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## 50 YEARS OF JS Shun path of conflict

President calls for reaching a consensus through dialogue



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Abdul Hamid has called upon all to cooperate in flourishing democracy, reaching a consensus through dialogue, and forgetting the path of conflict.

He said the development that occurs in the absence of democracy can never become universal, rather it becomes individual or group-centric.

Hamid was addressing the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday on the occasion of its



Vermicelli, a traditional delicacy for Eid, is being dried in the sun on the roof of a factory in Chattogram city's Chaktai. Factories have increased their production as the demand for this item shoots up ahead of Eid every year. Producers sell each box of vermicelli weighing 35 kg for Tk 1,500 to Tk 2,200, depending on quality. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



## Stability led to massive dev in Bangladesh

PM tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told parliament yesterday that the stability of parliamentary democracy since 2008 created a scope for massive development in Bangladesh.

During the last three terms of the government, the continuous progress of parliament, the consistency of parliamentary democracy, and political stability created a field for the development, she said.

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All should contribute to establishing a tolerant democratic system by ending conflicts

Politics of violence and hatred in the name of movement can never bring good for the country

golden jubilee.

The first session of Bangladesh parliament was held on April 7, 1973. Yesterday, the House went into a special session to mark its golden jubilee.

"The 12th national election is approaching. An election is the only way to go to power or to bring changes. The politics of violence and hatred in the name of movement can never bring good for the country, society and economy... It darkens the political environment. We all should cooperate on flourishing democracy, reaching a consensus through dialogue, and forgetting the path of conflict," the president said.

He said all have to contribute in establishing a tolerant democratic system by ending hatred and conflict.

It is the expectation of all people that the people of Bangladesh will enrich the history of the democratic practices in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

ESTABLISHING ICU AT 43 DIST HOSPITALS

## Not a single unit to be ready by June

Authorities now seek time till Dec this year as project sees little progress in 3 years

MD ABBAS

Three years ago, the prime minister ordered setting up an Intensive Care Unit in every district hospital. A project was then initiated to open 10-bed ICUs in 43 district hospitals and 10 medical college hospitals.

But none of the facilities have a functioning ICU yet.

The Tk 512 crore project was approved in April 2020. The facilities that already had the infrastructure suitable for ICUs were chosen under the project.

The ICUs were supposed to be set up by June 30 this year. Officials say ICU equipment has been set up in the 10 medical college hospitals, but they have yet to begin operation.

According to Project Director Prof Shah Golam Nabi Tuhin, work on installing ICUs in 13 district hospitals is currently going on.

He claimed that the project was delayed because of difficulties in opening letters of credit (LCs), the devaluation of taka against the dollar, and the supply chain issues caused by the Russia-Ukraine war.

An expert, however, said the causes for the delay are unsatisfactory.

Project authorities revised the project and are seeking Tk 301 crore more with a new deadline on December 31, 2025. The planning ministry is yet to approve the revision.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and the Public Works Department (PWD) are implementing the project titled "Covid-19 emergency response and pandemic preparedness" with funds from the World Bank.

None of the 64 district hospitals had ICUs when the pandemic hit in 2020, said Project Director Tuhin.

Prof Rashid E-Mahbub, former vice-chancellor of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said many critically ill patients die in ambulances while on their way to Dhaka due to the absence of ICUs in district hospitals.

Mentioning it as a critical life-saving issue, he said, "It is heartbreaking for doctors to witness such tragedies."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

## Indian editors decry govt move to police online news

REUTERS, Mumbai

The Editors Guild of India is deeply disturbed by the government's move to police news on social media through a self-appointed fact-checking unit, the industry body said yesterday, describing the new rules as draconian and akin to censorship.

The amendments to the country's IT rules make it obligatory on platforms "not to publish, share or host fake, false or misleading information" about the government.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration has been in repeated tussles with various social media platforms when they failed to heed demands that certain content or accounts be taken down for allegedly spreading misinformation.

The federal government on Thursday announced

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## 8 killed in 'shootout' in Bandarban

Police suspect feud between KNF and UPDF (Democratic); villagers flee in panic

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Eight people were killed during a "shootout" between two armed groups at Rowangchhari upazila in Bandarban on Thursday night, said police.

Officials suspect the United People's Democratic Front (Democratic) and Kuki-Chin National Army, the military wing of Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF), were engaged in the gunbattle.

Creating an atmosphere of fear, the violence led at least 90 families from three villages to flee their homes and took shelter in Ruma and Rowangchhari.

Abdul Mannan, officer-in-charge of Rowangchhari Police Station, said two groups had been exchanging fire for the last two days over establishing supremacy in the hills of Khamtang Para and nearby areas.

On information, police recovered the eight bullet-ridden bodies near the Ruma-Rowangchhari link road around 12:30pm yesterday, he added.

The bodies were sent to Bandarban Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

The authorities are yet to provide any names of the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Railway staffers help people register their NIDs with Bangladesh Railway Ticketing Service online at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday, the first day of advance sale of ticket for Eid journeys. Once the registration is complete, people would be able to pay for tickets through online platforms or at counters. Yesterday, tickets were sold for trips on April 17. For the first time in its history, Bangladesh Railway is selling all advance Eid tickets online. The authorities have made the decision to ease the suffering of holidaymakers. In the previous years, many people had to wait for 30 to 40 hours at different stations for tickets.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## SPORT Bangladesh football in Salahuddin era



With Bangladesh football in the doldrums, hope had emerged when the country's legendary footballer Kazi Salahuddin took the helm of the Bangladesh Football Federation in 2008. However, excluding a few sporadic successes, his impact in reversing the tide has been hardly felt in the past 15 years. The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman tried to unearth the factors behind the overall sordid scenario.

STORY ON PAGE 11

### ELEVATE YOUR EID CELEBRATIONS

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Special Magazine From The Daily Star



## One killed, 3 injured in Ctg landslide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least one person was killed and three others were injured in a landslide in Akbarshah area of Chattogram yesterday.

Three units of fire service rushed to the spot and launched a rescue operation, said Abdullah Harun Pasha, deputy assistant director of Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Nurul Alam, in charge of Chattogram Medical College Hospital police outpost, said a man named Mohammad Khoka, 45, was declared dead by duty doctors when brought to CMCH.

According to fire service and police sources, the accident took place around 5:20pm when 10 workers were cutting a hill the in Beltoli Ghona area.

“Our rescue operation is underway. Locals said five male and five female labourers were cutting the hill,” Fire Service DAD Harun Pasha said.

“We are seeing if anyone else is trapped underneath,” he said.

According to Senior Assistant Commissioner of Chattogram District Administration Touhidul Islam, the number of casualties may increase.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner of Chattogram Abul Bashar Mohammad Fakhruzzaman visited the spot.

He told The Daily Star that the Chattogram City Corporation was constructing a road beside the hill and for that reason, a guide wall was being constructed.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

## Three killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Three persons were killed and two others injured in a head-on collision between a truck and a CNG-run three-wheeler in Ramu upazila of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

One of the dead is Badiul Alam, driver of the three-wheeler, said police.

The accident took place around 7:00am on Shahid ATM Zafar Alam Road in Bharabridge area.

Anwarul Hossain, officer-in-charge of Ramu Police Station, said two persons died on the spot after the Teknaf-bound truck collided head-on with an auto-rickshaw.

One of the injured succumbed to the injuries on his way to hospital, he said, adding that the two other injured are receiving treatment at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

Police are trying to identify the two other deceased.



Relatives, friends and well-wishers of Rokia Afzal Rahman wait outside Gulshan Azad Mosque in the capital to join her namaz-e-janaza yesterday afternoon. The pioneering businesswoman passed away at Mt Elizabeth Novena Hospital in Singapore on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Ukrainian forces under pressure in Bakhmut

Says UK intel as Russian advance puts key supply route at risk

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russian forces have very likely seized the centre of the fiercely contested city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine and are threatening a key supply route for Ukrainian forces to the west, British intelligence said yesterday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Wednesday his troops would pull back from the small city, which has been the main focus of Russia's assault on Ukraine for months, if they came under risk of encirclement.

Asked to comment on the British report, a Ukrainian military command spokesman told Reuters the situation was difficult in Bakhmut and that Russian forces were concentrating all efforts to take the city but were not having “strategic success”.

The battle for Bakhmut, one of the last urban centres in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk province yet to fall to Russian forces, has proven one of the bloodiest of the war.

Donetsk is one of four provinces in eastern and southern Ukraine that Russia declared annexed last year and is seeking to fully occupy in what appears to be a

shift in its war aims after failing to overrun the country early in the war.

Yesterday's daily update from British military intelligence contrasted with the usual emphasis on Ukrainian successes.

“Russia has made further gains and has now highly likely advanced into the town centre, and has seized the west bank of

**Western analysts say both sides are losing large numbers of troops in the battle for Bakhmut**

the Bakhmutka River. Ukraine's key 0506 supply route to the west of the town is likely severely threatened,” it said.

Eastern Military Command spokesperson Serhiy Cherevatyi said Ukraine controlled the situation in Bakhmut and understood Russian intentions.

“The situation is difficult, the enemy is concentrating maximum efforts to capture Bakhmut. However it is suffering serious losses and not reaching strategic success,” Cherevatyi said by telephone, without elaborating.

Western analysts say both sides are

losing large numbers of troops in the battle for Bakhmut, where Moscow has said it has taken control of the city, including part of the centre.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's leaders discussed ways to prevent leaks of military information yesterday after secret documents detailing US and Nato efforts to help the country plan a counter-offensive against Russia's invasion reportedly appeared on social media.

The New York Times said on Thursday, citing senior US officials, that classified war documents were posted this week on Twitter and Telegram, which is widely used in Russia.

A Ukrainian official told Reuters the documents contained a “very large amount of fictitious information” and the posts looked like a Russian disinformation operation to sow doubts about the offensive, which requires advanced Western weapons.

“These are just standard elements of operational games by Russian intelligence. And nothing more,” presidential official Mykhailo Podolyak said in a written statement. The Kremlin did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## Woman killed on road

BSS, Satkhira

A woman was killed in a road accident in the Chourongi Mour area on the Satkhira-Khulna Highway in Satkhira town last morning.

Taslima Khatun, 52, from Sadar upazila's Gopinathpur village, was run over by a bus as she was crossing the highway around 9:00am, leaving her critically injured.

She was rushed to the Satkhira Sadar Hospital where the duty doctor declared her dead, said Satkhira Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abu Jihad Fakrul Alam Khan.

## Two children drown

BSS, Narail

Two boys drowned in the Bhairab river at Afra village under Sheikhati union in Sadar upazila of Narail Thursday evening.

The deceased were identified as Aiyan Fakir, 3, son of Dabir Fakir and his cousin Tahsin Fakir, 2, son of Sultan Fakir, residents of Afra village.

Police said the incident occurred when Aiyan and Tahsin were playing outside their house on the Bhairab riverbank.

Locals spotted the children floating in the river in the evening.

Later, the locals rescued their floating bodies from the river and took them to Bagharpara Upazila Health Complex in Jashore where the on-duty doctor declared them dead.

## Driver, helper arrested with 15,000 yaba pills

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A truck driver and his helper were arrested with 15,000 pieces of yaba pills in Parbatipur upazila, Dinajpur yesterday, said police.

The arrestees were Md Arif Hossain, 34, of Bagerhat and Md Iqbal Hossain, 45, of Lakshampur.

Following a tip, a team from the Department of Narcotics Control stopped and searched a truck that was travelling from Chattagram to Parbatipur on the Parbatpur-Phulbari highway at around 1:00pm.

They found at least 15,000 yaba pills inside the truck.

DNC Deputy Director Shah Newaz said the arrestees were handed over to local police.

## Three ‘arms suppliers to ARSA’ held

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Rapid Action Battalion on Thursday detained three alleged arms dealers in Chakaria upazila of Cox's Bazar.

Moktar Ahmed, 52, Abdur Rahim, 40, and Md Enamul Haque, 38, allegedly supplied arms to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).

The Rab recovered three single-barreled rifles and one double-barreled rifle and Tk 1,05,700 from their possession.

During primary interrogation, the detainees confessed that they had been running illegal arms trade in Maheshkhali and Chakaria upazilas area for a long time and supplying arms to various terrorist groups, including members of ARSA in Rohingya camps, said Lt Col Saiful Islam Sumon, commanding officer of Rab-15.

# Shun path of conflict

FROM PAGE 1

the country in the light of established democratic norms and the constitution, he added.

Mentioning that the number of veteran lawmakers was decreasing gradually, Hamid said if this trend continued, the need might arise to invite external experts to examine, evaluate and analyse bills placed in parliament.

“Development and democracy advance in tandem. Development and progress move forward if democracy prevails in the country. Again, development is hampered if the democratic system does not prevail in the country.

“Democratic institutions should be strengthened and the democratic practices should flourish at the grassroots if development is to be made permanent and sustainable.”

Jatiya Sangsad is the principal focal point for institutionalisation of democracy, Hamid said, adding that there may be differences of opinion, principles and ideals in politics, but there cannot be any dissent about making parliament the focal point of democracy and development.

“I therefore urge you fervently to get united for making parliament effective.”

He said transparency and accountability of the government can be ensured if the JS standing committees on different ministries can be made truly effective under the parliamentary system.

Hamid said the then Speaker felt embarrassed when any lawmaker spoke against Bangabandhu in parliament, but Bangabandhu himself didn't.

“In 1973, there were some MPs who belonged to opposition parties in parliament. I saw even then that they got the opportunity to speak whenever they wanted, and Bangabandhu used to facilitate that by talking to the Speaker.

“It was a democratic strategy of Bangabandhu to take the opposition parties into confidence. No matter how dissimilar their political ideologies might have been, Bangabandhu used to speak showing due respect to the leaders of opposition parties. In fact, there is no alternative to good manners and tolerance of others' opinions in politics.”

The president said in a parliamentary system the Jatiya Sangsad is the centre of all powers.

“Parliament is made more effective through constructive criticism of the government by means of effective and intensive supervision, which ultimately ensures overall public welfare.”

Hamid said free and sovereign Bangladesh and the Jatiya Sangsad are the results of the country's independence which have been achieved through a war fought under the leadership of Bangabandhu. Therefore, it is the responsibility and obligation of all, irrespective of party or opinion, to make the JS the focal point for realising the hopes and aspirations of the masses, he said.

“We can learn how to make the parliament lively and effective if we study Bangabandhu's statements recorded in the parliamentary proceedings from 1972 to 1975.”

Stating that the JS is the nucleus of Bangladesh's democratic tradition, the president said lawmakers have the vital responsibility of setting ideal examples in the area of accountability of all government departments with the objective of ensuring good governance.

“Only the democratically elected members can represent the masses in parliament and ensure its accountability to the people. The MPs from both the treasury and the opposition benches are liable to the nation in this regard.

“Based on this realisation, I urge the lawmakers to participate [in JS proceedings] in a constructive, effective and active manner by rising above distrust, enmity, personal and party interests to strengthen democracy,” he added.

## Stability led to massive dev in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

The premier said this while placing a motion in the House on the occasion of its golden jubilee.

Hasina said Bangladesh achieved many successes like the successful implementation of Millennium Development Goals, reducing the poverty rate to 18 percent from 40 percent, massive development of communication infrastructures, construction of Padma Bridge with own funds, implementation of metro rail project, setting up of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, women empowerment, and building Digital Bangladesh.

“Overall, today Bangladesh is a wonder of the world for the improvement of life,” said Hasina, also the leader of the House.

She said the Jatiya Sangsad, as the centre of parliamentary democracy, will continue to play an effective and active role in improving the quality of life.

“An exploitation-free social system will be established, and equality and justice will be ensured for all. We all will work together to fulfil the promises stated in the constitution and build the Sonar Bangla as dreamt by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman -- this should be our conviction.”

Earlier, President Abdul Hamid addressed the House on this occasion.

The first parliament in independent Bangladesh went into its maiden sitting on April 7, 1973.

## Not a single unit to be ready by June

FROM PAGE 1

**SLOW PROGRESS**

PD Prof Tuhin, who took charge six months ago, said, “There was little progress before my appointment, leaving me with a significant backlog to overcome.”

He said the PWD was unable to complete necessary construction work within their stipulated time. “Furthermore, the contractors were confronted with obstacles such as difficulties in importing equipment and a sharp rise in equipment prices due to the depreciation of taka,” Tuhin said.

He said the contractors have started importing equipment after the allocation of additional funds to make up for the weak taka.

Former Vice-Chancellor, Prof Nazrul Islam, criticised the authorities for their negligence in implementing the project, stating that the directives of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina should be promptly executed.

He also highlighted that the implementation of the project will alleviate the pressure on patients who travel to Dhaka due to the scarcity of ICUs. “Once the project

is implemented, it will solve several issues at the district level,” he added.

Public health expert Lelin Chowdhury, also a consultant at the Health and Hope Hospital, said the reasons given for the delay are unsatisfactory. Establishing 10-bed ICUs at district hospitals and medical college hospitals is not a difficult task.

According to him, the most crucial aspect of setting up ICUs is creating an oxygen bank, which can be done within two to three months.

Citing several examples, he pointed out that private hospitals had set up ICUs within two to three months.

The supply chain issues may have had some impact, but that cannot be blamed for the delay, he said. He emphasised the importance of holding officials accountable for negligence and delay.

The project director said 14 other district hospitals will get ICUs after the first 13 get them and the remaining 16 will get ICUs even later.

He said Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital (SSMCH), Khulna Medical College Hospital, Barishal Medical College Hospital, and Sylhet Medical College Hospital

are among the 10 medical college hospitals that have got the ICUs.

He said Munshiganj 250-bed District Hospital, Feni 250-bed General Hospital, and Lakshampur General Hospital are among the first 13 hospitals that would get ICUs.

SSMCH Director Khalilur Rahman said 10 ICU beds have already been set up.

Md Manzurul Alam, the civil surgeon of Munshiganj, said, “Infrastructure has already been built and the manpower has also been appointed to the district hospital. The equipment could arrive any day.”

DGHS Director General Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam told The Daily Star that officials were working hard to implement the project.

Highlighting the need for recruiting manpower to run the ICUs, he said some will be recruited under the project and the rest through the regular process of the DGHS.

Prof Debabrata Banik, president of the Bangladesh Society of Anesthesiologists, said they have trained over 2,500 doctors, nurses, and staffers to manage the ICUs.

coming from the forest next to the neighbourhood when she was preparing for sleep on Thursday night.

“At least 90 families live in three villages under Rowangchhari and Ruma upazilas. The shootout caused the families to flee,”

Putuli Khiong said she also fled and took shelter in Ruma.

“My son Moshi Khiong, current representative of the village, was captured by Kuki Chin members on March 31. Since then, there has been no trace of him,” she added.

The Daily Star could not find anyone from KNF for comment.

Contacted, UPDF (Democratic) District President Ubamang Marma denied their involvement

in the “shootout” and termed it propaganda against them. “We are not an armed group. We work for peace.”

Bandarban Superintendent of Police Tariqul Islam said police on their own would file a case if any family of the deceased is not found.

“We suspect the fight was between KNF and UPDF (democratic) for establishing supremacy in the area,” he added.

Earlier on March 12, an army man named Nazim Uddin was killed and two others were injured after KNA members reportedly opened fire on army personnel in Rowangchhari.

Besides, a retired army sergeant was reportedly abducted by KNA and was released later.



# DSA protects people who want to harm country

Prof Anu Muhammad tells rally  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent economist Prof Anu Muhammad yesterday said that the Digital Security Act (DSA) is serving as an indemnity to protect those who want to put Bangladesh in jeopardy.

He said the act was formulated to protect the looters of the country's resources and money launderers.

"There are provisions in the law that bar people from saying anything against lawmakers, ministers, institutions and mega-development projects, even if any foreign country acts aggressively or signs treaties with the government that go against Bangladesh's interest," he said.

Anu made the remarks in a rally demanding the abolishment of DSA, the release of those detained under the law, and the formation of a judicial probe body to investigate the death of Sultana Jesmin, who died in Rab custody. The rally was organised by left-leaning student organisations in the capital's Shahbagh.

He also said the law makes sure that the enemies of the country are well protected. "This law, in another sense, is an indemnity for the national and international coterie of looters. There prevails many more such indemnities in the country."

"Thousands of crores of money are being laundered in the power and energy sector. Environment-destroying projects have been taken up in the Sundarbans. The country's economy is being jeopardised through loan-dependent projects. And all actors involved in these

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Bus counters in the capital's Gabtoli and Shyamoli saw a rush of people from early morning yesterday, as advance ticket purchases were opened ahead of Eid. Customers stood in long queues for hours, clinching on to their patience in the hopes of celebrating the festival together with their families. The photos were taken at Gabtoli Bus Stand.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



# Bangabazar fire fully doused after 75 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The massive fire at Bangabazar Market was fully doused yesterday morning, after more than 75 hours of breaking out on early Tuesday.

The fire was doused around 9:30am, said Rakibul Hasan, duty officer of the Fire Service and Civil Defence control room.

The fire originated around 6:10am on Tuesday at Adarsha Market of Bangabazar Shopping Complex, burning several thousand shops to ashes.

Initially, 48 firefighting units worked at the site and brought the blaze under control after six hours.

On Wednesday, DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh met the shop owners' association leaders at the Nagar Bhaban and promised to give them financial support from the city corporation funds.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said that the DSCC will make Bangabazar a modern and safe market.

# Police arrest gang of dollar swindlers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police claimed to have arrested four members of a gang -- which used to swindle people in the name of selling them US dollars -- from Dhaka's Mirpur on Thursday night.

The arrestees are -- Belayet Hossain Sheikh, the ringleader; Jashim Hawladar; Biraj Shikdar; and Rasel Gazi.

A police team arrested them during a drive at Paikpara area, Mohammad Mohsin, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station, told The Daily Star.

The OC said the gang members used to lure people into buying dollars at a rate cheaper than the market one.

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PRAYER TIMING					
APRIL 8					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 4:27	12:45	4:45	6:21	7:45	
JAMAAT 4:37	1:15	5:00	6:31	8:15	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					
SEHRI, IF TAR TIMING					
RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IF TAR		
16	08		6:21		
17	09	4:21	6:21		
18	10	4:20	6:22		

# Plagued by gas crisis

Several areas of Dhaka hardly getting supply for months

HELEMUL ALAM

Over 10 areas of Dhaka have been facing a gas crisis for the last six months, with experts blaming supply shortages, illegal and excessive gas connections, and pipeline leaks for this situation.

Although the situation improved in February and the middle of March, the crisis reared its head again at the beginning of Ramadan.

The areas include Jurain, Donia, Nama Shyampur, Mirpur, Bhatara, Shahjahanpur, Mirhajirbagh, East Rajabazar, Gandaria, Moghbazar, and Shanarpar.

Amid this situation, Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company has identified 60 areas, including two in Keraniganj and the whole of Narayanganj. Titas aims to change old pipelines -- mainly to solve leakages and low pressure -- and install bigger pipelines to meet the demand in the identified areas.

Meanwhile, residents of the areas are now miserable, as their living cost has increased due to spending extra money to manage their cooking needs.

For example, Safkat Hasan, a resident of

College Road in East Jurain, now has to spend around Tk 2,500 a month apart from his regular Tk 1,050 gas bill to cook three meals a day for his family. Even though the bills are issued, the family does not get gas for a single minute.

In a bizarre turn of events, they started getting water from the gas pipeline, due to a leakage, around a year ago. After that ordeal, they have not received gas for the last five months, they said.

"We are now totally out of gas; we only got it one day, for a couple of hours, at the beginning of Ramadan," said Safkat.

The family has resorted to cooking using firewood, which takes a long time and costs more, Safkat said, adding that many more houses in the area are also dealing with the same crisis.

Some employees of Titas went to the area a few months ago and assured the residents of solving the problem. However, nothing has changed, he mentioned.

Belal Hossain, a resident of Nitaipur of Shanarpar under Siddhirganj, also has to spend around Tk 2,000 a month in addition



Amid this situation, Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company has identified 60 areas, including two in Keraniganj and the whole of Narayanganj. Titas aims to change old pipelines -- mainly to solve leakages and low pressure -- and install bigger pipelines to meet the demand in the identified areas.

to his gas bill of Tk 1,050. He has not been getting a regular supply of gas for the last six months.

"I'm in a dilemma about whether to disconnect my gas connection or not," he said.

Masudur Rahman Khan, a resident of Mirhajirbagh, said, "The situation improved for a couple of weeks before Ramadan, after a prolonged crisis in winter. However, we have been facing the same problem again since the first day of Ramadan. The supply stops totally before iftar time, when we need it badly."

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# Frustrated and full of rage

Victims of Rana Plaza tragedy against owner getting bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing dissatisfaction over the High Court's decision to grant bail to Sohel Rana, owner of Rana Plaza, injured workers and relatives of the deceased yesterday demanded maximum punishment for him.

They made the demand while speaking at the opening ceremony of a photography exhibition held at the capital's Drik Gallery.

"When my daughter said that the third floor of her office had cracks, I told her not to go there anymore. Then Ankhi replied, 'I've don't go on the 24th... we will not get salary,'" said Nasima Akter, mother of deceased garment worker Ankhi Akter.

"I learnt from the news that Rana was granted

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Visitors at the exhibition.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# BNP doing ill-politics over Bangabazar fire

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP leaders are doing ill politics over the devastating fire incident which broke out at Bangabazar in Dhaka.

"The Bangabazar inferno shocked the country's people. The flames burned the well-furnished dreams of businessmen and employees to ashes," he said in a statement issued to condemn and protest the provocative speech of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Quader, also road transport and bridges

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

# AL leaders behind Bangabazar fire

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday voiced suspicion that influential Awami League leaders might have carried out the fire incident at Bangabazar market to grab land.

"If a real impartial investigation is conducted, then there is a possibility to find out that this incident was completely carried out by the Awami League," he said.

Speaking at a press briefing after a meeting with the 12-party liaison committee at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, Fakhrul said their

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With an underlying message to prepare learners for the future world, STS Group launched Glenrich International School (GIS) on Thursday. From right, Ramesh Mudgal, principal of GIS; Khandaker Monir Uddin, managing director of STS Group; Education Minister Dipu Moni; Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi; Bob Kundanmal, chairman of STS Group; Manas Singh, its CEO, and Shaharia Sultana Ria, head of HR, were present at the inauguration ceremony.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



## Suchita Zaman passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Suchita Zaman, the youngest daughter of National Professor Anisur-zaman, passed away yesterday morning. She was 53.

She breathed her last at 6:07am while undergoing treatment at United Hospital in Dhaka. She had been suffering from thymic cancer, said her family members.

She is survived by a son and a daughter.

Suchita was the wife of the late Tasneem Sumon Haider Chowdhury, who was the eldest son of martyred intellectual Mufazzal Haider Chowdhury.

She was brought to the country yesterday afternoon from the Samitivej Sukhumvit Hospital in Bangkok.

Her namaz-e-janaza was scheduled to be held at Azad Mosque in Gulshan after Juma prayers yesterday. She will be buried beside her husband at Banani graveyard in the capital.



Protesting the High Court's move to grant bail to Sohela Rana, the owner of Rana Plaza, which collapsed claiming at least 1,136 lives in April 2013, National Garment Workers Federation staged a demonstration in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday. They demanded that the HC dissolve the bail and grant maximum punishment instead.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Frustrated and full of rage

FROM PAGE 3  
bail. I strongly protest this decision. He should be given capital punishment," she added.

Stating that she still couldn't get over the trauma of the Rana Plaza collapse, a survivor of the incident, Rupali Akter, said, "I don't know how I came back alive. When I was rescued, the fear was still in my mind, whether I would be buried in the ground like this, or thrown away as a corpse. Ten years have passed, but that fear and terror still haunts me."

"Next April 24 will mark 10 years of that tragedy. Even today, we have not received justice," she added.

Speaking at the

programme, Seuty Sabur, a teacher of Brac University, said, "There is interdependence among the garment owners and workers. The owners must realise that their industry is built on labour, sweat and blood."

Claiming that there is a lack of artistic forms to depict the Rana Plaza collapse, eminent filmmaker Amitabh Reza Chowdhury said, "But we don't see the story of human life in any movie or drama. Few dramas were made [on Rana Plaza]. Why can't we? It will not be allowed to be made in any way. The people who control the three things of the movie -- production,

direction and distribution -- are all in the hands of the garment owners' relatives."

To mark the 10th anniversary of the Rana Plaza tragedy, Drik Gallery and Pathshala South Asian Media Institute jointly organised the photo exhibition where photographs of 20 photojournalists of the country are being displayed. The exhibition will remain open from 3:00pm to 7:00pm every day till April 15.

At least 1,136 people, mostly garment workers, were killed and over 2,500 others injured as the nine-storey building came crashing down in Savar on April 24, 2013.

## Courier companies

FROM PAGE 5  
Suruj Khan, a trader of the area.

Nazrul Islam Chunnun, convener of Janaudyog Mymensingh, a citizens' forum, alleged that a section of unscrupulous traders is enjoying a huge financial benefit by grabbing the city's footpaths. Nobody was bothered about it although it has been continuing for years, he added.

Chunnun demanded a sustainable action to evict the occupiers to keep the walkways clear.

Humayun Kabir Masud, operation manager of AJR Parcel and Courier Service at Dhopakhol, said sometimes their goods are kept on the footpath during delivery as they have no available space for loading and unloading those.

Noor Mohammad Khan Manik, manager of Sundarban Courier

Service's Mymensingh branch at Boro Bazar, said sometimes, their covered vans are kept in front of their office.

Occupying footpaths is one of the major causes behind traffic congestion in the city, said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, traffic inspector in Mymensingh.

"City dwellers must be aware of this menace in a concerted way to help the administration and police to tackle it," said the traffic inspector.

Md Aminul Islam, assistant secretary of Mymensingh City Corporation, said they conduct eviction drives to clear the footpaths. However, the drives are yet to reach the expected goal.

"A coordinated drive involving the administration and law enforcers is a must to make footpaths usable for people," added the official.

## Man attacked

FROM PAGE 5  
to Monir's office on Thursday with the bribe. As per plan, I went to the BSCIC office and gave Tk 50,000 to Monir. At that time, the ACC officials detained him [Monir] red handed around 1:00pm," Eskandar told The Daily Star.

"Around two hours later, I left the BSCIC office and was returning home in an auto-rickshaw. When my vehicle reached Paschim Kotapara area in the town, some 10 to 12 people riding on motorbikes stopped me and took me near the premises of a local primary

school," he continued.

"Then, they started hitting me with hammers. The attackers were asking me why I complained against Monir," claimed Eskandar.

"Later, some locals rescued and took me to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital," he added.

Meanwhile, the BSCIC official was sent to jail through a court, and a bribe case was filed against him, said ACC's assistant director Akhtaruzzaman. He stated that they will extend their cooperation to Eskandar if needed.

## AL leaders behind

FROM PAGE 3  
party wants a neutral probe into the incident to unveil the truth. Justifying his remark involving the ruling party leaders with the market fire, Fakhrul said the government has started talking about constructing multi storied buildings at Bangabazar just a day after the incident.

A massive fire broke out at Bangabazar Shopping Complex in Dhaka on Tuesday morning and it spread to some other nearby

markets, burning several thousand shops, mainly ready-made garment and footwear stores, to ashes.

On Thursday, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said investigations were being carried out to unearth whether BNP was involved in the devastating fire incident at Bangabazar.

He also alleged that BNP was trying to politicise the fire incident instead of standing by the fire-affected people.

## DSA protects people who want

FROM PAGE 3  
projects have been given indemnity through this act," he added.

Anu also observed that the ruling party claims itself to be a democratically elected government, whereas, in reality, no real election has been held since 2008.

He said the government formulated this act out of fear. "People have to speak out to oppose the unjust restrictions imposed by the government. We have to be loud when they want

us to be silent. We have to remain active when they want us to be inactive."

Prof Tanzimuddin Khan of international relations at Dhaka University said those who are in power boast of turning the country into a smart Bangladesh.

"We saw an example of this supposed smart Bangladesh through the death of Mushtaq Ahmed. In the name of making a smart Bangladesh, they are pulling Bangladesh back," he said.

"DSA is the continuation

## 4 held

FROM PAGE 5  
"At one stage, they brandished firearms and tried to take our money," Iqbal, Akkas' son, told The Daily Star.

"We started shouting, after which locals rushed to the spot. We, altogether, caught two of them [Tanvir and Shoyeb]. But the other two fled the scene. Then, we informed police," he said.

On information, police rushed to the spot and detained the duo. Few moments later, two other people -- Lelin and Kamrul -- went to the spot and tried to release Tanvir and Shoyeb. But police arrested them too, said locals.

"We have arrested four persons while trying to snatch cash. They were involved with different types of criminal activities too. We will share details in a press conference later," said Avijit Ray, sub-inspector of Narsingdi Sadar Police Station.

"We have recovered firearms and fake ID cards of police from them," he informed The Daily Star.

Of them, Lelin is accused in different criminal cases, said police sources.

## Important Pirojpur road in dire

FROM PAGE 5  
Mizan of Binna village.

Another local, Nurul Islam, said, "We don't see any other damaged roads like this one in our upazila."

Raju Ahmed, who drives his motorcycle on rental basis, said he has to face serious trouble while driving on the dilapidated road. "Most of the passengers prefer to walk instead of operating any

vehicle."

"Due to the awful condition, road accidents occur regularly," said Sahabuddin Ahmed of Rajabari village.

"We avoid getting on passenger-carrying vehicles, fearing risk of accidents," said high-schooler Mohammad Ibrahim, adding that their sufferings increase during the rainy season.

Residents of several villages under the two upazilas and many students of different educational institutions use the road to go to their desired destinations every day, locals said.

Shafiqul Islam, a local, said there are many small factories that produce different consumer products in the region, and they have to face a lot of trouble while carrying the products through the damaged road.

Baldia Union Parishad Chairman Sayeedur Rahman said the rural road is commercially crucial, and its renovation will remove sufferings of thousands of people living in his union.

Contacted, Nesarabad LGED Upazila Engineer Sheikh Towfique Aziz said they will start their work soon after completing all official procedures.

## Police arrest gang

FROM PAGE 3  
Once the deal was agreed upon, the gang members used to hand the buyers bundles of dollars with \$100 notes on top and bottom, but with \$1 notes in the middle of the bundle.

By the time the buyers realised that they were

given fewer dollars than they paid for, the gang members would disappear from the scene, the OC said.

The gang members used to cheat people in this manner in different places in the country.

Belayet is accused in at least 12 cases, the OC added.

## BNP doing ill-politics

FROM PAGE 3  
minister, said people from different classes and professions have stood by the fire victims. "Everyone is trying to help them within their capacity. But, even such a terrible incident could not prevent BNP from doing ill-politics."

He said a probe body was formed to find out the

reason behind the fire.

The body will investigate the cause of the fire and prepare a list of victims apart from estimating the amount of damages, Quader said.

"We strongly want to say that legal action would be taken against any person or group found responsible for this horrible incident," he warned.

## Plagued by gas crisis

FROM PAGE 3  
A former official of Petrobangla said there are some areas under Titas where gas connections are over-saturated, which means where 100 connections are required, they have given 200 or more.

He said in some areas, the pipelines are inadequately small to supply the required amount of gas.

An official of Titas said as the authorities are not providing new gas connections for a long time, many syndicates have formed in and outside Dhaka to provide illegal connections, which ultimately leads to all consumers suffering due to such crises.

According to Titas' data, the total number of domestic consumers in

Dhaka is around 28.65 lakh. From January 2020 to December 2022, 1218.28 kilometres of illegal lines were cut.

Meanwhile, the country's gas demand is about 4,000 million cubic feet (mmcfd) per day, whereas it is getting 2,700 to 2,900 mmcfd, said an official of Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Ltd.

Officials attributed the dearth of supply to the reduced import of liquefied natural gas (LNG) for a long time.

An official of Petrobangla said they are now conducting area-based rationing to balance the supply.

Energy expert Prof M Shamsul Alam said the crisis is man-made. "Although the country has a lot of

hydrocarbon potential, we have not emphasised on gas exploration."

"We had appointed international oil companies to explore our natural resources instead of increasing our local gas companies' ability to explore, which is costly," he said.

Alam, also vice president of Consumers' Association of Bangladesh, said, "Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission made a fund to explore gas resources with the help of consumers. However, the government has not been able to spend more than 30 percent of the fund till now."

"It is an example of the government's negligence in exploration. They love to import expensive LNG from the international

spot market. Now, there is a lack of foreign currency to import LNG, and the government is in trouble," he added.

Urban planning expert Adil Mohammad Khan said the policy on supplying gas has shifted.

The government is not giving new connections, as it is showing interest to supply liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) via cylinders, he noted.

Supplying gas in residential areas and preventing leakages would be more risk-free and profitable in Bangladesh than making people use cylinders, he said.

Although the government has stopped providing connections to residential areas, the number of illegal connections is increasing,

leading to a higher risk of accidents, he mentioned.

In March, Md Salim Miah, director (operations) of Titas, said the situation was a bit better compared to the crisis several months ago, and it will improve further when the LNG supply increases.

Salim said they have taken the initiative to replace old pipelines to make the supply smoother, as leakages will go down.

They have already completed a feasibility study and are working to prepare a development proposal. He, however, mentioned that it will take more time to start the work, as many procedures are required, he said.

When asked about illegal connections, he said they will take more steps to disconnect them.

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[https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/WCMS\\_367536/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/WCMS_367536/lang-en/index.htm)

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## 4 held for ‘mugging in guise of cops’

### Two are BCL activists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Four current and former activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League were arrested while they were reportedly trying to snatch cash, identifying themselves as police in Narsingdi yesterday.

The arrestees include Rehanul Islam Bhuiyan Lelin, 36, former joint convener of Narsingdi district unit BCL, and Shoyeb Raihan, 29, former member of BCL's central committee.

The two others are Tanvir Ahmed, 30, and Kamrul Hasan Muhiit, 29. Both of them are BCL activists, said a prominent member of the district unit BCL, seeking anonymity.

The victim, Akkas Ali, member of a local union parishad and resident of Sahebprotab area of Narsingdi Sadar upazila, said he along with his son were going to their village home at Bashgari area in Raipura upazila.

“We were travelling on an auto-rickshaw. We were scheduled to buy land at our village home. That is why, we were carrying Tk 16 lakh cash,” he said.

“When we reached Bowakur area around 11:30am, four people riding two motorbikes intercepted us. They were in plainclothes and identified themselves as police officers, showing ID cards. They started searching our bodies and bag,” he told The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8



This 5.25-kilometre-long Indurhat-Binna Bazaar-Jilbari road in Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila remains in an awful condition for long, much to the sufferings of local residents.

PHOTO: STAR

## Man attacked for ‘accusing BSCIC official of bribery’

### Criminals break his leg after ACC detains accused with bribe

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

A man who filed a bribery complaint against an official of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) had his leg broken by a group of criminals on Thursday afternoon.

The victim, Eskandar Dhali, claimed that BSCIC's deputy manager Mohammad Monir Hossain demanded Tk 1.25 lakh bribe for completing an official task required for his business institution. Eskandar then filed a complaint with the local Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) office.

“They [ACC officials] made a plan and asked me to go

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## Important Pirojpur road in dire straits

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

An important road in Pirojpur that connects Baldia union of Nesarabad upazila and two unions of Nazirpur upazila is crumbling away, as it has not been renovated for a long time.

As a result, several thousand residents of at least 20 villages under the three unions have been suffering immensely, as they have no other alternative to reach their destinations.

Locals said around 4-kilometre portion of the 5.25 kilometre Indurhat-Binna Bazar-Jilbari road, stretching from Baldia Bridge to



Jilbari village, has remained badly damaged for over a decade. But no step has been taken to fix it.

The most concerning part is that parts of the road that connect to a small bridge are falling apart.

According to Pirojpur Local

Government Engineer Department (LGED), authorities have taken necessary steps to reconstruct the road soon. Tender process to fix 2.7 kilometres of the 3.61-kilometre damaged portion has already been completed.

The tender was called to complete renovation work of the dilapidated part and 13 culverts at a cost of around Tk 5 crore, LGED sources said.

“We have no word to express our sufferings as it is very difficult for us to carry our agricultural goods to the market,” said Mohammad

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Schoolgirl hurt in Ctg road crash dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A schoolgirl succumbed to her injuries yesterday morning, three days after she was hit by a truck in Sitakunda upazila of Chattogram.

The deceased – Sanjida Akter, 15 – was a ninth-grader at CCC High School, said police.

On Tuesday, two students – including Sanjida – were severely injured as a truck hit them while they were crossing Dhaka-Chattogram highway in SKM gate area. Locals took them to Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

After 66 hours, Sanjida passed away early yesterday. The injured student was still undergoing treatment at CMCH, said Shahadat Hossain, inspector of Kumira Highway Police Outpost.

The body was handed over to the family without a post-mortem following their request.

The inspector said they seized the truck. Legal action will be taken in consultation with the family, he added.

## ‘Bring AL leader to book’

### Tangail women demand punishment for ‘raping teenager’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Local women held a demonstration in Tangail yesterday demanding severe punishment for Golam Kibria Boro Moni, vice president of the town unit of Awami League, for “raping a teenager”.

The protest was organised by a group called “Socheton Nari Somaj”, and the women marched through various streets before forming a human chain at Shaheed Minar premises.

According to the protesters, Boro Moni allegedly raped and tortured the girl. They demanded that the case be thoroughly investigated and Moni be given exemplary punishment through trial.

They warned that if this does not happen, they would initiate a stronger movement.

On Wednesday night, the 17-year-old pregnant girl filed a case against Moni on charges of rape and torture with Tangail Sadar Police Station.

Moni's wife, Nigar Aftab, was also named as an accused in the case.

## TRAFFIC SNARL IN MYMENSINGH

# Courier companies take over footpaths

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

In urban areas, traffic jam is generally triggered by some common factors, which general people sometimes tolerate for their own interest.

The government takes some positive steps such as widening the roads, expansion of footpaths and building flyovers and overpasses that cause



traffic congestion up to a certain period.

However, in a city like Mymensingh, no such development works have so far been taken in recent times. As a consequence, dwellers have to face acute traffic jams, and they blame a section of courier service companies for the situation.

They have grabbed the whole of footpaths in the entire city, and, in many cases, large parts of the roads in front of their establishments. According to locals, this has become their tradition for years.

This trend has been hampering the movement of pedestrians as well as vehicles, worsening the traffic situation.

This correspondent came across this situation when he went on a walk in the city's Dhopakhola, CK Ghosh Road and Boro Bazar areas during busy hours recently.

The roads lead to important Charpara and Shambhuganj Bridge areas, which naturally see the huge pressure of various vehicles.

Courier service companies left their

goods to smack on the pavements beside these roads. They load and unload their stuff during busy hours, causing public nuisance.

Locals said the authorities concerned have turned a blind eye to the issue.

Ramzan Ali from Dhopakhola said blocking of footpaths by these roads gives passers-by no scope to use those at all.

They have to jump or go down to the road to cross the area.

The worst sufferers are patients and their attendants, who have to face traffic snarl to reach Mymensingh Medical College Hospital every day, said

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Free health camp in honour of Mita Haque

STAR REPORT

As a tribute to Rabindra Sangeet exponent Mita Haque, a free health camp was arranged by her organisation Shurotirtho.

The service was provided at Mita Haque's residence in Keraniganj's Boro Monoharia yesterday.

Incepta Pharmaceuticals Limited provided full cooperation to Shurotirtho in the programme, titled “Mita Juboraj Free Health Camp”. Mita Haque and noted actor Khaleel Khan Juboraj tied the knot in 1985. The actor passed away on December 20, 2013.

A press release informed that the camp commenced at 10:00am and provided locals with free medical advice and treatment. It continued till 1:00pm.

Mita Haque was awarded Ekushey Padak in 2020 for her outstanding contribution to music. Earlier in 2016, she received Shilpakala Padak.

The artist was born in 1962. As a child, she took lessons from her uncle Wahidul Haque and later Ustad Mohammad Hossain Khan and musicologist Sanjida Khatun. Since 1977, she performed regularly on Bangladesh Television and Radio.

She passed away on April 11, 2021.

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## TRAUMATIC AFGHAN EXIT

# White House blames bad intel, Trump

AFP, Washington

The White House on Thursday released a long-awaited review of the US exit from Afghanistan, laying blame on Donald Trump and a huge intelligence failure, but defending overall US conduct of the traumatic operation.

The classified review was sent to Congress, where the Republican majority in the House of Representatives is investigating what it says is President Joe Biden's failures during the August 2021 withdrawal.

Presenting a declassified summary, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby conceded mistakes had been made in the exit, which saw the Taliban seize control of Afghanistan within weeks, forcing the last American troops and their allies into a desperate evacuation.

"Ending a war, any war, is not an easy endeavor, certainly not after 20 years," Kirby told reporters.

"It doesn't mean it wasn't worth doing -- ending that war in Afghanistan."

The White House largely blamed Biden's predecessor Donald Trump for creating the conditions leading to the rout.

But it also acknowledged that US intelligence services had failed to understand the Taliban's strength and the weakness of Afghan government forces that Western countries had spent years propping up.

"Clearly we didn't get things right" on intelligence, Kirby said.

In the end, nothing "would have changed the trajectory" of the exit and "ultimately, President Biden refused to send another generation of Americans to fight a war that should have ended for the United States long ago," the report summary said. The pullout, ending on August 30, 2021, shocked Americans and US allies, as the Taliban swept aside Western-trained Afghan forces within weeks.

A suicide bomb attack killed 13 US troops and 170 Afghans on August 26 at the crowded perimeter of Kabul's international airport.

Before US troops were able to secure the whole airport, the world witnessed tragic scenes of panicked Afghan civilians mobbing airliners and even falling to their deaths as they attempted to cling onto departing planes.



Chinese President Xi Jinping and France's President Emmanuel Macron attend a tea ceremony at the Guangdong province governor's residence, in Guangzhou, China yesterday. Xi has given Macron an unusually lavish welcome on the state visit, which some analysts see as a sign of Beijing's growing offensive to woo key allies within the EU to counter the US.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# China sends warships, aircraft around Taiwan

## Imposes sanctions on Taiwan's US envoy, US institutions

AGENCIES

China sent warships and aircraft near Taiwan for a second day yesterday and said the island remains its "inseparable part", after President Tsai Ing-wen angered Beijing by meeting with US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

Three Chinese warships sailed in waters surrounding the self-ruled island, while a fighter jet and an anti-submarine helicopter also crossed Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ), said the defence ministry in Taipei.

Tsai returned yesterday after visiting Taiwan's dwindling band of official diplomatic allies in Latin America, with two US stopovers that included meetings with McCarthy and other lawmakers.

"We let the international community see that Taiwan is more united when facing pressure and threats," she told reporters, describing her trip as a success. "We will never yield to suppression and we will not stop interacting with the world because of any hindrance."

Hours before her meeting with McCarthy in Los Angeles on Wednesday, China sent its Shandong aircraft carrier through Taiwan's southeastern waters on



its way to the western Pacific.

Beijing said earlier yesterday that "Taiwan is an inseparable part of China", after repeatedly warning against the Tsai-McCarthy meeting. "China's sovereignty and territorial integrity will never be divided," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a regular press briefing. "The future of Taiwan lies in reunification with the motherland."

AFP journalists on Pingtan island, China's nearest outpost to Taiwan, saw a military ship and at least three army helicopters transiting through the strait yesterday afternoon.

The silver-grey Dongtuo-859 tugboat cruised southwards, about one kilometre

from the shore, while the two aircraft flew northwards over the waters at fairly low altitude.

Taiwan was on alert, with Premier Chen Chien-jen saying yesterday that its defence and security agencies were keeping a close eye on developments.

Meanwhile, China has imposed further sanctions on Hsiao Bi-khim, Taiwan's de facto ambassador to the United States, prohibiting her and family members from entering the mainland, Hong Kong and Macau, state media reported yesterday.

The sanctions, announced by China's Taiwan Affairs Office, also ban investors and firms related to Hsiao from cooperating with mainland organisations and individuals, reports Reuters.

China's foreign ministry also announced steps against the United States' Hudson Institute and Reagan Library and their heads, saying both institutions provided a platform and facilities for what it called Tsai's separatist activities.

Taiwan's Foreign Ministry reacted angrily, saying China had no right to "butt in" when it came to Tsai's overseas trips and that Beijing was "deceiving itself" if it thought the sanctions would have any effect.

## US hopes govt

FROM PAGE 12

The same day it published a video on YouTube, titled "How the elite police force Rab terrorises the people of Bangladesh" DW Documentary).

Meanwhile, Seheli Sabrin, spokesperson for the foreign ministry, said Rab keeps working for the interest of the country's security and it is not being used for any political purpose, reports UNB.

## Nasa sends

FROM PAGE 12

size of a washing machine and has been described as a chemistry laboratory in space, is that it will be hosted on an Intelsat communications satellite in geostationary orbit.

"Geostationary orbit is a common orbit for weather satellites and communications satellites, but an air quality instrument measuring gases hadn't been there yet," said Caroline Nowlan, an atmospheric physicist at the Harvard & Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

Existing pollution-monitoring satellites are in low Earth orbit, which means they can only provide observations once a day at a fixed time.

"We can get measurements, say, over New York City at 1:30 in the afternoon," Nowlan said. "But that's just one data point over New York City over a day."

"The great thing about TEMPO is that for the first time we'll be able to make hourly measurements over North America, so we'll be able to see what's happening over a whole day as long as the sun is up."

Daugherty said TEMPO will power up at the end of May or in early June and begin producing data in October, although it will not be made available to the public until April of next year.

TEMPO will have multiple applications from measuring levels of various pollutants to providing air quality forecasts and helping the development of emission-control strategies.

# Rokia Afzal laid to rest

FROM PAGE 12

the Mt Elizabeth Novena Hospital in Singapore on Wednesday at the age of 82. She is survived by her daughters Erum Mariam and Faiza Rahman, and her son Imran Faiz Rahman.

Her children and a grandchild arrived in Dhaka with her body late Thursday.

The business community, women entrepreneurs and noted individuals from all sectors are mourning for her and paying their tributes.

Those who paid their respects at her Gulshan residence include Rokia Afzal Rahman's younger sister Khadija Afzal, Transcom Group Chief Executive Officer Simeen Rahman, Transcom Group Head of Strategy and Transformation Zairaif Aayat Hossain, MIDAS board member Parveen Mahmud, Newspapers Owners' Association of Bangladesh President AK Azad, and The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam.

Chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue Prof Rehman Sobhan, eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain, and Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher

Matiur Rahman took part in janaza.

Rokia was the vice president of the International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh. She was the chairman of RR and Arlinks groups of companies. She was also the chairman of MIDAS Financing Limited.

She was the chairperson of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of The Daily Star, and a director of Mediastar Limited, the owning company of Prothom Alo.

She undertook initiatives in different sectors and left a lasting legacy in the media, insurance, real estate, and financial sectors. In 2001, she became an adviser to a caretaker government.

Rokia's career started with a job at a commercial bank in 1962.

At the time, women working in banks was a rarity and Rokia became one of the very few female bankers. Within two years, she became the first woman bank manager of the country and also led the first female-only branch in Dhaka.

In 1980, she ventured into the farming industry.

# Israel bombards Gaza

FROM PAGE 12

As the Israeli jets struck in Gaza, salvos of rockets were fired in response and sirens sounded in Israeli towns and cities in bordering areas. However, there were no reports of serious casualties and only one rocket hit a target, damaging a house in the southern town of Sderot.

The cross-border strikes came amid an escalating confrontation over Israeli police raids at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which this year coincides with the Jewish Passover holiday.

"We hold the Zionist occupation fully responsible for the grave escalation and the flagrant aggression against the Gaza Strip and for the consequences that will bring onto the

region," Hamas said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Two Israelis were killed yesterday in a shooting attack on their car in the occupied West Bank, Israeli authorities said.

The attack came with Israel on high alert in Jerusalem. Israel's military said soldiers had arrived at the scene of a reported car crash between Israeli and Palestinian vehicles near the Jewish settlement of Hamra and saw a car with three Israeli women inside had been shot up.

Two of the women died and the third sustained serious wounds, Israeli medical officials said.

"Soldiers are blocking routes adjacent to the scene of the shooting attack. A pursuit after the terrorists has begun," the military said in a statement.







## Restore hope and dignity to the traders

The government must urgently assist them

Now that the ashes of the devastating fire that ravaged through Bangabazar Shopping Complex have somewhat settled, we urge the government to take urgent steps to assist and compensate the affected businessmen ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr and help them rebuild their businesses. We are reassured by the prime minister's pledge that support will be provided to the traders who incurred losses in the fire, and hope that a comprehensive compensation package will be devised that covers property damage, lost inventory, lost income and other forms of losses suffered by the traders. Moving forward, we must also ensure an enabling environment for the affected traders to reconstruct their businesses on the site.

The traders in Bangabazar are predominantly small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs who do not have other businesses or properties to fall back on. According to the Bangladesh Shop Owners Association, owners of at least 5,000 stores – who had stocked up on supplies in anticipation of the Eid-ul-Fitr celebration – saw their livelihoods destroyed in an instant. Many of them had invested their entire savings and had been working for years to build their businesses. This loss will have a ripple effect on their families, employees, and the wider community. This unforeseen devastation of livelihoods is especially severe given the current economic climate, which has already made it difficult for businesses to survive. And it is not just the traders who have lost their businesses; the entire Bangabazar area is suffering from a significant loss of economic activity. Suppliers, for instance, who are owed money from multiple shops – some as much as Tk 40 lakh – now have no means of recovering them. And what of the employees of these shops, who will have to return to their families this Eid empty-handed amid the worst cost-of living crisis in over a decade?

Under the circumstances, the traders have demanded that they be allowed to set up shops at the site, with whatever little inventory they could recover. We hope that the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) will provide whatever assistance is needed – and swiftly – to aid the traders enabling them to rise from the ashes. The government should also ensure that the traders have access to the necessary infrastructure to rebuild their businesses, including affordable credit. If the DSCC's plan to build a 10-storey shopping complex in Bangabazar goes through, it must ensure that all traders, no matter how small, are allocated their fair share in the new premises, without harassment, bureaucratic delays or bribery.

It has been heartening to see ordinary people and non-government organisations buy burnt or partially burnt items in the fire in an attempt to assist the shopkeepers. We urge others to follow suit and stand beside them in this hour of darkness.

This is not just a matter of providing financial assistance; it is a matter of restoring hope and dignity to the traders who have lost everything in the fire. The government must act swiftly and decisively to address the plight of the affected traders, and to ensure that they are not left to suffer in silence.

## The disappearing ponds of Dhaka

### Stop the onslaught on our precious water bodies

Once a lush green city full of canals, lakes and water bodies, Dhaka has now lost most of its natural beauty to rapid urbanisation. According to the Detailed Area Plan 2022 of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), there are a total of 3,464 ponds in its 1,528 sq-km jurisdiction. Of them, 205 are in the central Dhaka region. But between 2010 and 2019, Dhaka lost a staggering 3,440 acres out of the 9,556 acres of flood flow zones, water retention areas and water bodies to individuals, businesses, real estate developers and other organisations.

This monumental loss has put pressure on the country's water resources and raised serious concerns about the future of our water security. In fact, Bangladesh lags behind Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Afghanistan in water security. Adding to it, due to filling up of Dhaka's water bodies, the city simply cannot handle any heavy deluge. Nearly 90 percent of Dhaka is covered in concrete; rain water has no way of draining out, and we end up with intense waterlogging during heavy rainfalls.

Urban planning experts say water bodies should cover 12-15 percent area of Dhaka considering its population, but the current coverage is just around five percent. In the 30 years until 2016, more than 60 percent of wetlands in Dhaka have been lost. A visit in 2017 to 65 ponds marked on the map of the undivided Dhaka city based on a survey between 2003 and 2011 also confirms our worries. Many of them were found filled up, lost forever to urbanisation.

There is no sign that the onslaught on our water bodies will stop. Last year, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) filled a water body near the Hajj Camp in Ashkona for a housing project. How can a government body show such disregard for our wetland protection law, which stipulates that there is no scope for filling a single pond or water body? The authorities need to ensure that the law is not just on paper. There have to be tangible actions to bring the violators to book.

To understand what is at stake, we must understand how important water bodies are. They hold great ecological and socioeconomic values, help biodiversity flourish, are important rainwater reservoirs, and contribute to storm water drainage. They play another critical role in congested urban areas such as Dhaka, where fires are all too frequent – an alternative hydrant system.

The incident at Bangabazar has reminded us just how numbered our water bodies are. Those that are left are in bleak conditions, calling for immediate interventions. The government must amp up monitoring and implement the relevant laws to protect them. We urge all authorities concerned to treat this matter with utmost sincerity before time runs out, and take stern action against the rampant destruction of our last remaining water bodies.

# OHCHR echoes our concerns about the DSA



Kamal Ahmed  
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KAMAL AHMED

After four years of consultations with UN experts, Law Minister Anisul Haque has now outrightly rejected the most crucial part of their recommendations, saying the government won't repeal sections 21 and 28 of the Digital Security Act (DSA). He promised more consultations on amending other parts of the law and stopping its abuse. We learnt of this after the recommendations by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) were published in the Bangla daily *Prothom Alo*.

Before delving into the OHCHR recommendations, it must be noted that well before the DSA was enacted, there were widespread concerns about its likely impact on freedom of expression as the proposed provisions appeared harsher than the preceding law, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, 2006. Media representatives including the Editors' Council were at the forefront of demanding amendments in the draft legislation. They identified sections 21, 25, 28, 31, 32 and 43 of the proposed act that would limit the freedom of speech and hamper independent journalism. Civil society organisations, academics and rights groups, too, objected to these provisions and added a few more, such as sections 8, 27, 29 and 53.

Those opposing the DSA have argued that the legislation has too much ambiguity, and allows undue discretionary power to the authorities, which can be used at will to suppress criticism. They demanded amendments to remove the loopholes and ambiguity.

The OHCHR experts' suggestions are no different. But the most important thing they have reminded the Bangladesh government of is: as signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), it has certain obligations to the treaty to ensure those rights and not to enact any law that contravenes or falls short of it. It identifies the language used in the provisions as "vague and overly broad," criminalising legitimate forms of expression, and that penalties are harsher than other existing laws. There's some emphasis on removing hindrances to journalism, too.

Reviewing the "OHCHR Technical Note to the Government of Bangladesh on review of the Digital Security Act," one may wonder how punishments for the same offence can vary so much depending on the law an accused is charged under. It points out that for



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

an offence of hurting religious values or sentiments, the sentence under the DSA is up to five years and/or a fine, and 10 years and/or a fine if repeated, while the Penal Code indicates a punishment of two years and/or a fine. The OHCHR also says that the definition of hurting religious sentiments in the Penal Code is much clearer than in the DSA. Similar disparities in sentencing for similar offences with the Penal Code have been identified in other sections, too.

Ironically, the OHCHR review reveals that offences related to religion were better defined nearly a century ago, in 1927, when the Penal Code of 1860 was amended, than that in 2018 in the DSA's Section 28. While the Penal Code describes the crime as "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs," the DSA is less precise when it only reads "hurts the religious values or sentiment." Whether a lack of legislative scrutiny and debate in formulating legislations has resulted in such poor drafting or it's the bureaucrats' deliberate attempt to keep it open for wider interpretation and abuse is hard to tell.

Highlighting the wider scope of the DSA's arbitrary use to curtail freedom of opinion and expression, the UN experts drew pledges made in Article 19 of the ICCPR: 1) the right to hold opinions without interference; and 2) right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom to seek, receive and

right to freedom of expression. About Section 21, which makes "any kind of propaganda or campaign against Liberation War, spirit of Liberation War, father of the nation, national anthem or national flag" a crime, the OHCHR says this overly broad language risks criminalising legitimate expression that cannot be limited under Article 19 of the ICCPR.

The OHCHR has called for doing away with these two provisions that not only impact journalism, but also suppress opposition voices. Available unofficial data shows these are so far the most used sections of the DSA. The OHCHR then deals with sections 25 and 29 regarding defamation, Section 27 related to cybercrime, Section 31 regarding deterioration of the law and order situation, Section 32 related to breaching government secrecy and spying, Section 8 related to the power to remove or block some data-information, Section 43 allowing warrantless searches, seizures and arrests, and Section 53 referring to cognisable and bailable or non-bailable offences.

All these sections one way or another affect journalism and free flow of information. The OHCHR has suggested decriminalising defamation like many other countries. It argues that even if criminal liability is kept, it should be defined narrowly and include defences, such as the defence of truth or a defence for public interest. It has

journalism almost impossible, which is crucial for public interest and holding power to account.

It rightly calls out the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) as an executive branch of the government and stresses the need for a judicial oversight in case of blocking and removing content. Highlighting the wider scope of abuse of power by police in seizure and arrests for breaching data, it asks the government to amend the law and make provision for judicial pre-authorisation. Differentiating between a cybercrime and cyberterrorism, it calls for making the law more precise.

Another important reference the OHCHR draws from the ICCPR is about pre-trial detention, where it suggests releasing the accused pending trial as the general rule – right to presumed innocence until proven guilty by a court of law – and not including vague and expansive standards such as "public security."

These recommendations are nothing extraordinary, but rather reflective of the views of most Bangladeshis. Accepting those will make Bangladesh fulfil its obligations to the ICCPR. There's no justification for rejecting the OHCHR's recommended course of rectifying the controversial DSA other than weaponising it to suppress critical voices, pushing the country towards authoritarianism.

## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# A reality check for the renminbi



Shang Jin Wei,  
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SHANG-JIN WEI

After years of speculation and false starts, it seems that the internationalisation of the renminbi is well underway. On March 29, China and Brazil announced plans to trade using their own currencies, rather than the US dollar. The day before, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation and France's TotalEnergies completed their first-ever renminbi-denominated liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade. Russian President Vladimir Putin recently said he wanted to use the Chinese currency not just for trading with China, but also as a form of payment in trade with other countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. And Saudi Arabia has been in talks with China since last year about accepting payments for some oil exports in renminbi.

It is no secret that China would like to convert the renminbi into an international currency and move away from the global dominance of the US dollar. While this is often interpreted as a geopolitical move, a way to insulate China from possible US-led economic sanctions in the future, transforming the renminbi into one of the world's

leading settlement currencies would also greatly benefit the Chinese economy. Moreover, it would help protect the country from an exchange rate crisis, which is why other countries, including India and ASEAN member-states, are trying to internationalise their currencies, too.

China's progress in internationalising its currency is visible in South Korean firms' renminbi-dominated exports as a share of its total exports to China between 2006 and 2020, showing the Chinese currency's share rising from zero percent before 2008 to nearly six percent by 2020. In October 2016, the renminbi became part of the basket of currencies underpinning the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) reserve asset, special drawing rights, joining an exclusive club alongside the dollar, the euro, the yen, and the British pound.

While these are impressive milestones, one should not exaggerate the degree to which the renminbi is encroaching on the greenback's position. As the figure shows, the US dollar's share of South Korean exports to China declined from nearly 98

percent in 2006 to roughly 87 percent in 2020. In other words, the dollar has gone from overwhelmingly dominant to slightly less dominant. Even in China-South Korea bilateral trade, the renminbi is not even close to displacing the dollar.

Moreover, roughly 99 percent of South Korean exports to the US during the same period were denominated in dollars; none were denominated in renminbi. By contrast, the dollar's share of South Korean exports to Japan was 45 percent, about equal to that of the yen, with the won and the euro accounting for the rest. In other words, the US dollar continues to dominate global trade, including bilateral trade not involving the US, while the renminbi is essentially used only in transactions involving China.

Part of the reason for the greenback's continued pre-eminence is that, in addition to its status as a trading power, the US has very large and liquid capital markets where foreign investors can park their dollar-denominated assets. Because of its capital controls, China's domestic financial market is far less liquid, making the renminbi unattractive to international investors.

Theoretically, China could raise the renminbi's global profile by loosening capital controls. But doing so could come at a significant cost, exposing the Chinese economy to the (often negative) consequences of US interest-rate movements and global financial cycles. Moreover, premature capital-account liberalisation could exacerbate the existing distortions within China's

financial system, where domestic savings are not always channelled to the most productive firms. The Chinese authorities are keenly aware of these risks, which is why they have been prioritising financial stability over renminbi internationalisation.

There are, however, other ways to promote the renminbi. A series of currency swap agreements between the People's Bank of China (PBOC) and its counterparts in other countries, for example, could help make the renminbi less risky for international firms and investors.

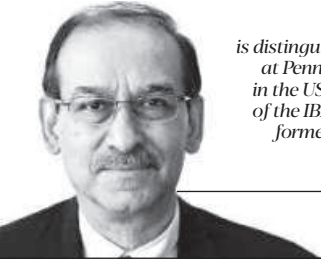
In addition, a digital renminbi could facilitate partial capital account liberalisation without formally removing capital controls. By removing the anonymity of foreign investors, a digital renminbi would allow the PBOC to limit cross-border financial transactions to less volatile types and more conveniently activate a circuit-breaker when needed. Being able to separate inflows of "hot money" from more stable types of foreign investment could convince the central bank to relax some capital controls and allow financial capital to flow more freely.

In sum, while China has achieved notable progress towards making the renminbi a global reserve currency, it is still far from reaching its goal. While it could use a digital currency to deliver de facto partial capital account liberalisation, it will not undermine the dollar's hegemony without going much further in loosening capital controls.



# What is a great curriculum?

**In this era of technological revolution, how should a school curriculum be designed to equip today’s students to become the torchbearers of tomorrow’s nation-building? Two academic veterans examine the dos and don’ts of modern-day curricula in the fifth part of a series that focuses on some of the most fundamental issues of higher education in Bangladesh. The Daily Star welcomes and encourages any and all thoughts, ideas, and recommendations on these issues from our respected readers.**



Dr Syed Saad Andaleeb is distinguished professor emeritus at Pennsylvania State University in the US, former faculty member of the IBA, Dhaka University, and former vice-chancellor of Brac University.

**SYED SAAD ANDALEEB**

A great curriculum is intended to shape human capacities by delivering quality education in sync with the times. It contributes significantly to an academic institution’s identity and reputation, bringing to life the institution’s essence and purpose. In combination with good students, great teachers, sufficient resources, creative governance, stakeholder involvement, and far-sighted leadership, the curriculum influences what, where, and how students learn. In its larger ambit, from the institution to the nation, its role in nation-building is undisputed.

A well-designed curriculum involves a complex web of considerations: national policy guidelines; community needs (including employers); mission and vision of the institution(s); learning styles (adult learning can be subject-based, process-based or problem-based); nature of the subject matter; institutional resources (budgets, state-of-the-art facilities, technology, opportunities for upskilling, etc); and support services (e.g. links to industry for internships, guidance and counselling programmes, etc). The complex connections among these elements must be aptly harmonised for a curriculum to be effective for students, institution(s), and community.

A good curriculum must be examined relentlessly on its design, seeking to constantly improve on five dimensions: Goals are the expectations concerning learning and teaching and must at least:

- \* Specify the end goal, with clear learning objectives across the programme.
- \* Support learners’ ability to learn with the right balance of rigour.
- \* Prepare learners for life with unique skills, interest, attitudes, and values.
- \* Build learning experience in a pyramid fashion, each level building on previous levels.

\* Be flexible and enable monitoring and evaluation by administration.

\* Consider the theories of learning relevant to each field of study and the range of learning styles. *Methods* concern the instructional approaches and procedures to reach and engage students inside and outside the classroom to facilitate learning. The right blend of methods – i.e. pedagogy or andragogy – can run the gamut: from lectures, peer instruction, flipped classrooms, minute papers, developing concept maps, case studies, hands on research projects, team-based learning to problem-solving and much more. Today’s lecture-based classrooms, dreary and uninspiring to the core, represent an antiquated era.

*Materials* are the tools combined with methods to achieve the goals of the curriculum. Books, journal articles, laboratories, cases, media reports, web sources, and a plethora of materials are available to enrich the curriculum. If computer labs are ill-equipped or a geography teacher lacks multimedia to take students to the various corners of the world, learning is diminished. Budgets in our academic institutions often fail to provide the right materials and constrain the inquisitive mind.

*Innovative linkages* within a programme (architecture students converting rooftops into gardens or water reservoirs) or between programmes (using art to treat mental health or the creation of biomedical engineering) must be constantly explored, seeking synergy and to vivify the curriculum.

*Assessment* is an ongoing process to determine what the student knows, understands, and can do with their knowledge and skills. Information from assessment is used to adjust instructional approaches, teaching materials, and academic support programmes. Some programmes are considering eliminating summative assessment without clearly understanding its ramifications.

It needs emphasis that if the curriculum is ill-designed, purposeless, disjointed, and repetitive, it will encumber one’s education. I recall seeing a university offering three levels of an introductory course, adding credit hours (seemingly) to earn revenues! No student or parent complained, nor did any regulatory body intervene to look into this anomaly. A poor curriculum is “a recipe for academic disaster.” It is particularly dire when institutions download programmes of study from institutions

abroad without considering their fit with and the needs of various stakeholders (students, teachers, employers, planners, etc), whether resources are available to match the demands of the curriculum, whether it can be competently delivered, and whether the quality of the student intake will be capable of absorbing the material.

A vibrant curriculum feeds into more detailed activities: sequencing the subject matter for best possible alignment, training teachers to deliver the curriculum, preparing an effective syllabus for each course, developing clear learning outcomes for effective assessment (both formative and summative), developing rubrics, and providing effective feedback to students. With online/hybrid learning and emerging educational technology playing an increasing role in higher education, attention to the curriculum is a *sine qua non*.

A curriculum should be reviewed regularly to meet the needs of learners as well as society. In fact, a good curriculum should be developed democratically, although it can pose challenges – e.g. whether Darwin should be taught in class at all. Times change, circumstances change, curricula should, too.

Importantly, academic institutions must demonstrate courage by introducing new thinking into the curriculum. For example, engineering students should be able to design and build a prototype in their field at the end of their academic career, instead of just passing exams. Sociology students may design social change programmes. Harmonising cross-disciplinary programmes of study such as engineering and sociology for poverty reduction can go a long way in transforming academia to becoming more innovative and relevant.

Curriculums across the world are being reassessed today. A colleague at Oxford worries, “Universities have lost their original purposes – to give a broad education and make useful citizens of its students as well as providing research into life concerns.” Unfortunately, many institutions have turned into job training and specialist trade schools while teaching little else. It’s time we refocus on what, where, and how students learn, and their competencies, attitudes, behaviours, and worldview we need to develop, consistent with a fulfilling, tolerant, industrious, and kind society. With stakeholder participation, a vibrant curriculum can be truly transformative.



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**HALIMUR R KHAN**

Despite being almost ubiquitous in discussions on education, the term “curriculum” is quite often used, even by educators, incorrectly and is not infrequently referred to just as a “routine” or a “schedule” of activities for students. Curriculum, however, is a much broader concept, and aside from considering all the relevant components of learning and skill-developing activities, it must and generally does help learners develop the idea of nation-building and to help promote an educated citizenry, particularly at the primary and secondary levels.

In his piece here, Prof Syed Saad Andaleeb explores the overall contour of the curriculum – i.e. the major dimensions it should be based upon, whether it is for the primary schools or for a private university. However, while he provides a clear roadmap, the component of nation-building and developing an educated citizenry at the school levels need a separate discussion and particular attention.

Aside from a formal set of activities to develop a desired set of skills, the school curriculum must also embed educational texts within the material approved, especially in the areas of general education, that represent the values of a nation and its culture, and appreciate, promote and aspire to establish them among its citizens.

The first component of a curriculum, then, is a set of planned educational activities, experiences and materials designed to achieve specific learning goals or outcomes. It outlines what students should learn, the order in which they should learn it, and the assessment strategies used to evaluate student learning.

The second component is the kind of texts and material that are chosen to impart the values and morals that can help create a healthy, equitable and prosperous society. This is more easily done with the material, as mentioned earlier, from the courses in general education – disciplines from the arts and the humanities.

The commonly agreed upon foundational values among most nations generally are honesty, integrity, truthfulness, accountability, dignity, kindness and respect for others, commitment, responsibility, dependability, and hard-work. There can be others which a society might value more. However, a GREAT curriculum that intends to prepare children for the future must promote these values that, in turn, lead to a nation’s economic growth, national prosperity, and the establishment of a healthy society. The correct values and morals matter; they determine the success and failures of a society.

A great curriculum can instil proper values in the children from the lessons they learn from reading stories, looking at images and pictures, interpreting the meaning of historical events, and so on. With an appropriate story conveying a particular value, the teacher can adopt a strategy to make the lesson memorable to the children. For example, in order to teach honesty, the instructor can start with a discussion on the topic to prepare the children’s minds to receive the lesson. During this discussion, perhaps after the story is read, the instructor could ask open-ended questions probing into what the children might think about the characters in the story that may have done something “dishonest,” ask what the children might have done in the situation; the instructor can add some visuals (something for the children to reinforce the lesson), encourage role-playing, ask the students if they have faced a situation like this, etc. And the teacher might also assign a follow-up activity, such as writing a journal entry or drawing a picture on the topic. The impact of a similar lesson based on an appropriate text can – and usually does – last a lifetime and influences the learner to become a more honest citizen. Imagine if this was done in Bangladesh: a nation of mostly honest individuals! It would eliminate perhaps more than half of this nation’s problems immediately.

A great curriculum enables a society to pursue its needs and aspirations. The school curriculum should thus be closely tied to the pressing problems of society. In today’s Bangladesh, there’s a serious need to include – NOT provide lip services to – the 10 values mentioned above.

Crime, corruption, moral degradation, ineptitude, illegalities, illicitacies, etc now appears absurdly out of control in Bangladesh. This clearly suggests that either society does not want to or cannot eliminate these problems, or that it’s not creating enough honest and moral citizens to replace the undesirables from society. It’s perhaps time to pay attention to what we teach (or not teach) and how we teach it in our schools, to help build a moral and smarter society.



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

## 10 Things I Hate About Dhaka



**BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND**  
Dr Shamsad Mortuza is a professor of English at Dhaka University, and former pro-vice-chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).

**SHAMSAD MORTUZA**

10 Things I Hate About You is a popular Hollywood teen romance. In a pivotal scene, a young girl named Kat reads out a poem in front of her class as she is heartbroken about her classmate Pat. Dhaka is notorious for breaking our hearts. Here’s my take on Dhaka guided by the poem.

“I hate the way you talk to me,” Dhaka! You are loud and obnoxious. You get jittery easily. You love to show your might depending on the size of your wheels, the flag stands that you bear or the hooters that you blow. You are rude when you wear a helmet. Your head accessory makes you part of a notorious gang that can throng and throw tantrums. You shout and scream. You get physical when you talk. I hate the way you talk and talk,

and do not change at all. I hate it when those who are not supposed to talk, say it all. And those who are supposed to talk, do not have anything to say. And most of all, I hate the way you mastered the art to gag us all.

“I hate the way you cut your” roads, Dhaka! I know it hurts as different agencies take different times to rip you open. They insert cables to rejuvenate your nerves to make sure that things flow all right. The colossal concrete columns look over you like surgeons watching you being cut open on an operation table. “Are you numb, Dhaka? Has the toxic air put you to sleep? Do you feel any pain?” The columns of surgeons seem to ask.

“I hate the way you drive your car,” Dhaka! You come from all different

directions. You are colour blind. Green means stop, even eternally so. Red means the colour of a police sergeant’s eyes that pry all over you. Yellow, my dear, is the sick, jaundiced state we are all in.

“I hate it when you stare.” There is little care for privacy. Everything is everyone’s business here in Dhaka. You stare at an inferno in its full blaze.

**“I hate the way you talk to me,” Dhaka! You are loud and obnoxious. You get jittery easily. You love to show your might depending on the size of your wheels, the flag stands that you bear or the hooters that you blow.**

Your stare is more important than those who have come to douse it. You stare at bodies, encouraging others to

get under the sartorial wrap.

“I hate the big” mess that you dump here and there. A city filled with filth that reads my mind. Has there been any study to show the connection between the waste outside and the waste within? Dhaka, you should own up to the meaning of your name and keep your filth all covered. Or do you prefer the ritual drum root of your name to make all dirty laundry public? How can you allow all your dirt to be washed away by the river that is near? Little do you care that the water can wash back and come to our doors when the monsoon is here.

“I hate the way you’re always right.” I hate that you do not give us our rights. Life is taxing here, as our bills would say. But there is no way to prove you wrong as you would always have the final say.

“I hate it when you lie,” Dhaka. You keep on making promises. Then once you realise that I do not exercise my franchise, you always have it your way. You can stop all road dividers at your whim and not find it foul. You do not care how much longer the other passengers will be on the road with the avoidable increase in traffic volume.

“I hate it when you make me laugh.”

Even worse when you make me cry. I laugh when you bring the circus to the town. Singers and players come to entertain us. Firecrackers lit up the sky. You give the sign of allience as if to prove that money in the city actually flies. I laugh when people buy gold-plated *jalebi* only to think their excrement runs through the same sewage of those whose lives are as complicated as that *jalebi*. The rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. You do not care if there are rich man’s sports creating a gulf, separating the East from the West. You do not care if the river gets narrowed for recreational clubs. You do not care if you can stop the traffic from entering sticker-only zones. Whose city is it anyway, Dhaka? I cry.

“I hate the way you’re not around.” I hate the way an ambulance cannot find a way to carry patients to hospitals. I hate the way when there are hardly any decent services around. Have you ever wondered, Dhaka, why there is an equal number of pharmacy shops and eateries? That’s my guesstimate, but if I am right, then all we do here is just eat

and fall sick. There are hardly enough healthy spots. The traffic jam sucks the life juice out of us. We eat, sleep, and die. Yet, there is no slot for us to have our last respite when we die. You will simply churn our bones away when our body has deposited the last drop of nitrogen to enrich the soil of your burial ground.

“I hate the way I don’t hate you, not even close, not even a little bit, not even at all.” Indeed, I should hate you more for being the least liveable city. Yet, Dhaka, I am in love with you. I know your nooks and crannies. You are the first of many of my firsts. You are the crowd where I am never alone. You are the faces that I never get tired of facing. My first day at school, my first movie in the cinema hall, my first truancy from school, my first Eid prayer with Dad, my first visit to a puja mandap, and my first escape into a park. To detach from you is to detach from my sole self. I have been around. I have seen cities that are great and small. Life in Dhaka beats it all. And my heart beats with the beat of Dhakeswari *dhaak*, Dhaka. I hate to see you lose your charm.



## Tigers thrive on creativity

SPORTS REPORTER

The lone Test against Ireland presented an ideal platform for the Bangladesh team management to try and test new strategies, considering the visitors' lack of experience and strength in the longest format – a format in which the Tigers are yet to become consistent.

There were talks that Shakib Al Hasan and his troops are willing to play with an attacking mindset under head coach Chandika Hathurusingha. It was during Hathurusingha's first stint where Bangladesh adopted to maximise the home advantage, preparing tailor-made surfaces to favour the spinners, and went on to undone teams like England and Australia.

This time, however, the Sri Lankan was willing to play in a sporting track and provide a fair platform for the Bangladesh seamers who have shown great improvement in recent times.

Despite losing the in-form Taskin Ahmed at the last moment, leading to curators shaving the grass off the Mirpur pitch, the team management still showed courage in proceeding with three quicks in the playing eleven with Ebadot Hossain, Khaled Ahmed and Shoriful Islam.

Although the pacers were not able to make an impact significantly since the Mirpur pitch turned out to favour the batters, the positive approach in preparing the seamers for tougher conditions deserves appreciation.

The fact that the Tigers fielded six specialist bowlers in the playing eleven – with three pacers and three spinners in the form of Shakib, Taijul Islam and Mehedi Hasan Miraz – is also something unique from Bangladesh's perspective. Taijul remained the standout bowler, bagging nine wickets in the game after scalping a fiver in the first innings.

Interestingly, Shakib opted not to bowl much against Ireland. It may have raised a few questions but the Tigers skipper said he is not willing to “use all options every time.”

“It's not necessary that one must bowl when you have five-six different weapons in your armoury,” said Shakib, and he added, “We have enough bowlers to pick 20 wickets and I have full faith in them. They have shown that, especially in the type of pitch where we don't play often.”

On the batting front, Liton Das, who normally bats at number seven in Tests, was also part of the tactical flexibility as he opened in the second innings and played an aggressive and impactful cameo during the successful chase that resulted in a seven-wicket victory.

Overall, it demonstrated that the Tigers think tank has managed to utilise the Ireland Test for the upcoming days.



**Skipper Shakib Al Hasan was all smiles after Bangladesh's seven-wicket victory over Ireland in the one-off Test in Mirpur on Friday, but things could have gone awry had Ebadot Hossain not picked up the wicket of Andy McBrine early on Day 4. With just his second delivery of the day, Ebadot broke through McBrine's defences before wrapping it up with the wicket of Graham Hume and setting Bangladesh on course for a victory.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## ‘Mental change the biggest area of improvement’

SPORTS REPORTER

It has been a long stretch of international commitments for the Tigers, starting with the T20 World Cup in Australia last year and culminating with the multi-format series against Ireland.

The period has seen a number of changes to the side, with veterans excluded, especially from T20Is, and young guns blooded in a new way. Another change of



### SCORES IN BRIEF

**Bangladesh vs Ireland Only Test, Day four**  
**Ireland:** First innings- 214 all out in 77.2 overs and second innings- 292 all out in 116 overs (Tucker 108, McBrine 72; Taijul 4-90, Ebadot 3-37)

**Bangladesh:** First innings 369 all out in 80.3 overs and second innings- 138 for three in 27.1 overs (Mushfiqu 51 not out, Tamim 31; Adair 1-30)  
Result: Bangladesh won by seven wickets  
Player-of-the-match: Mushfiqu Rahim

note in the time has been the progression of the team tactically and approach-wise.

However, Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan said that the biggest area of improvement had been the growth in the mentality of the players.

The T20 World Cup saw Bangladesh produce their best outing statistically, winning two Super 12 games for the first time in their history and falling just one win shy of making it through to the semifinals.

“Mental improvement is where I feel we have made the biggest improvement. When we played the last T20 World Cup match, we discussed that maybe we were thinking of

ourselves as a small side. But in reality, we weren't a small side. If we had carried that belief, we could have made the semis. We were lacking in that particular area,” Shakib said at the post-match presser.

Following the T20 World Cup, Bangladesh clinched an ODI series against India, a T20I series against England and won T20, ODI and Test assignments against Ireland. Shakib said that they had planned to bring on changes after the T20 World Cup.

“From then on [after T20 World Cup] we had been thinking of changing [our mentality]. Especially if you look at those in the T20 side, all of them have this kind of mental change,” Shakib said, alluding to players' ability to keep their nerves and show toughness.

In particular, Shakib was talking about the mentality of being a big side and the team has responded to the credo of having an aggressive mentality that big sides possess.

The England ODIs saw the collective agreement to play on better tracks, instead of taking the usual route of slow and low surfaces. The ODI series was lost 2-1 but Bangladesh were able to gauge their

strengths in their own conditions against a superior team.

More came were rung in after the England ODIs as BPL performances saw the inclusion of Rony Talukdar and Towhid Hridoy. The Tigers then lay down a marker with a 3-0 clean sweep against the T20 world champions with a far more aggressive outlook.

Coming into the Ireland series, Bangladesh found more substance in their attempt to be mentally stronger. Big wins in the ODI series were followed by big scores in T20Is which led Shakib to feel that the year would be a good one.

From Liton Das to Mushfiqu Rahim and Taskin Ahmed to Hasan Mahmud, the Tigers have found better means to be aggressive and Shakib was hoping to continue in that vein as the ODI World Cup nears.

“I had said earlier that 2023 would be a good one for us. It's an important year and there is the World Cup and Asia Cup. Of course we want to play well in the next six months. Four of the first six months have gone very well and we would like to continue. A majority of the games will be one-dayers and it's a format we do well in,” Shakib said.

## BCB expects tax exemption for new stadium

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has requested the National Board of Revenue (NBR) for a tax exemption on the import of materials required to build the Sheikh Hasina International Cricket Stadium, BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon said in a press conference yesterday.

The final schematics for the stadium were submitted to the BCB last month and the design will be finalised in about three months' time according to BCB sources.

“Due to the sudden devaluation of the Taka against the US Dollar, what should cost 200 crore is costing 500 crore. A majority of the things will be imported. No board spends their own money to build stadiums but we will be doing it with our own money. We know the government will help us if we ask, but we don't want to put that burden on the government so we will do it ourselves. We can ask for an exemption on the tax of imported products since we are doing it with our own money,” Nazmul said, adding that he expected the request to be granted.

The stadium capacity will be “45k to 50k” and will include a green gallery.



**I think there is something else...I don't know...it's sad. Nothing can be more shameful than this for the country – BCB president Nazmul Hassan slams BFF for not sending women's team to Olympic qualifiers.**



## Sakib costs Kings first dropped points

SPORTS REPORTER

League leaders Bashundhara Kings had their first stumble in the Bangladesh Premier League, playing out a 1-1 draw against newcomers Azampur FC Uttara at the Shaheed Rafiq Uddin Bhuayan Stadium in Mymensingh yesterday.

Sakib Bepari got on the end of an uncharacteristic error in stoppage time to even proceedings after Robson Da Silva had given the visitors a 57th-minute lead to put an end to Kings' 14-match winning streak in the league since a 1-1 draw to Mohammedan in Cumilla last season.

Despite dropping their first points in 11 games this season, Kings remain top of the table with 31 points. But their lead against their nearest rivals was cut to seven after Abahani had yesterday beaten Fortis FC 2-0 at the Muktijoddha Smriti Stadium in Rajshahi.

Kings could have maintained a nine-point gap by notching up a win, but they dropped points against a side they had beaten 3-0 in their first meeting of the season.

Azampur gave Kings a run for their money before conceding from the spot following a foul on Dorielton Gomes.

With the clock running into the last minute of the five minutes of added time, Sakib stunned Kings following an error from Tapu Barman. The defender's pass ricocheted off Sakib and in behind the defence, with the striker running onto the ball and finding an easy finish.

The goal secured Azampur's third point in 11 matches.

## PSG situation NOT ACCEPTABLE

REUTERS, Paris

**Paris St Germain's Ligue 1 situation is “not acceptable”, coach Christophe Galtier said on Friday after their lead at the top of the table shrunk to six points ahead of two key encounters.**

PSG were 10 points ahead in late February but they have now lost their last two games in their worst start to a calendar year in 22 years. On Saturday, they visit Nice, who are on a 12-match unbeaten streak, although they drew their last four games.

Second-placed RC Lens will be next up for PSG, who have already been eliminated from the Champions League and the French Cup.



Lens will provisionally move within three points of PSG later on Friday if they beat Racing Strasbourg at home.

“These are important matches. Nice are on a huge unbeaten run since (coach) Didier Digard took over. Then we will be hosting Lens, but first there is Nice,” Galtier told a news conference on Friday.

“We are all aware that we must do more, including myself. We must

also show more personality and have a lot of pride. Our situation is not acceptable. We must not act, but react.”

Galtier warned that PSG's lead was not a guarantee they would secure the title at the end of the season.

“We obviously have to get out of this spiral. There is an 11th title at stake for Paris St Germain. That's what I told the players, we have a six-point lead. But what do we do with these six points? Do we leave ourselves in a deadlock or do we react?”

Forward Kylian Mbappe, who is suffering from hip pain but will be available for Saturday's game, criticised the club on Thursday after it featured him in a video to promote season ticket sales, without informing him how the interview would be used.

“It's very difficult to comment on, it concerns Kylian and the club. Kylian was in a very good mood this morning, he was smiling, he cut short the training session with hip discomfort, but it will not compromise his participation in the Nice game,” said Galtier.



**After sitting out Manchester City's 4-1 hammering of Liverpool last weekend due to a groin injury, Erling Haaland is set to return to action when Pep Guardiola's men make a trip to bottom-placed Southampton for a Premier League contest on Saturday. “He trained the last two days really good,” said Guardiola.**

PHOTO: MANCHESTER CITY



BANGLADESH FOOTBALL IN SALAHUDDIN ERA

# Falling into oblivion

Of late, two major reasons pushed football to suddenly become a focal point of discussion among sports lovers in Bangladesh: the national women's football team's withdrawal from the Paris Olympic women's football qualifiers after the men's team's subpar display against lowly Seychelles in two FIFA friendly matches last month.

Since being elected the president of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) in 2008, Kazi Salahuddin has all but failed to translate his legendary status as a player as his leadership in the last 15 years brought him down from the pedestal. In an attempt to bring forth the contributing factors behind the devolution, The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman summed up the overall scenario.

**Men's team: a pale reflection of bygone self**

Due to the presence of vastly superior teams, the Asian Football Council (AFC) and FIFA sanctioned competitions long remained a tough nut to crack for the men's team. As a result, the SAFF Championship has been the apt reference point for Bangladesh to assess themselves at the international level, but the last 20 years since their lone SAFF Championship triumph in 2003 has painted a sorry picture.

Interestingly, under the Salahuddin regime, the men's team could reach the knockout stage of the tournament only once in their last seven attempts. Moreover, despite a greater opportunity to play international friendly matches that surfaced from 2008 to 2023, hardly any reflection of improvement has been witnessed across 120 official and unofficial matches against 33 nations. In that period, guided by as many as 17 local and foreign coaches, Bangladesh could register no more than 32 wins, most of which came against Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, Cambodia, and Pakistan.

Rare has been the act of punching above their weights against superior opponents, and even against a 199-ranked Seychelles, comprising mostly non-professionals, Bangladesh

Although the BPL is categorised as a professional league, professionalism has hardly moulded into a concrete form due to the absence of definite time-frame for the league, definite number of participating clubs, and the lack of playing venues and quality of match officials. Meanwhile, the participating clubs continue to appear devoid of vision, when it comes to returning their investment year after year, as evident by their apparent charity-based approach.

The clubs may have improved training facilities in the recent past and salary structure for the ready-made senior team in the past decade-and-a-half, but they do not yet have any youth development projects to produce quality players. A couple of players reportedly were each paid more than one crore taka this season but, unfortunately, the standard of performance did not match their wages.

Furthermore, on the back of huge investment from contemporary powerhouse Bashundhara Kings, the BPL has virtually turned into a one-way affair, shrinking the number of competitive matches, leading to players crumbling under pressure at the international level, both club and national team-wise.

**Lower division and district leagues: pipeline remains a pipedream**

The BFF boss often proudly states that he has kept rolling the top-flight football since taking over, but he hardly talks much about the all-important pipeline.

As the lower division and district football leagues are being held irregularly, there has been a dearth of quality players across the country. It



### COACHES DURING SALAHUDDIN'S TENURE

» Bangladesh men's national team had 17 coaches in 23 different stints so far since Kazi Salahuddin took charge of the BFF in April, 2008.

» Five of the 17 Bangladesh coaches featured domestic products: Abu Yusuf, Shafiqul Islam Manik, Shahidur Rahman Shantoo, Saiful Bari Titu and Maruful Haque. Foreign coaches include: Dido/Brazil, Robert Rubčić/Croatia, Nikola Ilievski/North Macedonia), Lodewijk de Kruij/Netherlands, Fabio Lopez/Italy, Gonzalo Moreno/Spain, Tom Saintfiet/Belgium, Andrew Ord/England, Jamie Day/England, Óscar Bruzón/Spain, Mário Lemos/Portugal, Javier Cabrera/Spain.

» Three of the 12 foreign coaches -- de Kruij, Day and Cabrera -- have guided Bangladesh in 10 or more matches.

» English coach Day, who was in charge from 2018 to 2021, was the only coach to taste 10 or more wins for Bangladesh. However, the relationship between the BFF and Day ended on a sour note.

### WHAT HE SAID

**2008**  
"Money has always been a big problem for the game in the least developed countries like us. We need a committee which will go to the corporate houses and make an impression on them to bring funds to football."

**2011**  
"I am a greedy person; greedy for success. I am my biggest critic. I have been like this ever since I played football, when even if I had scored a hatrick, I felt I could have done more. It is the same here. Things have been done, many positive things. But wholesale change needs more time and dedicated sponsors. As I have said, I am a technician, not a magician."

**2013**  
"What I can say is that we will do everything in our power to fulfil that dream, which is a place in the 2022 Qatar World Cup finals."

**2016**  
"I will give the emphasis on three things -- district football, club football and the national team. In order to run the federation as well as run the country's football, the pledges of the manifesto will have to be materialised."

**2018**  
"It [good result] is not going to happen in one



or two days. We need to work hard, train hard and do better. Good things take time. We are all working towards winning."

**2022**  
"There are many matches at the Asian level in the coming days [for Bangladesh women's football team]. We will arrange the money needed for these matches. The team will have to work 60 per cent harder in training. Our target now will be to catch up with the ASEAN teams, or else we will fall back."

### BANGLADESH MEN'S NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM

Time	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost
2008-2023	121	32 (26.45%)	29 (23.97%)	60 (49.58%)



failed to assert their style of play in front of a home crowd who once felt ample pride in seeing the men in red and green.

**Women's team: confined in a glorified cage**

While the men's team headed on a downward spiral, the women's national and age-group teams boasted steady progress at the international level in the last eight years and notched up 19 wins and four draws in 48 international matches since 2010.

Consequently, following several age-group trophies of the regional competitions under the belt, the promising stars from the youth teams lived up to their potential to break the long-held dominance of neighbour India by clinching the SAFF Women's Championship trophy last year.

It is worth mentioning that such a success was not even dreamt of by any local football stakeholders and, thus, the game's governing body must receive some appreciation for having conducted a series of development programmes for women footballers over the years. However, the BFF's decision to pull out from the Paris Olympic qualifiers shocked everyone, especially since they were eager to see the SAFF champions get back in action after a gap of over six months.

The high-flying women in red and green, on an unbeaten streak of eight matches, continue their agonising wait to resume flight.

**Bangladesh Premier League: a mere facade**

The standard of a country's football is judged by its top-flight league but Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is still taking baby steps since its inception around 15 years ago, whereas neighbouring India demoted its I-League to a second-tier competition after promoting Indian Super League to a top-tier league.

has resulted in unproven footballers often making the cut to the national side on the back of few impressions at the top-flight.

So far in Salahuddin's regime, the senior division has been held five times, while the second, third and district leagues had registered only four, six, and four instances, respectively. It is striking that there has not been any instance where all leagues, from top to bottom, were featured in a single season.

Despite repeated appeals from the organisers to roll the leagues or provide the financial assistance to run district leagues, which were once main sources to produce the players across the country, the BFF councilors had paid little attention once elected.

Although it is the BFF's responsibility to run all leagues across the country, the BFF president said after the 2022 annual general meeting: "We don't have any directive from the FIFA to run district leagues. The DFAs [District Football Association] should look to organise leagues instead of looking at us for money."

However, around 12 to 15 districts hold the district football league

regularly without the financial help from the BFF, which means around three-fourth of the hidden gems across the country potentially remain unearthed.

**Grassroots programme: seemingly uprooted**

Country's leading coaches have often said that there is a lack of educated footballers locally as there is virtually non-existent grassroots programme to groom players from a tender age. Although the BFF has been running the women's youth programme for a long time and went on to form Elite Academy in 2021, exclusive for boys aged between 16 to 19, it remains a far cry from the optimum development criteria.

In the era of professionalism, clubs must possess different youth teams. Unfortunately, Fortis FC now stand as the lone entity among 11 professional clubs in that regard after now-defunct Saif SC, who had a youth structure in place with BKSP's association, went on to abandon proceedings after a year.

After the BFF congress in 2022, Salahuddin had promised to organise two tournaments – Sheikh Kamal U-18 championship and Sheikh Russel U-12 championship – regularly to cover youth circuit but it has not seen the light yet. Furthermore, the federation has trimmed the school football tournament to only 64 participating schools, citing a baffling reason that the school tournament has no impact in the bigger picture.

**Coaches' programme: certified majority in the dark**

The number of certified coaches was less than 100 before 2008 but ever since BFF technical director Paul Smalley started conducting the AFC certificate courses, the numbers improved by leaps and bounds – amounting to 1022, with 423 grassroots, 452 AFC C diploma, 88 AFC B diploma, 53 AFC A diploma, and six AFC professional diploma coaches.

While the country's leading coaches are working with top clubs, the ones down the hierarchy who also paid handsome money to acquire coaching licences are not getting the necessary platform to hone their skills and be financially solvent due to the uncertain fixtures of lower division, district and

youth leagues.

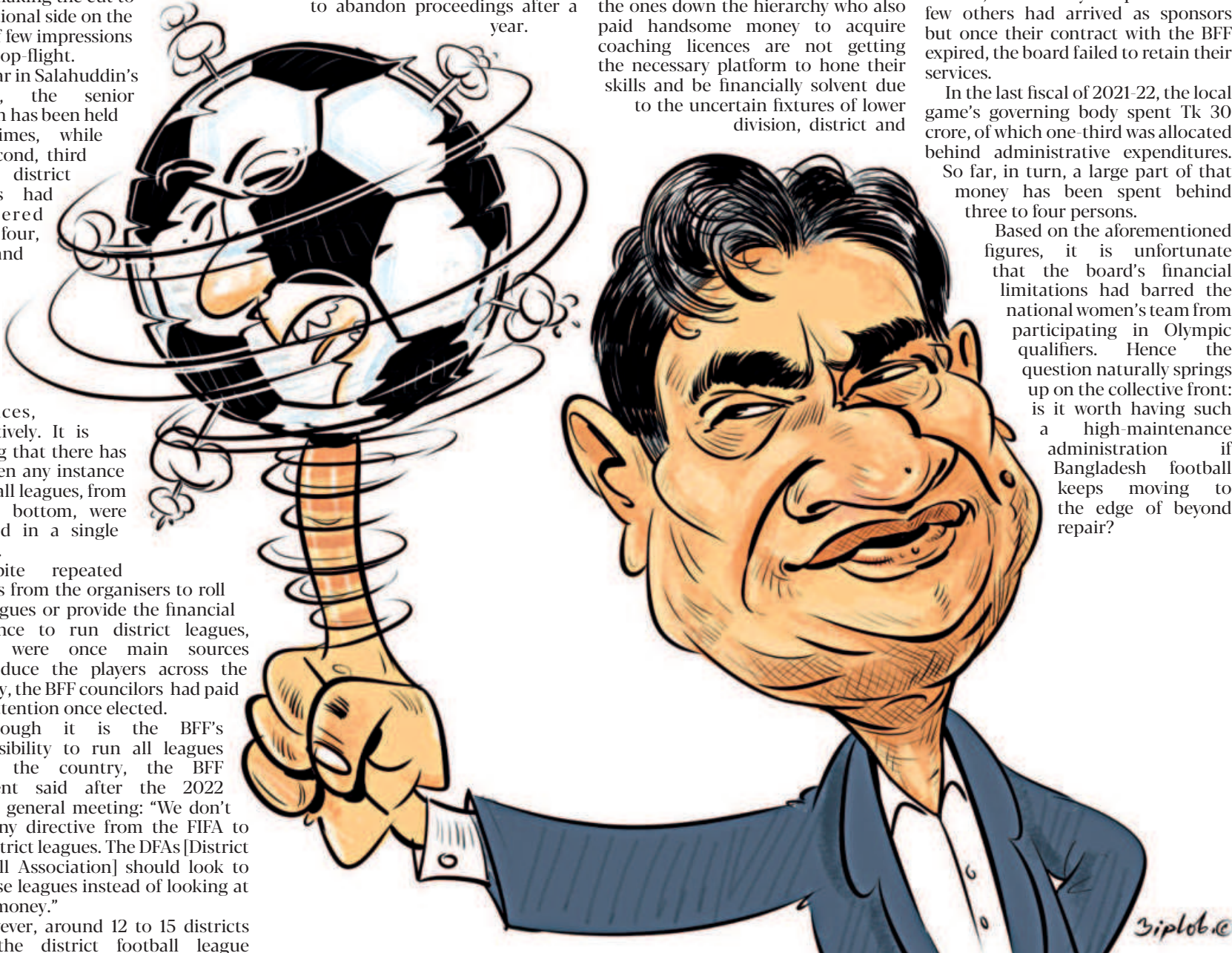
**Financial state: does the board really mean business?**

During the 2022 BFF congress in October, an estimated budget of Tk 49.340 crore was presented for the 2022-23 fiscal against the projected income of around Tk 41.495 crore, including the financial help from the FIFA and AFC. The two leading governing bodies together provide Tk 20 to 22 crore to the BFF per year, according to last Monday's statement from Salahuddin. The board president also informed that they do not have the capacity at present to bring a further one crore for the women's circuit from sponsors.

Currently, the board runs most of its events on the back of sponsorship money from Bashundhara Group and Dhaka Bank. Previously, however, corporate houses like CityCell, Grameenphone, Nokia, KFC, Epyllion, Prime Bank, Islami Bank, Modhumoti Bank, Saif Powertec, Manyavar, Walton, Dhaka City Corporation and few others had arrived as sponsors but once their contract with the BFF expired, the board failed to retain their services.

In the last fiscal of 2021-22, the local game's governing body spent Tk 30 crore, of which one-third was allocated behind administrative expenditures. So far, in turn, a large part of that money has been spent behind three to four persons.

Based on the aforementioned figures, it is unfortunate that the board's financial limitations had barred the national women's team from participating in Olympic qualifiers. Hence the question naturally springs up on the collective front: is it worth having such a high-maintenance administration if Bangladesh football keeps moving to the edge of beyond repair?









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# Journo thrown off roof of 2-storey building in Ctg

Father says it’s for his report on hill-cutting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A journalist is fighting for his life in a hospital after criminals beat him up and threw him off the roof of a two-storey building in Chattogram allegedly over his report on hill-cutting.

Ayub Miyaji, 34, Chandanaish correspondent of national daily Janobani and local daily Shangu, is undergoing treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

Terming Ayub’s condition critical, his father Abdus Shukkur yesterday said he suffered injuries to his head and his three ribs were broken.

Shukkur filed a case on Tuesday night with Chandanaish Police Station accusing Md Alauddin, 35, and Md Faruk, 26, and seven to eight unidentified people.

A video of the incident, which took place on Tuesday, went viral on social media the next day.

In the case statement, Shukkur alleged that his son became the target of a vested group after he wrote a report on hill-cutting in Dohazari area and gave information about it to the local upazila nirbahi officer and assistant commissioner (land).

On Tuesday afternoon, the accused attacked Ayub with sticks and iron rods and threw him off the roof of the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



This picture taken early yesterday shows explosions in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip during Israeli air strikes on the Palestinian enclave.

PHOTO: AFP

## DW DOCU, ARTICLE US hopes govt will look into allegations against Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US hopes that the Bangladesh government will examine the allegations against Rab in an article and documentary by German news organisation Deutsche Welle.

Vedant Patel, principal deputy spokesperson at the US Department of State, was asked about the documentary at a press briefing on Thursday.

“I’m not going to preview any actions from up here. We will examine the allegations in this article and video very carefully, and we hope the Bangladesh government will do the same,” he said.

He added that the perpetrators of human rights violations should be held accountable.

DW ran an article on its website on April 3 titled ‘Death squad’: Inside Bangladesh’s Rapid Action Battalion, where DW also credited Netra News as taking part in the investigation.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



## Rokia Afzal laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Iconic business personality Rokia Afzal Rahman was laid to rest at the capital’s Banani graveyard yesterday.

Before this, Her namaz-e-janaza was held at Gulshan Azad Masjid after Asr prayers. Her family members, business association leaders, and well wishers took part in it.

Rokia’s vision and entrepreneurial prowess left an indelible mark on the country’s business community. She was determined to help women entrepreneurs break barriers and succeed in a male-dominated business world.

She passed away at  
SEE PAGE 6 COL 5  
PHOTO ON PAGE 2

# Israel bombards Gaza, Lebanon

Targets Palestinian militant group after rocket attack; UK urges ‘all parties’ to de-escalate violence

REUTERS, Jerusalem/Gaza

Israel’s military hit sites in Lebanon and Gaza early yesterday, in retaliation for rocket attacks it blamed on the Islamist group Hamas, as tensions following police raids this week on the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem threatened to spiral out of control.

Loud blasts rocked different areas of Gaza, as Israel said its jets hit 10 targets including tunnels and weapons manufacturing and development sites of Hamas, which controls the blockaded southern coastal strip.

At around 4.00 am, the military said it had also struck three Hamas infrastructure targets in southern Lebanon, where residents around the area of the Rashidiyeh refugee camp near the southern city of Tyre reported three loud blasts. “We strongly condemn the blatant Zionist aggression against Lebanon in the vicinity of Tyre at dawn today,” Hamas said.

Two Lebanese security sources said the strike hit a small structure on farmland near the area from which the rockets had been launched earlier.

The strike appeared to have left a large crater in farmland in the south, according to Reuters witnesses. A member of Lebanon’s Civil Defense at the scene yesterday morning said there were no casualties.

The strikes came in response to rocket

attacks from Lebanon towards northern Israeli areas, which Israeli officials blamed on Hamas. The military said 34 rockets were launched from Lebanon, of which 25 were intercepted by air defence systems. It was the biggest such attack since 2006, when Israel fought a war with the heavily armed Hezbollah movement.

“Israel’s response, tonight and later, will exact a significant price from our enemies,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said following a security cabinet meeting.

**“Israel’s response, tonight and later, will exact a significant price from our enemies.”**

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly yesterday appealed on “all parties” to de-escalate. “Now is the time for all parties across the region to de-escalate tensions,” he said, condemning rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza and southern Lebanon, and noting London recognises “Israel’s right to self-defence”.

The US State Department condemned the launch of rockets from Lebanon and earlier strikes from Gaza and said Israel had the right to defend itself.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

## SNATCHING OF MILITANTS Wife of escaped convict arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police has arrested the wife of one of the two death-row convicts who were snatched away by militants from the premises of a Dhaka court last year.

A CTC team in a raid nabbed the woman from the Signboard area of Narayanganj last night, Md Asaduzzaman, the unit chief, told The Daily Star.

Another person, who had sheltered her, was also held in the raid, he said, without giving any details.

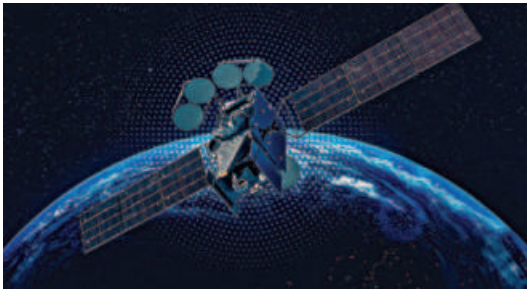
Fatema Khanam Shikha is the wife of Abu Siddiq Soheli, an Ansar al-Islam member, who was sentenced to death for killing publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan in 2015.

According to counterterrorism officials, Shikha is one of the key coordinators of the militant snatching incident. She was present at the court with her child on that day.

After escaping, the two militants took shelter at “Ansar House”, a hideout of militants. Shikha met her husband one or two times there, said the officials.

On November 20, two Ansar al-Islam members – Moinul Hasan Shamim alias Samir alias Imran, and Soheli – escaped from the premises of Dhaka Chief Judicial Magistrate’s Court with the help of fellow militants. Both were sentenced for killing Dipan.

## Nasa sends new pollution-tracker into orbit



AFP, Washington

A Falcon 9 rocket successfully blasted off from Florida into space yesterday, carrying a new Nasa device that can track air pollution over North America down to the neighbourhood level.

The launch, which took place at 12:30 am (0430 GMT), will bring into orbit the Tropospheric Emissions Monitoring of Pollution (TEMPO) instrument, which will allow scientists to monitor air pollutants and their emission sources more extensively than ever before.

The data will be used by the US Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other agencies responsible for tackling atmospheric pollution.

“TEMPO will be measuring pollution and air quality across greater North America on an hourly basis during the daytime, all the way from Puerto Rico up to the tar sands of Canada,” said Kevin Daugherty, Nasa’s TEMPO project manager.

A unique feature of TEMPO, which is about the  
SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

# Mushfiqur stars in win over Ireland

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

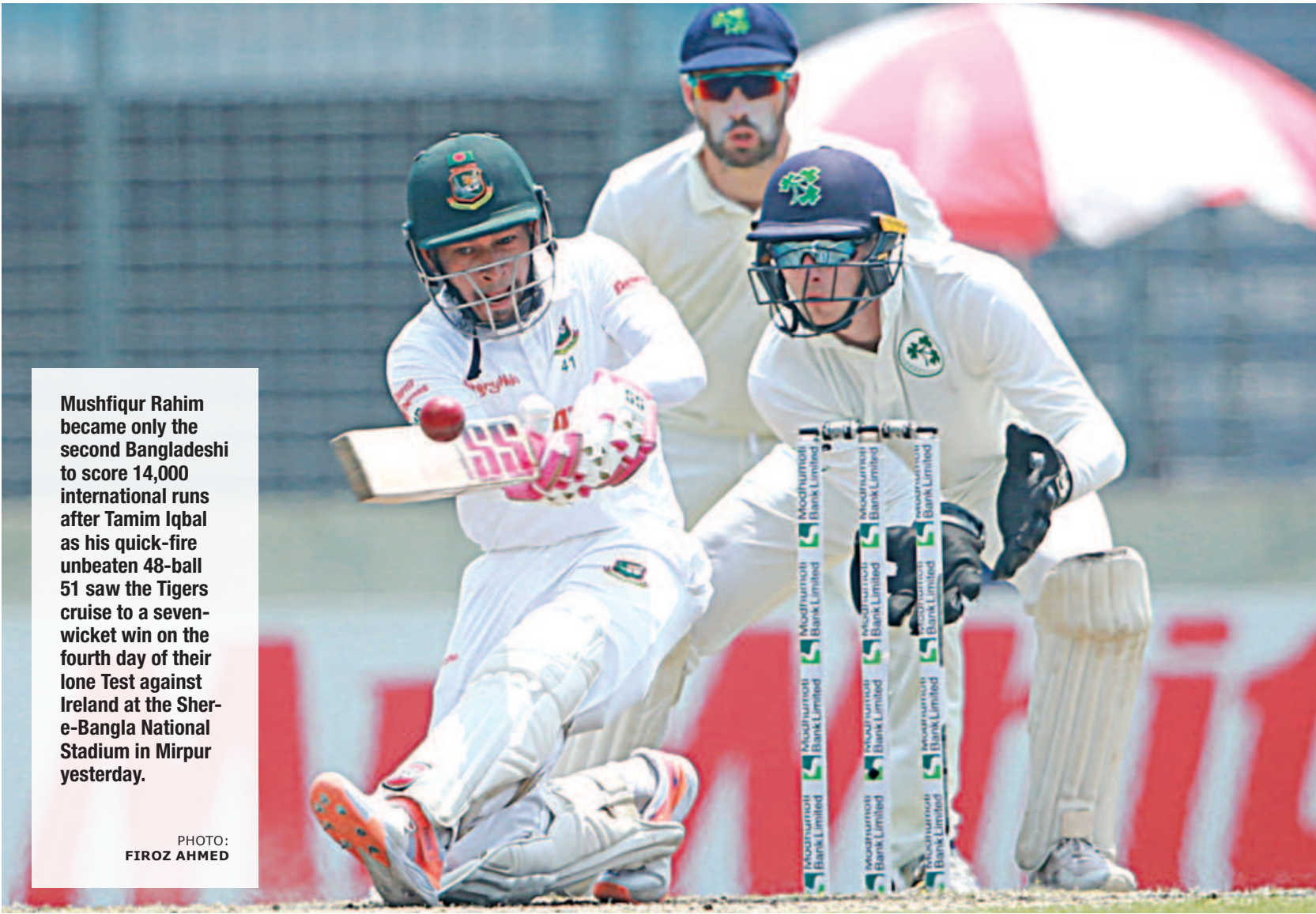
Mushfiqur Rahim found his mojo in the Ireland series, with his latest show coming in the last leg of the tour in the one-off Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur. The veteran starred with 177 runs, including a century in the first innings and a fifty in the second, to ensure the Tigers cruised to a seven-wicket win with a day in hand.

The visitors staged a remarkable comeback on the third day after losing four wickets for just 27 at the close of the second day. Not only did the visitors thwart a potential innings defeat that many predicted, but they also showed immense application to take a lead 138-run lead.

However, their hopes were soon deflated courtesy of Ebadot Hossain’s blistering spell in the morning session on day four as he picked up the two remaining wickets in quick time, making it a matter of time before the Tigers could end a 10-match losing streak in the longest format.

The last time Bangladesh won a Test was against New Zealand in Mount Maunganui in January 2022. The Tigers lost the next Test in Christchurch and have gone on to suffer four series defeats since against South Africa, Sri Lanka, the West Indies and India.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



**Mushfiqur Rahim became only the second Bangladeshi to score 14,000 international runs after Tamim Iqbal as his quick-fire unbeaten 48-ball 51 saw the Tigers cruise to a seven-wicket win on the fourth day of their lone Test against Ireland at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Writer, activist Prabir Ghosh dies at 78



OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Prabir Ghosh, who waged a lifelong battle against all forms of superstition, died at his apartment in Kolkata’s Dum Dum-Motijheel area yesterday.

He was 78.

Ghosh breathed his last at around 11:00am following protracted age-related health issues, Anandabazar Online and Kolkata 24x7 channel reported, quoting his family sources.

He was the founder of Bharatiya Bigyan O Yuktibadi Samiti (Science and Rationalists’ Association of India).

Born on March 1,  
SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Haunting memories of

JINJIRA MASSACRE

“

In another room, I was hiding under a bed silently praying to Allah to save me. ... While I was waiting there, the soldiers shot dead another of my nephew.”

ERSHAD SARDER

a survivor of Jinjira's Sarder family massacre



AHMAD ISTIAK

“Pakistani soldiers broke into our house through the backyard. Sensing their presence, three of my nephews gathered in one room. Another managed to flee. The soldiers entered our house firing indiscriminately killing the 3 helpless boys. They fell on the floor just like logs. ...

In another room, I was hiding under a bed silently praying to Allah to save me. There were so many pots and pans in front of me underneath the bed that the soldiers did not notice me. I was extremely thirsty. While waiting under that bed, the soldiers shot dead another of my nephew.”

Ershad Sarder, a survivor of Jinjira's Sarder family massacre, was narrating his ordeal with teary eyes. Ershad alone buried at least 20 bodies on that day.

It could never be confirmed how many were actually killed during the Jinjira massacre. According to eyewitnesses, up to 5,000 people were killed by the Pakistan army on that day.

On April 2, 1971, during the Jinjira massacre, most of the houses in Keraniganj's Jinjira, Kalindi and Shubhadda areas went through similar ordeals to the Sarder family.

It could never be confirmed how many were actually killed during the Jinjira massacre. According to eyewitnesses, up to 5,000 people were killed by the Pakistan army on that day.

After the mass killing of March 25, many people who fled Dhaka took shelter in these villages crossing the Buriganga river. These villages, mostly inhabited by the Hindus, were



The present state of the canal by which the Pak killing squad entered Shubhadda union on April 1, 1971.

PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK



A weaver's body lies on the ground after he was killed by the Pakistan military in Jinjira.

PHOTO: RASHID TALUKDER

“After the massacre of March 25, we started patrolling outside the village so that we can know beforehand when they would come. On that morning, I went to the river bank and saw five gunboats full of Pakistani soldiers had just arrived. Some of the soldiers got down from the boat and asked me where Narikelbaria was. They also asked about the location of student leader Mostofa Mohsin Montu's house.

After the encounter, I ran back home. Sensing the situation, my family members had already started to flee. I joined them and went to the mosque of Borhanibag village. Thousands of people had already gathered at the mosque. One of the houses adjacent to the mosque was burnt to the ground by the Pakistani soldiers. A man said seven people were killed by the soldiers there.

I felt the mosque was not safe either. So, I decided to go back home through the paddy fields and found numerous dead bodies there. Reaching home, I found several dead bodies on the banks of our pond. We took the wounded to the Mitford hospital and buried the dead bodies.”

Saiful Islam, an inhabitant of East Mandail village and another eyewitness of Jinjira massacre, told The Daily Star, “The situation was

Houses of Jinjira, Kalindi and Shubhadda unions were ransacked and burnt and hundreds of mothers and sisters were raped. Each and every house of these three unions was attacked. Finally, when the killing spree was stopped on the command of Brigadier Bashir, it left behind a series of horror tales in the memory of survivors.”

A number of mass killings on that fatal day have been well documented.

On April 2, more than four hundred people were lined up and gunned down by the Pakistan army in a single place called Monu Miar Dhal. Later, a memorial was erected in that place in memory of all people martyred in Keraniganj during the Liberation War. Besides, 60 people were killed on the bank of a pond adjacent to Mandail main road. The soldiers killed 11 women in one house of Kalindi village.

Mostofa Mohsin Montu, Dhaka district commander of Mukti Bahini and a famous student leader at that time, told The Daily Star, “After the massacre of 25th March, I came to Keraniganj along with the national leaders and the leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League. Although the national leaders left for the border, leaders of Chhatra League were with me. Pakistani soldiers were informed about our presence in that area.

On April 1, a doctor of Mitford Hospital secretly informed me that some Pakistani officers were keeping close surveillance on Keraniganj using telescopes. They were also amassing mortar shells and ammunition on the roof of the hospital. I conveyed this information to all my contacts without any delay. However, we could not realise that they would launch the raid within such a short time.

Pakistani soldiers took position in the canals using gunboats at around 2:00am. At 3:00am, I learned that Pakistani soldiers crossed the river and landed in Jinjira. At 4:00am, the soldiers got the signal from Pari Bibi's mosque.

By that time, the military surrounded the area with barbed wire and bamboo fences so that nobody could escape the carnage. Some

“

We started to flee [seeing the soldiers]. ... We found several dead bodies when we returned home several days after the massacre. Some of the dead bodies floated away through the canal and some were buried by the villagers.



SAHADEB CHANDRA MONDOL

an eyewitness of Jinjira massacre

soldiers started firing at the village. Frightened, people were running to and fro but they were surrounded from all sides.

They kept firing at the village for three hours. Till 11:00am, they conducted house to house searches and killed many people.”

After Jinjira union, Shubhadda union bore the brunt of the Pak military's cruelty. During the massacre, poet Nirmalendu Goon took shelter at a Shubhadda village mosque.

In “Jinjira Genocide 1971”, Goon described the horrific atrocities committed by the Pakistan military. “When I reached the mosque courtyard, it was overcrowded. I saw several dead and wounded bodies in the mosque courtyard. Some of them were lying and some of them were upside down. ... It was hard to tell if they were still alive or not. They were bleeding profusely,” he wrote.

Another eyewitness of that massacre Sahadeb Chandra Mondol of Madhya Shubhadda village told The Daily Star, “Pakistani army started firing arbitrarily as soon as they entered the village through the canal. That forced us to flee from our homes. Many of us got killed. We found several dead bodies when we returned home several days after the massacre. Some of the dead bodies were floated away through the canal and some were buried by the villagers.”

Mohammad Almas, an inhabitant of Par Gendaria village of Shubhadda union said he counted at least 30 dead bodies in his neighbourhood.

After this massacre, Pakistani military administration launched a propaganda campaign. On April 2, 1971, they broadcasted that Pakistan army had subdued the separatist miscreants who took shelter in Keraniganj on the other side of the Buriganga river. On April 3, the headline of the daily Morning News, a newspaper that served the Pakistan army, was “Action against miscreants at Jinjira”.

Jahanara Imam wrote in his book “Ekattorer Dinguli” about the massacre.

“I was shocked to read the headline of Morning News. It said, Action against miscreants at Jinjira. I was hearing from the day before that Pakistani soldiers bombed the villages of Jinjira and many people were killed there. So, were the apprehensions true?!”

People of this generation may not comprehend the scale of brutality the people of Jinjira faced on that day. But that does not matter for people like Ershad who lost their loved ones. They still shiver remembering the shocking scenes of the carnage that unfolded before their eyes.

The article has been translated by Md Shahnawaz Khan Chandan

“

The situation was beyond description. Some of the people were killed on the spot, and those who were injured were screaming for water. The entire Hindu block of our village was razed to the ground by the Pakistan army.

SAIFUL ISLAM

eyewitness of Jinjira massacre



considered strongholds of the Awami League. In the initial days of Bangladesh's Liberation War, many top leaders of the Awami League including Tajuddin Ahmad fled Dhaka through Jinjira. Influential student leaders including Shajahan Siraj, Tofail Ahmed, and Serajul Alam Khan took shelter there.

Receiving intelligence reports that Awami League was getting secretly organised in Jinjira through its student leaders, the Pakistan army decided to launch a raid. One of the masterminds of Operation Searchlight, brigadier general Jahanzeb Arbab devised the plan which was executed by brigadier general Rashid.

“

By that time, the military surrounded the area with barbed wire and bamboo fences so that nobody could escape the carnage. Some soldiers started firing at the village. Frightened, people were running to and fro but they were surrounded from all sides.



MOSTOFA MOHSIN MONTU

an eyewitness of the massacre and Dhaka district commander of Mukti Bahini

As per the plan, Pakistani troops took position at Mitford hospital with heavy weaponry. Mortars and machine guns were placed on the roof of Pori Bibi's mosque. Troops crossed the river and landed in the villages of Jinjira, Kalindi and Shubhadda unions through gunboats.

At around 5:00am, Brigadier Rashid fired a flare and signalled the troops to start the raid. Then and then Pakistani soldiers started one of the most horrific massacres in the history of our country, setting fire to houses and bazaars using gunpowder and killing civilians indiscriminately.

Julhas Mian, an inhabitant of south Mandail, recently narrated his ordeal to The Daily Star.



The Maddhya shubhadda mosque where poet Nirmalendu Goon took shelter during the Jinjira massacre.

PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK

beyond description. Some of the people died on the spot, and those left injured were screaming for water. The entire Hindu block of our village was razed to the ground by the Pakistan army. Some of our neighbours hid in the jungle as they learnt about the incoming raid. When the soldiers left the village, we asked them to come out but nobody responded. Later, we found their lifeless bodies in the thicket.”

Saiful claimed that at least 5,000 people were slaughtered on that day.

On April 3, 1972, a report by Saiful Islam was published in the daily Dainik Bangla titled “Hellish brutality in Jinjira”. That report has been included in the 8th volume of the official historical records of the Liberation War of Bangladesh (Bangladesher Shadhinota Juddho Dalilpatra).

The report read like this, “As the night dawned, inhabitants of Keraniganj were still sleeping. Suddenly loud bangs of guns and mortars pierced through the silence of the dawn. The Pakistani soldiers started the killing spree. The whole area was filled with cries and people's pleas to live. Frightened, shocked people tried to flee. ... Frightened people couldn't decide what to do as they were surrounded ...



A memorial has been built in memory of all people martyred in Keraniganj during the Liberation War.

PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK





DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI

OPINION

Are you what you read?

I am against  
policing  
entertainment;  
I refuse to use  
the term guilty  
pleasure for  
anything (yes,  
even *Emily in  
Paris*) because  
if something is  
entertaining,  
guilt has no  
place in it.

NAZIA MANZOOR

Every semester on the first day of classes, I have a routine icebreaker for my English majors: “What is the one book you have read in class or otherwise that has left the biggest impact in you?” The answers are often charming, deep, silly, and even downright hilarious. For every *The God of Small Things* and *Crime and Punishment*, there are novels and comics and mangas that are wholly unfamiliar to me and then there’s the dreaded “I don’t really read”. This January, for instance, student after student kept mentioning Colleen Hoover’s latest as the most gripping book they have read. As the author’s name kept popping up and I struggled hard to keep a straight face all the while insisting that I am not judging, soft giggles and eventually roaring laughter erupted in the classroom. They knew I was judging.

What I meant to say is this: don’t *just* read Colleen Hoover, please and thank you. Reading habit is an intensely personal affair and it speaks to a person’s taste, family and environmental background, class position, place specificity, education etc. Reading is also an escape and how one chooses to escape the general drudgery of life is no one’s business but their own. And yet, few experiences in life can prepare us to be more sensitive, more inclusive, and generally kinder human beings than reading. Particularly reading stories about people, places, and experiences that are different from ours.

Growing up in 90s’ Dhaka, before smart phones and Instagram reels, before Netflix and YouTube, reading was the form of entertainment I preferred and frankly, easily had at my disposal. As a young girl, I devoured every *Teen Goyenda* and Sheba Prokashoni book

available and learned all about love and loss from Humayun Ahmed. Zafar Iqbal taught me about friendships, and I would like to think my brief interest in post-apocalyptic literature was inspired by both authors’ science fiction work. My teenage sensibilities were also shaped by the classics—I was consumed by Rabindranath’s short stories and novels, rereading certain lines and sections, and imagining what it must have been like to know the poet. I learned to love *Jogajog*’s Kumu but resented Sharatchandra’s heroines’ single-minded obsession with feeding their loved ones. I went on adventures with Kakababu and Feluda, and Shirshendu’s epic family sagas and Shomores’h’s complex women had me gripped. At 17, I already knew I was going to study literature at university because nothing else made better sense to me than getting lost in the world of words, feelings, unrequited love, unparalleled passion, pathos, humour, and tears. Standing underneath the massive trees in our school yard, hiding behind the staircase leaning against the dirty walls, my friends and I would spend hours debating scenes, dialogues, characters.

It was only in my teen years that I started reading fiction in English. My equally bookish friends and I would pool our Eidi and buy secondhand books from Nilkhet. Those were the years when we read tons of Mills and Boons and Sweet Valley High. And here is where the literature professor in me bristles against my Colleen Hoover loving students. I am against policing entertainment; I refuse to use the term guilty pleasure for anything (yes, even *Emily in Paris*) because if something is entertaining, guilt has no place in it. I am also never going to malign the reading of romance books or think of them in demeaning terms such as ‘chick lit’ or

‘women’s fiction’. Aside from the obvious profit made by these books written by women for women, disrespecting women’s reading choices is a form of minimising women’s experiences and labelling them as invalid and one should have no time for that.

And yet, popular fiction can promote certain destructive, reductive ideals for relationships. I know because I have read them. One book that has been trending on Bookstagram and is indeed a BookTok sensation is the Twisted Series by Ana Huang. The male protagonist is the “grumpy” to the female protagonist’s “sunshine” but that’s not the issue. There’s lying, violence, revenge, and utter devastation in the wake of their love story and if fan reactions are to be believed, fans are enthralled regardless. The frenzy reminded me of a viral video by a Bangladeshi influencer from a year or so ago where she is seen making fun of women who want to “fix the damaged guy”. My point being, reading hyper-fictionalised accounts of dreamy-unhealthy romantic heroes is great as long as we’re aware of the limitations of that portrayal. Such portrayals can propagate violence and reduce love to a mere act of possession.

As for the readers among us, perhaps occasionally we can pick up something other than viral TikTok sensations? To my students I eventually analogized that just as it’s not healthy to only consume junk food, one should challenge one’s palette by trying something healthier and dare I say, more refined. Sure, Alex Volkov sounds dreamy, but you know who else was dreamy? Velutha. Please, go look him up.

Dr. Nazia Manzoor is an assistant professor at the Department of English and Modern Languages, North South University.

POETRY

Postbox

STEWIE CHATTERJEE

i smile and greet, then shake and hug  
seldom do i trust  
peanut butter, jealousy  
and a bit of crust

golden tickets to the ball  
dancers mean no foul  
wolves then gather ‘round my soul  
packs that do not howl

thrust upon the will to live  
niceties and calm  
traitor to the foes of woes  
brothers lost to arms

obscure illusions of profound  
causes and revolts  
camaraderie is lost  
over frisky taunts

you feed the snakes and lick the wound  
i have done it too  
poisoned though i am, my love  
poison? that is you

freshly mown, my unkempt lawn  
salted drops of dew  
hues undress and coalesce  
into something new

thespians with tattered casts  
broken wings aloft  
sun, you’re nearly Icarus  
melting what is soft

your tongue, it tastes like caramel  
truth? your smelly socks  
name no names, i tell no lie  
i am a post box

Stewie Chatterjee is an urban nomad and aspiring writer currently based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Find snippets of their work: @stewiechatterjee on Instagram.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

TALESPEOPLE SPIELS

The magic of muscle memory

Sehri Tales is an annual creative flash writing boot camp hosted on Facebook during Ramadan every year by the group Talespeople. This is Part 3 of an ongoing series of creative writing tips based on the Sehri Tales experience.

SABRINA FATMA AHMAD

I recently had the pleasure of interviewing the formidable Geeteera Safiya Choudhury who recalled her Karachi days as a young feature journalist, where, during her lunch breaks she would listen to agency girls discussing pitches and write up copy for ‘fun’. It turned out to be so much fun for her, she went on to found one of the country’s largest advertising agencies.

The magazine I currently work for is still in its baby startup stage, with a tiny staff and a miniscule roster of freelance writers. This means I’m frequently called in to fill in page gaps and take ‘emergency’ interviews at only a few hours’ notice. I’ve seen my husband Abak, a seasoned editorial writer, take a pitch and schlep out a polished piece in as little as an hour. And then there are some Sehri Tales veterans, who by now, can pump out mind-boggling tales within minutes of receiving the prompt.

This never ceases to amaze newcomers or non-professionals in the field, this ability for instant writing. Interestingly, while talent might determine the quality of the writing, and many of our Talers have these in buckets, the basic skill is



DESIGN: HRISHIK ROY

actually a result of something more mundane: consistent practice.

That’s right. Just like any skill in any field, technical or creative, writing is a muscle that gets stronger with consistent use. Just like jogging or lifting weights will gradually result in better muscle tone and fitness, so will reading and writing consistently, build on your writing skills.

I’ve seen it in myself, during the course of my first year of Sehri Tales, and all the subsequent years of repeating the challenge. Whether it’s poetry or prose, or creative non-fiction, I grow in confidence and flow after a month of doing it every night. I’ve seen it in Talers who are just starting out—with time, they are able to hit the word limits, produce more coherent stories and every year we add a new regular to our ranks. And, as I’ve mentioned in previous entries to this column, once you’ve built that muscle, you can put it to a variety of uses.

So keep reading, keep writing, and stay hydrated (you knew this was coming), and you’ll find yourself getting faster, more articulate, and more confident before you even realise what’s happening.

Sabrina Fatma Ahmad is a writer, journalist, and the founder of Sehri Tales.





# The future is bright for ROSHAN

SAHID AKBAR

Ziaul Roshan is a dashing hero of the new generation. He made his debut in Dhallywood with the movie *Rokto*. Since then, he has been able to capture the audience's attention by working in numerous projects. Some of his films include *Beporowa*, *Dhat Teri Ki Mukhosh*, *Psycho*, and *Operation Sundarbans*. This year, two of his films will be released together during Eid. One is *Paap* directed by Saikat Nasir and the other is *Jin*, directed by Nader Chowdhury.

**You have become quite the star since debuting in 'Rokto'. How is life going for you?**

For a long time, I had no idea that I would end up acting in a film. But then all of a sudden, I came to the industry. The first thing I noticed was that it is a challenge to make good films regularly. It is quite difficult to have a good story, script and director all the time. Still, I'm continuing to work on a regular basis and I want to give my best efforts.

**The dreams you had when you joined this industry, have they been fulfilled since?**

While I did come into this industry quite

suddenly, I did not come in with too many hopes and dreams. Actors work hard to earn the love of the audience. An actor should not have any goal other than delivering a good performance.

**At times, you have found yourself involved with some wrong projects. What was the reason behind this?**

When a project is offered to you and a dream is shown, you cannot know for sure what the project will be like by the end. We cannot be sure if this project will stop midway through. The vision the director tells us about, can we be sure if it will be realised? That's why I have sometimes made the wrong decision when picking a project. Did every superstar in our country always choose the right films?

**For a long time, I had no idea that I would end up acting in a film. But then all of a sudden, I came to the industry. The first thing I noticed was that it is a challenge to make good films regularly. It is quite difficult to have a good story, script and director all the time. Still, I'm continuing to work on a regular basis and I want to give my best efforts.**

**This upcoming Eid will see the release of two of your films. Why should the audience watch 'Paap' and 'Jin'?**

All my fans have seen me in a variety of roles in films over the years. They will be really surprised to see my look in *Paap*, which has already been heavily discussed. Those who watch this film, will do so for the entertainment it provides. I think both of these films will leave the audience entertained and satisfied. Those who enjoy horror movies will really enjoy *Jin*. My character in this film is quite different as well.

**You're quite frank when it comes to the topic of love. You have even confessed that you are in love. But many people say that you have gotten married. What is your response to this?**

I haven't denied anything yet. I have even confessed about my love. But I did so because I don't like hiding things. Maybe I confessed a little late, but I did not hide it. Even if I get married, I will definitely tell everyone. But so far, I have only been in love.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



## Grand Iftar Takeaway Fest

March 26 – April 17 | 1 pm – 7 pm  
Banani Puja Field



## Eid Luxury Exhibition

April 7 – 9 | 11 am – 9 pm  
Lakeshore Hotel Gulshan



## Self-quest during Corona

April 1 – 25 | 4 pm – 8 pm  
Kala Kendra

## TRENDY STREAMS

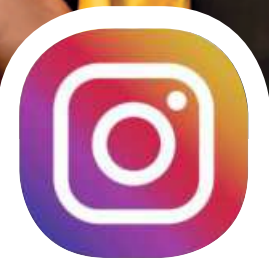
Netflix  
Kill Boksoon

Disney  
plus  
Rennervations

Amazon  
Prime India  
Jubilee

Hoichoi  
In a  
relationship

Disney Plus  
Hotstar  
Alaska Daily



WHAT'S ON  
THE GRAM

## NUSRAAT FARIA

The glamorous Nusraat Faria looked dazzling in a shimmering, one-sided, golden dress with glossy luminous lips and dazzling golden hair. The *Bibaho Obhijaan* actress added a little extra bling to her whole look with green emerald drops, which accentuated her sharp jawline and her beautiful face.

## TV TALKIES

## ‘Made in Heaven’

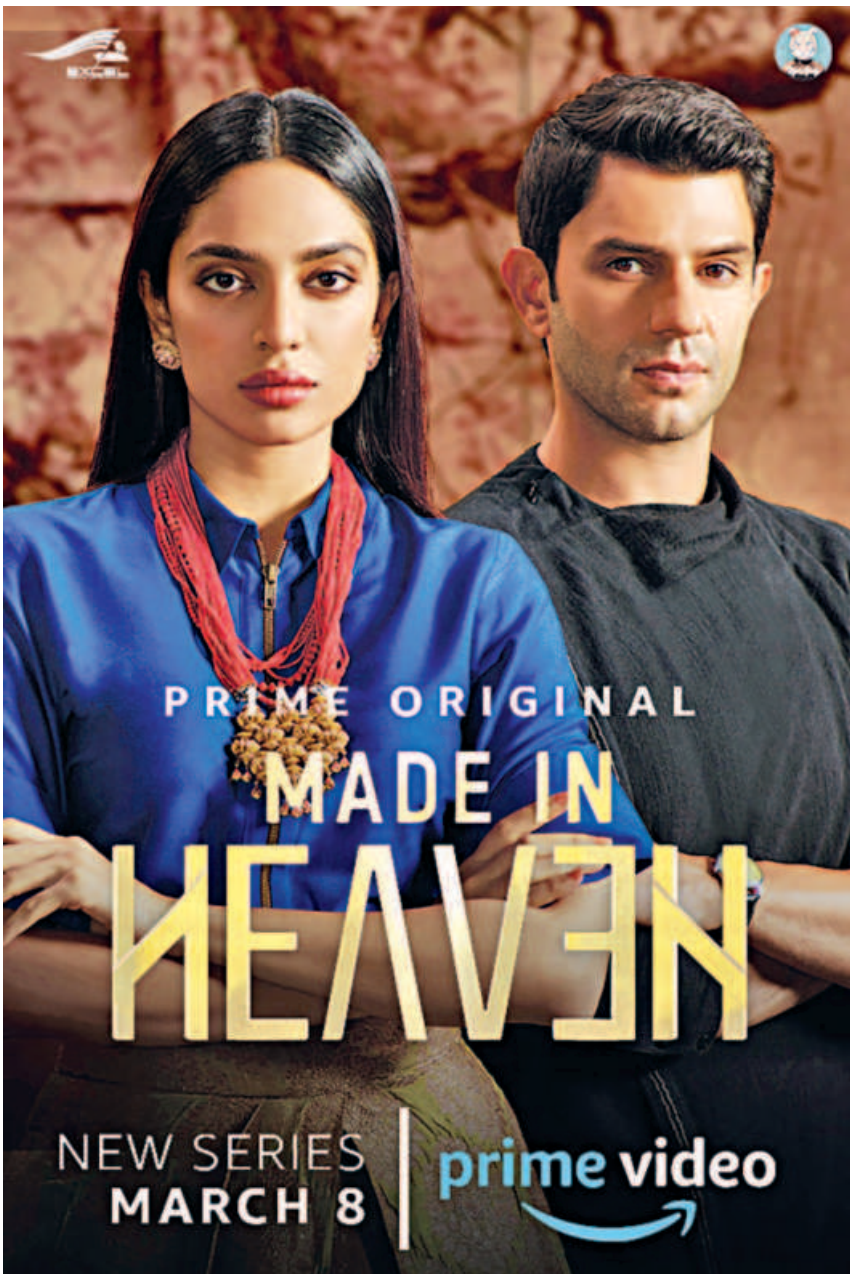
Ornaments of silver, gold and lies

Be it poor or rich, every South Indian individual wants their wedding to be flawless- but the intricacies that hide behind the trial of achieving such perfection is a darkly kept secret. *Made in Heaven* (2019) follows the story of best friends and business partners Tara (Sobhita Dhulipala) and Karan (Arjun Mathur), who work as wedding planners for the upper echelons of the society.

Even between the montages of deceit and extravaganza filled wedding plans, we get glimpses of the planners' own lives- where one is taunted for her humble upbringing and the other grapples with the acceptance of their sexuality. Tara and Karan both display a raw and unfiltered honesty- all the while also surprising the viewers with the lies, they weave when the client requires it.

What truly makes the series a memorable show is the way the characters are introduced and their ability to stick, not to mention the colourful stories they portray of the ever changing economical and social landscape of the city of Delhi.

It is available on Amazon Prime.







# Man stays in Bangladesh despite apparently acing IELTS, goes viral

The long course of the IELTS ace's assistance to the foreigner started from the roundabout of Kawran Bazar and continued till the Hatirjheel signal.

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

It is a given that someone who secures a commendable score in the IELTS exam will go abroad, and not stay back in Bangladesh. But this simple truth was proved untrue in broad daylight by a middle-aged man as he was spotted effortlessly speaking with a foreigner in English, which he must have learned while preparing for the IELTS, an English language test believed to be designed especially for Sylheti inhabitants. The man first came to light in a video where he was seen trying his heart and soul to help a foreign YouTuber in the alleys of Kawran Bazar. Bangladesh is a coveted destination for YouTubers, as much for the country's natural beauty as its 170 million potential subscribers. The long course of the IELTS ace's assistance to the foreigner started from the roundabout of Kawran Bazar and continued till the Hatirjheel signal. The journey included the greatest "English to Bangla Translation" show, where our man translated "keep the

change" to "bakita amare dite koiche". As the IELTS test doesn't have a translation section, people did not bother about his E2B skills. While the foreigner was passing by the BFDC, the headquarters of the Shilpi Samiti where two groups of alleged actors always fight for the most desired chair, the IELTS graduate pleaded with him for some dollars as he was severely disturbed by the incessant devaluation of the local currency. This Satireday correspondent, in disguise, closely observed the events from a distance and went to the man, who was utterly disappointed after successfully being denied by the foreigner several times. When asked why he was asking for money from an obscure tourist, he said, "You saw that? We were actually having a conversation as I was testing my English-speaking knowledge. Asking for some money was just an exercise." As his second interview with this correspondent also went viral, people were desperate to know why such an awesome speaker had not applied to go to the USA, Canada or some European countries yet, despite apparently having a good IELTS score. Although the man never disclosed his IELTS score or whether he really sat for the exam, people believed that it was not possible that such a fluent speaker would rule out the idea of sitting for the IELTS exam and obtaining a handsome score. So, the only concern of people, who watched his video on social media, was why he didn't yet join the leaving-the-country brigade. "If I were him, I would be in a room in Canada now, looking at the snowfall through my window," Tausif, a Canadian visa-seeker, said in despair. Like the video, disappointment also went viral as we talked to another person. When asked what he thought about the man and his English-speaking calibre, Nazmus Sakib, another seeker of visa to a country dominated by fair-skinned people, said, "Such a treasure should not be wasted in the city of traffic jams. He should be somewhere in the world where snowfall and school shootings occur simultaneously."

## People get angrier as iftar approaches: study

STUDIOUS CORRESPONDENT

People get more and more frustrated and angry at each other as the time to break fast in the holy month of Ramadan approaches, a new study found. The study conducted by a group called "Blatantly Obvious Conclusions" also found that people were more likely to engage in physical violence near the time of sunset than earlier in the day. The findings of the study were revealed in a press conference in the capital yesterday. "We have spoken to a large cross-section of people, including office workers, pedestrians, motorists and homemakers," said Abul Kabul, the lead author. "The conclusions are unmistakable, and obvious, obviously. People in Dhaka get angrier as the day wears on," he said at the press conference that started around evening yesterday. Among the signs of tempers flaring were a greater incidence of honking on the streets, slapping rickshaw-pullers, rickshaw-puller-on-rickshaw-puller violence, arguments among married couples, and long tailbacks caused by a motorist abusing the ancestors of another in the middle of the road. "We think this may be linked to hunger pangs and people experiencing withdrawal due to not being able to indulge their vices while fasting," Abul said. "It is of course not helped by the traffic, the air pollution, and the heat people often experience at the end of the work day."

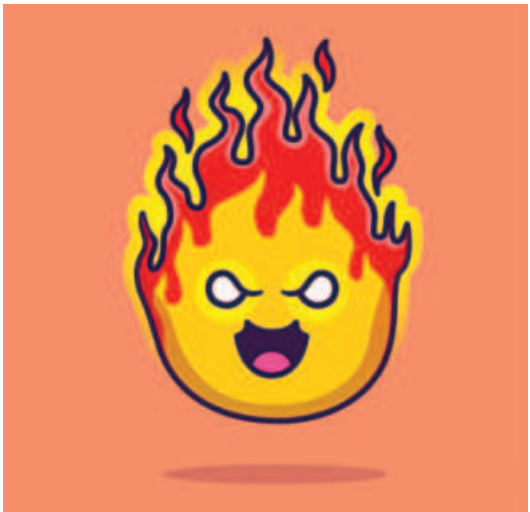


PHOTO: FREEPIK.COM

A reporter asked for the study duration, and the study authors on stage started riffling through the study documents for around five minutes. "Er... it seems that we do not have the exact dates," Abul said. "Let's just say that this study was conducted over the last three years." "Over the last three Ramadans, you mean?" a reporter asked. "No, this was over all of the last three years." "So this isn't restricted to people getting angrier as iftar approaches. People in Dhaka generally get angrier as the day wears on, regardless of time of year?" Abul paused for a second, before replying, "Oh will you look at that? Living in Dhaka basically gets you angry. Fascinating! Blatantly Obvious Conclusions will publish another study on this. Now, please enjoy your iftar." In other news, a study found that there were too many studies being published and reported on, and that many may be misleading.

# Company blacking out windows to stop workers leaving at the sight of empty roads

CONGESTION CORRESPONDENT

A company in Dhaka has started blacking out its windows to increase productivity in the month of Ramadan. This came to light after the glass front of the building, which houses the company, was seen being painted black yesterday. The building is located on one of the busiest thoroughfares in the capital. This correspondent visited the company yesterday and talked to employees and management to find the reason for this unusual action. At the request of management and ignoring the pleas of employees, Satireday has decided not to name the company. "Everything was going fine at the start of Ramadan," said a top official. "For the first few days, it was business as usual -- us telling employees they should work harder, longer, faster and them constantly failing ... you know the drill, right?" asked a top official of the company. "But one day, about a week into Ramadan, around 2:00pm we [other top officials] heard what I can only call crazed laughter from the floor where everyone else works." The top official said that upon going down to the floor, he saw one of the employees laughing maniacally as he gathered his stuff and without explanation ran full pelt towards the exit.



PHOTO: STS

"He [the employee] apparently looked out the window and saw that the streets were mostly empty, with just one or two vehicles on the road," the senior member of management said. He then shouted "IFTAAAR!!!" and ran out the door. Speaking to the employees, this correspondent learnt that over the following days, others followed the footsteps of the "trailblazer", as they called the original bolter. "It takes us two hours to get home for iftar. It doesn't matter where home is or what mode of transport we choose to take, it takes two hours. So, that means we miss iftar at home every day," an employee said, adding that every day between 1:00pm and 2:00pm there was a lull in traffic. "So, when we go stand by the window to look at the world outside, and see that the road is empty, how can we not drop whatever work there is and head out the door?" the employee asked. This correspondent talked to another top official and asked him whether blackening windows would do the trick, as the employees already know that the roads are relatively free during a particular hour. "Oh, we are taking care of that too. We are piping in sounds of traffic into the general workspace, so that they think there is terrible congestion outside. "It has to be done, otherwise productivity will fall and before you know it, management won't be able to order in the lavish iftars."