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TO KNOW

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surprisingly
low this Eid



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to attend SCO
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Our picks for
the best Eid
entertainment

RURAL BANGLADESH WOMEN labour force on the rise

More involved in
economic activities

MD ASADUZZ ZAMAN

Female labour force participation in rural areas has increased significantly in Bangladesh thanks to women's growing involvement in the agriculture sector and urban-rural migration brought on by the global coronavirus pandemic.

In 2016, the female labour force participation rate in rural areas was 38.6 percent. In 2022, it shot up to 50.89 percent, shows the latest edition of the Labour Force Survey that came out last month.

One of the reasons could be the increase in off-farm activities in recent times, which, according to Planning Minister MA Mannan, explains the increase in overall employment in the agriculture sector.

Activities that are related to crops and livestock but occur outside of the field such as processing, packaging and other forms of value addition are termed off-farm activities.

Women are mostly involved in post-harvesting work, said Sheikh Mohammad Sayem, who was a consultant for the latest Labour Force Survey.

The mass lay-offs in garment factories, which mostly employ women, during the pandemic could also explain the spike in rural female labour force participation, he said.

"Those women mostly went back to their villages and got involved with various jobs -- they did not sit idle," said Sheikh Mohammad Sayem, associate professor of agricultural and applied statistics at Bangladesh Agricultural University.

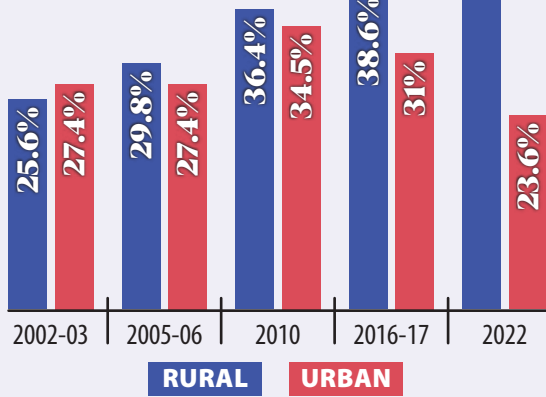
In fact, migration from urban areas to rural regions and other towns has seen a rise, shows the Sample Vital Registration System 2021.

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

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

MORE RURAL WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN LABOUR FORCE THAN URBAN ONES

SOURCE: BBS



Observers from EU, UK welcome in nat'l election

PM tells British envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will welcome observers from the European Union and the United Kingdom in the upcoming general election, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday.

She said this when the outgoing UK High Commissioner Robert Chatterton Dickson paid a farewell call on her at the Gono Bhaban.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed the reporters afterwards.

Mentioning that some local election observers have their own agenda, the prime minister said her party has established the voting rights of the people in Bangladesh.

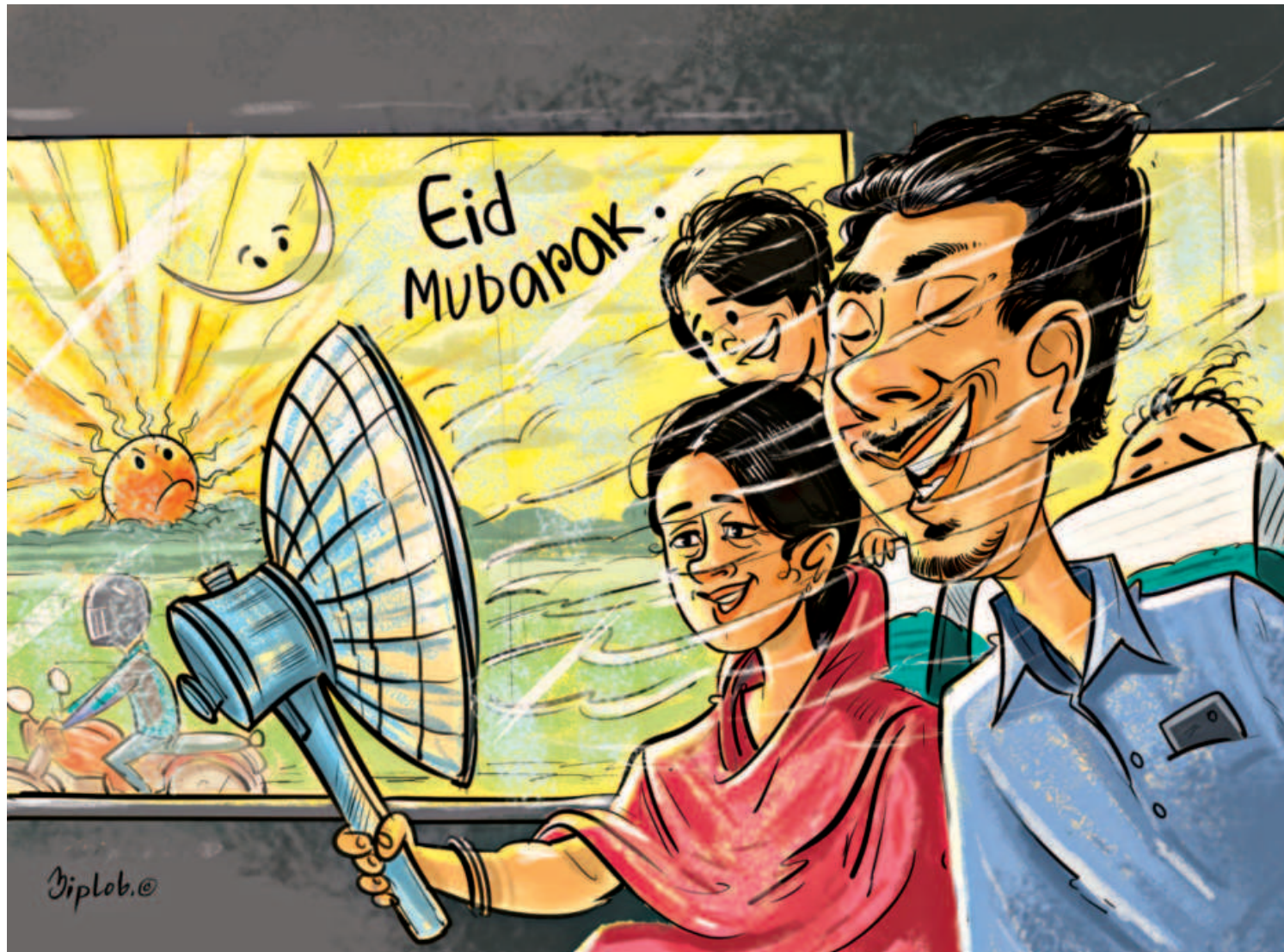
She said the extreme poverty rate has declined to 5.6 percent while the poverty rate to 18.7 percent as democracy continued in Bangladesh.

The UK envoy said his country wants to strengthen further the economic partnership and cooperation in aviation sector with Bangladesh.

He said they want to strengthen the cooperation with Bangladesh to tackle climate change in line with the accord signed between the countries in March.

About the Rohingya issue, Hasina sought cooperation to repatriate the Rohingyas in a sustainable way.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



EID JOURNEY

Good, so far

Surge of garment workers heading home
causes congestion at few points

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of people continued to leave Dhaka yesterday to celebrate Eid with their loved ones and their trips were relatively hassle-free.

All trains, except the Chattogram-bound Sonar Bangla Express, left Dhaka on time and no major traffic congestion was reported in the city.

However, there was some traffic at Nabinagar, Joydebpur Chowrasta, Chandra and Baipail, all key intersections on the way to the north and northwestern regions.

The intersections are surrounded by a large number of garment factories that closed for the Eid holidays in the evening.

Eid-ul-Fitr, the biggest religious festival of Muslims, will be celebrated across the country tomorrow if the crescent moon of the month of Shawwal is sighted today.

People with some 29 lakh mobile phone connections left Dhaka yesterday, Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar said on his Facebook page at 5:30pm.

On Tuesday, people with 12.28 lakh SIMs left Dhaka while people with 16 lakh SIMs left

Dhaka on Wednesday, he also mentioned.

People started leaving Dhaka in the morning and formed crowds at bus terminals and outside the Kamalapur Railway Station. The number of passengers increased sharply in the evening.

During a visit to the Gabtoli Bus Terminal around 2:30pm, this correspondent found a relatively small crowd. Many passengers alleged that they were overcharged.

Hemayet Uddin, deputy director (enforcement) of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) who was at the terminal's control room, said although they received some complaints of overcharging, the allegations could not be proven.

Mosharref Hossain, general manager of Hanif Paribahan, said the pressure of passengers was huge in the evening. Congestion was reported from several points on the way to northern districts, he said.

The control room set up by the road transport and bridges ministry at the BRTA, reported tailbacks at Nabinagar, Joydebpur Chowrasta, Chandra and Baipail at 7:00pm.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

TK 7.5CR BRIBE FOR VISA

Malaysia recalls two officials from Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Malaysian authorities have recalled and remanded two officers from its high commission in Dhaka on suspicion of receiving bribes of over Tk 7.5 crore for issuing visas for Bangladeshi workers and tourists.

The two suspects -- a man and a woman -- were remanded for three days until yesterday, but it was not sure whether they have been released yet, reports Free Malaysia Today (FMT), an independent news portal of Malaysia.

Sources with knowledge of the investigation said the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) discovered "suspicious transactions" involving the bank accounts of the two.

MACC has frozen more than 20 bank accounts and seized assets, estimated to be worth RM3.1 million (Tk 7.5 crore), believed to belong to the two. The assets include eight plots of land.

MACC Chief Commissioner Azam Baki confirmed that the officers had been placed under remand and said the case was being investigated under Section 17(a) of the MACC Act and Section 4(l) of the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act.

"I do not rule out the possibility that there will be several other arrests that will be made after this," he said.

The Malay Mail newspaper quoted the Malaysian foreign ministry as saying that the two officers arrested by MACC are Immigration

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Hours after the government lifted a ban on bikes on the Padma Bridge, motorcycles form long queues on the Mawa end yesterday. With Eid round the corner, holidaymakers continued to head out of Dhaka for their homes in villages and towns.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

BUSINESS

Banks hike deposit rates

Banks in Bangladesh are raising the interest rates on deposits to pull funds with a view to tackling the liquidity shortage and meeting a higher demand for loans.

It comes as good news for savers, who saw the real return on their deposits turn negative as the interest rate has continued to remain below the inflation rate.

The weighted average interest rate on deposits stood at 4.31 per cent in February, the highest in nearly two years.

STORY ON B1

Lawyer found dead in Ctg, wife detained

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An apprentice lawyer was found dead in Chattogram early yesterday.

Abdullah Al Mamun, 25, completed his Bachelor of Legislative Law (LLB) degree from Chattogram BGC Trust University and later started practising at the Chattogram court.

Manjur Qader, officer-in-charge of Chawkbazar police station, said they sent a team to a house on DC road on Wednesday night on information that a youth committed suicide there.

“But police found no one in the house,” he said, adding that the body was found at Chattogram Medical College Hospital’s emergency department early Thursday.”

Meanwhile, police detained the victim’s wife Tamima Akter Liza in this connection.

Mamun’s family and friends claimed that he was murdered by his wife.

The body was sent to the hospital’s morgue for autopsy, said the OC adding that Liza was detained from the hospital in this connection.

During the primary interrogation, his wife said Mamun committed suicide by hanging from the ceiling fan in the house, the OC said.

The victim’s friend Raihan said Mamun was taken to a private hospital in the Chawkbazar area where physicians declared him dead around 12am.

Later, the body was taken to CMCH’s morgue; he said adding that there were marks of injuries on his body including throat, eyes and hands.

Mamun and Liza got married after a love affair and they used to live in a rented house on the rooftop of a building on DC road in the Miah Bafer Masjid area.

Russian worker of Rooppur Power Plant found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Russian national, who worked at the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project, was found dead at his dormitory in the Green City Residential Area in Pabna’s Ishwardi.

Kun Alexander, 31, might have suffered a cardiac arrest in his sleep, police said yesterday, quoting doctors.

Ishwardi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Arbinda Sarkar said Alexander did not join work on Wednesday and he was later found dead in his dorm room.

His body was sent to the Pabna General Hospital morgue for autopsy, the OC added.

Iran army gets 200 ‘strategic’ drones: report

AFP, Tehran

Iran’s defence ministry has delivered the army with more than 200 new drones equipped with missile capabilities and electronic warfare systems, state media reported yesterday.

In a ceremony broadcast on television, Defence Minister Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani handed over “more than 200 long-range strategic drones” to army chief Abdolrahim Mousavi, the official news agency IRNA said.

Produced by the Iranian defence ministry, the drones are designed for reconnaissance and strike missions, and can carry air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles, IRNA said.

The United States and the European Union have sanctioned Iran over its drone programme, alleging it had supplied Russia with unmanned aerial vehicles for its war on Ukraine – a charge Tehran denies.

Observers

FROM PAGE 1

She said the number of Rohingyas has increased with the birth of 40,000 babies, which has become a huge burden for Bangladesh.

“R Rohingyas are the nationals of Myanmar and they must go back to their homeland,” she said.

Dickson said his country has supported Bangladesh on Rohingya issue.

Hasina stressed the need for stopping the Russia-Ukraine war immediately as the entire world has been suffering for it.

“We’re always against any war,” she said.

The prime minister said Russia and Ukraine can solve their problems through talks.

Bangladesh has solved all bilateral problems with neighbours through talks, she added.

PMO Secretary Mohammad Salahuddin was present during the meeting.



People flee their neighbourhoods amid fighting between the army and paramilitaries in Khartoum, Sudan on Wednesday, following the collapse of a 24-hour truce. Story on page 7.

PHOTO: AFP

World could face record temperatures this year

Say climate scientists as El Nino weather phenomenon returns

REUTERS, Brussels

The world could breach a new average temperature record in 2023 or 2024, fuelled by climate change and the anticipated return of the El Nino weather phenomenon, climate scientists say.

Climate models suggest that after three years of the La Nina weather pattern in the Pacific Ocean, which generally lowers global temperatures slightly, the world will experience a return to El Nino, the warmer counterpart, later this year.

During El Nino, winds blowing west along the equator slow down, and warm water is pushed east, creating warmer surface ocean temperatures.

“El Nino is normally associated with record breaking temperatures at the global level. Whether this will happen in 2023 or 2024 is yet known, but it is, I think, more likely than not,” said Carlo Buontempo, director of the EU’s Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Climate models suggest a return to

El Nino conditions in the late boreal summer, and the possibility of a strong El Nino developing towards the end of the year, Buontempo said.

The world’s hottest year on record so far was 2016, coinciding with a strong

The last eight years were the world’s eight hottest on record - reflecting the longer-term warming trend driven by greenhouse gas emissions.

El Nino - although climate change has fuelled extreme temperatures even in years without the phenomenon.

The last eight years were the world’s eight hottest on record - reflecting the longer-term warming trend driven by greenhouse gas emissions.

Friederike Otto, senior lecturer at Imperial College London’s Grantham Institute, said El Nino-fuelled temperatures

could worsen the climate change impacts countries are already experiencing - including severe heatwaves, drought and wildfires.

“If El Niño does develop, there is a good chance 2023 will be even hotter than 2016 - considering the world has continued to warm as humans continue to burn fossil fuels,” Otto said.

EU Copernicus scientists published a report yesterday assessing the climate extremes the world experienced last year, its fifth-warmest year on record.

Europe experienced its hottest summer on record in 2022, while climate change-fuelled extreme rain caused disastrous flooding in Pakistan, and in February, Antarctic sea ice levels hit a record low.

The world’s average global temperature is now 1.2C higher than in pre-industrial times, Copernicus said.

Despite most of the world’s major emitters pledging to eventually slash their net emissions to zero, global CO2 emissions last year continued to rise.

Boy kills 7-yr-old cousin during rape attempt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A 13-year-old boy was arrested for allegedly strangling his seven-year-old cousin to death while trying to rape her in Panchagarh’s Debiganj upazila, police said yesterday.

The girl was identified as Ria Moni, 7, daughter of Monowar Hossain from the upazila’s Peralbari village.

Her body was recovered from a maize field in Mahantapara village on Wednesday night.

Debiganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Jamal Hossain said the girl left her house on Wednesday afternoon with her cousin who came to visit from Dhaka the day before.

However, when the boy returned home alone in the evening, the girl’s family members questioned him about her whereabouts, and he later confessed to killing her while attempting to rape her.

The girl’s father later filed a case against his nephew with the local police station.

2 hundi traders arrested in Noakhali

BSS, Dhaka

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police arrested two hundi traders in Noakhali’s Chatkhil early yesterday

Shahadat Hossain, 23, and Balai Chandra Das, 26, used sources in the middle east to bring remittances into the country through hundi channel.

They laundered about Tk 50 crore through bKash in the last three years, a CID press release said.

A case has been filed against them with Paltan Police Station of Dhaka Metropolitan Police under the Special Powers Act and Digital Security Act.

Motorcyclist killed in road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Motorcyclist killed in collision with human haulier Our Correspondent, Thakurgaon

A motorcyclist died after his vehicle collided with a human haulier on the Baliadangi-Lahiri road in Baliadangi upazila of Thakurgaon yesterday.

The victim is Nazir Islam, 35, of the upazila’s Kashidanga village.

Police said the crash occurred in front of the Dakbungalow around 9:00am when a Baliadangi-bound motorcycle collided head-on with a human haulier coming from the opposite direction leaving the motorcyclist injured seriously.

Locals rushed the victim to the Baliadangi Upazila Health Complex where the duty doctors referred him to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital after providing primary treatment.

Nazir later succumbed to his injuries on the way to the hospital.

Malaysia recalls

FROM PAGE 1

Department officers, not diplomats.

The MACC was also tracking an individual named Siti Liyana Sakijan to help in the investigation and called on those with information on the woman to contact investigating officer Jayaraj Rajan at 016-6371082.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Labour Department Director General Asri Rahman told Reuters that the government is investigating why and how hundreds of migrant workers from Bangladesh and Nepal were jobless, though they paid hefty sums for jobs in the Southeast Asian country.

He declined to provide details until completion of the inquiry.

Last week, V Sivakumar, the Malaysian minister for human resources, visited a group of 226 Bangladeshi and Nepali workers who had been in the Southeast Asian country for 40 days without the jobs they had been promised.

He described as “appalling” the crowded accommodation of the workers, and vowed to find them jobs at the earliest, but did not identify the provider of the facilities.

MACC also detained two of Sivakumar’s senior officers and a businessman last week in connection with its investigation into recruitment of foreign workers. The trio were released from remand on Monday.

Sivakumar was questioned twice by the MACC.

Contacted yesterday, Bangladesh Expatriates’ Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad told The Daily Star that he has learnt of the arrest of two Malaysian officials. “If there is any wrongdoing, it should be investigated and those responsible for migrant workers’ sufferings should be brought to book.”

Labour migration to Malaysia in the recent years has gained much international attention because of excessive recruitment cost and labour exploitation, especially when it comes to recruitment from Bangladesh.

Businesses linked to the power

Women labour force on the rise

FROM PAGE 1

At the same time, female labour force participation in urban areas declined significantly: from 31 percent in 2016-17 to 23.6 percent in 2022.

Sharmin Neelormi, an associate professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University, also attributed the trend to greater involvement in agriculture.

“Usually, a woman in a rural area would not be able to stay unemployed as per the definition of employment,” she said.

It is relatively easier for women in rural areas to get into family’s economic activities – be it in farming or non-farm activities, said Rizwanul Islam, a former employment sector special adviser at the International Labour Organisation in Geneva.

It is quite possible that a large number of young women entered their family business when the schools were closed during the pandemic.

The education sector has also emerged as an important employer for women in rural areas, he said.

For several decades, microcredit has played an important role in generating self-employment in rural areas, and a very high proportion of the borrowers are women, according to Islam.

Good, so far

FROM PAGE 1

A large number of garment workers set out for their holidays after their factories closed in the evening. Buses were picking them up blocking roads, which caused congestions, an official of the control room said.

“We have already spoken to law enforcers there and we hope they will free up the road soon,” he said.

A total of 7,105 motorcycles crossed the Padma Bridge during the first 12 hours after the vehicles were allowed on the bridge, Bridges Division Secretary Monjur Hossain told The Daily Star.

“The overall experience on the first

day is quite good as most of the bikes follow the directives and stayed in their lane,” he said at 8:10pm.

Monjur said 16,218 vehicles crossed the bridge from the Mawa end between 12:00am and 6:00pm, paying Tk 1.65 crore in toll.

Meanwhile, two road crashes in Munshiganj and Dinaipur killed eight people.

Khairul Kabir, division transport officer (Dhaka division) of Bangladesh Railway, said, the Chattogram-bound Sonar Bangla Express left Dhaka after a delay of more than three and a half hours due to a technical problem.

The non-stop train finally left

Kamalapur Railway Station at 10:25am.

A total of 56 trains, including 40 intercity trains, were supposed to leave Dhaka yesterday, Khairul said.

He said many in the crowd that gathered outside the Kamalapur station to buy standing tickets, had to leave empty-handed as they had a small number of tickets to sell.

Since evening excess passengers were seen in trains and even on roofs of carriages at Kamalapur and Airport stations.

There was relatively a larger crowd at the Sadarghat Launch Terminal yesterday compared to the day before.



A child gestures at her father to call them from a train window, as the man is unable to join them for Eid celebrations in Sirajganj. The emotional moment captures the bittersweet reality of a service holder in Dhaka, torn between job responsibilities and family -- a familiar story echoing across generations in the bustling city of Dhaka. This photo was taken in Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Those who return to Dhaka for Eid

FARIHA AMBER

Crossing off every day of the Ramadan calendar draws the joy of Eid nearer. And what makes the festival even more exciting is being finally able to return home to our loved ones to celebrate this joyous occasion.

As most people head outside Dhaka in overbooked trains and buses, navigating their way through deadly traffic, there are also people taking the opposite route and coming to Dhaka to celebrate Eid -- a city they call home.

Although most people living away from their families usually end up making a home away from home and creating bonds as strong as the familial ones, there is quite nothing like being able to return home -- to the comfort of our bedroom, to the delicious taste of home-cooked food, and to finally be able to shop for oneself and loved ones.

Students and job holders living outside Dhaka get their fair share of independence to live as they will and create a lifestyle as they wish, but this independence comes at a cost, that of missing family members back home.

And this yearning can hit at any point in time. Nostalgia can hit you in a packed room joyously laughing with friends, or even on tiresome work days when you return home to an empty house and iftar table with barely any energy left to cook food.

"After spending a year and a half outside the comfort of my house, I realised what I took for basic necessities are actually things that made me privileged. Being able to go home to the relish of iftar prepared by mum and having it with the family is a privilege, and we realise it too late," remarked Najmus Sakeeb, employee at a private company.

Even for Tusher, a student at



Chittagong University, who enjoys his best life with friends on his campus, nothing hits like going home. "Before, I wouldn't be so excited about Eid, but since I've moved out for studying, this is one occasion I look most forward to. I can't wait to go back home and receive that influx of extra care and pampering from my family!" he exclaimed.

And for people living abroad, it's a different story altogether! "Although the streets here are wider and safer, my heart yearns to walk on the lanes we played in during Eid. I save up all my leaves for Eid so that I can fly back home and not miss out on the fun. Now, more than ever, I finally relate to the song 'Shopno Jabe Bari'," remarked Eliza, who moved to Australia five years ago.

But not everyone can fly back home; returning to Dhaka is a struggle on its own. If bus and train tickets are not bought early, people often resort to anything available at the last minute, from uncomfortably hanging inside buses to sitting openly above a train! Although tickets mostly sell out when we look for them, you magically seem to find them available on-spot at half the price if you just go to the bus station!

The joy of coming back to Dhaka for Eid is unmatched by any other. We rarely get to taste this feeling of euphoria, and returning home for Eid is one of those occasions. And what better time to enjoy the empty streets of Dhaka?

Every nook and cranny of Dhaka has stories waiting to be told. "My Dhaka" gives interested writers the platform to share experiences of city life. Only selected stories will make it to our print edition and digital platform. Send your Dhaka story (within 450 words) to raffat@thedailystar.net

Nat'l Eidgah set to welcome devotees: Taposh

UNB, Dhaka

The Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) is completely prepared to welcome the president, cabinet members, diplomats and other important persons and the people of Dhaka to the main Eid congregation at the National Eidgah Maidan, said DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh.

A total of 35,000 devotees (male and female) can offer prayers at the main Eid jamaat (congregation) to be held at Jatiya Eidgah Maidan on Eid day, he said while talking to journalists after visiting the overall preparatory activities of the Eidgah yesterday.

Inviting everyone to offer prayers at the National Eidgah, Taposh said that there will be separate arrangements for women to say prayers.

A separate gate has also been installed for the exit in the maidan to avoid rush of worshippers, he said.

He added that special measures have also been taken to handle water-logging in case of any sudden rain or storm.

He also said that an arrangement of safe drinking water has been made so that no one suffers amid the ongoing heat wave sweeping the country.

Besides, the authorities concerned have kept adequate fans and medical support to tackle emergency situation.

"Law enforcers including the Special Security Force (SSF) have arranged tight security measures in Eidgah as the President will offer Eid prayers," added the mayor.

The mayor urged all the devotees who would join the prayers not to bring any kind of lighter or inflammable materials in and around the Eidgah Maidan.

During the visit, DSCC Chief Executive Officer Md Mizanur Rahman, Secretary Akramuzzaman, Chief Engineer Saleh Ahmed, Acting Chief Waste Management Officer Md Haider Ali, Chief Health Officer (Acting) Dr Fazle Shamsul Kabir, Directorate of Fire Service and Civil Defence, police and senior officers of Rab were also present.

UN shares iftar with children

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A UN Bangladesh team on Wednesday shared iftar with children honouring the holy month of Ramadan.

The team went to four different locations in Dhaka city -- Korail Orphanage, Gabtoli, Kamalapur, and Sadarghat -- and distributed 500 iftar and gift boxes to children.

"Spending time with children and their caregivers during iftar reminds us that they need our empathy and support," said UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Gwyn Lewis.

"I would like to thank all of the UN agencies and the UN Staff Association for making this evening's iftar a very special one," she added.

PRAYER TIMING		APRIL 21			
Fajr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
4:13	12:30	4:45	6:26	8:00	
JAMAAAT 4:23	1:15	5:00	6:36	8:30	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					
SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING					
RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR		
29	21		6:26		
30	22	4:07	6:27		



With Eid knocking at the door, footpath traders are seeing quite a bit of crowd and sales as customers round up their last minute purchases. This photo was taken in front of Nurjahan market near Dhaka College yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Helpful initiative falling apart

DU's sanitary pad vending machines malfunctioning, causing trouble for students

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA

Dhaka University's attempt to break period-related stigmas and provide easier access to menstrual-hygiene products has hit a snag. Despite the installation of sanitary pad vending machines throughout the campus, many female students are left without the intended benefits due to the machines malfunctioning.

Students who have struggled to access the products despite paying money, and are now calling for urgent solutions.

The initiative was taken three years ago by Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) in partnership with ACI Group to break the taboo surrounding menstruation hygiene.

The vending machines were supposed to provide easier access to the products and lower costs for almost 12,000 female students.

Along with Ruqayyah Hall, Shamsun Nahar Hall, Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall, Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall and Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall -- the machines have also been installed at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC), girls'

The vending machines were supposed to provide easier access to the products and lower costs for almost 12,000 female students. But students said the malfunctioning machines have caused more inconvenience than comfort. The machines often offer low-quality napkins and do not provide pads even after payment.

common rooms at arts, business studies, fine arts faculties, and the science faculty library.

Female students said the malfunctioning machines have caused more inconvenience than comfort. The machines often offer low-quality napkins and do not provide pads even after payment.

Nineteen-year-old Sharifa Oishee had a similar experience when the vending machine took her money but provided

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

1 more hospitalised with dengue

UNB, Dhaka

One more person was hospitalised with dengue in the 24 hours to yesterday morning.

The new patient was admitted to a hospital in Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Twenty-two dengue patients, including 14 in the capital, are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.

So far, the DGHS has recorded 921 dengue cases, 889 recoveries, and ten deaths this year. The country logged 281 dengue deaths in 2022 -- the highest on record after 179 deaths recorded in 2019. Also, it recorded 62,423 dengue cases and 61,971 recoveries last year.

Dhaka's air quality 5th most polluted

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka's air quality was "unhealthy" yesterday morning.

With an air quality index (AQI) score of 161 at 8:57am, Dhaka ranked 5th in the list of cities worldwide with the worst air quality.

Chile's Santiago, Vietnam's Hanoi and Thailand's Chiang Mai, occupied the first three spots in the list, with AQI scores of 180, 170 and 169, respectively.

An AQI between 101 and 150 is considered "unhealthy", AQI between 201 and 300 is said to be "very unhealthy", while a reading of 301+ is considered "hazardous", posing serious health risks to residents.

Dhaka has long been grappling with air pollution issues. Its air quality usually turns unhealthy in winter and improves during the monsoon.

As per the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year, largely as a result of increased mortality from stroke, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer and acute respiratory infections.

Local youths on mission to protect environment

MINTU DESHWARA

A group of youths, all wearing blue t-shirts. Some of them were seen picking up empty packets of chips, while others were collecting polythene and empty water bottles.

Meanwhile, a cluster was seen sweeping the area. Another was collecting the trash and helping others pile them up.

Such was the scene when this correspondent visited Madhabkunda waterfall area in Moulvibazar's Barlekha. Upon further enquiry, it was known that a group of young volunteers took it upon themselves to keep the tourist spot and place of scenic beauty clean, by offering their manual labour.

Later, they also put up a waste bin on the spot. These youths are members of Barlekha Kathalatli Samaj Kalyan Parishad, a voluntary organisation.

Members of the organisation started cleaning the area spanning one kilometre in and around Madhabkunda tourist spot main gate on Tuesday. Public representatives and local traders joined them in their endeavour, which was appreciated by the locals.

The volunteers said tourists from different parts of the country visit Madhabkunda every year. They bring polythene, chips packets and water bottles with them and trash the area while leaving.

This not only damages the environment but also harms the scenic beauty. "We noticed this during a recent visit to the area," said Delwar Hossain Chowdhury, chair of Kathalatli Samaj Kalyan Parishad.

"That's when the idea of the campaign came to my mind, which I shared with the members of the organisation," he added.

In no time, the volunteers got down to their mission. Upazila Parishad Vice Chairman Taj Uddin, Dakshinbhag North UP Chairman Enam Uddin and local traders joined them in the campaign.



Youths working under voluntary organisation Barlekha Kathalatli Samaj Kalyan Parishad have been cleaning Madhabkunda waterfall area in Moulvibazar's Barlekha. Many were seen picking up water bottles, while others were piling up garbage to dispose them. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR



Country's farming system is mechanised now: minister

UNB, Dhaka

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Md Shahab Uddin yesterday said that Bangabandhu wanted to make our cultivation system modern and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is implementing Bangabandhu's plan.

"Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman went to China and Japan and saw mechanised farming there. After returning home, he asked to make our country self-sufficient in food... Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has materialised Bangabandhu's plan today," he said.

“ Farmers no longer cultivate with cows. They grow plants and ready the land in a mechanical way.

He made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at a programme of agricultural machinery distribution among farmers at subsidised prices organised by the Department of Agricultural Extension Barlekha upazila of Moulvibazar district.

The environment minister said, "Farmers no longer cultivate with cows. They grow plants and ready the land in a mechanical way."

The government is distributing agricultural machinery to the farmers at subsidised prices to make the country self-sufficient in food, he added.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sunjit Kumar Chanda presided over the function. Among others, Upazila Parishad Chairman Soyeab Ahmed, Upazila Agriculture Officer Monowar Hossain and Upazila Krishak League President Abdul Latif were present on the occasion.

Boy dies in Sylhet road accident

UNB, Sylhet

A teenage boy was killed and two others were injured in a road accident involving a truck and a motorbike in Sylhet's Jalalabad area yesterday, police said.

The deceased was identified as

Rajib, 14, son of Shamsul Hoque of Tukerbazar area under Jalalabad Police Station in the city. The injured are Faisal Ahmed, 25, and Muhibur Rahman, 35.

Md Khaled Mamun, inspector (investigation) of Jalalabad Police Station, said the accident occurred around noon when the speeding

truck rammed into the bike driven by Muhibur on Kumargaon road, leaving the trio critically injured.

They were rushed to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital where physicians declared Rajib dead, he said, adding that the rest were being treated.

AL confident for victory, rivals worried

FROM PAGE 5

never had a chance for vying in any polls," he said. "I am grateful to my leader Prime Minister and AL President Sheikh Hasina for giving me the party nomination."

AL sources said Noman has been given the reward for his dedication to the party.

Noman said he is confident for his victory. "All the leaders and activists of the party are united and have been working for me," he said. "I am going door to door and getting positive response..."

Noman's rival candidates are also confident for victory if, what they said, the by-election is held in a free

and fair manner.

"The polls must be held in a transparent way," said SM Farid Uddin, who is vying with electoral symbol "chair".

"Wherever I go for campaigning, I am getting a huge positive response from the voters," he said. "The voters are eagerly waiting for casting their votes and it is now the duty of EC to assure them of holding fair polls."

Echoing the same, Sehab Uddin Mohammad Abdus Samad, who is vying with electoral symbol "candle", said voters are enthusiastic for casting their votes but they are "afraid" whether they can do so.

"I expect the EC would create an

atmosphere in the area so that voters would be encouraged to come to polling centres," he said.

"We proposed to the EC for setting up CCTV in every polling booth, but the EC rejected it saying that it is very expensive and they did not have the budget for it," he said.

Contacted, Chattogram District Election Officer Jahangir Hossain said the polls will be held through electronic voting machine.

About installing CCTV, he said they did not get any such instruction from EC.

He said almost all preparations have been taken to hold the polls peacefully.

Helpful initiative falling apart

FROM PAGE 3

no product. She tried again but faced the same situation. "Every time I use these machines, they fail. I've lost the money every time as well, so I stopped using them," said the second-year student of English.

This correspondent polled 42 DU students, who expressed similar problems, including money waste, technical faults, excessive waiting times, and low-quality napkins.

Munira, a residential student at Ruqayyah Hall, said they had to rely on vending machines in the event of an emergency late at night because most stores remain closed at that time, but they run into unwanted problems because the machines barely work.

A few students from the same hall remarked that the facility varies in usefulness depending on the old and new buildings and dormitories; for example, the newly completed 7th

March building has a fully functional machine.

Besides, each machine is meant to have two towels and two trash cans. The students were assured that they would always receive

Each machine is meant to have two towels and two trash cans. The students were assured that they would always receive support from a female aide while purchasing a pad. Unfortunately, none of these services have been made available yet. Female students are demanding continuous supervision of the process to make it more efficient. They also recommend the installation of a digital money-transfer system in case of emergencies.

installation of a digital money-transfer system in case of emergencies.

Hasin Jahan, country director of WaterAid Bangladesh said, "Students spend a lot of time in

their classrooms, which demands adequate supply of sanitary pads inside academic institutions. Besides, female wash-rooms of educational institutions are often unhygienic. This issue requires immediate attention."

Tilottoma Shikder, a

member of the DU senate, suggested the need for campaigns to teach the students about the usage of the machines and speaking out when faced with problems.

"If a student complains about any malfunction, the service providers will give her an extra sanitary pad without any question," she claimed.

However, all is not bad. Each pad costs Tk 10 from the DU machines, which is less than what is charged at pharmacies. The machines are re-filled in time by ACI group every week.

Prof Tania Haque of women and gender studies said the initiative to install sanitary pads will advance the concept of healthy sanitation for women.

She urged the university authority to take central steps to install sanitary pad vending machines not only for students but also for female staff and faculty members.



Members of Rapid Action Battalion conducted special mobile courts to check fitness and licence of vehicles in various places, including Motijheel, Shajahanpur and Kamalapur in Dhaka, yesterday. This photo was taken in Motijheel.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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ISHWARDI RAILWAY STATION MARKETS

Traders worried about railway’s eviction plan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

The railway authorities are planning to expand the junction yard at Ishwardi Railway Station to unload goods brought by carrier trains. To do this, the space needs to be cleared, which will lead to eviction of the shops set up in the yard.

And this eviction is worrying small traders who have been demanding rehabilitation once the shops are evicted.

Meanwhile, the railway authorities have already warned the traders of an eviction drive and marked over 50 structures in the station area last week.

Md Masud Hossain, a clothes trader from Ishwardi municipality area, rented a shop at Ishwardi rail junction six months ago. He invested Tk 4 lakh ahead of the Eid sales by borrowing the money. Now, the threat of eviction looms over his head as his shop has also been marked by the railway authorities.

“Just when the Eid sales started reaching their peak, I got to know that I’ll have to vacate the area. My investment is in danger,” said Masud.

The concern is shared by most traders in the area.

“I’ve been running my business at the junction, taking a lease from railway, for over a decade now. Now, my shop has been marked red,” said another trader Ali

Ahmed.

Notable, while leases were originally taken from railway authorities, in most cases, the lessees are not running the business. Many have taken rent of the spaces from the lessees informally.

“There are around a hundred small shops in the rail station area, locally renowned as the poor people’s market. Most traders have been running their

“ **Just when the Eid sales started reaching their peak, I got to know that I’ll have to vacate the area. My investment is in danger.**

MD MASUD HOSSAIN
Clothes trader

businesses here... for over the last five decades,” said Md Abul Kalam, a leading trader in the market.

“Moreover, most are doing business by taking loans from NGOs and other sources. They have no scope of shifting their shops anywhere else. Their livelihoods will be completely ruined,” added Abul Kalam, also a member of Ishwardi Chamber of Commerce.

Traders of the area have urged the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



The railway authorities have decided to expand the yard of the Ishwardi rail junction to make more space for unloading goods. For this, they have red-marked over 50 shops in the area, identifying them as illegal. This has put shopkeepers and traders in distress ahead of Eid. They are now demanding rehabilitation if the eviction is carried out. These photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Woman ‘tortured by husband for dowry’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Narayanganj*

A three-month pregnant woman was brutally tortured by her husband allegedly for getting dowry in Narayanganj’s Araihaazar upazila.

Family members of victim Tamanna, 25, said she got married to Didar Hossain, 26, in 2017. They have two daughters – Tanha, 4 and Fahima, 2.

Tamanna told this newspaper that her family gave Tk 1,27,000 in cash and gold jewellery to her in-laws at the time of her marriage as dowry. She used to bring money from her father’s house at various times even after her marriage as per her husband’s demands.

Her husband Didar Hossain, who is a day labourer, was not getting work due to his drug and gambling addiction over the last year. He sold Tamanna’s jewellery – given to her by her mother – for money, said Tamanna.

Meanwhile, Didar was also pressurising her to get more money from her parents.

“I’m currently three months pregnant. Even in this condition, my husband has been brutally beating me for dowry,” said Tamanna. “I fell unconscious after he punched me in my right eye several times.”

Later, her father-in-law Md Kashem called her mother. She came and took Tamanna to a private hospital in Araihaazar upazila. Tamanna was taken to her mother’s house after receiving treatment yesterday.

This correspondent could not reach Didar. Contacted, Tamanna’s father-in-law Kashem admitted to his son torturing his daughter-in-law. “I tried to stop him but failed. I admit that what he did was wrong.”

Tamanna’s family went to Araihaazar Police Station on Wednesday night to file a case regarding her husband’s torture. “However, police sent us to the hospital first,” said Tamanna’s uncle Ahmad Ali.

Officer-in-Charge of Araihaazar Police Station Emdadul Haq Taiyob told this newspaper that an officer has been assigned to investigate the allegation. “Legal action will be taken against the accused after preliminary investigation.”

However, no case has been filed till filing of this report at 4:30pm yesterday.

Ctg residents suffer due to frequent power outage

ARUN BIKASH DEY, *Ctg*

With the heat wave blowing all over the country and putting people’s lives in discomfort and misery, frequent load-shedding has doubled down on the sufferings of Chattogram’s residents.

Although the country set a new record of power production on Monday, people in different areas of Chattogram city have been suffering in the scorching heat due to frequent power cuts in the past three days.

According to Power Development Board (PDB), power plants in Bangladesh produced 15,604 megawatts of electricity on Monday, which is a new record.

However, in most areas of the port city, power outages occurred

eight to 10 times a day. Residents cannot even sleep at night due to the heat, as the power goes out even at midnight.

The situation is worse in rural areas. Once the electricity’s gone, there is no news of it coming again for hours.

The highest temperature of

Shuvescha, a graduate of the English Department of Chittagong College, is currently preparing for the BCS examination.

“I have seen on the television that the country has set a record of power production, so I don’t understand why we have to

Contacted, Cab Central Vice President SM Nazer Hossain said before Ramadan, the electricity, water and gas authorities assured consumers that there will be no shortage of supplies during Ramadan. But now, electricity and water shortage are making people’s life miserable in the port city.

“We have heard that production has stopped in some power stations in Chattogram. In that case, the government should generate more power from the national grid to Chattogram,” he added.

Contacted, Shampa Nandi, assistant chief engineer of PDB, Chattogram, declined to make any comments on the matter.

However, Gias Uddin, executive engineer of PDB, Chattogram, admitted to The Daily Star that the production of power in some stations has been hampered due to different reasons. However, he also mentioned that it was not the reason behind frequent load-shedding in Chattogram.

“We always receive power from the national grid. Our power stations generate power to the national grid which distributes power all over the country,” he added.

Gias also said the daily electricity demand of Chattogram is 1,300mw. However, it only gets around 700mw from the national grid.

Contacted, Rezaul Karim, chief engineer of PDB, Chattogram, said Chattogram receives around 300mw less power than its daily demand from the national grid, which he claimed is the reason behind such frequent power outages.

“ **On Monday, electricity went out at 8:00am and came back at 8:40am. Then it went out again at 10:00am and came back at 10:30am. The cycle repeated itself when power went out again at 11:45am and came back at 12:20pm. It continued the cycle till 3:00am the next day.**

SHUVESCHA GHOSH, Resident

the city was recorded at 33.7 degrees centigrade on Monday, said Harun-ur-Rashid, forecast officer of Chattogram Met Office.

The official said humidity was recorded at 80 percent on Monday, while it was 78 percent on Tuesday.

“When there is more humidity in the air, people feel more heat in their bodies,” he said.

Shuvescha Ghosh, a resident in the city’s Askar Dighir Par area, said, “I cannot sit to study due to the heat. I cannot even sleep properly at night due to frequent load-shedding.”

“On Monday, electricity went out at 8:00am and came back at 8:40am. Then it went out again at 10:00am and came back at 10:30am. The cycle repeated itself when power went out again at 11:45am and came back at 12:20pm. It continued the cycle till 3:00am the next day.”

suffer due to the frequent power outage,” he said.

Like Shuvescha, many people in different areas of the city, including Halishahar, Bahaddarhat, Oxygen, Agrabad, Chawkbazar, Battery Goli, Askar Dighir Par, Anderkilla, Shulakbahar, Panchlaish, Muradpur and Bibirhat areas, have been suffering in the past three days due to frequent power cuts.

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (Cab) in a statement sent to the media on Tuesday demanded that the government put an end to load-shedding in Chattogram by generating more power from the national grid.

In the statement, the Cab leaders said public life is already being severely disrupted due to extreme heat, and power outages have added more to this suffering.

CAB Central Vice President SM Nazer Hossain said before Ramadan, the electricity, water and gas authorities assured consumers that there will be no shortage of supplies during Ramadan. But now, electricity and water shortage are making people’s life miserable in the port city.

CTG-8 BY-ELECTION

AL confident for victory, rivals worried over transparency

ARUN BIKASH DEY, *Chattogram*

With the by-polls for Chattogram-8 (Boalkhali-Chandgaon-Panchlaish-Bayezid) coming closer, the candidates are busy campaigning from afternoon to midnight.

According to locals, as BNP, one of the biggest political parties, is not participating in the by-polls and no BNP leader is vying as an independent candidate, the Awami League candidate is feeling comfortable.

Five candidates – Noman Al Mahmud from AL, Sehab Uddin Mohammad Abdus Samad from Bangladesh Islamic Front, Kamal Pasha from National People’s Party, SM Farid Uddin from Islamic Front Bangladesh, and independent candidate Ramzan Ali – are going to contest the by-election to be held on April 27.

“ **We proposed to the EC for setting up CC cameras in every polling booths but the EC rejected it saying that it is very expensive and they did not have the budget for it,**

SEHAB UDDIN MOHAMMAD ABDUS SAMAD
AL rebel candidate

A total of 5,17,652 people are supposed to cast their votes, said Election Commission sources.

The constituency remained vacant after the death of AL lawmaker Moslem Uddin Ahmed on February 5.

The candidates are campaigning in every vicinity under the jurisdiction of the constituency, offering the voters a bunch of pledges regarding development if elected.

AL candidate Noman conducted campaigns in eight unions under Boalkhali upazila along with five wards in the city recently.

Contacted, Noman, also organising secretary of Chattogram city unit AL, said it is for the first time he was vying as a candidate in polls. “I have been in politics since my student life in 1970s and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Rising costs drive ‘tal-pakha’ artisans out of profession

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barishal*

The heatwave and frequent power outages have increased the demand for “tal-pakha (hand-made palm leaf fans)” made by rural artisans.

Artisans of Chandshi village of Barishal’s Gournadi upazila are now spending busy days making these fans to meet the demand, selling them to people and traders from different parts of the country including the capital.

Chandshi is located about four kilometres away from Gournadi upazila headquarters; it is now known as “Pakhapalli” or the village for preparing palm-leaf hand fans.

Many of these families have been in this profession more than 30 years.

However recently, many artisans have started to shift to a different profession due to the shortage of raw materials and increasing production cost of these fans.

Those who are still involved in this business have sought help of government departments and took out interest-free loans.

After visiting different areas of the village, families were seen busy making these fans in an orderly fashion, and all members were



participating in the process.

Female members make the fans and tie them with yarn, while male members of the house are responsible for collecting and trimming the palm leaves and selling the fans.

As soon as one enters the village, one can see fan artisans Simul Akhtar, Kajal Banu, Ayesha Begum busy making fans – a skill passed down by their parents.

Starting from cutting and trimming the palm leaves, the fan-making process ends in a few steps. The last step in making the fan is tying everything with yarn.

Simul said she can earn Tk 100 by binding 100 fans every day.

Rashid Khalifa, 65, of the same village said he has been making fans for the past 25 years, but is now facing a crisis in this profession due

to the scarcity of palm leaves, the main material for making fans.

They have to visit different areas of nearby upazilas for collecting palm leaves.

Meanwhile, seven members of Hashem’s family are involved in collection, but most times, they are forced to resort to buying palm leaves and bamboo at higher prices.

His family together makes 200 to 300 fans per day. It costs them Tk 3-5 to make each fan, and they are selling it wholesale for Tk 5-7.

Halim Khalifa, another craftsman of that village, said that once a week, a wholesaler comes and buys hand fans from the house.

Local social worker Premananda Gharami said due to financial hardship, artisans of Pakhapalli are deprived of their profits from summer season, since many artisans have to take money from lenders in winter to meet the production cost of the fans in summer.

Chairman of Chandshi Union Parishad Krishna Kant Dey said due to the increase in the price of materials, around 50 families involved in this profession have been forced to change their profession. Even when artisans do receive a profit, part of it goes to the money-lenders.

Theatre or living room?

Our picks for your Eid entertainment

Eid is a time for joy and celebration. While the best use of this time is undoubtedly to go out and meet your family, another long-standing tradition is to watch your favourite stars work their magic on-screen. We present to you our picks for the best films and OTT projects you can watch this year.

Films:
'Leader Amie Bangladesh'
Shakib Khan's new film, *Leader Amie Bangladesh*, has already set the gears in motion to become a hit. It has garnered a positive reaction from the audience. In this film, directed by Topu Khan, Shakib will act opposite Shabnom Bubby.

The two songs in this film, *Kotha Ache* and *Surma Surma* are trending all over the country, and the fans are eagerly awaiting the release of the film.

'Laal Shari'
Apu Biswas's debut production film, *Laal Shari*, is based on the lives and struggles of handloom weavers. The *Koti Takar Kabin* actress will be seen opposite Symon Sadik in the government-funded film. Directed by Bandhan Biswas, the first song of the film, *Ronge Ronge Shonghe Shonghe*, received positive reviews from the audience.

'Kill Him'
Actor-business tycoon AJ is

no stranger to Eid releases. Now, Ananta, and Barsha will be returning this Eid to entertain the audience with their new film, *Kill Him*. The musical number and trailer of the film have already created a buzz among audiences.

Directed by Mohammad Iqbal, *Kill Him* will portray Ananta Jalil in the role of an agent. This will mark the first time Ananta and Barsha will be working on a film outside of their own productions.

'Local'
Another film by Shabnom Bubby, *Local* directed by Saif Chandan has received a lot of praise from the Bangladesh Film Censor Board. The story and dialogue for the film have been written by Ferari Forhad. In this film, Bubby will be seen opposite actor Ador Azad.

The movie has everything, starting with crime, politics, romance, and adventure, which makes it a perfect film for Eid.

'Paap'
Jaaz Multimedia will be coming to this Eid with their new film, *Paap*. Directed by Saikat Nasir, the film stars Bobby and Ziaul Roshan in the lead roles.

In this film, Bobby plays the role of a detective. The poster and the trailer have already created anticipation for the release of the film.

'Jinn'
Jaaz Multimedia's horror film *Jinn* is already the talk of the town because of this unusual '1 Lakh' challenge. Although so far nobody has been able to watch the film alone, surely it increases the curiosity of the audience.

Nader Chowdhury has directed the horror film *Jinn*. The film will see the first-ever on-screen pairing of Shajal Noor and Puja Chery.

OTT Projects:
'Mohanagar 2' (Hoichoi)

After the tremendous success of Mohanagar Hoichoi, the director of the

series, Ashfaque Nipun, is back with its second season.

The cop-crime thriller recently released a teaser of the show on its official channel and social media pages. The first season of the series was thrilling, ending with an unfinished story. The audience has been waiting for the truth to be revealed, and the ultimate consequence that OC Harun has to face.

Just ahead of Eid, the second season of the series was released yesterday (April 20).

'Myself Allen Swapan' (Chorki)
The witty and funny Allen Swapan will be back with his smuggling business this upcoming Eid, as the new teaser revealed the release date of the spin-off series, *Myself Allen Swapan* directed by Shihab Shaheen.

With Chorki's original series, *Syndicate*, last year, Nasir Uddin Khan carved a place in the hearts of the audience by overshadowing the big stars. In that series, he played the role of a leader of the money laundering group, Allen Swapan.

The series also stars Rafiath Rashid

Mithila as the wife of Allen Swapan, Shimla, Sentu, and Sumon Anwar, among others.

The series will be released the day before Eid.

'Made in Chittagong' (Binge)
Released on November 18 in just a few cinema halls in Chittagong, the audience now can enjoy Partha Barua and Aparna Ghose starrer *Made in Chittagong* from their drawing room.

Directed by Imraul Rafat, the film has been made in the regional language of Chattogram. The film also stars Chittralekha Guha and Nasir Uddin Khan, among others.

'Shohore Onek Rod' (Deepto Play)
After the success of *Network Er Baire* and *Unish 20* in Chorki, Mizanur Rahman Aryan will again entertain the audience with a sweet romantic flash film *Shohore Onek Rod*. The film features Khairul Basar and Sabila Nur in the lead roles.

'Hotel Relax' (Bongo)
Bachelor Point famed director Kafil Arefin Ome is making his OTT debut with this web-series.

The star-studded cast includes Purnima, Polash, Mishu Sabbir, and Marzuk Russell, among others. Purnima will be portraying the role of a police officer in the series.



COUNTRYWIDE

Aziz, a role model for farmers

SHYKH SERAJ

Abdul Aziz, a resident of Shaliaboh village in Tangail's Ghatail upazila, is the most recognized farmer in Bangladesh.

He has earned the reputation by growing various types of crops like guava, lemon, malta, orange, tang, and many other fruits.

Every year in the Bengali month of Baishakh, he distributes free saplings among hundreds of people in his locality and he did the same as well this year.

He thinks the whole landscape can be changed by planting trees, filled with greenery.

He has appeared in many episodes of Hridoye Mati O Manush in the last one and a half decades.

In 2008, he achieved Channel i Agriculture Award as one of the most innovative farmers of the country.

For years, many farmers have followed Chasha (farmer) Aziz and built their own fruit orchards.

Aziz is not concerned about his wealth at all, rather his deep

attraction is towards the soil, farming and farmers.

I had the opportunity to visit Aziz's home on many occasions and I went there again in February this year.

According to Aziz, although nursery traders of the country are selling different varieties of fruit saplings, it is important to know which ones are suitable for our soil.

Aziz walked around his orchard and showed oranges in many trees have dried up.

Aziz said all types of oranges do not produce well in the soil of our country.

He hopes to earn Tk 10 lakh from his three-acre orange orchard this year.

Readers, as I said earlier, Aziz's patience and commitment to the society amazed me.

He doesn't just want to succeed alone, but he wants others to achieve more and more.

When he started cultivating malta 10 years back, he distributed his first harvest among the villagers

and students.

Aziz said to raise a mixed fruit orchard is best for rural farming families so that they can get year-round benefits.

He is particularly optimistic about commercial orange production.

Aziz took me to a local primary school premises on the Pahela Baishakh, 1430, where he distributed oranges and orange saplings among every student free of cost.

The production of oranges is increasing, but still, local orange market is not that prosperous.

In this case, farmers feel that the import policy needs to be revised.

Aziz said to increase the production of local fruits and crops, it is necessary to reduce the import quantity for at least one season.

I believe, the skill Aziz is creating in terms of sustainable and profitable agriculture will guide many unemployed youths in the country. It will also play an important role in expanding the market for high-yielding or new fruit crops across the country.



Abdul Aziz, third from left, distributes orange saplings among some school students in Tangail's Ghatail upazila.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

Indian court rejects Rahul Gandhi's plea

FROM PAGE 12

Naishadh Desai told reporters, adding that the verdict would be appealed in the Gujarat High Court.

Critics highlight that the defamation conviction came after Gandhi repeatedly raised the issue of Modi's relationship with business tycoon Gautam Adani both inside and outside parliament.

The two men -- both

Gujaratis -- have been close associates for decades, but Adani's business empire has been subject to renewed scrutiny this year after a US investment firm accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud, which it denies.

Gandhi, currently on bail, is the leading face of the Congress party, once the dominant force in Indian politics but now a shadow of its former self.

He is the scion of India's premier political dynasty and the son, grandson and great-grandson of former prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru.

But he has struggled to challenge the electoral juggernaut of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and its nationalist appeals to the country's Hindu majority.

In an appeal filed this

month, Gandhi's lawyers argued the trial was "harsh" and excessive.

They also said that if the trial court's decision was not stayed, it would cause irreparable damage to his reputation.

The sentence renders Gandhi ineligible to stand in next year's election, which Modi's party is widely expected to win convincingly.

Japanese firm tipped to get the job

FROM PAGE 12

HSIA, with its own manpower. Biman does the ground and cargo handling in all eight airports.

Amid widespread dissatisfaction of government high-ups over poor luggage handling services, CAAB decided to outsource the job to a company that can deliver international standard services and serve passengers in the best possible way.

Passengers at the HSIA have been facing

problems like mishandling of luggage for years. Sometimes passengers have to wait more than an hour after arrival to get their luggage.

"Although Biman is trying to improve the quality of services... it's not enough. We want to ensure international standard ground handling services at the third terminal," CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman said, adding, "At the same time, it will help increase the government's income."

CAAB is now conducting a study on how the work will be done, where money will be spent, and how CAAB will earn.

Around 70 percent of the construction work of the third terminal has already been completed and the terminal will have a soft opening in October, the CAAB chief told The Daily Star.

The third terminal is being built at a cost of Tk 21,399 crore and 70 percent of the money is coming from Japan International Cooperation

Agency (Jica) as loan.

Mitsubishi and Fujita of Japan and Samsung of Korea are constructing the three-storey 2.30 lakh square metres terminal.

It will have 115 check-in counters, 64 departure and 64 arrival immigration desks, 12 boarding bridges, and 16 carousels. It will also have a 5.42 lakh square metre apron for 37 aircraft and 63,000 square metre cargo complex.

A new carpark there will have space for 1,230 vehicles.

It'll elevate Dhaka-Tokyo ties to 'new stage'

FROM PAGE 12

the two countries should gradually shift the ties from donor-recipient to mutually beneficial "Eco Partner" on trade and investment.

Iwama said they are in a discussion on a possible "Economic Partnership Agreement" as Bangladesh is set to graduate from the LDC category in 2026. "I hope our leaders will acknowledge this development."

Asked whether taking the relationship to a new stage means strategic level, the ambassador said, "Definitely, we would like to elevate the relationship to a

new stage. You can define it as strategic, but strategic means we are doing security and defence cooperation."

EXPECTATIONS ON FOIP
Japan hopes that Bangladesh would play a vital role in materialising its new Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision announced by Prime Minister Kishida Fumio on March 20.

Japan is eyeing practical cooperation with Bangladesh to realise the FOIP for ensuring a rules-based international order to bring stability and prosperity for every country and secure peace and

prosperity in the region.

"Concisely speaking, Prime Minister Kishida Fumio emphasised the importance of dialogue with the so-called Global South," said the ambassador.

Iwama said there are so many aspects of the relationship, but connectivity is one of the key elements and the Japanese PM mentioned connectivity in a specific term -- connectivity between Matarbari and Northeast India. "This is a new idea."

Japan expects Bangladesh's contribution to the trilateral initiative

on connectivity front, the envoy added.

The ambassador said Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, commonly known as Quad, is not a military alliance, and military and political stability is one of the elements to be discussed during the dialogue between four countries -- Australia, India, Japan and the USA.

The envoy said Kishida would not ask Hasina to join Quad.

Hasina will be on an official visit to Japan from April 25 to 28, at the invitation of her Japanese counterpart Kishida Fumio.

Pakistan FM to attend SCO meet in India

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's foreign minister will attend a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in India next month, his ministry said yesterday, in what will be the first visit by a top Pakistani government official to India in nearly a decade.

Relations between the nuclear-armed neighbours have been fraught for years and they have fought three wars, two of them over the Muslim-majority Himalayan region of Kashmir, which they both claim in full but rule in part.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will attend a meeting of foreign ministers from the SCO in the Indian state of Goa on May 4-5, the ministry said.

It will be the first visit to India by a top Pakistani since then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attended Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in in 2014.



Protesters carry a replica of a coffin draped with a cloth and the word 'democracy' as they wait for the arrival of the French President, a month after his government pushed an unpopular pensions reform act through parliament, in Ganges, southern France yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

COVID CURBS 67m children missed out on vaccines: UN

AFP, United Nations

Some 67 million children partially or fully missed routine vaccine globally between 2019 and 2021 because of lockdowns and health care disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the United Nations said Wednesday.

"More than a decade of hard-earned gains in routine childhood immunization have been eroded," read a new report from the UN's children's agency, Unicef, adding that getting back on track "will be challenging."

Of the 67 million children whose vaccinations were "severely disrupted," 48 million missed out on routine vaccines entirely, Unicef said, flagging concerns about potential polio and measles outbreaks.

Vaccine coverage among children declined in 112 countries and the percent of children vaccinated worldwide slipped 5 points to 81 percent -- a low not seen since 2008. Africa and South Asia were particularly hard hit.

"Worryingly, the backsliding during the pandemic came at the end of a decade when, in broad terms, growth in childhood immunization had stagnated," the report said.

2002 GUJARAT RIOTS India court acquits 69 Hindus of murder of 11 Muslims

REUTERS, New Delhi

An Indian court yesterday acquitted 69 Hindus, including a former minister from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), of the murder of 11 Muslims during communal riots in the western state of Gujarat in 2002.

The killings occurred in Ahmedabad on February 28, 2002, a day after a suspected Muslim mob set fire to a train carrying Hindu pilgrims, setting off one of independent India's worst outbreaks of religious bloodshed.

A total of 86 Hindus were accused of the killings in the Naroda Gam district of Ahmedabad, 17 of whom died during trial. All the accused were free on bail.

"We have been saying from the first day that they were framed," defence lawyer Chetan Shah, who represented 82 of the accused, said. "Some of the accused were not present at the scene on the day of the incident."

Shamshad Pathan, who represented the victims, said they would challenge the court's decision in a higher court.

"Justice has eluded the victims once again. We will study the grounds on which the court has acquitted the accused persons," Pathan said.

Those acquitted include Maya Kodnani, a former minister of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP, who was a lawmaker at the time of the riots, former Bajrang Dal leader Babu Bajrang, and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Jaydeep Patel.

Bajrang Dal and VHP are Hindu nationalist groups and have close links to the BJP.

New fighting rattles Sudan's capital

Death toll rises to 300; residents stream from city, some stopped at checkpoints

AGENCIES

Residents of Sudan's capital yesterday reported renewed heavy gunfire over central Khartoum and some other areas as many tried to flee the city on the eve of the Eid holiday marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Over 300 people have been killed since the fighting erupted Saturday between forces loyal to Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), reports AFP. Early yesterday, smoke and fires that had risen from the city in previous days had abated, live TV feeds over Khartoum showed, before the fighting erupted once again.

Gunfire was heard in Bahri and residents reported violent clashes west of Omdurman where they said the army had moved to block the arrival of RSF reinforcements.

Both sides said earlier they would respect a 24-hour ceasefire that was due to come into effect at 6:00 pm local time on Wednesday, but was quickly broken by renewed fighting.

The RSF issued a statement about the breakdown in the truce, saying it came under attack in Omdurman and inflicted losses on the army in response, including shooting down two helicopters.

Reuters could not independently verify the RSF's

claims. Some of the most intense fighting has been focussed around the compound housing the army HQ and the residence of Sudan's military ruler, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.

The army controls access to Khartoum and appeared to be trying to cut off supply routes to RSF fighters, residents and witnesses said.



International powers, struggling to evacuate citizens after the airport and several districts housing embassies were caught up in the violence, have been pushing repeatedly for truces, to little effect.

More people have been leaving the capital with most able to pass but some stopped at checkpoints, according to residents and social media posts.

"There's no food, supermarkets are empty, the situation isn't safe, honestly, so people are leaving," said Khartoum resident who gave only his first name, Abdelmalek.

The fighting has been raging since Saturday morning, cutting

power and water supplies in many places during the final days of Ramadan, when Muslims fast from dawn to dusk.

The power struggle between Burhan and RSF leader General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, widely known as Hemedti, was triggered by an internationally-backed plan to form a new civilian government and integrate Hemedti's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) into the regular military.

Sudanese medics have warned of a catastrophic health care situation, especially in Khartoum where many hospitals were apparently caught in the crossfire.

As many as 70 percent of the hospitals in Khartoum and neighbouring states have been rendered "out of service" due to fighting, the doctors' union said.

The union has warned the death toll was likely to be far higher, with many wounded unable to reach hospitals.

Many countries have started to make plans to evacuate thousands of foreigners, but their efforts have been put on hold by the ongoing violence.

The Sudanese army said 177 Egyptian soldiers were evacuated from the northern city of Meroe back to Egypt, which also confirmed their arrival. The RSF said later it handed over another 27 Egyptian soldiers to the Sudanese Red Cross and Cairo confirmed their arrival at the Egyptian embassy in Khartoum.

Iran 'forced' US submarine to the surface in Gulf

AFP, Tehran

Iran said yesterday it had "forced" a US submarine to surface as it was crossing the strategic Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf, a claim the Americans promptly denied.

Admiral Shahram Irani, the commander of Iran's navy, told state TV the USS Florida nuclear submarine was "approaching and passing in complete silence" when it partly entered Iranian waters.

An Iranian submarine then forced it to "surface and cross the strait", he said, adding that Tehran would raise the matter with "international authorities".

In a Twitter statement, the US Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet said the claim was "absolutely false" and "represents more Iranian disinformation".

The "US 5th Fleet continues to operate wherever international law allows", it added.

Last June, the US Navy said three Iranian vessels had "interacted in an unsafe and unprofessional manner" as its ships transited the strait.

Washington-Tehran ties soured after Iran's 1979 revolution toppled shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and brought about Islamic rule under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

WAR IN UKRAINE Russia expands recruitment drive

REUTERS, Moscow

The Russian military has launched a video campaign to lure more professional soldiers to fight in Ukraine which challenges those interested to show they are "a real man" and swap what it casts as hum-drum civilian life for the battlefield.

The ad, set to stirring music, follows a report from British military intelligence and Russian media reports that suggest Moscow is seeking to recruit up to 400,000 professional soldiers - on a volunteer basis - to bolster its forces in Ukraine. The ad has so far been released on major Russian social networking sites.

Russia, which says it is prosecuting what it calls "a special military operation," does not disclose full casualty figures. But up to 43,000 Russians have been killed in the war so far, according to a recently leaked estimate from the US Defence Intelligence Agency.

It estimated up to 17,500 Ukrainians had been killed too.

The ad, which invites men to sign a contract with the Russian Defence Ministry for a salary starting at 204,000 roubles (\$2,495) a month, shows a man in supermarket dressed in military uniform holding a heavy machine gun. He is then shown in the uniform of a security guard with the question:

Meanwhile, Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg visited Kyiv yesterday and said Ukraine's future lies in Nato.

"And over time, our support will help you to make this possible," Stoltenberg told reporters during a joint press conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. He pledged continued military support for Ukraine.

FUNDING VIOLATIONS CBI searches at Oxfam India

NDTV ONLINE

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case against Oxfam India and its office-bearers for allegedly violating the provisions of India's foreign funding rules and carried out searches at the offices of the non-governmental organisation, officials said on Wednesday. According to the complaint filed with the agency by the Home Ministry, Oxfam India received around ₹ 1.5 crore directly into its Foreign Contribution Utilisation account instead of the designated bank account between 2013 and 2016. It also alleged that Oxfam India routed ₹ 12.71 lakh to the CPR in the financial year 2019-20.

BOAT SINKS OFF GREECE One migrant dead, 47 rescued

AFP, Athens

One man died and 47 people were rescued after a boat carrying migrants sank off southern Greece, the coast guard said yesterday. A rescue operation was launched early yesterday and the coast guard found "a dead man, aged 45,

and 47 surviving migrants" off the Peloponnese peninsula, an official told AFP. She said four children and three women were taken to hospital in Sparta, the main city in Laconia. Thousands of would-be migrants seek to reach the European Union via Greece, making a perilous crossing over the Mediterranean, often in flimsy, overcrowded boats. The migrants' boat had hit a rock, the coast guard said.



An Indian security personnel searches the bag of a pedestrian during a random search in Srinagar, J&K yesterday. Five soldiers died after a military truck caught fire likely due to a grenade attack by terrorists in J&K's Poonch, the Indian army said yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Indian climber rescued from Nepal peak

AFP, Kathmandu

An Indian climber was rescued alive yesterday from one of the world's most treacherous mountains in Nepal, three days after he went missing down a crevasse.

Anurag Maloo, 34, was descending from a camp on Annapurna on Monday when he fell down a deep crevasse at an altitude of around 5,600 metres.

Chhang Dawa Sherpa of Seven Summit Treks told AFP that Maloo had fallen 300 metres down a crevasse on the 8,091-metre (26,545-foot) mountain and had been lifted out by a team of eight people.

"His condition was critical and he has been airlifted to a Pokhara hospital for treatment," he added, referring to a nearby city.

Annapurna, the world's tenth highest mountain, is an avalanche-prone, technically difficult and has a higher death rate than Everest.

Have a safe and joyous Eid

Eid comes at an uncertain time, but together we can forge ahead

It is that time of year again, a time that brings to an end a month of fasting, spiritual dedication and reflection. A time that brings communities and entire countries together. A time of feasts and family bonding. As we prepare to embrace this moment – Eid-ul-Fitr will be observed either on Saturday or Sunday, depending on Shawwal moon sighting – things are falling into a predictable pattern. To celebrate Eid with their loved ones, tens of thousands of people have already left Dhaka on trains, buses, and launches. Reportedly, it has been mostly hassle-free so far, although, in the mad rush for home, some gridlock is to be expected along with some trouble getting tickets. We hope that all this will be kept to a minimum, and relevant government agencies will do their job properly.

This Eid, however, comes under less-than-ideal circumstances. Long-held concerns over high food prices have remained unaddressed, or ignored, causing suffering for a vast majority of the population. For Dhaka-based traders, the situation has been particularly grim. Although shopping markets are drawing heavy footfalls, the effect of the devastating fires in two popular markets for retail or low-end customers will cast a long shadow over the community. The incidents in Bangabazar and New Super Market – coming within the space of 11 days – together damaged about 4,000 shops. And like in past years, many workers in the garments sector will go back home without wages or Eid bonuses. According to an estimate, as of Wednesday, over 32 percent of RMG factories in seven industrial zones – including in Ashulia, Gazipur, Narayanganj, and Chattogram – are yet to pay bonuses to their workers.

These issues and others may ruin the festive mood for poor households and those with fixed income. Every Eid in Bangladesh also comes with the additional threat of precious lives being lost in road crashes. There is an irony in the fact that we talk about people streaming out of the capital without hassle, as they did last year too, only for us to be likely slapped with a long list of crash victims at the end of the holiday. Historically, Eids are when most road crashes occur. Last year, for example, highway travels during the extended Eid-ul-Fitr holiday between April 25 and May 8 resulted in the deaths of 376 people. With the relevant authorities still in a state of denial about the true extent of danger on our roads, one cannot help but worry if the same scenario will be repeated this time. We urge the authorities to take all measures necessary to ensure the safety of travellers.

Heading into the Eid holiday, however, we want to focus more on the brighter side of things as well as the lessons of the holy month that we can hopefully carry forward. As a nation, the lesson that will most benefit us is that of giving generously (to those in need of help) and of working together for the greater good of society. We wish everyone a safe and joyous Eid. Eid Mubarak!

Don't criminalise free thought

Withdraw suspension of Salina Shelley, repeal DSA

We are alarmed by the extent to which intolerance has been institutionalised in the country, severely curtailing people's right to free speech. The latest victim to have paid a price for expressing an opinion – a satire, for that matter – is Salina Akhter Shelley, poet and acting principal of Chattogram Port Authority Women's College. The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) suspended Selina on April 16, alleging that her Facebook status on the Arabic word Ramadan had “hurt” religious sentiments, and that such an act was punishable under the Digital Security Act (DSA). Five years since the infamous DSA was passed, we are still at a loss to understand what exactly constitutes “hurting” of religious sentiments, who is entitled to have hurt sentiments, and how one can objectively judge such a feeling.

By now, we have shouted ourselves hoarse over the various ways in which the vague provisions in the DSA have been misused to target human rights defenders, opposition activists, journalists, writers, cartoonists, etc. The list of who can be a target of the DSA – and the scope of what constitutes an offence – keeps on increasing by the day, so much so that any slightly critical or creative thought can be (mis)interpreted as offensive. Its broad and ambiguous provisions have created a culture of fear, forcing people to self-censor their opinions. For how long will this draconian law – which has no place in a country that professes to be democratic – dictate our thoughts?

After defending the law for the first three years of its enactment, the law minister in December 2021 admitted that it had been “abused in certain cases”, adding that a six-member team had been formed to address some of the concerns raised nationally and internationally. In February 2022, he claimed that the UN had given some suggestions to the committee, which they were looking into. But then, the relevant UN offices told *The Daily Star* that no such committee had been in touch with them in the two years since the minister announced its formation. Does it mean that all the talk of addressing concerns about DSA was just a charade?

On March 31, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk called for an immediate suspension of the DSA until necessary amendments were made, including repealing two sections and amending eight others. We are alarmed that far from delivering on his lofty promises of reform, the law minister rejected the possibility of repealing the two sections flagged by the OHCHR, and stated in no uncertain terms that the DSA was here to stay.

The government's reluctance to amend or repeal the DSA is an ominous sign, particularly as the national elections approach. What's equally concerning is that thought policing, popularised by the DSA, now seems to have spread across the country, with different institutions taking it upon themselves to criminalise diversity of thought, as evidenced by the case against Salina. We urge the authorities to withdraw the suspension against her, and stop criminalisation of freethinking by any means.

Vilification of a well-known scholar is a threat to us all



Shamsuddoza Sajen
is a journalist and researcher.

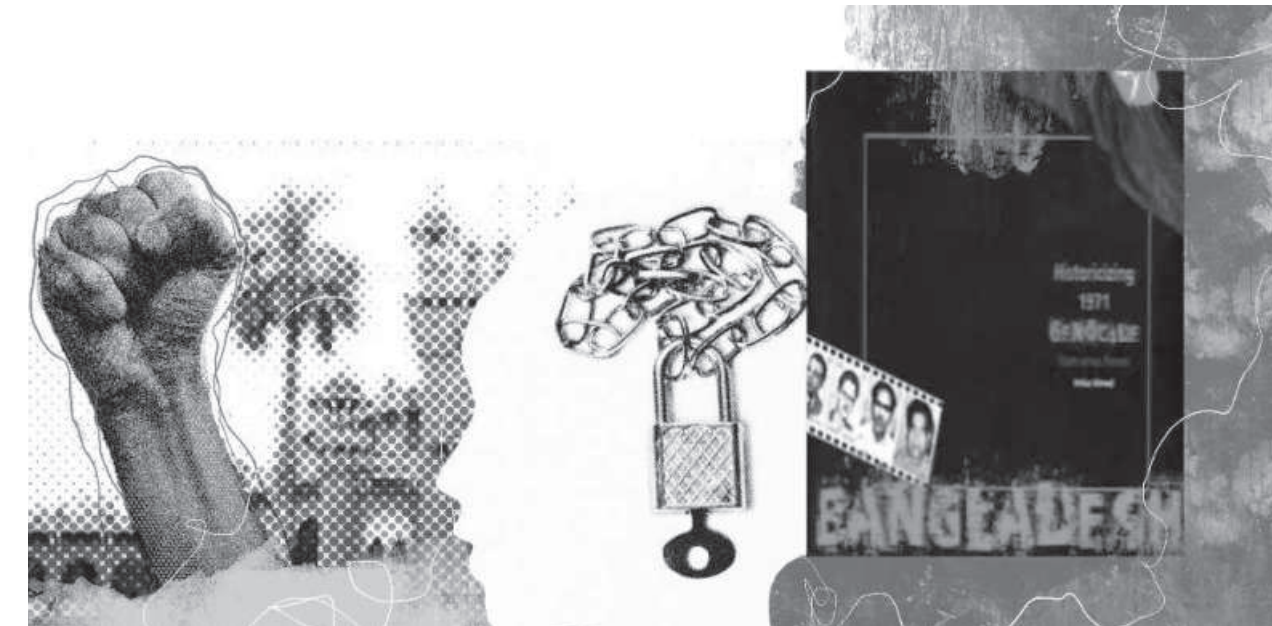
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

If you carefully read the introduction of the 15-volume *Bangladesh War of Independence: Documents*, you will not miss the fact that the original goal of the government initiative was to write a comprehensive history of the country's Liberation War. However, the project members chose to collect and publish documents related to the war instead. The reason they cited for this decision was the difficulty of “maintaining impartiality and objectivity and avoiding the possibility of distortion” in writing about a contemporary event, particularly a “revolutionary event” like the Liberation War. They were aware of the diversity of experiences during the war and wanted to ensure the representation of multiple perspectives.

The project was headed by famous litterateur and journalist Hasan Hafizur Rahman, and the authentication committee of the project included famous historians and educationists of Bangladesh, including Prof Mafizullah Kabir, Prof Salahuddin Ahmed, and Prof Anisuzzaman.

The publication of the documents was a great service to the nation. Most importantly, they set a standard and provided a guiding spirit for future research on the war. These values have become increasingly relevant in Bangladesh, particularly in light of recent events such as the removal of renowned academician Prof Imtiaz Ahmed from his position as the director of Dhaka University's Centre for Genocide Studies (CGS). This action was taken following a propaganda campaign against his book *Historicizing 1971 Genocide: State versus Person*, which was published in 2009. Interestingly, one of the campaigners, Sheikh Hafizur Rahman Karzon, has been appointed as the new director of CGS.

The event has set a dangerous precedent not only for future research



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

on the Liberation War, but also for academic freedom in Bangladesh. It is ironic that this has been done by the same university whose teachers sacrificed their lives to uphold their freedom of thought and conscience during the war.

The most shocking aspect was the statement released by the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA). It is disconcerting to think about the future of intellectual freedom in Dhaka University.

For the sake of reason, I must ask: if these teachers are truly concerned about the history of the genocide or the Liberation War, why have they remained silent for nearly 13 years since the publication of Prof Imtiaz Ahmed's book?

It is a globally accepted practice that, when disagreeing with a scholar's position, one should follow academic norms. These teachers could have written another book or

published articles in national and international media or journals to refute Prof Ahmed's observations. A serious reading of the book and contextualising all its content paint a different picture.

It is noteworthy that the Centre for Genocide Studies, Prof Ahmed's brainchild, was the first academic initiative of its kind in Bangladesh to study the 1971 genocide.

Bangladesh need not worry about it. While these criticisms may be valid, they do not justify the defamation and harassment of Prof Ahmed. We must not forget that hatemongers will continue to operate in the future. It is necessary to speak out against such actions, for not doing so will further shrink our free space.

Hasan Hafizur Rahman expressed regret in the introduction of the

Bangladesh War of Independence: Documents that only 15,000 pages could be published out of their 350,000-page document collection. He hinted that there were many more documents yet to be collected. Although decades have passed since the publication of these valuable volumes of our history, the rest of the documents from their collection remain unpublished. To my knowledge, many of these documents are now gathering dust in the collection of the National Museum.

If the government is genuinely committed to preserving the history of the Liberation War, they should take the initiative to publish these documents and establish a mechanism to continue the collection, research, and publication of the history of Bangladesh's Liberation War, while maintaining the highest academic standards.

How will our climate budget look post-NAP2050?



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HASEEB MD IRFANULLAH

Two facts related to climate-relevant funding in Bangladesh fascinate me. First, between 2015-16 and 2022-23 fiscal years, Bangladesh allocated 7.26-8.1 percent of its annual national budget as climate budget, which is 0.7-0.8 percent of the national GDP. Second, 18 years ago, the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) estimated to invest \$73.5 million in climate change adaptation over the following few years. But such strategic planning magnified manyfold in October 2022, when the government approved the National Adaptation Plan, 2023-2050 (NAP2050), targeting to spend \$230 billion over the next three decades.

Since the government is now preparing its annual national budget for FY2023-24, what changes can we expect to see in the climate-relevant allocations, post-NAP2050?

I think we can expect three specific achievable changes in the forthcoming climate budget. First, in the current fiscal year, with a total climate budget of Tk 30,500 crore, the three ministries or divisions (out of 25) with the highest climate allocations are Ministry of Agriculture (Tk 8,667 crore), Local Government Division (Tk 3,768 crore), and Ministry of Water Resources (Tk 3,484 crore). In addition, the climate budget also shows allocations against six thematic areas of the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, 2009. Here, the highest allocation is made to food security, social protection, and health (41.87

percent), followed by infrastructure (27.78 percent), mitigation and low-carbon development (13.36 percent), comprehensive disaster management (7.21 percent), capacity-building and institutional strengthening (6.71 percent), and research and knowledge management (3.07 percent). These thematic allocations broadly match the ministerial allocations.

In the FY2023-24 budget, we also need to see the geographical distribution of the climate allocations. The NAP2050 contains the latest climate vulnerability maps of Bangladesh considering a wide range of shocks (e.g. cyclones and floods) and stresses (e.g. rise of sea level and salinity intrusion), prepared by the Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS). The CEGIS can help the Finance Division to prepare maps combining climate fund allocations against the degree of climate vulnerability. These maps should carry information down to the upazila level, if union-level information is not available for now. We indeed need to know how much money is going to Dhaka and how much to Dacope (Khulna), Derai (Sunamganj) or Dimla (Nilphamari).

Second, in the forthcoming climate budget, a separate section should be added on investments to be made in nature-based solutions (NbS) to tackle climate change. Here, NbS means to protect, restore, create, and manage aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems to adapt to climate change impacts

as well as reduce carbon dioxide in the air, while increasing the local biodiversity. Focusing on NbS has two specific rationales. First, the NAP2050 has already included NbS as one of its six main goals. Second, unlike climate finance, our conservation finance is poorly defined and is essentially made of project-based, short-term investments.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest

By incorporating allocations for nature-based solutions into Bangladesh's climate budget, we can essentially bring together financing of two biggest crises of our times: climate emergency and biodiversity loss. The environment ministry should work with the finance authorities to develop a tool to collate investments in NbS by different government agencies every year.

and Climate Change and its concerned departments are showing low interest in sustainable conservation financing. Therefore, we are not going to see much progress in establishing new funds as outlined in the Ecologically Critical Area Management Rules, 2016, the Protected Area Management Rules, 2017, and the Bangladesh Biodiversity Act, 2017 any time soon. But the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, agreed upon by 188 countries in December 2022 in a global biodiversity meeting in Montreal, Canada, emphasises conservation finance to minimise the

current annual gap of \$700 billion.

By incorporating NbS allocations into Bangladesh's climate budget, we can essentially bring together financing of two biggest crises of our times: climate emergency and biodiversity loss. The environment ministry should work with the finance authorities to develop a tool to collate investments in NbS by different government agencies every year. Our experience of preparing climate budgets should be useful here.

Over the last two years, Bangladesh has developed two climate-related investment plans: the draft Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan 2030 (MCP2030) and the NAP2050. The climate budget for FY24 should track how many of these financial targets have been achieved or have received commitments from donors and development partners. If we look into the NAP2050, about 72.5 percent of the \$230 billion fund has to be invested by 2040. This means the country needs to triple its current yearly investment, which now stands just above \$3 billion.

In 2016, with FAO and USAID, the environment ministry prepared the Bangladesh Country Investment Plan for Environment, Forestry and Climate Change (EFCC-CIP). This CIP was supposed to be accompanied by a monitoring mechanism to track investments in these sectors until 2021, but it didn't work out. Based on past experience, the ministry and FAO can work with the finance authorities to develop a monitoring and reporting tool to track investments to implement the NAP2050.

The NAP2050 is an ambitious plan with 113 priority actions in crucial sectors ranging from water, disaster management, agriculture, nature conservation and urban, to policy, institution, capacity-building and research. If the NAP2050 can't make us rethink the way we prepare our climate budget, that will be a missed opportunity.

Zafrullah: Tribute to a freedom fighter and revolutionary



Prof Rehman Sobhan
is chairman of the Centre for
Policy Dialogue (CPD).

REHMAN SOBHAN

With Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury's passing, we have interred one of the few genuine social revolutionaries visible in Bangladesh's public domain. Zafrullah was indeed a frontline freedom fighter and was universally recognised as such. He did not participate in the war remotely, through campaigning abroad for our liberation, as many of us did. Such campaigns did valuable service to the course of the war, but is not comparable to travelling from London to Agartala, setting up a field hospital from scratch, on the front line of the war zone, and working round the clock to tend to the wounded and sick. He and his colleagues thereby saved lives and, in many cases, enabled the injured to return to the battlefield.

I do not know of too many people who actually gave up their lifestyles abroad to immediately join the Liberation War. Quite a number, such as Fazle Hasan Abed and Muhammad Yunus, did return to Bangladesh from abroad immediately after liberation and committed themselves to a life of service to the *dukhi manush*, as did Zafrullah and many others. For this class of young men and women, the Liberation War had a life-changing impact and inspired them to give up more conventional lives committed to professional advancement commensurate with their education and class. Yunus and Abed moved away from their projected career paths to build world-famous organisations, which served to improve the lives of millions of people not just in Bangladesh, but around the world. Other such social entrepreneurs have played an important role in writing Bangladesh's globally recognised success story of reducing poverty and promoting the human development of its people.

Zafrullah always remained anchored in Bangladesh. His point of departure lay in the revolutionary nature of his consciousness and actions. This was manifested in his decision to abandon his quest for a possible FRCS, the dream of every aspirant Bangalee medical practitioner, just a few weeks before his final exam – his decision to abandon his Pakistani nationality and to publicly tear up his passport, and his decision to join the Liberation War as a soldier. When he reached Kolkata, he did not linger there and join his many compatriots taking refuge there, but immediately moved to Tripura on the front line of the battlefield and decided to set up a field hospital. Presumably, studying for an FRCS does not educate anyone about how to set up a battlefield hospital with limited resources at hand or few experienced personnel available to him. Such a bold, risk-prone involvement, for a young man, required a revolutionary consciousness where you decide to do things that no one has thought of, and to do so for the first time.

Zafrullah's move to set up Gonoshasthaya Kendra in Savar was itself based on a revolutionary conception. I suspect that Zafrullah was inspired by ideas drawn from the Chinese Revolution led by Mao, which in its early years sought to provide health for all, using limited resources, socially appropriate technology, and the use of so-called "barefoot doctors" – medical practitioners with limited education from the grass roots, who could be provided with basic training to take care of the most frequently recurring medical problems of ordinary people.

Zafrullah's further revolutionary act was to engage the working people of Savar in taking care of their own health problems by investing in low-cost preventative care. Such care was mostly provided by the revolutionary act of bringing young village girls out of the seclusion of their homes, training them to work as healthcare providers, and eventually drawing them into a variety of other non-traditional activities such as riding bicycles, driving cars, working with machinery, and serving as security guards. All such activities by women are more commonplace now. But in the 1970s, these were social revolutionary acts, more so than microfinance, which was built around helping women to generate income working from the seclusion of their homes. By the end of the 1970s, the Gonoshasthaya women were ubiquitous across the landscape of Savar, engaged in work that was once inconceivable for any woman.

To build a cadre of "barefoot" healthcare providers required a revolutionary approach to medical education. Zafrullah believed – and I remember him explaining this on various public platforms and to me personally – that the courses training medical students for the MBBS

degree were inappropriate and not cost-effective for serving the health needs of the majority of the then low-income population, who mostly lived in the rural areas.

He argued that more elaborate training must indeed go on to meet the needs of patients with more complicated diseases and illnesses. But for the more commonplace illnesses suffered by a great majority of people such as fevers, low-grade infections, diarrhoeal diseases, simple injuries and the need for preventive care, a much shorter, more serviceable training programme would be cost-effective and could be completed in a much shorter time, which could produce large numbers of doctors/caregivers/nurses to meet the immediate needs of people. Moreover, such "graduates" would likely be more willing and able to live in the rural areas to service those most in need of affordable care. In contrast, five-year MBBS degrees produce a much smaller crop of caregivers whose graduates, in most cases, are less inclined to live and serve in the rural areas and spend their time and energy doing *tadbir* with the health ministry officials to be transferred to the metropolitan centres. It was

CEOs and managers who thereby locally incorporated companies such as Renata, Eskayef, and ACI, now at the vanguard of Bangladesh's thriving pharma industry that today meets 90 percent of our needs for medication and is one of our most promising export industries.

The drug policy and its outcome provide an excellent example of the positive outcome of economic nationalism. Zafrullah's revolutionary consciousness was demonstrated by his vision and courage to take on one of the biggest sources of FDI in Bangladesh at the time, and to persuade a regime not known for its strong commitment to nationalism to stay the course in the face of much pressure from the Western countries, from where the MNCs originated.

At the end of the day, Zafrullah's revolutionary vision had, at best, a limited impact. Its social reach did not go much beyond Savar, and its achievements at the national level remain limited to the drug policy. His ideas on reforming medical education did not go far due to the resolute resistance of the BMA against his non-traditional ideas. His initiative to use Bangladeshi scientific expertise to develop a low-cost rapid testing kit for Covid infections was rejected by the health ministry, though such kits came to be widely produced abroad and are in regular use in Bangladesh through imports.

In his later years, even when his health was failing, he engaged himself in a variety of causes where he believed the values that had informed the liberation struggle to be endangered. In a political climate where public reasoning is itself



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

Zafrullah's ideas on medical education which first attracted the wrath of the BMA and presumably many doctors with an MBBS. But he went on arguing about this to the end and eventually set up Gono University to give substance to his ideas.

His views on the pharmaceutical industry were also radical for its time. I remember around the early 1980s Zafrullah educating me to the fact that the MNCs who then monopolised the pharmaceutical industry marketed brand name medications at high prices, where their generics could be produced locally at lower costs. When he finally persuaded Gen Ershad to set new ground rules for banning branded medicines where generic alternatives were available, this was criticised and resisted by much of the pharmaceutical industry in Bangladesh, but particularly by the MNCs. Fortunately, the then government held firm and a large number of much favoured brand-name drugs, in popular use, were banned. The ban eventually led to an exodus from Bangladesh of most of the MNCs such as Pfizer, ICI, and Glaxo.

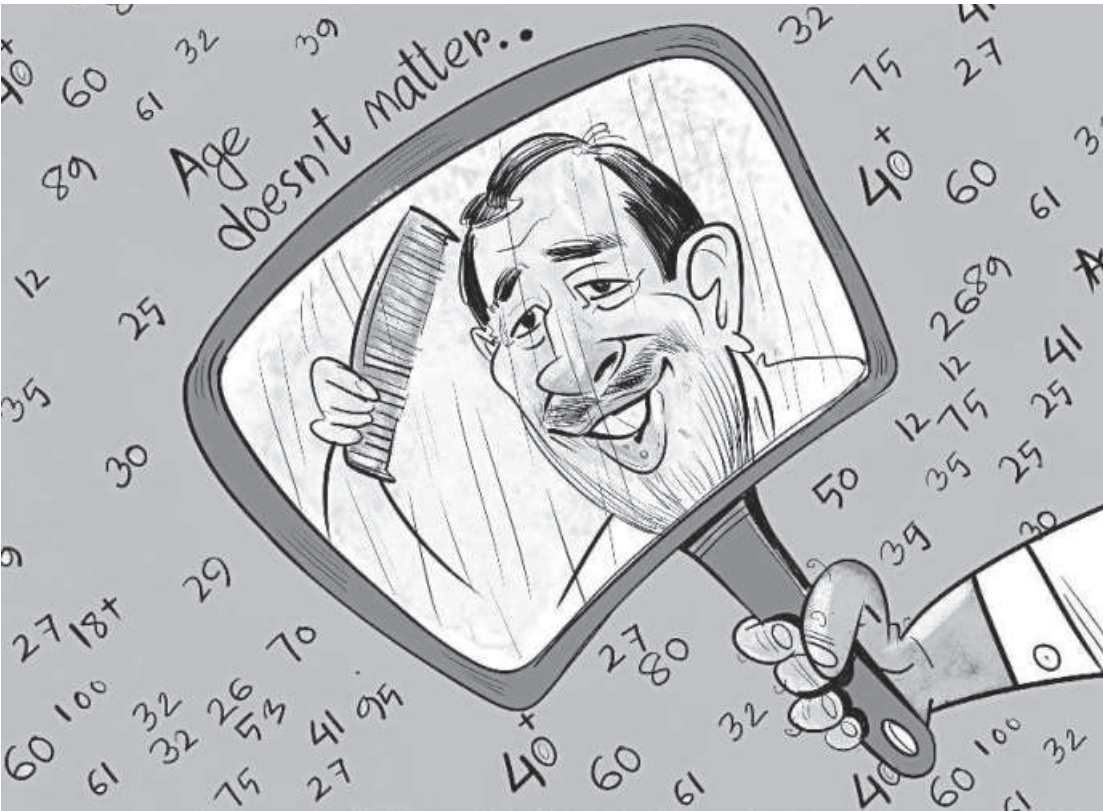
The good news was that, as predicted by Zafrullah, when he argued his case with Ershad for the drug policy reforms, the ban provided a great stimulus to the development of local pharmaceutical companies such as Square and Beximco. These ventures were given a quantum boost in their business fortunes when the MNCs vacated the local market for pharmaceutical products, leaving the field open for local companies. The further bonus came when the departing MNCs sold, on favourable terms, their production facilities, goodwill and, most important, their technological and managerial expertise, to their Bangladeshis

in retreat, his gestures remained largely rhetorical but projected his indomitable spirit and courage.

Many people talk or argue for revolution. A smaller number are members of political parties that proclaim social revolution as part of their ideologies. For all of this class, their revolution remains largely aspirational since they have had little or no opportunity to demonstrate what a social revolution would amount to in practice. Zafrullah, who always proclaimed himself to be a socialist, believed that incremental change was not enough and that the social order itself needed to be changed. He could never do this on his own since such a move demanded political engagement and the emergence of necessary objective conditions. Instead, he attempted through his programmes at Gonoshasthaya Kendra to demonstrate what a "socialist" health system – relevant to the needs of the masses – might look like. He explored in real life what empowerment of the deprived through a social and gender revolution may demand. He was sufficiently successful in demonstrating his ideas on the ground in Savar, enough to occasionally arouse the wrath and resistance of local elites and fundamentalist forces.

In his own life, he lived simply, owned no property, and remained accessible to all people – particularly the dispossessed, to whom he was perceived not as a *Neta*, but as a *Bhai*.

May his life inspire those, particularly the young – who continue to believe in social revolution but are discouraged by the formidable obstacles that lie before them – to move along the path blazed by Zafrullah.



VISUAL: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

The futility of fussing over age



NO STRINGS
ATTACHED

Aasha Mehreen Amin
is joint editor at The Daily Star.

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

It's always a bit of a jolt when one is reminded of one's age. Sometimes it comes as an unintentional backhanded compliment: "Apa you have 'preserved' yourself well," which may make you feel like a jar of onion pickle floating in a pool of mustard oil. At other times, it may be brutally honest and, again, well-intentioned. "Apa, the fact is this city is not made for old people; old people in this country should migrate to countries that are elderly-friendly."

Well, you kind of asked for it when you were complaining about the sloping footbridge that gives you the jitters because of your rickety knees.

But the fact is that there is no way of getting out of this constant message that you are considered kind of a "marvel" just for being able to stand and not crumble to the floor.

Of course it's all about perspective. When you were 12, your 16-year-old brother seemed like a real grown-up, and you were struck by his coolness for having the gumption to refuse haircuts and defy parental or school authorities, not caring about the dire consequences. When you were 16, you couldn't wait till you were 18, ready to enter the haloed gates of university, the Disney World of teenage fantasies where the possibility of being able to "study" hundreds of members of the opposite sex would make your head swim.

This perverse obsession with wanting to grow up fast – to partake in what seemed to be the perfect montage of life's most glorious moments – lasts till one reaches 25, when suddenly it does an about-turn. The fear of turning 30 and being on the precipice of "oldness" can ruin one's 20s, which honestly speaking IS the best time of your life – although, as we have earlier established, it's all subjective. People in their 50s and 60s, for instance, wistfully remember their 40s, the pre-pubescence of old age when their midlife crises led to all kinds of silliness – wearing ripped jeans to look like a teenager and horribly failing, hanging out with 20-somethings to be part of "the gang," sporting psychedelic eyeshadow colours, and so on.

The 50s are possibly the most tumultuous years when you are forced to come to terms with the inevitable decline of all that you took for granted – hair, smooth skin, sturdy bones, patience, and the general urge to be spontaneous and adventurous. It is also the time when one develops an affinity for any product that has "anti" as a prefix. Hence, the rows of anti-ageing serums, anti-hair loss shampoos, anti-greying dye, antioxidants, antidepressants, antibiotics, and so on. It is almost like reliving

puberty with the hormones going haywire (though with totally different outcomes), the feeling of being misunderstood and on short fuse all the time. It is a time when you really do feel like you are about to implode with rage at the sheer unfairness of it all, and also because SOMEONE DID NOT SWITCH OFF THE NIGHTLIGHT IN THE VERANDA EVEN AT 5AM!

It will also mean struggling to keep up with the sonic pace of technology so that, by the time you have kind of accepted that everything is saved "in the cloud," some smart Alec will tell you to AirDrop your files to their phone! You must also learn how to make your post "public" on Facebook and NOT send unicorn emojis to your boss when you text.

After the torment of the 50s, there is far more clarity in life. You will know for sure that the number of multi-coloured pills on your bedside table will keep on increasing, and your holidays abroad will fall under "medical tourism." You will be able to guess just how much your blood sugar

The best part is that it will no longer sting when the references to your twilight years are pointed out. In fact, it is a kind of superpower, this senior citizenship, providing you with incredible allowances.

level will shoot up if you have the extra *jilapi* after dinner, and how your BP will soar if you stay up till 2am binge-watching your favourite Netflix series.

The best part is that it will no longer sting when the references to your twilight years are pointed out. In fact, it is a kind of superpower, this senior citizenship, providing you with incredible allowances – the privilege to be cranky at any given time, exemption from all kinds of heavy lifting, the entitlement of the best seat in the living room, the pure joy of having grandchildren to cuddle (but not see through college), being fed first, and getting away with all kinds of offending remarks that will be condoned as a quirk of ageing.

The lesson, therefore, is to relish your age no matter what number it represents. Every age comes with its own set of challenges, but it also brings in new and interesting experiences that make life so mysterious and wondrous. So embrace your age with love and pride, smile triumphantly – toothless or not.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Aquarium residents

5 Jack or joker

9 Sea ray

10 Musical drama

12 Change

13 Angled edge

14 Sparkles

16 Clumsy fellow

17 Weasel relative

18 Pat Nixon's real first name

21 Plus

22 Gains by force

23 Docking spots

24 Fellow performer

26 Mountain pass

29 Platitude

30 Lawn tunneler

31 So far

34 Loses color

37 Parcel out

38 Last Greek letter

39 Horse controls

40 Put away

41 Canary snack

DOWN

1 Join the formation

2 Mean

3 T-bone, for example

4 Impair

5 Corn core

6 Gorilla or gibbon

7 Rise up

8 Visions

9 Molten rock

11 Letter before Bravo

15 Brooks

19 Munich mister

20 Snaky shape

22 Funny folks

23 Letter before

38 Across

24 Defeats decisively

25 Plug's place

26 Player in a mask

27 Candy bar nut

28 Nuisances

29 Keyboard goof

30 Scuffle

33 Sea dogs

35 Sense of self

36 Spotted

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FRIDAY'S ANSWERS

P	A	S	T		M	O	O	R	S	
A	N	A	I	S	A	U	D	I	T	
C	O	L	O	N	R	I	D	G	E	
E	R	A		U	S	E		J	O	E
D	A	M	A	G	E		C	O	R	D
K	I	N	G		C	R	A	B	S	
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LAW REVIEW

The Fiduciary Obligation Delusion in Syndicated Loan Agreements

SULTANA MUMTAZ

Last year, Eastern Bank Limited arranged a loan syndication worth BDT 1,200 crore for Banglalink Digital Communications Limited. Such facilities are becoming increasingly popular in the country since it plays a huge role in reducing the exposure level of a lender through distributing the risk amongst various lenders. In Bangladesh, syndicated loan facilities are governed according to the Law of Contract as well as the directions issued by Bangladesh Bank from time to time. Moreover, its recovery is presumably to be governed by the Artha Rin Adalat Ain, 2003. However, an important question which deserves to be explored is to what extent equity comes into play in governing the roles of the banks engaged in such facility, specifically, the arranging bank and the agent bank.

In a syndicated loan facility, the arranging bank and the agent bank perform contrasting duties since the role of one begins only when another's comes to an end. However, when it comes to fiduciary duties, the position in English Law (which is a persuasive authority for Bangladesh) is quite the same. The arranging bank in a syndicated loan facility is the bank which puts together the loan upon receiving the mandate from the borrower.

Zakrzewski & Fuller in *McKnight and Zakrzewski on The Law of Loan Agreements and Syndicated Lending* (OUP, 2019) describes the duties of the arranging bank to be threefold, namely, (a) helping the borrower in putting together the information memorandum which compiles the necessary information for the lenders to assess whether to lend or not, (b) using its reasonable (or best) endeavours to obtain the agreement of different lenders to participate in the loan, and lastly, (c) to prepare the facility document.

In contrast, they describe the Agent bank as the "facility agent ... coordinator of the facility once it has been formalised by the signing of the documentation. Its role begins upon execution of the facility agreement and will continue, unless it



Last year, EBL arranged BDT 1,200 crore syndication loan facility for Banglalink.

PHOTO COURTESY: THE BUSINESS STANDARD

resigns and is replaced by another agent, until the conclusion of the transaction". The agent bank is appointed by the lenders to act as their agent and the appointment is not revocable by individual lenders in respect of themselves (*Redwood Master Fund Ltd v TD Bank Europe Ltd* [2002] EWHC 2703 (Ch)).

Fiduciary obligation of arranging bank

L. Gullifer & J. Payne in *Corporate Finance Principles and Policy* (2nd ed, 2015) outline that whether an arranging bank owes a fiduciary duty has two aspects to it. First, whether it owes a fiduciary duty to anyone and the second is to whom and when? According to them, it is impossible to owe a fiduciary duty to two parties negotiating with each other and it is very difficult "to pinpoint a time when the duties of the arranger shift from the borrower to the lender". Hence, referring to other scholarly authorities, they opine that the best solution is that the arranging bank does not owe a fiduciary duty. The only authority suggesting that the arranging bank may owe a fiduciary duty is the case of *UBAF Ltd v European American Banking Corp* [1984] QB 713.

However, both Zakrzewski & Fuller and L. Gullifer & J. Payne suggest that in the

concerned case, the duty might have been owed as the security trustee, rather than the arranger. In this regard L. Gullifer & J. Payne highlights two more key aspects to arranging bank owing a fiduciary duty which are: (i) such duties are likely to be expressly excluded in the mandate letter (*Barclays Bank Plc v Svizera Holdings BV* [2014] EWHC 1020 (Comm) [15]) and (ii) the borrower is usually in the position of a customer of the bank, and no fiduciary duties are owed by a bank to its customer (*JP Morgan Chase Bank v Springwell Navigation Corp* [2008] EWHC 1186 (Comm) [573]).

Fiduciary obligation of agent bank

In the case of agent bank in syndicated loan facilities, although the probability of owing fiduciary duty may be more than the arranging bank, it is well within the capacity of the parties to exclude any such duty through their contracts. Again, the starting position would be *UBAF Ltd v European American Banking Corp* [1984] QB 713 as the authority, however, Zakrzewski & Fuller have expressed their doubts as to whether such duty would be owed by virtue of being an agent rather than a security trustee.

From the case of *Henry v Hammond* [1913] 2 KB 515, it is also evident that not

every agent will be held to be in a fiduciary position. Moreover, Zakrzewski & Fuller argue that as per *Torre Asset Funding v RBS* [2013] EWHC 2670 (Ch) "it is possible (specially in a commercial context) for the nature and scope of the duties of a fiduciary to be restrictively defined and modified or even excluded by contract" with the exception of situations which involves dishonesty or lack of good faith on the part of the fiduciary as provided in *Armitage v Nurse* [1998] Ch 241. Further relying on the case of *Torre Asset Funding*, Zakrzewski & Fuller opined that it is common practice that the syndicated loan facility will expressly preclude any fiduciary obligation on part of the agent bank towards lenders or anyone else and contain such provision that would overcome any fiduciary duties which might otherwise arise or might be implied

In Bangladesh, syndicated loan facilities are governed according to the Law of Contract as well as the directions issued by Bangladesh Bank from time to time. Moreover, its recovery is presumably to be governed by the Artha Rin Adalat Ain, 2003.

from the role which the agent bank plays.

Therefore, it is quite evident that the parties to a syndicated loan facility can successfully avoid any liability which may arise out of fiduciary obligations owed as an arranging bank and agent bank through meticulously drafted documentation. However, even if the documentation does not sufficiently protect the parties against such liability, the chances of courts implying such a duty are quite narrow.

The Writer is an Advocate and an Associate at Tanjib Alam and Associates.



YOUR ADVOCATE

Legal tools to deal with cyber harassment

This week Your Advocate is Barrister Omar Khan Joy, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh. He is the head of the chambers of a renowned law firm, namely, 'Legal Counsel', which has expertise mainly in commercial law, family law, labour law, land law, constitutional law, criminal law, and intellectual property rights.

QUERY:

I am a 19-year-old female student studying at a reputed college in Tangail. Recently, I have seen on Facebook that someone is repeatedly creating a fake profile using my name and photos to annoy me and spread rumors about me. Whenever my friends and I report the account to Facebook to take it down, a new account reemerges. Is there any legal action that I can take now?

Parul (not real name), Tangail

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your query. I am very sorry to hear that you have been going through such a situation and I sympathise with you. The situation you are in is commonly referred to as cyber-bullying. Bullying of any type can have detrimental effects on the victim, regardless of the fact that such an issue is often ignored or taken lightly by our society. Moreover, the effects of bullying are not just instant, the trauma resulting from it can last for a long time.

Cyber-bullying falls under the umbrella of cyber-crime. The term cyber-crime refers to crimes committed in cyber-space. Hence, to simplify, cyber-bullying means any act committed against another person via the usage of electronic communication, e.g., social media. Sending threatening messages online, sharing private or embarrassing pictures, creating fake profiles, spreading rumours and so on, are all examples of cyber-bullying. In short, any act of bullying in cyber-space constitutes cyber-bullying.

With an increasing number of users on social media platforms, cyber-bullying has been increasing every day. Although most victims of cyber-bullying are students and young people, others such as employers, teachers, and employees, etc. also face such issues. Nonetheless, to clarify, cyber-bullying is not just an act that is frowned upon, rather it is an offence punishable under the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006, and the Digital Security Act, 2018. These Acts tell us that any person who publishes fake, obscene, or defamatory content against a person, or the State or violates any religious view, such a person shall be deemed to have committed and be guilty of an offence, which is punishable. The punishment for such an offence is fine and imprisonment.

Cyber-crime victims can file a complaint against the perpetrator to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) by calling the number: +88029611111 or, sending an email to btcr@btcr.gov.bd. An action would be taken by the BTRC within 24 hours, and the perpetrator shall be brought to justice within 3 days of filing the complaint. The government has also introduced a cyber-crime helpline +88-02-55007183. Victims can now call the number to submit their complaints.

Furthermore, in case the harassment amounts to criminal intimidation (threatening a person to harm him, his property, his reputation, etc.), the person shall also be liable under the Penal Code 1860. If the gravity of the offence results in what is more than just mere bullying, the aforementioned statute should definitely be resorted to.

On the contrary, the initial internal steps of reporting, blocking, etc. should be implemented before moving on to the complaining stage.

I hope the information I provided will help you find a solution to your problem.



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Remedy against conviction by mobile courts

The Act further leaves the avenue of filing a revision to the sessions judge against the decision of the district magistrate or additional district magistrate, as the case may be.

MD. NAFIS ANOWAR SANTO

The Mobile Court Act, 2009 has elaborately discussed the definition, function, procedure, and power of the mobile courts. This Act empowers executive magistrates to take into cognizance and try offences instantly.

Section 7 of the Act states that punishment may be conferred on the basis of confession. If the accused does not confess, the magistrate may either discharge him or refer the case to the appropriate court. Again, the executive magistrate is empowered to punish a person when the offence has been committed in his presence while conducting the Court.

However, section 13 of the Act has provided the scope of challenging the conviction passed by the mobile courts. If any person is aggrieved by the decision of the court, they may file an appeal before the district magistrate. The district magistrate may

himself dispose of the petition or transfer the same to the additional district magistrate.

The Act further leaves the avenue of filing a revision to the sessions judge against the decision of the district magistrate or additional district magistrate, as the case may be.

Again, any aggrieved person may also file an application for the quashment to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court challenging the judgment of the sessions judge or additional sessions judge, as the case may be, under section 561A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.

In a recent case of *Md. Asif Ahammed v The State* (2023), the convict filed an application under section 561A of the Code of Criminal Procedure before the High Court Division. The Court found that the petitioner has been convicted and sentenced by the

mobile court without complying with the mandatory provision of Mobile Court Act, 2009, and eventually the Court quashed and set aside the order passed by the executive magistrate.

Besides, as per article 102 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, the aggrieved person can file a writ petition before the High Court Division for redressing illegality or grievous irregularity in the proceeding of the mobile court. The Court is empowered to pass such directions or orders as may be appropriate for the enforcement of any of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution.

These legal provisions shall enlighten an aggrieved person to avail remedy against any conviction passed by the mobile court.

The Writer is a Student of Law, University of Dhaka.





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OPERATING HSIA 3RD TERMINAL

Japanese firm tipped to get the job

RASHIDUL HASAN

A Japanese company is likely to get the job of operating the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), which includes ground and cargo handling.

However, administrative, security, immigration, and customs services will be provided by officials and employees of the government agencies concerned.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) has recently appointed Japanese consulting firm Nippon Koei to determine how an operating company would run the airport, how profits and expenditures would be shared, and who would be responsible for what, sources at CAAB said.

Several domestic and foreign companies have shown interest in operating the third terminal.

The Japanese company has already submitted a proposal for this and a meeting was recently held at the Prime Minister's Office to discuss the proposal.

Sources at the civil aviation ministry said the government is positive about the proposal.

The government in January approved in principle that the third terminal would be operated and maintained under Public Private Partnership.

CAAB said it runs all airports in the country, including

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



The roads in the capital are devoid of the rush of vehicles as many city-dwellers have already left the capital to celebrate Eid outside Dhaka. The photo of the nearly empty Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PM'S JAPAN VISIT It'll elevate Dhaka-Tokyo ties to 'new stage'

Says Japanese envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Iwama Kiminori has said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming visit to Japan should be one of the historic moments in the two countries' bilateral relationship.

"This visit is taking place after two postponements. That's why I myself have big expectations. I do expect that we will have very meaningful and tangible results," he told UNB in an interview at his residence.

He said the bilateral relationship should be elevated to a new stage through widening scopes for collaboration and cooperation.

The envoy said in terms of economic relations

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

CHARITY DISTRIBUTION 85 killed in Yemen stampede Hundreds hurt; three detained

AFP, Sanaa

At least 85 people were killed and hundreds injured in a crush at a Ramadan cash handout in Yemen early yesterday, as the impoverished country suffered one of its worst tragedies just as optimism was growing over its bitter civil war.

Three people were detained over the incident in Sanaa, Yemen's rebel-held capital, after large crowds gathered at a school to receive gifts of 5,000 rial (about \$8) for the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Harrowing footage screened by the Iran-backed Huthi rebels' Al Masirah TV showed a tightly packed crowd screaming and shoving, unable to move, while others attempted to haul stricken people out of the crush.

Other shots showed dead bodies on the ground as the panic continued. Piles of abandoned sandals, clothing and a crutch littered the scene.

At least "85 were killed and more than 322 were injured", a Huthi security official told AFP on condition of anonymity, adding that around 50 were in a serious condition.

"Women and children were among the dead," the official said. A health official confirmed the toll.

The incident comes just ahead of Eid al-Fitr, and punctures a buoyant mood over the war in the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country, following peace talks and an exchange of nearly 1,000 prisoners last week.

Eyewitnesses said gunfire sparked a stampede after crowds gathered at the school, in Sanaa's historic Bab Al-Yemen district, to receive the handouts from a businessman. AFP could not verify the reports of gunfire.

The head of the Huthis' Supreme Revolutionary Committee, Mohamed Ali al-Huthi, blamed "overcrowding", saying that people were packed in a narrow street leading to the school's back entrance.

Once the gates opened, the crowd streamed into a tight staircase leading to the courtyard where the distribution was taking place.

"People flocked in a huge way, the gate opened, and with the large numbers, the stampede happened."

The Huthis' political chief Mahdi al-Mashat said a committee had been formed to investigate, and a Huthi security official said three people had been detained on suspicion of involvement and an investigation was underway.

STAY ON CONVICTION Indian court rejects Rahul Gandhi's plea

AFP, Ahmedabad

An Indian court yesterday rejected a plea by top opposition figure Rahul Gandhi for a stay on a defamation conviction that prompted his expulsion from parliament last month.

Gandhi, 52, who was sentenced to two years imprisonment for remarks he made in 2019 seen as insulting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and those sharing his surname, had been looking to overturn the conviction before national elections due next year.

Modi's government is widely accused of using defamation law to silence critics.

The case in the premier's home state of Gujarat is one of several lodged in recent years against Gandhi, who is Modi's chief opponent and the foremost member of the opposition Congress party.

The judge in yesterday's hearing rejected Gandhi's plea for a stay, Congress member

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



THE FLYING RAINBOW
An Indian Pitta resting on a fallen tree branch in Dhaka. Native to the Indian subcontinent, the Indian Pitta gets its name from the Telugu word "pitta", meaning "small bird". It is sometimes also referred to as "aaru mani kuruvi", meaning "6'o clock bird", as its calls can be heard at both 6:00am and 6:00pm. Though very colourful, this bird is very shy and remains hidden in the undergrowth of trees, and hunts for food, mainly insects, on the forest floor. Solitary in nature, an Indian Pitta will only associate with others of its kind during breeding season or migration!

PHOTO: ADNAN HOSSAIN

New 'pristine' coral reef found in Galapagos

CNN ONLINE

A scientific expedition has discovered a previously unknown coral reef with abundant marine life off Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, the country's environment ministry said.

"A deepwater scientific expedition has found the first totally pristine coral reef, approximately two kilometres (1.2 miles) long, at 400 metres (deep), on the summit of a submarine mountain," Environment Minister Jose Davalos said on Twitter.

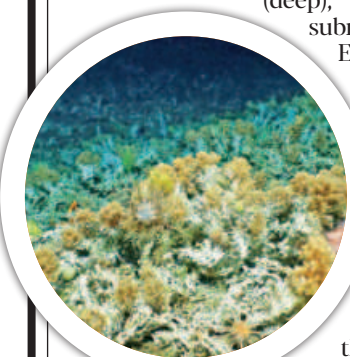
"Galapagos surprises us again."

Scientists had believed that the only Galapagos reef to survive El Nino weather in 1982 and 1983 was one called the Wellington reef, along the coast of Darwin Island, but the new discovery shows other coral has persisted, the ministry said in a statement on Monday.

The reef has more than 50 percent living coral.

"This is very important at a global level because many deepwater systems are degraded," said Stuart Banks, senior marine researcher at the Charles Darwin Foundation, who participated in the expedition. The coral is several thousand years old at least, he added.

The South American country last year expanded the Galapagos marine reserve by 60,000 square kilometres (23,166 square miles), an extension of the 138,000 square kilometres already in place, to protect endangered migratory species between the Galapagos and the Cocos Island in Costa Rica.



FIRST TEST FLIGHT SpaceX Starship, world's biggest rocket, explodes

AFP, Starbase

SpaceX's Starship, the most powerful rocket ever built, exploded yesterday during the first test flight of the spacecraft designed to send astronauts to the Moon, Mars and beyond.

The gigantic rocket successfully blasted off at 8:33am Central Time (1333 GMT) from Starbase, the private SpaceX spaceport in Boca Chica, Texas.

The Starship capsule had been scheduled to separate from the first-stage rocket booster three minutes into the uncrewed flight but separation failed to occur and the rocket blew up.

Despite the failure to complete the full flight test, SpaceX declared it a success.

"With a test like this, success comes from what we learn ...," SpaceX tweeted.

Starship consists of a 164-foot tall spacecraft designed to carry crew and cargo that sits atop a 230-foot tall first-stage Super Heavy booster rocket.

The US space agency Nasa has picked the Starship spacecraft to ferry astronauts to the Moon in late 2025 -- a mission known as Artemis III -- for the first time since the Apollo programme ended in 1972.