ice beneath. Scientists "seeing their primary material disappear", said Jerome Chapellaz, president of Ice Memory foundation.



Man's 25-year ordeal

FROM PAGE 14

except one on the day after my mother's death," said the man, now an employee at an appliance showroom in Madaripur.

Every time he came to Dhaka for a hearing, he had to spend Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,500 on fares, lawyer's fees and other expenses.

DEATH OF FELLOW WORKER

Oliar came to Dhaka in 1996 to seek his fortune as his family could barely make ends meet. Through a local acquaintance, he learned embroidery work in a factory at New Super Market.

A year later, he joined the embroidery section of a small shop named Rakib Garments, owned by trader Rana Bepari.

But within three months of his joining, he was arrested in the case filed over the death of his fellow worker Shahidul Islam Titu, who also worked in the same section.

On September 6, 1997, Titu was found hanging from a ceiling fan inside the tailoring section of Rakib Garments.

Before his death, Titu was fined Tk 7,000 for allegedly stealing some garment samples from his owner's shop in an arbitration held at the market, said Oliar.

During the arbitration, Titu's brother-in-law Mohammad Jamal beat up Titu and told the arbitrators to keep him in their custody until he returned and paid the fine.

After the arbitration, Oliar brought food for Titu. After having the food, Titu went to tailoring section to take rest, pulling down the shutters. No one was working in the section at that time.

Around 5:30pm on September 6, 1997, a boy from Titu's village named Ismail came to see Titu. As Ismail opened the shutters, he found Titu hanging from a ceiling fan.

Oliar and a man named Babu brought the body down and started rubbing Titu to revive him before they took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Around 10:00pm, Oliar came to know that Titu had died.

On that very night, Mohammad Jamal filed a murder case with Dhanmondi Police Station, accusing the factory owner, Rana Bepari, his three trader friends — Mohammad Ali, Sultan Khan, and Shariful Islam Sharif — and Oliar.

Oliar was picked up by two to three plainclothes men the next day and taken to Dhanmondi Police Station where he found Sultan and Shariful in the lockup.

The three were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on September 8 in the murder case.

Oliar was placed on five-day remand in two phases.

On March 31, 2002, AK Yakub Ali, then inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department, filed the charge sheet with the Chief

Metropolitan Magistrate's Court against the five.

In the charge sheet, the investigator brought murder charges against the accused.

However, the autopsy report prepared by Dhaka Medical College, said Titu died of asphyxia (a condition when body is deprived of oxygen) as a result of hanging which is suicidal in nature.

The investigator, who later retired as an assistant superintendent of police, didn't mention any accused's age in the charge sheet, although Oliar was a teenager at the time of his arrest.

In 2003, the Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court-2 of Dhaka framed charges against the accused. The court recorded statements of two witnesses till October 25, 2015. It held a total of 46 hearings.

On January 5, 2016, the case was transferred to the Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court-8 of Dhaka. Another five witnesses testified before this court till March 27 last year. The court held around 40 hearings.

The case was again transferred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 on June 11 last year.

Asked why he chargesheeted a child showing him as an adult, IO Yakub yesterday said he won't comment on the issue as the court already delivered a verdict in the case.

Concern rising over fate of WB fund

FROM PAGE 14

Amin Ullah Nuri said the project proposal is now with the Planning Commission and its approval is expected soon.

In reply to a query, he told The Daily Star last night, "There is no risk over getting the fund. The project will be approved within the timeline."

THE PROJECT

The World Bank, in its appraisal report prepared for financing a road safety project in Bangladesh in 2021, said different bodies exist in Bangladesh to ensure road safety, but they are not empowered and lack effective coordination to get expected outcomes.

These organisations are also not held accountable. Besides, the fund allocated for road safety action plans is insufficient, not prioritised, and has never been institutionalised, it said.

The multi-lateral financier carried out several studies before taking the final decision regarding the loan.

Meanwhile, in September 2021, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader at an event alleged that the WB was delaying its decision to finance Bangladesh's road safety project, despite repeatedly expressing interest.

The WB on August 28 last year approved \$358 million loan to help Bangladesh improve road safety, and reduce fatalities and injuries from road accidents in selected high-risk highways and district roads.

The project will have several

components and will be implemented by the RHD, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, Directorate General of Health Services and Bangladesh Police.

It will pilot comprehensive road safety measures, including improved engineering designs, road signs and markings, pedestrian facilities, speed enforcement, and emergency care from Gazipur to Elenga and Natore-Nawabganj highways. These measures will help reduce road traffic deaths by more than 30 percent on these two highways, the WB hoped.

The project will also undertake road safety pilots in selected urban areas and district roads. It will improve post-crash care, which is critical in saving lives, and will also set up an ambulance service via a toll-free number and upgraded emergency care services in selected district hospitals, and upazila health complexes along the two national highway corridors.

DELAY IN PROJECT APPROVAL
Upon receiving the DPP, the Planning Commission in February 2022 asked project implementation agencies to recast it with the answer of more than 20 queries, said RHD sources.

In December last year, the DPP was re-submitted with an estimated cost of Tk 4,951.52 crore.

But the Planning Commission in March this year asked answers for 14 more queries. RHD submitted the DPP to the Road Transport and Highways Division again late last

month.

But the division raised some queries and the DPP was resent with all answers on Sunday, they said.

The project cost stood at Tk 4,988.14 crore now following an increase in US dollar rate. The WB is supposed to give Tk 3,759.82 crore in the project and the government is to provide Tk 1,228.32 crore, they added.

Involvement of three other agencies and the delay in getting necessary information to answer the queries are one of the major reasons for the delay, said a top RHD official.

Dry spell leads to wildfires across South Korea

AFP, Seoul

Firefighters were scrambling yesterday to contain wildfires across South Korea as a dry spell led to blazes in multiple regions, including on a mountain popular with hikers in central Seoul.

A fire broke out Sunday morning on Mount Inwang, a popular outdoor destination in Seoul's Jongno district, and spread rapidly due to strong winds, the city government said in a statement.

About 120 households were forced to evacuate, but no deaths or injuries were reported, it added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Chuadanga
E-mail: eechu@rhd.gov.bd
Phone & Fax: 02-477789139
Memo No. 35.01.1800.409.05.001.23-703 Dated: 02/04/2023 Eng.

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

Tender ID	Tender No. and description	Tender last selling date and time	Tender closing & opening date and time
807381	e-GP/CHURD/29/2022-2023. Emergency repair and surfacing work including widening at Ch. 14+000 km to Ch. 14+750 km (Total Length=750.00m) of Chuadanga-Darshona-Jibonagar-Kotchandpur-Kaligonj Road (R-748) under Road Division, Chuadanga during the year 2022-2023.	12-Apr-2023 15:00	13-Apr-2023 12:15

- 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 Member of Schedule Banks for e-GP.
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Monzurul Karim
ID No. 602000
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Chuadanga
01730-782778

GD-614

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Laksham, Cumilla.
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No: 46.02.1972.902.14.031.23.1814
Date: 03.04.2023

e-Tender Notice No: 10/2022-23
e-Tender is hereby invited through National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of:

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No	Name of the Works	Date & Time of closing
01	810598	e-Tender/PEDP4/CUM/LAK/2022-2023/W2.04979	Construction of additional class room at Daulatganj Government Primary School under PEDP4, Laksham, Cumilla.	18 April, 2023 BST 11:00:00
02	810600	e-Tender/PEDP4/CUM/LAK/2022-2023/W2.04981	Construction of additional class room at Paschimgaon Model Government Primary School under PEDP4, Laksham, Cumilla.	18 April, 2023 BST 11:00:00
03	810599	e-Tender/PEDP4/CUM/LAK/2022-2023/W2.04980	Construction of additional class room at Azgara Government Primary School under PEDP4, Laksham, Cumilla.	18 April, 2023 BST 11:00:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies are allowed. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Any others conditions for this tender is stated in TDS. Interested Tenderers may communicate with the undersigned during office hours.

(Misuk Kumer Datta)
Upazila Engineer
Laksham, Cumilla.
Phone: +880 2334407367
ue.laksham@lged.gov.bd

GD-616

Government of The Peoples Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District-Rangpur.
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.8500.000.07.080.23-1118
Date: 03/4/2023

Invitation for Tender (Works)
e-Tender Notice No. 29/2022-2023
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works, details are given below.

Sl No	Tender ID No.	Package No	Description of work	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)
1	812211	LGED/RANG/VRP/OL/22-23/W-34	Rehabilitation of Paschim Debu Kadamtola UZR-Bramonnikunde Bazar Road from Ch: 00m-3048m(Road ID: 185734035) [Pirgacha] [LTM]	25/04/2023 16:00 PM
2	812231	LGED/RANG/VRP/OL/22-23/W-35	Rehabilitation of Borodargha GC - Damurchakia Madhupur UZR via Modhura Road from Ch: 00m-500m(Road ID: 185734041) [Pirgacha] [LTM]	
3	812236	LGED/RANG/VRP/OL/22-23/W-36	Rehabilitation of Pirgacha UZHQ (Mortur Hotel) - Zabanobish Madrasa Road from Ch: 00m-1600m(Road ID: 185734043) [Pirgacha] [LTM]	
4	812243	LGED/RANG/VRP/OL/22-23/W-37	Rehabilitation of Pawtanahat Bus Stand - Pirgacha Pawtana UZR Road from Ch: 00m-2000m(Road ID: 185734045) [Pirgacha] [LTM]	
5	812205	IRIDP-3/RNG/DW-105	Construction of 27.00m Long RCC Variable Depth Girder Bridge on Taluk Ishad Pw2, School at Alakumari River Sarwar's House at Nagaripur Mouja at Ch. 1100m [R.I.D. 185735095] [Salvage Cost Tk: 504226.00] [Pirgacha] [OTM]	

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 (<https://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 Banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

(Mohammad Shahjahan Ali)
Executive Engineer
LGED, Rangpur
Ph: 02589-962730
E-mail: xmrangpur@lged.gov.bd

GD-613

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
District Primary Education Office
Habiganj
website: dpe.habiganj.gov.bd

Memo No. dpeo/hobi/ngps/ 714
Date: 02/04/2023

e-Tender Notice No.1/2022-23
e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of following works:

SL NO.	Name o Scheme	Tender ID NO	Package No	Tender/Proposal Document Last selling/downloading Date & Time	Tender/Proposal Closing Date & Time	Remarks
1	Supply of Various Types Furniture at different of Newly Nationalized Govt.Primary Schools of Bahubad, Hanrachong, Chunaraghat, Lakshai, Madhabpur and Nabigonj Upazilla in Habiganj District under Need Based Infrastructure Development of Newly Nationalized Govt.Primary School- 1st Phase (NBIDNNGPS-1). Total 31 NNGPS	799014	NBIDNNGPS1/HAB/2022-23 G1-41	25-April-2023 16:00	27-April-2023 11:00	OTM

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 Tender/Proposal document to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP System portal and from e-GP-help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

(Md. Golam Moula)
District Primary Education Officer
Habiganj.
Phone : 02996605294
e-mail: dpeohobig@gmail.com

GD-617

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Director
Shaheed M. Mansur Ali Medical College Hospital
Sirajganj

Memo No. SMMAMCH/SIRAJ/TENDER NOTICE/2022-2023/413
Date: 03/04/2023

e-Tender Notice (NCT) (Re-Tender)
e-Tender is in the e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procuring of following Non Consulting Services.

Tender ID	Name of tender	Package No.	Last selling date	Closing & opening date	Remarks
810703	Procurement of Non Consulting Services (Security Guard & Cleaner) for the FY 2022-2023	SMMAMCH/SIRAJ/OUTS/2022-2023/01	17-April-2023 15.00pm	18-April-2023 12.00am	OTM

- 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 in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
- Details about the tender have shown in e-Tender notice and e-Tender document. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Dr. Saiful Ferdous Md Khyrul Ataturk
Director
Shaheed M. Mansur Ali Medical College Hospital
Sirajganj

GD-612

Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company (Pvt.) Limited
(A JOINT VENTURE COMPANY OF BPDB AND NTPC LTD.)
WWW.BIFPCL.COM

Ref: BIFPCL/HRD/RECT/2023/108
CAREER OPPORTUNITY
Date: 02.04.2023

Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company (Pvt.) Limited (BIFPCL), a Joint Venture Company of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), Bangladesh and NTPC Limited, India, is looking for energetic and promising candidates for immediate appointment on contract basis to the following posts and inviting online applications from Bangladeshi nationals only.

Sl. No.	Name of Post, Basic Salary and Maximum Age Limit	No. of Vacancy	Minimum Required Qualifications and Experience
01	Assistant Manager (Stores/Clearing & Forwarding) Basic Salary: 52,000/- Maximum Age: 30 years	03 (Three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least Honors with Master Degree in any discipline from any recognized university. No third division / class at any stage of the academic career shall be acceptable. Candidates passed in the grading system must possess at least a GPA 3.5 on a scale of 5.0 & CGPA 3.0 on a scale of 4.0. Must have strong communication skill in Bengali & English (written & oral) including computer literacy. Prior relevant experience in Power Sector will be an advantage.
02	Junior Assistant Manager (Stores/Clearing & Forwarding) Basic Salary: 40,000/- Maximum Age: 30 years	04 (Four)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least Bachelor degree in any discipline from any recognized university. No third division / class at any stage of the academic career shall be acceptable. Candidates passed in the grading system must possess at least a GPA 3.5 on a scale of 5.0 & CGPA 3.0 on a scale of 4.0. Must have strong communication skill in Bengali & English (written & oral) including computer literacy. Prior relevant experience in Power Sector will be an advantage.

Compensation Package :
a. Basic Salary, House Rent allowance, Medical Benefits, Bonus, CPF, Gratuity and other Fringe Benefits will be given as per the policy of BIFPCL.
b. Income Tax has to be paid by the employee.

Nature of the Service :
The service is purely contractual. The initial contract period of the service shall be for 03 (Three) years and is renewable for further period(s) upto the limit of 60 (sixty) years of age subject to satisfactory performance.

General Conditions :
1. Interested candidates shall have to apply through the Online Application Form wherein a scanned photograph and signature of the candidate has to be inserted into due place. The online Application Form will be available at <http://bifpcl.telstalk.com.bd> during application period from 04.04.2023 (09:00 A.M) to 30.04.2023 (4:00 P.M).
2. All eligible qualifications should be from a recognized institution or university.
3. Candidates passed from foreign university(s)/institute(s) should have equivalent result and certificate from the competent authority.
4. All computations of Age shall be as on last date of submission of application i.e., 30.04.2023.
5. Candidates shall have to pay BDT 1,000/- (BDT One Thousand only) each on non-refundable basis through SMS from any Teletalk mobile connection following the instructions mentioned <http://bifpcl.telstalk.com.bd> or www.bifpcl.com
6. Persons employed in Government/Semi-Government/Autonomous organization(s) or Govt. Power Sector utilities should apply through proper channel.
7. The applicant (if selected) must have to sign 03 (Three) years' Service Bond at the time of joining.
8. In case of departmental candidates, age limit is maximum 35 years.
9. No TA/DA shall be paid for appearing/participating in the recruitment process.
10. BIFPCL reserves the right to shortlist candidates for Written Test/ Interview. Applicants should note that mere fulfillment of minimum eligibility criteria may not ensure consideration for shortlisting for Written Test/Interview. BIFPCL will not entertain any correspondence on this subject and decision of BIFPCL will be final in all matters.
11. Age limit for sons/grand-sons and daughters/grand-daughters of freedom fighters and martyred freedom fighters shall be 32 years in place of 30 years (wherever applicable). Only at the time of joining (if selected) these candidates have to submit attested copies of certificates issued to Freedom Fighters/ Martyred Freedom Fighters by the appropriate authority. Also, these candidates have to submit certificate (In Original) issued from the respective Union Parishad Chairman/ Ward Commissioner of City Corporation/ Paurashava Mayor/ Counselor; mentioning their relationship with the Freedom Fighters/ Martyred Freedom Fighters.
12. BIFPCL reserves the right to cancel the candidature of the applicant if any fake or wrong information is found at any stage of recruitment process.
13. BIFPCL reserves the right to cancel/restrict/enlarge/modify/alter the recruitment/selection process or /and no. of posts, if need so arises.
14. Last date of receipt of online application is: 30.04.2023 (4:00 P.M).

(H.M. Ziauddin)
Chief Human Resources Officer
Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company (Pvt.) Limited

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Nawabganj, Dhaka
www.lged.gov.bd

e-Tender
Invitation e-Tender Notice No. 04/2022-23
Memo No. 46.02.2662.000.18.015.18-261
Date: 03-04-2023

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

Tender ID	Name of scheme	Procurement method	Last selling date & time	Closing date & time
807515	Construction of Additional Classroom 118 No. Algirchar GPS under PEDP4 (2V+1V)	OTM	24-Apr-2023 15:00	25-Apr-2023 13:00
807528	Construction of Additional Classroom 123 No. Chhoto Rajpara GPS under PEDP4 (3V+2V)	OTM	24-Apr-2023 15:00	25-Apr-2023 13:00
807536	Repair and Renovation of Nawabganj URC under PEDP4	OTM	24-Apr-2023 15:00	25-Apr-2023 13:00

These are 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 (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Zulfiker Hoq Choudhury
Upazila Engineer
Nawabganj, Dhaka
E-mail: ue.dhaka.nawabganj@lged.gov.bd

GD-611

Ireland up for Test challenge

SPORTS REPORTER

Ireland will be playing their first Test in nearly four years when they take on Bangladesh in the lone Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur from today, with the challenge for the visitors being how they adapt to the longest version of cricket, a format almost none of the current Irish side have featured in.

According to skipper Andrew Balbirnie, the biggest challenge for the visitors, who are also shorn of first-class experience, will be adjusting to conditions against a team that have been especially dominant on home soil in recent times.

"I think [the challenge will be] just the longevity. A lot of our guys don't have a huge amount of first-class experience. Five-day Tests are very different. A lot of our guys have been brought up on white-ball cricket. A batter has to set himself to bat for as long as possible. Bowlers have to be as disciplined as possible," Balbirnie told the media ahead of the Test on Tuesday.



"That's going to be the biggest challenge. Conditions will play a part in terms of the heat. These guys need to learn on the job. It is an exciting group. Certainly get the whites back on, dust off the white pads. We know how good Bangladesh are in Test cricket, particularly here. It will be challenging but exciting."

Ireland, who are yet to register a win in the three Tests that they have played so far, have a number of debutants waiting in the ranks for the game today and so decided to complete the cap presentation formalities yesterday.

"It has not happened many times in recent history but there's going to be a lot of Test debuts. It only happens to new nations. It would have happened to Bangladesh in the early 2000s. We are going to have a bit of a get-together tonight to do some presentations. I think if we do it in the morning, it will take too long."

"A lot has happened. We have been through a pandemic. There's been so many changes. Players have gone, players have come in. It was a memorable occasion in 2019 for a lot of Irish cricket people. This is memorable as well. This is a big cricketing nation, playing against a top team. A lot of good teams have come here and got unstuck. The message is to go out and play, not hold too many fears. There's not a lot to lose in a one-off Test. So, we want to enjoy it," he said.



No IPL for Shakib this season?

A Kolkata Knight Riders official on Monday told The Daily Star that the franchise was looking to replace Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan for the ongoing season of the Indian Premier League due to his packed schedule with the national team. Shakib, however, seemed relaxed during Bangladesh's practice yesterday despite all the noise regarding his participation in the tournament. The premier all-rounder turned up for the practice session on the eve of the one-off Test against Ireland but did not take part in the training.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

TEST AGGRESSION on the agenda but concerns remain

SPORTS REPORTER

As groundsmen flocked to the centre pitches following the end of both teams' practice session, reporters were curiously waiting to see whether the 'greenish' looking surface would lose a bit of grass.

Why such a suspicion? News had come about just hours after Mehedi Hasan Miraz's press conference in the afternoon that key pacer Taskin Ahmed had been ruled out, with Rejaur Rahman Raja drafted in as a replacement.

Without their leading pacer, would the hosts want as much grass on the surface? While the grass was not cut yesterday, that could very well change on Tuesday morning, the first day of the one-off Test against Ireland.

Skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who had a nonchalant demeanour, did not partake in any practice. His only moment of real activity came when he headed from the dressing room to the centre pitches in the morning with Chandika Hathurusingha. In the background, a table lay on its side and Taskin, who appeared a bit distant, was looking down below.

If a picture speaks volumes, was the tumbled table a symbol of a plan foiled due to Taskin's injury? At the press conference, Miraz talked about the chance of the number of pacers in the eleven increasing, but that idea may also take a back seat following Taskin's injury.

If not for Taskin's injury, there is also the issue of Tamim and playing an extra batter. Tamim had returned to the Test side after sitting out the Tests against India, but a family emergency put his



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal is doubtful for the lone Test against Ireland in Mirpur today since his son has taken ill.

participation in doubt.

The idea that importance would be placed on pacers at home was being debated after looking at the greenish wicket and Miraz's press conference had somewhat substantiated that idea before the news of Taskin's injury.

When asked whether a spinning track was on offer or whether pace would be prioritised, Miraz believed the team had a good balance: "We have a full-strength squad and the combination is working well for us."

Belief in the pacers' ability was also at

the forefront of Miraz's presser.

"The pacers' role is very important. When they do well, the scenario inside the team changes. Pacers are doing well in ODIs and us spinners are doing well along with them. So the combination is good. Even in T20Is, the pacers are stepping up and we have begun to win matches. When a pacer gives you one or two wickets, the opponent falls behind. I believe our pacers are world-class and they will try their best to do well," Miraz said.

The idea of aggression in Tests stems from the firepower of a pace-bowling unit. Given Taskin's injury, the idea of a three-pronged pace attack with Raja looks uncertain. However, Miraz also suggested that the Tigers would look to translate their white-ball aggression into Tests going forward. The top-order batters all had a bout of range-hitting practice yesterday following regular nets session.

"There are attacking brands of cricket in the modern day. Teams are trying to attack even in the Test format at the moment. So obviously we will also try to do the same."

"If we can manage 350-400 in 100 overs, it will be good for the players but it will depend on wicket and how the opponent bowls."

"We will play Test cricket as it should be played," Miraz further relayed.

But without a practice game, adaptability will be key and with Ebadat Hossain and Khaled Ahmed as the only experienced pacers, it remains to be seen if Tigers can start to build on their motto of aggression from the one-off Ireland Test.

'Can't argue, I've seen the bodycam'

REUTERS

Referees in grassroots leagues in England feel more confident and "safer" when wearing body cameras whilst officiating, the Football Association's head of refereeing said amid a trial into the efficacy of the technology.

In February, the FA announced it will trial body cameras on grassroots referees in a bid to ascertain whether the technology could help "improve participant behaviour and respect towards referees".

Paul Field, president of England's Referees' Association, in February said that the verbal and physical abuse of grassroots referees in the country is getting so bad that lives are at risk.

A BBC questionnaire responded to by more than 900 amateur referees revealed worrying levels of abuse and intimidation with multiple cases of death threats being made.

Last year the FA banned 380 players and coaches for attacking or threatening referees and match officials.

"The early signs are positive, the referees feel more confident, reassured, protected, safer," Daniel Meeson, the FA's head of refereeing, told the BBC.

"Referees tell us some players have taken a second glance, seen the bodycam, and made a joke like, 'Oh I'd better not argue with you ref, I've seen the bodycam'."

The cameras being used in the trial do not record for the entire duration of the match, but have a 30-second capture that can be triggered by referees. The FA have said that no referees have felt the need to activate the body cameras yet.

"It's a positive start - no activations - so in my mind it looks like the deployment of these devices is acting ultimately in the way we want them to, which is that deterrent," Meeson said.

"Better to prevent misconduct and prevent poor participant behaviour than to have to cure it."

If the trial is successful, the FA have said they will look into implementing the technology "across additional adult grassroots football leagues in England during the 2023-24 season".

SAF to receive medal after 40 years

REUTERS

Sir Alex Ferguson is already known as one of the greatest managers in football history but the Scot will have to make room in his trophy cabinet for one more medal that is set to be awarded 40 years after he guided Aberdeen to European glory.

Before Ferguson became a serial winner with English side Manchester United, where he won 13 Premier League titles and two Champions League trophies among other honours, he managed Aberdeen from 1978 to 1986.

His greatest success at the Scottish club came when they beat Real Madrid in extra time in the final of the European Cup Winners' Cup in May 1983.

However, only the starting 11 and five substitutes received winners' medals on the night in Gothenburg.

UEFA have now agreed to provide six additional medals, with Ferguson the first name on the list.

"It's a great honour to be receiving this medal and I am grateful to everyone who has worked so hard to make this happen," Ferguson, 81, said in a statement.

"Their efforts, along with the co-operation of UEFA is much appreciated. It's also fantastic to see some of the wonderful people who worked tirelessly behind the scenes during this hugely successful period for the club now being honoured."



In the midst of their high-flying Serie A season, Napoli were brought crashing down as AC Milan defeated them 4-0 at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona in Naples yesterday. It was the first time Napoli lost a home league match by a four-plus goal margin since October, 2000. Although I Partenopei remain 16 points clear at the top of the table, the loss means that Luciano Spalletti's men can no longer break Juventus' record tally of 102 points -- the most recorded in a single campaign.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Why am I still sitting here?'

REUTERS

Liverpool boss Juergen Klopp jokingly questioned why he still had a job as clubs around the Premier League sacked their managers as the season enters its home stretch.

Chelsea sacked Graham Potter on Sunday with the club sitting 11th in the league, hours after relegation-threatened Leicester City parted ways with Brendan Rodgers. Meanwhile, Tottenham Hotspur also parted ways with Antonio Conte late last month.

Klopp has been at Liverpool since 2015 but despite guiding them to Premier League and Champions League titles, he is under pressure with the Anfield club eighth in the standings -- eight points off the top four after losing 4-1 to Manchester City.

"What can I say about that (the sackings)?"

Klopp has been at Liverpool since 2015 but despite guiding them to Premier League and Champions League titles, he is under pressure with the Anfield club eighth in the standings -- eight points off the top four after losing 4-1 to Manchester City.



The elephant in the room is probably why am I still sitting here in this crazy world? Last man standing," Klopp told reporters ahead of Tuesday's game against Chelsea.

"So I think both clubs are not in the spots where they expect to be... I respect them (Potter and Rodgers) a lot. Really good people and fantastic managers, both of them. But things can go wrong."

"We all accept that part of the business,

but that's it. Conte was last week, (Julian) Nagelsmann and now these two. The season is in a decisive part, people are afraid of maybe not reaching their targets."

Nagelsmann was shockingly sacked by Bayern Munich during the international break despite being in a much healthier position in the league.

The Premier League has had a record 12 managers sacked this season, which Klopp described as an "awful number".

"It is how it is. Some clubs are under achieving, definitely us too... There are expectations out there, rightly so, and if you don't reach them, then you have to accept the decisions," he said.

On his own future, the German manager said Liverpool have "smart owners" but he did not like the fact that he was still in the job because of his previous success with the club.

"I'm here to deliver, I'm not here as a talisman or for murals on houses' walls," he said.

"I know as well I'm still here because of what happened in the last few years, I don't like the fact that I have to rely on that."

"But we have to sort it, we cannot just continue playing like we do from time to time. Not always, thank god. That's not allowed, really. I'm really disappointed about us, but it happens and we have to find a way out."

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PM lauds country's progress in healthcare



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said doctors in Bangladesh are now capable of performing critical operations, including kidney transplant, as the country has advanced in healthcare.

The PM said this when a delegation of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, led by its Vice-Chancellor Prof Sharafuddin Ahmed, paid a courtesy call on her at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

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The 6km-long Port Connecting Road in Agrabad being dug up by Chattogram Wasa, just three months after the road was repaired for the smooth plying of vehicles. Locals are blaming both Wasa and the Chattogram City Corporation for this irresponsible move just ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr and the monsoon season.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

PUBLIC UNIV ADMISSION Single entry exam from next year Govt to form national body to conduct the test

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

From the next academic year, all public universities have to enrol students through a single admission test and the government will set up a separate authority to hold that exam.

The education ministry and the University Grants Commission said such a centralised test will reduce the hassle of admission seekers and cut both time and cost.

The schedule of the entry test will be declared immediately after the completion of the HSC exams and all public universities will start classes at the same time, officials said.

The UGC at its office yesterday held a meeting on forming a separate body titled "National Testing Authority". The meeting was attended by Education Minister Dipu Moni as the chief guest.

It was decided that a high-powered committee under the leadership of UGC Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah will soon be formed to work out how to initiate an acceptable admission process, UGC member Prof Muhammed Alamgir told this newspaper.

He also said the committee will comprise representatives from all public universities.

Dipu Moni, while talking to reporters after the meeting, said the decision of a single entrance test has been taken

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ACQUITTAL FROM CASE Man's 25-year ordeal comes to an end, finally

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

For the last 25 years, Oliar Rahman had been shuttling between Madaripur and Dhaka to appear before courts in a case filed over the death of his fellow worker.

Oliar, who was an employee of an embroidery factory at the capital's New Super Market, was only 13 when he was arrested in the case.

He spent seven months behind bars before coming out on bail. Since then, he had to appear before courts for about 150 hearings during the long trial.

And all these years, he had to endure unfathomable mental stress and bear financial burden for being accused in the case.

Finally, Oliar's ordeal came to an end yesterday as a Dhaka court acquitted him and four others of murder charges as the prosecution failed to prove the charges brought against them.

"I am the happiest person in the world now. I got justice at long last," said an emotionally-choked Oliar, now 38 and father of three daughters.

"The moment I heard the verdict, I felt that I am relieved of the agony that I had been going through since my tender age," he told The Daily Star.

Judge Monir Kamal of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 of Dhaka delivered the verdict around 12:20pm.

Oliar was the only accused who stood in the dock while the four others were on the run.

"I had been appearing before courts over the last 25 years. I cannot remember skipping a single hearing

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BIGGEST ROAD SAFETY PROJECT Concern rising over fate of WB fund

A year of the stipulated 18 months gone, govt yet to approve the project; roads secy sees no uncertainty

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The World Bank in March last year approved a loan for the biggest road safety project in Bangladesh. The loan contract with Bangladesh authorities has to be signed within one and a half years of the approval, or else, the loan would be cancelled, said officials.

One year has already gone by, but the project has not been approved yet, a pre-condition for signing the loan deal, rising concern over the fate of the project's funding, they said.

The Tk 4,988.14 crore project now has to get the nod within three or four months by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council, because it takes some time to issue office order regarding the approval, they added.

After changes in the Development Project Proposal, the Roads and Highways Department, the lead implementing agency of the project, re-submitted it to the Road Transport and Highways Division on Sunday.

RHD sources said WB already wrote to the authorities concerned to complete the DPP approval process quickly.

Any project, after submission of the DPP by the implementing agency

concerned, usually goes through a lengthy process that include several meetings involving different agencies. It takes quite a long time. So, the fate of the project depends how quickly the process will be completed and how fast the Ecneec approves it, the officials said.

The deadline for the project is June 2028.

The project is getting delayed when

The project proposal is now with the Planning Commission and its approval is expected soon

ABM Amin Ullah Nuri
Road Transport and Highways
Division Secretary

road safety issue has become a major concern as thousands of people are getting killed or maimed every year. The issue came to the fore again after a bus, which had no fitness clearance, veered off the Dhaka-Bhanga expressway and crashed, killing 19 people last month.

Contacted, Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary ABM

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Scrap DSA, case against Prothom Alo journalists

Demand teachers, journos, cultural activists

STAR REPORT

Journalists, teachers, and cultural activists yesterday expressed concern over the suing of Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiuur Rahman, reporter Samsuzzaman Shams, and other journalists under the Digital Security Act.

They also demanded the withdrawal of the case and the scrapping of the act.

A statement from the University Teachers' Network said the government has enacted the law to create panic among people by harassing those, who criticise the government.

Journalists and social media activists are the worst victims of the DSA, said the statement signed by 48 teachers from different public and private universities.

Referring to a statistic of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), the teachers' network said some 56 journalists were tortured and harassed in three months from

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SEABED OFF JAPAN Scientists film deepest ever fish



CNN ONLINE

Cruising at a depth of 8,336 metres (over 27,000 feet) just above the seabed, a young snailfish has become the deepest fish ever filmed by scientists during a probe into the abyss of the northern Pacific Ocean.

Scientists from University of Western Australia and Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology released footage of the snailfish on Sunday filmed last September by sea robots in deep trenches off Japan.

Along with the filming the deepest snailfish, the scientists physically caught two other specimens at 8,022 metres and set another record for the deepest catch.

Previously, the deepest snailfish ever spotted was at 7,703 metres in 2008, while scientists had never been able to collect fish from anywhere below 8,000 metres.

"What is significant is that it shows how far a particular type of fish will descend in the ocean," said marine biologist Alan Jamieson, founder of the Minderoo-UWA Deep Sea Research Centre, who led the expedition.

Scientists are filming in the trenches off Japan

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Finland to join Nato today Sweden still waiting

REUTERS, Brussels

Finland will join Nato today, marking the completion of a swift journey into the military alliance for the Nordic nation following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, officials said.

Finland has a 1,300-km (810-mile) border with Russia, meaning Nato's frontier with Russia will roughly double in length, and the move drew a pledge from Moscow that it will beef up its forces in border regions.

"Tomorrow we will welcome Finland as the 31st member of Nato making Finland safer and our alliance stronger," Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels, hailing the move as "historic".

"We will raise the Finnish flag for the first time here at Nato headquarters. It will be a good day for Finland's security, for Nordic security and for Nato as a whole," Stoltenberg said.

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto will travel to Brussels to take part in the ceremony, his office said.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February last year pushed Finland and its neighbour Sweden to apply for Nato membership, abandoning decades of military non-alignment.

The last hurdle to Finland's membership was removed last week when Turkey's parliament voted to ratify Helsinki's application even as it kept Sweden's bid on hold.

"President Putin went to war against Ukraine with the clear aim to get less Nato," Stoltenberg said. "He's getting the exact opposite."

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Vehicles stuck in a long tailback on the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital around 5:15pm yesterday. Traffic in many places was at a standstill during that time as many rushed home for iftar.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

ALLEGED EXTORTION Mob beats UPDF man to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A member of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), beaten by a mob over extortion allegation on Sunday night, died hours later while undergoing treatment in Khagrachhari.

The deceased Hlachingmong Marma, 23, of Baidya Para in the district's Ramghar upazila, was UPDF's district organiser, party sources said.

"On Sunday evening, locals apprehended the man over extortion allegation and gave him a thrashing in the Schoolpara area of the Jaggyachola union in Manikchhari upazila," said Anserul Karim, officer-in-charge of Manikchhari Police Station.

Police rushed him to Manikchhari Upazila Health Complex Hospital after he was handed over to law enforcers, he said.

Later, he was shifted to Khagrachhari General Hospital, where he died while undergoing

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