



DSA AMENDMENT A promise that rings hollow

ZYMA ISLAM

Every time citizens and rights bodies demand that the Digital Security Act be repealed, the government buys time, saying reforms "are underway".

However, even after over a year since the government first spoke of making changes to the law to prevent rights abuses, the promised amendments seem to be stuck in a loop of prolonged assurances.

"Which part of the law would you not amend?" asked Irene Khan, the UN special rapporteur for freedom of expression, while speaking to The Daily Star.

"The recent use of the DSA against the Prothom Alo editor and journalist is an example of the appalling abuse of unlimited power that this law puts into the hands of the authorities. The government must withdraw the charges and abolish the law," she said, adding, "Keeping the law in the book will not solve the problem."

The government has routinely responded to these demands with a firm "no".

Even as recently as two weeks ago, both the information and law ministers reiterated in no uncertain terms that the law is here to stay.

Speaking at the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry auditorium, Law Minister Anisul Huq again tried to placate the naysayers by saying "discussions are on"

Since the DSA was passed in 2018, concerns about its abuse had been vociferously voiced by journalists, editors and rights activists, but those were routinely stonewalled in response.

about amending the law.

Since the DSA was passed in 2018, concerns about its abuse had been vociferously voiced by journalists, editors and rights activists, but those were routinely stonewalled in response.

Even when the protests reached a fever pitch in March 2021, after writer Mushtaq Ahmed's death while he was incarcerated under the DSA, the government's conviction about the draconian law was steadfast.

The then UN human rights commissioner Michelle Bachelet, in a statement, said, "There needs to be a complete overhaul of the DSA".

At the same time, 13 prominent ambassadors had issued a statement questioning the DSA's "compatibility with Bangladesh's obligations under international human rights laws and standards".

In response, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen had said, "You [the media] should stop giving publicity to this sort of nuisance. This should be boycotted."

Discarding all concerns about the DSA, he used the words, "Death in jail is a common phenomenon in every country, even in the USA. The strange thing is that when someone dies in jail in Bangladesh, they [foreign envoys] create hype over it and the media in the country give that publicity."

The law minister had sternly told the media that there was no question of repealing the law - but he did also add that they were "mulling changes" so that people are not arrested right away.

After more than three years of turning a deaf ear to the calls made by rights activists, there was finally a change in tune in December 2021 when the Rapid Action Battalion was sanctioned by the United States.

For the first time, Law Minister Anisul Huq had stated

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A vehicle of Dhaka North City Corporation is spurting mist on the plants and palm trees on Manik Mia Avenue to protect them from the gruelling heat. Water is also being sprayed on the road to keep the dust down. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Extreme heat elevating fire risks

Substandard wiring doesn't help things either, say experts

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Record-setting temperatures are making everything dry and more flammable, and this has been making fire incidents more frequent and lethal, experts said.

"As the temperature is rising, even a small spark is leading to major fires," said Maj (ret'd) Shakil Newaz Bhuiyan, fire and disaster expert.

Moreover, electrical wires used in the old shopping centres like Dhaka New Super Market are not suitable to power the appliances used now-a-days, said Shakil, a former director (operation and maintenance) at Fire Service and Civil Defence.

"The wires were probably good enough a decade ago. But they are not capable of withstanding the load of an air conditioner that you see everywhere," he said.

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Rooppur loan to be paid in yuan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Russia have struck a preliminary agreement to make loan payments for the \$12.35 billion Rooppur nuclear power plant in yuan - a development that breaks the impasse between the two sides over the stalled repayments following Western sanctions on Russian banks.

In a meeting recently between Economic Relations Division and Russian officials, it was decided that the payments would be made in yuan in a Chinese bank account, The Daily Star has learnt from officials informed on the proceedings. They spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

At present, the government has been setting aside the amount due to Russia with the Bangladesh Bank.

Payment will begin after a final agreement between the two governments, they said, adding that about \$300 million would be paid this way.

The modalities of the payment method are yet to be thrashed out between the sides.



"The Chinese currency is an official currency for us since 2019 and we have been doing regular trade settlements with this. We settle many Japanese loans in yen. And we invest a portion of our reserves in yuan."

BB SPOKESMAN MD MEZBAUL HAQUE

Russia is insisting that Bangladesh bears the currency conversion risks and costs of converting the yuan to rouble. But Bangladesh is unwilling to agree to this condition as it will inflate the loan servicing costs.

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Searing heat to continue till Thursday

STAR REPORT

There will be no respite for the people from the sweltering heat for at least two more days as the Met office has said the heatwave will continue till Thursday.

"Currently, the temperature is two to seven degrees Celsius higher than the average temperature of April," said meteorologist Mohammad Abul Kalam Mallik.

Yesterday, the country's highest temperature, 43 degrees Celsius, was recorded in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila, according to Bangladesh Meteorological Department. In Dhaka, the maximum temperature was 38.1 degrees Celsius.

The Met office said a severe heatwave is sweeping the districts of Rajshahi, Pabna, Chuadanga and Kushtia, while the other districts were experiencing mild to moderate heatwave, and it may continue.

However, the weather department predicted rain or thundershowers at one

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AL IN SYLHET CITY POLLS Rift feared because of 'an outsider'

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

The Awami League's decision to nominate Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury, who is not even a part of any party units in Sylhet, may create a rift in the grassroots ahead of the upcoming mayoral polls.

Local party leaders and activists fear Anwaruzzaman might face a party rebel in the election due to high dissatisfaction among other nomination seekers, who are key figures in AL politics.

If there is no party rebel, a section of key ruling party leaders and their followers may even secretly extend support to the current mayor and BNP leader, Ariful Haque Chowdhury, if he contests the polls, said insiders.

"If he [Anwaruzzaman], as an outsider in the city, wins the election with the Awami League ticket, it would be the end of the grassroots politics in Sylhet," said a senior AL leader, wishing not to be named.

In 2002, the Sylhet Municipality was upgraded to Sylhet City Corporation and AL nominated Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran in all four elections till 2018. He lost the 2018 polls as many of the grassroots leaders worked against him and favoured Ariful Haque.

Kamran died of coronavirus in 2020. Several other leaders sought AL nomination in the city polls slated for June 21.

Of them, the most notable aspirants are former

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

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Speak out against militancy, women's repression

PM asks Islamic scholars

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon Islamic scholars to speak out against militancy, drug abuse, corruption, and repression of women in their sermons.

The premier said this while inaugurating 50 more model mosques and Islamic cultural centres in the fourth phase across the country, joining virtually from her official residence Gono Bhaban.

She said, "If you give sermons in the mosque and discuss more to eliminate violence against women, militancy, spreading of rumours, inhumane treatment with domestic workers or subordinates... people will accept it."

Hasina especially laid emphasis on the need for highlighting these issues before the people in sermons during Jumma prayers.

The PM also urged scholars to give sermons about the essence of Islam, saying that sometimes, vested quarters lead innocent children astray. "These children will not be involved in terrorism if they are taught properly that Islam is the religion of peace."

Regarding communal harmony, she said, "Bangladesh

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the capital's Dhanmondi yesterday morning, marking the historic Mujibnagar Day. She then stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of profound respect to the memory of Bangabandhu.

PHOTO: BSS

Mujibnagar Day observed

UNB, Dhaka

The country observed the historic Mujibnagar Day yesterday through various programmes.

On the day, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She paid homage by placing a wreath at Bangabandhu's portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the capital's Dhanmondi in the morning.

Flanked by central leaders of Awami League, Sheikh Hasina, also the president of the party, placed another wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu on behalf of AL.

On this day in 1971, Bangladesh's first government in exile was formed at the Baidyanathtala mango orchard in Meherpur, then under Kushtia.

The place was later renamed Mujibnagar as a tribute to Bangabandhu who had been declared as the president of the government-in-exile.

Syed Nazrul Islam was appointed the acting president in the absence of Bangabandhu. Tajuddin Ahmad was appointed the first prime minister, while Captain M Mansur Ali and AHM Quamaruzzaman were made cabinet members.

The successful leadership of the core cabinet steered the Liberation War to victory on December 16 that year.

Empower industrial, river police to combat pollution

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers in a workshop recommended the law under which Industrial Police was created be amended to tackle pollution, and River Police be armed with logistics to prevent the onslaught on rivers.

They came up with the recommendations in the workshop organised by National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) yesterday.

Manjur A Chowdhury, chairman of NRCC, said Industrial Police cannot act against pollution as they were not mandated under the current law.

"We will write to higher officials of the government to bring a slight amendment to the law, so that they can play a role in combatting industrial pollution. Many industries don't operate effluent treatment plant (ETP) and release the effluents via underground pipes. Industrial police can act against them and inform us of the such malignant practice," he said.

He also underscored the need to strengthen River Police by arming them with modern patrol boats and

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'Must ensure gender-sensitivity'

Experts tell discussion on gender and media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists and rights activists emphasised the role of media houses in promoting gender equality and sensitivity by organising more training programmes on gender issues and having women in policy-making positions.

At a discussion held at The Daily

Star Centre, Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) unveiled a report titled "Gender Equality and Media Regulation Study", which analysed 4,530 news stories from 15 mainstream media outlets.

Qurratul-Ain-Tahmina, principal investigator and chief researcher, presented the report with support

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PHOTO: STAR

Yet another market fire in the capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out at Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) market in the capital's Uttara Sector-7 yesterday.

Around 10:25am, the fire service and civil defence (FSCD) received the information about the fire, and managed to douse it completely within 45 minutes, said Shafiqul Islam, deputy assistant director (Zone-3) of FSCD.

A total of six units of FSCD doused the fire.

There are around 100 tin-shed shops at the market and a fire broke out in the middle of it from an automobile shop, said Shafiqul.

"The shop was full of flammable objects, for

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'Long-term measures a must' Says Taposh on recent fires, hands over Tk 2 crore to affected traders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said long-term measures should be taken to tackle fire incidents in the capital's markets.

"Not only should risky markets be marked but it should also be ensured that they aren't used again until they're risk-free," he said this yesterday while handing over cheques of Tk 2 crore to the traders affected by the Bangabazar fire at Buriganga Hall of The Nagar Bhaban.

"DSCC has formed a standing committee which will look into these issues thoroughly."

"If a market is too risky, it will be demolished and rebuilt. If it is repairable, it will go through substantial reforms," he added.

"We are very worried and shocked by the incidents of market fires. Law enforcers and intelligence agencies are working to unravel the reasons behind these accidents," Taposh added.



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Sylhet Osmani International Airport Extension



Cox's Bazar International Airport





PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Farmers separate individual grains from paddy stalks using a machine in Bilpabla area of Khulna's Dumuria upazila yesterday. As the beginning of Baishakh is the time for harvesting Boro paddy, farmers are now busy with the task. Each maund of rice sells for Tk 1,200 to Tk 1,300 at local markets. This photo was taken recently.

Trying to restore what has been lost

Owners, staff cleaning up shops after New Super Market fire

HELEMUL ALAM

The devastating fire that broke out at Dhaka New Super Market on Saturday has left shop owners and staff struggling to pick up the pieces of their businesses. While they await permission from authorities to resume activities, they have taken it upon themselves to clean up their shops, or whatever that is left of it.

The fire damaged 270 shops, most on the second floor. With Eid approaching, these shops were expected to sell around Tk 5 crore every day. However, due to the fire, they have been forced to close their doors, causing massive losses for shop owners, suppliers, and staff.

The shop owners are seeking assistance from the authorities to help them get back on their feet. The scene at the market yesterday was one of determination and resilience, as they worked to rebuild what was lost.

Mohammad Ariful Islam, a shop owner

on the second floor, said, "I have faced a loss of around Tk 20 lakh due to the fire. I don't know how I will resume my business as I have no other capacity to invest more money."

Similarly, Mostafa Kamal Sagar, owner of five shops named Unique at the market, said, "We could've sold around Tk 10 lakh from these shops every day during this Ramadan. They have been out of operation since Saturday."

Despite not having a green signal from authorities concerned to resume activities yet, many shop owners and staffers were cleaning their shops with advice from the shop owners' association of New Super Market.

Kazi Abul Khair, member secretary of Dhaka New Super Market Dakkhin Banik Samity, said they have already asked shop owners to open their shops except the second floor.

Mohammad Omar Faruk, owner of two

PRIVATE AMBULANCE

Why not permit their commercial operation?

Questions HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the government's inaction to permit privately-owned ambulances to operate commercially for serving patients.

The court issued a rule asking the respondents to explain why their inaction should not be declared illegal.

Officials concerned of the government including secretaries at the ministries of law, home, road transport and bridges, and health; chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA); inspector general of police (IGP); additional IGP (traffic); superintendents of police of Dhaka; and the national hotline (999) have been made respondents to the rule, which is returnable in four weeks.

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PRAYER TIMING

APRIL 18

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-16 12-45 4-45 6-25 7-45
JAMAAT 4-26 1-15 5-00 6-35 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
26	18		6:25
27	19	4:10	6:25
28	20	4:09	6:26

Government of the peoples Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Department of the Public Health Engineering
Bagerhat District, Bagerhat
e-mail: ee.bagerhat@dphe.gov.bd
টেলিফোন নং-০২৪৭৭৭৫১৫২৪

Memo No. 46.03.0100.061.16.010.17-352 Date: 17/04/2023.

e-GP Tender Notice No-14(2022-2023)

1	Ministry/ Division	Local Government Division
2	Implementing Agency	Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE)
3	Project/Program Name	Primary Education Development Program - 4 (PEDP 4)
4	e-Tender IDs	819360,819362,819363,819364,819365
5	Description of Works	Construction of 2 storied RCC WASH Block having 2 storied foundation for MT & Boys and FT & Girls including all associated construction, sanitary, plumbing & electrical works Total (31 nos) School at Different Upazila In Bagerhat District Under PEDP-4. FY-2022-23
6	This is online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested persons/firms can see details in the website: (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) Size: 4" x 3"	

(Jayanta Maitlik)
Executive Engineer, DPHE,
Bagerhat District, Bagerhat

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Director
Chittagong Medical College Hospital
www.cmch.gov.bd

Memo No. CMCH/Tender/2022-2023/4367 Date: 17-04-2023

e-GP Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details, please contact support desk contract numbers. e-Tender are invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Brigadier General Md. Shamim Ahsan, Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital, Chattogram for the Procurement of:

SL. No.	Tender Id	Name of goods	Tender/proposal last selling date & time	Tender/proposal closing date & time	Tender/proposal opening date & time
1	814077	Procurement of CC Camera & Others Materials for the fiscal year 2022-2023.	26-Apr-2023 16:00	27-Apr-2023 12:00	27-Apr-2023 12:00
2	817383	Procurement of MSR Surgical Goods (Suture Items) for the fiscal year 2022-2023.	02-May-2023 16:00	03-May-2023 12:00	03-May-2023 12:00

For pursuer e-Tender details can be downloaded on e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). e-Tender will be accepted only as stated in above list, accepted tenders will be opened online as stated in above list.

Signed/-
Brigadier General Md. Shamim Ahsan
Director
Chittagong Medical College Hospital
Telephone: +8802333360179
E-mail: cmch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd

Metro rail to run during Eid holidays

Trains will take longer intervals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The metro rail authorities have announced that they will continue to operate trains during the upcoming Eid holidays, but with longer intervals than usual.

MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), revealed this information at a press conference held yesterday at the DMTCL head office.

According to Siddique, from April 20 until the day after Eid, trains will run from 8:00am to 2:00pm at 20-minute intervals, instead of the current 10-minute intervals. On Eid day, trains will be operated from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. After the Eid holidays, the operation will return to normal.

Municipality mayor's firearm licence revoked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Pabna district magistrate has cancelled the firearm licence of Faridpur municipality mayor Kamruzzaman Mazed, also an Awami League leader, over misuse of firearms. The mayor, however, claimed that he is a victim of conspiracy, and he will go for legal action.

Earlier, police arrested the mayor's son with a gun of his father in a clash between two rival AL groups. The son chased an union parishad chairman flaunting the gun on March 2. A case has been filed.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Director
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur
E-mail: fmch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd

Memo No-Director/BSMMCH/Tender/ Computer, Photocopier & Furniture /2022-2023/2660 Date: 15/04/2023

Invitation for Tenders

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited from Bonafied Businessmen/Experienced Service Providers to supply of Desktop Computer, Photocopier Machine, Furniture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur as per PPA-2006 & PPR-2008.

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH					
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.			
2	Agency	Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).			
3	Procuring Entity Name	Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur			
4	Procuring Entity Code	1270205111084			
5	Procuring Entity District	Faridpur.			
6	Invitation for	Goods			
7	Invitation Ref No	Director/BSMMCH/Tender/ Computer, Photocopier & Furniture /2022-2023/2660			
8	Date	15/04/2023			
KEY INFORMATION					
9	Procurement Method	NCT Open Tendering Method (OTM)			
FUNDING INFORMATION					
10	Budget and Source of Funds	Non-Development GOB			
11	Development Partners (if applicable)	NA			
PARTICULAR INFORMATION					
12	Project / Programme Code (if applicable)	NA			
13	Project / Programme Name (if applicable)	NA			
14	Tender Package No.	Package No-1, Lot No-1, 2, 3 & 4			
15	Tender Package Name	Procurement of (i) Desktop Computers & Accessories (ii) Office Equipments, (iii) Furniture, (iv) Other Machineries & Equipments.			
16	Tender Publication Date	18/04/2023			
17	Tender Last Selling Date	02/05/2023			
18	Tender Closing Date and Time	03/05/2023, 12:00 Noon			
19	Tender Opening Date and Time	03/05/2023, 12:30 PM			
20	Name & Address of the office(s)				
	- Selling Tender Document	Office of the Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur			
	- Receiving Tender Document	Office of the Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur			
	- Opening Tender Document	Office of the Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER					
21	Brief Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderer	a) The tenderer should have valid trade license, vat registration certificate, latest income tax clearance certificate, and financial solvency certificate as specified in the TDS. b) The tenderer shall be bonafied businessman/providing company/ experienced supplier. c) The tenderer shall have over all experience in the supply of similar goods and related service and shall have a minimum experience for supply of similar goods and related services in the matter of money as specified in the TDS. d) Other detail conditions are included with the tender schedule.			
22	Brief Description of Goods or Works	Procurement of Desktop Computers, Photocopier Machine, Office sofa set & Chair for Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur.			
23	Brief Description of Related Services	As required			
24	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	1,000/- (One Thousand) for each lot. To purchase tender document fixed money must be submitted in favour of Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur. Code-no-1-2711-0000-2366 in Sonali Bank by CTR form with online challan verification.			
25	Lot No	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender Security Amount (Tk)	Completion Time in Weeks / Months (approximate)
	1	Desktop Computers & Accessories	Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur	5000/=	2 months
	2	Office Equipments	Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur	7500/=	2 months
	3	Furniture	Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur	6000/=	2 months
	4	Other Machineries & Equipments	Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur	12500/=	2 months
26	Name of Official Inviting Tender		Dr. Md. Enamul Haque		
27	Designation of Official Inviting Tender		Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur.		
28	Address of Official Inviting Tender		Office of the Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur.		
29	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender		Phone:02478803331, E-mail: fmch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd		
30	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings Authority is not bound to accept the lowest tender rate. Authority may cancel the whole tender(s)/part of the tender without assigning any reason.				
Terms and conditions of the tender and other information will be available with the tender schedule.					

Note :-If the Date of selling, receiving & opening of tender is disturbed under any unavoidable circumstance, the next working day will be applicable for the same respectively.

(Dr. Md. Enamul Haque)
Director
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, Faridpur.

MACRON REMARKS G7 diplomats seek unity on China

AFP, Karuizawa

The G7's top diplomats began talks in Japan yesterday, looking to project a unified message on concerns about China after controversial remarks by French President Emmanuel Macron.

The foreign ministers are keen to move past the firestorm created by Macron's assertion, following a trip to Beijing, that Europe should avoid "crises that aren't ours", and China was on the agenda even before official talks kicked off yesterday morning.

After arriving at the mountain resort town of Karuizawa on a special bullet train, the group held a working dinner on China and North Korea, with Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi telling his counterparts that "the unity of the G7 is extremely important".

Yesterday's first session again focused on China and regional challenges, and Hayashi opened the talks by warning the international community was "at history's turning point".



Protesters rally in solidarity with prisoners held in Israeli jails, outside the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) office in Gaza City yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Heatstroke kills 11 at India awards event

AFP, New Delhi

Eleven people died of heatstroke in India after an estimated one million spectators waited for hours in the sun at a government-sponsored awards ceremony, officials said yesterday.

Around 20 people were hospitalised and 300 felt ill at the event near the western city of Mumbai on Sunday, when temperatures hit close to 38 degrees Celsius (100 Fahrenheit) with high levels of humidity, local media reported.

Senior government officials attended the ceremony, including Interior Minister Amit Shah, who praised the crowd for waiting so long in the sun.

The office of Maharashtra state Chief Minister Eknath Shinde described it as a "sad and disturbing incident" and promised compensation for the victims' relatives.

India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party said around a million people attended the event, the Indian Express reported.

CRITICISM OF UKRAINE OFFENSIVE Putin critic Kara-Murza jailed for 25 yrs

REUTERS, Moscow

Outspoken Kremlin critic Vladimir Kara-Murza was jailed for 25 years by a Moscow court yesterday, the harshest sentence of its kind since Russia invaded Ukraine, after being found guilty of treason and other offences he denied committing.

Kara-Murza, 41, a father of three and an opposition politician who holds Russian and British passports, spent years speaking out against President Vladimir Putin and lobbied Western governments to impose sanctions on Russia and individual Russians for purported human rights violations.

State prosecutors, who had requested a 25-year term, had accused him of treason, among other offences, and of discrediting the Russian military after spreading "knowingly false information" about its conduct in what

Moscow calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine.

In a CNN interview broadcast hours before his arrest, Kara-Murza, whose family home is in Washington, alleged that Russia was run by a "regime of murderers".

After hearing he'd been ordered to spend the next 25 years in a maximum-security penal colony, Kara-Murza, who had calmly listened to proceedings inside a glass courtroom cage, said "Russia will be free", a well-known opposition slogan.

Outside the court in Moscow, British Ambassador Deborah Bronnert told reporters that Kara-Murza had been punished for bravely speaking out against Russia's war in Ukraine and demanded he be immediately released.

US Ambassador Lynne Tracy, speaking alongside her, said Kara-Murza's conviction was an attempt to silence dissent.



Iran invites Saudi king to visit Tehran

AFP, Tehran

Iran said yesterday it has formally invited Saudi King Salman to visit Tehran, following an agreement reached last month between the two sides.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said President Ebrahim Raisi had "invited the Saudi King to visit Iran". Kanani said the Iranian president had already received an invitation to visit the Sunni ruled kingdom.

The spokesman expressed hope Iran and Saudi Arabia would reopen their respective missions by May 9, as scheduled in the China brokered deal. The two countries held several rounds of talks in Iraq, Oman before reaching deal to mend ties on March 10 in China.

Putin, Chinese defence minister hail military co-op

REUTERS

Russian President Vladimir Putin met Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu in Moscow on Sunday and both men hailed military cooperation between the two nations, which have declared a "no limits" partnership. Chinese President Xi Jinping met Putin in Moscow last month.

Russia and China have moved to further strengthen their economic, political and military ties since Moscow sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine in February 2022. Footage of the meeting showed Putin shaking hands with Li and then sitting down at a table. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu was also present. "We are working actively through our military departments, regularly exchange useful information, work together in the field of military-technical cooperation, and hold joint exercises," Putin said. The exercises, he added, had been held in the Far East as well as Europe and involved ground, naval and air forces. "Undoubtedly, this is another crucial area that strengthens the extremely trusting, strategic nature of our relations," Putin said.



BLASPHEMY ACCUSATION Chinese engineer in Pakistan police protection

AFP, Peshawar

A Chinese supervisor at a dam construction project in Pakistan is under police protection after workers accused him of blasphemy against Islam, officials said yesterday. Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in Muslim-majority Pakistan, where even rumours of sacrilegious remarks can incite lynch mobs and deadly violence. Officials said the engineer at the Dasu hydropower project in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was accused of blasphemy after he highlighted the "slow pace of work" during the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. "The labourers said they were fasting but denied that work had slowed down, which led to an exchange of heated words" with the supervisor, a police official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "Later, the labourers accused the engineer of making blasphemous remarks" and locals gathered to protest, he said. A written complaint filed with police identified him only as a transport supervisor by the name of "Mr Tian".



Relatives gather around a bus carrying prisoners being released outside the Insein prison in Yangon, Myanmar yesterday. Inset, a man celebrates with a relative after being released from the prison. Myanmar's junta began releasing more than 3,000 prisoners to mark the Buddhist New Year, without specifying whether those jailed in its bloody crackdown on dissent would be freed. PHOTO: AFP

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Quality Assurance Manager
Quality Control Lab
Department of Fisheries, Dhaka.

Memo No: 33.02.0000.314.22.125.16-677 Date: 17.04.2023

Invitation for Tender (Goods)

e-Tendering Notice No: 02/2022-2023

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following goods, details are given below.

Sl. #	Tender ID #	Package #	Name of works and location	Tender last selling (date & time)	Tender closing (date & time)	Tender Opening (date & time)
1.	819358, 33.02.0000.314.22.123.2 3-669	GTF 01	Procurement of chemicals and standards for quality control lab, Dhaka	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00
2.	819359, 33.02.0000.314.22.123.2 3-670	GTF 02	Procurement of ELISA Kit for quality control lab, Dhaka	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00
3.	819366, 33.02.0000.314.22.121.2 3-671	GTF 03	Procurement of spare parts for LC/MS-MS for Quality control lab, Dhaka	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00
4.	819371, 33.02.0000.314.22.121.2 3-672	GTF 07	Procurement of spare parts of nitrogen generator for quality control lab, Dhaka	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00
5.	819375, 33.02.0000.314.22.121.2 3-673	GTF 08	Procurement of Fume hood for kjeldahl digestion system for quality control lab, Dhaka	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00
6.	819378, 33.02.0000.314.22.123.2 3-674	GTF 016	Procurement of PCR Kits and reagents for quality control lab, Dhaka	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00
7.	819379, 33.02.0000.314.22.121.2 3-675	GTF 017	Procurement of micropipettes and mini spinner for PCR for Quality control lab, Dhaka.	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00
8.	819382, 33.02.0000.314.22.122.2 3-676	GTF 018	Procurement of micropipette filter tips, cooler, tips holder and micro centrifuge tips rack for quality control lab, Dhaka	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00
9.	819306, 33.02.0000.314.22.280.2 3-667	GR 22-23/2	Procurement of ELISA Kit for chemical section of Quality control Laboratory Dhaka	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00
10.	819350, 33.02.0000.314.22.224.2 3-668	GR 22-23/3	Procurement of Equipment for ELISA SECTION of Quality control laboratory Dhaka	02-May-2023, 15:00	03-May-2023, 14:00	03-May-2023, 14:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no off line/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches up to 02-May-2023, 15:00. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@procure.gov.bd).

(S M Rezaul Karim)
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Quality Control Laboratory
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"Establishment of Research Facilities on Processing of Safe and Healthy Dry Fish and Indoor farming at BCSIR Centre in Dhaka and Chattogram" Project, BCSIR
Ministry of Science and Technology

Ref: 39.02.0000.030.05.003.21/048 Date: 16.04.2023

e-Tender Notice

Tender ID	Description of Supply	Tender Closing & Opening Date and Time
819449	Supply and installation of research item, chemical, raw material and spare parts and others	16-May-2023 15:00

Forantocoin
Md Rezaul Karim
Project Director

GID-708

A fully equipped ICU lying unused!

Jamalpur hospital shows how catastrophically mismanaged our health sector is

Words cannot describe the sheer imprudence of having an intensive care unit (ICU) fully equipped with modern equipment only to have it sit idly for years, depriving critical patients of vital care. This is the story of Jamalpur General Hospital, where the ICU has remained locked since its inauguration eight years ago. From life support ventilators to monitoring facilities, the ICU has all the necessary life-saving equipment. But according to a report, all of that has been left to rot away in a display of utter negligence and disregard for public health. With patients being denied the use of the ICU, many are having to travel all the way to Mymensingh or Dhaka for the treatment that should have been readily available in Jamalpur.

Patients who require ICU treatment are already in a somewhat critical condition. For them to be forced to travel long distances when there is already an equipped ICU near them is criminal. What is most absurd is that, according to a member of the hospital's management committee, the ICU has remained inoperative due to a shortage of manpower, indecision and mismanagement. But how can anyone accept that justification for eight years, especially when lives of patients are at stake? This is, unfortunately, just an example of how catastrophically mismanaged our health sector is.

One may recall that the prime minister, three years ago, had ordered setting up an ICU in every district hospital. But as this newspaper reported recently, a Tk 512 crore project following her instruction, which was supposed to have delivered 10-bed ICUs in 43 district hospitals and 10 medical college hospitals by now, has seen very little progress so far. Project authorities are now seeking a deadline extension as well as an additional Tk 301 crore for completing the project!

If there was ever a time when we were truly going to appreciate the importance of hospitals having proper ICUs, one would have hoped that it would be the peak and post-Covid periods. The fact that even then our authorities have cared so little about setting up life-saving ICUs, despite all the support needed to do so being at their fingertips, is shocking. It really displays a different level of apathy altogether.

Aside from various other issues with our health sector, what this demonstrates is the quality and sincerity of people in charge of our healthcare system. Healthcare is an essential service, which means those making decisions in this sector must truly care for the health and lives of patients. This is clearly one place where we have failed to get the right people in. Nevertheless, we hope that those responsible for the shambles at the Jamalpur hospital will be held responsible, and the ICU now lying unused will be operationalised without delay. At the same, the project authorities that failed to get the ICUs in district hospitals running must also be held accountable. It is time to consider a complete overhaul of our healthcare system, where establishing accountability will be the number one priority.

Beware of plastic pollution

It has reached a stage where only drastic action can reverse the trend

A report published by this daily on Sunday has, once again, showed just how widespread plastic pollution has become. At the Kulaura municipality in Moulvibazar, even a bit of rain is enough to flood the roads. This is because of the indiscriminate disposal of waste – including polythene, plastic packets, bottles, and cork sheets – into the town's drains. We have seen this scenario play out across the country, with the disposed waste often causing drainage systems to clog up, leaving little room for the excess water brought in by rain. Sometimes, the drains are cleaned up, but excavated wastes often end up back in because of the lack of proper waste management.

Given the state that it has reached, plastic pollution in the country demands urgent attention. In the absence of a proper disposal system, people often leave their waste anywhere they find vacant. Most, however, fail to realise how it contributes to clogging the drains, and how waste, in turn, lands in connecting rivers and other water bodies. This is not just harmful for the environment; when plastic enters the human body (in the form of microplastics), it can have all sorts of health consequences.

Unfortunately, the problem seems to be getting worse day by day. According to a World Bank estimate, between 2005 and 2020, Bangladesh's annual per capita plastic consumption in urban areas tripled. Moreover, experts have found that of all the plastic wastes produced in the country in 2019, only 36 percent was recycled. The rest has been left to cause a havoc on the environment and every living thing in it. One cannot help but wonder whether Bangladesh has at all achieved anything from its "historic" ban on polythene and plastic bags in 2002. To this day, it remains an example of worthless legislation minus enforcement.

How pervasive plastic pollution has become can be understood from a joint study that revealed that at least 17 species of fish and three species of shellfish from rivers flowing through the Sundarbans were contaminated with microplastics. Plastic is definitely causing severe harm to the environment and the marine life. As such, the environment, forest and climate change ministry's March 27 announcement of banning single-use plastic across 6,500 square kilometres of the Sundarbans is a welcome one. But enforcement can again be an issue, so the authorities must ensure that such restrictions are placed everywhere and enforced without fail.

While the role of industries in accelerating the pollution of our environment is undeniable, it is also crucial that individual citizens are made aware of the danger of irresponsible waste disposal. We urge the authorities to conduct mass awareness programmes in this regard and ensure that there are adequate waste disposal points available in all city neighbourhoods. Without drastic changes in how we, individually and institutionally, treat plastic waste now, things will get worse in the coming days.

Is the US really happy with our election plan?



Kamal Ahmed is an independent journalist. His Twitter handle is @ahmedkcal

KAMAL AHMED

It was probably the most challenging diplomatic assignment any diplomat could have wished for. Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen's meeting with US Secretary of State Anthony J Blinken on April 10 was understandably a delicate one, not least for the unusually harsh public criticism of the US by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that had preceded it, but also for convincing his host that Bangladesh can deliver a free and fair election.

The apparent silence on the part of Washington, DC about the allegations that the US is "trying to eliminate democracy" in Bangladesh, and "can overthrow the government of any country", suggests that they didn't have the same impact as those made by Pakistan's Imran Khan. On March 31, 2022, the US rejected claims made by Imran Khan, Pakistan's then prime minister, that the Biden administration was trying to oust him when he was about to lose his majority in parliament. No wonder, in response to a question from the media, our foreign ministry spokesperson Shehli Sabrin was confident enough to say that the remarks by the prime minister and her ICT Adviser Sajeb Wazed Joy would have no impact on the bilateral relations between Dhaka and Washington.

Following the expulsions of two Tennessee lawmakers, two days before the Blinken-Momen meeting, Sajeb Wazed on his Facebook page questioned the fairness of US democracy, and said that "the US State Department is nothing but a bunch of hypocrites."

The opening statements by both the foreign policy chiefs were broadcast live on the State Department's YouTube channel, which made it easier for us to understand the tone of the talks. In a very short opening statement, Secretary Blinken said, "We're looking – the world is looking – to Bangladesh for its next elections, to make sure that they set a strong example for free and fair elections for the region and for the world." Our foreign minister's response was all about thanking them for their partnership and appreciation to President Biden for using the words "Joy Bangla" in his letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Independence Day. But what transpired at the talks seems hard to decode as the



Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen meets US Secretary of State Antony J Blinken at the State Department in Washington, DC on April 10, 2023.

SOURCE: US STATE DEPARTMENT

narratives given by Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Momen are not an exact match.

Though bilateral conversations usually cover a wider range of issues of mutual interests, this particular meeting apparently had a special focus on Bangladesh's upcoming parliamentary elections. Claiming that the US didn't want a caretaker government, Momen told journalists in Sylhet on April 14 that "we told them what we have done for a fair election. We have prepared a voter list with photos, made transparent ballot boxes, and formed a strong Election Commission. They are happy with that."

Regarding the Digital Security Act (DSA), he said in some cases the law had not been used properly. "But all the countries of the world have such laws, even the US has tougher laws. We will rectify any deviations. They [US] are satisfied with that. They do not want repeal of the law, but want its misuse stopped," he added.

The US narrative, however, is quite blunt. First, there was a tweet by Secretary Blinken, in which he said, "I underscored that free and fair elections and respect for human rights, media, and civil society are critical as we

seek to deepen US Bangladeshi ties." It shows neither signs of happiness over the electoral arrangement in Bangladesh, nor any satisfaction about the assurances given on ending the misuse of the DSA.

The second statement made by the principal deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel after a few hours was even more straightforward. In his readout, he

vocal about human rights, workers' rights, press freedom, and rule of law.

Looking back at their previous meeting, you won't see the election issue featured so prominently, despite the fact that the US considered the 2018 elections as "not free or fair," and observed that it "undermined faith in the electoral process." That meeting, too, was a difficult one, owing to the

said that the secretary "reiterated our commitment to promoting inclusive economic growth, free and fair elections, human and labor rights, and freedom of expression in Bangladesh. Additionally, Secretary Blinken expressed concerns about violence against and intimidation of the media and civil society, including under the Digital Security Act. He underscored that free and fair elections and respect for human rights in Bangladesh are critical as we seek to deepen our bilateral relationship." At a separate media briefing, Vedant Patel even termed the DSA "one of the world's most draconian laws for journalists."

It is true that the US and several other Western nations have been increasingly putting emphasis on holding credible elections in countries like ours for quite some time. But it has rarely featured in such detail at this level. It is even rarer that a felicitations message on the anniversary of independence from the US president will have a reminder of the deep value of free and fair elections. This extra emphasis on free and fair elections on the part of the US is something fairly new; so far it has been consistently

sanctions imposed on the country's elite force Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), which rattled the Bangladesh government. On that occasion, besides expressing gratitude to Bangladesh for hosting the Rohingya, Secretary Blinken told his guest that he wanted "to discuss the work we're doing together bilaterally in the region and indeed even globally."

This willingness to work together in the region and globally was seen by many as an explicit recognition of Bangladesh's strategic importance. It was thought to be quite significant in Washington's pursuit of an open Indo-Pacific and to counter China's growing influence. It is, therefore, intriguing as to why there was no public commitment this time for "working together in the region and globally."

The foreign minister's remark on Sunday that he had sought cooperation from Washington to ensure participation of all political parties in the upcoming general elections is quite revealing. It reminds one of his previous request to the US to help bring the BNP to the elections. Doesn't it appear to be something closer to seeking their mediation?

Bolster healthcare with better data connectivity



ABM Uddin is a healthcare consultant for the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

ABM UDDIN

The ability to harness the power of data exchange among healthcare providers can change the face of public health in Bangladesh. But it is easier said than done. Professionals in our healthcare systems often say that we have achieved an ideal level of health data connectivity. That is an erroneous assumption. The ability to share data laboriously among a few platforms falls short of true data interoperability.

In an ideal state of health information exchange, Bangladesh should have three levels of data connectivity: district or local, division or regional, and state or national. Beyond that, we should have a single network, like the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement (Tefca) in the US, for a uniform platform to support business, technical, and regulatory aspects of transporting data across the country in a more meaningful and cohesive manner.

The local health data connectivity networks will link care providers so that when patients transition between care facilities, the care teams can extract their clinical records from connected facilities across the district. These facilities typically cannot afford the heavy infrastructure and hefty costs to join national platforms. Technology vendors can facilitate basic

data-sharing services at low costs for such entities, providing them with a lifeline for local data-sharing.

Regional health information exchange organisations will integrate local platforms in the division under one umbrella, and provide a gateway to national networks. Integration with regional health data-sharing organisations is greatly useful when patients seek care at a facility outside their usual settings – the district. Regional networks will have richer data than local platforms, owing to all the patient data from connected hospitals across districts under their aegis.

The national health information networks will be on top of the tier delivering the most comprehensive data repository on patients, as they will provide linkages to all local and regional health information platforms, and other national networks. These networks offer a seamless and connected experience of care and the best practice for data dissemination. More importantly, national platforms offer flexibility in meeting diverse business, technical, and regulatory needs around health data transmission.

Once the three-tiered goals are accomplished, healthcare communities must work to build one

umbrella that will link all data-sharing mechanisms at local, regional, and national levels. The system will provide governance and policies to create further coherence and coordination in sharing data nationally. Consider US' Tefca, designed to offer a "universal floor" to share data via the most robust national networks. These platforms must pass rigorous data safety, security, and interoperability measures. The initiative breaks down silos.

To build the federated data infrastructure mapped out above, interprofessional and intersectoral consensus building and shared decision-making are critical. Three actors must be involved in this process: the government, the technology companies, and the health systems.

The government has the ultimate authority and duty to do the heavy lifting to uplift health care. They must also regulate and support small providers to integrate with health information exchange initiatives. Health data transaction relies on internet connectivity. Unfortunately, many areas, especially rural communities, are unable to afford the costs. Moreover, not all physicians' offices have office space or trained employees to use technology. The government must incentivise these geographically and economically disadvantaged providers by funding high-speed internet and providing necessary resources.

Communication technology companies must step in to improve health care for the greater good, alongside promoting their business. Once healthcare systems see the benefits of technology, they will

heavily invest in it, creating more opportunities for the companies. Increased utilisation of health information exchange can set the stage for a massive diffusion of technology. Ideally, the companies will create enough revenue to be able to even offer free connectivity services for small practices, whether or not the government can fund them.

Health systems should be at the front and centre of data connectivity because they must provide the best patient outcomes, and without data, they can offer only substandard care. Data sharing among care providers not only helps support the best patient experience but also saves lives. With high patient satisfaction, health systems create more revenue opportunities for themselves as well.

In an ideal state, national data exchange can do miracles to find missing persons and support uninterrupted healthcare during disasters, when patients are displaced. During emergencies, patients often have to leave behind their medication and prescriptions, and their routine care providers are simply unable to operate. In those times, patients seek care outside their normal settings. At a connected facility or emergency shelter, the technology will enable clinicians to investigate patients' medical records, without starting over with examination and treatment. It will also create alerts letting care providers know where their patients have been treated, and help connect them to their loved ones.

We are clearly far from the ideal future state. Claiming that the country has achieved true data interoperability is misleading at best.

OPINION

How reliable is the BBS data?



Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb is a Bangladeshi columnist and writer living in the Netherlands. Among other titles, he has authored 'Fourth Industrial Revolution and Bangladesh' and '50 Years of Bangladesh Economy.'

FAIZ AHMAD TAIYEB

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' (BBS) Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2022, the size of the country's workforce as of 2022 is 71 million, up from 61 million in 2016-17. Considering this growth, it is fair to ask: can the BBS prove this on the employment contract issue? The answer is no. Can the BBS relate this to the increase in income tax return filings? What about the salary account or payroll increase in the banking sector? What are the positive correlations of this data with other economic indicators?

As per the LFS 2022, agriculture is still the main employment generator despite declining GDP share, now 11.7 percent (FY2022) dropping from 13.6 percent (FY2017), while employment share has increased to 45.33 percent (2022) from 40.6 percent (2016-17). The industry's GDP share increased to 35.3 percent (FY2022) from 32.7 percent (FY2017), but its employment share declined to 17.02 percent from 20.4 percent. What a bizarre correlation of statistical data!

This simply indicates that either the GDP or the LFS data – or both – could have been manipulated. It also means a critical structural shift of

Economic Review 2020, the service sector's contribution to the GDP is 51.29 percent. Per the latest BBS data, the service sector employs 37.65 percent of the workforce, down from 39 percent previously. The BBS has to find positive correlations for this as well, especially with the local, foreign and joint venture investment proposals registered with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), given that local and foreign investments are currently more inclined towards the service sector.

According to another BBS survey published in 2022, titled the Survey of Manufacturing Industry, nearly 450,000 people joined employment in the manufacturing sector between FY2011 and FY2019. The BBS data shows industrial sector growth of more than 10 percent and manufacturing sector growth of about 12.5 percent in two years, even amid the Covid-19 pandemic. With this tremendous growth, how does manufacturing employment experience a sharp decline in the new BBS report – down from 20.4 percent to 17.02 percent? Which survey is correct, then?



ILLUSTRATION: BIPOLO CHAKROBORTY

The fact is, owing to Covid-induced unemployment as well as continuous price hikes of energy and commodities due to high inflation, a large number of people have moved to the villages as they are no longer able to afford the living costs in the cities. This migrant labour force has been shown as employed in the BBS survey. This is not acceptable.

employment from industry towards agriculture. Can this shift be backed with any policy reform and sectoral restructure? A labour force shift towards agriculture is impossible when industrial growth is the fastest. The industrial growth of nine percent caused a loss of 350,000 jobs, while 5.1 percent growth in the service sector created almost three million jobs, according to the survey.

This is not the only anomaly emerging out of the BBS statistics. According to the Bangladesh

The unemployment rate sees a positive trend, dropping to 3.6 percent in 2022 from 4.2 percent in 2016-17 – another absurd statistic. The BBS number of unemployed people in the country is 2.63 million, which was 2.7 million in 2016-17. Many have been laid off from their jobs during the growing economic crisis, so unemployment has risen, especially during the pandemic. Even now, as the Russia-Ukraine war continues, the taka's devaluation of more than 20 percent against the US

dollar, import ban, and the line of credit (LC) crisis, there is a stagnation in employment. Due to the ongoing power and energy crisis, production of major industries has fallen by 25-50 percent, according to a media report. Hence the BBS survey data is highly inconsistent with reality.

The BBS reference to the ILO definition of employment – at least one hour of work in a week – is inappropriate for Bangladesh, because it cannot prove weekly one-hour "wage" registration. In the West, almost every white-collar job is registered, so they count on such wage payment to measure pseudo-unemployment; it's not the basis of counting unemployment rate. In Bangladesh, one is considered employed even if he or she does not get paid for productive work. This does not make any sense, because there is no criteria to measure this production; 89 percent of the informal labour sector does not have wage registration.

The ILO definition considers

the effective value of labour, i.e. on the basis of whether it is possible to cover costs with income from a 40-hour week. Hence, the BBS data on unemployment is seriously questionable as the survey did not include the effective price-based definition. Such data will create confusion and misguide the government's employment policies.

In the 2018 BCS preliminary exam, there were more than 200 applicants per position on average, with over five million young people applying for jobs in just six government sectors. On average, nearly 900 applicants contested for a position in the Department of Narcotics Control, and 1,400 in the Department of Food. In the last few BCS exams, nearly 32,000 educated individuals were "BCS unemployed" even though they passed the exams. According to a 2019 survey by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), around 27 percent of SSC graduates in the country are unemployed – so are 28 percent of HSC graduates, 36

percent of graduates, and 34 percent of postgraduates; 33.19 percent of the educated population was unemployed.

The fact is, owing to Covid-induced unemployment as well as continuous price hikes of energy and commodities due to high inflation, a large number of people have moved to the villages as they are no longer able to afford the living costs in the cities. This migrant labour force has been shown as employed in the BBS survey. This is not acceptable.

According to Dr Birupaksha Paul, former chief economist of the Bangladesh Bank, "No country has as poor quality data as Bangladesh. It may sound awkward, but the truth is the bureau's data is of the lowest quality." Be it the per capita income, GDP calculation, inflation measurement, inflation adjustment in GDP and wages, population, reserve counting or employment data – in every indicator, there are traces of data manipulation. The per capita income is calculated by dividing the

country's annual gross income by its population. The BBS has been accused of understating population and inflating the average per capita income.

Childbirth and population growth rates do not correlate with school enrolment. In many cases, BBS data cannot be correlated with other data sets. It is not correlated to the country's domestic and foreign investment flows, inflation, employment, international recessions and booms. It is not related to the rise and fall in fuel prices, agricultural production, and natural disasters. If this continues, national policies will not be effective as they are formulated typically based on BBS data.

There is a criticism that while numerical growth in the data better reflects government development indicators, the BBS data tends to go steadily upwards in a stairwell pattern. And where decreasing numerical values mean improvement, BBS data continues to descend like a staircase. This mystery needs to be unravelled.

A promise that rings hollow

FROM PAGE 1

that the law was being abused in certain cases, and that a six-member team has already been formed to work on addressing some of the discontent centring it.

He said this on December 30, 2021, at an event organised at the Jatiya Press Club by the Overseas Correspondent Association, Bangladesh (OCAB).

The team, he had said, comprises representatives from relevant ministries, including law, information and communication technology, and home, adding that it was formed a year ago, when the minister spoke to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Anisul had further said the team is chaired by the secretary of the Legal and Parliamentary Division, and includes officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, home, the ICT Division, and the Law and Justice Division.

He had added that the team has been engaged with a similar one formed by the UN body to find whether enforcement of the DSA had led to any violations of human rights.

The minister had mentioned this committee again in February, while speaking at a seminar organised by International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law and Counterpart International in the capital's Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel.

"We have formed a committee, along with the OHCHR, composed of officers from the law ministry, foreign ministry, home ministry and ICT Division. The UN office has given some suggestions and the government is looking into those."

However, insiders within the UN wing recently told The Daily Star that no such committee has been in touch with them in the two years since the minister has announced its formation.

Irene Khan said the same.

"My office has not been contacted; I have not been communicated with regard to forming any committee. I have been in direct communication with the government and I have had no response."

On the flipside, bodies and rights chiefs of the United Nations have at least four times called for the law to be abolished or fully overhauled.

The most recent was on March 31, when the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk called for an immediate suspension of the DSA until necessary amendments are made.

He said that his office had "provided detailed technical comments to assist with such a revision".

Türk had made a similar call a month ago, when he said his office has provided lengthy consultations on the law and now calls for it to be amended.

His predecessor Michelle Bachelet had also said that when she came to visit Bangladesh last year, her office too had given recommendations for repeal and revision of certain provisions of the act.

Last year, Special Rapporteur Irene Khan demanded the immediate repeal of the Digital Security Act in a report submitted to the 50th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The law minister himself had meetings with the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva at least on three occasions since 2019 and had promised amendments.

The first meeting was as early as December 2019, as per the minister's own statement made during an event by the Bangladesh Secretariat Reporters Forum at its secretariat office in June last year.

The second meeting was with the human rights chief in Geneva last year in November. The minister

exchanged views about the best international practices at both those meetings.

The third meeting was as recent as March 21, where Anisul Huq told Volker Türk that the government is committed to working closely with the OHCHR to amend the DSA.

Law Minister Anisul also said that the government is working with a delegation of the European Union on problematic sections of the law.

That is not all.

In the middle of last month, he also met a delegation of citizens, including Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh; Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua; Professor CR Abrar and others, where the team explained for two hours why the law needs to go.

While the law minister presents these meetings as progress, the end is nowhere in sight.

Ministers continuously say they have instructed law enforcers to ensure that journalists are not "unnecessarily" harassed under this law.

The law minister had previously declared that journalists "cannot be arrested immediately" after a case has been filed.

Speaking at the OCAB press conference, he had said, "No journalist can be taken to jail as long as the investigation is not completed, even if there is an allegation under the Digital Security Act. If any case is filed against any journalist under the Digital Security Act, it will go to a cell of the ICT Act, 2006. The case will be accepted if the cell in its investigation finds any merit in the lawsuit."

That such assurances are all just talk can be seen from the fact that Prothom Alo's Savar correspondent Shamsuzzaman Shams was picked up from his home first, and then charged in a DSA case nearly 20 hours later.

Similarly, Naogaon's land officer Sultana Jasmine, albeit not a journalist, was arrested, injured in custody and was mere hours away from death, when a DSA case was lodged against her.

Even Anisul Huq himself said the law was misused here.

The damage, however, is already done, and Jasmine is dead.

Special Rapporteur Khan said that the ones implementing the law, such as law enforcers, need tight, clear instructions, which this law does not provide, leaving broad scopes for abuse.

For example, while the law does not codify the law minister's assurances that all arrests will be vetted, it does allow the law enforcers to conduct arrests on the basis of "suspicion that a crime will occur" without any check and balance.

"This [the DSA] is an example of using the courts to chill freedom of expression. This is a measure to intimidate journalists into silence by bringing charges against them and then prolonging the case," said Khan.

This willful procrastination is costing Jagannath University student Khadijatul Kubra the precious days of her student life.

Khadija was hauled off to jail for hosting a Facebook webinar, where a guest speaker made contentious "anti-government" remarks.

She herself, however, had actually not uttered a word of the sentences which the police took issue with, and prosecuted her for.

Sued as an "adult" at the age of 17, Khadija has been in jail for nine months already.

Neither her incarceration, nor the pursuit of her release gets the nation riled the way a journalist under arrest does, and while the government dawdles over amending the law, this university freshman will be the forgotten casualty of the process.

Rift feared because of 'an outsider'

FROM PAGE 1

central organising secretary Misbah Uddin Siraj and Sylhet city unit Vice-President Asad Uddin Ahmed, General Secretary Zakir Hossain and Joint Secretary ATMA Hasan Jebul.

Besides, Kamran's son and city unit's Organising Secretary Arman Ahmed Shiplu, and Joint Secretary and city councillor Azadur Rahman Azad are also prominent names.

When the local leaders were preparing for the polls, Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury, joint secretary of the AL's United Kingdom unit, returned to Bangladesh on January 22 and claimed to have received a "special message" from the party high-ups regarding the party ticket.

After much speculation and turmoil, 11 AL leaders bought nomination forms earlier this month. The AL Nomination Board last Saturday selected Anwaruzzaman.

Though never involved in the AL politics in the city, Anwaruzzaman was a nomination seeker for the Sylhet-2 constituency in the last two national elections.

Several senior AL leaders said Anwaruzzaman was not nominated for the constituency as former parliamentarian Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury, also president of Sylhet district unit, was also an aspirant.

Notably, both the Chowdhurys have a business based in the UK and keep close acquaintance with top AL leaders.

Because of their rivalry, the party left the seat to Jatiya Party in both elections.

With Anwaruzzaman's mayoral nomination, the row over Sylhet-2 has ended but it gave rise to the possibility of a new conflict.

Meanwhile on Sunday, after returning to Sylhet after a 14-day London tour, Ariful Haque

Choudhury said his party BNP will not participate in the city election but he will honour citizens' wishes.

According to several BNP leaders, Ariful secured a signal from BNP's acting chairperson Tarique Rahman in London to participate as an independent candidate by resigning from his party post.

Local AL sources say if Ariful opts out, the AL might see a rebel candidate.

Misbah Uddin Siraj, former organising secretary of AL central committee, said, "Every decision draws a reaction. The Awami League is a historic party and when the party decided something, there is nothing to say against it. We vowed to work for the candidate nominated by the party."

Asked about the discontent within the grassroots, he said, "Awami League is a big political party and that's why there are many aspirants. But they all congratulated me and talked to me positively. I wish to work with everyone."

While talking to the correspondent, several other aspirants also spoke similarly and said they will work for Boat, the election symbol of AL.

After securing the AL nomination, Anwaruzzaman landed in Sylhet from Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

Asked about the discontent within the grassroots, he said, "Awami League is a big political party and that's why there are many aspirants. But they all congratulated me and talked to me positively. I wish to work with everyone."

What it takes to get into DU C Unit



PHOTO: NAYEM SHAAN

numerous instructors at various coaching centres disregard this instruction and convince examinees that passing this exam requires rocket science. My results prove these thoughts to be a myth.

Not everyone can do well in this exam the same way I did, however, so here's some general advice for everyone. You should have a profound knowledge of your business-related subjects and a proper grasp of Bangla and English grammar and vocabulary. You should solve previous years' questions, and practice translations or error corrections daily.

Although the written portion is now slightly different, analysing previous questions is always an effective way of understanding the question pattern and important topics. Practice will pay off, whether you work alone or with the help of an admission coaching centre. Your HSC books, any C unit guides with questions and any wordbooks should be enough to practise by yourself. Model tests can also be helpful.

Conceptual questions from compulsory subjects like Bangla, English, Accounting, and Business Organisation and Management are included in the 60-mark, 45-minute Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) section. You can choose between Finance, Banking and Insurance or Marketing. It doesn't matter if you answer questions from the Marketing section without having it as an HSC subject. It also doesn't matter if you want to study in the Department of Finance but you answer marketing-related questions, and vice versa.

Your written answer script won't be examined unless you receive 5 out of 12 in English and 24 out of 60 in the MCQ section. Remember to be mindful of the negative marking, which is 0.25 for each incorrect response. Learn to skip confusing questions.

The question pattern and mark distribution for English medium students are a bit different but the preparation plans and exam strategies for the C unit exam should be identical.

Most of you already know that there are nine departments in the Faculty of Business Studies, DU. Out of them, 30-32 courses are common to all departments and 8-10 courses are offered for respective majors. After the results, if you want to specialise in a certain subject, choose it. But if you're confused, I'd suggest taking a look at the BBA brochures of each department available online and then deciding.

To answer the original question of what it takes to get into DU C unit, the answer is that it takes passion, motivation, practice, knowledge, calmness, luck and most importantly a certain sense of achieving a goal. Stay true to yourself, always be aware of what you want and where you want to see yourself, and make a plan and work for it accordingly. It may seem unachievable, but it really isn't.

Last but not least, please believe that failure is not the end of life. If not DU C unit, life will provide you with something even better.

The writer is a student in the Department of Finance, FBS, DU.



ILLUSTRATION: FAISAL BIN IQAL

The need for admission counsellors in Bangladeshi schools

JAIYANA CHOWDHURY

Studying abroad is a dream that an increasing number of students are realising through sheer determination and hard work. Now, more than ever before, Bangladeshi students are exploring their options to study abroad.

Statistics show that 44,338 students went abroad for higher studies in 2021, a huge jump from 24,112 students in 2015.

However, the increased popularity hasn't made the application process any less daunting. Taking the first step is always the hardest, and when students discover the tedious process in their last year of high school, stress, confusion, and anxiety follows. This is where school counsellors come in to help students navigate the difficult road ahead.

So, what exactly are school counsellors supposed to do and what makes their role so crucial?

The first step of the application process is choosing the country and the institutions you want to apply to. It is only natural to feel overwhelmed, and this is where counsellors can help students recognise what sort of institution they want to attend and narrow down the list to an appropriate length.

School counsellors also help craft essays, review applications, and, more importantly, write recommendation letters and upload transcripts. A good recommendation from a school counsellor

Most of you already know that there are nine departments in the Faculty of Business Studies, DU. Out of them, 30-32 courses are common to all departments and 8-10 courses are offered for respective majors. After the results, if you want to specialise in a certain subject, choose it.

NUJHAT NISHAT YOUSUF

Everyone discusses what it takes to get into a certain university but no one talks about what this admission season takes away from our lives. Looking back, it surprises me how carefree I was in my admission days. I was never a textbook "good student" because of my laziness like Nobita's but my results somehow resembled Dekisugi's.

Admission season was different. It wasn't anything like our usual academic exams, and it was definitely frustrating as well. When I made up my mind to prepare for Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Dhaka University (DU), I could feel how unfit I was for that fast-paced analytical exam. Just 12 days before my C unit admission test, I decided not to go for IBA and to devote my time solely to my HSC books.

But just like Nobita, I still wasted the first six days crying about my poor choices. I spent the next six days studying the same things I've learnt in the past four years as a business student in high school and college. This must have worked because some weeks later, I noticed I had ranked 8th in Dhaka University's C unit admission test. I know this story sounds too good to be true, but in reality, it's merely the result of years spent attempting to comprehend how things function rather than memorising facts.

The 30-mark written part of the C unit admission test question was a blessing in disguise for me. Since the written portion of the DU's admission tests was still relatively

new, there were no specific guidelines for the materials that admission coaching centres could offer. Since I didn't have the time to follow any suggestions, I applied my creative writing skills there.

Examinees in 2023 will find this section to be more difficult because it carries 40 marks out of the exam's total of 120. This 45-minute segment will include translations and error corrections in both Bangla and English. There will be questions on Accounting, Business Organisation and Management, Finance, Banking and Insurance, and Marketing.

I've always done well in school since I loved my Business Studies subjects. Despite being the topper in both school and college test exams, I failed to achieve a golden A+ in my SSC or HSC exams. It might not seem significant right now but at the time, it was aggravating to see myself struggling in the board exams.

To add to the troubles, 20 marks of the 120-mark admission test were based on SSC/O level & HSC/A level scores. Getting into DU seemed far-fetched back then.

However, anyone who enjoyed studying the Business Studies topics in their HSC should pass this exam with ease, because I didn't notice any questions on my test that were noticeably out of the syllabus.

It says on the admission notice that "the purpose of the examination will be to verify the knowledge acquired at the higher secondary level. Question papers will be prepared based on the syllabus at higher secondary level."

All examinees should take these words on the admission notice seriously. I've observed

Studying journalism in this day and age

AZRA HUMAYRA

Watching movies like *Spotlight* and *All the President's Men*, I used to look in the mirror and think, "I can be another Michael Rezendes or Carl Bernstein if I had the nose for news." The admission process rolled around, and I was not exactly thrilled to learn that I would be able to major in Political Science. My heart yearned for journalism, so I migrated departments.

I had many things to bemoan, but not migrating to journalism. The teachers were enthusiastic about their subjects, and the curriculum was just what I was looking for. I am currently in my third year and have missed a total of only four classes, primarily because I love what I study. I learned about so many things alongside the fundamentals of journalism. I learned about the nuances Mrinal Sen left in his films, and I learned about how the

The Nazi party employed propaganda to manipulate the Germans. I learned about what a staccato lead is and how Chanakya's Arthashastra was a practical guide to governing a nation. Studying journalism has marked an epoch in my life.



DESIGN: ABIR HOSSAIN

Nazi party employed propaganda to manipulate the Germans. I learned about what a staccato lead is and how Chanakya's *Arthashastra* was a practical guide to governing a nation. Studying journalism has marked an epoch in my life.

Right after starting classes, the pandemic gripped the world. My spirit did not diminish even during the online classes. With nothing to do but stay chronically online, I read online discourses about Mushtaq Ahmed and Ahmed Kishore being detained under the Digital Security Act. Then, in 2021, Rozina Islam faced charges under Articles 379 and 411 of the Penal Code as well as Articles 3 and 5 of the Official

Secrets Act 1923 for her anti-corruption reporting. I gradually realised that pursuing a career that this major will lead to had its risks, and my dream of being another Rezendes or Bernstein might even put me behind bars. The recent case of Shamsuzzaman Shams does not ease my worries.

As I weigh the risks and uncertainties involved in this field against other seemingly "safe" career options, the constant questions about my chosen journalism major haunt me every day. Every sentence I may write carries the burden of possible misinterpretation, I can only hope that what I write aligns with the law when it should align with the truth. So, I learn to censor myself.

The urge to leave the country for higher education and never return can be strong, fuelled by the unpredictable future of journalism in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, an inner voice fully comprehends the dire consequences of the words I speak and write and urges me to stay in my country and make a difference, whatever obstacles stand in my way. Because in times like these, my responsibility to contribute to the betterment of my country goes beyond my mere journalistic title.

Azra Humayra is questioning her major and would appreciate some good music to complement her despair. Send her songs at: azrahumayra123@gmail.com

Different countries have different requirements and application procedures, but transcripts and letters of recommendation are common factors when it comes to university applications. To access these documents and send them to the institutions, students require assistance from their respective school counsellors and their schools.

which mentions all the areas a student is involved in, and paints a vivid picture of who the student is as a person can essentially make or break an application.

Different countries have different requirements and application procedures, but transcripts and letters of recommendation are common factors when it comes to university applications. To access these documents and send them to the institutions, students require assistance from their respective school counsellors and their schools.

More often than not, the applicants find themselves alone on this path or have to deal with teachers who are not used to the process yet. As more people are aiming to travel overseas for higher education, educational consultancies, Facebook groups, and YouTube channels have stepped up to fill the gaps formed due to a lack of information and direction from schools.

The fact remains that students in most schools do not receive the support they require from their institutions. While a lot of teachers are eager to help, they fail to do so due to being unfamiliar with the process. Uncooperative institutions result in students going as far as writing their own recommendations when they're left with no other choice.

To make the whole process easier for both students and teachers, Bangladeshi schools need to invest in qualified school counsellors who know their way around the maze. This will benefit the schools too, and their reputation will be bolstered as a result of having successful alumni around the world.

As the youth of our country unlock new achievements every day, it is high time students get the backing they deserve from their schools to reach their full potential.

Jaiyana is looking for ways to stop procrastinating and survive A Levels. Send her suggestions at jaiyanachy@gmail.com

'If there is forgery, Shohag did it individually'

SPORTS REPORTER

Absolving themselves of any blame, the top brass of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) formed a seven-member investigation committee to look into FIFA's suspension of its general secretary, Abu Nayeem Shohag.

The decision to form the committee was made at an emergency meeting of the BFF executive committee yesterday, three days Shohag was suspended from all kind of football activities for two years "for having used false and/or falsified documents to justify payments made by the BFF with FIFA funds".

It was also decided that Shohag would not get any further opportunities to work at the BFF.

The probe committee members are the federation's four vice-presidents – Kazi Nabil Ahmed, Imrul Hasan, Aatur Rahman Bhuiyan Manik, Mohiuddin Mohi – and three executive committee members – Satyjit Das Ruptu, Zakir Hossain Chowdhury and Ilias Hossain.

"We have made a seven-member special committee to inquire about the matter. Our internal audit committee will also work with the committee and place their report about what happened and why it happened within 30 days," a gloomy BFF president Kazi Salahuddin told journalists after an hour-long meeting at the BFF House.

"We also did not like the thing that happened and we want to make sure it does not happen again in our lifetime. That was our meeting's main concern," said Salahuddin.

He was also unwilling to shoulder any of the blame. "My office had done wrong, which was proven. But I can't see everything like a clerk. It is a general thing; FIFA banned him for misusing his power. There is no blame to share," said the BFF boss.

BFF protocol chief and personal assistant to the BFF president, Emran Hossain Tushar, will be acting general secretary for three-six months until a new general secretary is appointed.

BFF Finance Committee chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy claimed there were no complaints against his committee. He maintained that Shohag's issue was regarding non-compliance.

"The report [FIFA investigation] didn't mention any grievances about the finance committee, which has shown a great improvement in the recent past," Salam said. "There is no corruption mentioned in the FIFA report, but here proper compliance was not maintained while making purchases."

Replying to query, he said: "If there is forgery, he [Shohag] did it individually. We, the finance committee, will not take any blame. We have also decided that Shohag won't get any opportunity to work here in future."



Everyone in the BFF was more keen to impress the president [Kazi Salahuddin] but nobody worked to save football in Bangladesh. They were always busy with all these. I think those accused should immediately resign with dignity. And, definitely the BFF president should be accountable for that [FIFA's ban on BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag]. He [Salahuddin] always tried to come up with surprises by announcing heavy prize money but the fact is football in the country is declining day by day.

Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, former captain of Bangladesh football team, said during an episode of The Daily Star's multimedia programme 'Star Special' on Monday.



Rugbanj Tigers' Shamim Hossain, who hit a fifty in their 56-run win over Brothers Union in Mirpur yesterday, takes a drinks break as the current heatwave sweeping the country takes a toll on players in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

No respite in sight for sweltering DPL players

SPORTS REPORTER

Imagine yourself, if you may, attending a Dhaka Premier League game at Mirpur, Fatullah or the BKSP at 10:00am. The sweltering heat shows no respite even to those sitting in the stands, but for the players it has become an arduous task. There has been no rain to speak of around Dhaka, with temperatures rising as the day progresses.

On Sunday, Nasir Hossain and Mushfiqur Rahim were at the crease for Prime Bank against Agrani Bank in chase of 274. The pair put on 111 runs for the fourth wicket with Nasir eventually taking his side to victory with a ton while Mushfiqur struck a fifty before falling in the 39th over.

The pair, batting under sweltering temperatures, were often seen splashing water on their face and head.

That has been the image of the ongoing DPL, being held in March-April and the heat is set to continue according to the forecast.

"The extreme heat is making life very difficult for everyone so you can imagine how difficult it is for the cricketers. Pace bowlers are struggling the most. It's tough for them to bowl more than three overs on the trot, which hampers the game plan," one of the players said.

However, the clubs wanted this schedule since national team stars would be available. It is a double-edged sword, which the BCB president felt they could not do much about.

"It's definitely (hot). In Kolkata, schools and colleges have been closed since yesterday. But the matches are on. The games did not stop. This heat is completely unexpected. We have never seen this before. It will definitely be on our minds. But I don't think there is much that can be done about it," Nazmul Hossain Papon told the media after a food distribution

programme for the less fortunate.

"Nobody wants to play without national cricketers. It is very difficult to find the time. Eventually, we have to accept that the Premier League will have to be played without national-team players. The schedules can't be moved if the clubs don't want to play without the national players."

The Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) discussed pushing back the dates, so as to escape the heat wave for the Super League phase.

The CCDM chairman informed that the original schedule prescribed was to begin matches in February instead of the actual start date of March 15. "If that was done, the tournament would have ended by now."

CCDM said they would try to talk about scheduling again.

"We always ask clubs why we need national players? We can keep our schedule and hold the tournament. But it's difficult if the clubs don't agree. Next season we will try to change things since it's impossible to play like this," he said.

As the DPL takes a hiatus for the Eid vacations, Gazi Group became the sixth side to reach the Super League. They will have a short respite, but players and clubs will need to adapt in some way when the tournament returns.

Team	Matches	Win	Loss	NR	Points
Sheikh Jamal DC	11	10	1	0	20
Abahani Ltd	11	10	1	0	20
Legends of Rugbanj	11	8	3	0	16
Prime Bank Cricket Club	11	7	4	0	14
Mohammedan SC	11	6	4	1	13
Gazi Group Cricketers	11	5	5	1	11

'They don't know which way it's going to spin'

EKUSH TAPADER

Jake Lintott has been instrumental for Mohammedan Sporting Club in the ongoing Dhaka Premier League. The English left-arm wrist spinner played a pivotal role in the Black and Whites qualifying for the Super League stage following a lousy start – that included four defeats in first five outings.

With 17 wickets in six games at an average of 18.35, including a match-winning five-wicket haul against Brothers Union, Lintott once again proved the importance of having a wrist spinner in the squad – something that the Bangladesh team know very well after spending more than decades without a proper wrist spinner in their ranks.



"They [batters] don't really know which way it's spinning and they're finding it hard to read. So yeah, I've had lots of success with bowling googlies, leg-spin, sliders and mixing it up is making things difficult for batters," Lintott explained why he had success in Bangladesh.

According to the 29-year-old, the captains and coaches in the country should be more patient with the young wrist spinners to allow them to master the difficult art.

"I think, as a whole in Bangladesh, they're crying for wrist spinners as club batters struggle against such bowlers. So, if the Bangladeshi players, and the coaches and captains, could be more patient with young wrist spinners, then they'll have more of an impact and get more opportunities," Lintott added. He also informed that as batters here are more used to playing against finger spinners, the option of a wrist spinner can make a huge difference in the domestic circuit.

Ancelotti returns to crumbling Bridge

AFP, Madrid

Less than a fortnight ago, Chelsea owner Todd Boehly picked up the phone and called Blues great Frank Lampard to come back and try to steady the ship, with the team in shambles.

In another world, it might have been Carlo Ancelotti on the line to the American.

Instead, Ancelotti returns to Stamford Bridge dug-out strictly as an opponent, representing Real Madrid in the Champions League quarterfinal second leg clash on Tuesday.

It was Madrid president Florentino Perez who brought the Italian back for a second stint at the helm, after Zinedine Zidane walked away again in 2021.

Ancelotti's Madrid picked off the Blues in the first game, carving out a 2-0 lead through Karim Benzema and Marco Asensio, and they could have added further goals as they controlled proceedings.

At the other end, former Chelsea duo Thibaut Courtois and Antonio Rudiger made important saves and blocks to leave Lampard's side empty-handed.

Ancelotti's return to Chelsea evokes warm memories of one of the finest ever Premier League sides, which he led to the club's first ever league and FA Cup double in 2010, halcyon days in stark contrast to



the Blues' recent slump.

The Italian's Chelsea side featured big characters including Didier Drogba, John Terry, Michael Ballack and Lampard himself, and they racked up 7-0, 7-1 and 8-0 triumphs at the Bridge as they strolled to domestic glory.

Chelsea's current hodgepodge of players lacks both the leadership and quality of that group, as was laid painfully bare in their defeat at the Santiago Bernabeu last week.

Ancelotti said he hopes 'Lampard does a fantastic job', but the Italian will hope his coach is nowhere near as magnanimous on Tuesday under the lights in London.

Ancelotti was let go by then-owner Roman Abramovich in 2011, ending his brief but memorable two-season spell in charge. Madrid are aiming to win a record-

extending 15th Champions League, defending the title after their triumph over Liverpool last season, and looked streets ahead of the 2021 victors in the Spanish capital.

"I am 'fantastic' at managing but there are other things, because this team is well-trained," said Ancelotti before the first leg.

"If we win the Copa del Rey, we will have won every title possible in two years and there are teams who won't win that in their whole lives."

Ancelotti has kept squad players like Dani Ceballos, Nacho Fernandez and Asensio both hungry and helpful, with the latter netting again at Cadiz at the weekend. Most of them, anyway.

Former Chelsea star Eden Hazard has remained a fringe presence and his former fans will hope not to see him on Tuesday – if the Belgian appears, it will mean Madrid have clinched progression and the key players are getting rested.

Ancelotti, the 63-year-old, has lifted the trophy six times, twice as a player, and four times in the dug-out, recently observing he is approaching his 1,300th game as a coach.

His experience and stability are in stark contrast to Chelsea's haphazard project, and on Tuesday they may help him highlight chasms where he once left silverware and memories.



Napoli's Victor Osimhen is set to return for the second and decisive leg of their all-Italian Champions League quarterfinal with AC Milan, who hold a slender 1-0 lead in the tie. The Partenopei will rely heavily on Osimhen, the top scorer in Serie A, to find the finishing touch they missed in the first leg in order to progress further from their first-ever outing in the tournament's last eight.

PHOTO: NAPOLI

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METRO LINE-5 Physical work to start in July

The 20-km northern line from Savar to Bhatara to cost Tk 41,239cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Physical work of the country's third metro rail, namely Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Line-5 (northern route), will begin in July.

The construction work will begin with the development of the depot at Hemayetpur, on the outskirts of the capital.

The project to build 20km rail line from Savar's Hemayetpur to Bhatara via Gabtoli, Mirpur, and Gulshan would be implemented at the cost of Tk 41,239 crore. The project's deadline is 2028.

"We have a meeting tomorrow and hope that [the contractor] for CP-1 [contract package-1] will be approved there and the construction work will start in July," MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), said yesterday.

The development comes at a time when the Roads and Highways Department still maintains its reservations over the proposed alignment between Hemayetpur and Aminbazar as the rail line will "frustrate" its Dhaka-Aricha highway development plan.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Eid holidaymakers throng Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday, the first day of special train service ahead of the festival. Thousands of people leave the capital for their homes every year to celebrate Eid with their near and dear ones. The Eid holidays begin tomorrow.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

EU to send observers if election participatory

PORIMOL PALMA

The European Union has told the government that it is ready to send election observers if the next parliamentary polls are participatory.

"I said that a participatory election is necessary for the deployment of an election observation mission, according to the decision of High Representative Josep Borrell," Charles Whiteley, EU ambassador to Bangladesh, told The Daily Star after meeting Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday.

The EU had written to the foreign ministry on February 16, seeking confirmation that Bangladesh would welcome EU election observers.

Yesterday, Momen confirmed to Whiteley that international election observers would be welcome.

The minister also made similar statements during his meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington earlier this month.

Whiteley said Joseph Borrell considers Bangladesh a priority country for sending election observers.

Sending observers takes place in

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

DATA PROTECTION ACT Entire society will be under surveillance

Says TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Data Protection Act will put the entire society under surveillance, said Transparency International Bangladesh.

One of the reasons why the TIB thinks so is because the draft law makes it mandatory for every person or organisation dealing with data to enrol in a "data protection register" where they must state what type of data they are collecting, processing, and why.

Not only is this logistically impractical, but it also makes the general citizens liable, said the TIB at a press conference held at its office yesterday.

"While it may be appropriate to incorporate a registration requirement in the act for certain data controllers... several questions should be considered before doing so. Which entities are required to register? What is the registration requirement and for which data? Are there any exceptions to the registration requirements?" it said.

Furthermore, even though stakeholders have been demanding that an independent commission be formed to oversee the implementation of the law, the bill puts a government-controlled agency in charge, observed the TIB.

"No reference is found in the draft regarding the independence of the data protection agency," it said, adding that along with operational independence, the agency should have in-built provisions to check abuse of authority.

"The government is a user of data so this creates scope for abuse," said Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, addressing the press conference.

He also pointed out that the data protection agency has "unlimited powers" to access the data of any controller or processor without any judicial oversight.

The agency also has the right to ban anyone from processing data

Life expectancy declines for first time in 4yrs

Shows BBS survey; Covid main reason behind it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The average life expectancy for Bangladeshis declined by six months to 72.3 years in 2021, bucking the upward trend seen since 2017.

"It is not a big drop statistically," said Md Matiar Rahman, director general of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, at the launch of the Sample Vital Registration System (SVRS) 2021 yesterday.

The impact of Covid-19 and its post-effects, such as reduced access to healthcare facilities, poverty, lifestyle, nutrition, delayed vaccination and other biological factors are the reasons behind the decline in life expectancy and the rise in crude death rate, said Mohammad Mainul Islam, former chairperson of Dhaka University's population sciences department.

The crude death rate increased from 5.1 per thousand people to 5.7. Men's life expectancy declined more than women's.

In 2021, men's life expectancy came down to 70.6 years from 71.2 years and women's from 74.5 to 74.1.

The study also reveals an increase in maternal mortality rate in 2021, with 168 maternal mortalities reported per lakh childbirth. The mortality rate is higher in urban areas compared with rural areas.

The literacy rate increased to 76.4 percent from 75.2 percent in 2020.

However, there is still a significant rural-

urban gap in literacy, with the adult literacy rate in rural areas at 71.4 percent compared with 82.5 percent in urban areas.

Women are lagging behind men in literacy attainment.

The crude birth rate has increased slightly to 18.8 per thousand in 2021, and the use of sanitary latrines has increased to 85.8 percent.

Migration from urban areas to rural regions and other towns has seen a rise.

Out of every 1,000 people, eight moved from urban areas to rural in 2021, up from 4.7 in 2020. Rural-to-urban migration declined to 30.8 per thousand from 31.3 the previous year.

The birth control rate has increased to 65.6 percent from 63.9 percent in 2020.

The study looked at the disability rate for the first time: 24 out of every 1,000 people have different types

of disability.

As of January 1, 2021, Bangladesh's population stood at 170.26 million. Among them, 84.33 million were men and 85.93 million were women.

About 96.9 percent of households in 2021 use electricity, according to the report.

Planning Minister MA Mannan highlighted the positive indicators, including the increase in literacy rate and more people coming under the electricity connection.

Shamsul Alam, the state minister for planning, and Shahnaz Arefin, secretary of the Statistics and Informatics Division, also spoke.

In 2021, men's life expectancy came down to 70.6 years from 71.2 years and women's from 74.5 to 74.1.

Oldest machine-printed book on show in Paris

AFP, Paris



The oldest known work printed on a mechanical press – a Korean book that predates the first European example by several decades – went on display in Paris for the first time in 50 years on Wednesday.

The "Jikji", a collection of Buddhist teachings, was printed in 1377 – some 78 years before Johannes Gutenberg produced his famous Bible using his printing press in Germany.

The Korean treasure is being shown as part of a new exhibition at the National Library of France (BnF), running until July.

Since no examples of the Korean machinery have survived and the technique did not become widely used at the time, it did not have the revolutionary impact of the Gutenberg press – and the exhibition mostly focuses on European history.

But it marks the first time the "Jikji" has been shown publicly since 1973, according to reports in the Korean press – reigniting hopes of its return.

"With this exhibition as an occasion, if we collaborate and build a good relationship based on trust, I think we could have a valuable opportunity to see Jikji in person in Korea in the future," said Kim Jung-hee, chair of the Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation.

The BnF says Gutenberg was probably not aware of the Korean invention, and was combining various forms of reproduction using wood and copper engravings that had been in use in Europe since around 1400, though they themselves were influenced by techniques imported from East Asia.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said the draft law mandates storing of sensitive, user-generated and classified data within Bangladesh's geographical boundary, but this will impede freedom of expression and citizens' privacy could be violated. This is because the law gives the government access rights.

without any judicial process.

The TIB recommended that requests for data access should be published in a monthly transparency report.

Iftekharuzzaman said the draft law mandates storing of sensitive, user-generated and classified data within Bangladesh's geographical boundary, but this will impede freedom of expression and citizens' privacy could be violated. This is because the law gives the government access rights.

In addition, the TIB pointed out that the head of the data protection agency will prepare the standard operating procedures or code of conduct for every organisation or group of organisations.

The act considers these codes of practice as regulations, indicating that they will be treated as the law; non-compliance with the code resembles non-compliance of the law itself," said the TIB.

It said the scope of data protection act should be strictly restricted to personal data only. Extending the scope beyond that will be counterproductive, the TIB said.



Workers harvesting boro paddy under the scorching sun in Agarhati village of Jashore's Keshabpur upazila. The labourers are paid Tk 600-Tk 700 for a day's work. Farmers are happy with a good yield this season due to favourable weather. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN