



"We demand today officially ... that Israel respects these resolutions or suspend Israel's membership of the UN."

Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas



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DHAKA-COX'S BAZAR RAIL LINK Opening this Sept but bottlenecks to stay till 2028

Rickety Kalurghat bridge, poor state of Ctg to Dohazari line to trouble travellers

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Dhaka-Cox's Bazar rail line via Chattogram is likely to open this September, but the rail connectivity between the capital and the tourist district may not be smooth before 2028.

Officials said the dilapidated Kalurghat bridge and the poor state of a 52km section from Chattogram city to Dohazari are the problems.

Bangladesh Railway is to take up two projects -- one for building a new bridge at Kalurghat, and the other for improving the Chattogram-Dohazari section. But projects would not be completed before 2028, BR sources said.

Currently, the bridge, with a speed limit of just 10kmph, is off-limits for heavy locomotives and trains.

Until the new bridge is built there, BR is planning to spend Tk 60 crore to repair the current one and make it sturdy enough for heavy locomotives. However, the repairs will not allow trains' speed limit on the bridge to be raised much.

The Chattogram-Dohazari section is a meter-gauge line with a speed limit of 48kmph, a stark contrast to the 100km rail line from Dohazari to Cox's Bazar's Ramu with a 100kmph speed limit.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, transport expert Prof Hadiuzzaman said, "There is a fault or weakness in the planning. And that's why the Dhaka-Cox's Bazar rail operation will not be smooth until the new bridge is built and the section [Chattogram-Dohazari] is improved."

Speed limits -- on the bridge and the section mentioned -- will hamper the effectiveness of operations on the line, said Hadiuzzaman, a professor of the civil engineering department at Buet.

Referring to the rail speed limit imposed on the Bangabandhu Bridge, he said, "We didn't learn any lesson from that experience."

The 20kmph speed limit on Bangabandhu Bridge has been causing delays in rail operations from Dhaka to northern and south-western parts of the country.

CHATTOGRAM-COX'S BAZAR RAIL LINE

The government took up the 128km metre-gauge rail line project in 2010, with a target to complete by June 2013. It was supposed to cost Tk 1,852.35 crore.

In 2014, the government decided to install dual-gauge lines and keep space for double lines, which raised the cost to a staggering Tk 18,034.47 crore.

The authorities then made more changes and shelved the plan to build the lines up to Ramu's Gundum, near the Myanmar border.

But the physical work of the 100km Dohazari-Ramu section started in March 2018, with a current deadline set for June 2024, with a one-year defect liability period.

Visiting the project site yesterday, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujjan

CHATTOGRAM-COX'S BAZAR RAIL LINE

Length: **100km**
Cost: **Tk 18,034.47 crore**

UPCOMING TWO PROJECTS TO REMOVE BOTTLENECKS

BUILDING BIGGER RAIL-CUM ROAD KALURGHAT BRIDGE

Possible Cost: **Tk 14,000 crore**
Possible deadline: **December 2028**

EXPANDING LINE FROM CTG CITY TO DOHAZARI

Possible cost: **Tk 7,073 crore**
Possible Deadline: **June 2027**

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



A Rohingya woman washes clothes past destroyed houses at Basara refugee camp in Sittwe, Myanmar yesterday, a couple of days after Cyclone Mocha made landfall.

PHOTO: AFP

SALARY HIKE OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES Inflationary risks put govt in doubt about timing

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is in a dilemma over the timing of increasing the salary of its employees as a risk of further rise in inflation is associated with it.

Finance ministry officials said they are undecided about whether the salary will be hiked from July this year or January next year.

The salary may be increased by 10 percent of the basic salary of an employee considering the current inflation rate. This will include an annual increment of 5 percent, they said.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the inflation rate was 8.64 percent in April, up from around 6 percent a year ago.

Any salary hike for government employees does have an impact on the prices of essentials as the prices go up further after the implementation of such a decision, officials said.

The government has already hiked electricity and gas prices several times which had a negative impact on the commodity prices. It has planned to increase the electricity price again by June.

If the salary is hiked from July, it will be difficult for the government to control inflation before the next national election. That is why

the government is considering to raise the salary from January next, officials told The Daily Star.

The next parliamentary election is scheduled to be held either in late December this year or early January next year.

On Monday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government is considering increasing the salaries of its employees in line with the inflation.

She, however, said the government does not have any plan on granting dearness allowance to the employees.

On May 14, the National Board of Revenue held a meeting with the PM where the finance minister raised the issue of salary hike. The premier gave a green signal, said an official who was present at the meeting.

According to the Ministry of Public Administration, there are 15.55 lakh government employees and about 6.70 lakh government teachers.

If the salary of its employees is hiked by 5 percent, in addition to the 5 percent yearly increment, the government will have to spend an extra Tk 2,000 crore a year.

HOUSEHOLD USE Gas price may rise by up to Tk 512 a month

Titas without proper study says household gas use a lot higher than BERC estimate

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Without conducting a proper study, Titas has said the average household gas consumption is a lot more than the estimation made by the energy regulator last year.

If Titas estimation is taken into consideration, the price of domestic gas may rise by 47 percent for dual burner stoves and 39 percent for single burner ones because the assumed consumption is a major factor in deciding the tariff.

People now pay Tk 1,080 a month for using a dual burner stove and Tk 990 for a single burner one. If the proposal is approved, Titas' 28.5 lakh subscribers may have to pay Tk 1,592 and Tk 1,380 respectively.

Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company sent a letter early this month to Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission about refixing the assumed gas consumption by households.

The letter said households with non-metered gas

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



Int'l community not doing enough for Rohingyas

PM says in interview with BBC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International communities are not doing as much as they should about the Rohingyas and their repatriation, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said in an interview with the BBC.

In the interview that took place during her visit to the UK earlier this month, she also talked about the US sanctions on the Rab, rights abuses and the upcoming election.

BBC Bangla service published a story on the interview on its website yesterday.

Queried why the US slapped sanctions on the Rab, the prime minister said, "The force on which they imposed sanctions

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



The Auchpara area in Tongi is littered with posters as the campaign for the Gazipur City Corporation election gains momentum ahead of the May 25 polls. Supporters of the mayor and councillor candidates are campaigning in the city to woo voters. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BNP expels 29 leaders for life

They're vying for councillor posts in Gazipur city polls defying party decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday expelled its 29 leaders for life for taking part in the Gazipur city polls going against the party decision.

The 29 are running for councillor posts.

The party issued a press release, signed by Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, in this regard. The release was issued after a virtual meeting between BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman and the party's Gazipur city unit leaders, said party sources.

On May 12, the party issued show-cause notices to its 30 leaders and asked them to reply within 24 hours why actions would not be taken against them.

The release said the party is taking organisational actions against those who are participating in the Gazipur city polls, slated for May 25, ignoring its decision.

The leaders are running in the polls without giving satisfactory replies to the show-cause notices, it added.

So, the 29 leaders have been expelled for life in line with the party's charter.

The BNP earlier announced that it would boycott the mayoral polls to five city corporations and said it would go tough on party leaders and activists who would run for councillor. Actions would also be taken against their patrons, the party warned.

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Homecoming day of Sheikh Hasina today



BSS, Dhaka

Today is the 43rd homecoming day of Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

On May 17 in 1981, she returned to the country after a long exile.

Boarding on an aircraft of the Indian Airlines, Hasina reached the then Kurmitola Airport here from the Indian capital of New Delhi via Kolkata at 4:30pm on the day.

Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was brutally killed along with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



With frequent load shedding in the capital in the last couple of days, the demand for diesel has increased. To make sure there's enough diesel for running generators in office and residential buildings, many were queuing at filling stations with containers. This photo was taken in Madhya Badda area recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

DSCC most corruption-free govt institution

Claims Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday claimed that the Dhaka South City Corporation is the most corruption-free institution of all the government offices.

Taposh was speaking at a press conference at Nagar Bhaban, marking his third year as mayor.

"We have adopted a zero-tolerance policy against corruption. If we find any trace of corruption we strike there hard. For this, it (DSCC) has become corruption free, earning city dwellers' trust," he claimed.

"In the last three years, more than 100 officers and employees have been dismissed for various crimes including corruption and irregularities," he added.

The mayor claimed that no one is facing harassment now in the Nagar Bhaban and regional offices of the city corporation.

He also said he has taken several successful steps to ensure good governance in the DSCC.

Taposh said more than 500 officers and employees, including 109 drivers of heavy vehicles, have been appointed to reduce the severity of this shortage of necessary manpower. As a result, the rate of implementation of supervision and development activities as well as the delivery of civic services and the casual work of the corporation has increased.

TREE FELLING

Regarding the controversy surrounding tree felling on

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

4 members of robber gang held in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested four alleged members of a robbery gang which mugged at least four people including a police constable on Dhaka streets on May 12 and 13.

The arrestees are Soheli, 30; Akter alias Sohrab, 32; Abir Hossain alias Rasel, 25 and Roni, 28.

The gang of robbers used to roam the city streets on a pick-up van and rob people, Hayatul Islam Khan, deputy commissioner of Motijheel Division Police, told in a press briefing at DMP media centre yesterday.

Analysing footages of more than 100 CCTVs, a police team arrested the four from Mohakhali area on Monday as they gathered there for robbery.

They seized the pick-up van, two knives and four phones from them. The DC said they have stepped up vigilance after a constable of Special Branch was mugged near Rajarbagh Police Lines on May 12.

Danger of dengue outbreak looms large

12 dead, 1,261 hospitalised this year so far; experts call for immediate measures

Surveillance is an important aspect, in which we are lagging. It is also important to know the types of active viruses based on their locations to take proper control measures.

GM SAIFUR RAHMAN
Entomologist

A higher density of Aedes mosquitoes have been noticed outside Dhaka, especially in Chattogram and Barishal, compared to the previous months.

KABIRUL BASHAR
Entomologist

HELEMUL ALAM

The country has already seen the death of 12 dengue patients before the beginning of the monsoon, while 1,261 others were hospitalised till yesterday. The numbers indicate alarming signs of a massive dengue outbreak this year.

Experts urged the city corporations to take necessary steps to contain the mosquito-borne virus from spreading. They also urged the government to pay

more attention to areas outside of Dhaka, as the number of dengue patients is simultaneously increasing outside the capital.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), 31 dengue patients -- of whom, five are from outside Dhaka -- were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning. The total number of dengue cases this year outside Dhaka was 525 till yesterday.

The total number of dengue-related deaths last year was 281,

while 62,382 cases in total were recorded. Of them, 23,162 were from outside Dhaka.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar said the situation is still under control but the number of patients is increasing every day.

"A higher density of Aedes mosquitoes have been noticed outside Dhaka, especially in Chattogram and Barishal, compared to the previous months," he said.

Bashar suggested conducting

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Community inclusion vital to eliminate child labour

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poverty is not the only factor, rather failure to connect families and communities with social safety programmes is the challenge contributing to the rise in child labour in Bangladesh, stressed speakers at a workshop yesterday.

The national workshop, titled "The Review of National Plan of Action to Eliminate Child Labour", was jointly organised by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) and Unicef at a city hotel.

State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Monnujan Sultan attended the workshop as the chief guest.

"In order to end child labour in Bangladesh, we have financial support and training programmes. To prevent families from

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

No alternative to repeal DSA

TIB expresses concern over cases against journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing concern over the recent cases filed under the Digital Security Act against journalists, Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday said the DSA is a major obstacle to independent journalism and there is no alternative to repeal it.

"The DSA become a serious obstacle to fearless journalism. It is also increasing the trend of self-censorship in the media industry," said TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman.

He made the remarks during a meeting with Reporters Against Corruption (RAC), an organisation of journalists, at the TIB office in Dhaka, according to a press release.

Iftekharuzzaman said several new laws are being prepared, including the Data Protection Act, which may endanger journalism and freedom of expression.

Claiming that the government is using the DSA as a tool to implement its various objectives, he said its implementation could see an increase

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Not foreigners, people will decide who'll come to power

Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said not foreigners but people of the country will decide who will come to power.



He said this while paying tributes to freedom fighter, actor and Member of Parliament Akbar Hossain Pathan (Faroque) at Central Shaheed Minar.

Sheikh Hasina herself said that we want to come to the power in accordance with the mandate of the people, Quader said. "If the people want, then we will come to the power, otherwise not."

So, there is no reason that she [Sheikh Hasina] has any fear of the foreigners or local conspirators, he added.

Responding to a query on the claim made by Mirza Fakhrul that the government is agitated on the western countries, fearing to lose of power,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Withdrawal of envoys' police escort 'irresponsible'

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday termed "extremely irresponsible" the government's move to withdraw the additional police escorts for the envoys of different countries, including the US, the UK, and India, saying it may weaken the country's international relations.

"I think there're two things -- extreme irresponsibility and arrogance -- behind the decision," said party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Speaking at a press briefing at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, he feared that the government's such decision can invite international problems and the people of Bangladesh will be the ultimate victims. "So, I consider this decision nothing but irresponsible."

"Secondly, the [PM's] arrogance has reached such a point that it may cause the greatest harm to the country..."



SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Amid sweltering heat, a mother-daughter duo finds respite by playfully dipping their heads beneath the cascading flow of a nearby pump. Laughter echoes in the air, capturing the essence of the simple pleasure of cool relief and togetherness. This photo was taken in Tangail's Nagarpur area recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

N'GANJ 4 MURDER CASE

HC confirms death for 2, acquits 11

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

High Court yesterday confirmed death penalty of two and acquitted 11 persons out of 23, who were sentenced to death by the trial court for killing four activists of Awami League and Chhatra League at Arahazar in Narayanganj in 2002.

The death sentences of Zahirul Haque Bhuiyan alias Zahir Member and Abdul Ahad were confirmed.

The HC bench of Justice SM Emdadul Hoque and Justice KM Zahid Sarwar Kajol commuted death sentence of Faruk, Khokon, Dalim, Ruhel, Liakat, Al Amin and Ruhel to life imprisonment.

The 11 acquitted are Siraj Uddin alias Siraj, Sahab Uddin, Md Halim, Yakub Ali, Amir Hossain, Abul Kamal, Rafiq Miah, Golam Azam, Abdul Hye, Harun and Tajuddin, Deputy Attorney General Sujit Chatterjee Bappi told The Daily Star.

On March 12, 2002, Abdul Barek, brother of former president of Arahazar upazila unit Chhatra League Rafiqul Islam, his cousin Badal, AL activist Faruk and Kabir Hossain were picked up from Ajar Ali Spinning Mills and taken to Laxmibardi Samaj Kalyan Office at Gopaldi. They were tortured to death.

On May 17, 2017, a Narayanganj court sentenced 23 people to death.



Chaos unfolds as a fleet of CNG-run three-wheelers occupies almost the entire road in the Jurain Rail Gate area. Due to this illegal parking, vehicular movement often comes to a grinding halt. Despite the inconvenience faced by commuters, authorities seemed to have turned a blind eye to the situation. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Make polls participatory
CEC urges all political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal once again urged all political parties to take part in the next general elections to make it participatory and festive yesterday.

He was talking to reporters after holding a meeting with the Krishak Sramik Janata League President Kader Siddique.

He said during the election there will be a "political" government and a "bureaucratic" government. "By bureaucratic government, I mean from cabinet secretary to assistant secretary and political government from deputy minister to top... We will try to exercise our control over both the governments."

The CEC said they repeatedly came to know that there are complaints that police play a negative role. "It's not the police, rather some candidates try to bias the police locally... I'm not blaming the police," he said.

PRAYER TIMING
MAY 17

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:10	12:45	5:00	6:36	8:00
JAMAAT 4:45	1:15	5:15	6:40	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

KCC MAYORAL POLLS

Seven submit nominations

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A total of 195 aspirants – including seven mayoral – submitted nomination papers for Khulna City Corporation election yesterday, on the last day.

So far, 236 aspirants bought nomination papers, according to the EC office. Of them, eight are for mayoral post, 188 for the councillor posts and 40 for the 10 reserved pots.

Babul Rana, general secretary of Khulna city unit of Awami League, said former mayor of KCC and president of the city unit AL Talukdar Abdul Khaleque from the party submitted nomination papers.

The other mayoral aspirants are Md Shafiqul Islam Madhu from Jatiya Party, Maulana Abdul Awal from Islami Andolan Bangladesh, SM Sabbir Hossain from Zaker Party, and independent Al Amin Md Adullah Chowdhury, SM Shafiqur Rahman, and Engineer Syed Kamrul Islam.

The last date for withdrawal is May 25. Around 5,35,528 voters are expected to cast their votes on June 12.

POLLS TO 5 CITY CORPORATIONS

POLLS CODE VIOLATIONS
Six councillor candidates fined

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six councillor candidates contesting in the Barishal City Corporation polls were fined Tk 68,500 by the Election Commission yesterday for violating the election code of conduct.

Zakir Hossain Bhulu, the councillor candidate of ward 12, was fined Tk 5,000, Sheikh Anwar Hossain, the candidate of ward 5, was fined Tk 20,000, Shahid Khan Azad, the candidate of Ward 22, was fined Tk 20,000. Besides, three other candidates were fined Tk 23,500 in total. They were penalised for bringing out motorcade rallies, although it's strictly prohibited in the election laws.

The City Corporation (Election Code of Conduct) Rules 2016 state that candidates or their supporters can organise street rallies and indoor meetings only after informing the local law enforcement authorities 24 hours in advance. No candidate can start campaigning using any electoral symbol before the official allotment, which is scheduled for May 26 in this case.

According to Executive Magistrate Abi Abdullah, the candidates have previously received warnings for breaking the code of conduct. Ten mayoral, 146 councillor and 42 candidates for the reserved female councillor seats, have submitted nomination papers to run in the June 12 election.

We are facing threats from ruling party men: Zahangir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Suspended Gazipur city mayor Mohammad Zahangir Alam, who is currently campaigning for the mayoral bid of his mother in the upcoming polls, yesterday alleged that they were facing threats from supporters of the Awami League nominated mayoral candidate.

"We are being intercepted by goons campaigning for the ruling party men... and being intimidated," he said.

When asked if they had filed any general diary, Zahangir deemed the act meaningless, questioning the purpose of filing a GD if the threats were coming from individuals who were supposed to ensure justice.

Zahangir emphasised his determination to support his mother in her mayoral bid till the very end.

Asked about his permanent expulsion from the party, he said he does not believe anyone except Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Maintaining

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Govt ineffective to stop communal violence: US report
Cites allegations from minorities in Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Religious minority rights organisations have criticised the arbitrary detention of community members, often without bail, on false charges of blasphemy under the Digital Security Act, according to a US report published yesterday.

It said members of religious minorities said the government was ineffective in preventing communal violence against religious minorities and did not protect minorities from forced evictions and land seizures stemming from land disputes.

The US State Department report on "International Religious Freedom 2022" said Bangladesh's constitution designates Islam as the state religion but upholds the principle of secularism. It also prohibits religious discrimination and provides for equality for all religions.

However, in 2022, religious minority organisations and local human rights groups said communal violence against religious minority communities continued throughout the year. Ain o Salish Kendra stated 12 incidents of violence against religious minorities in both homes and places of worship took place in 2022, injuring five persons.

Referring to the reports of minority groups, the US report said property and land ownership disputes and forced eviction cases, including some involving the government, remained unresolved in 2022. Land disputes occurred in areas near new roads or industrial development zones, where land prices increased.

ROBBING EXPAT

BCL leader, three others sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A Narayanganj court sent a Chhatra League leader and three of his accomplices to jail in a case filed for stealing Tk 17 lakh from an expatriate.

Tapu Chandra Ghosh, vice president of the district unit of BCL, is the prime accused; other accused are Md Rohan, 21, Krishno Chandra Rajbongshi, 32, and Ershad Sheikh, 24.

According to police, Uzzal Hossain, a Saudi expatriate, lives in Cumilla's Meghna. On April 4, he sold some gold bars to a jewelry shop at Kalirbazar in Narayanganj. While returning home in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, carrying Tk 17 lakh, he was intercepted by the BCL leader's gang near Hazi Saheber Mor.

They identified themselves as detectives and robbed him. Two days later, the victim filed a case against unnamed people with Bandar Police Station.

Rezaul Karim, an inspector of Bandar police outpost, said they arrested the four on Saturday.

The City Corporation (Election Code of Conduct) Rules 2016 state candidates or their supporters can organise street rallies and indoor meetings only after informing the local law enforcement authorities 24 hours in advance. No candidate can start campaigning using any electoral symbol before the allotment.



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INVITATION FOR RE-TENDER-OTM (International Competition)

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Science and Technology
2. Agency	Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (BCSIR)
3. Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (BCSIR), Dr. Quadrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205, Bangladesh.
4. Procuring entity district	Dhaka
5. Invitation for	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Scientific Equipment.[Name of equipment: Item no. (1) INDUCTIVELY COUPLED PLASMA OPTICAL EMISSION SPECTROSCOPY (ICP-OES) (Details will be found in the Tender Document)].
6. Invitation ref. no.	39.02.0000.022.35.292.23
7. Date	16.05.2023

8. Procuring method	Open Tendering Method (International Competition)
9. Budget and source of fund	GoB

PARTICULAR INFORMATION	
10. Tender last selling date	14.06.2023 during office hour
11. Tender closing date & time	15.06.2023 at 1.00 PM.
12. Tender opening date and time	15.06.2023 at 2.00 PM.
13. Name & address of the office selling tender document	Cashier, BCSIR, Secretariat building (3 rd floor), Dr. Quadrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.
14. Name & address of the office receiving tender document	Office of the Secretary, Secretariat building (4 th floor) BCSIR, Dr. Quadrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.
15. Name & address of the office opening tender document	Office of the Secretary, Secretariat building (4 th floor) BCSIR, Dr. Quadrat-I-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205.

INFORMATION ON AWARD	
16. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Science and Technology.
17. Eligibility of tenderer	* The tenderer shall have a minimum of 5 (five) years of overall experience in the supply of similar type of goods. * The satisfactory completion of supply of similar scientific equipment/ instrument of minimum 100% (Hundred percent) of the total value of the item quoted by the Tenderer under maximum 5 (five) contracts in the last 5 (five) years. * Details will be found in the Tender Data Sheet (TDS) of the Tender Document.
18. Brief description of goods	As per attached specification in the tender document.
19. Brief description of related services	As per attached specification in the tender document.
20. Price of tender document	Tk. 2,000.00 (Two Thousand) (Non-refundable)
21. Evaluation will be done "Item by Item" basis.	
22. Description of goods	Tender security (Tk.) The amount of Tender Security shall be at least 2.0% (Two percent) of the total value of the item quoted by the Tenderer in favour of secretary, BCSIR by a tender security.
	Completion time in months/days 90 (Ninety) days from the date of contract signing.

PROCUREMENT ENTITY DETAILS	
23. Name of official inviting tender	Shah Abdul Tarique
24. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Secretary, BCSIR, Dhaka.
25. Contract details of official inviting Tender	Secretary, Secretariat building (4 th Floor), BCSIR, Dr. Quadrat-i-Khuda Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205, Tel: 58610717
26. The Procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.	

(Shah Abdul-Tarique)
Secretary

GD-857

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Shariatpur
www.pwd.gov.bd

Memo No. 1248(3) Dated: 16/05/2023

e-Tender Notice (Re-Tender)

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

Sl No.	Tender ID Ref No. Tender/proposal status	Name of work	Publishing date, closing date
01	ID: 833260 MEMO: 1242 Date: 15/05/2023	Construction of 02 (two)-storied Sakhipur Thana Building with 06 (six)-storied foundation including civil work, internal sanitary and Electrification, Septic tank, soak wall, pump house, RCC Road and Centry box at Shariatpur Zilla.	16/05/2023 12:00 31/05/2023 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Mohibur Rahaman, PEng
Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Shariatpur
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SUDESHNA SANYAL

The Indian singer who calls Bangladesh 'Maa'

Sudeshna Sanyal Rudra is a Rabindra Sangeet singer, who is also a dancer as well as a priest. She has a deep connection with Dhaka, usually calling Bangladesh her 'Maa'. She has come to Dhaka almost 20 times and every time she leaves the country, she leaves behind a part of her heart.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Recently, she visited Dhaka upon the invitation of Bangladesh Rabindra Sangeet Shilpi Shongstha, to celebrate the 34th 'National Rabindranath Music Festival'. She also performed in the two-day-long programme which was organised on May 12 and 13.

This year, her Bangladeshi tour was really special, as she got to visit her idol and legendary Rabindra Sangeet exponent, Sadi Mohammad, for the first time.

In conversation with The Daily Star, the singer opened up about her love for Bangladesh, the Rabindranath Music Festival, and much more.

Hridoy amar prokash holo anonto aakashhe. The sky that hovers over both countries is the same. We are all Bengalis who are bound together with language, culture and love for music. There is a barbed wire between the two countries, but nobody can separate our love for one another. This love is what pulled me back to this country.

This year, I came to Dhaka upon the invitation of Bangladesh Rabindra Sangeet Shilpi Shongstha. Renowned singers Amina Ahmed (executive president) and Tapan Mahmud (president of the organisation), gracefully welcomed me to their programme and also made me perform in their programme.

I was literally spellbound by all the beautiful performances by the other artists and the crowd's love for Rabindra Sangeet. This is the third time the organisation has invited me and yet every time it feels surreal.

I can honestly say that the people of Bangladesh love Rabindra Sangeet more than West Bengal. These people love Rabindranath from the depths of their heart. The people of Bangladesh know how to show their love, as they always



Sudeshna Sanyal with renowned singer Sadi Mohammad

PHOTOS: COURTESY

call me to their house whenever I come here.

My mother inspired me to follow my passion for music and I got my *talim* under my guru and renowned singer, Kanika Bandyopadhyay. I got my official training in music from Shantiniketan and also pursued Monipura dance from the same institution as well.

Growing up, I listened to Bangladeshi artists who have inspired me a lot, particularly songs by Sadi Mohammad, Tapan Mahmud, Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya and Mita Haque, among others.

This time, I had the wonderful opportunity to visit my idol Sadi Mohammad and I was really spellbound by the whole experience. As I got to touch his feet and ask for his blessings, I felt like the happiest soul in the world. He is such a wonderful human being and his principles continue to inspire me.

My love for Rabindra Sangeet inspired me to become part of Shubhamastu, a group of female priests, headed by its founding member and eminent priestess, Dr Nandini Bhowmick. Apart from chanting *vedic* mantras, we also perform Rabindranath's songs while conducting marriages.

I have lots of beautiful memories stored in Bangladesh, but the one that I treasure the most occurred in Shilaidaha, Kushtia. I went there to perform and I met this elderly lady who asked for alms. I told her that I only have Indian rupees and she told me that she didn't need any and gave me BDT 50 taka instead. It's so nice to see such a wonderful soul in this time and age. I took a picture of that lady, which I still keep in my phone. These memories and many more, make my memories in Dhaka truly beautiful.



Habib Wahid releases duet with Shithi Saha

Popular singer Habib Wahid has collaborated with singer Shithi Saha for the second time, to create magic with their latest song, *Pori*. Ali Akbar Zico penned the lyrics, while Habib Wahid himself composed the captivating song.

Pori was recently released and can be enjoyed as a lyric video on Habib's YouTube channel. It has also been shared on Facebook by both artistes, allowing their fans to indulge in the enchanting melody.

Furthermore, *Pori* is available to stream on various audio platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, and Shadhin Music.

76th Cannes kicks-off with Johnny Depp's 'Jeanne du Barry'

The 76th Cannes Film Festival kicked-off yesterday, with the highly anticipated premiere of the Louis XV period drama *Jeanne du Barry*, starring Johnny Depp, bringing the iconic Cannes red carpet back to life.

The first day's festivities included an opening ceremony where Michael Douglas was honored with an honorary Palme d'Or, followed by the presentation of another Palme d'Or to *Indiana Jones* star Harrison Ford.

Screening today, on the second day of festival, are *Occupied City*, *Anselm*, *Le Mépris*, *Monster*, *Le Règne Animal*, *Caligula: The Ultimate Cut*, *C'est la vie! (Le Sens de la fête)* and *Le Retour*. Along with a re-screening of *Jeanne du Barry*, there will also be a rendezvous with Palm d'Or recipient, Michael Douglas.



COUNTRYWIDE

GROUP FARMING

Cultivation of maize, pumpkin brings joy to char farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Members of Agamir Sanchay Samobay Samity, a social organisation in Lalmonirhat, have a huge success in crops cultivation by bringing unused sandy land in the Teesta river basin areas under group farming, also known as community farming.

Besides, 16 out of the 24 members of the organisation are higher educated, while most of them are involved in various other professions.

They have set-up an example by cultivating pumpkin and maize at Jamirbari Char in Kaliganj upazila, during their leisure time, with an aim to encourage the char farmers to produce crops by utilizing the unused sandy land in the Teesta river basin.

Rabiul Islam, president of the organisation, said they started their journey in November last year.

At the beginning, they planted pumpkin on about 16 bighas of sandy land and maize on another 20 bighas land.

Though they have started harvesting pumpkins a few days ago, it will take

another three to four weeks to harvest the maize, Rabiul said, adding that every year vast tracts of char lands remain uncultivated during the dry season.

One of the members of the organisation Tapas Kumar said, 16 highly educated local youths along with eight farmers of the village formed the organisation with an aim to bring the sandy char land under crops cultivation.

Farmer Abdul Wahab said usually the char lands along the Teesta river used to remain abandoned during the dry season, but some educated men in cooperation with local farmers set the example by growing pumpkin and maize on the sandy land.

Another member Popy Begum said local farmers are highly encouraged, seeing pumpkin and maize farming on the unused sandy land.

Kaliganj Upazila Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer Faridul Islam said the char farmers are hugely inspired by the group farming initiative.

Local farmers will be benefited if the char lands are brought under various crop cultivation.



Once an abandoned char land has now turned into a pumpkin field. The photo was taken from Jamirbari village in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila. PHOTO: STAR

10-year-old boy found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Police recovered the body of an unidentified 10-year-old boy in Narayanganj's Rugganj upazila yesterday.

Locals found the body on a sand field in Pitalganj area. On information, police recovered it around 10:00am and sent it to Narayanganj General

Hospital for autopsy, said Ataur Rahman, inspector of Rugganj Police Station.

The boy was wearing black pants and black and white stripe t-shirt. Police are trying to identify the child, he added.

"Police found injury marks on the child's neck and eyes," he said.

A case will be filed soon in connection with the death.

Int'l community

FROM PAGE 1

was formed on their advice in 2004. They arranged for its training and logistics. The way they wanted it to be formed and the way they wanted it to function, it has been working accordingly. Then why did they slap the sanctions?"

Pressed further, she said maybe they don't want her to stay in power, or maybe they don't want the progress her government has made to continue.

Hasina claimed that Bangladesh has made outstanding strides during her rule in the last 14 years.

In a statement in parliament last month, she stated that the United States wants a regime change in Bangladesh.

Asked if there is any evidence to back up the statement, the prime minister said, "It's a question to me as well. Why did they slap the sanctions? When the law enforcement agencies are working to tackle terrorism ... when measures are being taken against the human rights abusers and in support of the victims, they have sided with the abusers, not with the victims."

When the interviewer cited the concerns voiced by the Amnesty, Human Rights Watch, the UN and others over human rights abuses, Hasina said, "They could not

prove anything. I don't know what conspiracy is afoot internationally."

Asked why they would want to unseat her, she said, "They have killed my father. Those plotters, who killed my family, even my 10-year-old brother, don't want anyone from this family to come to power."

The BBC also wanted to know about the allegations made by the opposition that she wants to stay in power without election. To that, Hasina said, "Of course, not. I have fought for election and the people's right to vote. I have fought against the military rulers all my life. Only we have enacted laws to form an election commission. We always want a fair and free election."

About a Transparency International Bangladesh report that found irregularities in 47 out of 50 constituencies surveyed during the last election, the premier said, "Could they prove that? Where is the evidence? I want to see it."

"I am frankly saying that I have doubts over their [TIB] transparency." About the Rohingya repatriation, Hasina said, "At meetings, they say they [Rohingyas] should go back. But they are actually not doing anything positive to that end. Why? This is my question too."

Gas price may rise by up to Tk 512

FROM PAGE 1

connections use more gas than last year's estimated 60 cubic metres by a dual burner and 55 cubic metres by a single burner stove each month.

The estimated average consumption should be 88.44 cubic metres and 76.65 cubic metres for dual and single burner stoves, reads the letter.

Titas cited a 2003 estimation based on a study Titas conducted in 2000-01 on 100 consumers in Gulshan and Banani areas.

The data on average consumption is not based on a recent study on non-metered consumers who represent 95 percent of its household users, according to energy expert Maqbul E-Elahi Chowdhury.

The current gas tariff fixed in June last year is based on an analysis of 3.70 lakh metered connections to households, he said.

"No consumer was found to be using more than 45 cubic metres a month. How are they claiming that the average non-metered

consumer is using over 70 cubic metres a month? This is absurd," said the former member of BERC.

Titas simply wants to put the burden of system loss on subscribers of non-metered connections, he said.

The Titas letter also cited consumption data from October 2022 to March 2023 of around 53,000 "post-paid metered connection subscribers".

It says the average consumption of those users was 97 cubic metres a month.

But multiple Titas officials requesting anonymity said metered connections are mostly subscribed by dormitories of educational institutes, madrasas, police barracks, and hospitals where the consumption is significantly higher.

Contacted, BERC Secretary Khalilur Rahman Khan said, "We will hold a meeting with the distributor companies [today] and ask for the rationale behind their

[Titas] claims."

Before fixing the non-metered gas price in 2022, the BERC conducted a study in collaboration with Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

The study found that the distribution companies have no recognised method of measuring the consumption by subscribers of non-metered gas.

As a result, the fixed tariff paid by subscribers of non-metered connections is higher than the monetary value of the gas used by them, said the study conducted on 688 non-metered and 365 metered gas connections in 13 districts.

Titas Managing Director Harunur Rashid Mollah refused to make comments on the issue.

Alamin, manager (public relations) at Titas, said the estimated average gas usage needed revision because of Titas' rising system loss. This revision is not directly linked to gas prices, he added.

Withdrawal of addl security

FROM PAGE 12

The authorities in Dhaka recently decided to stop providing additional police escort. Ansar members will escort the diplomats instead.

The ministry officials are likely to meet the director general of Ansar today to know about the services the force has to offer.

"We will then let the missions know officially," Masud Bin Momen said, adding that the government is aware of the responsibilities under the Vienna Convention, and regular security measures

for the foreign missions and their personnel remain unchanged.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on Monday said there was a shortage of police personnel, and there was no lack of security in the country because "militancy and the law-and-order were under control".

The foreign diplomats will be able to avail the service if they pay for it, he added.

Patel during his regular briefing said that Washington looks forward to deepening

its relationship and cooperation with Bangladesh on a number of key issues "regardless of political parties or candidates or anything like that".

He said Washington hopes for any election around the world to be free, fair and accessible.

He said this when asked about US Deputy Assistant Secretary Afreen Akhter's recent comment that it was for the political parties to decide whether to participate in the coming national election in Bangladesh.

Ukraine repels Russian attacks

In first, Kyiv says it shoots down multiple hypersonic Kinzhal missiles; Moscow says 'all targets hit'

REUTERS, Kyiv
Ukraine said yesterday it had shot down six Russian hypersonic Kinzhal missiles in a single night, thwarting a superweapon Moscow had previously touted as all but unstoppable.

It was the first time Ukraine had claimed to have struck an entire volley of multiple hypersonic missiles, and it confirmed would be a dramatic demonstration of the effectiveness of newly deployed Western air defences.

The six Kinzhals, ballistic missiles which travel at up to 10 times the speed of sound, were among a volley of 18 missiles Russia launched at Ukraine overnight, lighting up Kyiv with flashes and raining debris after they were blasted from the sky.

The commander-in-chief of Ukraine's armed forces, Valeriy Zaluzhnyi said all had been successfully intercepted. However, Russia said that all the targets assigned by its military in an overnight missile barrage on Ukraine had been hit.



Police stand guard as university students shout slogans demanding the closing of private medical universities during an anti-government demonstration in Colombo, Sri Lanka yesterday.



City authorities in the Ukrainian capital said three people were wounded by falling debris.

"It was exceptional in its density - the maximum number of attack missiles in the shortest period of time," Serhiy Popko, head of Kyiv's city military administration, said on the Telegram messaging app.

Zaluzhnyi said his forces had intercepted the six Kinzhals launched from aircraft, as well as nine Kalibr cruise missiles from ships in the Black Sea and three Iskanders fired from land.

Earlier this month, Ukraine claimed to have shot down a single Kinzhal missile over Kyiv for the first time, using a newly deployed U.S. Patriot air defence system.

Previously, the ability of Patriots to intercept Kinzhal missiles was theoretical. Hitting six at once would suggest it could be a reliable defence, rather than a lucky shot.

President Vladimir Putin, who unveiled the Kinzhal as one of six "next generation" weapons in 2018, has frequently touted it as proof of world-beating Russian military hardware, capable of taking on Nato.

The Kinzhal, whose name means dagger, can carry conventional or nuclear warheads up to 2,000 km. Russia used them in warfare for the first time in Ukraine last year and has only acknowledged firing them on a few occasions.

With Ukrainian forces preparing to go on the offensive for the first time in six months, Russia is now launching long-range air strikes. Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar said yesterday Ukrainian forces have taken back about 20 square km of territory from Russian forces around the eastern city of Bakhmut in recent days.

SUDAN CONFLICT
Air strikes, artillery fire escalate

Residents say Khartoum situation 'unbearable'

REUTERS, Dubai
Air strikes and artillery fire intensified sharply across Sudan's capital early yesterday, residents said, as the army sought to defend key bases from paramilitary rivals it has been fighting for more than a month.

The air strikes, explosions and clashes could be heard in the south of Khartoum, and there was heavy shelling across the River Nile in parts of the adjoining cities of Bahri and Omdurman, witnesses said.

The fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has triggered unrest in other areas of Sudan, especially in the western region of Darfur, but is concentrated in Khartoum.

It has caused a humanitarian crisis that threatens to destabilise the region, displacing over 700,000 people inside Sudan and forcing about 200,000 to flee into neighbouring countries.

Those who have remained in the capital are struggling to survive as food supplies dwindle, health services collapse and lawlessness spreads.

Officials have recorded 676 deaths and more than 5,500 injuries, but real toll is expected to be far higher with



many reports of bodies left in the streets and people struggling to bury dead.

"The situation is unbearable. We left our house to go to a neighbour's house in Khartoum, escaping from the war, but the bombardment follows us wherever we go," said Ayman Hassan, a 32-year-old resident.

"We don't know what the citizens did to deserve a war in the middle of the houses."

Fighting has surged both in Khartoum and in Geneina, capital of West Darfur, since the two warring parties began talks in Jeddah brokered by Saudi Arabia and the United States more than a week ago.

The talks have produced a statement of principles about providing access for aid supplies and protecting civilians, but mechanisms for setting up humanitarian corridors and agreeing to a ceasefire are still being discussed.

Iran, Russia expanding military co-op: US

AFP, Washington

The United States said Monday that Iran and Russia are "expanding their unprecedented defense partnership," as Moscow ramps up ties with Tehran after being hit with Western sanctions.

Russia, one of the world's top military powers, has been obliged to rely on Iran for supplies as it suffers battlefield losses in its invasion of Ukraine, according to US intelligence.

US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby cited Moscow's desire to acquire more sophisticated unmanned military drones as a key part of the growing cooperation.

"Interactions between Iran and Russia in matters regarding the selling of advanced weapons, especially more advanced UAVs, are now continuing," he told reporters. "This is a full scale defense partnership that is harmful to Ukraine, to the region in the Middle East, and to the international community," he said.

Tunisia jails opposition leader

AFP, Tunis

The Tunisian Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party yesterday condemned the one-year prison sentence handed to its leader Rached Ghannouchi, calling it an "unjust political verdict". Ghannouchi, a leading opponent of President Kais Saied, was sentenced on Monday on terrorism-related charges following his April 17 arrest. He had appeared in court at the end of February on the charges after being accused of calling police officers "tyrants". The case was one of several levied by authorities against Ghannouchi, whose party was the largest in parliament before Saied dissolved the chamber in July 2021 as part of a power grab allowing him to rule by decree.

Join alliance with election winners

Thai opposition figure urges holdout parties

REUTERS, Bangkok

Srettha Thavasin, an opposition leader in Thailand, yesterday urged holdout parties to join an alliance with election winners to block defeated military-backed parties from forming a minority government. The progressive Move Forward Party staked a claim as the new force in Thai politics on Sunday, winning most seats in a general election, including in some conservative strongholds, and coming within just four votes of a clean sweep of the capital, Bangkok.

Don't use artificial sweeteners: WHO

AFP, Geneva

Artificial sweeteners, used to replace sugar in a vast range of products, do not help in losing weight and can have serious health effects, according to the World Health Organization. The United Nations' health agency released new guidelines on Monday advising against using so-called non-sugar sweeteners or NSS. A systematic review of available evidence "suggests that use of NSS does not confer any long-term benefit in reducing body fat in adults or children", the WHO said. In addition, results from the review "suggest that there may be potential undesirable effects from long-term use of NSS, such as an increased risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases". Sweeteners are consumed by millions every day in products like diet soda or to sweeten coffee.

Dead woman wins local polls in India

AFP, Lucknow

A woman won a local election in India almost two weeks after her death as supporters kept their pledge to back her in a sign of respect, officials said.

Ashiya Bi polled at nearly 44 percent in the race for a municipal civic body seat in Uttar Pradesh this month, and was declared victorious posthumously.

The popular 30-year-old first-time candidate fell ill, reportedly from an acute infection, and died just 12 days before the poll. Her husband informed election officials, but district officer told AFP yesterday that there was no procedure in place to remove her name from the ballot.

MAY 9 ATTACKS CASES

Pak court reserves verdict on Imran's plea against arrest

DAWN ONLINE

The Lahore High Court (LHC) yesterday reserved its verdict on former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's plea against his arrest in any case registered on or after May 9, when he was arrested from the premises of the Islamabad High Court in the Al-Qadir Trust case.

The petition, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, named the Punjab inspector general and the state through the Punjab advocate general as respondents.

The plea called on the court to direct the Punjab inspector general to provide a fresh report regarding the registration of "undisclosed/new FIRs" in Lahore on or after May 9.

It also called on the court to give Imran "protection of law" and to bar the respondents from arresting the PTI chief in any new criminal case

registered on or subsequent to May 9 without the court's prior permission.

Meanwhile, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) extended bails of Imran in two cases - one pertaining to allegations against top officers of state institutions and the other on the manhandling of PML-N leader Mohsin Ranjha by party workers - until June 8.

In a video message on Twitter yesterday, Imran lamented that his supporters, including women, were being tormented in a manner never seen before.

He said that fear was being spread among the public to oppress them as he likened the situation in the country today to the atrocities during the rule of Genghis Khan.

He called on the people to take to the streets and hold peaceful protests whenever a call is given by the PTI.

Office of the Registrar, Jashore University of Science and Technology, Jashore-7408, Bangladesh. Notice regarding the application process for the ACMP 4.0 program, including details on scanned copies, application fees, and contact information.

IBA Institute of Business Administration Admission Notice for ACMP 4.0. Includes background information, course highlights, application process, eligibility criteria, and contact details for the Institute.

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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

A poll-time govt without BNP?

A fair election will require much more than token initiatives

We appreciate what appears to be the first sign of flexibility about forming a poll-time government ahead of the national election. The prime minister on Monday hinted that a poll-time government with parties having representation in parliament could be formed. By the same logic, however, she rejected the possibility of BNP, whose MPs had resigned from parliament last December, being a part of it. She also ruled out any dialogue with BNP.

There are a number of takeaways from the PM's statement. First of all, the apparent willingness to bring opposition elements in the government marks a departure from the bellicose posturing that we have come to expect from ruling-party politicians. But that hardly rises to the level expected in the present environment of distrust, with BNP edged out of the process on a technicality. Also, the PM's tone, alluding to "our generosity" for forming such a government, leaves doubt about how impactful it might be. One thing that we don't want to see is token representation without real power.

Secondly, BNP remains the biggest opposition party regardless of its representation or lack thereof in parliament. So, how judicious is it to exclude it from a potential poll-time government or any dialogue on said government and the election in general? Dialogue at the top level may not be on the cards right now, but mid-ranked leaders from both parties can, and should, start the process. Dialogue is essential for any solution to the current political impasse.

Thirdly, formation of a poll-time government is but a means to an end, which is to ensure that those in charge have the trust of all political elements and the general public, and can deliver a fair and credible election. So how should that be formed? The PM offers a way, but it cannot be the only way. Any poll-time government without the representation of main political elements will not solve the pressing issues we face. Also, how will it perform? Will it be unidimensional, where everything is decided from the top, as it is now? These things must be considered going forward.

As the chief election commissioner has repeatedly said, the commission alone cannot hold a fair election without the help of the government. Without taking away from the responsibility of the EC, we think some sort of a credible power structure in the driving seat is a crucial precondition for any fair election.

We must curb rising inequality

Reforms as per IMF conditions should not harm disadvantaged groups

At a dialogue organised by the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, speakers rightly emphasised the need for the government to balance economic reforms – some of which are preconditions for accessing the IMF's \$4.7 billion loan – in a way that can rein in economic disparity in Bangladesh. As the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2022 has demonstrated, inequality is indeed rising in the country. According to data, the Gini coefficient related to income rose to 0.499 in 2022, up from 0.482 in 2016 and 0.458 in 2010. A combination of this with the ongoing global and domestic economic challenges, and the obligation to meet IMF conditions through various spending cuts, could lead to faster inequality growth.

By now, numerous studies have shown us that inequality tends to rise during IMF programmes or as a result of IMF conditions. Therefore, it is crucial to adjust its conditions in a way that can contain inequality. Experts, for example, have urged the government to allow specialised and subsidised credit schemes for those involved in agriculture and cottage, micro, small and medium enterprises (CMSME), and for women and youth, while maintaining flexible interest rates as per the IMF recommendations. Additionally, while the government needs to reduce tax exemptions to meet loan conditions, it should do so in a way that does not hurt small and medium enterprises.

How the government plans and implements the upcoming national budget will also be a big factor, as far as inequality is concerned. Allocation for disadvantaged groups should not suffer as a consequence of the government's fiscal constraints. If anything, the government should ensure that much of its limited resources is directed towards the needs of these groups. It also needs to ensure greater accountability and transparency in its budgetary allocations and delivery, so that corruption – which always hits disadvantaged groups the hardest, while benefiting special interest groups – is reduced.

As the planning minister himself has admitted, there are many tax evaders and defaulters in the country. Taking action against them, however difficult that may seem, is a must for any reform to be sustainable.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Rising prices are suffocating us

I am responsible for feeding a family of five. With rising food prices, we have cut down our food consumption, particularly protein-rich food items such as fish and meat, as we can't afford them like we could before. This is putting my two small children's development in jeopardy as they are not getting the nutrition they need. Now I'm hearing they may raise the price of gas further. I am the sole earner in my family, and my salary isn't increasing like the prices are. How am I supposed to keep my family alive and well?

Mohammad Hasan
Rayerbazar

Biman never fails to disappoint



A CLOSER LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is @tasneem_tayeb

TASNEEM TAYEB

Biman – flamboyant, glamorous, carefree – seems to be flying high on the back of unbridled corruption, reckless nepotism, shameless mismanagement, and belligerent malpractices. It also seems to have become a magnet for the wayward and the corrupt, ensnaring them with endless possibilities of thriving on the common people's taxes and national resources.

Take, for instance, Biman's puzzling decision to send about a hundred officials to Saudi Arabia this year on a 37-day, fully-paid-for trip, at a tentative cost of about Tk 8-10 crore, to "supervise" hajj pilgrims and assist them. In what capacity these Biman officials are going remains a mystery, since the "work" that they are supposed to do involves tasks that are already carried out by others – carrying luggage, wheelchair management, ticketing, cleaning aircraft, etc.

For instance, these officials (from the customer service directorate, marketing sales, engineering and material management directorate, and IT, among other departments)

It is a generally accepted fact that Biman is a cesspool of corruption and mismanagement. It does not have the capacity to run like a commercial airline let alone create its competitive edge in the global aviation industry. It is a blackhole that keeps devouring national resources and gives nothing back except scandals.

are supposed to help in carrying the luggage and Zamzam water bottles/containers to and from hotels. However, the president of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, M Shahadat Hossain Taslim, said to this daily that, under the Makkah Route Initiative, Saudi-appointed employees carry the pilgrims' luggage between the airport and their hotels, and they also carry Zamzam water containers.

Moreover, the national flag carrier already has a General Sales Agent (GSA) in Saudi Arabia and station offices in



ILLUSTRATION: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

Jeddah, Madinah, and Makkah. Despite the hollow and puerile justifications given by Biman authorities, this entire programme looks like a leisure trip for the officials at a time when the country is facing perhaps the worst forex crunch of recent times, and in spite of the prime minister's straightforward directive to avoid unnecessary foreign trips. Interestingly, Muhammad Nizam Uddin Ahmed, a key accused in the recent question paper leak scandal during Biman recruitment, is also a part of the entourage.

Unfortunately, Biman's misadventures do not end here. On May 3, its board of directors in principle decided to procure 10 Airbus planes, including the two freighters, to expand its fleet. This decision has left some aviation experts baffled, since Biman is only using six percent of its current freight capacity. In 2022, Biman carried about 28,000 tonnes of freight in the cargo hold of the planes making international flights, against a capacity of 498,000 tonnes. There is another challenge: Biman's seasonal cargo transport demand is west-bound when it comes to exports, and in-bound cargo mostly comes in from countries in the eastern region, such as China, Japan, Hong Kong, etc.

Given the reality, how is Biman planning to ensure a two-way goods traffic during these flights? Or are

international flights, and had a concerning 700,000 seats vacant, which translates to an underutilised capacity of 24 percent. This inability to utilise existing capacity has been attributed to shortages of pilots and cabin crew members, and poor planning and management.

At the executional level, too, Biman seems to be struggling incessantly, putting passengers' lives at risk. As recently as on May 13 this year, a Biman flight coming in from Kuala Lumpur at the Dhaka airport got stuck at the end of the runway while taking a U-turn, resulting in flight operation suspension at the airport for about an hour and causing about six international flights to be delayed. Unsurprisingly, neither of the two captains flying the aircraft managed to register the incident in the air safety report, which could have been a deliberate attempt to hide the incident from official reporting channels.

What is even more alarming is that the Boeing 787 Biman aircraft, which dropped off the prime minister at Tokyo airport on April 25 during her recent visit to Japan, on its way back to Bangladesh had to navigate a "minimum equipment list" flight, as both its weather radar systems had stopped functioning. Imagine this happening during the flight to Japan, instead of the return leg. This could

had to make a technical landing at Dhaka airport two and a half hours into the flight, as its weather radar system was not working. Now, coming back to the incident involving the aircraft that carried our prime minister to Tokyo: if, as Air Commodore Moazzem Hossain, director of engineering and material management at Biman, said, it was only a "small problem" and did not "pose a safety hazard," why did the Riyadh-bound flight suffer the same problem?

Unfortunately, these incidents are only the tip of the iceberg. It is a well-known and generally accepted fact that Biman is a cesspool of corruption and mismanagement. It does not have the capacity to run like a professional, commercial airline – despite its officials drawing corporate-structure salaries – let alone creating its competitive edge in the global aviation industry. It is a blackhole that keeps devouring national resources and gives nothing back in return except scandals. The airline has zero accountability and no regard for any form of governance, compliance, or internal (or even external) control measures.

While it is understandable that Biman serves the financial interests of vested quarters, the only solution to its malady is privatisation. The sooner the policymakers and decision-makers come to terms with this fact, the better.

Role of MPs in tackling climate change



POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Dr Saleemul Huq is director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCAD) at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

SALEEMUL HUQ

I had an opportunity to address a meeting of Bangladeshi parliamentarians, under the leadership of Speaker of the House Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, organised by the UNDP, on the outcome of COP27 and the role of parliamentarians going forward.

Let me share some of my remarks to the parliamentarians and also some of the outcomes of the event.

The main positive outcome of COP27, held in November 2022 in Egypt, was the agreement to set up a funding mechanism to address loss and damage from human-induced climate change. This was a major breakthrough agreement and the result of some very effective advocacy and diplomacy by Bangladesh as part of the climate-vulnerable developing countries' group.

The activities of the Transitional Committee on funding loss and damage need to be geared up to get a result in COP28, which is scheduled to be held in December 2023 in Dubai. We must keep a close eye on the work of the Transitional Committee before COP28.

Regarding the role of parliamentarians, there are three levels of action they could get involved in – namely the global, national, and local levels.

Bangladeshi parliamentarians have already been playing a leading role for

a number of years. MP Saber Hossain Chowdhury, who has chaired the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for many years, and Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, who has chaired the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), both raised the issue of tackling climate change from their respective positions. More recently, under the presidency of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) also set up a new parliamentarian forum, in which all our parliamentarians should join and participate in their deliberations and global advocacy, together with their counterparts from other vulnerable developing countries.

At the national level, the parliamentarians – as part of their membership of the different parliamentary standing committees – have a constitutionally mandated role of overseeing the activities of different ministries of the government and need to sharpen their role in monitoring their activities in tackling climate change, especially the allocation and disbursement of the climate budget under the Ministry of Finance. The climate budget has been an excellent initiative of the finance ministry. But merely announcing the budget allocations without providing information on the actual

expenditures will not ensure their usefulness. Hence, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance must take a greater responsibility to oversee the climate budget allocation, as well as expenditures, as they are constitutionally mandated to do.

The third level of activities of parliamentarians was vividly illustrated

At the national level, the parliamentarians have a constitutionally mandated role of overseeing the activities of different ministries of the government and need to sharpen their role in monitoring their activities in tackling climate change, especially the allocation and disbursement of the climate budget under the Ministry of Finance.

in real time as we met just as Cyclone Mocha was approaching Bangladesh (before moving on to Myanmar). The cyclone preparedness programme of Bangladesh – which involves everyone from scientists, who track the cyclones, to government agencies responsible for preparation to volunteers letting everyone know about the coming event and helping them get to the shelters – was particularly pertinent as every parliamentarian in the meeting had

considerable experience to share on tackling cyclones and other weather-related disasters.

All parliamentarians in Bangladesh, and indeed globally, need to become aware of climate change and about their specific roles in helping their constituents tackle its impacts through effective local adaptation. However, the MPs rightly pointed out that every constituency is different with respect to which climate change impacts need more attention and what they need to do to prepare themselves. Hence, a constituency-by-constituency set of data and information could be developed by the government and experts.

At the same time, a set of parliamentarians from the most vulnerable constituencies could form a special group to get more deeply involved regarding the climate actions needed at the local level in their constituencies.

Finally, I recommended that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and Climate Change take the lead in learning more about and then implementing the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCP), along with the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and the Bangladesh Delta Plan. I am pleased that the speaker endorsed this recommendation and asked the UNDP to follow up on it.

It is now clear that every group of citizens in Bangladesh must learn about their respective roles in tackling climate change and then carry out their tasks urgently and at scale. I was pleased to see that our parliamentarians seem to have gotten the message and have taken up their role in earnest, and I am happy to help them in any way I can from hereon.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

AJAR ALI MOSQUE A Mughal-era architectural wonder

As you approach the Halihsahar area in Chattogram, your eyes will be drawn to a striking red building with majestic domes that seem to reach for the sky. This is the Ajar Ali Mosque, a stunning example of Mughal-era engineering design that takes visitors on a journey back to the late 18th century.

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

With its unique aesthetic beauty and significant historical value, this cultural heritage is a must-visit attraction for anyone who appreciates the artistry and craftsmanship of past generations.

The mosque, built in 1795 by Asi Mia Chowdhury, son of wealthy landlord Ajar Ali Chowdhury, boasts a unique aesthetic beauty that is sure to leave a lasting impression on anyone who visits.

The square-shaped mosque features three terracotta domes with Mughal architectural style on the top.



The mosque was constructed on 10 decimal land, with a total of 24 minars (small towers or spires) adorning the top. The lime-sand and powdered brick structure is complemented with beautiful designs both inside and outside, with columns and supporting ceiling made of stone.

The main entrance features wood crafted doors with two windows on either side. Inside the mosque, eight Khilan (arches) with carved designs are located, and it can accommodate around 31 to 34 devotees for prayers at a time.

Despite the fact that prayers are not being held inside the mosque since 2016, it remains a popular attraction for people from all walks of life. The locals take great pride in the Ajar Ali Mosque, and its preservation is of utmost importance to them.

Gias Uddin Chowdhury, the motwalli (caretaker) of the mosque, spoke of his family's legacy and commitment to preserving the history and beauty of the mosque.

"Our ancestor built the mosque in 1795, and we renovated the mosque with our family funding a few years back to keep the history alive," he said.

"For devotees, we have built another mosque beside it spending around Tk 4 crore. Our forefather never sought money from anyone to fund the mosque. From the family fund, we are maintaining the cost," he said.

The Ajar Ali Mosque is easily accessible from the Boropole Halihsahar area of Chattogram.

Drinking water crisis grips Sitakunda

7,000 tube wells go dysfunctional due to depleting groundwater, rampant use by industries

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

The drinking water crisis in Sitakunda has been worsening as over 7,000 tube wells have become dysfunctional due to the fall of the groundwater layer amid scorching heat.

The situation has been ongoing for nearly 25 days, causing untold sufferings to women and children. Locals said they are now forced to drink and use arsenic-contaminated and unclean water, leading to health problems.

Sitakunda accommodates almost 300 small and large industries, including iron factories and ship-breaking yards. These factories reportedly pump groundwater with high-power submersible pumps to meet their daily necessities for production.

Locals allege that due to the industries, the groundwater level goes down during every dry season, causing a tube-well water crisis, putting local life in immense trouble.

The Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) Sitakunda office has reported that a total of 5,000 tube wells



installed by the DPHE have become dysfunctional, forcing people to collect drinking water from other sources.

Additionally, more than 5,000 tube wells set up privately have also become out of order.

Officials of DPHE said they can do nothing but wait for the rain to relieve the situation.

The crisis is affecting Kumira, Banshbaria, Muradpur, Syed Para, and the municipality area, as well as 32 coastal colonies

of fishermen communities and seven indigenous villages. People are collecting water from nearby canals and ponds, but this water is often polluted, causing physical problems for children and women.

Banker Nazmul Alam, a landlord in Sitakunda Bazar area, said his tenants have reported water crises for the last several years, and this season has brought more woes as there is scanty rain, and the water level is going down every year due to the

increase in demand.

The situation has led to diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases in fisher communities.

Admitting the crisis, Sitakunda DPHE office's Deputy Sub Engineer Md Rasheduzzaman said there is no water in around 5,000 tube wells in different parts of the upazila.

"The problem will ease if torrential rain starts in the locality, otherwise there is no solution," he added.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Sitakunda Md Shahadat Hossain acknowledged the situation and said they are trying to tackle it by advising people to use nearby ponds and similar water sources.

When asked about the allegation of rampant use of groundwater by the industries in Sitakunda, the UNO said they asked the industries to use reserved water by installing ponds and are demotivating business organisations from using groundwater.

He also claimed that some factories have sought permission to use spring water from hills, but it was declined.

Sitakunda accommodates almost 300 small and large industries, including iron factories and ship-breaking yards. These factories reportedly pump groundwater with high-power submersible pumps to meet their daily necessities for production.

Port city to get third bus terminal soon

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Chattogram City Corporation is going to construct a bus-truck terminal, which will be the third of its kind in the city, after 30 years of constructing the second one.

The terminal will be constructed at Kulgaon, on the outskirts of the port city. The CCC has already floated a tender for land development at the site.

Chattogram's first bus terminal was launched at Kadamtoli Intersection in 1966 and the second one at Bahaddarhat in 1993.

Kafil Uddin, former president of Chattogram Jela Sarak Paribahan Malik Group, said the buses bound for different districts from north to Chattogram used to move from Kadamtoli earlier. Now, only Noakhali-bound buses move from the terminal.

As the Bahaddarhat terminal caters to buses moving between the port city and seven upazilas in south Chattogram, Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts, the buses bound for eight other upazilas in north Chattogram and Rangamati, Khagrachhari and other districts have to stand on road due to a lack of bus terminal.

The third bus terminal will be

beneficial, said Kafil Uddin.

The new terminal will accommodate a total of 160 buses and trucks that will ply on different routes, said CCC Executive Engineer (civil) Rifatul Karim

According to CCC sources, a total of 28 acres of land at Kulgaon have been earmarked for a bus terminal in the masterplan formulated by Chattogram Development Authority in 1995. However, the CCC would develop 8.1 acres initially for this purpose.

Following this masterplan, the CCC initiated the Tk 296 crore project back in 2018, which was approved by the Ecnc in October 2018, said Rifatul Karim.

Contacted, Jasim Uddin, CCC executive engineer and deputy project director of the project, said they have already floated tender for land development.

Jasim said the deadline of the project implementation would be expired in June and so they would apply for extending period for one more year.

When asked about the delay, Jasim said the district administration could not hand over the acquired land for the project in the past five years due to some issues raised by local land owners over compensation.

Life on the edge of a broken embankment No renovation in 15 years led to farmers losing cultivable land

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

The five-kilometre embankment in Musapur union of Sandwip upazila was repaired in 2008. But the union has lost a vast area of its land to the sea due to erosion, since no further renovation work has been done.

Abul Khair Nadim, chairman of the union, said, "In the last 15 years, the embankment has not been renovated. Thousands of people living in coastal areas fear drowning due to high tidal waves during cyclones."

Noruttom Banik, a resident of Maitbanga union of Sandwip, said, "Our union's land has lost fertility due to salt water, for which, crop production here is difficult."

According to the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), in 1963, a 58km embankment was built in the coastal area of Sandwip upazila under Coastal Embankment Project. Of this, around 17km of the embankment has not been repaired for the past 15 years.

Anis Haider, sub divisional engineer of BWDB, admitted that around 17km of the dyke has not been renovated for many years due to fund crisis.

However, BWDB officials have no official data about the condition of the remaining 33km (approx) of the dyke.

Jahangir Hossain, a resident of Alakdia village in Sitakunda, used to cultivate various types of crops on a half-acre land adjacent to the coastline. However, his land remains uncultivable for the last five years due to the saline water entering from an adjacent dyke.

During a recent visit to Alakdia village, this correspondent found that a large portion of an adjacent dyke has broken down, making way



Sandwip two months after cyclone Sitrang last year.

FILE PHOTO

for saline water to enter the area.

Villagers said surging water from the sea washed away parts of the dyke during the flood last year, flooding cropland and dwellings.

Mohiuddin, a farmer of the Kumira union, said, "During the cyclone last year, tidal water entered the locality and the crops on my 2.5 acres of land were destroyed. We are at risk of losing everything as the embankment has not been repaired yet."

Imran Bin Sabur, a resident of the Raipura union of Anwara upazila, warned that huge areas of the union will be flooded through the breached points, which will lead to croplands and homesteads going under water in the coming rainy season.

Abul Khair Nadim, chairman of Musapur union, said, "We appealed to BWDB several times to repair the dyke, but no initiative has been taken as of yet."

Nahiduzzaman Khan, executive engineer of BWDB, said if there is high tide due to cyclones, there is a danger that these dams will break and water will enter the locality.

"We are alert in these danger-prone areas. Geo and synthetic bags are kept ready for immediate response, in case of any untoward incident," he said.

"We already took on a project for constructing a sustainable dyke in Chattogram including Sandwip upazila. Hopefully we will start working on this project after monsoon," he added.

NUMBERS GAME

- ▶▶ **25** – Pep Guardiola's side are unbeaten in their last 25 Champions League games at the Etihad, having won 23 of them. Their last defeat came against Lyon in September 2018. In all competitions, City are currently unbeaten in 22 matches, with 18 wins.
- ▶▶ **12** – Vinicius Jr has been directly involved in 12 goals in 11 Champions League appearances this season, scoring seven goals and providing five assists. He leads all players for involvement in open play sequences that end in goals (14) and shots (76).
- ▶▶ **7** – Madrid are unbeaten in their last seven knockout games in the UEFA Champions League, including finals – winning six and drawing one.
- ▶▶ **4** – Real Madrid are winless in their previous four away games against Manchester City in the Champions League, losing each of the last two and drawing the two prior. The only team Real have faced more times away from home in Europe without ever winning is AC Milan, who Real have failed to beat in seven attempts.
- ▶▶ **2** – Madrid have only twice progressed on the nine previous occasions they failed to win the first leg of a Champions League knockout tie at home. Ominously for City, both were in Manchester, against United in 2000 and 2013.

Etihad awaits epic clash

AGENCIES

It's not an exaggeration to suggest that tonight's Champions League semifinal second leg against defending champions Real Madrid is the biggest game in Manchester City's recent history.

With the Premier League title all but wrapped up after Arsenal's defeat to Brighton at the weekend, and a FA Cup final against Manchester United – where City will be heavy favourites – Real Madrid stand between them and the chance of going for an historic treble.

But this is the Champions League. And this is Real Madrid, a side that thrive in knockout competition. So much so that it can sometimes feel like they can channel black magic to drag themselves



out of desperate situations.

As recently as last year, when these two sides met in the semifinal and Rodrygo's injury-time brace took the tie into extra time. From that point on, Karim Benzema's winning penalty seemed inevitable.

It was the second time that City had been eliminated from a UCL semifinal, after Real Madrid inflicted the same

pain on them in 2015-16. Should they fail to progress here, it would be the first time that a team have been eliminated by the same side in the semifinals in consecutive UEFA Champions League campaigns.

In the first leg, avoiding a Bernabeu beating was priority number one for Man City's treble chasers, who will undeniably enter Wednesday's second

leg with the favourites tag embroidered on their shirts.

"How fortunate we are. We are incredibly lucky to be here. It's in our hands, it depends on us, we don't have to do something exceptional, just be ourselves and win one game to reach a final," Guardiola said at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday.

Defender Kyle Walker, who did a good job in the first leg but still came out second best against Real Madrid's scorer in the first leg in Vinicius Junior, said he would not want to be turned into an internet meme tonight.

Walker was responsible for Vinicius down the left flank of Madrid, and Guardiola would probably depend on Walker's pace to thwart the lightning Brazilian.

"I went to hug him [after the first leg] because he tried to rainbow flick me. I was like please don't try that again and make me a meme. Boxers have a battle and shake hands after. You give the level of respect because they deserve it. Carrying a massive club over the line in the CL, you show your respect. Tomorrow night, I'll give him the respect he deserves but before that is dog eat dog," Walker said.

Two clubs back out of Women's DPL at eleventh hour

SPORTS REPORTER

The second and final day of the players' transfer for the upcoming Women's Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League was held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday, but events took an unexpected turn as two clubs, Sheikh Russel KC and Ajax SC, no-showed for the second consecutive day, signaling their withdrawal from the league and creating uncertainty among the cricketers.

The 11-team tournament now looks to be a nine-team affair and national pacer Jahanara Alam expressed her frustration about the turn of events.

"I think it's disappointing for women's cricket that two clubs backed out from the league at the last moment. As you know, not all cricketers are financially solvent. It's a big blow for the girls who wait for the Dhaka league each year," Jahanara told the media yesterday.

"I recruited two cricketers who were supposed to represent Ajax SC for my team last night. But it's sad that many players are still looking for a team. I hope the BCB will handle such issues strongly in the future so no other team can back out from the league at the last moment."

According to the sources, the two clubs did raise some concerns to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) before eventually backing out from the league. It was also learned that there was bargaining over councillorships from the two clubs but the two parties could not come to an agreement in the end.

"It's definitely a concern but everyone has some limitations. The clubs raised some issues but obviously it's disappointing that some of the players are now uncertain about their participation in the league since the two clubs did not participate this season," BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

As in previous seasons, each club can field one foreigner in their playing eleven in the round robin league. Organisers are yet to announce the schedule but it was learned that the league is likely to begin between May 23 to 25.

Lemos relishing Abahani-Mohammedan final

SPORTS REPORTER

Coach Mario Lemos expressed his excitement after leading Abahani to the final of the Federation Cup against historic rivals Mohammedan following a 3-0 win over Sheikh Russel in the second semifinal at the Shaheed Dhirendra Nath Dutta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

The final, to be held in Cumilla on May 30, will be the first Federation Cup final between the country's two most popular clubs in 14 years, with the Black and Whites winning the last battle at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in 2009.

The two sides met later twice in cup finals during the 2009 Super Cup and 2011 Super Cup, with the Black and Whites winning the former and the Sky Blues having the last laugh two years later.

Mohammedan's 2-1 win against favourites Bashundhara Kings in the first semifinal last week means this will be the first Dhaka Derby final in more than a decade, a prospect that excited Lemos.

"I'm very excited. It's a big game with a lot of history. I think it's a game that is going to get the gallery full. People who love football and love Mohammedan-Abahani, hopefully we can have a good game and show them that Bangladesh football is still alive," the Portuguese told The Daily Star



over phone following yesterday's victory.

Abahani are the defending champions and record 12-time winners of the Federation Cup, which had been a traditional curtain-raiser in Bangladesh football in the past. But is being held in concomitantly with the Bangladesh Premier League for the first time this season.

Both Abahani and Mohammedan are realistically out of contention for the Bangladesh Premier League title, with Abahani in second position, 10 points behind leaders Bashundhara Kings and Mohammedan sixth, a further 11 points behind. This is both teams' first chance to taste silverware this season, but Lemos

was confident.

"I know it's not [going to be] easy, but when you are in a final, it's one game. It's a very tough game but we have to win. We have to play the same way we played today – be patient, disciplined, organised and try to win the game," the long-term Abahani coach said.

After Sheikh Russel striker Mfon Udoh missed a couple of scoring chances, Colombian forward Daniel Colindres gave Abahani a 38th-minute lead with a powerful diagonal shot following a long ball from Rezaul Karim.

Foysal Ahmed Fahim doubled that lead six minutes after the restart with a placed shot on a square pass from Raphael Augusto. The 24-year-old Bangladeshi forward wrapped up the victory with a floated attempt that Sheikh Russel keeper Ashraful Islam Rana failed to keep out in the 71st minute.

Lemos felt the team defended very well and were effective on the counterattack.

"Sheikh Russel are a very tough team to beat. We played three times against them. We lost one, we drew one and we won on penalties in the group stage of the Federation Cup. I thought it would be a 1-0, 2-0 or a 2-1 – a very tight game. We defended very well and attacked very well. It was a good win for us," Lemos added.



PHOTO: RCB

Royal Challengers Bangalore have their own 'Cristiano Ronaldo fan club', with their star player Virat Kohli leading the pack including Wayne Parnell and Karn Sharma.



PHOTO: TWITTER

Barcelona players turned hip in celebrating their first La Liga in four years, parading through the Spanish city on an open-top bus with fans flocking the streets and cheering from the balconies of their homes on Monday. A 4-2 win over Espanyol on Sunday ensured Barcelona's La Liga triumph with four games in hand.

'These situations may arrive at the WC against big teams'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh clinched two very close games against Ireland and Najmul Hossain Shanto, who was adjudged the player of the tournament for his vital contributions with the bat, opined that digging in for the wins in difficult scenarios would be useful to their World Cup campaign.

There are about four months left until the World Cup in India and the Tigers are planning to get their preparations right in the remaining matches. The conditions in Ireland provided a challenge and chasing down 320 in just 45 overs in the second ODI was a big boost.

"The 320 we chased down was very important. Then the match where we defended [a 274-run target in the third ODI]. Both matches were very important. These kinds of situations may arrive at the World Cup against big teams. We got a feel for both instances; how to chase and how to defend. If we can keep these instances in our memory when playing matches, it will be great," Shanto told reporters at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport after landing in the country.

Bangladesh finished third in the ICC ODI Super League ahead of India, Pakistan and Australia and Shanto believed their form must continue. "We are playing good cricket but there is room for improvement," he said.

Shanto was credited with putting forward



good feedback to the team during the third ODI while defending 274. The left-handed batter was also electric on the field.

"Whenever the team is fielding, we all try to help out and give ideas we may have to bowlers or the captain. It's good we could do it and when it helps the team out, it's a good feeling. We always try to contribute and provide feedback," he said, adding that the crowd in Chelmsford made them feel like they were playing at home.

PCB 'unhappy' with new revenue model

STAR SPORTS DESK

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is unhappy with the proposed revenue distribution model for international cricket although it accepts that India, the game's financial engine, should get the biggest share, chairman Najam Sethi told Reuters.

According to figures leaked to Cricinfo, India would claim 38.5%, while England and Australia would pocket 6.89% and 6.25% respectively. Pakistan stands to earn 5.75% of the ICC's projected earnings, primarily from its media rights sale.

"We are insisting that the ICC should tell us how these figures were arrived at," Sethi told Reuters from London. "We are not happy with the situation as it stands."

Sethi said the PCB had already asked the ICC to explain how its finance and commercial affairs committee, headed by Indian cricket board secretary Jay Shah, determined the share.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury told the Daily Star yesterday that they already explained their position to ICC and they were not in a position to make any comments regarding the issue.

Former England captain Mike Atherton wrote in The Times newspaper on Monday: "If that distribution comes to pass, then the strong will get stronger, the weak weaker (relatively) and international cricket will continue to become less competitive – which is in nobody's long-term interest."

Leicester staring down the barrel

AGENCIES, London

Leicester City supporters left the King Power Stadium in their droves with 20 minutes remaining during their 3-0 drubbing against Liverpool, knowing full well that their Premier League fate could well have been sealed by the time they return.

The Foxes face West Ham at home on the final day of the season but Monday's loss felt like a crucial moment. Should Everton win at Wolves on Saturday and Dean Smith's side get beaten at Newcastle two days later, Leicester will be relegated to the Championship, just seven years after defying 5000-1 odds to win the Premier League title.

But Leicester fans were in no mood to empathise, booing at both half-time and full-time during the game against Liverpool while chanting: "You're not fit to wear the shirt".

Almost exactly seven years earlier, those same supporters were packed inside the King Power Stadium waiting for Andrea Bocelli's rendition of Nessun Dorma – the perfect prelude to getting their hands on the Premier League trophy. More recently than that, these fans had also been treated to a Champions League quarterfinal, regular Europa League matches and an FA Cup final triumph at Wembley.

Now, barring a miraculous recovery



in their final three games, Leicester are set to swap night outs at the Wanda Metropolitan to a brief layover at Taunton Dean services en route to Plymouth Argyle.

Smith understood why the fans were upset, but did not question his players. "I wouldn't question our fight today. I wouldn't question our attitude. If you're losing 3-0 at home and you're fighting a relegation battle, I understand why fans will react in certain ways."

Smith reiterated that narrow margins contributed to Leicester's defeat. "It is two marginal inside goals and a free-kick that should never have been," he added. "I can't question the players and I won't."

On what he has said to his players, Smith said: "Not an awful lot. It's a tough time to lift the players. Liverpool made it very tough for us. We have to keep believing."



LEARNING LOSS FOR COVID Class-V students suffered most for school closure

Shows study by NCTB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

School closure due to Covid-19 has caused a significant learning loss to primary students and class-V students were the worst affected, says a study.

According to Learning Loss Study 2022, revealed at a city hotel yesterday, class-II students suffered the least learning loss.

The study, done by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, said 16.43 percent class-V students suffered learning loss in Bangladesh and Global Studies and 12.49 percent in English.

Average marks were compared between Learning Loss Study 2022 and Curriculum Effectiveness Study 2019, the study mentioned.

Before the school closure due to the pandemic, the average rate of learning in English for the class-V students was about 49 percent and it stood at 36 percent after the closure.

The average learning rate of students of the same class was 68.03 percent in Bangladesh and Global Studies in 2019 and it dropped to 51.60 percent in 2022.

Speaking at the event, Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education, said all came to know about the great loss for students from a government study and it is a good move. "But we need measures to recover the losses."

The NCTB, with support from the European Union, carried out the study to identify the learning loss of primary school students and to prepare an action plan to recover the loss.

For the study, 18,838 students from 240 primary schools took part in a test on Bangla, mathematics, English, science and Bangladesh and Global Studies.

The study said about 48 percent of class-V students have a severe and moderate learning gap in Bangla, 61 percent in English and 59 percent in mathematics, 54 percent in science and 60 percent in Bangladesh and Global Studies.

It added that around 60 percent of class-IV students experienced the same learning gap in Bangla, 62 percent in English, 59 percent in mathematics, 56 percent in science and 64.14 percent in Bangladesh and Global Studies.

About 64 percent of class-III students went through severe and moderate gaps in Bangla, 63 percent in English and mathematics and 58 percent in science and Bangladesh and Global Studies, according to the study.

The study recommended having a need-based "Remedial Education Package". Teacher training on the teaching learning techniques for implementing the remedial learning packages is essential.

School Based Assessment should be re-designed as part of remedial education to help students with severe learning gaps.

Zakir Hossain, state minister for primary and mass education, however, disagreed with the study findings. "We have over 65,000 government primary schools and the sample size of the study covered only 240 schools. The study said students cannot read Bangla properly. I don't agree with this."

At the programme, Charles Whiteley, EU ambassador to Bangladesh, said the report admitted and recognised the learning gap. "I believe it is already halfway into solving it."

Education Minister Dipu Moni said Covid-19 created a learning loss, but students got an opportunity to learn new things like online classes. She also said that they will take measures to recover the learning loss.

School Based Assessment should be re-designed as part of remedial education to help students with severe learning gaps.



Locals of Bosila and Chandrima Housing in Mohammadpur regularly build such bamboo bridges to cross the Ramchandrapur Canal, located between the two areas. While it is risky for them to cross it, they claimed the authorities concerned have never taken the initiative to build a concrete bridge there.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SIX AMBASSADORS Withdrawal of addl security won't hurt ties

Says foreign secy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen said he did not believe the withdrawal of additional police escort for envoys of the US, UK and several other countries would affect the bilateral ties between Bangladesh and those countries.

Talking to reporters after an event at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday, Masud Bin Momen said the additional escort was mainly used for clearing the way for the envoys' vehicles, reports UNB.

About the withdrawal, State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel in Washington DC said as per the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the host country must uphold its obligations to ensure the protection of all diplomatic mission premises and personnel, and take all appropriate steps to prevent any attack on those.

"The safety and security of our diplomatic personnel and facilities are of the utmost importance."

In a statement, the UK high commission in Dhaka yesterday also said the security of its staffers and diplomatic facilities is of the highest importance.

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SUPREME COURT BAR ASSOCIATION

Pro-BNP, AL lawyers get into brawl

Around two dozen hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pro-BNP and Awami League-leaning lawyers yesterday scuffled with each other during holding separate programmes on the Supreme Court Bar Association office premises over its recent annual polls.

The incident left around two dozen lawyers injured.

The SCBA secretary's office room was also ransacked and its door and windows were vandalised in the afternoon.

Leaders of the two organisations blamed each other for the incident.

Abdun Nur Dulal, SCBA secretary and Bangabandhu Awami Ainjibi Parishad leader, told reporters at his office that pro-BNP lawyers, led by AM Mahub Uddin Khokon, Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal, Kayser Kamal, Gazi Kamrul Islam Sajal, Abdul Zabbar Bhuiyan and Morshed Al Mamun, attacked the pro-AL lawyers and vandalised and ransacked his office room in a planned manner.

"At least 30 lawyers, including some female ones of Bangabandhu Awami Ainjibi Parishad, were

injured in the attack," he said.

Dulal said the pro-AL lawyers were holding a "peace meeting" in front of the office rooms of the SCBA president and secretary like other days protesting the anarchy by pro-BNP lawyers.

Appropriate legal action must be taken against them, he added.

However, Kayser Kamal, secretary general of Bangladesh

The SCBA secretary's office room was also ransacked and its door and windows were vandalised in the afternoon.

Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum, the platform of pro-BNP lawyers, alleged that the pro-AL lawyers scuffled among themselves and vandalised the office room of the SCBA secretary to cover up their occupation of offices of the SCBA president and secretary through holding a farcical election on March 15-16.

Some pro-BNP lawyers were tortured and injured by the pro-AL lawyers during the incident, he told The Daily Star.

Kayser urged the chief justice to take necessary steps to address the crisis in the SCBA.

Pro-BNP lawyers are demonstrating on the SCBA office premises, demanding a date be fixed for holding fresh polls to the SCBA under an acceptable election conducting subcommittee.

In a counter move, AL-backed lawyers are staging "peace meeting" in front of the SCBA president's office room in protest of snatching ballots and vandalising furniture by "pro-BNP lawyers" on March 15 on the SCBA office premises during the polls.

They also formed a human chain on the premises yesterday and brought out a procession, protesting "the anarchy created by pro-BNP lawyers and the outsiders".

In the election, pro-AL lawyers won all 14 SCBA posts, including president and secretary.

SOLAR SUPERSTORMS AI gives advance warning before they strike Earth

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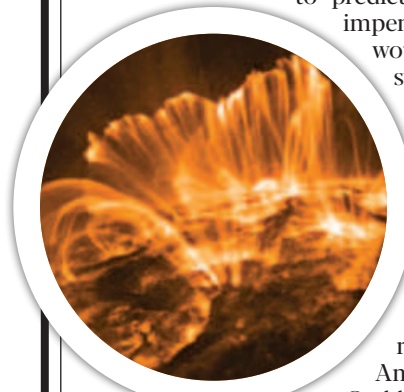
Nasa has built an artificial intelligence model to predict where on Earth an impending solar storm would strike, a new system that scientists said can provide "30 minutes of advance warning".

The AI model analyses Nasa satellite data to raise the alarm on dangerous space weather, said researchers from the American space agency's Goddard Space Center.

The warning may provide just enough time for countries to prevent severe impacts of these storms on power grids and other critical infrastructure, according to the new study published recently in the journal Space Weather.

Solar storms are caused when the Sun emits a burst of electrically charged plasma in what is called a coronal mass ejection.

These charged particles create so-called geomagnetic storms that may cause blackouts and technological malfunctions of instruments on Earth as they interfere with the protective magnetic field around the planet.



A passenger shed, previously being misused as a plant nursery, at a bus stop near the Golf Club Gate in the capital, is now being cleaned up and prepared for bus passengers' use. DNCC workers said the initiative was taken by the authorities concerned three days ago, after The Daily Star ran a photo (inset) of the shed's previous state on May 9. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTOS: ANISUR RAHMAN

CYCLONE MOCHA

Death toll rises to 81 in Myanmar

Over a hundred people missing

AFP, Bu Ma

The death toll in cyclone-hit Myanmar rose to at least 81 yesterday, according to local leaders, officials and state media, as villagers tried to piece together ruined homes and waited for aid and support.

Mocha made landfall on Sunday with winds of up to 195 kilometres per hour, downing power pylons and smashing wooden fishing boats to splinters.

At least 46 people died in the Rakhine state villages of Bu Ma and nearby Khaung Doka Kar, inhabited by the persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority, local leaders told AFP reporters at the scene.

Thirteen people were killed when a monastery collapsed in a village in Rathaung township north of Rakhine's capital Sittwe, and a woman died when a building collapsed in a neighbouring village, according to Myanmar state broadcaster MRTV.

"There will be more deaths, as more than a hundred people are missing," said Karlo, the head of Bu Ma village near Sittwe.

Nearby, Aa Bul Hu Son, 66, said prayers at the grave of his daughter, whose body was recovered yesterday morning.

"I wasn't in good health before the cyclone, so we were delayed in moving to another place," he told AFP. "While we were thinking about moving, the waves came immediately and took us."

"I just found her body in the lake in the village and buried her right away. I can't find any words to express my loss."

Other residents walked the seashore searching for family members swept away by a storm surge that accompanied the cyclone, AFP correspondents said.

Nine people died in Dapaing camp for displaced Rohingya near Sittwe, its leader told AFP, adding the camp was cut off and lacked supplies.

"People cannot come to our camp because bridges are broken... we need help," he said.

One person was killed in Ohn Taw Chay village and six in Ohn Taw Gyi, local leaders and officials told AFP. State media had reported five deaths on Monday, without offering details.

Photos released by the state media showed Rakhine-bound aid being loaded onto a ship in the commercial hub Yangon. Rohingya villagers told AFP they were yet to receive any assistance.