

MEETING DEFICIT FINANCING

Govt borrowing from banks may go thru the roof

2nd time in a row it may cross Tk 1 lakh crore

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government's target for borrowing from the banking system in the next fiscal year is set to surpass the Tk 1 lakh crore mark for the second consecutive year amid the twin difficulties of raging inflation and shrinking foreign reserves.

To meet the deficit financing, the target may exceed Tk 1.25 lakh crore in the coming budget for the 2023-24 fiscal year, according to finance ministry officials. In the current fiscal, it is Tk 1.06 lakh crore.

The target is expansionary and it may fuel inflation, Zahid Hussain, a former World Bank lead economist, told The Daily Star.

The inflation that has shot up to 9 percent has not subsided in the current fiscal due to the government's massive borrowing from the central bank, said Hussain.

From July 1 to May 10 of the current fiscal year, government borrowing from the banking system was Tk 78,559 crore, of which Tk 67,905 crore was from the central bank.

"If the aim is to reduce inflation from 9 percent to 6 percent, the government has to borrow less from the central bank," said Hussain.

The budget for the next fiscal is estimated to be Tk 7.61 lakh crore, said finance ministry officials. The deficit in the budget will be below 5.5 percent of the GDP (Gross domestic product) and about 3 percent of the deficit will be met through domestic borrowing, they added.

The total domestic borrowing is likely to be over Tk 1.50 lakh crore, they said.

In addition to banking system, the government also borrows from non-banking domestic sources such as the savings instruments. Government borrowing from savings certificates is around Tk 40,000 crore in the current fiscal.

However, the government targets borrowing around Tk 25,000 crore from savings certificates in the next fiscal year, according to finance ministry officials.

The target has been lowered as sales of savings certificates have fallen due to imposition of new conditions, including submission of income tax return and a new ceiling of Tk 50 lakh for the total amount of money a person can invest.

According to Bangladesh Bank data, the net sale of savings certificates in nine months (from July 22 to March 23) has dropped by Tk 4,161 crore.

Net sale is calculated by deducting the payments of principal amounts from the gross sale.



"If the aim is to reduce inflation from 9 percent to 6 percent, the government has to borrow less from the central bank."

Economist
Zahid Hussain



People try to shield themselves from the pouring rain as boatmen ferry them across the Buriganga in Shoarighat yesterday. After the mercury reached early thirties, the rain brought some relief to the city residents.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

US VISA POLICY

It'll help curb laundering of money

Momen says people needn't worry

STAR REPORT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said the new US visa policy announced for Bangladesh will help prevent money laundering and not affect the common people or the polling agents.

He said, "A section of government officials, rich businessmen, politicians, and civil society leaders who launder money abroad will be the ones affected under this policy."

Momen made the remarks after attending a programme at the International Mother Language Institute auditorium in the city yesterday, reports our

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Bangladesh economy at a crossroads

CPD says mistakes of current year's budget must be avoided

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's economy is in its worst state in recent history, and the situation may worsen if the policymakers do not address the problems by employing the appropriate policy tools, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) said yesterday.

High inflation, slow inflow of remittance and exports, falling forex reserves, lack of good governance, lax policy implementation, and inability to make necessary reforms are mainly responsible for the current economic crisis, the think-tank said.

"Bangladesh's economy is at a crossroads and going through the most difficult time in recent history," said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of CPD.

She made the remarks while presenting a review of the "State of the

Bangladesh Economy in FY2022-23" at a press briefing at the CPD office in the capital's Dhanmondi.

Fahmida said many policies are now drawn up to protect the interests of influential groups and the policymakers should not do so.

Considering the current economic situation and the next budget to be presented on June 1, there is no doubt that the primary task of the policymakers should be restoration of macroeconomic stability, she said.

The policymakers should set targets for the macroeconomic framework for the upcoming fiscal year taking into consideration the current realities, said the CPD executive director.

"Mistakes committed during the preparation of the FY2022-23 budget — that is setting the targets for the macroeconomic correlates in an

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ROHINGYA ISSUE
China wants repatriation to start soon

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China wants prompt Rohingya repatriation and is interested in building regional connectivity in South and South East Asia under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

China expressed its views during the 12th Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) between Dhaka and Beijing at the state guest house Padma in Dhaka yesterday.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen and Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Sun Weidong led their respective sides to the meeting, which started at 10:00am.

According to a foreign ministry statement, the Chinese side reiterated its commitment to facilitate the early, safe, sustainable and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas to Rakhine.

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BNP may go for 1-point demand

Party to press for resignation of govt; bomb attack, arrests mar demos in Natore, Gaibandha

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP now plans to focus on one point: resignation of the Awami League government.

It will drop its current 10 point demand then, party leaders say.

After the weeklong anti-government programme concludes today, the BNP will work on launching the one-point movement, they said, adding that the weeklong programme is in fact a preparation for the one-point movement.

The US visa policy has encouraged the BNP leaders and activists to take to the streets, and this will help the party to successfully organise the one-point movement.

"The people of the country want a one point movement. The US visa restrictions have made the democracy-loving people hopeful about regaining their rights," BNP standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

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SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

মেয়েকে প্রথম থেকেই দিন
সেনোরা টিন কনফিডেন্স

Senviro Confidence Teen Sanitary Napkin

মেয়েকে প্রথম থেকেই দিন
সেনোরা টিন কনফিডেন্স

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US visa policy insulting for Bangladesh: CPD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The latest US visa policy for Bangladeshi individuals is "very insulting" for the nation, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue yesterday.

"The new US visa policy is unfortunate. We should ensure a credible election for our own interest," said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the CPD, at a press briefing yesterday.

The thinktank organised the event to disclose its third reading on "State of the Bangladesh Economy in FY2022-23" at its office in the capital.

Ensuring a free and fair election should seem a normal process in a democratic society, he said.

"It is very unfortunate that the threat of a visa restriction is a precondition to arranging a free and fair election. It should be a part of any functioning democracy," he said.

"I hope that all political quarters will realise it."

He cautioned that the new visa policy should be taken with due seriousness as the US is the single-largest market of Bangladeshi exports.

"We are capable of competing in the US market even after facing duties when the country graduates from the LDC level, he said.

Noakhali BNP leader allegedly defamed PM

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

An allegation has been raised against a BNP leader in Noakhali for making derogatory remarks about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Abdur Rahman, BNP's joint general secretary of Senbagh upazila unit and chairman of Chatarpaiyya union parishad, allegedly made the remark at a meeting with his party men at his office in Chatarpaiyya Bazar on Thursday evening.

He has been on the run since a video clip of the meeting went viral.

Police on Friday night arrested his son Nazmul Hasan Riday, 23, and his nephews Ismail Hossain Rakib, 22, and Zunayed Hossain, 24.

"Although the trio were not present at that meeting, they are accused of other criminal cases," said Iqbal Hossain Patwary, officer-in-charge (OC) of Senbagh Police Station.

Police were trying to arrest Abdur Rahman, he added.

A fresh case will be filed against Abdur after his arrest for making derogatory remarks about the prime minister, the OC added.



An aerial view shows residential buildings destroyed by recent shelling in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict in Donetsk, Russian-controlled Ukraine, May 26, 2023.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ukraine targets oil pipeline with drones inside Russia

Say media reports; Russian forces intercept British Storm Shadow missiles

REUTERS, Moscow

Ukraine struck oil pipeline installations deep inside Russia yesterday with a series of drone attacks including on a station serving the Druzhba pipeline, while shelling from Ukraine killed at least two, Russian officials and media said.

Ukrainian drone attacks inside Russia have been growing in intensity in recent weeks, and the New York Times reported that US intelligence believes Ukraine was behind a drone attack on the Kremlin earlier this month.

Ukraine has not publicly acknowledged launching attacks against targets inside Russia. The Ukrainian defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Saturday.

In the Tver region, which lies just northwest of Moscow, two drones attacked a station that serves the Druzhba (Friendship) pipeline, one of the world's largest oil pipelines, the Kommersant newspaper said.

The Tver local council said that a drone had crashed near the village of Erokhino, around 500 km (310 miles) from the border with Ukraine.

The Telegram channel Baza, which has

good sources among Russia's security services, said the drones attacked a station serving the Druzhba pipeline.

In Russia's Belgorod region, Ukrainian shelling killed at least one person and injured three, including a 15-year-old girl and a 17-year-old boy, Vyacheslav Gladkov, the governor of the region said.

Drones attack Druzhba pipeline infrastructure

One killed in shelling near Ukraine border

Russian forces intercept British Storm Shadow missiles

Gladkov, whose region borders Ukraine and was the target of pro-Ukrainian fighters this week, said a power line was also damaged. In Kursk region, a construction worker was killed in shelling near the border with Ukraine, the local governor said.

Druzhba, built by the Soviet Union, has capacity to pump more than 2 million barrels per day (bpd) but has been severely

under-utilised as Europe sought to reduce its dependency on Russian energy after President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine last year.

Russia's oil pipeline operator Transneft TRNE p.MM said earlier this month that a filling point on Druzhba in a Russian region bordering Ukraine had been attacked.

At its daily briefing on the Ukraine war, Russia's defence ministry said it had destroyed 12 Ukrainian drones in the past 24 hours and intercepted two long range Storm Shadow cruise missiles that were supplied to Ukraine by Britain.

Russia also said it had intercepted shorter range US-built HIMARS launched and HARM missiles. The ministry did not say where those interceptions took place but reported fighting at points along the front line.

Reuters could not immediately verify battlefield accounts from either side.

Ukraine's Ministry of Defence did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Kyiv officials have previously said that Western supplied weapons would be used exclusively against Russian forces inside Ukraine.

Govt borrowing from banks Bangladesh economy

FROM PAGE 1

Also, the IMF's \$4.7 billion loan programme, approved earlier this year, has set a condition for reducing sales of savings certificates, said finance ministry officials.

That is why the government plans to borrow more money from banks, they said.

Zahid Hussain said the IMF condition is logical as the government expenditure on interest payment has grown out of proportion.

The government's interest payment may exceed Tk 1 lakh crore in the next fiscal. It is Tk 80,375 crore in the current fiscal.

The impact of the government's borrowing on the economy will largely depend on how it will borrow

from the banking system, said Hussain.

"If the government borrows more from the central bank than the commercial banks, it will have an adverse impact on inflation. Besides, it will also chip away at the Bangladesh Bank's initiatives to tackle the dollar crisis," he said.

He said that the inflationary pressure and strain on foreign reserves will decrease considerably if the government borrows more from the commercial banks.

"Withdrawing funding from low-priority projects in the next fiscal can be another way for the government to reduce government borrowing from banks," said Hussain.

reveals that Bangladesh has surpassed all the thresholds of creating gross new money by a considerable margin, Fahmida said.

She said that the central bank did not even use its monetary tools to contain inflationary pressure.

The BB should have relaxed the interest rate cap of 9 percent on loans to tackle the high inflation, observed the CPD executive director.

The think-tank said Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), the sole agency that imports and markets petroleum products, may make a profit of Tk 5 per litre from selling diesel and about Tk 13 per litre from octane at the current prices.

So, there may be an opportunity for the BPC to reduce petroleum prices between Tk 5 and Tk 10 each litre, it added.

The BPC's total profit in the last seven years (from FY 2015-16 to FY 2021-22) was about Tk 43,804 crore.

After paying Tk 7,727 crore as income tax, the BPC's net profit stood at Tk 36,074 crore during the same period.

Being a monopoly and state-owned enterprise, enjoying windfall gains by penalising the citizens of the country can't be justified, it said.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the CPD, said, "Almost all economic indicators are in a bad shape. Policies adopted by the government to resolve the problems are not working. The government will get stuck if it continues adopting such policies in future."

In such a situation, the pressure on macroeconomy will increase further, he added.

For instance, the initiatives taken by the government to boost remittances or resolve the ongoing crisis in forex reserves have become ineffective, Moazzem said.

He said it is very difficult to bring back stability to the economy if a reform programme is not taken in the true sense.

Towfiqul Islam Khan, a senior research fellow, of the CPD also addressed the event.

BNP may go for 1-point demand

FROM PAGE 1

Members of the standing committee held a meeting on Thursday night and discussed the outline of a joint declaration which the BNP and like-minded political parties will announce.

BNP leaders drafted the outline from the party's 27-point state reform proposal. The declaration will be finalised at another standing committee meeting tomorrow.

Once it is finalised, the BNP and other like-minded parties will make the joint declaration public and launch the one-point movement, party insiders said.

The programmes which are part of the one-point movement will be announced after the death anniversary of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman on May 30.

The leadership is considering youth rallies in every division to mobilise the young generation.

The party's top leadership has already held meetings with former lawmakers, former MP candidates, and key leaders from the districts and cities, said a senior leader, wishing not to be named.

The top leadership also held meetings with the organising secretaries and leaders of associate bodies and asked them to prepare for waging a one-point movement.

At multiple standing committee meetings in recent weeks, the leaders discussed how the authorities had started arresting BNP activists and filing false cases against them.

The US visa policy will weaken the ruling party leaders' morality and the administration will be less aggressive, BNP leaders believe.

However, while some senior leaders want to launch the one-point movement as soon as possible, others fear that the momentum of the movement will be lost during the coming Eid holidays and want to launch it in the second week of July.

Meanwhile, two crude bombs went off in front of Natore district unit BNP office at Alipur area in the town yesterday morning and in Gaibandha 26 BNP men were arrested at a hotel on charge of planning subversive activities.

Both the incidents took place ahead of their party's programme for the 10-point demand.

According to media reports, borrowing from the central bank rose to Tk 74,393 crore until April, it said.

Borrowing from the BB may create gross new money of Tk 383,124 crore, but a comparison with global practice

reveals that Bangladesh has surpassed all the thresholds of creating gross new money by a considerable margin, Fahmida said.

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It'll help curb laundering of money

FROM PAGE 1

diplomatic correspondent.

Meanwhile, at a different programme, on the same day, Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque said the US wants the next election to be free and fair, which is also the goal of the government.

"So, there is nothing to be worried about the new US policy," he said while addressing the triennial conference of the Tangail district Jubo League at Shaheed Sriti Pouro Udyan in the town, reports our Tangail correspondent.

On May 24, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the new visa policy under which the US will be able to restrict the issuance of visas for any Bangladeshi individual, believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

Momen said, "Who applies for US visa?...Only some government officials, businesses, politicians, and civil society leaders who send their children, built homes, and laundered money there. As a result, money laundering will come down inshallah."

The government wants the US visa policy to stop violence and arson attacks as were the cases in the past, he said, mentioning that in 2014, at least 3,800 vehicles were burnt.

"If this policy helps stop violence, it would be a blessing. You know who resort to violence, they should be careful," he said, while making an

Man dies as truck rams three-wheeler

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A truck rammed into a three-wheeler killing a man and injuring four others on Bogura-Nagarbari highway in Ullapara upazila of Sirajganj yesterday morning.

Mohammed Ali Sheikh, 42, of Raiganj upazila of the Sirajganj, who was on the three wheeler, died at the scene of the crash, said Bodrul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Hatikumru Highway Police Station.

Highway police recovered the body and sent the injured men to Sirajganj general hospital.

The truck driver managed to flee the scene, the OC added.

Boy dies after falling off roof

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 17-year-old boy died after falling off the roof of a seven-storey building in the capital's Uttar Badda yesterday.

Muhammad Tasin, son of Babul Mia of Tongibari, was watering plants on the roof in the morning when he slipped and fell, said Inspector Bachchhu Mia, in-charge at Dhaka Medical College Hospital police outpost.

Tasin was a delivery person for an online shop, the inspector said, adding that he lived on the 6th floor of the building.

Body of newborn recovered from Buet campus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a newborn was recovered from a dustbin on the Buet campus yesterday.

A man spotted the body wrapped in a strip of cloth inside the dustbin next to an ATM booth around 11:00am, said Dipak Bala, sub-inspector of Shahbagh Police Station.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue, he added.

Two killed in clashes on Afghan-Iranian border

AFP, Kabul

Two people were killed yesterday when clashes broke out between Taliban and Iranian forces at the Afghan-Iranian border, Taliban authorities said, as the neighbours argue over water rights.

Iranian police confirmed the incident without giving details of casualties, while local news agency Mehr reported one Iranian border guard had been killed.

Both sides blamed the other for shooting first.

"In the clash, one person was killed on each side and many were injured," tweeted the Taliban's interior ministry spokesman Abdul Nafy Takor about the incident in the southwestern province of Nimroz.

oblique reference to the BNP-Jamaat.

On the other hand, Dr Abdur Razzaque said the US announced the new policy to prevent BNP's bid to sabotage the election.

"The next election will be fair and acceptable. Still, if B

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KERANIGANJ CLASH

Nipun Roy among 108 BNP leaders, activists sued
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 108 leaders and activists of BNP, including its central executive committee member Nipun Roy Chowdhury, were sued yesterday in connection with an Awami League-BNP clash in Keraniganj two days ago.

Sumon Miah, a local AL activist, filed the case with Keraniganj Model Police Station, Inspector (operation) Ashiqur Rahman told The Daily Star.

The clash that took place on Friday left around 50 people injured.

In the first information report, Sumon claimed that BNP men attacked the AL activists and its office.

"We have already arrested nine people for their involvement in the attack. We have sent them

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Opposing the decision to lease out six baors (waterbodies) to a hatchery, a group of people, whose livelihoods solely depend on fishing in the waterbodies, staged a demonstration in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday. They said at least 40,000 fisher families will be affected by this fish farming in Kotchandpur of Jhenidah. They also urged the government to take steps to preserve local fish. The six baors include Baluhar, Jayadia, Marjad, Bergobindapur, Kathgara and Khoter Pal.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

THALASSEMIA PREVENTION

'Blood screening prior to marriage vital'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

He also stressed the importance of blood screening prior to marriage.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder that is passed on from parents to children via DNA.

The blood disorder is incurable, and its management is difficult and expensive because it requires

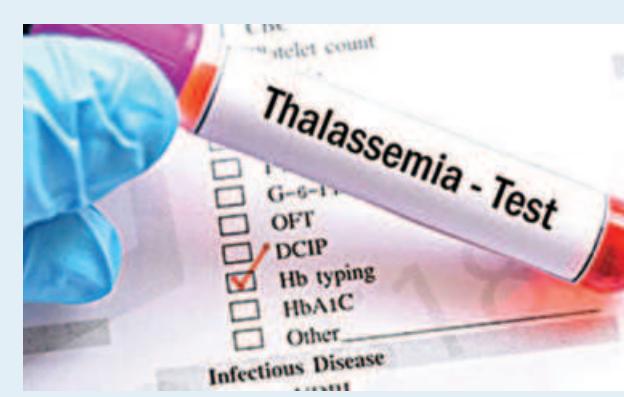
chance that a mother will give birth to a child with thalassemia if none or only one of the partners carries the gene.

"However, there is a 25 percent chance that a newborn will suffer from lifelong thalassemia if both parents have the gene. In 50 percent of cases, the newborn will be a carrier of the gene like the parents



Thalassemia can only be prevented if two carriers don't start a family together. And detecting the carriers would be easier if screening can be done among all school children.

Prof Md Selimuzzaman
Secretary general of BSHI Thalassemia Centre



Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder that is passed on from parents to children via DNA. The blood disorder is incurable, and its management is difficult and expensive because it requires perpetual blood transfusions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Screening for carrier status before marriage
- Checking for thalassemia during first trimester
- Raising awareness regarding the issue

they said at the Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute premises, marking World Thalassemia Day.

"All parents of patients who came to us for treatment said they were unaware they were thalassemia gene carriers," said Prof Belayet Hossain of BSHI's paediatric haematology department at the event.

perpetual blood transfusions.

According to the Health Bulletin published by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), over 5,000 thalassemia affected children are born every year, and it is estimated that six out of every 100 Bangladeshis carry the gene.

Prof Belayet said there is no

but will not suffer from thalassemia. Meanwhile, in 25 percent of cases, the newborn will neither be a carrier nor a sufferer," he added.

Dr Md Abdul Wohab, a paediatric haematology oncologist at the BSHI, shared the latest updates on the treatment of thalassemia.

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Honouring the stellar women

bti, Star award 2 in architecture, education categories

STAR REPORT

To recognise the special contributions of emerging, young and promising women from different walks of life, bti and The Daily Star honoured two women at an event yesterday.

The event -- "Stellar Women Awards" -- was held at bti Celebration Point, Gulshan 2 in Dhaka.

This initiative will award 12 women in 12 categories.

Previously, promising women from the "Development" and "Technology" sectors have been awarded with the same fervour. In continuation of that spirit, in this event two extraordinary women have been recognised as "Stellar Women".

Nazli Hussain in the "Architecture" category and Sadia Jafrin in the "Education" category were presented with the awards.

Nazli Hussain was presented with



The stellar duo -- Sadia Jafrin (left) and Nazli Hussain (right). PHOTO: COLLECTED

EX-RHD ENGINEER Committee formed to probe graft allegations

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body yesterday formed a three-member committee to investigate alleged corruption and irregularities of former additional chief engineer of Roads and Highways Department Tushar Kanti Saha.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Roads, Transport and Bridges Ministry formed the probe body at its meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban with Jatiya Party MP and chief of the House watchdog Rowshan Ara Mannan in the chair.

Ruling Awami League MP Abu Jahir was made

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the award for her extraordinary contributions in ensuring sustainable architectural practices throughout the country for the past 15 years through her firm, Praxis Architects.

Her company is the first

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DHAKA-CTG CORRIDOR

'Build expressway for seamless communication' Experts, business leaders tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business leaders and experts yesterday called for constructing an elevated expressway on the Dhaka-Chattogram Road corridor to establish seamless connectivity between the capital and the Chattogram port.

Only widening the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway -- which is considered the economic lifeline of the country -- will not be enough to facilitate the smooth movement of vehicles. They said elevated expressway will help in reducing the cost and time for both import and export.

They made the remarks during a roundtable

A Dhaka-Chattogram expressway can create effective and smooth connectivity across the country as well with Nepal, Bhutan, the northeastern region of India and the Asian Highway.

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN
ICCB President

on Investment for Infrastructure Development, organised by International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh (ICCB) at a city hotel.

Their demand came at a time when the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has started working to determine whether the four lane Dhaka-Chattogram Highway will have six lanes or eight.

Two separate plans -- one for an elevated expressway and another for an expressway with some elevated parts on the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway -- were dropped in 2016 and 2019 respectively.

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Prime Bank

DRIVEN FOR A GREENER BANGLADESH

Prime Bank has joined a programme under the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI): the Net-Zero Banking Alliance is an industry-led, UN-convened alliance of banks worldwide, with the commitment to build a greener planet aligning our lending and investment portfolios with net-zero emissions by 2050.





Children in the port city had a fun day yesterday. They took part in an art competition at Foy's Lake where they were able to express themselves through colours. Around 700 children aged between five and 12 from 25 schools participated in the event.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Political activities return to Laldighi Maidan AL to organise rally today

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

The historic Laldighi Maidan is poised to reclaim its legacy as a venue for political rallies after a hiatus of approximately four and a half years. The Chattogram city unit of the ruling Awami League has announced that it will organise a rally today on this ground.

The last rally held at Laldighi Maidan took place on December 19, 2018 with the AL-nominated candidates for the 11th parliamentary polls in 16 constituencies of Chattogram. In February 2020, the Education Engineering Department commenced a renovation project on the premises, which was completed last year at a cost of Tk 4.17 crore.

The newly-renovated Laldighi Maidan was

inaugurated by the prime minister on December 4, 2022, and officially opened on January 2.

Although the ground has been open for approximately five months, no political rally has been held there thus far.

Laldighi Maidan was known as the epicentre of political activities since the 1960s, as noted by veteran politician Badiul Alam, joint general secretary of Chattogram city unit AL. "The ground became the symbol of political rallies. Whenever any political rally was announced, we did not need to know the venue because we all knew it would be Laldighi Maidan," he added.

Khorshed Alam Sujan, vice president of Chattogram city unit AL, said other political parties should also have the

opportunity to organise rallies at this venue.

AJM Nasir Uddin, general secretary of AL Chattogram city unit, said the rally is part of the party's ongoing organisational programme.

Shah Alam, central president of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), emphasised the need to revive the tradition of Laldighi Maidan by allowing all political parties to organise rallies there.

Abu Hanif, president of Workers' Party Chattogram unit, echoed him.

BNP central organising secretary (Chattogram) Mahbubur Rahman Shamim criticised the closure of Laldighi Maidan for nearly five years, attributing it to an attempt by the AL to deprive BNP and opposition parties of holding rallies.

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OBITUARY



In Loving Memory of ENGR. MOHAMMAD NURUL AMIN (1941-2023)

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Engr. Mohammad Nurul Amin on May 26, 2023, at the age of 82. With heavy hearts, we mourn the loss of a remarkable individual who dedicated his life to the field of civil engineering and made significant contributions to Bangladesh's infrastructure development. Engr. Mohammad Nurul Amin was widely regarded as an esteemed expert within the civil engineering and construction communities in Bangladesh. His expertise in foundation engineering earned him a place of utmost respect among his peers and colleagues. Throughout his illustrious career spanning nearly six decades, he founded a reputable company that undertook numerous noteworthy infrastructure projects both in Bangladesh and abroad.

Among the notable projects to which he contributed were the Khilgaon Flyover, the first locally designed and built flyover in Bangladesh. His expertise was also instrumental in the successful completion of significant ventures such as the Jamuna Bridge, Padma Bridge, and Asuangan Power Plant, to name just a few. Engr. Mohammad Nurul Amin played a pivotal role in bringing modern engineering technology to Bangladesh after its independence, and his consultancy services were sought after for various national and international projects.

His dedication to the field extended beyond his practical contributions. Engr. Mohammad Nurul Amin shared his knowledge and insights through the publication of engineering journal articles, both locally and internationally. His efforts were recognized and honored with several prestigious awards, a testament to his exceptional skills and contributions to the engineering community.

Engr. Mohammad Nurul Amin's passion for sports was evident even during his time as a student at EPUET (currently BUET). He excelled as an accomplished sportsman and proudly represented his institution and country on numerous occasions. His commitment to excellence extended to his involvement on the boards of several private and nonprofit organizations, including BIRDEM, where his guidance and leadership were highly valued.

Engr. Mohammad Nurul Amin is survived by his four beloved children, who will forever cherish his memory. His loss leaves a void in the hearts of his family, friends, and the engineering community as a whole. The Namaz-e-Janaza prayer will be held at Gulshan Central (Azad) Mosque after Zohr prayers on Sunday, May 28, 2023. We kindly request all who knew and respected Engr. Mohammad Nurul Amin to join us in bidding farewell to this exceptional individual, whose legacy will continue to inspire future generations in the field of civil engineering.

"Inna Lillahi wa inna ilaihi raij'un" (Verily, we belong to Allah, and to Him, we shall return)

Honouring

FROM PAGE 3
architectural firm in the country to receive membership of the prestigious US Green Building Council.

After receiving the award, Nazli said, "It was a tough journey for me, but I followed my passion with the belief that sustainable architecture would become something big and necessary in the future..."

Sadia Jafrin was awarded for her contributions in reforming the education sector with her Grow

Your Reader Foundation. The former Teach for Bangladesh fellow said, bti Managing Director FR Khan, CEO Nalaka Hettiarachchi, and other senior officials were present on the occasion. Chief Business Officer of The Daily Star Md Tajdin Hassan, senior officials from the national daily, and several journalists from various media organisations were also present. Prominent singer Elita Karim handed over the awards on behalf of The Daily Star.

Around 10:45am on Friday, Jubo Dal, the youth wing of BNP, brought out a procession from Jinjira Chatgaon area and it was heading towards their Keraniganj party office to press home its 10-point demand, including the resignation of the government, and holding the national polls under a non-partisan government.

As the procession was passing by the local AL office, both the AL and BNP activists started shouting slogans. At one stage, a clash broke out between the two groups.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, BNP standing committee member, said, "We are the victims and the case was also filed against us."

Nipon Roy is now undergoing treatment in a Dhaka hospital with head injury, he said. "If police want, they can arrest her after going to the hospital," he added.

The parliamentary standing committee later formed the probe body to investigate the whole incident.

FROM PAGE 3
convener while AL MPs -- Enamul Haque and Md Salim Uddin Tarafdar -- were made members of the probe committee.

The committee was asked to submit its probe report before the JS committee at its next meeting. Usually, a parliamentary watchdog is supposed to hold at least one meeting within a month.

ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of Road Transport and Highways Division, informed the parliamentary standing committee that earlier two investigation committee of the ministry didn't find any irregularities or corruption against Tushar Kanti.

The parliamentary standing committee later formed the probe body to investigate the whole incident.

Lives upended

FROM PAGE 5
to protect residents from river erosion. However, the villagers have criticised the poor quality and insufficient quantity of sandbags, claiming that they are not enough to safeguard the vast riverbank.

Md Milton Hossain, a sub divisional engineer of the Sirajganj WDB, said a permanent protection project is underway in a six-kilometre stretch from Enayeturp to Pachil.

TK 40CR POWER STATION IN DANGER

The power substation established at Kollanpur char in Pabna's Bera upazila is facing a threat from river erosion. The government had set it up at a cost of Tk 40 crore to supply electricity through

submarine cable to around 12,000 people residing in shoal areas of Pabna and Manikganj districts since 2001.

The entire project, including the submarine cables, cost Tk 70 crore.

The soil erosion in the area has already affected the submarine cables, said Md Mujibul Haque, general manager of Pabna Palli Biddu Shammittee 2.

"We have repeatedly urged the WDB to take action to prevent river erosion and safeguard the power substation, but they have not taken any steps," he added.

Shudhangsh Kumar Sarkar, the executive engineer of the WDB in Pabna, refuted the allegations.

Last of the

FROM PAGE 5
his two sons work in a salon, but Sushil finds joy and fulfilment in his nomadic profession.

In neighbouring Karnopur village, Narayan Chandra Shil, a 70-year-old roving barber, shares a similar tale. Twice a week, he embarks on his rounds, driven by a desire to preserve his ancestral work.

Contrasting the dedication of these roving barbers, Prithish Chandra Shill, a 34-year-old barber who works at a salon in Phulbari upazila, said, "It's (being a roving barber) not feasible anymore, after the rise of salons with their modern amenities and fixed locations."

Meanwhile, Mozammel Haque, a low-income resident of Sarishabari village, attests to the affordability and convenience of the roving barbers.

"With their modest charges, ranging from Tk 15-20 for a haircut and Tk 10-15 for a shave, they cater to the financial constraints of the community," he said.

Pranab Chandra Barman, another resident of the same village, expressed nostalgia for the days when roving barbers were the norm.

The seventy-year-old remains a loyal customer of Dhiren, aware that those of his generation are the last customers of these travelling barbers.

Nipun Roy

FROM PAGE 3
to a court seeking remand for interrogation," said Inspector Ashiqur.

Drive is underway to arrest the absconding FIR-listed accused, he added.

Around 10:45am on Friday, Jubo Dal, the youth wing of BNP, brought out a procession from Jinjira Chatgaon area and it was heading towards their Keraniganj party office to press home its 10-point demand, including the resignation of the government, and holding the national polls under a non-partisan government.

As the procession was passing by the local AL office, both the AL and BNP activists started shouting slogans. At one stage, a clash broke out between the two groups.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

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Nipon Roy is now undergoing treatment in a Dhaka hospital with head injury, he said. "If police want, they can arrest her after going to the hospital," he added.

The parliamentary standing committee later formed the probe body to investigate the whole incident.

Blood screening

FROM PAGE 3
Hospital and Evercare Hospital.

Prof Dr Md Selimuzaman, secretary general of BSHI Thalassemia Centre, said, "Thalassemia can only be prevented if two carriers don't start a family together. And detecting the carriers would be easier if screening can be done among all school children."

Dr Mohammad Shahidullah, chairman of the board of directors at BSHI, suggested arranging for more services for thalassemia patients at BSHI.

2 former BCL leaders

FROM PAGE 5
over extortion charges and sent them to court. We are currently on the lookout to arrest the other accused in the case.

"We will take stern action against them after investigating the allegations. We urged the law enforcing agencies to take legal action against them immediately," said Sheikh Wali Asif Enan, BCL general secretary.

Prof Mohammed Yousuf, principal of Dhaka College, said they will cooperate with law enforcers in this regard.

Build expressway for seamless

Asian Highway," he added.

Transport expert Prof Shamsul Hoque, who presented the keynote, said merely widening the existing roads without proper planning and design will not accomplish anything.

Planning Minister MA Mannan said he noted down the demand of the businesses regarding the Dhaka-Chattogram elevated expressway and assured that he will try to forward the suggestion to the relevant decision-making bodies.

Emphasising railways, he said the Dhaka-Chattogram railway is currently under construction to have a double track and this issue should also be taken into consideration.

Abul Kalam Azad, former principal secretary to the prime minister; AK Azad, vice president of ICCB, Mustafa K Mujeri, former chief economist of Bangladesh Bank, also spoke at the programme.

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

Memo No: CMCH/e-Tender/2022-2023/MSR/DGHS/HSM/5868

Date: 27-05-2023.

e-Tender Notice

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

SL. No.	Tender Id	Name of Goods	Tender/ Proposal Last Selling Date & Time	Tender/ Proposal Closing Date & Time	Tender/ Proposal Opening Date & Time
1	838052	Procurement Of Machine Readable Re-agent (ABG) for the fiscal year 2022-2023.	11-Jun-2023 15:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00
2	838081	Procurement Of Device for the fiscal year 2022-2023.	11-Jun-2023 15:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00
3	839023	Procurement of X-Ray Film (Fuji) for the fiscal year 2022-2023.	11-Jun-2023 15:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00
4	838367	Procurement Of Machine Readable Re-agent (Hematology Analyzer Celsac) for the fiscal year 2022-2023.	11-Jun-2023 15:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00
5	838400	Procurement Of Machine Readable Re-agent (Medica) for the fiscal year 2022-2023.	11-Jun-2023 15:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00
6	838412	Procurement Of Machine Readable Re-agent (ERBA XL-200) for the fiscal year 2022-2023.	11-Jun-2023 15:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00
7	838808	Procurement Of Machine Readable Re-agent (BECKMAN Coulter) for the fiscal year 2022-2023.	11-Jun-2023 15:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00	12-Jun-2023 14:00
8					

OIC secretary general in city
To call on PM today

UNB, Dhaka

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretary General Hissein Brahim Taha arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a five-day visit.

Director General (International Organisations), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wahida Ahmed and Vice-Chancellor of Islamic University of Technology Dr Mohammad Rafiqul Islam welcomed the OIC secretary general at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Taha will pay a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today.

He will also pay a courtesy call on Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

As the chancellor of the IUT, the OIC secretary general will join the 35th convocation of the IUT on May 30. Taha will also visit the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, according to the ministry.

80 more get hospitalised with dengue

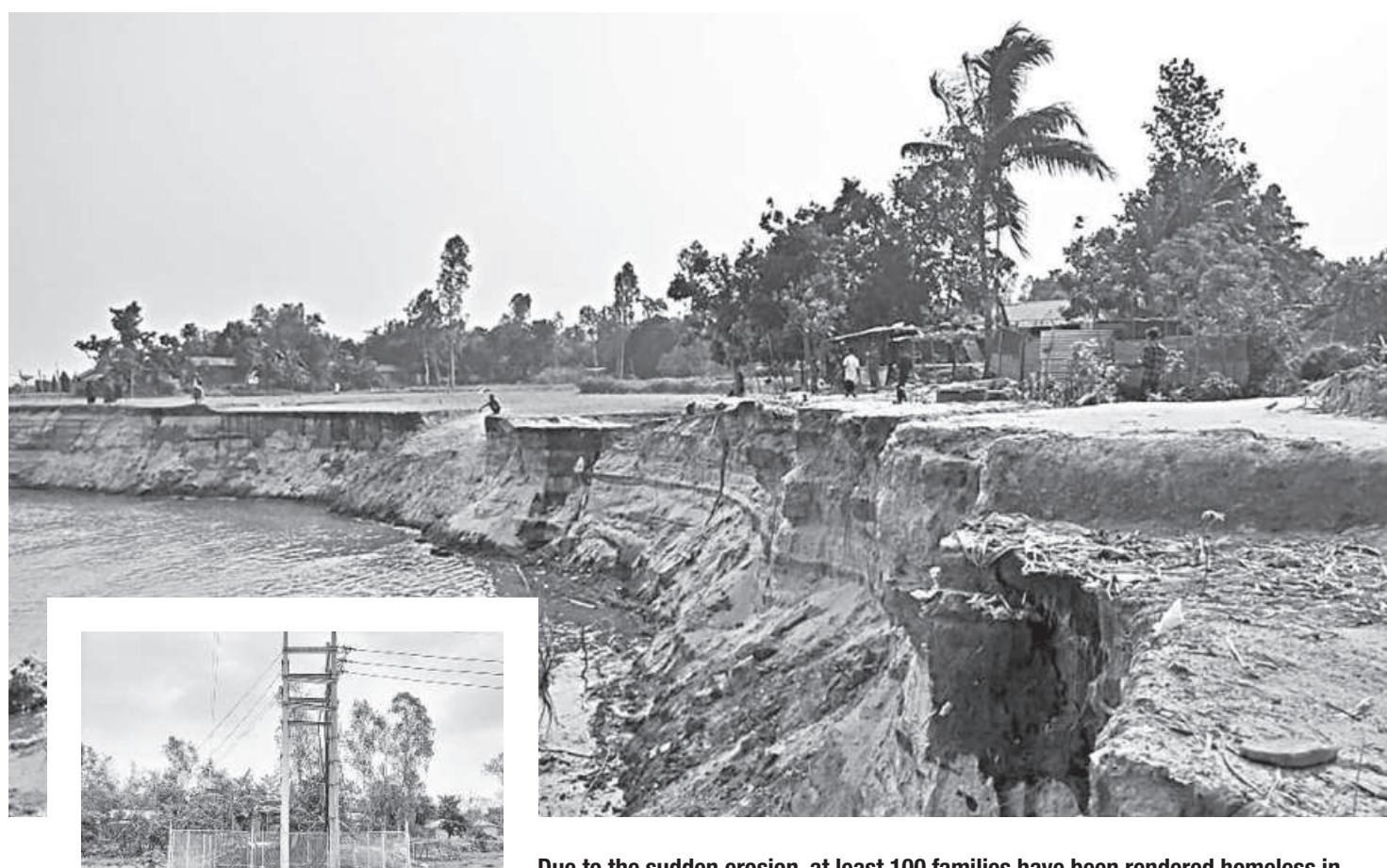
UNB, Dhaka

Eighty more people were hospitalised with dengue in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

Of the new patients, 73 were admitted to hospitals in Dhaka, according to the DGHS.

At least 202 dengue patients are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.

So far, the DGHS has recorded 17,104 dengue cases, 1,489 recoveries and 13 deaths this year.



Due to the sudden erosion, at least 100 families have been rendered homeless in Sirajganj. Meanwhile, a Tk 40 crore power substation set up at Kollanpur char in Pabna's Bera upazila also faces erosion threat.

PHOTO: STAR

it suddenly became fierce and eroded nine houses in one night, catching most villagers off guard."

Md Ramjan Ali, another erosion victim, said, "In the past three to four weeks, the Jamuna has devoured approximately 25 to 30 houses in Brammogram village, forcing residents to seek shelter in different areas along the river."

Md Nuruzzaman Gadon, a resident of the erosion-hit Arkandi village, found refuge by the roadside in the village.

"I have become homeless and lost everything due to the sudden erosion. Not

only my house but also the crop land, trees, and everything around my home has been swallowed by the river."

UNO Sadia Afrin of Shahjadpur confirmed that around 100 families have been left homeless due to the erosion. The worst affected are the residents living along the river banks in Kukni, Jalalpur, and Kojuri unions.

"I have instructed the UP chairman in the affected areas to prepare a list of erosion victims, and they are currently working on it," she said.

WDB workers have been placing sandbags

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Shashabari village, nestled within the Rajarhat upazila of Kurigram, bears witness to a fading tradition. Dhiren Chandra Shil is a 77-year-old roving barber who steadfastly clings to his ancestral profession, defying the tides of change. While his three sons have chosen to ply their trade within the confines of a salon, Dhiren remains the last roving barber in the region, traversing various markets and occasionally venturing into neighbouring villages.



The last of the ROVING BARBERS

S DILIP ROY

Roving barbers refer to barbers who don't have a fixed salon, but instead, move around different markets or villages to provide grooming services to their customers. They set up temporary workstations wherever they find customers, often working under the open sky.

The term "roving" indicates their nomadic nature, constantly on the move to reach their clientele. These barbers cater to low-income individuals and older customers who prefer the convenience and affordability offered by their services.

Dhiren's customers are predominantly individuals aged 60 and above, belonging to a time when roving barbers were the primary providers of grooming services in the village.

Dhiren embarked on his journey as a barber at the age of 12, accompanying his late father, Nabin Chandra Shil, to vibrant markets. The memories of those formative years, etched in his mind, solidified his attachment to the ancestral trade.

Despite his sons' concerns and

attempts to dissuade him from continuing his laborious work, Dhiren remains resolute, unable to sever the bond he shares with his craft.

"With their modest charges, ranging from Tk 15-20 for a haircut and Tk 10-15 for a shave, they cater to the financial constraints of the community."

Each day, he toils diligently, earning an average of Tk 400-500.

"We are the last generation of roving barbers," he said, acutely aware that with their eventual passing, the village will bid farewell to an era defined by these roaming artisans.

Sushil Chandra Shil, a fellow roving barber from the same village, echoes Dhiren's sentiments. At the age of 74, Sushil still traverses the village, providing haircuts and grooming services. Just like Dhiren,

2 former BCL leaders held over extortion

DU CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested two former Chhatra League leaders yesterday on extortion charges after a case was filed against them and 13 BCL leaders and activists of Dhaka College unit with New Market Police Station.

The complainant of the case, Mehedi Hasan Ayon, is an employee of a private company.

The arrestees are -- Jany Hasan, a former assistant secretary, and SM Shafiq, ex-deputy sports secretary of BCL's central unit.

According to the case

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

5 members of trafficking gang held

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Police in a drive arrested five suspected members of a human trafficking gang and 19 Myanmar nationals from a house in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar district on Friday night.

The five arrestees are Zahid, 30, Jamal, 38, Hazer, 50, Yunus, 24, and Dwin Islam.

Among the Myanmar nationals, six were women, six men and seven children.

Tipped off, a team of police conducted a drive at the house of one Amin Sharif (husband of Hazer) around 11:00pm and arrested them, said Abdul Halim, officer in charge of Teknaf Police Station.

All of them entered the Bangladesh territory illegally through Teknaf border, said police.

PRAYER TIMING

MAY 28

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:05 12:45 5:00 6:40 8:00
JAMAT 4:40 1:15 5:15 6:45 8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

JAMUNA TURNS FURIOUS IN SIRAJGANJ

Lives upended, homes swept away

3 women killed in truck-pickup van collision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Three women were killed and 10 injured in a collision between a pickup van and a truck on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Habiganj's Bahubal upazila early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Monjila Begum, 45, Tanjila Begum, 35, and Shahinur Begum, 45, said Officer-in-Charge of Shaistaganj Highway Police Station Mainul Islam.

The OC said the pickup van, heading towards shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal in Sylhet with 15 passengers, collided head-on with an oncoming truck around 1:00am in Mouchak area.

Ten people, including children, were also injured in the accident, the OC said, adding that the injured had been admitted to local hospitals.

Meanwhile in Jamalpur, a 4-year-old girl died after an auto-rickshaw hit her in Islampur upazila.

The deceased is Muslma Akhter, daughter of Mojibur Rahman of Digreechar village. The accident happened around 3:15pm when a battery-run auto-rickshaw hit Muslma while she was crossing a road, said police. Locals caught the driver and handed him over to police.

Three killed by lightning

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed by lightning in two districts yesterday.

In Munshiganj, two people were killed by lightning at Dakshin Kusumpur Lebutala in Sirajdikhan upazila, reports our local correspondent.

The deceased are Mohamad Kausar, 38, a fisher from Louhajhang upazila; and Juman Sardar, 35, an auto rickshaw driver, from the same village, said Syed Ahsan Kabir Shishir, a UP member of Ichapura ward-3.

The two got struck by lightning struck when they were trying to take shelter in a nearby shop, said Officer-in-Charge AKM Mizanul Haque of Sirajdikhan Police Station.

Meanwhile in Sirajganj, a farmer was killed after being struck by lightning in Shahjadpur upazila, reports UNB.

Sultan Pramanik, 60, from Char Anganu village, died on the spot, said Shahjadpur Police Station OC Nazrul Islam Mridha.

He and his co-workers went to a paddy field to harvest in the morning. Although all the workers managed to rush to a safer place, Sultan got struck by lightning, said OC Nazrul.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Director
Chittagong Medical College Hospital
www.cmch.gov.bd

Date: 27-05-2023

Invitation for Tender

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from experienced Importers/Contractors/Suppliers/Distributors to Furniture Repair for CMCH in the fiscal 2022-2023. As per PPA-2006 & PPR-2008 (Including all corrigendum); terms and condition are as follow(s):

KEY INFORMATION

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
2	Agency	Chittagong Medical College Hospital, Chattogram.
3	PE name, designation & contact details	Brigadier General Md. Shamim Ahsan; Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Telephone: +8802333360179 E-mail address: cmch@hospi.dgbs.gov.bd
4	Procuring entity code & district	GOB, Chattogram.
5	Invitation for	Furniture Repair for Chittagong Medical College Hospital in the fiscal year 2022-2023.
6	Tender Ref. No. & date	CMCH/Tender/2022-2023/Furniture Repair/5851 Date: 27-05-2023.
7	Procurement method	Open Tender Method (National) Item-by-item
8	Budget and source of funds	GOB, Economic code: 3258102.
9	Tender publication date	27-05-2023.
10	Tender schedule selling starting date and time	27-05-2023 During office hours.
11	Pretender meeting	01-06-2023, 11:00am.
12	Tender last selling date and time	10-06-2023, 12:00pm.
13	Tender dropping & closing date and time	Dropping date: 11-06-2023, Dropping time: from 09:00am to 12:00pm Closing time: 12:01pm.
14	Tender opening date and time	11-06-2023 at 01:00pm.

Name and address of the offices

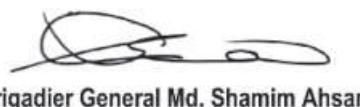
(a) Selling tender documents	Cashier, Office of the Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital.
(b) Receiving tender documents	Office of the Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital.
Tender documents opening place	Officer In-charge, Panchlaish Model Thana, Chattogram Metropolitan Police.
	Office of the Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital, KB Fazlul Kader Road, Chattogram-4203.

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

16	Bidders eligibility	Details in Tender Booklet.
17	Description of Group, Price of Tender Document, Tender Security etc.	Tender security in BDT (Bank Draft/Pay Order to be submitted with the tender booklet in favor of The Director, CMCH).
	Name of group	Price of tender document in BDT (Only in Cash, Non Refundable)
A	Furniture repair	Tk. 500.00 (Five hundred) only
18	Description of related services	Details in Tender Booklet.

Note:

- (a) Corrigendum if necessary in future will be a part of this notice. The company authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender without assigning any reason whatsoever.
- (b) If the date of selling, receiving & opening of tender is disturbed under any unavoidable circumstance, the next working day will be applicable for the same respectively.


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

ENTERTAINMENT'S RISING STARS

SHUVENDU DAS SHUVO
A spellcaster with 6-strings

AAQIB HASIB

"I have been practising music since a very young age. My mother, older brother, uncles, all of them were trained in classical singing. So, it was kind of expected of me. I remember participating in singing competitions at school, where I won prizes as well."

Shuvendu Das Shuvo is an ever-present figure within Coke Studio Bangla. In almost every Coke Studio Bangla video, Shuvendu can be seen, sometimes playing a guitar, a mandolin or just singing. However, he isn't just limited to being a performer. Shuvendu has carefully crafted and arranged a few of the Coke Studio Bangla songs like *Bulbuli*, *Murir Tin* and *Darale Duuarey*. On a Sunday evening, The Daily Star sat down with Shuvendu to learn the story behind the magic.

How did you get started on your musical journey?

I have been practising music since a very young age. My mother, older brother, uncles, all of them were trained in classical singing. So, it was kind of expected of me. I remember participating in singing competitions at school, where I won prizes as well.

However, the inspiration to make music and play the guitar came from my older brother, Autumnal Moon. Seeing him play guitar made me want to learn it. I particularly enjoyed the feeling of singing a song

while playing the guitar. This is where I really got into music of my own accord.

I cannot pinpoint a specific moment, but I feel as if I just fell into music at one point.

At a point, I discovered there was nothing else but music around me in my own world.

Around 2010 is when I first picked up the mandolin. I really enjoyed country, Irish, Scottish and folk music, that is where I got the inspiration to start playing the mandolin.

You're an ever-present figure within Coke Studio Bangla.



PHOTOS: COURTESY

This is a once in a lifetime experience. Working with so many talented artistes, most of whom are people quite close to me, has been quite a wonderful experience. In particular, the man who has assembled us, Arnob da—who is very important to me as I see him as an idol—has made the experience even better.

You composed and arranged 'Bulbuli', 'Darale Duuarey' and 'Murir Tin'. What kind of input do you have on the other songs?

In the first season, we all lived together in a house. Living together helped us develop a better understanding of each other. The experience of living together and making music really added the soul to our music. It almost felt like a band, so all our input is taken. We bounce ideas off each other and give suggestions all the time.

Do you have any insight about how big Coke Studio Bangla's international audience is?

While I haven't seen the analytics, I do

feel the support from the international audience. I see a lot of people reviewing our music from neighbouring countries like India and Pakistan. On top of that, people from countries all over the world post their reactions and thoughts about our songs. We are a global platform, so we can see that our music is reaching out far and wide across the world.

I also see that a lot of non-resident Bangladeshi are very proud that after Coke Studio India and Pakistan, there is now a Coke Studio Bangla.

Do you have any advice for the next generation of musicians?

Music is a continuous learning process. My only advice would be to continue to learn music. If you love music, you will always enjoy learning. If we continue to learn music, then we will see even better growth and hear even better music. Don't chase fame, rather pursue the endless love of learning music, as that will make you great.



Tamil actress impressed by Dibyo, sends flowers

Dibyo Jyoti has received a lot of praises for his fantastic performance in Hoichoi's series *Mohanganar*. Recently, the actor received a token of appreciation from an Indian Bengali and Tamil actress, Katha Nandi.

The *Thalaikoothal* actress sent a bouquet of flowers for Dibyo at his house, after being impressed with his acting in the popular web-series.

Actress Shahnaz Khushi, who is the proud mother of twins Dibyo and Soumyo, posted the news on her Facebook account.

New project featuring Shakib Khan unveiled

Topu Khan directorial and Shakib Khan starrer *Leader Amie Bangladesh* received massive responses from the audience this Eid. Now, the duo are ready to grace the screen once again, as hinted by a picture shared by Topu Khan on his Facebook page, alongside the officials of the OTT platform, Deepo Play.



In an interview with the media, Topu Khan revealed, "We are still in the early stages of planning, but one thing is certain—the movie will star Shakib Khan. He has given his agreement, and we have discussed the schedule. Currently, we are working on the story. Moreover, Deepo Play has shown immense interest in the project. With their support, I am hopeful that we can commence shooting this year."

COUNTRYWIDE

Schoolhouse on verge of collapse

Erosion by the Brahmaputra river takes serious turn in Kurigram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Latmonirhat*

A large portion including the playground of a high school in Kurigram Sadar upazila have gone into the Brahmaputra river due to severe erosion, while the lone schoolhouse is on the verge of collapse.

Char Bhagabatipur High School, located at remote Bhagabatipur village along the Brahmaputra river, was established by Kurigram district administration, aiming to reduce the number of dropouts in the char areas.

The newly established school started its journey with 130 students in January this year.

But, fearing further erosion and possible collapse of the schoolhouse, the school authorities suspended all academic activities and started shifting the belongings to a safer place.

Local people said after passing primary level most of the students of the village could not continue their studies further as there was no high school previously.

Students, who have a desire to get higher education, have to walk miles of sandy char land in order to study at high school on the mainland, they said.

One of the guardians Saidul Islam said, "If the high school wasn't established here, my daughter's education would have been stopped after passing primary level."

But unfortunately the schoolhouse was gradually going into the Brahmaputra river due to severe erosion for the last two weeks.

Children's education will be badly hampered if the school is not reconstructed elsewhere immediately, he lamented.

Raju Ahmed, an assistant teacher

at Char Bhagabatipur High School, said the school authorities have removed the infrastructure and other belongings of the school and kept those on the land of local UP member Shah Alam.

Journalist Yusuf Alamgir, also a lifetime member of the school managing committee, said the school will be re-established at a safer place soon resume its academic activities within the next week.

Kurigram Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Rasedul Hasan, also president of the school managing committee, said it required at least Tk 7 to Tk 8 lakh to reconstruct the schoolhouse in another place.

The previous schoolhouse was on the verge of collapse as high tide continued to hit the institution directly due to emerging chars on the upstream of the Brahmaputra river, the UNO said.



Erosion by the Brahmaputra river is about to devour the entire compound of Char Bhagabatipur High School located in Kurigram Sadar upazila.

42 citizens shocked by comments of Taposh

FROM PAGE 12

mayor are undoubtedly tantamount to "insulting the country's apex court", read the statement.

"We have no words to condemn his indecent and objectionable remarks. By making such remarks, he essentially gave the message that the political party he belongs to is desperate for establishing its control over the country's judiciary like it did over the others."

By making such comments, he not only dishonoured the judiciary, senior lawyers and the civil society, but also disrespected his own professional position and educational background, said the eminent citizens.

The signatories to the statement include rights activist Sultana Kamal, former adviser to a caretaker government Rasheda K Choudhury, former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder, rights activists Khushi

Kabir, Hameeda Hossain, Shamsul Huda, and Nur Khan, minority community leader Rana Dasgupta, economist Prof Anu Muhammad, women rights activist Shirin Hague, anti-graft campaigner Iftekharuzzaman, jurist Shahid Malik, political scientist Prof Ali Riaz, Prof Asif Nazrul, Prof Gitiara Nasreen, rights activist Sara Hossain, and good governance campaigner Badiul Alam Majumdar.

Form independent body to punish culprits

FROM PAGE 12

enforced disappearances and allows them to evade justice," he said.

He said that nearly 600 people have been victim to enforced disappearances, with only 300 of them returning.

"We want to warn the security agencies. Release the victims immediately. The current and former officers, politicians and the individuals who are responsible for the enforced disappearances in Bangladesh will face the music," Nur Khan said.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of Nagorik Oikya, claimed that the world now recognises the current government as a fascist.

He pointed out that international

bodies had provided a list to the government requesting information about disappeared individuals since when the government had prohibited Rab from carrying out such acts. Yet some incidents are taking place, he added.

Sanjida Islam, coordinator of Maayer Daak, also the younger sister of BNP leader Sajedul Islam Suman, who was allegedly taken away by Rab in December 2013, said that victim families had filed general diaries, cases, and complaints in Bangladesh but received no assistance from law enforcement agencies and the government.

"The officers of secret detention

bodies where my brothers are kept -- get it in your ear -- we know you. No one will be spared," she warned.

Children of the victims are growing up without knowing the fate of their fathers. Yesterday, they also held placards, desperately seeking any trace of their missing fathers.

Ten-year-old Safa struggled to hold back tears as she tried to express her anguish during the programme. Her father, Mahfuzur Rahman Sohel, a leader of Chhatra Dal in the capital's Bangshal, was allegedly taken away by law enforcers in 2013.

"My father did nothing wrong. I have no idea where he is now. I just want my father back," she sobbed.

China wants repatriation to start soon

FROM PAGE 1

"The vice minister mentioned that an early repatriation would be beneficial for Bangladesh, Myanmar and the entire region," the statement said.

Bangladesh, with Chinese support, signed a bilateral deal with Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation. Later, China also developed a trilateral mechanism involving Bangladesh and Myanmar for the repatriation.

Despite two attempts, no Rohingya volunteered to return to Myanmar, arguing that they lack security and a guarantee of citizenship. They also want back their properties that they had left. After a Rohingya delegation's visit to Rakhine on May 5, some of them expressed the same concerns.

Dhaka conveyed the Rohingya's concerns to Beijing, which said it also sent the message to the Myanmar government, foreign ministry officials told this correspondent.

Bangladesh, which is sheltering more than one million Rohingyas, is concerned that the protracted Rohingya crisis may be a security issue in the whole region and that peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region is not possible without solving the crisis.

Western countries, including the US, say the conditions in Rakhine are not yet conducive for repatriation.

Foreign Secretary Masud emphasised Bangladesh's ongoing efforts to arrange Rohingya repatriation, engaging friendly countries, and regional and international organisations.

At the three-hour FOC, the two countries expressed willingness to build connectivity in South and South East Asia under the China-led BRI as Bangladesh wants to be connected to the greater region through the Indo-Pacific, the focus of the global powers that are competing for influence.

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, China offered Bangladesh to join Global Development Initiative. This was supposed to be discussed in the FOC. However, the foreign ministry made no mention of it.

At the meeting yesterday, the two sides expressed satisfaction with the existing defence cooperation. They discussed the possibilities of regular staff-level talks and specialised training programmes.

China offered its support to build capacity for addressing emerging challenges like online gambling and drug trafficking. The two sides agreed in principle to have dedicated dialogue on public security issues.

The two sides reviewed the progress of different infrastructure projects in Bangladesh and agreed to further streamline the outstanding issues concerning a few additional project proposals in the power and communication sectors.

Nepal PM to visit India next week

REUTERS, New Delhi

Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kumar Dahal will visit India next week and hold talks with Narendra Modi to strengthen the historically deep ties between the two countries.

The visit will "further strengthen the age-old, multifaceted, and cordial relations between Nepal and India," Nepal's foreign ministry said in a statement today.

The trip will be Dahal's first official foreign trip since he was elected prime minister in December 2022.

Dahal, a 68-year-old former Maoist rebel leader who goes by the name Prachanda, meaning "fierce", will also meet other senior Indian officials, including President Droupadi Murmu.

The four-day visit will begin on May 31 and will also include visits to the temple town of Ujjain and Indore.

"The visit continues the tradition of regular high level exchanges between India and Nepal in furtherance of our 'Neighbourhood First' policy," India's foreign ministry said.



CRACKDOWN ON IMRAN KHAN

Pakistan establishment closes ranks

AFP, Islamabad

With military courts, intimidation of the press and mass arrests, Pakistan's rulers are seeking to destroy former prime minister Imran Khan's support ahead of elections, analysts say.

Khan's brief arrest earlier this month sparked days of street protests.

Islamabad has labelled the violence "anti state", justifying huge roundups and the revival of army courts to try civilians who targeted government and military buildings.

Journalists, lawyers and activists in Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party report campaigns of intimidation and influence which they blame on the "establishment."

"They want to make it clear to Imran Khan that he can't fight with the establishment," said analyst Hasan Askari.

"People are being broken," he told AFP. "By exerting pressure in different ways, they are trying to put the politicians in their place."

The military's media wing did not respond to repeated requests for comment by AFP.

In the days following the protests, more than a dozen of his senior leadership were repeatedly arrested and released on allegations of instigating the violence.

In press conferences after being freed, some of his closest aides condemned the violence and announced they were parting ways with Khan.

"They have put everyone in jail," Khan complained in an address. "If



provisions" are being used and "a pall of fear hangs over Khan's supporters following the arbitrary arrests of many opposition leaders", he added.

"It is a familiar story. A political party, thinking it can take on the country's all powerful establishment, crosses a red line and quickly finds itself losing a ruthless, one-sided war of attrition," said an editorial in the Dawn newspaper.

"The only way out is to do exactly what you are told."

Journalists in Karachi told AFP they were being sent streams of briefings by the army public relations wing targeting Khan's reputation.

"We get a lot of smearing news from the 'big brothers' on WhatsApp, which

are supposed to be off the record and we are obliged to broadcast without any attribution," a TV reporter said on condition of anonymity, using a euphemism for the army.

"We observe self censorship voluntarily to avoid any nuisance," one more reporter admitted.

Reporters Without Borders and Amnesty International have said prominent pro-PTI reporter Imran Riaz Khan has been missing since being abducted by military intelligence agencies two weeks ago.

Media has been saturated with pro army content since Khan's arrest, including a "Martyrs' Day" hastily announced on Thursday.

Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center said it was "not a surprise that the army would want to apply a PR blitz".

"It's suffered major blows to its popularity and even its credibility because of Khan's anti-army narratives," he added.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has openly criticised the Supreme Court after they ruled Khan's arrest illegal.

"Police behaviour, delaying tactics, and other legal complications purposely created by the authorities are a hindrance in the way of quick justice," Supreme Court barrister Gohar Ali Khan -- a member of Khan's legal team -- said.

The government meanwhile approved the use of military courts to try protesters. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said it was "the consequences of Mr. Khan's actions".



Activists of ruling party Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) throw shoes at a wall poster of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party members, in Rawalpindi yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Avalanche kills 10 in northern Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

An avalanche killed at least 10 people in a remote area of northern Pakistan today, officials said, adding that poor weather and limited accessibility were hampering rescue efforts.

The avalanche, which also injured more than 10 people, happened near the Shounter Pass that connects the Gilgit-Baltistan region with Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

"A group of around 35 nomads who were returning from Kashmir had set up camp close to a ravine," rescue official Subah Khan told AFP.

"They were struck by an avalanche late at night that caused at least 10 deaths."

Major Hong Kong democratic party to disband

AFP, Hong Kong

The Civic Party, one of Hong Kong's most prominent pro-democracy groups, voted yesterday to disband due to a leadership vacuum, after its members were squeezed out of local councils and charged under Beijing's national security law.

Nicknamed "the barristers' party", it was founded in 2006 by professional elites -- mostly from the legal sector -- who wanted to promote democratisation and civil society in Hong Kong.

The party was among the last few standing opposition groups, as political dissent has been outlawed under 2020's national security law, and civil society in Hong Kong has been forced underground or driven into exile.

People stand next to artist Benjamin Von Wong's art installation unveiled by the Greenpeace International, ahead of a four-day summit of the United Nations Environment Programme on reducing plastic pollution, in Paris, France yesterday. Inset, Actor Shailene Woodley and activists hold banners in front of the installation.

PHOTO: REUTERS



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A blatant disregard for rights treaties

The Digital Security Act must go, before it inflicts further harm

Two issues that have consistently bothered rights defenders in Bangladesh are the government's excruciatingly slow response time in addressing concerns over the draconian Digital Security Act (DSA), and its uncompromising stance on the question of repealing it. Last week, the law minister reiterated that some amendments would be made to the act by September this year – after over four years of continued, blatant abuse – but dashed any sense of optimism by rejecting the possibility of repealing it.

It was over 11 months ago that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recommended that the government scraps two sections of the DSA and amends eight others. To this day, the government maintains that those sections are "necessary", but is open to some amendments based on its review which is yet to be completed. It is futile to ask why it is taking so long.

After all, the OHCHR is not the first to point out the extremely broad, ambiguous and harsh provisions of the law, which contradict several international rights treaties (including ICCPR) that Bangladesh as signatory is bound to uphold. The Sampadak Parishad, among others, has also repeatedly and elaborately highlighted these issues since 2018, to no visible effect so far. The last four years and so have amply justified their concerns, with journalists, activists, and political rivals frequently targeted.

It is possible that the government will indeed bring some amendments come September, even if merely to distract naysayers ahead of the upcoming general election. But it will be neither enough nor in keeping with its pledge to prevent abuse of the DSA. Any legal change barring an outright repeal may give the appearance of reforms but it may still not be immune to exploitation since the very nature of the law, as a Supreme Court lawyer reminds us, "is contrary to the constitution and fundamental rights." It will certainly do nothing for the thousands of victims who are facing harassment or punishment as a result of its abuse.

The government's failure to recognise their plight or address the glaring problems in the DSA is deeply concerning. We urge the authorities to take the concerns of journalists and activists seriously, and approach the question of reforms in DSA from a human rights perspective instead of imposing their version of reforms.

Support children with Down's syndrome

They have more to offer to society than we realise

It is unfortunate that we as a society have been unable to create an enabling environment for children suffering from various health and developmental issues, including Down's syndrome. Down's syndrome occurs when a person is born with an extra chromosome. Although they may appear to be like everyone else, their abilities can vary and they may require special care.

According to the government's Disability Identification Survey, 6,028 individuals in Bangladesh have so far been diagnosed with Down's syndrome. However, due to a lack of awareness among parents and society in general, it is possible that the actual number is higher. And this is a major problem as early detection can prove vital in providing the care required by children with Down's syndrome and making their lives easier, particularly in relation to their schooling.

Like many other conditions, Down's syndrome continues to be stigmatised in Bangladesh due to lack of awareness and understanding. Therefore, parents themselves are often reluctant to seek out the additional support their children require. But even when they do, the support system being offered by the government in particular, and society in general, is also woefully subpar.

For example, although there are a number of schooling services in Dhaka for children with such conditions, these are not sufficient. The situation is far worse in rural areas where such schools are almost non-existent. The number of trained teachers who are qualified to help these children flourish is also very low.

Because they tend to be different, children with Down's syndrome may sometimes struggle to integrate with their peers. However, it is often the case that they may excel more in certain fields and are naturally talented in them. That is why it is essential for society to provide them with the care and nurturing conditions they require, so that they can contribute more to our nation. Hence, the government should increase the number of special schools and other facilities for children with such conditions and thus help them live an active and meaningful life.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedadlystar.net

Address the plight of GPA-5 holders

I completed my HSC in 2021 with a GPA of 5 and my SSC in 2019 with a GPA of 4.72. Recently, I applied for honours courses at the National University for nine separate subjects, but I haven't been selected to study there. I was a good and hardworking student throughout my life. But now I feel depressed. Where will I study now? There are so many GPA-5 holders in the country. But the question is: will all of them get a chance to study further? Just imagine how dire the situation is for the students under the national curriculum. I urge the authorities to do something about this, so that none of us have to drop out.

Nazmus Sakib
Bhola Sadar
Bhola

EDITORIAL

US' VISA RESTRICTION 'SIGNAL'

A fair warning against a foul conduct



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

Dr Shamsad Mortuza
is a professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

The decision to restrict US visa services to Bangladeshi nationals who might be unlawfully and immorally involved in undermining the forthcoming electoral process has created a political maelstrom. The announcement came from the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday. The White House spokesperson, Matthew Miller, explained the new visa policy under Section 212(a)(3)(C) – known as "3C" – of the Immigration and Nationality Act that had been enacted to "support Bangladesh's goal of holding free, fair, and peaceful national elections."

At the White House press briefing, available on the website of the US Department of State, the diplomatic correspondent from the AP, Matt Lee, queried why the 3C needed to be spelt out specifically for Bangladesh as the US reserved the right to issue or revoke visas anyway. A tete-a-tete ensued as Lee tried to understand the nature of the "grand deterrent", to which Miller conceded that it was "a symbolic thing."

A second journalist tried to decipher the "signal." Miller replied, "It is a signal to all members of society – military security forces, members of the judiciary – that we have this ability and that we are paying attention."

The journalist quizzed, "Are you expecting that there will be rigged elections or irregularities because you're sort of doing this preemptive strike? Is that in any way a warning or criticism of the government and the prime minister in Bangladesh?"

Miller responded by saying, "No, I think it is a signal [by] our part that we support free, fair, and peaceful elections in Bangladesh."

Miller was then asked, "Usually you impose these visa restrictions or sanctions when there's proof of irregularities. In this case, you're saying, 'Watch out if?'"

Miller confirmed by saying, "Correct."

There is a lot to be learned from this discourse; the beauty of democratic norms. The US decision, as we now know, was intimated to our foreign secretary when he was touring Washington. For three weeks, the government had time to prepare its response. It did so by heightening suspicions about the adversary role of foreign agents. The withdrawal of police escort from certain diplomats, the unnecessary



The "fair electoral warning" made the Ministry of Foreign Affairs give a very composed reaction, reiterating the government's position on holding a fair election.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

comment on ambassadorial flags, and the high profile BBC interview to suggest dislike for the premier, all added fuel to the fear of sanctions. When the news eventually broke three weeks later, it turned out to be mildly strategic. The potency of this remedy is homoeopathic as it has the potential of being increased in intensity. And they say the power of homoeopathic medicine increases every time you hit the bottle a certain way.

The announcement that came in the wake of the Gazipur City Corporation mayoral election had already shown some impact on the people or agencies concerned. Coincidence or not, we just saw a peaceful election where the candidate from the incumbent party lost to a rival independent token figure.

The "loser" conceded in a manner that would have surprised even the US, who had not even recovered from the nightmare of counting and recounting their presidential ballots. One can only "watch out" for the "fair" electoral practice that we saw in Gazipur prevailing in the next seven months for the strengthening of democracy.

The "fair electoral warning" made the Ministry of Foreign Affairs give a very composed reaction, reiterating the government's position on holding

impede the election; the opposition's violent past is a case in point. The opposition interprets this visa ban as a slap on the wrists of those who have been in power for long. The "visa stick", the opposition hopes, will create a level playing field for them to participate in the next election. This does not, however, resolve the issue of a referee supervising the fair play. Can the nullified provision for a caretaker government be promoted by the visa master, who does not have any such practice in its own fair and lovely world?

The idea of "fairness" is, by definition, subjective. What tools will be used to determine "fairness"? In a country, where electioneering is a "costly" affair as candidates have to produce "conviction" of their abilities to be close to power to bring any considerable change to the constituency. They have to pay heavily to the party leadership to buy their tickets, then pay visits to their constituents to franchise or not to franchise their rights to veer the verdict in their favour. So any aggrieved party can cry foul in an after-election scenario. In a country that loves litigation, there's a local joke that describes the act of a village politician, who admits, "Since I am in town, I

actors can become counterproductive if the officials decide to avoid the electoral hassle altogether. A magistrate might think, "Why jeopardise my son's future of studying in the US for a fight not my own?" There can be many others in villages who might think that visa restrictions do not concern them at all, as they are not the ones with green cards or second homes in the Global North. But their impudence and actions on the periphery might have consequences for their leaders or instruction givers at the centre. Indeed, it will take time for us to practise democracy in its full form.

Meanwhile, our access to the promised land will depend on how we exhibit and practice prescribed virtues to be aligned with the free-thinking liberal world. The signal comes with an additional string of not deviating from the "ideal" path to tilt towards the lure of the material growth of development.

There is a new world order brewing on the margin. The eye shifts to other parts of the world to ensure the sanctity of the order. It is an emerging battle between two world orders: "freedom-with democracy" and "progress-without democracy". A clash of the titans is unfolding at the macro level. We, mere mortals, are caught in the crossfire at the micro level.

The looming US default and some lessons



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

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ABDULLAH SHIBLI

For over two months, there has been speculation in the US – and, one might even say, across the globe – about whether the Biden administration and the US House of Representatives will reach a deal to raise the debt ceiling. The current debt ceiling is \$31.46 trillion. Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen announced on May 1 that unless the US Congress raises the ceiling, the US government could run out of cash as early as June 1.

For the rest of the world, the negotiations in the US capital between the opposing teams (led by President Biden and Speaker McCarthy) have been a lesson on economics, politics, and the latest state of the geopolitical power balance. Biden, who had planned an extended trip to Japan, Papua New Guinea, and Australia to shore up the anti-Russian alliance and to counter growing Chinese influence in the Pacific, cut short the sojourn and rushed back home after the G7 summit for the budget talks.

The moral of the story so far is: domestic financial stability and the president's credibility are of greater urgency and rightly deserve a higher priority than fighting Russia and isolating China.

For those who might have lost track of the negotiations and are wondering how the crazy US-American reality show arrived at the current state of affairs, let me offer a recap.

Every few years, the US government goes to Congress to seek approval to spend more money than it earns. In 1939, Congress passed a law establishing the debt ceiling at an initial limit of \$65 billion. Since 1960, the US has either raised, extended, or revised the debt limit 78 separate times and has always succeeded in raising the debt ceiling.

The problem now is two-fold. The House of Representatives is under the control of the Republican Party, which took over in January on the promise that it would enact legislation to curtail the Federal Budget. However, the president, a Democrat, won the 2020 elections and has since then gone on a mission to spend more money on green energy, the Ukraine War and various social programmes. The Republicans are using the debt crisis and the June 1 deadline to extract some concessions from the Democrats, particularly stricter work requirements for social safety net programmes, and cuts in the Inflation Reduction Act

(IRA) spending measures.

Interestingly, the House of Representatives proactively passed a bill on April 26 to raise the debt ceiling, and this was approved 217 to 215 along party lines. The Limit, Save, and Grow Act of 2023 would suspend the debt limit through March 31, 2024, or by \$1.5 trillion, whichever comes first. The legislation would raise the debt ceiling in exchange for freezing spending at last year's levels for a decade – a nearly 14 percent cut – and cap spending growth at one percent. Biden and the Democrats have already expressed their opposition to this bill, but the Republican initiative has put the Democrats in a tight spot.

So, what happens if Congress and the president fail to agree to raise the debt ceiling? First, the US government could default and postpone payments on some of its obligations. While the media has focused on debt servicing, the government could reduce its other discretionary expenditures, including social security, salaries, Medicare and various commitments.

Secondly, a default would have a major impact on the financial market and the US economy. Brookings Institution analysts Wendy Edelberg and Louise Sheiner recently argued that, "Worsening expectations regarding a possible default would make significant disruptions in financial markets increasingly probable" and that "such financial market disruptions would very likely be coupled with declines in the price of equities, a loss of consumer and business confidence, and a contraction in access to private credit markets."

The United States has the highest credit rating from two of the three major rating agencies. But if it defaults on its debt, the agencies have vowed to downgrade its rating.

Even if the two sides reach a deal after Memorial Day weekend, some damage has already been done.

To avoid a default, the government could bypass the speaker and work with centrist Republicans to secure the 217 votes needed to get a pro-Democrat bill. Failing that, it could keep on borrowing and ignore the debt ceiling under the umbrage of the 14th Amendment. However, as legal scholars have pointed out, while the 14th Amendment bars debt defaults, it does not authorise the president to borrow money to pay for social security or welfare.

So, when the president and the congressional leaders sit down next week, we expect some progress.

There are three lessons. First, as Professor Tomas Philipson of the University of Chicago and former acting chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisors wrote in an op ed, "Great damage is done by the debt negotiations, which are part of a persistent pattern in which the government creates large, destabilising market risks."

Second, the outgoing World Bank President David Malpass criticised the governments for borrowing from the market, leading to an explosion of public debts, and crowding out private sector growth.

Third, as *The Wall Street Journal* reports, even once the debt crisis is resolved, the financial market will experience further aftershocks, especially the deposit-hungry banks.

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Address the plight of GPA-5 holders

I completed my HSC in 2021 with a GPA of 5 and my SSC in 2019 with a GPA of 4.72. Recently, I applied for honours courses at the National University for nine separate subjects, but I haven't been selected to study there. I was a good and hardworking student throughout my life. But now I feel depressed. Where will I study now? There are so many GPA-5 holders in the country. But the question is: will all of them get a chance to study further? Just imagine how dire the situation is for the students under the national curriculum. I urge the authorities to do something about this, so that none of us have to drop out.

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Racism in football: What Vini's story tells us

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SAUME SAPTAPARNA NATH and SYED RAIYAN AMIR

For centuries, racism has been a stain on the character of European soccer. But a string of high-profile instances in recent years has led to calls for firmer action from football's governing organisations.

In the second half of Real Madrid's game against Valencia on May 21, Vinicius Jr was subjected to terrible racial taunts during a LaLiga match, which has outraged the footballing world. The incident shed light on the not-so-beautiful side of the beautiful game, especially on European soil, bringing to light deeply established racial behaviour and attitudes on and off the field.

Last May, Vinicius Jr scored the winning goal in Real Madrid's 14th European Cup, and his brilliance has continued to light up the team's Champions League campaign this season. The extremely gifted 22-year-

Racist taunts against players from various origins have included racial slurs, gestures, and even physical assault. Players and spectators who do not adhere to the criteria promoted by far-right beliefs are forced to live in a hostile and unwelcoming environment as a result of their acts. Also, social media platforms have made it possible to transmit racist and vile sentiments, which has the potential to strengthen and spread far-right views. As a result, it has become simpler for individuals to plan and orchestrate racist attacks during football games.



It's critical to understand that racism is a problem that transcends political beliefs, even though the growth of far-right politics has facilitated the rise of racism in football.

PHOTO: REUTERS

old, widely regarded as one of the world's top players, has scored six goals in seven European matches and eight more in LaLiga. But he has also been a recurring target of "hate crimes" in Spain. However, Vinicius Jr's case is not the first time when Europe's bigotry and recklessness regarding the waves of racism in soccer has been revealed, which ultimately exposes the underlying racism across European society. Despite numerous campaigns, initiatives, and movements aiming to tackle racism in football, figures from inclusion and diversity charity Kick It Out have shown that cases of racist abuse rose by 53 percent between 2019-2020. Besides, LaLiga has disclosed to CNN Sport 12 distinct incidents of racial abuse directed towards Black footballers dating back to January 2020, which it had reported to local authorities. If the sport is viewed as a microcosm of society, current storylines mirror the situation of race relations in society.

Against such a backdrop, it's critical to understand that racism is a problem that transcends political beliefs, even though the

growth of far-right politics has facilitated the rise of racism in football. Racism can take many different forms and be impacted by a variety of elements, such as cultural biases, socioeconomic inequalities, and historical prejudices.

Football, racism, and Vinicius Jr

The most recent incident involving Brazilian star Vini Jr occurred during Real Madrid's 1-0 loss to Valencia in a recent match, when the game was momentarily halted after the striker claimed he was abused by a supporter from behind one of the goals at Mestalla Stadium. After the game, Vinicius Jr criticised LaLiga on social media for their continuous silence, saying that racism is common in LaLiga and that this incident was not the first, second, or third of its kind. He claims that the federation and the competition both view this as normal and even promote it. Ahead of the derby against Atletico Madrid in January, an effigy of Vinicius was hanged from a bridge in Madrid, while racist slurs have been caught on camera during Real's matches at Osasuna, Mallorca, Real Valladolid, and Atletico.

The footballing community, which was understandably stunned by the events of May 21, has reacted quickly to rally around Vinicius Jr. Neymar Jr, a fellow countryman, wrote a post on Instagram in his support. Kylian Mbappe also sent him a note of unity, saying, "You're not alone; we're with you and we support you." Xavi Hernandez, manager of Barcelona, has denounced the incident of racism that Vinicius encountered on Sunday at Valencia's Mestalla. The Terrassa coach thinks that football needs to take decisive action and declare that enough is enough in order to prevent situations like this from happening again.

Even the political world has been rocked by the occurrence. During the G7 Summit in Japan, at a press conference, Brazilian President Luis Enacio Lula de Silva offered his take. In particular, he hoped LaLiga and Fifa would take serious action to prevent the rising incidents of racism and fascism at football stadiums.

Long-term causes of racism in soccer

Indeed, the recent surge of far-right movements in Europe has had an effect on

a number of societal facets, including LaLiga and other competitions. Politics on the far right frequently promotes xenophobic, nationalistic, and racist viewpoints. These philosophies are inciting bigotry and intolerance towards people of other racial, religious, or national backgrounds. Besides, this can take many forms, including violent attacks against players and spectators, racist slurs, and discriminatory chants. There have also been occasions where far-right political rubrics have contributed to the nurturing of racism within football communities, despite the fact that not all incidences of racism in football can be traced back to them directly.

Racist taunts against players from various origins have included racial slurs, gestures, and even physical assault. Players and spectators who do not adhere to the criteria promoted by far-right beliefs are forced to live in a hostile and unwelcoming environment as a result of their acts. Also, social media platforms have made it possible to transmit racist and vile sentiments, which has the potential to strengthen and spread far-right views. As a result, it has become simpler for individuals to plan and orchestrate racist attacks during football games.

Can football do more?

Numerous parties, including clubs, players, supporters, and football regulatory organisations, have contributed to the response to racism in football. There have been initiatives to increase awareness about the issue, impose harsher penalties for racist behaviour, and encourage diversity and inclusion in the sport. But combatting racism in football requires a multifaceted strategy that includes law, education, and the shifting of societal attitudes. This pernicious spectre continues to cast its ominous shadow, tainting the sport we love. And we must face this issue as impassioned advocates of the beautiful game, not as casual bystanders.

To address the impact of racism on the game and on affected victims, football must adopt a proactive approach. Efforts must be made to create a zero-tolerance atmosphere against such prejudices. Eliminating racism in football demands a collaborative approach from all parties. Together, we can build a footballing landscape that welcomes diversity, supports inclusion, and reflects the genuine essence of the game. In this case, anti-racism looks to be gaining traction through social movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and #TakeAKnee. While measures to promote race equality have helped, recent occurrences illustrate that there is still a long way to go.

Improving our management of disasters



Dr Shafiq A Rahman
is a postdoctoral fellow of International Relations of Southeast Asia at the National University of Singapore.

SHAFIQ A RAHMAN

Bangladesh is a country that is both vulnerable to climate change and is disaster-prone. The country is prone to various natural disasters due to its flat topography, density of population, and socioeconomic environment.

Simultaneously, the introduction of the concept of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) changed the DRM approach from having "reactive relief-based" measures to a proactive integrated management approach. The basic cycle of the DRR mechanism is: preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.

Besides, the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action (1990-1999), Standing Order on Disasters (SoD) in 1997, Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA, 2005-2015), and the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) through the Comprehensive Disaster Management Program (CDMP) helped Bangladesh in becoming a pioneer in DRM.

Water-related hazards

More than 80 percent of the population is at risk of facing floods, earthquakes, and droughts, while more than 70 percent is at risk of facing cyclones. Every three years on average, a powerful tropical cyclone strikes the nation, and every year, floodwaters cover around 25 percent of the country's geographical area. Every four to five years, 60 percent of the land mass is flooded severely. It is estimated that our GDP might decrease by as much as nine percent in the event of catastrophic flooding. At the same time, average tropical cyclones cost Bangladesh about \$1 billion annually.

However, with the improved disaster response capacity, death tolls during floods declined radically. While 17 people died in the 2014 floods, a similar round of flooding in 2007 had killed 1,110 people, a flood in 1998 had claimed 1,050 lives, and one in

1988 had claimed 2,379 lives.

The Early Warning System (EWS) is one of the important aspects among the 44 sources of resilience listed in the Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC). According to an assessment, 96 percent of people are currently receiving early alerts and 93 percent of respondents claimed they got enough time to prepare, which helped to lower the severity of the loss and damage. In terms of the EWS, Bangladesh is viewed as a role model.

Bangladesh made tremendous efforts to lessen its vulnerability to disasters in the wake of the deadly cyclones of 1970 and 1991, and as a result of its significant long-term investments in safeguarding lives, it is now regarded as a global leader in coastal resilience. For instance, the government made substantial preparations to deal with the situation in light of the concern

of the 19 coastal zones have been built in such a way that they can be used as storm shelters in an emergency.

Another crucial point to address is the condition at the Bhasan Char. Bangladesh has taken the initiative to move 100,000 Rohingyas from Cox's Bazar to Bhasan Char, of whom over 30,000 have already been relocated, in order to improve their livelihoods and relieve strain on the makeshift camps of Kutupalong and Teknaf. International rights organisations expressed concern about the long-term viability and vulnerability of the Char to natural disasters. Since the relocation began in December 2020, the island has already witnessed a number of cyclones with almost zero impact, demonstrating the endurance of the well-planned infrastructure project.

Further areas to focus on

The Early Warning System (EWS) is one of the important aspects among the 44 sources of resilience listed in the Flood Resilience Measurement for Communities (FRMC). According to an assessment, 96 percent of people are currently receiving early alerts and 93 percent of respondents claimed they got enough time to prepare, which helped to lower the severity of the loss and damage. In terms of the EWS, Bangladesh is viewed as a role model.

that Cyclone Mocha might have caused devastation along the coast. Numerous projects, in addition to the government's initiatives, have been working to raise public awareness regarding cyclone.

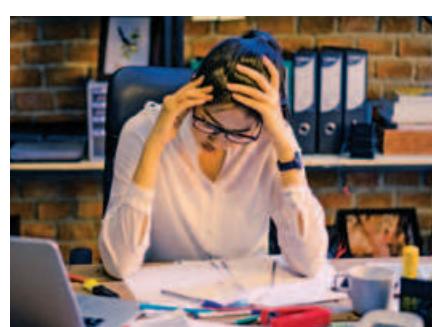
Previously, coastal residents had no faith in the EWS, and many stayed in their homes rather than going to shelter houses, causing the death toll to climb. People in coastal areas are more informed now, thanks to the precision of meteorological updates, and they follow government directives during natural disasters. Furthermore, another important step in disaster safety management has been the use of public schools, model mosques, and dedicated cyclone centers as shelter facilities. The basements of the model mosques in 147 upazilas

Bangladesh has exhibited the best global practices in disaster risk management and serves as a voice for climate-vulnerable countries. In 2009, Bangladesh was among the first to adopt a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, which has served as a model for other climate-vulnerable countries. The government has implemented a number of proactive policies and initiatives to increase resilience against climate-related disasters, supporting community-led action. This has resulted in the building of coastal embankment systems that safeguard over 6,000 kilometres of vulnerable coastline, as well as an early warning system for cyclones with over 76,000 volunteers. However, more has to be done.

The level of devastation will increase with more floods and

and maintenance of embankments. With the changing nature of global warming and climate change, the frequency and scale of natural disasters will increase. As a result, considerable preparations should be made to deal with natural disasters.

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Re-Tender Notice				
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh				
01	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology.		
02	Agency	Posts and Telecommunications Division.		
03	Procuring entity name	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited.		
04	Procuring entity code	Not used at present.		
05	Procuring entity district	Dhaka.		
06	Invitation Ref No.	14.39.0000.012.07.004.22.269		
07	Date	25/05/2023		
08	Procurement method	Open Tender.		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
09	Budget and source of funds	Company's own fund.		
10	Tender Package No.	BSCL/2022-23/PG-20		
11	Tender package name	Capacity enhancement of BSCL head office Monitoring Center (Re-Tender for Lot-2).		
12	Tender publication date	28/05/2023		
13	Tender last selling date	11/06/2023 Time: 04:00pm		
14	Tender closing date and time	12/06/2023 02:05pm		
15	Tender opening date and time	12/06/2023 02:15pm		
16	Name & address of the office(s)	Address		
	-Selling tender document (principal)	Managing Director, Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited		
	-Selling tender document (others)	SEL Rose-N-Dale, Level-07, 116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka.		
	-Receiving tender document			
	-Opening tender document			
17	Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	As stated in the tender document.		
18	Brief description of service	Capacity enhancement of BSCL head office Monitoring Center (Re-Tender for Lot-2).		
19	Price of tender document (Tk)	Tk 1000 (one thousand Taka only).		
20	Lot No.	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)
02	Lot-2: Prepare Glass room for server, Supporting Wall for TV installation & Electrical Activity and Supply & Installation of Air Conditioning System	SEL Rose-N-Dale, Level-08, 116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000.	15,000/- (fifteen thousand only)	As per the 'Supply/Work Schedule (Section 6)' of tender document
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS				
21	Name of official inviting tender	Md. Shafiqul Islam		
22	Designation of official inviting tender	Managing Director		
23	Address of official inviting tender	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited, SEL Rose-N-Dale, Level-07, 116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000.		
24	Contact details of official inviting tender	0241030091-93	<Fax No. >	procurement@bscl.com.bd
The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.				
(Signed) Md. Shafiqul Islam Managing Director				
GD-931				
Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited				



Stress hormone measured in hair predicts who is likely to suffer from cardiovascular diseases

New research presented at the European Congress on Obesity (ECO) in Dublin, Ireland, suggests that the levels of glucocorticoids, a class of stress hormones, found in an individual's hair may indicate their likelihood of developing cardiovascular diseases (CVD) in the future.

The study, conducted by researchers from Erasmus University Medical Centre Rotterdam in the Netherlands, examined the long term levels of scalp hair cortisol and hair cortisone, which are biomarkers representing the cumulative exposure to glucocorticoids over several months.

The researchers analysed hair samples from over 6,000 adults enrolled in the Lifelines study, a large-scale research project in the Netherlands.

After following the participants for an average of 5-7 years, the researchers found that individuals with higher long term cortisol levels were twice as likely to experience a cardiovascular event such as a stroke or heart attack. This risk was even higher in participants aged 57 or younger, where the likelihood rose to over three times.

It is important to note that this study is observational and does not establish a cause-and-effect relationship between stress and cardiovascular disease. However, the findings suggest a strong link between long term stress hormone levels and the incidence of CVD.

The study has some limitations. It only included participants from a specific region in the Netherlands, and most participants self-identified as white. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to other populations.

Overall, this research highlights the potential role of chronic stress in determining an individual's cardiovascular health and underscores the importance of further investigation in this area.

Expert oncologist offers insight on cancer

An in-depth discussion with Dr Tanuja Rajasekaran, senior consultant at Parkway Cancer Centre

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Singapore Parkway Cancer Centre is a renowned medical facility dedicated to providing exceptional cancer care. With a multidisciplinary approach and a team of highly skilled oncologists, they offer comprehensive treatment options for various types of cancers. From advanced therapies to personalised medicine, Parkway Cancer Centre is at the forefront of cancer treatment, delivering innovative and compassionate care to patients. Their commitment to excellence has made them a trusted destination for cancer management in Singapore and beyond.

Dr Tanuja Rajasekaran, a senior consultant and medical oncologist at Parkway Cancer Centre, recently shared her views on cancer with Star Health. She has extensive experience in general medical oncology and specialised expertise in the management of lung, genitourinary, head and neck cancers, and geriatric oncology.

Lung cancer remains a significant global health concern, despite a decrease in incidence due to anti-smoking campaigns and tobacco control efforts. While lung cancer rates have declined in smokers, there has been an alarming increase in cases among non-smokers, particularly younger individuals, and females. The reasons behind this trend are not yet fully understood but may involve genetic mutations and unidentified factors. Smoking is the primary risk factor for lung cancer, but other factors like family history, radiation exposure, second-hand smoke, and certain occupational hazards can contribute.

Lung cancer can manifest with respiratory symptoms such as coughing, difficulty breathing, or coughing up blood. It can also present with weight loss, loss of appetite, and specific symptoms depending on the organs affected by metastasis. Early-stage lung cancer often goes undetected due to the absence of noticeable symptoms, leading to late-stage diagnoses.

Regular screenings, such as CT scans, are recommended for individuals aged



Dr. Tanuja Rajasekaran,
Senior consultant at Parkway
Cancer Centre (PCC)

55-74 with a significant smoking history. However, the effectiveness of lung cancer screening for non-smokers is still under investigation, and there is no definitive answer regarding its benefits for this population.

Prevention of lung cancer involves eliminating risk factors, with smoking cessation being crucial. Even long-term smokers can reduce their risk by quitting. A healthy lifestyle, including a balanced diet and regular exercise, is also beneficial.

Advancements in lung cancer treatment have transformed its management. Targeted therapies that block specific genetic mutations, like the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) mutation, have improved prognosis and extended the life expectancy of patients. In Asia, where a significant percentage of lung cancer cases are EGFR-positive, oral targeted medications have revolutionised treatment, allowing patients to control their cancer without traditional chemotherapy. This personalised approach has positively impacted the lives of Asian lung cancer patients.

Research focused on Asian lung cancers, including the EGFR mutation subtype, is ongoing to better understand

and treat this specific population. Targeted therapies offer hope for improved outcomes and quality of life for lung cancer patients, demonstrating the power of personalised treatment options.

Continued efforts in research, prevention, and early detection are essential in combating lung cancer and reducing its impact worldwide.

Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in men, especially among older individuals. Risk factors include advancing age, family history, and genetic mutations like BRCA gene alterations. Symptoms can include urinary issues, blood in the urine, incomplete bladder emptying, weight loss, and loss of appetite. Prostate cancer can also be incidentally discovered during routine screenings, such as PSA tests.

Treatment options for localised prostate cancer depend on factors like the Gleason score and PSA levels. Active surveillance is suitable for low-risk cases, while surgery (prostatectomy) and radiation therapy are other options.

Recent advancements in prostate cancer treatment include hormonal therapies that target testosterone, oral hormonal agents, PARP inhibitors for specific genetic mutations, and radiopharmaceutical therapy that delivers targeted radiation to prostate cancer cells.

Prevention of prostate cancer is not entirely possible, but adopting a healthy lifestyle can reduce the risk. Regular exercise and avoiding smoking are beneficial. High-risk individuals, such as those with a family history or genetic mutations, should undergo regular screenings and consult healthcare professionals for monitoring and early detection.

Prostate cancer remains a significant health concern, but advancements in treatment options provide hope for improved outcomes and management. Increased awareness, early detection, and personalized treatment approaches are essential for combating prostate cancer effectively.

HAVE A NICE DAY When a 'psycho' becomes your Boss!

DR RUBAIUL MURSHED

One of the most psychological classic movies of the 20th century, Hitchcock's 'psycho' has reinforced the common misconception that people with mental illnesses are always dangerous.

Psychopathy is an illness characterised in part by low emotional responses, antisocial behaviours, and lack of understanding and kindness. They may have features such as superficial charm, high merit, failure to learn from experiences, egoism with poor judgment, and lack of remorse. Most psychopaths are mean and indefinable. They are more like arsenic (a slow-working poison) than cyanide. They are pathological liars and good at manipulative behaviour. They may have an increased risk for cruelty, but not all psychopaths are violent.

Research shows that there are also 'good' psychopaths. Many people in positively heroic professions have strong psychopathic personalities. Believe it or not! a psychopath can also fall in love. Even though it might be difficult to show these emotions, they can feel something resembling affection or even strong romantic passion. Researchers suggest that they can make up at least 1% of the population. That could include your friend, neighbour, colleague, or maybe even your boss, who seems normal initially.

The good news is that there are treatments for Psychopaths. Treatments such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) may help reduce certain psychopathic behaviours and characters.

This is a psycho-social intervention that aims to reduce symptoms of various mental health conditions and primarily depression and can help to manage problems by changing the way a psycho thinks and behaves. The most effective approaches to treating psychopaths are multimodal, including multiple strategies simultaneously. Other than psychotherapy, it includes behavioral skills training and recognition of the important roles of family and social surroundings.

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Keep your brain young and increase creativity

AMIT SARKER

The brain exercises extensively every day, some activities can alter the brain functions, potentially may enhance memory, brain power, and creativity. Let us delve some ways which can help you to boost your brain function and discover your creativity.

Meditation helps the mind focus in a relax, controlled manner. Being spontaneous, which is closely related to creative freedom is impossible if you are constantly doubting yourself rather than having faith in your gut. You can follow your creative thoughts with meditation and do so without criticising the process. Meditation may also help the brain by reducing brain aging and improving information processing.

Visualisation is a process of forming an image in your head to represent information. The mental image could take the shape of still images or animated scenes. People who use visualisation are better able to organise their information and make wise decisions.

The most classical methods of memory and intellectual development through brain training are games and puzzles.

Memory card games test a person's short-term memory and pattern recognition skills. These are an easy and enjoyable way to connect the mind and memory. Additionally, crossword puzzles are another popular activity that may stimulate the brain and facilitate divergent thinking. Furthermore, number puzzles may also help some people's



cognitive performances.

Chess helps people with their executive functioning, which is the capacity to keep track of and adjust behaviour to achieve predetermined goals. It also improves the information processing speed. Notably, the ability to solve problems is enhanced by video games, just like other games and puzzles. Altogether, these can boost your brain health and help to uncover your creativity.

Learning new skills or teaching new skills to someone else engages the brain in new ways and may enhance brain function. Additionally, learning new languages also increase knowledge and strengthen connectivity between different parts of the brain. You require a great deal of knowledge in order to generate new concepts, develop strategies and adopt novel viewpoints.

Spending time with friends (socialising) can help to maintain cognitive function. People who interact with others more frequently have a lower risk of dementia and cognitive decline, increases planning, problem solving and multitasking ability.

Overall, no matter your age, concentrating on your brain health is one of the best things you can do to enhance your concentration, focus, memory, and mental agility. By including brain exercises in your daily activities, you can push your mental limits, improve your cognitive abilities, and perhaps even pick up some interesting new knowledge and creativity.

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New studies highlight the importance of addressing alcohol and metabolic syndrome in gout management

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Two recent reports serve as a reminder that addressing lifestyle factors and behaviours is important in the management of gout.

The first study conducted in Korea analysed data from a large health service database and found that individuals with metabolic syndrome, characterised by certain components such as abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, and abnormal cholesterol and glucose levels, were four times more likely to develop gout compared to those without metabolic syndrome.



Another study from China focused on the presence of tophi, which are deposits of uric acid crystals that can accumulate in joints and tissues of individuals with gout. The

researchers discovered that patients who consumed excessive amounts of alcohol or even moderate amounts were approximately twice as likely to have tophi compared to those who did not drink alcohol.

These findings emphasise the need for a comprehensive approach to managing gout, which includes not only appropriate medication but also lifestyle modifications to reduce the risk factors associated with the condition. By addressing these factors, healthcare professionals can potentially improve the outcomes and overall well-being of individuals with gout.

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Survival in focus on final day

AFP

The battle for Premier League survival is the main event of Sunday's final day of the season as Everton, Leicester and Leeds face a nerve-wracking scrap to avoid relegation.

The two clubs who join already-relegated Southampton in the second tier will be pushed to the financial precipice.

Everton are the one side in full control of their own fate as victory at home to Bournemouth will prevent them from being relegated for first time in history.

If fourth bottom Everton fail to win, third bottom Leicester, who just seven years ago won the league, can survive by beating West Ham at home thanks to their superior goal difference.

Meanwhile, second bottom Leeds need a miracle to avoid the end of their three-season stay in the top-flight. Victory over Tottenham at Elland Road will only be enough for Leeds boss Sam Allardyce to pull off another great escape if Everton lose and Leicester fail to win.

Should Everton manage even a draw, Leeds will need to beat Tottenham by three goals.



It was agony at the Signal Iduna Park while ecstasy prevailed in Cologne on the final matchday of the Bundesliga on Saturday. [Inset] Substitute Jamal Musiala's strike in the dying minutes ensured Bayern Munich come out 2-1 winners against FC Koln to clinch their 11th consecutive title as Borussia Dortmund, who had a two-point cushion at the top of the table even hours ago, stumbled to a 2-2 draw against Mainz at home. Both Bayern and Dortmund ended on equal 71 points with Bayern piped Dortmund by goal difference in the tightest German league race in years.

PHOTO: REUTERS

WHEELS FINALLY FALL OFF

ATIQUE ANAM

Golam Rabbani Choton probably cannot remember the last time he was sitting at home while his charges were training at the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) astroturf, a place he had known to be home for more than a decade-and-a-half.

The 53-year-old has been replying to constantly queries from journalists ever since he dropped the bombshell announcement on Friday that he would be leaving the BFF at the end of this month.

There has not been an official announcement yet, but the veteran coach is adamant about sticking to his decision. While Choton is using 'physical fatigue' as the reason, it is widely believed, and apparent from his recent remarks, that he is tired of not getting much-deserved recognition and reward from the BFF nor enjoying the work environment in the federation.

Choton's announcement came hours after prolific striker Sirat Jahan Swapna announced her retirement from the women's football team, which itself came on the heels of the retirement of two other members of the SAFF-winning team. All those incidents are interlinked and a result of the deprivation from the BFF.

Women's football has been propping up the image of Bangladesh's sinking football scene over the last decade, winning a number of trophies at age-group level in South Asia before finally clinching the SAFF Women's Championship for the first time in September last year.

It is the hard work of Choton and his deputies -- Mahbubur Rahman Litu and Ananya -- and the effort of Sabina Khutun, Swapna, Sajeda Khutun and many more, who have overcome many hurdles and sacrificed being with their families to earn

accolades for the country.

Unfortunately, players are the least rewarded, with the monthly salary of a majority of the 70 players in the camp ranging from Tk 5,000 to Tk 10,000 and the best getting close to Tk 20,000.

The players have staged two walkouts from the camp in recent times demanding better salaries and facilities, but their



event is far from seeing the light of day.

Since the SAFF triumph, the senior team players have only been training, without assurances of playing competitive football and without any sign of a financial windfall.

The coaches are not well paid either. Choton currently receives Tk 1,50,000 -- increased from Tk 1,00,000 in November last year -- despite the fact that he has to look after all the women's teams under the BFF, starting from the lowest age-group team to the senior team. The two other assistant coaches receive a lot less than that.

Ironically, the lion's share of salary in the BFF goes into another account belonging to its technical director, reportedly close to Tk 20 lakh.

The man in question, Paul Smalley, handles a lot of other things, but his role with the women's teams is where the troubles are most pronounced. The Englishman is a regular fixture with all the women's teams, so much so that he takes a front seat in the dugout when the team is playing a competitive match.

The coaching staff have often expressed their displeasure about Smalley's meddling in aspects of the team, starting from their training regime to food charts and game plans. The players have often put the blame on him for blocking their path to foreign leagues.

Yet, Smalley reigns supreme in the BFF's corridors, having recently negotiated a pay rise of Tk 5 lakh to extend his contract.

While the likes of Swapna, Choton and many more leave the edifice of glory that they had built over years with their sweat and tears, Smalley remains an immovable force. And with a section of the BFF top-brass behind him, he continues to sell women's football at the expense of the footballers.

History in store for Djokovic, Swiatek

AFP, Paris

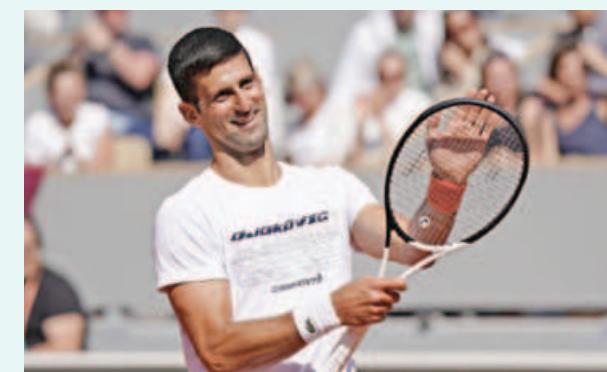
Novak Djokovic will bid for a record-breaking 23rd Grand Slam title at the French Open without his old rival Rafael Nadal, while Iga Swiatek attempts to become the first woman to defend the title in 16 years.

The French Open gets underway today without injured 14-time champion Nadal, who is absent for the first time since 2004. Djokovic today takes on world number 114 Aleksandar Kovacevic, a player who idolises the veteran Serbian.

Despite the absence of Nadal, who won the previous edition of the year's second Grand Slam, two-time Roland Garros winner Djokovic will not be the favourite for the title after having struggled with an elbow injury so far this season.

Carlos Alcaraz won the Barcelona and Madrid Opens en route to taking over from Djokovic as world number one, while Daniil Medvedev is seeded second for Roland Garros after his maiden clay triumph in Rome.

Meanwhile, the winner of the women's singles is expected to be one of the trio of reigning champion Swiatek, Australian Open winner Aryna Sabalenka and Elena Rybalkina, who have won the last four Grand Slam titles between them.



Iga Swiatek has won the French Open in two of the last three editions, boasting a win percentage of 91.3%. Only Margaret Court (95.2%) and Chris Evert (92.3%) have a higher win rate in the women's main draw.

Swiatek has also won 30 of her 33 matches on clay surfaces since 2022.

Four men can leave Roland Garros as World No. 1 -- Carlos Alcaraz, Daniil Medvedev, Novak Djokovic and Stefanos Tsitsipas.

Men's World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz is the only player with a win percentage above 85% on clay surfaces this year, with a record of 20-2 (90.9%).

Alcaraz and Holger Rune both have seven wins against the world's top five players before the age of 21, level with one other player since 2000: Djokovic.

'Eager to express myself in every condition'

Shoriful Islam has been a part of Bangladesh's confident pace-bowling unit that has been improving leaps and bounds in recent years. The left-arm seamer has emerged as a multi-format pacer for the Tigers since making his debut in 2021 and spoke to The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin about his bowling and a few other topics during an exclusive interview. The excerpts are below:

The Daily Star (DS): Did the ODI series against Ireland go as per your expectations?



Shoriful Islam (SI): To be honest, no. I think it was a good experience for me since it was my first time in English conditions. There is always something for seamers in those conditions and it was a good lesson. As a bowler, it is important to contribute and I always try to do that.

DS: How are you preparing yourself for the upcoming Test series against Afghanistan at home?

SI: I am here in Sylhet with the Bangladesh team to play the third four-day game against West Indies A. I think it's a good opportunity for me to get game preparation ahead of the Test. I will look to prepare myself and utilise my opportunities.

DS: There is growing belief among the Bangladesh pace unit. Does healthy

competition serve as a motivation to do even better?

SI: Definitely. As a bowler, you always think about your game and try to become the best version of yourself. Taskin Bhai, Mustafizur Bhai, Ebadot Bhai and Hasan Mahmud, all of us try to contribute and always want to win matches for Bangladesh. We are a confident bowling unit that is eager to express themselves in every condition with our positive mindset. At times, we may fail, but if we follow the right process, it will come out positive most of the times. We talk to each other and have discussions before and after every game.

DS: Tell us about your experience working with Allan Donald?

SI: I have been working on my wrist position with Allan Donald. We also talk about how we should apply ourselves in different situations. He is always very vocal and keep reminding us of our plans, which is very motivating.

DS: What is your strength as a pace bowler?

SI: I think my strength is pace and swing. However, injuries can hamper a fast bowler's rhythm. Since I recovered from my last injury, it has not been easy to increase my pace overnight, but I am working on it and I am willing to become a consistent bowler across all formats.



STARVED OF COAL Payra power plant may shut for weeks

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Coal shortage has forced officials to shut down a 660 megawatt unit of Payra power plant on May 25, a first in its three years of operation, and if things stay as they are, the other unit of the plant will stop production in about a week.

Payra 1,320MW Thermal Power Plant has been a reliable source of power for the entire Barishal region and parts of Khulna and Dhaka.

Sources at the country's largest coal-fired power plant say they have only around 50,000 tonnes of coal in stock, and each of the two units require around 6,000 tonnes a day.

The second 660MW unit will also stop operation after about a week, they add.

Bangladesh-China Power Company Ltd (BCPCL) operates the power plant while China National Machinery Import and Export Company (CMC), which has 50 percent stake in the plant, pays for the coal. CMC realises the money from Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) within six months of paying for coal shipments.

On April 27, the BCPCL wrote to the ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, the PDB and Bangladesh Bank saying that the CMC imposed a ban on coal supply to Payra power plant. "Till the dues are paid, the coal supply will not resume," read the letter.

The BPDB has yet to pay the dues.

AM Khurshed Alam, managing director of the BCPCL, told The Daily Star that there was a due of around \$300 million and negotiations about the payment for coal were going on with the PDB and Bangladesh Bank.

"As of last Thursday, we got \$58 million and have the assurance of getting another \$100 million by this month," he said.

Hoping that the CMC will withdraw the ban on coal supplies, he said, "We will open the Letters of Credit. But even if we open those tomorrow, the coal shipment will take at least 25 days to arrive. This means the entire power plant will be out of operation for three to four weeks."

The Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) data shows that the power plant was supplying less than 660MW of electricity at 9:00am on Thursday. Yesterday, the production stayed between 300 and 350MW.

Currently, the country is producing around 12,200MW of electricity against a demand of 13,000MW to 13,500MW.

Meanwhile, Rampal Power Plant, which resumed operation on May 16 after three weeks due to coal shortage, was utilising half of the capacity of its only operational unit.

The country was producing around 2,000MW of electricity from coal-based power plants yesterday against a capacity of 3,440MW.

PDB spokesperson Shameem Hasan told The Daily Star that the authority of Payra was asked to keep the plant operational as long as possible.

"We are waiting for the next coal shipment. If the weather stays favourable, the national demand will not rise. And even if the power plant shuts down, there will not be power cuts."

"We will be able to keep a normal electricity supply from other sources," he added.

The first unit of Payra power plant started the commercial operation on May 15, 2020, while the second one started operation a few months later.



Farmers in Khulna's Dumuria drying their Boro paddy under the sun yesterday after boiling them. The paddy needs at least two days under the sun to be ready for millers to turn them into rice.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

BEST BRAND AWARD 2022

REMARKS ON EX-CJ
42 citizens shocked by comments of Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-two eminent citizens have condemned Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh's recent remarks about a former chief justice and civil society members, saying that they were hurt, aggrieved and shocked by such remarks.

In a joint statement issued yesterday, they called the attention of the country's apex court to this matter.

Citing a report published in a national daily, the eminent citizens said while speaking at an event of a lawyers' association on May 21, the DSCC mayor "threatened" to put civil society members in a sack and release it into the black water of the Buriganga. He also made objectionable remarks about the removal of a chief justice.

Such comments by the

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ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Form independent body to punish culprits

Urge families of victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The rights activists and the family members of enforced disappearance victims called upon the government to set up an independent commission to investigate the cases of enforced disappearances and punish the responsible agencies and individuals.

The family members of the victims stood in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

The gathering was organised by Maayer Daak, a platform for the families of the victims, in commemoration of the International Week of the Disappeared.

Rights activists highlighted that the number of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings has significantly decreased after the United States sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and seven of its officials.

They also believe that the recent US Visa Policy would be similarly effective, particularly in the context of the upcoming national election, as many cases of enforced



disappearances and extrajudicial killings have occurred before previous elections in 2014 and 2018.

Nur Khan, a prominent rights activist, also the executive director of the Ain O Salish Kendra, said that there are indications of change following the US actions.

He demanded that the government establish an independent commission to identify the responsible agencies,

officers and individuals involved in enforced disappearances and ensure that they are held accountable for their actions.

"The highest authorities of the state are saying that there are not many enforced disappearances and that many of the victims went into hiding. Such statement from the people who run the state gives impunity to those responsible for

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Saturn's iconic rings are disappearing

CNN ONLINE

Saturn's iconic icy rings may not be around for future skygazers to glimpse at through their telescopes, according to new research.

A new analysis of data captured by NASA's Cassini mission, which orbited the gas giant planet between 2004 and 2017, has revealed new insights into how long the rings have been around and when they may vanish from sight. The findings have been shared in three studies published in May.

Our solar system and its planets formed about 4.6 billion years ago, and scientists have long debated the age and origin of Saturn's rings. Some astronomers have argued that the bright, icy rings must be younger than expected because they haven't been eroded and darkened by interactions with meteoroids across billions of years.

The Cassini data has led to a new finding, published May 15 in the journal Icarus, that supports this theory of the rings appearing long after Saturn's initial formation. Additional studies published on May 12 in Science Advances and May 15 in Icarus, respectively, arrived at similar conclusions.

Rab recovers 14kg of ivory in Ctg One suspect held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rab has arrested a suspected wildlife smuggler with 14kgs of ivory and a buckskin worth Tk 1.37 crore from his flat in Chatogram's Panchlaish.

The arrestee is Abdul Malek, 68, of Sylhet's Kamalganj. However, he has been living in Rangamati's Bagachari area for the last 40 years and owns around 12 elephants legally.

Rab 7's Chandgaon Camp Commander Major Mehedi Hasan told The Daily Star that a team of Rab, on information, raided the house of Malek in the Panchlaish area on Friday around 11:30pm.

"We had information about Malek's involvement in smuggling ivory and skins of deer," Major Mehedi Hasan said.

"After hours of searching, Rab found the ivory weighing 14kg and a buckskin inside a plastic



BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain addressing a mammoth rally organised by the party's south and north city units at the BNP Nayapaltan office to press home its 10-point demand yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Retired bank staffer found dead at home

His wife, daughters sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police yesterday recovered the body of a retired bank employee from his home in Kulaura upazila.

Sheikh Rafiqul Islam Siddiqui, 65, was a resident of Krishnapur village under the upazila's Bhatera union.

His wife Mishfa Akhter Siddiqui, daughters Sheikh Sharmin Akhter Siddiqua and Sheikh Tazreen Akhter Siddiqua, and son-in-law Mehedi Hasan (Tazreen's husband) were arrested in this connection.

They were all sent to jail after they were produced before a Moulvibazar court in the afternoon.

The victim's elder brother Sheikh Sirajul Islam Siddiqui sued the four in a murder case along with two others.

Sirajul claimed that Rafiqul was killed by the accused over family disputes centring his pension money.

"After his retirement two years ago, Rafiqul received a pension of Tk 52 lakh. His wife and two daughters wanted to have this money for themselves."

On Friday night, a family arbitration was held that failed to reach an agreement.

Later, Sirajul received the news of his brother's death around 1:30am and found Rafiqul's body on the balcony.

Kulaura Police Station Inspector (Investigation) Ratan Debnath said the police found injuries marks on the back of the victim's head and nail marks on his neck.

"The body has been sent to the Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital mortuary for post-mortem. The cause of death will be confirmed after receiving the post-mortem report."