



## Airports getting ready for more flyers, planes

Govt spending Tk 32,605cr on 8 airfields to meet growing demand

RASHIDUL HASAN

The government is spending around Tk 32,605 crore to upgrade the eight commercial airports in the country and these facilities may start delivering dividends from as soon as this October.

The amount being spent is more than the cost of the Padma Bridge. The work involves constructing a third terminal at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), laying the country's longest runway in Cox's Bazar, expanding and strengthening the runways at six airports, increasing the cargo handling capacities, and improving basic amenities.

These should result in improved service and capacity for domestic and international air traffic and passengers.

The country's airports, including the HSIA, have been struggling to provide the service the flyers expect. They have been complaining about sub-par ground handling and other services.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman told The Daily Star that the eight airports were being upgraded under 15 projects.

The biggest project by far is the third terminal at HSIA being built for Tk 21,399 crore. Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) is funding 70 percent of the cost.

Adding 1,700 feet to the Cox's Bazar Airport's 9,000 feet runway for Tk 1,568 crore is another major project. Once complete, the airport will be able to handle aircraft like the Boeing 777s.

Mafidur said at least seven of the projects, including the third terminal air traffic management system at the HSIA, development of Cox's Bazar Airport, reinforcement of the runway and taxiways of Sylhet airport, and capacity building of CAAB are set to be complete by the year-end.

Aviation expert ATM Nazrul Islam said improved capacity and infrastructure facilities at the airports are necessary to tackle the growing air traffic.

He said in 1991, the number of passengers on domestic routes was around three lakh which has now increased to 25 lakh. For international routes, the number has increased from 11 lakh to 86 lakh.

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**However CAAB should also plan to install approach light systems and instrument landing systems to facilitate landings at night and during poor visibility in some airports.**

### THIRD TERMINAL AT HSIA

- ✓ Area: 2.30 lakh square meters
- ✓ Project cost Tk 21,399 crore
- ✓ 70% work completed
- ✓ Opening expected in October

### COX'S BAZAR AIRPORT

- ✓ Existing 9,000ft runway to be extended by another 1,700ft
- ✓ Project cost Tk 1,568 crore
- ✓ Expected to be completed by the end of 2023.

### SHAH AMANAT INT'L AIRPORT

- ✓ Runway and taxiway enhancement
- ✓ 80% work completed
- ✓ Project cost Tk 540.52 crore



### OSMANI INT'L AIRPORT

- ✓ Improvement of load-bearing capacity of runway and taxiways

- ✓ Improving passenger and cargo handling capacity

- ✓ Project cost Tk 2,309 crore

- ✓ Work yet to begin due to faulty design

### SAIDPUR AIRPORT

- ✓ Revamping terminal building to increase its capacity

- ✓ A new cargo building, an operations building, taxiways, and a control tower

- ✓ Project is nearing completion

### OTHER AIRPORTS

- ✓ Runway of Barishal airport being extended at a cost of Tk 370 crore

- ✓ Rajshahi airport terminal building being expanded at a cost of Tk 76 crore

- ✓ Jashore airport terminal building also being expanded



## Accept our demands, avoid chaos before polls

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the government will have to accept the demands of the opposition parties if it wants to avoid violence and conflict ahead of the next general election.

He made the remark during a press briefing at the BNP Chairperson's Gulshan office after a meeting with the liaison committee of Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote.

"If the government wants to avoid conflict and move forward, then the first thing it needs to do is to meet the demands of the opposition parties."

The BNP leader said their party has long been urging the government to step down and take steps for talks on the polls-time caretaker government to ensure a credible national election in the country.

Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader asked if

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## 'The House in decline'

Some lawmakers say during JS discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The standard of the Jatiya Sangsad is declining continuously and its character is changing also. If the House is to be made the centre for all activities, the people's sorrows and sufferings have to be discussed there.

Lawmakers from the Jatiya Party, Workers Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) said this in parliament yesterday while taking part in the discussion on a proposal.

Workers Party and the JSD are components of the ruling Awami League-led grand alliance.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday placed the proposal in the House, which is now in a special session on the occasion of its golden jubilee.

Taking part in the discussion, the MPs also said it is necessary to assess how much

the Jatiya Sangsad has been able to hold the government accountable.

However, AL lawmakers highly lauded the PM for advancing the country towards development and prosperity.

Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party, said, "Father of the Nation Bangabandhu had said that we will form such a parliament which might be a learning lesson for others. But unfortunately, we are seeing that the standard of our parliament has been declining continuously over the last few years."

Citing a study on a national parliament, Menon said it showed that in a one-hour speech in parliament, people's issues are discussed for three minutes while the rest of the time is spent on talking about the lawmaker himself, his party and the leader of his party.

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### BANDARBAN SHOOTOUT

## All 8 victims from Bawm community

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

All eight people, killed in a "shootout" between two armed groups in Bandarban's Rowangchhari on Thursday night, belong to the Bawm community.

Six of them were from Zurvarawng village, one from Raunin Para and another from Pangkhyang Para, a leader of Bawm Social Council (BSC), seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bandarban police, on the other hand, said they were yet to identify the dead.

Abdul Mannan, officer-in-charge of Rowangchhari Police Station, said 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 gunfight on Thursday night to establish 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 on Friday.

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### BANGABAZAR FIRE

## Traders want support to get back on their feet



DIPAN NANDY

Bangabazar shop owners are looking forward to today's meeting between their association and the city corporation in which decisions will be made about how the shop owners will run their businesses in a makeshift arrangement before Eid.

The meeting will also decide on compensation for the thousands of traders who lost everything in the April 4 fire.

The traders want to start over and want to know what assistance the government will provide.

"We had expected a brisk business ahead of the Eid. But the fire ruined everything," said trader Rakib Uddin.

Like Rakib, around 3,000 traders

want to start the business on the ground where the three-storey Bangabazar Shopping Complex stood.

Representatives of Bangladesh Shop Owners' Association are to sit with Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh.

Dhaka district administration is making a list of affected traders. A long queue of shop owners was seen at the information centre of the administration yesterday.

Names of the shops and shop owners, details of the NID cards and trade licences, and business cards were being recorded at the centre.

Those who lost their trade licences to the fire brought their NID and business cards.

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BNP'S SIT-INS

Foiled by attacks, arrests in many places

Party leaders blame law enforcers, ruling party men

STAR REPORT

While observing sit-ins in thanas and upazilas across the country yesterday, BNP leaders alleged they were obstructed and attacked in many places by law enforcers and ruling Awami League activists.

In several thanas in the capital, the opposition party held its programmes defying police barriers.

The sit-ins, held from 2:00pm to 4:00pm, were to protest the increase in prices of electricity and gas and the corruption of the Awami League government, and to push for the 10-point demand for the restoration of democracy, including the resignation of the government.

BNP central leader Anisur Rahman Talukder Khokon was arrested during the programme in Madaripur's Kalkini upazila, while Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, another party central leader and former minister, came under attack when he was going to join the programme in Patuakhali's Mirzaganj.

At least 15 people were injured when activists and leaders of AL and BNP

“The government is instigating the BNP to take a different path by obstructing the peaceful programme,”

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru'l Islam Alamgir

leaders clashed in Laxmipur's Ramganj. In Sylhet, BNP chairperson's advisor Abdul Muktadir was arrested from the airport area, but was released after an hour.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru'l Islam Alamgir condemned and protested the attacks and arrests.

“The government is instigating the BNP to take a different path by obstructing the peaceful programme. There were sit-in programmes at the thana-upazila level, but police put up barricades everywhere. In Dhaka city, most of the programmes were not allowed at the designated places, and so had to be held elsewhere,” he said while addressing an iftar party organised by Association of Engineers, Bangladesh, at the Ladies Club in the capital.

In Natore, Jubo League and Chhatra League activists have been accused of attacking BNP leaders and activists when they came to join the sit-in.

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Since Friday, around 60 local families took refuge at Rowangchhari Govt High School out of fear for their safety following Thursday night's alleged gunfight between members of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF-Democratic) and Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF) that left eight people dead in Rowangchhari, Bandarban.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

LEAK OF DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE WAR

Russia likely behind it

US officials say; Moscow charges US reporter with spying; Missile fired from Ukrainian-held territory downed over Crimea

REUTERS, Washington

Russia or pro-Russian elements are likely behind the leak of several classified US military documents posted on social media that offer a partial, month-old snapshot of the war in Ukraine, three US officials told Reuters on Friday.

A leak of such sensitive documents is highly unusual.

Meanwhile, Russian Federal Security Service investigators have formally charged Evan Gershkovich with espionage but the Wall Street Journal reporter denied the charges and said he was working as a journalist.

In Russian-controlled Crimea, a missile fired from Ukrainian-held territory was shot down over the Black Sea town of Feodosia, the Moscow-installed head of Crimea's administration said yesterday.

“A missile launched from Ukraine was shot down over Feodosia,” Sergei Aksyonov said on Telegram, without providing any detail on the kind of projectile in question.

Russia's TASS news agency quoted an adviser to Aksyonov, Oleg Kryuchkov, as saying that debris had fallen in a Crimean town, but no damage or casualties had been reported.

On the leaked US military documents, Kremlin and Russia's embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The documents appear to have been altered to lower the number of casualties suffered by Russian forces, said US officials seeking anonymity, adding their assessments were informal and separate from the investigation into the leak itself.

The Kremlin and Russia's embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

An initial batch of documents circulated on sites including Twitter and Telegram, dated March 1 and bearing markings showing them classified as “Secret” and “Top Secret.”

Later on Friday, an additional batch appearing to detail US national security secrets pertaining to areas including Ukraine, the Middle East and China surfaced on social media, the New York Times reported.

The US Justice Department said late on Friday it was in touch with the Defence Department and began a probe into the

leak. It declined further comment.

“We are aware of the reports of social media posts and the Department (of Defence) is reviewing the matter,” Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh said.

A CIA spokesperson said the agency was also aware of the posts and was looking into the claims.

One document posted on social media said 16,000 to 17,500 Russian forces had been killed since Russia's February 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine.

The United States believes the actual figure is much higher, at around 200,000 Russians killed and wounded, officials have said.

A Ukrainian presidential official said on Friday that the leak contained a “very large amount of fictitious information” and looked like a Russian disinformation operation.

On Evan Gershkovich being charged in Russia, TASS reported that Federal Security Service investigators had formally charged Gershkovich with carrying out espionage in the interests of the United States, but the 31-year-old journalist had denied the charge.



4 dead in Thailand shooting: police

AFP, Bangkok

At least four people were killed in a shooting in southern Thailand yesterday, police said, with local media reporting that officers were still searching for the suspect.

The attack started at about 5:00 pm (1100 GMT), in Khiri Rat Nikhom district in Surat Thani province -- roughly 600 km (370 miles) south of the capital Bangkok.

“Four people died,” local head of police Kriangkrai Kraikaew told AFP, declining to give further details.

The shooting happened near the home of a former village head, local media reported.

Thailand has high rates of gun ownership and there has been a steady trickle of violent incidents in the past 12 months, including one of the deadliest attacks in recent history.

All 8 victims

FROM PAGE 1

Tariqul Islam, superintendent of Bandarban district police, said the bodies were handed over to the Bawm community leaders for burial yesterday after conducting autopsies.

The victims' names were published on various news outlets but police could not identify the victims yet, he said.

“As it came to the media, we also suspect that the deceased might be KNF members,” the SP said. The BSC leader, however, could not confirm whether the deceased were KNF members.

According to the list provided by the BSC, six people from Zurvarawng village are -- Lal Tha Zar Bawm, 27, Sang Khum Bawm, 45, Wanlal duh Bawm, 35, Sun Thir Thang Bawm, 22, Bawi Rem Bawm, 17, and Lal Lian Ngak Bawm, 44.

Among them, Lal Tha Zar Bawm is an office assistant at Zurvarawng Government Primary School.

Jahim Bawm, 40, is from Pangkhyang Para while Bawm Ram Than Bawm is from Raunin Para.

Airports getting ready for more flyers, planes

FROM PAGE 1

The country's aviation market had a yearly growth rate of about 10 percent over the last 10 years, according to the civil aviation ministry. The market is expected to be three times bigger in 15 years, he added.

Asked, aviation expert ATM Nazrul Islam said runway improvements will definitely help bigger aircraft's land and take off and larger terminal building will facilitate passengers. However, CAAB should also plan to install approach light systems and instrument landing systems to facilitate landings at night and during poor visibility in some airports.

THIRD TERMINAL, HSIA

Around 70 percent work of the third terminal has been done. The interior decoration and the installation of various equipment are being done at present, said the CAAB chairman, adding that a soft opening is expected in October.

Flyers will get international-quality services, he hopes.

Designed by celebrated architect Rohani Baharin, the 2.30 lakh square metre terminal will have 115 check-in counters, 64 departure and 64 arrival immigration desks, 27 luggage scanners, 12 boarding bridges, and 16 carousels.

There will be a new 63,000 square metre import and export cargo complex, a 5.42 lakh square metre

apron for 37 planes and a new car park for 1,230 vehicles.

Besides, cargo handling capacity will rise from 2.20 lakh tonnes to 7 lakh tonnes, the CAAB chairman said, adding that the HSIA will be able to handle around 2 crore passengers a year.

OSMANI INT'L AIRPORT, SYLHET

The load-bearing capacity of the runway and taxiways will be improved to allow large planes to land with a full load in Sylhet, CAAB officials said.

Besides, under the joint finance of the government and CAAB, another project at a cost of Tk 2,309 crore was taken to improve the passenger and cargo handling capacity at the airport.

Under the project, a 34,919 square metre terminal, a 6,892 square metre cargo complex, a control tower, a fire station, a maintenance building and a car park will be built.

The CAAB chairman, however, said due to a fault in the design, the work on the project is stalled.

COX'S BAZAR AIRPORT

Extending the runway was supposed to be complete by May, 2024, but steps have been taken to complete it by the end this year, said the CAAB chairman.

SHAH AMANAT INT'L AIRPORT, CHATTOGRAM

About 80 percent work of the runway

and taxiway enhancement at Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram has been completed. The project is worth Tk 540.52 crore.

SAIDPUR AIRPORT

The terminal building of Saidpur Airport is being modernised. The project is nearing completion, and when done, the terminal will be able to accommodate 670 people, up from the current capacity of 310.

Besides, a cargo building with some level of automation, an operations building with apron, taxiways, and a control tower will be built.

OTHER AIRPORTS

The runway of Barishal airport is also being extended from 6,000 to 7,500 feet at a cost of Tk 370 crore. The width of the runway is being increased from 100 to 150 feet.

Rajshahi Terminal Building Expansion Project is being implemented at a cost of Tk 76 crore. This will increase the passenger accommodation from 260 to 850.

The Jashore Terminal Building Expansion Project will increase passenger accommodation from 300 to 600 people. Ninety-nine percent work of the project has been completed.

Another project, costing Tk 566 crore, has been taken up to ease landing and take off of aircraft at Jashore, Saidpur, and Rajshahi airports.

He told a press conference that goods worth Tk 1,000 crore were lost to the fire.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Khandaker Golam Faruq yesterday said police were investigating whether the fire was the result of a conflict between groups of traders over the construction of a multi-storey at the site.

He said there was a dispute among the businessmen of Bangabazar over building a multi-storeyed building at the complex.

Motorcyclist killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A motorcyclist was killed and two pillion passengers were injured as the motorcycle collided head-on with a truck on Thakurgaon-Pirganj road in Pirganj on Friday night.

Jatin Barman, 40, of Bhomradaha Malipara village in the upazila, died on the spot, said officer-in-charge of Pirganj Police Station.

The accident took place around 8:00pm. Police seized the truck but its driver and his helper managed to flee, he added.

A case was filed with the police station in this connection, he further said.

Two teenage boys stabbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two teenage boys were stabbed allegedly by members of a teen gang in Sylhet city's Rikabibazar area around 10:00pm on Friday.

The victims are Sheikh Fahian Ferdous, 14, and Shafin Ahmed Shafi, 16, said police.

Fahian's father Sheikh Nasir filed a case in this connection with Kotwali Police Station yesterday.

On information, police arrested the accused immediately. The law enforcers are trying to arrest rest of the accused, said Azbahar Ali Sheikh, deputy commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

The victims were admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital for treatment.

CU students dies 'by suicide'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A student of Chattogram University died reportedly by suicide yesterday evening.

Mochhammad Rokeya Khatun, fourth-semester student of management department, was staying in Shamsunnahar Hall.

According to her classmates, she was found hanging from the ventilator of her dormitory room around 4:00pm.

“I heard the student was rushed to the medical centre on the university campus. Doctors there referred her to Chattogram Medical College Hospital,” said CU Assistant Proctor Arup Barua.

Doctors of CMCH declared her dead around 7:00pm when she was taken to the hospital, said Nurul Alam, in-charge of CMCH police outpost.

“After receiving the autopsy report we will be able to tell if this was a suicide,” said CU Proctor Nurul Azim Sikder.

31 Ukrainian children returned from Russia

AFP, Kyiv

Thirty-one children have been brought back to Ukraine after being illegally taken to Russia from territories occupied by Moscow, a charity said yesterday.

“Today we are welcoming home 31 more children who have been illegally taken by Russians from occupied territories,” Mykola Kuleba, head of the Save Ukraine charity, wrote on social media.

High traffic online

FROM PAGE 1

others said they failed to get tickets even after they managed to log in.

For the first time, BR is selling all advance tickets online through the third-party vendor --Shohoz-Synesis-Vincen JV.

Prior to Eid, the Kamalapur Railway Station and other major stations used to see large crowds waiting for up to 30 to 40 hours at ticket counters. But that's not happening this year.

But, many people have pointed out that selling all tickets online will make it harder for people who don't know how to use the internet.

On Friday, the first day of advance ticket sales, things went fairly smoothly. However, yesterday, many people complained on social media that they couldn't access the site before all tickets for April 18 sold out.

When asked, Jubaer Hossain, vice president (business) of Shohoz, the company responsible for the ticketing system, said that people were having trouble logging in because so many users were trying to access the site at

the same time.

He said that a maximum of 500,000 people could access the site every minute, but the number of users exceeded the capacity when the tickets went on sale in the morning.

As a result, many had difficulties accessing the site, he explained, adding that however, those who could log in were able to purchase their desired tickets and that subsequently all tickets for April 18 were sold out.

However, BR Director (PR) Nahid Hossain Khan claimed that there were no issues with the online ticket purchases.

“People bought tickets faster today [Saturday] than they could yesterday [Friday],” he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, tickets for April 19, 20, and 21 will go on sale today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, respectively with more people likely to visit the website on these dates.

Eid-ul-Fitr is expected to fall on April 22 or 23.

Accept our demands

FROM PAGE 1

the government resigns, who will hold the dialogue?

“BNP demands holding dialogue after the resignation of the government... they [BNP] are talking baseless and perplexed as the party has failed to wage movement,” he said while addressing a programme on the ground of Sidhanta High School in the city yesterday.

“BNP wants to foil the election as the party knows that they will be defeated in the next general,” added Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister.

As a reporter drew Fakhru'l attention to President Abdul Hamid's memorial speech in the parliament marking the 50th anniversary of the national legislature, he said, “...There's one thing that I liked as he [Hamid] said the development without democracy is not universal. Another thing he said is that democracy can never be practised through conflict

and vengeance.”

Fakhru'l bemoaned that the AL government is trying to destroy democracy instead of practising it.

The BNP leader said the current parliament has become completely dysfunctional, and important public issues are not discussed there.

Fariduzzaman Farhad, the coordinator of the Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote, said they discussed with the BNP leaders the current political situation and the strategy to intensify the ongoing simultaneous movement to realise their 10-point demand including the resignation of the government and holding the next polls under a non-party neutral administration.

He said they will carry out their movement until the fall of the current Awami League government for ensuring a credible national election in the country under a non-party neutral administration.



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## Culture, like rivers, is drying up

Say speakers at event marking Abul Mansur Ahmad's death anniv

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cultural practice in the country has reached a very low point. It's drying up like the way our rivers have, Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said yesterday.

"We are moving towards individual ownership of culture. Today, the practice of collective culture in Bangladesh is steadily narrowing. There is no collective practice," said Prof Serajul, while addressing a prize-giving event of a book review competition on –Bangladesher Culture – written by writer-journalist-politician Abul Mansur Ahmad marking his 44th death anniversary at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

The eminent thinker and writer said, in today's world, human civilisation has come to a turning point, where the question of whether this civilisation will survive or not has come to the fore.

"If social ownership cannot be established, civilisation will fall into an abyss. And today's crisis is created due to the private ownership of culture."

Noting that the practice of history has reduced, he said, "That's why we have to go to Abul Mansur Ahmad to study history. There is a debate on history in class six and seven books. The reason for the controversy is that history has been written hastily."

Organised by Abul Mansur Ahmad Smiriti Parishad, writers, litterateurs, and readers from different institutions spoke at the event.

Speaking at the event, Prof Mohammad Azam of Dhaka University's Bangla department, said, "In this book [Bangladesher Culture], the concept of culture is different."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Marking the 44th death anniversary of eminent writer-journalist-politician Abul Mansur Ahmad, a nook-review competition was held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday, where three winners were awarded. Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury chaired the event, while discussants Prof Dibyadyuti Sarkar, Prof Mohammad Azam, Dr Md Adnan Arif Salim, Journalist Kazal Rashid Shahin, Columnist Khan Md Robiul Alam and Poet Afroza Shomar presided over the event.

PHOTO: STAR

## Implement CHT accord for peace in hills

Speakers tell meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The CHT accord was signed to end the conflict in Chattogram Hill Tracks (CHT), but now the conflict aggravated since the basic clauses of the treaty were not implemented, speakers at a view exchange meeting said yesterday.

Since the conflict in CHT is a national crisis, it should be solved nationally, they said at the meeting titled "Citizens' Responsibilities to Implement CHT Accord", organised by Parbatya Chattogram Chukri Bastobayan Andolon (Parbatya Chattogram Agreement Implementation Movement) at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

The crisis is deepening day by day for partial implementation of the treaty signed between the Awami League government and Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samiti

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## 'Prioritise fire safety in semi-formal markets'

Experts tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

City planners have called for prioritising overall safety issues, including fire safety in semi-formal markets in different urban areas, including Dhaka, in light of the massive fire at Bangabazar Market in the capital recently.

They made the call at an event, titled "Fire Hazards in Bangabazar and Sub-Formal Market Fire Risk: IPD's Observation", organised by the Institute for Planning and Development (IPD) yesterday.

IPD's Executive Director Prof Adil Muhammad Khan said, "Although the Bangabazar market has been identified as vulnerable to fire, the state institutions as well as the city corporation and fire service are relieved of responsibility only by issuing notice. As the owner of the market, it was the responsibility of the city corporation to take full measures for fire safety to avoid the loss of life and property."

IPD Advisor Prof Akhter Mahmud said through a detailed survey of informal markets across the country, the steps to reduce fire hazards according to the fire code and building code should be specified.

Planner Abu Taher said for markets such as Bangabazar, it's necessary to improve the fire prevention and detection system along with electrical safety auditing.

"It's also important to have a fire safety and emergency exit plan, in addition to setting up a fire control room in every market," he added.

PRAYER TIMING		APRIL 9	
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:26	12:45	4:45	6:21 7:45
JAMAAT 4:36	1:15	5:00	6:31 8:15
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION			
SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING			
RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
17	09		6:21
18	10	4:20	6:22
19	11	4:19	6:22

## Traders resort to selling on the streets

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Traders of Bangabazar Shopping Complex, which was burnt to the ground in Tuesday's devastating fire, have set up temporary shops on the streets to continue their business after losing everything in the flames.

Amidst the festive Eid season, what was supposed to be a busy time for the commercial hub has now turned into spending days in uncertainty.

Shop owners have put up at least 50 makeshift shops on both sides of the road near the remains of the once-iconic market yesterday. The move has caused severe traffic congestion, making it difficult for



**We did not imagine such a big loss before Eid. There were Tk 15 lakh worth of clothes in the shop, all of which were burned down.**

**RAKIB HOSSAIN**  
Affected trader

customers to access the stores. Shopkeepers are trying to continue their business, and others are being forced to sell their

remaining stock of clothes at lower prices due to an urgent need for money, they said.

Rakib Hossain, owner of Mashallah Enterprise, was one of the affected shopkeepers who was forced to move his business to the street.

"We did not imagine such a big loss before Eid. There were Tk 15 lakh worth of clothes in the shop, all of which were burned down," said Rakib.

Although Rakib is a wholesale trader, he is now among the many affected shopkeepers selling goods on the road due to an urgent need for money.

Shopkeepers like Bacchu Miah are also facing the challenge of selling their remaining stock of clothes at lower prices due to the urgent need for money.

"The fire has caused wholesalers to offer Tk 200-250 less per piece of Panjabi, which is affecting their earnings," he said.

Shop owner Jahangir Hossain expressed his despair at the loss of his shop's inventory, including pyjamas, pants, panjabi, and sarees, worth Tk 15 lakh. With no means to recover the loss, he has resorted to selling his remaining stock at a lower price on the road.

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## Barishal Plaza fire brought under control

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fire that broke out at Barishal Plaza near Bangabazar yesterday morning was brought under control.

Fourteen firefighting units brought the blaze under control around 8:45am, said Rafi Al Faruk, duty officer of the fire service.

The fire was reported on the third floor of the market at 8:05am, he said, adding that the first fire service unit reached the spot at 8:06am.

He said the cause of the fire could not be known immediately, adding that no casualties have been reported so far.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

## 'A crucial milestone for gender equality'

MJF lauds PM's directive to include women's unpaid work in GDP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has lauded the recent directive of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to include women's unpaid care and household work in Bangladesh's gross domestic product (GDP) calculation.

The instruction was issued during a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) on April 4.

MJF stressed that this is a positive step for Bangladesh and a crucial milestone in empowering women, advancing their overall progress in the country and promoting gender equality.

MJF suggested that the non-monetary value of unpaid care and domestic work should be measured using the Satellite Account System, which is commonly used by economists worldwide to recognise the contribution of women's unpaid work to the economy.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



**Rokia Afzal Rahman**  
(1941-2023)

### Departure of A Legend

We deeply mourn the passing of the prominent woman entrepreneur and icon personality Rokia Afzal Rahman, a former Director and Chairman of Reliance Insurance limited.

We recall with gratitude her association and contributions made to various forums and institutions of the country. Her demise has made a huge loss to the society and Bangladesh lost a true pioneer of woman advancement.

We will miss her guidance and cherish all the happy memories we had with her. During this difficult and tragic moment, our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved family.

In reverence & remembrance -  
**The Management and all Members of**

**রীল্যান্স ইন্স্যুরেন্স লিমিটেড**  
RELIANCE INSURANCE LIMITED



A family crosses the busy road in front of Bashundhara City Shopping Complex by squeezing through the gap in the road divider, completely ignoring a nearby foot over bridge to save time. Many pedestrians like them, ignore road safety and cross roads by gesturing vehicles to stop, adding to congestion on the road. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON





Kids beat the heat by taking a dip in the Kirtonkhola River, using a trawler as their makeshift diving board. With temperatures soaring in Barishal, these youngsters found a refreshing escape from the scorching April sun. However, the use of anchored vessels as jumping platforms can pose a risk, highlighting the need for safe recreational spaces for children. This picture was taken from Barishal yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Easy bike driver killed in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Unidentified criminals killed a battery-run auto-rickshaw driver in Ghatail upazila of Tangail on Friday night.

The deceased was Iman Ali, 38, from Dori Chithatra village in the upazila.

Police and locals said the easy bike driver was returning home with the vehicle on Friday night.

On the way, a group of criminals stopped his vehicle on Porabari road in Khagrata area around 10:00pm and tried to snatch away the auto-rickshaw. As Iman tried to resist them, the criminals hit him in the throat with a sharp object, leaving him seriously injured.

Later, he was declared dead at Ghatail Upazila Health Complex after locals took him there following his screams, said OC Azharul Islam of Ghatail Police Station.

He said the victim's throat was slit. They have started investigation, he said.

## Culture, like rivers

FROM PAGE 3

“Abul Mansur Ahmad did not write in very complex language and style like some scholarly works. But he was very careful about the methodology of his writings,” added Prof Azam.

Afroza Soma, a young poet, said, “Language, culture and politics stand at the centre point of this book.”

Addressing the programme, Adnan Arif Salim, assistant professor at Bangladesh Open University, “This book contains several important directions for contemporary researchers. And if we explain it in the light of different theoretical concepts, analyse it and try to understand it anew, I think the young researchers will find many

valuable directions.”

“The book does not define culture, rather it gives some dictation on how our culture should be. The articles in the book are like a thesis. Also they are very unique in terms of word choice,” said Prof Dibyadyuti Sarkar, dean of the social science and humanities faculty of Noakhali Science and Technology University (NSTU).

Following the brief discussion on the book, the prize-giving ceremony was held, where Mostafa Mushfiq Talukder won the first prize, and Faiza Binte Haq and Jobayer Ibn Kamal grabbed the second and third spot respectively.

The Daily Star's Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam was present during the prize giving ceremony.

# Construction materials dumped on OLD BRAHMAPUTRA BANK

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A section of vested quarters has been dumping concrete waste and keeping construction materials near the Old Brahmaputra River at Mymensingh city's Kachari Ferry Ghat area for months.

Neither Mymensingh City Corporation (MCC) nor the local Water Development Board (WDB) has taken any initiative against them yet, alleged locals.

Locals also alleged that these unscrupulous activities are mainly done at night. But it's a serious concern as no action has been taken yet.

The 283-kilometre Old Brahmaputra from Jamalpur's Dewanganj upazila to the Meghna in Bhairab of Kishoreganj is one of the longest rivers in the country. Many tributaries and small rivers depending on the Brahmaputra are also in crisis due to siltation, alleged environmental activists.

Not only this, contractors keep their materials for days on the river bed in the same area.



When this correspondent visited the area on Thursday, a huge pile of concrete waste, broken bricks and its mixture with sand was seen.

Shamsul Mia, a resident of the adjacent Char Gobindapur area said after the monsoon begins, the dry river bed goes under water within days. If the concrete rubbish and other construction materials aren't cleaned up immediately, it will mix with the river water.

Advocate Md Nazrul Islam Chunnu, convener

of Jonouddiyog, a civil society forum, alleged this menace wouldn't exist if there was proper monitoring.

Pointing fingers at the municipal authorities and WDB, he added that waste disposal into the Old Brahmaputra River at Kalibari Puran Gudaraghat continues.

Memorandums to the Mymensingh deputy commissioner and MCC mayor were submitted on various occasions urging the stopping of any kind of dumping into the river but no fruitful action has been taken yet, lamented the leaders.

Admitting to dumping concrete waste onto the river bed, Mohabbat Ali, conservation inspector of MCC, said no one can use the river land for keeping construction materials to dump waste. He also said they will look into the matter seriously to find out those involved in such an act.

Abid Hossain, sub-divisional engineer of Mymensingh WDB, said they will investigate the matter.



A vested quarter has been dumping construction materials and waste on Old Brahmaputra's Bank in Mymensingh city's Kachari Ferry Ghat area and the authorities are yet to intervene on the matter. Locals fear that once Monsoon arrives and the river's water level increases, these materials will in turn end up polluting the river.

PHOTO: STAR

## Commuters' suffering

FROM PAGE 5

through the old bridge with great risks, said transport workers.

Ashraf Ali, a truck driver travelling on the highway from Bogra to Dhaka, said, “This highway is full of potholes at several places. It's necessary to repair all those places immediately.”

Bus driver Shamsul Haque said if there is a minute's slowness on this highway, 40 to 50 vehicles get stuck behind. “Additional police should be deployed at various places on the highway to prevent this traffic jam,” he said.

Abul Kalam, another bus driver, said the administration should play a role in ensuring that drivers drive properly and follow the traffic rules during Eid.

Ekhlash Uddin, project manager of contractor HEGO-Mir Akhtar (JV), said, “Renovation work is going on. Hopefully, it will be completed within the

20th of Ramadan (April 10). We expect there will be no more congestion on this road after that.”

“Five bridges on this road will be opened before Eid to prevent traffic jams. As a result, people will be able to return home without hassle,” he hoped.

Arifur Rahman Mondal, superintendent of police in Sirajganj, said, “To reduce the suffering of passengers during Eid journey, they have discussed with the officers of the SASEC-2 project and the engineers of the contracting company and urged them to renovate the risky places on the highway.”

“Some 20 places in 14 sections have been detected. The highway's renovation in these areas will reduce the possibility of traffic jams.”

Like every Eid, district police members, along with the traffic and highway police, will work to keep the highway free from traffic jams, he added.

## Main accused still at large

FROM PAGE 5

Chandanaish Press Club's President Delwar Hossain alleged that the police were “not cordial” in arresting the criminals. “They arrested a person who was not involved in the attack. It's just an eyewitness. There is CCTV footage which clearly shows who were involved in the attack,” he said.

Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Chandanaish Police Station, denied the allegation and said the police were conducting drives to arrest the accused individuals.

Chatto gram's Superintendent of Police (SP) SM Shafiullah said he had strictly directed the

local police station to arrest the accused immediately. He also suggested the victim's family members file a general diary (GD) with the police if they feel insecure.

The doctors treating Ayub declined to comment on his physical condition but an anonymous source claimed his condition was stable.

## Implement CHT accord for peace

FROM PAGE 3  
(PCJSS) in 1997, said Prof MM Akash of Dhaka University's Department of Economics.

Democratic election in CHT, establishing of democratic administration with the participation of indigenous and permanent Bangalee residents, balanced development, enactment of an effective policy over the ownership and uses of land in CHT, rehabilitation of the indigenous people engaged in the conflict before 1997,

are the key areas to address to bring peace in CHT, he said.

“The consequences will be dire for the country if we make further delays in implementing the accord. The situation in CHT is worsening,” said Prof Mejbah Kamal of Dhaka University's history department.

Settlers had been given land, that belonged to the indigenous people with an ill motive to make them the majority, Justice Md Nizamul Haque Nasim,

chairman of the Press Council said.

He also questioned the intention of the CHT land commission in resolving the land dispute.

Executive director of ALRD Shamsul Huda, Journalist and poet Sohrab Hossain, Joint Coordinators of the Parbatya Chattogram Agreement Implementation Movement Zakir Hossain and Dr Khairul Islam Chowdhury, also spoke at the event.

## Traders resort

FROM PAGE 3

He sold a Panjabi, originally worth Tk 600, for Tk 400 only to a customer yesterday. The burnt smell from these clothes has caused them to be sold at a lower price.

Aslam Hossain, a wholesale trader, said, “Three of my shops in Bangabazar have been destroyed. I had an investment of Tk 45 lakh in those shops.”

“During Eid season, we

usually make most of our sales, but now everything has turned into ashes,” he said.

“We are sitting on the roadside with goods worth Tk 70-80 thousand left to sell,” added Aslam.

Another shopkeeper, Kausar Hossain, has expressed his concern about the difficulty of doing business on the road due to the heavy traffic, leading to low sales.

## A crucial milestone

FROM PAGE 3

It also mentioned that currently, this work is not included in the System of National Accounts (SNA), as it is not a part of the market economy and lacks monetary value, even though accounting for this work is important as it plays a significant role in national growth.

According to different studies conducted by MJF, household chores have been a significant obstacle

to women's economic participation. Since 2012, the organisation has been actively identifying the gaps in the policy framework of the country.

MJF has also been working towards changing people's attitudes and mindset regarding domestic work, advocating for recognition and redistribution of workload, and identifying ways to reduce the burden of household chores.

## Scouts Day

FROM PAGE 5

people from childhood. The Scouts' activities keep the youth away from social ill.

She called upon the scouts to become smart citizens to create a smart Bangladesh.

## Barishal Plaza

FROM PAGE 3

Earlier on April 4, a massive fire broke out at the Bangabazar market, spreading to six nearby markets. The fire was doused yesterday at 9:30am – more than 75 hours after it broke out early Tuesday.

## Three poachers

FROM PAGE 5

forests (ACF) of Chandpai Range of East Sundarban Forest Division.

The forest guards seized illegal fishing nets, deer hunting traps, drums, four pieces of Sundari wood and an engine-driven trawler from them, he added.



# Commuters’ suffering inevitable on Sirajganj highway during Eid

Authorities unlikely to complete renovation within revised deadline

MIRZA SHAKIL

Commuters visiting their homes in the country's North for Eid will face much suffering as the Bangabandhu Bridge west link road in Siraganj is in bad shape due to the ongoing widening and renovation works.

This road is the gateway to northern districts. Vehicles from 22 districts, including 16 from northern districts, travel through this highway daily. Around 20,000 to 25,000 vehicles travel during normal times, but this number increases two to three times during Eid.

Transport workers and passengers said even the highway gets clogged with vehicles during Eid due to the slow progress of the road's renovation work, causing immense suffering to homebound passengers.

Raoshan Yazdani, officer-in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge West Police Station, said work to renovate 20 points of the highway, along with a 50 kilometre stretch from Bangabandhu Bridge west to Chandaikona highway via Hatikumrul is currently ongoing. Of this, at least 14

vulnerable places have a risk of traffic congestion, he said.

Under such circumstances, the road development project officials said the highway from Bangabandhu Bridge's west end to Chandaikona has been identified as risky for smooth traffic. Contractors have been directed to renovate these places within the 20th of Ramadan (three days from today).

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw potholes in various parts of the 50 km highway from the west end of the bridge to Chandaikona through Hatikumrul. Several lanes were not in good condition.

The highway at different places, including Konabari, Jhaail, Golchattar Food Village, Nalka, Pachlia, Mulibari, Syedabad, Chandaikona Bridge, Zamzam Hotel, Hatikumrul, Bhuyagati and Sahebganj, was in a bad shape.

Meanwhile, although the northern lane of the newly constructed Nalka bridge has been opened, the Dhaka bound lane has been kept closed. Due to the closure of the Dhaka bound lane, vehicles are moving

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

The Bangabandhu Bridge west link road in Sirajganj has been causing much peril to northbound commuters as the road has been in bad shape due to ongoing renovation work. The highway gets clogged with vehicles for hours before Eid, making commuters wait long hours on the road.

## Three children drown in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Three children drowned in two separate incidents in Netrakona on Friday.

In Barhatta upazila, two cousins -- who were third-graders -- drowned in a river near their home while they were bathing in the waterbody around 2:30pm, police quoted locals as saying.

The victims were identified as Diya Sutradhar, 10, daughter of Girish Sutradhar; and Meghla Sutradhar, 9, daughter of Dipak Sutradhar, of Charpara village in Barhatta upazila, said Md Lutfur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Barhatta Police Station.

Later, locals recovered the bodies from the river in the evening, said the OC.

In another incident, Mahbubur Rahman, 8, a second grader and son of Khalilur Rahman from Mou village in Durgapur upazila in Netrakona, drowned in a nearby pond while he was bathing in the waterbody around 1:00pm.

He was declared dead at Durgapur Upazila Health Complex, said Abdul Hannan, sub-inspector of Durgapur Police Station.

## Scouts Day observed

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Scouts Day was observed yesterday with much enthusiasm across the country for the second consecutive year with the theme "Will get involved in the Scouts, will build Smart Bangladesh".

On the occasion, various programmes were held at International Mother Language Institute in Dhaka's Segunbagicha. Education Minister Dipu Moni was present as chief guest at the events chaired by Dr Mozammel Haque Khan, chief national commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts.

The programmes started with prayer songs and a documentary about the Scouts' movement was displayed.

Earlier, the chief national commissioner hoisted the Scouts' flag.

Four Scouts were honoured on the occasion for joining the first Scout Council in independent Bangladesh in 1972 and for their active role and special contribution to the formation of Bangladesh Scouts.

Dipu Moni said the main activity of the Scouts is to develop philanthropy in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

# From cyclone devastation to tourist destination

The story of Sarankhola’s remarkable recovery

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY

Sarankhola, a small upazila in Bagerhat, is a place of scenic beauty that has recently seen a renewed interest in tourism. This upazila, of around 152 square kilometres, is bounded to the east by the Baleshwar River, to the north by Morrelgonj, and the south and west by the Sundarbans and the Bay of Bengal.

Cyclone Sidr, which hit Bangladesh on November 15, 2007, claimed the lives of over 3,500 people in Bangladesh and caused damage worth hundreds of crores of money. The residents of Sarankhola were hit particularly hard by the storm. The powerful winds and storm surges destroyed homes, crops, and infrastructure, and left many people homeless and without access to necessities such as food and water.

The storm surge, which was more than five metres high in some areas, inundated the entire upazila. The embankments that had been built to protect the area from flooding were breached in many places. The people of Sarankhola, who are mostly fishermen and farmers, lost almost everything in the cyclone.

Hence, their main demand in the cyclone's aftermath was the construction of a long-lasting embankment to protect them against natural catastrophes.

And the government obliged. An embankment was constructed with funding from the World Bank soon after.

This embankment turned out to be a blessing for the residents of Sarankhola. The concrete blocks left to sustain the earthen embankment have

become an attractive sight, and every day thousands of people from different areas come to the bank of the Baleshwar River near Sharankhola Upazila Sadar to enjoy the river and natural beauty together.

The upazila administration has started working to advance the tourism potential of the Baleshwar River bank, which

with the sound of the river, will fascinate anyone."

The Riverview Eco-park has become a source of tranquillity for thousands of visitors every day. The small traders of Fuchka, Jhalmuri, Phuchka, Chanachur, and ice cream said sales are good. Speedboat driver Salim said he also earns a good income from the spot.

travellers.

With the increase in visitors in the future, employment opportunities will be created for more than a thousand people around Riverview Eco Park, hoped Sharankhola Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Noor-e-Alam Siddiqui.

The upazila administration is committed to promoting



has been named Riverview Eco Park. Colourful umbrellas and beach beds have been placed, and small entrepreneurs are selling different types of food. Speed boats are also available for visitors to enjoy the beauty of the river.

Robiul Halder, a visitor from Morrelgonj, said, "It was very good to see the river's waves and the white clouds floating in the sky. Such a scene is not often seen."

Jasim Molla, a visitor from Bagerhat Sadar, said, "The calm and serene environment, along

Local Sanjib Mollick said, "Sharankhola had no place for people to visit. Now everyone is coming to Riverview Park, having a good time. In one word, the Baleshwar River bank has become one of the main attractions of travel seekers. Hope Riverview Eco-park will play a role in the prosperity of Sharankhola residents."

The beauty of the river and the natural environment, coupled with the renewed tourism opportunities, make Sarankhola a must-visit destination for

sustainable tourism in the area and visitors are sure to leave with unforgettable memories of the natural beauty of Sarankhola, he added.

He also said it is very easy to go from Sarankhola to the Sundarbans, mainly Katka, Kachikhali and Dubla char areas of the mangrove forest.

"If more visitors come to the banks of the Baleshwar River, then domestic and foreign tourists will also increase in the Sundarbans," he claimed.

## ATTACK ON CTG JOURNO Main accused still at large

ARUN BIKASH DEY

After a brutal attack on a journalist in Chandanaish upazila of Chattogram, the police have been unable to arrest the main accused even after four days of the incident.

Ayub Miaji, a local journalist, was allegedly beaten and pushed off the roof of a two-storey building on Tuesday afternoon. The attack was reportedly carried out by a group of individuals, who were angry about Miaji's news reports on hill cutting and providing information to the administration.

Miaji works as the Chandanaish upazila correspondent for the national daily Janobani and the local daily Sangu. He is now receiving treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital for his critical injuries.

The victim's father filed a case with the local police station accusing two named individuals and several unnamed persons. The named accused are -- Md Alauddin, 35, and Md Faruk, 26, both residents of the same upazila.

However, the police have been unable to arrest either of them yet. Several locals have alleged that Alauddin is involved with Jubo League politics but the local Awami League lawmaker Nazrul Islam Chowdhury has denied this.

"The criminals attacked my son for reporting on their misdeeds," said Abdus Shukkur, the victim's father. "But police could not arrest them till now. Meanwhile, influential quarters are pressuring us to withdraw the case. We are passing days amid insecurity. Now they (influential people) are trying to implicate me in a false case," he claimed.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Drive intensified against illegal sand extraction in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Tangail District Administration has intensified drives against illegal sand extraction from different rivers by influential people.

On complaints from locals, Jashim Uddin Haider, deputy commissioner in Tangail, directed to launch mobile court drives at different places in Kalihati and Bhuapur upazilas.

Yesterday, mobile courts led by executive magistrates Belal Hossain, also upazila nirbahi officer in Bhuapur, and Fahima Binte Akter, assistant commissioner (land), launched the drives at the river Jamuna in Arjuna, Govindasi and Nikrail unions.



The court seized equipment used for extracting sand from the spots.

Sensing the presence of mobile courts, the sand lifters, however, managed to flee.

Earlier on Friday, executive magistrates Dweep Bhoumik and Sinthia Hossain conducted mobile court drives against illegal sand lifting from the river Poulee at Char Bhabla and Bashi areas under Elenga municipality in Kalihati upazila.

The court fined one Siddiqur Rahman Rana Tk 1 lakh and another Shafiqul Islam Tk 80,000.

The team also destroyed some equipment used for sand extraction.

Magistrate Dweep Bhoumik told The Daily Star that such drives will continue in the future.



This area marked with red tape was affected by a landslide during a road construction work, leaving behind one dead and three injured in the process. The injured have been hospitalised. This photo was taken in Chattogram's Akbarshah area yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Three poachers arrested from Sundarbans

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Three poachers have been arrested by the Forest Department while preparing to illegally enter the Sundarbans to hunt deer and fish. They were caught by forest guards from a canal adjacent to the Karamjal Wildlife Breeding Centre yesterday morning.

The arrestees are -- Asim Sheikh, 35, of Chila Kaorabuniya village of Bagerhat's Mongla Upazila; Md Zakir Hossain, 34, of Dakshin Kanaimari village of the same upazila; and Sagar Nath, 23, of Chila Bazar area.

Preparations are underway to file a case under the Forest Act against them, said Mahbub Hasan, assistant conservator of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8





Arbaaz Khan in Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## Want to try my luck in Bangladeshi film

ARBAAZ KHAN

“I love the people here. They are so warm and kind. Today, I had a fully desi platter of iftar, and it was delicious. Hopefully, next time I will come to Bangladesh for a longer period so that I can explore

ANTARA RAISA

It was supposed to be a calm post-iftar evening for the people of Dhanmondi, however, road 16 was lit up with joy and the excitement of people, who wanted to catch a glimpse of Indian actor, director, and producer Arbaaz Khan, brother of Salman Khan.

After the success of the first clothing outlet of Being Human by Bollywood superstar Salman Khan, the second branch of this clothing store was inaugurated by Arbaaz Khan on Friday, in the capital's Dhanmondi area.

Arbaaz Khan was accompanied by his nephew Ayaan Agnihotri and the Chief Operating Officer of Being Human Clothing, Vivek Sandhwar, at the time of inauguration.

Arbaaz came to the store around 8 pm, and officially opened the outlet by cutting the ribbon. A press meet-and-greet was arranged

for him to interact with the media. He shouted to the crowd, “Ami Tomake Bhalobashi.”

“The brand is very close to Salman, who started it first. He is so passionate about this brand that he wants it to go global. That's why we kept the price affordable and the fabric very comfortable, so that young people can buy it easily,” said Arbaaz.



He also expressed his joy of coming to Bangladesh, because this country feels like home to him.

“I love the people here. They are so warm and kind. Today, I had a fully desi platter of iftar, and it was delicious. Hopefully, next time I will come to Bangladesh for a longer period so that I can explore,” said the actor.

When asked if he is interested in acting in or producing a Bangladeshi film, he replied, “As everything is going international, of course I want to try my luck here too. However, the film

should have that type of story which attracts a large audience and have a connection between these two countries.”

Arbaaz also teased the possibility of making *Dabangg 4*.

“The film will definitely come, but I don't know when. Currently, Salman and I have some commitments; maybe after that, we will think about the film,” said Arbaaz.

Although the space for the inauguration ceremony was small, the organisers tried their best to accommodate all journalists.

The first 25 customers won a free Salman Khan statement bracelet during its inauguration.

For the Chittagong outlet, Being Human Clothing Bangladesh is offering free signed caps from Salman Khan for the first 25 customers.

Earlier, Being Human Clothing Bangladesh's first outlet was launched on September 15, last year. Sohail Khan and Salman's nephew, Ayaan Agnihotri, along with the CEO of Being Human, Sanjeev Rao, launched the store.

## Singer-actor Lee Seung Gi marries actress Lee Da In

In a lavish ceremony in Seoul on Friday, *Vagabond* famed actor-singer Lee Seung Gi has finally tied the knot with his girlfriend, Lee Da In.



The couple had started dating in May 2021 and made their wedding announcements in early February this year.

The wedding was held at a Seoul hotel and comedian Yoo Jae-suk hosted the ceremony, according to sources in the music industry.

Lee Da In, daughter of veteran actress Gyeon Mi-ri, has appeared in such TV dramas as *Come and Hug Me*, *Dr. Prisoner* and *Alice*.

## Allu Arjun ups expectations in poster for 'Pushpa 2'



On the eve of the *Pushpa* actor's birthday, the filmmakers of *Pushpa: The Rule* have revealed the poster of the film's second instalment.

The poster shows Arjun in an imposing avatar, surprisingly dressed in a saree and blouse, with blue skin and gold nose rings. He has a gun in one hand and gold bangles in the other while a garland of flowers and limes grace his neck.

The makers have also shared a teaser for *Pushpa 2* where they

ask the question, ‘where is Pushpa?’ The poster has now added to the intrigue that has engulged the audiences, who now eagerly await the film's release.

In the second instalment, actress Rashmika Mandanna is expected to star along with Allu Arjun yet again, directed by Sukumar.

# COUNTRYWIDE

## 4 brick kilns eating away farmland

ZAHANGIR SHAH, Manikganj

Four brick kilns set up side by side on farmland have been badly affecting the agricultural production in Manikganj's Singair upazila as the soil of the adjacent croplands are sold to feed the brick kilns for long.

Local farmers alleged that they are often forced to sell their valuable topsoil to the brick kiln owners.

A section of soil traders is cutting off the soil from the farmlands after buying the top layer from the land owners.

Later, the syndicate has been selling the earth to the brick kiln owners.

Despite submitting repeated complaints to the local administration and public representatives, the aggrieved land owners are yet to get any respite in this regard.

They also formed a human chain recently to press for their demand.

During a visit to the area this correspondent saw four brick kilns, set up side by side at Baudipara village under Jamirta Union, have been running their operations in full swing.

It was seen that the syndicate members have been cutting soil, using excavators, from the surrounding cropland at Baudipara, Ramchandrapur and Degrechar village and supplying it to GH Bricks, AMCO Bricks, DMC Bricks and TS Bricks.



Some local influential men including Nazimuddin, Danez, Fazal, Parbat, Barkat and Salam have already cut soil from several hundred bighas of farmland and sold it to the brick kilns.

Local farmers alleged that if anyone dares to protest the illegal soil cutting the syndicate men either beat them up or threatened them with dire consequences.

Farmer Mohammad Rahiz of Hatani village said he has 18 decimals of land only a few hundred yards from the brick kilns and used to get three crops from the land in a year.

“Last year I got 20 tonnes of IRRI paddy from my land, but it lies uncultivated this year,” Rahiz said.

He was unable to irrigate his land this year due to removal of soil from both sides of his land, he added.

Farmer Hamed Ali of Bhaudipara village said, “I have 115 decimals land on the east side of the brick kilns. Last year I got 70 maunds of IRRI, 12 maunds of Aman paddy

and 24 maunds of mustard from my land.”

“Although I have planted IRRI paddy this year, my land has been on the verge of collapse due to cutting of soil from both sides,” Hamed said.

Abu Bakar, another farmer of the village, said many trees of the village are dying and fruits are getting damaged due to emission of toxic smoke from the four brick kilns.

ATM Rashed Mehdi, an income tax lawyer from Ramchandrapur village, said despite repeated pleas the authorities are yet to take any action against the brick kilns.

Jamirta Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Abul Hossain said although he has informed the upazila parishad chairman, upazila nirbahi officer and other concerned people about the ill practice, but yet to get any result in this regard.

Manikganj Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Abdul Latif said nothing can be achieved by destroying agricultural land. Local administration will take necessary action in this regard soon, he added.

## Demonstration

FROM PAGE 12

formed after uniting all the women of the district, they said.

A 17-year-old girl filed the case against Golam with Tangail Sadar Police Station on Wednesday bringing rape and torture allegations against him.

Golam's wife Nigar Aftab was also accused in the case.

## They cut hills

FROM PAGE 12

authorities to stop the road construction work,” said Omar Faruk, adding that the authorities continued to cut hills violating the order.

Following the landslide, Chattogram district administration formed a seven-member probe body, headed by Additional District Magistrate of Chattogram Rakib Hasan, to investigate the incident.

They were asked to submit their probe report in five working days.

“We visited the spot and saw that they were dangerously cutting hills without taking preventive measures,” said a member of the probe body, requesting anonymity.

In February, the Department of Environment (DoE) sent a letter to the Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) authorities to inquire about the construction of roads by cutting hills. The CCC, however, has not yet responded to that letter, said Mia Mahmudul Haque, deputy director of the DoE, Chattogram.

According to CCC data, the road construction project costs Tk 2 crore 68 lakh and is financed by Asian Development Bank.

The Daily Star could not reach Joshim Uddin, executive engineer of the CCC, after repeated attempts.

CCC Mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury on Friday admitted that the road was being constructed at the slope of hills.

“We will investigate why safety measures were not taken for the workers,” he said.

## AL leader

FROM PAGE 12

He sought permission from the Cyber Tribunal in Rangpur to file a case against Sarkar Mazharul Mannan of Jamuna TV and two others after a report “against him” was broadcasted on Wednesday.

Protesting this, the journalist community in Rangpur demanded immediate arrest of Shiplu.

## Racked by ragging

FROM PAGE 12

before leaving the campus the next day. The SUST authorities suspended five students on February 22 in this regard.

Prof Kamal Uddin, chairman of the psychology department at DU, says, “Disrespecting or humiliating a person in the name of ‘teaching manners’ is obviously ragging.”

BCL Central Committee General Secretary Sheikh Wali Asif Enan claimed such activities do not take place at the guest room. “Seniors and juniors interact and discuss cultural issues there.”

“We usually take punitive action against activists found guilty of ragging,” he said, adding that Chhatra League has been conducting anti-ragging campaigns at all campuses.

Educationalists said ragging often leads to devastating consequences that include trouble concentrating on studies and absenteeism.

Kamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, a professor of DU's clinical psychology department, said, “Ragging can lead to trauma, which can have long-term effects. A victim of ragging may have

severe levels of anxiety as well as post-traumatic stress disorder.”

He added that victims of ragging usually fail to cope with the trauma and sometimes end up giving up on their academic life.

Nur Khan Liton, executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra, said an anti-ragging policy should be formulated after holding discussions with students and must be implemented strictly.

Contacted, UGC Secretary Ferdous Zaman said, “The government is working to formulate an anti-ragging policy for all educational institutions. We have a plan to formulate a central policy for all higher educational [institutions] so that innocent students do not face any form of harassment.”

He added that letters were sent several times to the universities, asking them to take measures to stop ragging in their institutions.

As ragging has been a long-standing problem across the world, albeit in different names, the UGC of India in 2009 launched a toll-free anti-ragging helpline to help curb the menace.

## Militant's wife helped

FROM PAGE 12

country. Both were sentenced to death for killing publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan in 2015.

According to the information gathered during Shikha's interrogation, after Soheli escaped, he on many occasions visited the house from where she was arrested, he told The Daily Star.

Asked if the snatching incident was an intelligence failure, the CTC chief said it was not possible for the police to know everything.

“The militants did it [planned the snatching] very secretly. When the husband and wife met in jail, they discussed the plan using signs. They were able to do it while avoiding the attention of those of us who keep an eye on them.”

On November 20, Shikha was on the premises of Dhaka Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court, and after the two militants were snatched from police custody, she took them to an Ansar camp, Asaduzzaman said.

“The militants made off on two separate motorcycles. It was

monitored by Shikha and the outfit's military wing chief Ayman. Around 10 to 13 people took part in the snatching.”

He added that the plan came from the top level of the banned organisation.

To execute it, members of Ansar al-Islam rented several houses in Dhaka and surrounding districts using fake NIDs.

Ayman and Shikha, who completed her BSc in engineering from the Military Institute of Science and Technology in 2014, held regular meetings with the Ansar al-Islam members, he said.

“Apart from this, we got the names of others who were part of the plan. But for the sake of investigation, we are not revealing those.”

He said Shikha was introduced to the ideology of Ansar al-Islam by her brother Moazzammel Hossain alias Saimon.

After marrying Soheli, whom she came to know through Saimon, she became a crucial member of the banned outfit.



Top Ukraine minister to visit India

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
New Delhi

In the first official visit from Ukraine since the Russian invasion of that country more than a year ago, Ukrainian first Deputy Foreign Minister Emine Dzhaparova will undertake a four-day visit to India from tomorrow to exchange views on the current situation in Ukraine and bilateral relations.

Dzhaparova will meet Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture Meenakshi Lekhi, Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs Sanjay Verma and Deputy National Security Adviser Vikram Misri.

In his talks with Sanjay Verma, both sides are expected to exchange views on the current situation in Ukraine, global issues of mutual interest and bilateral relations, Indian MEA said yesterday.

“The visit will be an occasion to further mutual understanding and interests,” said MEA.



A man takes a photo of a woman under a frame in front of the Taiwan Strait which marks the closest point in the mainland to Taiwan, on Pingtan island, in China's southeast Fujian province, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

China-Taiwan relations

AFP, Taipei

As China launches three days of military drills around Taiwan, AFP looks at the history of relations between the self-ruled island and Beijing:

1949: SEPARATION

Mao Zedong's communists take power in Beijing in October 1949 after defeating Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (KMT) nationalists in a civil war. The KMT flee to the island of Taiwan and form their own government in Taipei in December, cutting off contacts with mainland China. In 1950, Taiwan becomes an ally of the United States, which is at war with communist China in Korea. The United States deploys a fleet in the Taiwan Strait to protect its ally from possible attack.

1971: BEIJING GETS UN, US NODS

In October 1971, Beijing takes over China's seat at the United Nations, previously held by Taipei. In 1979, the United States cuts formal ties with Taiwan and establishes diplomatic relations with Beijing instead. The United States maintains trade and military ties with Taipei. It opposes both Taiwanese independence and any attempt by China to forcibly take the island.

1987-2004: RELATIONS IMPROVE

In late 1987, Taiwan residents are permitted to visit mainland China for the first time, allowing families to reunite. Taiwan lifts emergency rule in 1991, unilaterally ending a state of war with China. The first direct talks between the two sides are held in Singapore two years later.

2005-2015: THREATS AND TALKS

Beijing adopts a law in March 2005 authorising the use of force if Taiwan declares independence. In April, KMT chairman Lien Chan makes a landmark visit to Beijing for talks with Chinese leader Hu Jintao. In 2014 hold the first government-to-government talks since separation.

2016: HONEYMOON OVER

Tsai Ing-wen, from the traditionally pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, wins presidential elections in January 2016. In June, China suspends all communications with Taiwan after the new government fails to acknowledge the “One China” policy.

2022-PRESENT: TENSIONS SPIKE

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi lands in Taiwan on August 2 after days of speculation and stern warnings from Beijing. A furious China vows “punishment” and launches its largest-ever military exercises in the area, encircling Taiwan on August 4. Tsai makes two stops in the US on her way to and from Latin America, meeting House Speaker Kevin McCarthy on the return leg in California on April 5.

TAIWAN PRESIDENT’S MEETING WITH US SPEAKER

Angry China starts 3-day military drills

71 Chinese planes crossed Taiwan Strait median line

REUTERS, Fuzhou/Taipei

Seventy-one Chinese military aircraft crossed the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait yesterday as China began drills around Taiwan in anger at President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with the speaker of the US House of Representatives.

The three-day drills, announced the day after Tsai returned from the United States, had been widely expected after Beijing condemned her Wednesday meeting with Speaker Kevin McCarthy in Los Angeles.

Beijing's announcement also came just hours after China hosted a visit by senior European leaders.

The People's Liberation Army said it had started the combat readiness patrols and “Joint Sword” exercises around Taiwan, having said earlier it would be holding them in the Taiwan Strait and to the north, south and east of Taiwan “as planned”. “This is a serious warning to the Taiwan independence separatist forces and external forces' collusion and provocation, and it is a necessary action to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” the Chinese army's Eastern Theatre Command said in a statement.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said as of 4:00 pm (0800 GMT) on yesterday it spotted 71 Chinese

aircraft, including fighter jets and bombers, crossing the median line that normally serves as an unofficial barrier between the two sides, as well as nine Chinese ships.

China was using Tsai's US visit “as an excuse to carry out military exercises, which has seriously damaged regional peace, stability and security”, the ministry said in a statement.



“The military will respond with a calm, rational and serious attitude, and will stand guard and monitor in accordance with the principles of ‘not escalating nor disputes’ to defend national sovereignty and national security.”

Chinese state television released what it said was footage of the drills, set to stirring martial music and showing warships at sea and mobile missile launchers being readied, though did not show missiles being fired. It said fighter aircraft went up armed with live weapons.

There was no broader sense of alarm in Taiwan about the drills, where people are long accustomed to Chinese threats.

A senior Taiwan official familiar with security planning in the region told Reuters the aircraft involved in the morning missions had only crossed the median line briefly.

The situation was “as expected” and manageable, and Taiwan's government has rehearsed various scenarios for its response, the person said on condition of anonymity, as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

Writing on her Facebook page, Tsai said she was briefed about the security situation and that the military was at its post around the clock.

“Taiwan will stand with all democracy-loving partners in the world and jointly assume the responsibility of ensuring regional stability and prosperity,” she added.

Taiwanese officials had expected a less severe reaction to the McCarthy meeting, given it took place in the United States, but they had said they could not rule out the possibility of China staging more drills.

China's announcement came hours after French President Emmanuel Macron left China, where he met President Xi Jinping and other senior leaders.

UNDERWATER NUCLEAR DRONE  
N Korea conducts another test

AFP, Seoul

North Korea claimed yesterday it had tested another underwater nuclear attack drone, its latest response to joint US South Korea military drills, though analysts have questioned whether Pyongyang has such a weapon.

In recent weeks, North Korea has tested what state media have described as an underwater nuclear-capable drone and also carried out the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

“A national defence science research institute in the DPRK carried out a test of underwater strategic weapon system from April 4 to 7,” the official Korean Central News Agency said.

“The underwater nuclear attack drone ‘Haeil 2’... cruised 1,000 km of simulated underwater distance.”

KCNA added that “the test warhead accurately detonated underwater. The test perfectly proved the reliability of the underwater strategic weapon system and its fatal attack ability.”

On March 23, North Korea claimed it tested an underwater nuclear attack drone able to unleash a “radioactive tsunami”, as it blamed US South Korea exercises for a deteriorating regional security situation.

Satellite imagery has also indicated a high level of activity at North Korea's main nuclear complex after leader Kim Jong Un ordered that production of weapons-grade nuclear material be ramped up.

Last year, North Korea declared itself an “irreversible” nuclear power, while Kim has told the North Korean military to intensify drills in preparation for a “real war”.

South Korea and the United States on Wednesday staged joint air drills, Seoul's military said.

US Navy sends guided-missile sub to Middle East

REUTERS

The US Navy yesterday said a nuclear-powered guided-missile submarine was operating in the Middle East in support of the Bahrain-based US Fifth Fleet. The USS Florida entered the region on Thursday and began transiting the Suez Canal on Friday, Commander Timothy Hawkins said in a statement. “It is capable of carrying up to 154 Tomahawk land-attack cruise missiles and is deployed to US 5th Fleet to help ensure regional maritime security and stability,” Hawkins said.

Iran installs cameras in public places to penalise unveiled women

REUTERS



Iranian authorities are installing cameras in public places and thoroughfares to identify and penalise unveiled women, the police announced yesterday.

After they have been identified, violators will receive “warning text messages as to the consequences”, police said in a statement.

The move is aimed at “preventing resistance against the hijab law,” said the statement, carried by the judiciary's Mizan news agency and other state media, adding that such resistance tarnishes the country's spiritual image and spreads insecurity.

Yesterday's police statement called on owners of businesses to “seriously monitor the observance of societal norms with their diligent inspections”. It urged citizens to confront unveiled women.

Gunmen kidnap 80 in Nigeria

REUTERS, Bauchi

Gunmen abducted at least 80 people, mostly women and children, in Nigeria's Zamfara state, a hotspot for kidnappings for ransom by armed gangs targeting remote villages, residents said yesterday.

Gangs of armed men have attacked hundreds of local communities across northwestern Nigeria in recent years, while Islamist militants continue to stage attacks in the northeast.

The latest kidnapping took place on Friday in Wanzamai village in Tsafe local government area in Zamfara, three residents said. Zamfara is one of the states most affected by kidnappings.

Musa Usman, whose 14-year-old son Ibrahim was among those abducted, said children and women from the village were clearing land for farming and collecting firewood when they were taken by gunmen and marched into a nearby forest.

“The children from different households went to collect firewood and few of them were going to farms in search of manual jobs when they were abducted,” Usman told Reuters by phone.

Zamfara police confirmed the incident in a statement but did not say how many people were abducted. The police were working with the military and community security guards to rescue the victims, he said.

Haruna Noma, another parent, said some of those taken were from two nearby villages of Kucheri and Danwuri who had gone to Wanzamai to clear land to farm.

‘The House in decline’

FROM PAGE 1

President Abdul Hamid in his Friday's speech in parliament also said that the need may arise to invite external experts to examine, evaluate and analyse laws, Menon added.

“Today the character of our parliament is changing continuously. Parliament is having a new face due to commercialisation of politics and elections.”

He said it is necessary to review the constitution and reform parliament.

JP MP Anisul Islam Mahmud said, “If we want to make the Jatiya Sangsad the focal point

for all activities, people's sufferings must be discussed there.

“If this discussion is not held, parliament will not be the centre for all activities. Rather, the talks held outside parliament would become the focal point, the writings of the newspapers would get priority.”

He said it is not only the opposition parties' responsibility to speak for the people.

Another JP MP named Shameem Haider Patwari said that numerous laws have been passed in parliament over the last 50 years.

“But we need to evaluate to what extent we have been able to make the government accountable. How much can we force the government to make a right decision cancelling a wrong one?” he said.

JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu demanded formation of a parliamentary committee to review the constitution to remove the issues contradictory to the fundamental principles of the constitution, to remove the confusion about the small ethnic groups, and to empower lawmakers by amending article 70.

Inu highly praised

Bangabandhu and the PM, and blasted the BNP.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud said it is not the responsibility of the government to bring any party to an election.

“The Election Commission can carry out the responsibility of seeing who will take part in an election or not. It's not the responsibility of the government,” he said.

AL MP Tanvir Shakil said many local and foreign conspiracies are afoot.

“Today our great Liberation War and independence have been insulted. A conspiracy

has been hatched against the government through insulting the Independence Day and exploiting a child.

“I would like to ask the civil society and their newspapers where the spirit of freedom was when the Indemnity Ordinance was promulgated. Where was freedom when the grenade attack was carried out on August 21? You didn't talk about freedom then,” Tanvir said.

Quoting Harold Laski, an English political theorist, AL MP Shajahan Khan said freedom of speech and freedom of the press are correlated.

“How much freedom a country enjoys depends on its social and economic conditions. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press is more advanced in a country which is more educated and more aware of civil rights, economically developed,” he said.

Shajahan said it is unfair to expect too much freedom of speech in a country that is backward in terms of education, social awareness and financial system.

“If this freedom is given in a backward country, it will be like handing a cooking spud to a child,” he added.

Foiled by attacks, arrests in many places

FROM PAGE 2

Rahim Newaz, member secretary of Natore BNP, said, “Sadar Upazila BNP General Secretary Abul Bepari and Tebaria Union BNP General Secretary Masud Akand were seriously injured in the attack.”

Jubo League and

Chhatra League activists allegedly attacked Abul in front of Alaipur NESCO office when he came towards the party office to attend the meeting.

Police later rescued him with serious injuries and he was sent to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for treatment, Abul's

family said.

Meanwhile, Natore AL General Secretary Shariful Islam Ramzan denied the allegations of attacks on BNP leaders and said the opposition has become “disorganised”.

In Patuakhali, BNP's office at Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila was

ransacked around 9:00pm on Friday night.

Abdur Rahman Faraji, president of Rangabali upazila BNP, said that Jubo League and Chhatra League activists attacked party office at night to thwart this programme.

In Jashore, at least 10 BNP leaders and activists

were injured after an attack by Jubo League workers in Sharsha upazila. In Savar's Kalma area, at least 15 opposition leaders and workers were attacked by over 300 AL activists while attending the sit-in.

Golam Mostafa, general secretary of Savar thana BNP, said the attack

was launched under the leadership of Savar Sadar Union Parishad AL President Sohel Rana and General Secretary Majharul Islam Rubel.

Sohel and Rubel could not be contacted over the phone despite repeated attempts.



## Why the president’s speech is so relevant

### Politics of confrontation must end

President Abdul Hamid’s speech at the Jatiya Sangsad is more than just a ceremonial address on the occasion of the parliament’s 50th anniversary. It is significant because it comes at a crucial time for Bangladesh when it prepares for the 12th national elections. In an atmosphere of extreme acrimony between the ruling party and the opposition which dominates our politics, it is a speech worth listening to.

The president’s reiteration on shunning conflict and reaching a consensus through dialogue reflects the public’s frustration over a political environment driven by vitriolic hatred of political rivals. He has mentioned the need for a “tolerant” democratic system as well as practices that align with democratic norms and the constitution. He pointed out that without democracy, development could never be universal; rather, it would be individual or group-centric.

The president aptly referred to Bangabandhu’s role in 1973 during the first parliamentary assembly in talking to the speaker to facilitate opportunities for the opposition parties to speak when they wanted to. What the president was referring to was the courteousness and willingness to listen to opposition parties, no matter how different their ideologies may be. Constructive criticism ensures overall public welfare, which is the main goal of any parliament. Making democratic institutions stronger, ensuring that only democratically elected leaders represent the people in parliament, and guaranteeing its accountability to them are the other salient points of his speech.

The president, being a former speaker himself, has the experience and moral authority to make such statements that may seem standard remarks appropriate for a golden jubilee. But they are meaningful as they are cautionary in our current volatile, uncertain political environment. It is also an attempt to awaken the lawmakers to the jarring reality of just how weak and dysfunctional the parliament has become.

With virtually no real representation of the opposition, the parliament has become a one-sided forum where a large part of the session is devoted to laudatory iterations of the ruling party’s achievements or tirades against opposition parties. In those rare moments when an opposition member has raised a contentious point that alludes to the accountability of certain government agencies and institutions, there has hardly been a debate on the issue, least of all any consensus regarding an investigation into the allegations.

The president’s appeal to shun conflict and embrace dialogue is crucial not only within the parliament but outside it, too. For an effective parliament, many reforms are needed, such as an end to opposition boycott of the assembly (as practiced by both AL and BNP lawmakers on different occasions), allowing debate and consensus building among treasury and opposition benches, an empowered opposition bench, more representation of women MPs through direct election, a neutral speaker, empowered standing committees, a well-staffed secretariat, and so on. But the first step towards a functional parliament is unquestioningly a free and fair election, which will bring about lawmakers who truly represent the people in the house.

## Each district hospital must have an ICU

### Govt should address lack of progress in project on setting up district-level ICUs

It is disheartening to know that a project undertaken to set up Intensive Care Units (ICU) in district hospitals has seen little progress even as it nears its deadline three years on. If executed with the same zeal that it was initiated with in April 2020, the Tk 512 crore initiative would have delivered 10-bed ICUs in 43 district hospitals and 10 medical college hospitals by now. Instead, as per our report, not one of the facilities earmarked under the project yet have a functional ICU. This is totally unacceptable.

Government projects missing deadlines at the expense of inflated bills may have been normalised in Bangladesh, but not all projects can be treated similarly. The ICU initiative was meant to fill a big void in Bangladesh’s health sector where district hospitals hardly have any ICU, forcing patients to seek life-saving treatment in faraway hospitals braving an arduous journey. Often, we come across reports of critically ill patients dying in ambulances while on their way to Dhaka or other divisional centres. So when the PM ordered setting up an ICU in every district hospital in early 2020, it was seen as a response as much to the then-raging pandemic as to a crisis that long predated it, and one had hoped that project officials would be sincere in following it through given its huge potential impact.

The extent of their failure becomes clear when you consider that only facilities that already had the infrastructure suitable for ICUs had been chosen under the project. The ground was already prepared. Why the long delay then? When approached for comments, the project authorities conveniently cited difficulties in opening letters of credit (LC), the devaluation of taka against the dollar, and supply-chain issues caused by Russia-Ukraine war. These problems alone cannot account for the fact that they couldn’t operationalise a single ICU in three years. Experts say that ICUs are not difficult to set up. The most crucial aspect of it is the oxygen bank, which can be created within months. Overall, it shouldn’t take more than two to three months to launch the operation of an ICU.

The only plausible explanation for the delay then is negligence and indifference to public suffering. One cannot also rule out corruption in procurement and other aspects of the work, with the project authorities now asking for an additional Tk 301 crore fund to complete it. The question is, how long must citizens suffer for the indifference, incompetence and corruption of officials and those associated with our largely unaccountable government projects?

We urge the planning ministry to investigate the failure of the ICU project before any request for deadline/budget revision is entertained. Those responsible for its lack of progress must be held accountable. For critical patients, an ICU makes the difference between life and death. So the government must take urgent steps to get the project back on track, and ensure that all 64 district hospitals are properly equipped to serve critical patients.

# Was it really about protecting the interest of the child?



### ON THE SHORES OF (IN) JUSTICE

Dr CR Abrar  
is an academic with interest in human rights issues.

CR ABRAR

A graphic card carried by *Prothom Alo* online edition of March 26 has triggered a major controversy resulting in filing of cases under the Digital Security Act (DSA) against the reporter and the editor, among others; incarceration of the concerned reporter for five days, and unleashing of a tirade of criticism and condemnation of the daily for “mocking the country’s independence”, undermining celebrations of an auspicious day and the achievements of the government and the like. Despite prompt clarification and corrective measures taken by the daily the detractors remained resolute. Soon they began to harp the tune that it was indeed “a heinous case of child exploitation”. Needless to say, at no point the quote in question was attributed to the child and thus the charade and the accompanying cacophony appear to be a classic case of targeting a straw man.

The card affair has generated an intense debate among social and political circles and the media. Imbued by their version of the spirit of independence and the country’s image, pro-establishment commentators are largely in agreement with the way the state has handled the matter. Others feel that the state’s actions have been antithetical to a democratic order and amount to sharp curtailment of freedom of expression and the media. This group feels that the true spirit of liberation encourages and facilitates debate and discussion on issues that affect people and the media to present the contending perspectives. This group advocates that instead of being paternalistic (by promoting a particular narrative), the state should ensure citizens’ full enjoyment of the rights (including that of freedom of expression and the media) that are enshrined in the Constitution of the republic. *The Prothom Alo* matter has brought into the open the chasm that exists between these two groups.

As the government came under international scrutiny for curtailing freedom of expression, the question of child exploitation became the rallying point. The general secretary of the ruling party and a ranking

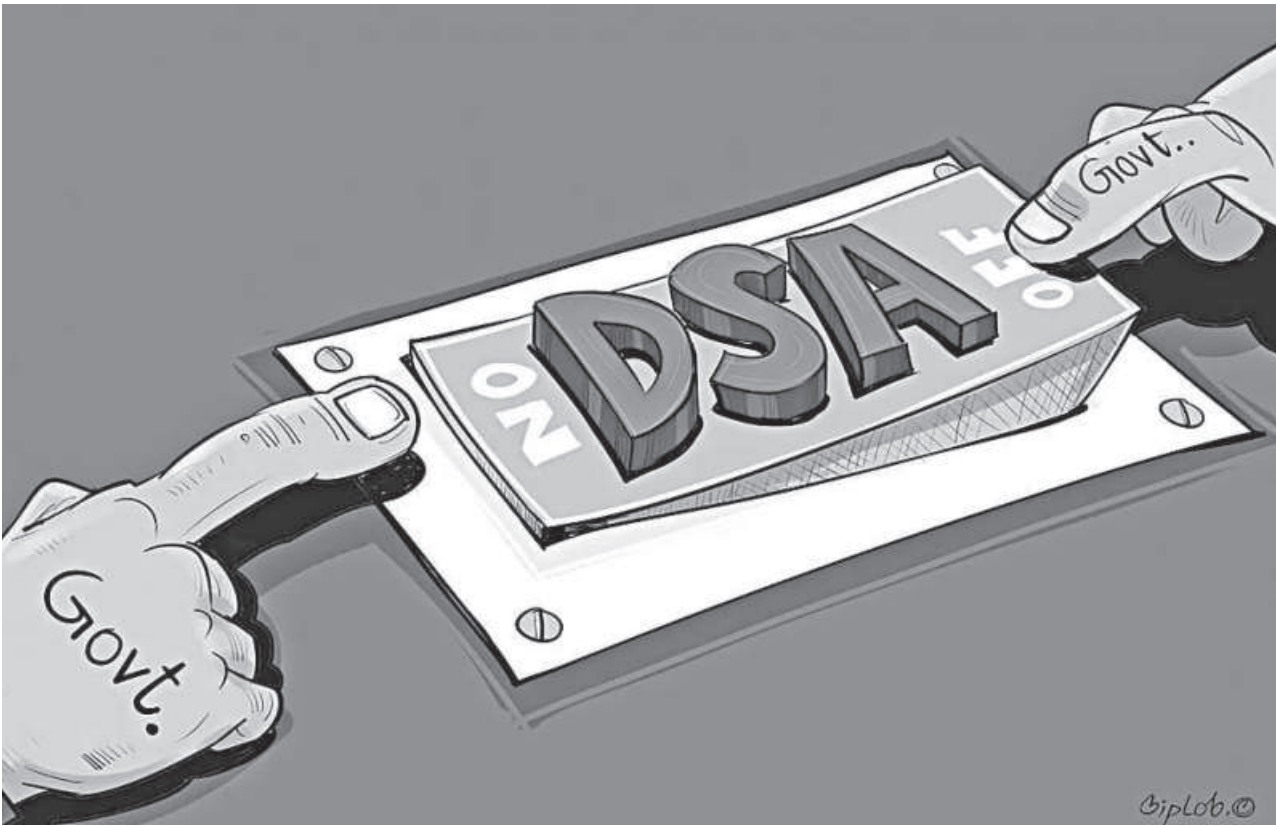


ILLUSTRATION: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

cabinet minister asserted that “it was not a simple mistake but a criminal offence”. He argued that “in any advanced democratic country if such kind of child exploitation had happened, licence of the media would have been cancelled”. The information minister claimed that the report in question violated the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In a press release issued on April 1, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), denying that the journalist was arrested for reporting on the cost-of-living crisis in Bangladesh, claimed he “was arrested because of child abuse and child exploitation” and for trying “to undermine the independence of Bangladesh on the great Independence Day”. The ministry statement asserted that “these acts surely tantamount to punishable crimes” and reminded all that “creating social unrest by undertaking such a fraudulent act

the DSA in the case lodged in Ramna police station and under those and two additional Sections 26(2) and 29 of the DSA in the case filed in Tejgaon police station. Curiously, none of the five sections deals with child exploitation and abuse. Also, according to the first information report filed with Ramna police station, Shams, editor Matiur Rahman and unnamed others were explicitly accused of using print, online and electronic media for tarnishing the image of the state and it does not make any reference to child exploitation and abuse.

The state’s recourse to DSA in dealing with a case of unintended technical lapse of a reputed national daily amply demonstrates the limits of freedom of expression and that of the media in today’s Bangladesh. The speeches of senior functionaries of the state and the ruling party and the statements of their acquiescent

cognisance the charges pressed against the accused and also to corroborate if their revised narrative of the state’s intent (of child exploitation and abuse) tallied with such charges. One can therefore deduce that in pursuing the graphic card episode of *Prothom Alo* the state’s claim of championing UNCRC does not hold water. If anything, the unfortunate incident has come in handy for the ruling establishment to send a clear message not only to *Prothom Alo*, but critical and objective media and free thinkers that the state will not shy away from resorting to the much handy draconian DSA for clamping down on any individual and entity who may appear to be transgressing the nebulous boundaries while exercising their rights as articulated not by the Constitution of the republic, but by those who command the authority of the state.

# The importance of learning in one’s mother tongue

Jaasimuz Zaman and Matilal Pal are volunteers for education and training for disadvantaged children in rural Bangladesh using the concept “Shikher Shamaikj Dayitto”, and are co-authors of “Sustainable Quality Education in Rural Bangladesh; From Dream to Reality.”

JASIMUZ ZAMAN and MATILAL PAL

Language is not only important for communication, it is also a tool for intellectual and mental development. Research shows that education in one’s mother tongue is a key factor in improvement of learning outcomes and academic performance. This is crucial, especially in primary school, to avoid knowledge gaps and increase the speed of learning and comprehension.

On the other hand, research has shown that children getting education in a language other than their mother tongue suffer from a disadvantage. The benefits of mother tongue in education are so great that the World Bank, when it measures “poverty in education”, uses the percentage of recent primary school graduates who can read and learn at a specified level in their mother tongue as a measuring stick.

Conversely, the medium of instruction being any language besides the mother tongue fails to offer the beneficial effects of learning and child development. Unesco says that large segments of the world population suffer from a lack of opportunity for schooling in their mother tongue. Unesco estimates that about 400 million children all over the world are disadvantaged because

of this. That is why attempts are being made worldwide to redress this barrier to learning wherever possible. In Bangladesh, in recognition of this hindrance, communities like the Chakma, Garo, and others use their mother tongue up to the primary level. The government already has a curriculum approved and supplied for these communities.

In Bangladesh, we are fortunate that the mother tongue of most people is Bangla, a well-developed language spoken by over 300 million people all over the world. Yet, our country has a peculiarity in its education system, with English being a prioritised medium of instruction.

We do not have any estimates of how many Bangladeshi Bangla-speaking children are undergoing education with English as a medium of instruction. But whatever the number, do their parents know that they are putting these children at a disadvantage in terms of learning and development?

English in our country has the legacy of a colonial past. The British introduced English in colonised India with the explicit intention of making the people of the region anglophones and even anglophiles. The British colonial past has not only imposed the language on us, it has also spawned a “mindset” which has been lethal. We could not shake off English after independence from British rule in 1947.

After Bangladesh’s independence in 1971, the government decided to have Bangla medium education at all levels, including the tertiary

level. It was an emotional moment in the history of Bangladesh, and also a period of turmoil when education plunged into disarray. The consequent disruption to the public education system caused alarm in the country. In the absence of a definite plan by the government, the intelligentsia failed to come out with its own action plan to mitigate the shortages of suitable books in Bangla for tertiary education.

In the meantime, the privileged classes of society moved towards setting up private institutions. This tendency rapidly evolved into the promotion of English medium schools. The government remained unresponsive to the rise of a private system of education and allowed it to grow uncontrolled. English medium schools, with the patronage of the elite and privileged, grew rapidly in Dhaka and other metropolitan areas. Even middle-class parents started sending their children to private English medium schools, at costs they could ill afford.

Then, regrettably, the government joined the English bandwagon by having the national curriculum and textbooks translated into English and encouraging yet another stream of school education.

What is prompting this rush towards English medium education? What is the rationale behind this? What are the benefits?

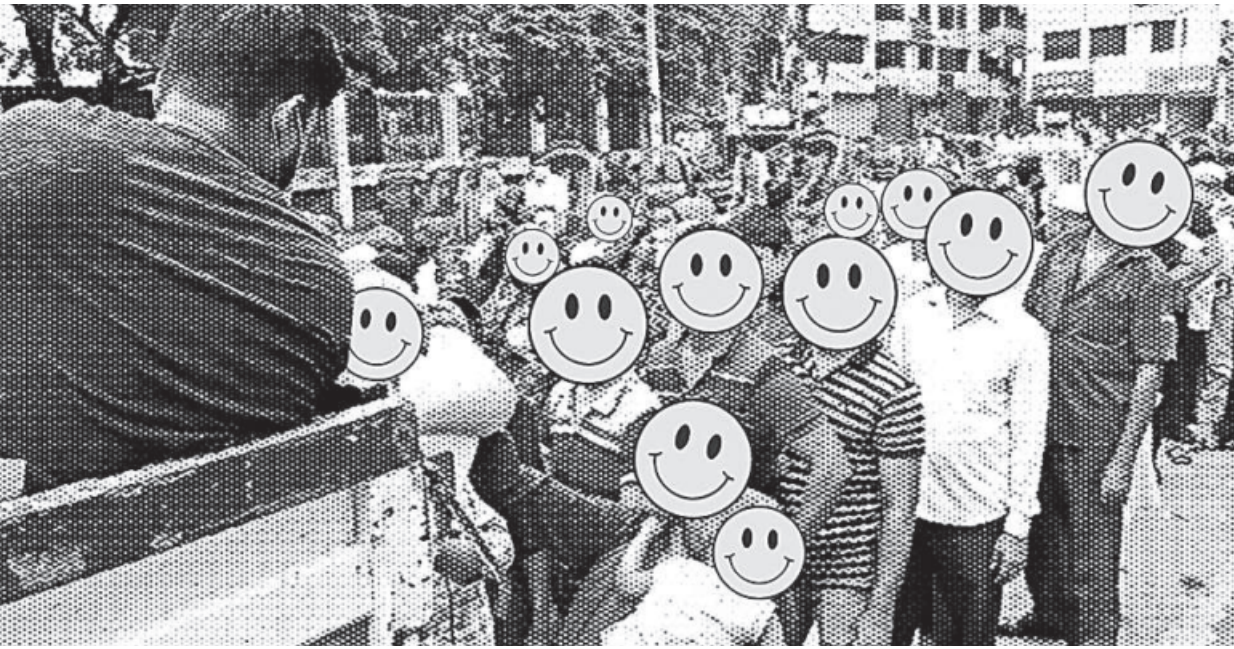
The rush comes from a societal perception wrongly created by equating the benefits of English language skills with the medium of instruction. The fact that it is entirely possible to be adept in

English if a student follows the public education system in Bangla is totally overlooked. English introduced in Class V, followed by seven years of English learning between Class VI and Class XII, should be enough to make the student capable and competent enough for an English education at the tertiary level. This is not a myth. This was true in the 1960s; there is no reason why, with far more opportunities for learning English today, students will not become proficient in the language.

What is happening to the children getting their education in English medium institutions? In actuality, parents are putting these children in great difficulty, making them learn through a language that is not their own. A segment of children educated in English medium may catch up in learning over time, but this likely will not happen for all students, putting them in jeopardy for future opportunities in life.

If we look at the outcome in tertiary education, we do not see a large presence of English medium students in public universities that by far maintain a higher standard of learning than the private universities in Bangladesh. English medium students prefer to go to private universities where admission is easier and competition for high grades is lower. Middle-class and poor parents continue to go through financial miseries because of the high costs of English medium schools and private universities. By confusing English proficiency with English as a medium of instruction, parents are doing a disservice to their children.





VISUAL: STAR

# In search of a happier Bangladesh



OPEN SKY

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Cortland in the US.

BIRUPAKSHA PAUL

Once, the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great met the great philosopher Diogenes and asked if he could do anything for the sage. Diogenes didn't ask anything of the king; rather he tartly told the commander not to block the sunlight which the philosopher was basking in. The hermit conveyed to the ruler that he shouldn't take away anything from the public which he can't deliver to his citizens.

Enjoying basic natural rights is the first principle of happiness, and that instantly justifies why Afghanistan turned out to be the unhappiest nation on the planet. It also tells us why Finland, Denmark, and Iceland – the three most reputed welfare states – occupied the first three places in the happiness index devised by a pool of experts under the guidelines of the United Nations.

The World Happiness Report 2023 has placed Bangladesh in the 118th position out of 137 countries. Surprisingly, Bangladesh's ranking was 94 in last year's report and has been downgraded by as many as 24 places, sparking both curiosity and concern as to why it happened. Some critics are labelling it as the government's failure, while some others are trashing the report outright as "a Western plot to malign Bangladesh."

Some discard it by arguing that happiness is a personal aspect and it can't be measured as a social indicator. That's not true. The price behaviour, which is measured at the individual level in microeconomics, can also be quantified at the state level in macroeconomics. We measure social psychology while it is initially studied at the individual level.

That is why the UN panel of experts has outlined six criteria to measure happiness at the national level: 1) per capita income; 2) social support; 3) healthy life expectancy; 4) freedom to make life choices; 5) generosity; and 6) corruption. Hence, the yardstick is the combination of both quantitative and qualitative aspects. For example, income and health indicators can be expressed in numbers, while elements like freedom, social connectedness, generosity, and corruption are perception-based, leaving some room for argument. But the UN

social scientists have explained the methodology of how they handled each of the qualitative factors. Yet, blaming the ranking as an act of conspiracy against any nation won't convince the audience by any chance.

Of course, some rankings may seem anomalous to some readers. Seeing Pakistan (108th) ahead of Bangladesh (118th) in the World Happiness Report at a time when Pakistan is grappling with an acute reserve shortage as well as food and fuel crises may seem odd to many. But these recent phenomena are likely to be reflected in the next report. In last year's report, Pakistan ranked much below at 121st, while Bangladesh's position was 94th, creating no doubt to any critics or sceptics. This year's positions for these two countries are not statistically too different. Any position beyond 100 requires the respective governments to address why social happiness scores are so poor. And the single most dominant factor is the level of corruption.

Highly corrupt nations are highly unhappy, a conclusion we can make by comparing the World Happiness Report 2023 and the Corruption Perception Index 2022, where Pakistan ranked 140th and Bangladesh 147th. The happiest countries like Denmark, Finland, and Iceland have the least amount of corruption as they rank 1st, 2nd, and 14th in the Corruption Perception Index. So, it would be a wake-up call for the government to crusade against those public officials involved in rent-seeking tasks, lawmakers engaged in bribes, police members involved in unethical practices, businessmen turned wilful defaulters, high-scale money launderers, and political pollutants. The outgoing president acknowledged corruption as the main obstacle to progress.

The government is engaged in development projects one after another. But the positive sentiment is outweighed when people can sense the presence of massive corruption in most public works. People feel unhappy when they see that no big-scale money launderers and wilful defaulters have even been touched at all. The criminals who victimise children, girls, women

or minorities are sometimes arrested, but rarely followed up with exemplary punishments. The drivers with fake permits and unfit vehicles keep on committing murders on the streets and highways, but are rarely caught or sent behind bars.

The spectacle of the tardiest possible judiciary, the drought of law enforcement, and the culture of massive impunity for the powerful make the helpless majority frustrated, demoralised, and disdainful. In this situation, the enthusiastic claim of a spike in per capita income by the finance ministry can't make the ordinary people cheer at this creditworthy message. That's why economic achievements on the one hand and the ever-growing financial turpitude on the other hand can't make people smile unconditionally. If a UN official approach them by asking, "Are you happy?" they say, "No." Corruption damages any gain in happiness, throwing the country into a lower rung of the ladder, and thus defaming the nation.

Some may argue that Bangladesh's position at 118th seems to be a mistake while Nepal's position in happiness is 78th, because Bangladesh is more prosperous than Nepal. Herein comes the question of rational expectations originally proposed in the early 1960s by the American economist John Muth. Given the differences in historical perspectives, geopolitical settings, and economic advancements between them, the level of expectations by Bangladeshi people are likely to be higher than that in Nepal, whose per capita income is less than half of Bangladesh's. Also, the low level of corruption in Nepal is a factor why it's happier than Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh government has to devise ways to make the country advance on the ladder of happiness because it is the ultimate objective of any ruler serving the country. Bangabandhu embarked on his second revolution in search for a happier Bangladesh. Anyone believing in his ideals must be serious to research on how to make citizens happier. The unemployment rate is now higher than at any time in the past. Megacities like Dhaka and Chattogram are simply unliveable. They are surcharged with sound pollution, toxic air, uncouth landscape cluttered by political posters, and one of the highest levels of congestion in the world. When the residents of these cities are interviewed on happiness by surveyors, saying that "they are happy" would be a parody of truth and travesty of justice. Those in power can do a lot to address these issues towards the task of making a happier Bangladesh.

# Trump's arrest adds fuel to fire in hyperpolarised US



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ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

It's not just the Democrats in the US who are looking longingly at former US President Donald Trump's arrest. A substantial number of Republican Party supporters are also hoping Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg will be able to do what everybody else has been unable to do till now: Put the flamboyant former president behind bars and remove his disruptive and destructive presence from US politics once and for all.

Well, good luck with that. Trump's arrest, ironically, has added rocket fuel to his incendiary campaign to win the Republican nomination for the 2024 presidential elections. Trump is playing the victim card for all it's worth, and his detractors are beginning to realise that Trump isn't going anywhere soon.

Heavens knows there is a great deal to dislike about arguably one of the most outré political figures in the Western world. Most politicians play fast and loose with facts, but Trump is in a class all by himself. What is far worse, Trump's uninhibited race-baiting, xenophobia and all-round coarse, pugilistic fact-free diatribes have done permanent damage to US political discourse. Racism, meanspirited demonisation of political opponents, once implicit in dog whistles, are now banded about with a bullhorn.

Porn star, hush money payment through thuggish hatchet man and felon Michael Cohen, covering up of salacious stories in the gaudy periodical National Enquirer – the case against Trump has all the hallmarks of a tawdry tabloid scandal. Herein lies the case's weakness.

The arrest and attempted conviction of a prominent political figure is a portentous, serious matter. The case against Trump is sordid, but does it rise to the level of a crime? Some legal analysts – not all of them Trump supporters – are saying the charge should more appropriately be a misdemeanour.

There are several consequences that follow from this. The first, evident from the cries of outrage of Republicans, is that all of this can be presented as a political witch-hunt. The weaker the case, the more emboldened they are. The other development is that the case may taint other, more substantive efforts to bring Trump to book. A grand jury investigation by Fani Willis, the district attorney of Atlanta's Fulton County, accuses Trump of trying to tamper with the 2020 presidential elections where he was caught on phone asking Georgia elections chief Brad Raffensperger to "find" votes to overturn Biden's impending victory in the state.

Trump has forced the US to confront a fraught political dilemma: How to balance the need to go after an ex-president suspected of serious legal malfeasance against the risk of opening up a Pandora's box of frivolous lawsuits against

political enemies. The Republican attempts of congressional investigations against Democratic enemies provide a foretaste of that – though the fact that they are not making much headway provides some measure of assurance that frivolous attempts will often fall by the wayside.

The immediate aftermath of Trump's arrest brings the former president back to the place he likes best – the centre of all attention. Now, doubtless to his utter delight, it's all about Trump.

As the campaign for US presidential elections is about to begin in earnest, we are back to square one. As the US baseball star Yogi Berra once said: "It's déjà vu all over again."

In 2015, when Trump stepped down the escalator of Trump Tower in Manhattan to announce his presidential campaign, Democrats

his star shone brightly for a while. Polls of Republican voters showed him outperforming Trump. Soon, however, Trump's double-digit lead reassessed itself and Trump now rules supreme.

The arrest and the attendant political outrage of Trump partisans is likely to add a fillip to Trump's support. Even Trump detractors in the Republican Party – DeSantis included – have been obliged to castigate Trump's arrest.

Anybody wishing to topple Trump within the Republican Party faces a formidable task. For a Republican there is the daunting math of keeping Trump supporters on his/her side while wooing those tired or disaffected. Now Trump says that he is the target of a political witch-hunt. How do you agree while seeking to topple him? That's a needle that is impossible to thread.

Some have noted the noticeable lack of public outrage of Trump supporters, but I would not read too much into it. The underlying challenge remains. For decades, the Republican Party has championed the politics of white grievance and outrage, casting political differences not so much as matters of policy rather than an existential battle against the evil Democrats



Republicans are locked in a Faustian embrace with Trump, and the arrest is likely to make that embrace tighter.

PHOTO: REUTERS

were delighted and the Republican establishment was confident. This preposterous political arriviste, everyone was sure, was about to get his comeuppance. (A mea culpa is in order here: even I had predicted a Hillary Clinton victory.)

Trump, of course, had the last laugh. There is a cautionary tale in all this, as is evident in the media circus that is beginning to surround him following the news of his arrest.

While it remains to be seen if Trump will actually be convicted, there is no question that the arrest has made Trump's candidacy for the Republican nomination virtually unassailable. Before the arrest, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis was the blue-eyed boy of Republicans keen to see the last of Trump. DeSantis hasn't thrown his hat in the ring yet, but his presidential ambition is one of the worst kept secrets in US politics. With an ability to out-Trump in shrill partisanship and a commanding performance in Florida's gubernatorial elections,

– and thrown in the establishment and the media into the same category. The right-wing media industrial complex, led by Fox News and its ilk, merrily fanned the flames and laughed all the way to the bank. Media mogul Rupert Murdoch, the eminence grise of parts of right-wing US media, has soured on Trump, but the ratings gods demand he change his mind fast – and signs are that Fox News is doing exactly that.

For decades, the Republicans style of take-no-prisoners, hate-filled partisan politics yielded considerable political dividends. Then Trump came along and made this politics his very own. The result has been an even more toxic brand of partisan politics that has given rise to a party too driven by hatred of the perceived control of the liberal establishment to engage substantively in policy or governance.

Republicans are locked in a Faustian embrace with Trump, and the arrest is likely to make that embrace tighter.

/Opinion

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**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

1 Bring up  
5 Hike route  
10 Sailors' saint  
11 Stable sight  
12 Boxer biter  
13 Rise up  
14 Saharan sight  
16 Wrench or hammer  
20 Male escort  
23 Great Leap Forward leader  
24 Saw  
25 Circus structures  
27 Maui souvenir  
28 Biased, in a way  
29 Battlefield worry  
32 Paul, to John, e.g.

36 Rich fabric  
39 Ship's front  
40 Chooses  
41 Fatigue  
42 Flirtatious signals  
43 Utters

**DOWN**

1 Game callers  
2 First name in scat  
3 Prayer finish  
4 Annoying driver  
5 Pollster's find  
6 Metal fastener  
7 Commotion  
8 Ailing  
9 Rented out  
11 "Encanto" character  
15 Secluded spot  
17 Old Atlanta

arena  
18 Stable diet  
19 Missing  
20 Brazenness  
21 Notion  
22 Make headway  
25 Look after  
26 Releases from duty  
28 Goes under  
30 Arizona player, for short  
31 Ship staffs  
33 Diva's piece  
34 John Major, for one  
35 Some sheep  
36 Grass coating  
37 2001 Will Smith film  
38 Chess pieces

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**FRIDAY'S ANSWERS**

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**BEETLE BAILEY** BY MORT WALKER

MY REPORT IS "TOP SECRET," SIR

AREN'T YOU GOING TO READ IT?

I CAN'T KEEP A SECRET

**BABY BLUES** BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

WITH WREN BACK AT PRESCHOOL TODAY, YOU'RE FINALLY GOING TO HAVE SOME ME-TIME!

YEAH, BUT...

SHE NEEDS TO BE AROUND OTHER KIDS, WANDA.

WE HAVE OTHER KIDS!

OTHER NON-HAMMIE KIDS.

GOOD POINT

BLAD-A-BLAD-A-BLAAA!





DID YOU KNOW?  
Flu can trigger a heart attack, Dutch study suggests

STAR HEALTH DESK

Individuals diagnosed with flu are six times more likely to have a heart attack in the week after testing positive for the virus, according to a Dutch study published in The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) and being presented at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases (ECCMID 2023, Copenhagen, 15-18 April), underline the importance of vaccination and awareness of heart attack symptoms among flu patients and those treating them.

The study used results from 16 laboratories across the Netherlands and death and hospital records to produce a more complete picture. Of the 419 heart attacks, 25 were in the first seven days after flu diagnosis, 217 within the year before diagnosis and 177 in the year after flu diagnosis (not including the first seven days). Around a third of the individuals (139/401) died, of any cause, within a year of being diagnosed with flu. The researchers calculated that the individuals studied were 6.16 times more likely to have a heart attack in the seven days following a flu diagnosis than in the year before or after.

The influenza virus is known to increase the coagulation of blood and weaken fatty plaques that have built up in the arteries. If a plaque ruptures, a blood clot can form, blocking the blood supply to the heart and causing a heart attack. The researchers recommend strategies to prevent influenza infection, including vaccination, as well as advocating for a raised awareness among physicians and hospitalized flu patients for symptoms of heart attacks.

75 years of improving  
PUBLIC HEALTH

STAR HEALTH REPORT

The World Health Organisation (WHO) was founded on April 7, 1948 with a mission to promote global health and ensure the highest level of health and wellbeing for everyone. This is why April 7 is observed World Health Day every year. WHO has achieved significant milestones over the years, such as the discovery of antibiotics, the development of vaccines for polio, and the establishment of the first International Health Regulations.

In the early years, WHO focused on mass campaigns against diseases like tuberculosis, malaria, yaws, syphilis, smallpox, and leprosy. WHO also created special programs like the Special Programme of Research, Development, and Research Training in Human Reproduction and the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, which contributed significantly to the elimination of several diseases.

In 1978, the International Conference on Primary Health Care set the goal of "Health for All," paving the way for WHO's call for universal health coverage. WHO launched the Global Diarrhoeal Diseases Programme with Oral rehydration salts (ORS) in the same year, reducing annual deaths from diarrhoea in children under five from 4.6 million to under 365,000 by 2019.

WHO successfully eradicated smallpox in 1980 and endorsed the International Code of Marketing Breastmilk Substitutes in 1981 to promote breastfeeding. By 2022, 75% of countries had adopted legal measures to implement the Code's provisions, leading to a 50% increase in the percentage of exclusively breastfed babies.

In 1988, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative was launched, reducing polio incidence by over 99% by 2022. WHO's priorities shifted with the discovery of the Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in 1983 and the licensing of the first

antiretroviral medication in 1987.

The Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) strategy was launched in 1995 to reduce global child mortality by 15%, and levonorgestrel emergency contraception was approved in over 100 countries in 1998.

The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (now Gavi) was established in 1999 to improve access to vaccines, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed to reduce extreme poverty and included specific health goals.

In 2001, the United Nations General

Assembly adopted the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, and created the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. The WHO launched the "3 by 5" initiative in 2003 to provide antiretroviral treatment to 3 million people living with HIV by 2005.

WHO worked to develop influenza vaccines in record time for the emergence of the new H1N1 influenza virus in 2009. WHO also issued a menu of options in 2010 for raising resources and removing financial barriers to ensure all people have access to essential health services. WHO achieved significant milestones in global health during the years 2011-2015. These included adopting the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework, setting global targets to prevent and control non-communicable diseases (NCDs), adopting an implementation plan on maternal, infant, and young child nutrition, endorsing the first global Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan, adopting the Every Newborn Action Plan, responding to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, and making important accomplishments in HIV treatment coverage and malaria elimination.

In 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted a political declaration on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and called for the establishment of an inter-agency coordination group on AMR. The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health was launched, and WHO declared Zika infection as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. In 2020, the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT Accelerator) partnership was launched to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines.

In 2021, HIV treatment coverage reached 28.7 million people, a ground breaking malaria vaccine for children was recommended, and tuberculosis prevention and care saved over 74 million lives since 2000. In 2022, four international agencies signed a framework to tackle human, animal, plant, and ecosystem challenges, and WHO released an updated edition of "Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers". As WHO celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2023, it reflects on past public health successes and motivates action to address current and future health challenges.

Source: World Health Organisation



HAVE A NICE DAY  
A dark empath

DR RUBAUL MURSHED

Kindness, empathy, and dark empathy are different concepts. Although kindness and empathy both are valued and well-known practices. But, the term 'dark empath' is relatively new. Some described them as "A wolf in sheep's clothing". According to some researchers, 'dark empath' may be even more dangerous than narcissists.

A study has unveiled this personality type that shares similarities with even psychopaths or may prove to be even more dangerous. Dark empath may be further dangerous as they can control and manipulate others by using their feelings against them. The victim may be left questioning their own feelings, thoughts, and behaviours while believing they are at fault. Dark empath may also be even harder to identify than a narcissist.

A dark empath can be someone who uses cognitive empathy at the expense of others, often for individual gain. Cognitive empathy is one of three types of empathy outlined by psychologists. By definition, dark empathy is a trait describing someone who understands another's emotions but can not feel them. People with dark empathy could use gaslighting and charm to manipulate the people close to them.

We need to distinctly clarify the differences between empathy and loving kindness - they are two separate notions. Empathy is the ability to understand and relate to another person's feelings, while loving kindness is an active wish for the well-being of others. Undesirably, for those who have never heard of dark empathy, according to a study, it is more common than we may think. Some suggest that it is related to narcissism as a part of the "dark triad" (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy).

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SLEEPLESS NIGHTS  
understanding the causes, risks, and treatments for insomnia

DR NUR-A SAFRINA RAHMAN

Insomnia is a widespread sleep disorder that affects millions of people worldwide. The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults get an average of 7-9 hours of sleep per night, yet research suggests that up to 30% of adults experience some degree of insomnia, with women being more likely to be affected than men.

Individuals with chronic insomnia (defined as difficulty sleeping at least three nights per week for three months or longer) are more likely to develop mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety.

**Causes and risks:** Insomnia has various causes and can involve psychological, physical, and environmental factors. Stress and anxiety are common triggers of insomnia. Other psychological factors that may contribute to insomnia include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and bipolar disorder.

Physical health conditions



such as chronic pain, respiratory disorders, and neurological conditions can also interfere with sleep, as can certain medications. Lifestyle habits like irregular sleep schedules, excessive caffeine consumption, and lack of physical activity can also contribute to insomnia. Exposure to electronic devices before bedtime can disrupt sleep.

**Treatment:** Insomnia can be treated through a combination of behavioural and pharmacological interventions. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is a widely used approach that aims to address the underlying causes of insomnia and promote healthy sleep habits.

Medications can be used to treat insomnia, but they have side effects and are not recommended for long-term use.

In recent years, researchers have investigated the potential of non-pharmacological interventions, such as mindfulness-based interventions, yoga, and exercise, as alternative treatments for insomnia.

Lifestyle changes such as avoiding caffeine and alcohol, establishing a regular sleep schedule, and creating a comfortable sleep environment can also be effective in treating insomnia.

Exercise has also been shown to be beneficial for insomnia.

Insomnia is linked with negative outcomes such as impaired cognitive function and increased risk of accidents and injuries. It can also worsen pre-existing medical conditions. Consultation with a healthcare professional is crucial in finding the best treatment for individual cases of insomnia.

The writer is a public health specialist.  
E-mail: safrinarahman16@gmail.com



Just BREATHE!

Modern science has shown that regular pranayama is capable of treating asthma, stress-related disorders, anxiety and depression. Pranayama oxygenates and detoxifies the body, clearing the mind, strengthening the nervous system, balancing the two hemispheres of the brain, cleaning the aura, improving digestion, and releasing fears, insecurity, irritability, depression and other blocks.

To learn 14 breathing techniques from experts, join the free Facebook live sessions on Dhaka flow festival at 5 pm every day, starting Friday April 7.

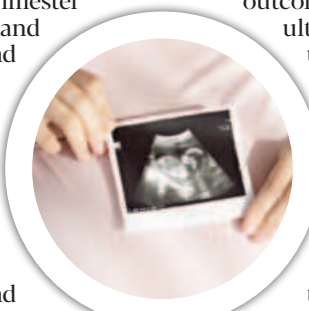
Routine 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester ultrasound  
can reduce undetected breech pregnancy and improve new-born outcomes

A study published in open accessed PLOS Medicine examined the impact of routine third trimester ultrasound scans and point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS) on the diagnosis of breech presentation and related perinatal outcomes. Accurate knowledge of foetal presentation is important for proper antenatal and intrapartum care.

The study found that both routine third trimester ultrasound scans and POCUS were effective in reducing the proportion of

undiagnosed breech presentations at term and improving neonatal outcomes. The use of routine ultrasound scans reduced undetected breech pregnancy rates by 71%, leading to better care before and during labour and improved outcomes for new-borns.

The study supports the policy of third trimester ultrasound scans for foetal presentation and suggests that future research should focus on exploring the cost-effectiveness of POCUS for foetal presentation.



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## Liton set to join KKR today

SPORTS REPORTER

Liton Das is set to join the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) today as he gears up to feature in his maiden Indian Premier League (IPL) campaign.

The dashing wicketkeeper-batter was set to be available for his franchise from today according to the No Objection Certificate (NOC) provided to him by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

However, Liton will miss KKR's game against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad today. He will be available the next game against Sunrisers Hyderabad on April 14.

Earlier, KKR released star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan after Bangladesh's Test and T20I skipper opted out due to a family emergency and drafted in England wicketkeeper-batter Jason Roy.

Add to that the fact that Afghan wicketkeeper-batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz also features for KKR as a foreign recruit and Liton's chances of featuring in the playing eleven appear slim.



After the completion of the Ireland series, national team players Shakib Al Hasan, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, and Rony Talukdar turned their focus to domestic cricket. The three featured for Mohammedan in their 101-run win over City Club yesterday. [Bottom] Mohammedan skipper Imrul Kayes was named player of the match for his 114.

PHOTO: STAR

## 'No compromise on quality'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on Saturday decided to organise the franchise-based Women's Super League (WSL) with four teams instead of six from May 15 in Dhaka.

BFF Women's Committee Chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiran said that the federation did not want to compromise on quality which is why they went with four teams instead of six.

"They [the right holders] wanted to hold the league with five or six teams but we decided to organise the Women's Super League with four teams because we don't want to compromise on the quality," Kiran told reporters after the first meeting of the organising committee at the BFF House yesterday.

"It is not that the aspiring teams did not show their interest in the league. We decided to organise it with four teams to keep the quality intact. The financial matter is also involved because the expenditures of the accommodation, food, transportation and others will increase," Kiran explained.

The league, to be played in double round-robin format, will end on June 4.

## BCB, Bogura stadium renew ties

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to re-establish its association with the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura after a meeting with officials of the National Sports Council and Bogura District Sports Association in Dhaka yesterday, Bogura District Commissioner Saiful Islam confirmed The Daily Star.

The BCB had decided to cut ties with the stadium in March, citing non-cooperation from the district's local sports bodies and organisers.

However, the meeting between the stakeholders managed to sort out the issues and in fruition, the BCB is set to resume their cricketing activities in the stadium from today, BCB Finance Committee chairman Ismail Haider Mallick informed reporters yesterday.

**It is possible [for international cricket to return to Bogura]. The travelling issues have been addressed and we have discussed them. If we can solve that then it's possible**



MAHBUB ANAM  
BCB Grounds Committee chairman

"BCB is taking over the stadium which will remain as it is. Proceedings will begin tomorrow. We will have to attend to it after bringing it under our jurisdiction. Then the Grounds Committee will decide on which games would be played there," Mallick said.

Mahbub Anam, the BCB Grounds Committee chairman, walked along the same lines.

"First of all, there is no issue with hotels now. The hotels in Bogura are completely prepared for international cricket. We want to fix the dressing rooms, indoor facilities and other infrastructure so that we can arrange international matches in the stadium ... We have to get it sanctioned by the ICC again."



SPORTS REPORTER

Just a day after winning the one-off Test against Ireland, skipper Shakib Al Hasan and other members of the national team took to the field for Mohammedan during their Dhaka Premier League clash against City Club yesterday.

Skipper Imrul Kayes struck a century while blistering fifties from Mahmudullah Riyad and Mahidul Islam Ankon helped Mohammedan clinch a comprehensive 101-run win at the BKSP-3 ground in Savar.

After a disastrous start to the DPL season that saw Mohammedan lose their first five games, the Black and Whites registered their third win on the trot. With seven points from eight games, Mohammedan are still holding on to hopes of a berth in the Super League stage.

In an eventful game, Mohammedan lost the wickets of Rony Talukdar (11) and Soumya Sarkar (13) cheaply after being asked to bat, but Imrul remained steadfast at one end.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz (6), who came to bat at number four, was controversially given leg before off the bowling of left-arm spinner Asif Hasan. Miraz was visibly disappointed with the decision since it appeared the ball may have been going down the leg side and the all-rounder expressed his dissatisfaction while returning to the dressing room.

Imrul then paired with Mahmudullah and added 121 runs for the fifth wicket before the latter was dismissed after scoring a 59-ball 71 that featured seven fours and four sixes. Mahidul also accelerated, adding 79 runs off 66 balls.

Imrul reached his 12th List A hundred off 108 balls, but had to retire hurt after his 121-ball 114 which was accentuated with ten fours and three sixes.

There was also another heated moment regarding controversial umpiring for a no-ball incident

with positive intent and rode on opener Tawfique Khan's quick 24-ball 36 until he was dismissed by Nazmul Islam.

Afterwards, City lost wickets at regular intervals and could only reach 247 for seven in 50 overs.

Abdullah Al Mamun was the



after a full toss from Tawfiq Ahmed, which seemed over waist-height, was not flagged by the leg umpire. Although the main umpire initially signalled for a no ball, he quickly changed his decision, causing a furore.

After Imrul's departure, Shakib joined Mahidul and added another 46-run stand off just 26 deliveries before left-arm spinner Rafsan Al Mahmud removed both batters to end with three wickets.

Mahidul was the first to depart after scoring a 52-ball 65 while Shakib was dismissed after a 16-ball cameo that yielded 26 runs and included two fours and a six.

In reply, City Club started off

team's top scorer with 70 while Asif Ahmed scored 50. Shakib picked up one wicket against 36 runs from 10 overs.

Shakib is not featuring in the Indian Premier League due to a family emergency and it is still uncertain whether the star all-rounder will feature for Mohammedan in the remaining DPL matches.

In the other two games of the day, Gazi Group Cricketers registered a seven-wicket win over Agrani Bank Cricket Club at the BKSP-4 ground while Brothers Union clinched a six-wicket win over Shinepukur Cricket Club at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali stadium in Fatulllah.

## Diabate hits another treble



SPORTS REPORTER

Malian forward Souleymane Diabate netted his second hatrick of the Bangladesh Premier League season as Mohammedan Sporting Club (MSC) handed a massive 6-1 defeat to Muktijoddha Sangsad at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj yesterday.

Mohammedan are now fifth, having raised their tally to 15 points from 11 matches.

However, things got off to a bleak start as defender Mohammad Atiquzzaman scored an eighth-minute opening goal to give the Muktijoddha the lead. But that lead lasted just 14 minutes before Diabate equalised and the Malian gave his side the lead by doubling his tally 13 minutes later. Muzaffarjan Muzaffarov then made it 3-0 three minutes before the break.

Mohammedan, coached by Alfaz Ahmed, came out even stronger for the second half, with Diabate completing his hatrick in the 53rd minute. His first hatrick of the season had come against Azampur FC Uttara in February.

Afterwards, forwards Emanuel Sunday and Sazzad Hossain struck to complete the rout.

Away at the Rofique Uddin Bhuiya Stadium in Mymensingh, Sheikh Russel defeated Bangladesh Police FC 3-1 in the day's other match to leapfrog their opponents into third place in the 11-team table. Sheikh Russel have 17 points after 11 matches while Police slipped to fourth place with 16 points.

Bangladesh Police stunned Sheikh Russel to take a 37th-minute lead through Colombian striker Johan Leonardo but Jufiker Mahmud Mintu's charges came out strongly for the second half and goals from Mohammad Ibrahim, Mfon Sunday and substitute Nihat Jaman rescued the former champions.

## Arsenal hope to end 10-YEAR ANFIELD CURSE

REUTERS

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta is preparing his players to take their Premier League title charge to the Anfield "jungle" as they look to end a marathon winless run at the home of Liverpool.

Arsenal have not won at Anfield in the Premier League since their 2-0 victory in the 2012-13 season - a game in which Arteta himself played for the north London club. Since then they have suffered heavy defeats, including two 5-1 losses.

The north London club were in the contest last year before Arteta's touchline spat with Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp fired up the home side who ran out 4-0 winners. Before that game in November 2021, Arteta used a quirky method to try to prepare his players for the atmosphere at Liverpool by playing 'You'll Never Walk Alone' - the Reds' supporter anthem - on a sound system at the training ground.

"You cannot train the players in the zoo and then go to the jungle on Sunday," Arteta told



reporters on Friday.

"It's impossible. You have to expose yourself. You have to prepare the players. You have to tell them what they're going to be facing and you have to recognise that."

Despite Liverpool's inconsistent form this season, which has kept them eighth in the league standings, the Merseyside club still have an excellent record at home - Leeds United are the only side to beat them there so far in the

league.

Arteta said his side are enthusiastic ahead of Sunday's clash with Liverpool as Arsenal look to maintain their eight-point lead over Manchester City in the title race.

"We know that we have a big challenge, but I see a big opportunity to go to Anfield and do something that we haven't done for many years," Arteta said. "That's what is driving the team in the last few days."

"We've been in a few grounds that we haven't won in 17, 22 years and we've managed to do that. So we're capable of doing it."

"We have to fully embrace it and go for it, it's a chance to go to Anfield and do something we haven't done for many years... It's a different group coming from a different position. What we need to have is courage - on Sunday we'll try to be that team."

Arsenal have struggled to score at Anfield on their last few visits and Arteta said he was glad to have January signing Leandro Trossard in the side, with the Belgian netting a hat-trick for Brighton & Hove Albion at Liverpool earlier this season.



Tottenham Hotspur's forward Son Heung-Min curled one to the top bin from outside the box during their encounter against Brighton and Hove Albion to become the first Asian ever to score 100 goals in the Premier League on Saturday. The incredible strike also saw the South Korean become only the second Spurs player after Harry Kane to reach the 100-goal mark for the club.

PHOTO: AFP







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## SNATCHING OF 2 CONVICTS

# Militant's wife helped plan the escape

### Claims CTTC after her arrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fatima Tasnim Shikha played a vital role in the whisking away of two militant convicts, including her husband Abu Siddiq Sohel, from the premises of a Dhaka court on November 20 last year, the Counter Terrorism and Transitional Crime unit has claimed.

A Dhaka court placed her on a five-day remand yesterday. Earlier on Friday, a CTTC team arrested her from Narayanganj's Signboard area. A female associate, who had been sheltering her there, was also detained.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Sheikh Sadi passed the remand order after Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad, a CTTC inspector and also the investigating officer of the case, produced the two before the court with a 10-day remand prayer.

In the prayer, the IO said both were directly involved in the snatching of the two militants. They need to be remanded to know the whereabouts of the fugitives.

No lawyers stood at the court to defend them. Speaking at a press conference on Shikha's arrest yesterday, CTTC Chief Md Asaduzzaman said Shikha would often visit her husband in jail and would communicate with him through signs.

He said Sohel and Moinul Hasan Shamim, the other snatched militant, are holed up somewhere inside the

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With Eid just weeks away, people have begun shopping in different markets across the city. Due to this, the roads remain gridlocked throughout most of the day, causing commuters to suffer for hours on end. The photo was taken in the capital's New Market area yesterday morning. *Inset*, What appears to be a busy market is actually the pavement in front of Motijheel Ideal School and College in the capital. With the school being closed for Ramadan and Eid holidays, the market is this busy all day.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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## TANGAIL TEEN RAPE

### Demonstration continues for the arrest of Boro Moni

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Local women of Tangail's Bhuapur upazila yesterday brought out a procession carrying brooms demanding immediate arrest of rape accused Golam Kibria Boro Moni.

Golam is a senior vice-president of Tangail unit Awami League and secretary general of the district's Bus Minibus Owners' Association. He is also the elder brother of Tanvir Hasan Soto Monir, AL lawmaker of Taigail-2 constituency.

The procession of a few hundred women started from the Bhuapur Pourousava area around noon and after parading different streets it ended on the upazila parishad premises.

They also held a rally under the banner of Socheton Nari Somaj.

Speakers at the rally said a pregnant teenage girl filed a rape case against Golam but police did not bring the accused to book even after three days.

The law enforcers will have to arrest the culprit immediately. Otherwise, tougher movements will be

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## CTG LANDSLIDE

### They cut hills ignoring court order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A lack of workers' safety and risky hill-cutting violating the law are to blame for Friday's landslide in Akbarshah area of Chattogram that killed one person and injured three others, said officials concerned.

In February, a mobile court led by Assistant Commissioner (Land) and Executive Magistrate of Kattali Circle Omar Faruk, raided the accident site.

A man was sent to jail for illegally cutting hills and others were instructed to stop cutting hills as project authorities did not have environmental clearance.

"We directed the

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A farmer irrigating his land as his boro paddy field is drying up due to excessive heat in the month of Chaitra, considered the hottest of all months. The photo was taken at Birpasha village in Barishal's Babuganj upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

# Racked by ragging

### UGC yet to formulate any policy to stop the menace

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

In the absence of a policy to act as a deterrent, ragging goes on unchecked at some public universities, as the authorities concerned seem indifferent to the need for curbing the menace.

"Ragging" is a term used for the so-called "initiation ritual" practised at higher educational institutions. It involves psychological and physical torture -- abuse, humiliation and harassment -- of freshers or juniors by senior students, and takes a heavy toll on the victims.

Academics and rights activists have long been calling for an anti-ragging policy for the universities with a clear definition of the word "ragging" and strict punishment for the offenders. This will help the university authorities to act quickly in case of such incidents.

However, the University Grants Commission (UGC) is yet to formulate any such policy. As a result, offenders, mostly from pro-ruling party student body Chhatra League, continue to rag freshers at different campuses.

The UGC is the apex body of all the affiliated public, private and international universities in Bangladesh. It is meant to ensure the quality of higher education throughout the country.

Taking advantage of seat crises at halls, university BCL activists "arrange" seats for freshers at "gono rooms", where they rag the entrants. According to students and teachers, the offenders do the same thing in the "guest rooms".

Gono rooms are run by the pro-ruling

party student body to accommodate mostly freshers who could not get a seat at the hall. As a result, 30-35 students are crammed together in a room big enough for only eight people.

Meanwhile, the guest room is officially meant to be a waiting room for visitors. However, at various public universities, BCL activists have been forcing freshers to come to the respective guest rooms, where seniors "teach the juniors how to honour them, and where their places at the dining hall or TV room are".

**Academics and rights activists have long been calling for an anti-ragging policy for the universities with a clear definition of the word "ragging" and strict punishment for the offenders. This will help the university authorities to act quickly in case of such incidents.**

In many cases, those who would fail to follow their diktats or are absent at political programmes, are punished in the guest room.

Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, professor of international relations at Dhaka University, said the issues of seat crisis and violence, bullying, ragging, sexual harassment, and other crimes by pro-ruling party student bodies on campuses are all linked.

"As the hall authorities do not play their due roles, students don't get seats [at halls] based on needs or even merit. As a result, they [freshers] become hostage to the whims of the pro-ruling party student body."

According to the UGC, 55 percent of the students at Dhaka University do not have access to hall facilities due to seat crisis. The situation is the same for 76 percent of the students at Islamic university, 78 percent at Shahjalal University (SUST), and 68 percent at Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU).

In all these four universities, freshers have had to face ragging even recently.

The issue of ragging came back to the fore after Phulpori Khatun, a first-year student, was tortured by some BCL leaders and activists at the Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall at Islamic University.

Phulpori on February 14 alleged that BCL leaders, including Sanjida Chowdhury and Tabassum Islam, tortured her on the night of February 12 for staying at the hall without their "permission".

This is no isolated incident.

On January 26, a first-year non-residential student of DU's Bijoy Ekattor Hall was physically tortured for being absent at BCL's guest room meeting.

Following a written complaint by the victim, Akhtarul Islam, the hall authorities suspended three students from the dormitory for their involvement in the incident.

Riyad Hasan, a fresher at the architecture department, left HSTU on February 22, two weeks after submitting a written complaint to the university administration about being ragged.

Just two days before that, some seniors of the business administration department of SUST ragged around 10 to 13 freshers at Syed Mujtaba Ali Hall.

One of the victims filed a complaint

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## Runaway black hole creating trail of new stars

### Scientists say



AFP, Los Angeles

A huge black hole is tearing through space, leaving behind a 200,000 light-year-long trail of newborn stars, space scientists said.

The supermassive monster -- likely born of a bizarre game of intergalactic billiards -- is rampaging through the blackness and plowing into gas clouds in its path.

The incredible forces at play mean this gas is being forged into a contrail of new stars, which have been captured on camera by NASA's powerful Hubble Space Telescope.

"We think we're seeing a wake behind the black hole where the gas cools and is able to form stars," said Pieter van Dokkum of Yale University.

"What we're seeing is the aftermath. Like the wake behind a ship, we're seeing the wake behind the black hole."

Researchers believe gas is probably being blasted and warmed by the motion of the black hole.

"Gas in front of it gets shocked because of this supersonic, very high-velocity impact of the black hole moving through the gas," said van Dokkum.

The black hole weighs about the same as 20 million of our Suns.

## TEL AVIV CAR-RAMMING

# Israel mobilises reserves after deadly attacks

### EU condemns attacks, urges restraint

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel began calling up police and army reservists yesterday after separate attacks killed three people, including an Italian tourist, in Tel Aviv and the occupied West Bank.

The European Union condemned the attacks in Israel and a barrage of rockets fired from Lebanon that triggered Israeli strikes and called for "restraint".

"The EU expresses its total condemnation of these acts of violence. This must cease," the bloc's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said in a statement yesterday.

Borrell also condemned the



"indiscriminate" rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.

Despite appeals for restraint, including by EU, violence has surged since Israeli police clashed with Palestinians inside Jerusalem's

flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque on Wednesday, with Israel bombarding both Gaza and Lebanon in response to rocket fire by Palestinian militants.

The Italian was killed and seven other tourists wounded when an Israeli Arab ploughed a car into pedestrians on the Tel Aviv seafont on Friday evening and flipped over before being shot dead, police and emergency services said.