



HIGH INFLATION

Worrying but under control

Finance minister tells post-budget briefing

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal yesterday said that though he is worried about the elevated level of consumer prices, the situation is still under the government’s control.

“We are worried ... However, inflation is under control. We are moving forward with a flexible approach to contain high inflation. We will try to



resolve the problems that have stoked it.”

His assurances came at a post-budget press conference at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

Kamal has targeted to bring down the average inflation to 6 percent in the next fiscal year of 2023-24.

But his target has been described as unrealistic as inflation averaged 8.64 percent in April, which is nearly three percentage points higher than a year ago.

Furthermore, the factors behind the rise in inflation, such as a surge in import bills, energy shortage, the US dollar crisis, and market imperfections, are still there.

In 2009, inflation stood at 12 percent but it was kept below 6 percent in the next decade, said Kamal.

“The whole world is going through a difficult time. We are tackling the situation.”

According to Kamal, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also said inflation will decline in the coming fiscal year.

“Oil prices are falling in the global markets. The government has signed agreements to purchase liquefied natural gas. So, uncertainty over the energy supply is not there.

“The prices of goods are falling as well. So, the targets outlined in the budget will be achieved,” said the minister.

The new budget has set a deficit financing target of Tk 261,785 crore. Of the amount, Tk 132,395 crore will come from the central bank, a move that analysts say will crowd out the private sector, stoke inflationary pressures and put the foreign currency reserves under further strain.

But Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder ruled out the possibility of a further rise in inflation.

He explained Bangladesh Bank has injected 20 billion US dollars in the market in the last two years, meaning Tk 2 lakh crore has been pulled out of the market.

“If that 2 lakh crore was still available in the market, it would not have been difficult for the government to borrow Tk 1 lakh crore.”

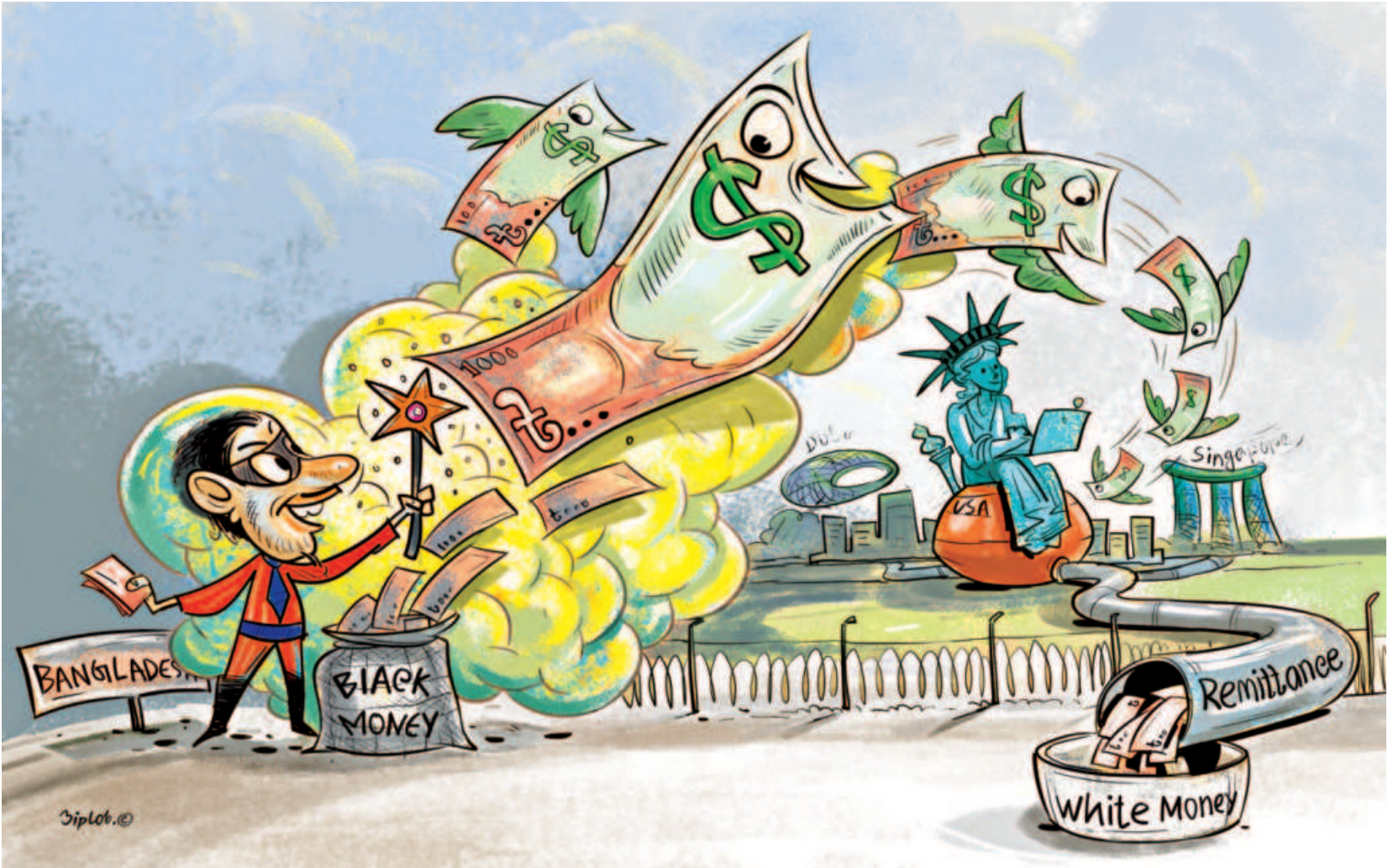
He said since there is a liquidity crisis in the market, some government bonds are being devolved.

“If we inject Tk 70,000 crore in the market after pulling out Tk 2 lakh crore, the impact will be far less.”

He said the money supply in Bangladesh is one of the lowest in the region, standing at 38 percent of the GDP. It is 70 percent in India and about 100 percent in Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia.

“Inflation has not stemmed from the money supply. Our inflation is

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Budget lacks tools to contain inflation

Measures inadequate, targets far from reality: CPD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

CPD ON PROPOSED BUDGET

➔

Projections of inflation and GDP growth overambitious

➔

Macroeconomic challenges not acknowledged

➔

Allocations for safety net schemes need to be raised

➔

Corporate governance issues in banks should be addressed

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Bank borrowing may pose twin challenges

Says MCCI on proposed budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government’s increased reliance on bank borrowing in next fiscal year is likely to create twin challenges, said the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), a leading chamber.

In the next fiscal year, the government plans to borrow Tk 132,395 crore from the banking system -- up by 14.7 percent from this fiscal year’s revised budget -- to meet the deficit financing of Tk 257,885 crore.

This may create a crowding-out impact on the economy and lead to fund shortage for the private sector, said the country’s oldest trade body in its initial response to the proposed national budget for fiscal 2023-24.

If the borrowing is done from the central bank instead of banks, it will fuel inflation.

Given the domestic and international complexities created by the pandemic, the Ukraine war and the impending LDC graduation, it was extremely challenging for the finance minister to prepare the budget before the national election, the MCCI said.

“The chamber feels that the budget for fiscal 2023-24 should focus more on pro-poor and inclusive growth. Assistance for poor people through social security program should be significantly increased.”

The allocation for the social security programme will

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No clear directions for RMG

BGMEA on new budget, demands unhindered supply of power, gas

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The BGMEA has said the proposed national budget doesn’t have any specific details on the measures for the garment sector.

Speaking at a press conference in the capital yesterday, BGMEA President Faruque Hassan said the previous budget proposals contained details about the incentives and other measures for the sector.

Many RMG factories are running below capacity because of frequent power cuts and inadequate supply of gas, he said.

Due to these two problems and the recent fall in apparel export, the government projection that private investment would account for 27.4 percent of the GDP may not materialise, Faruque said replying to a question from a journalist.

If the government can meet the demand for gas and power, and continue its support for the sector, the country may be able to attract a handsome amount of investment and a good number of jobs may be created, he said.

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Shops have already been built encroaching on the century-old DIT pond in the capital’s Gendaria. Locals say the waterbody is at risk of being wiped out by influential land grabbers. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Minimum tax of Tk 2,000 discriminatory

It’ll put burden on low-income TIN holders: CPD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government’s plan to impose a minimum tax of Tk 2,000 even on those without taxable income is both discriminatory and contradictory to the concept of a tax-free threshold, according to the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

“The move is not logically or morally correct,” said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the CPD.

She made this comment while presenting the organisation’s analysis of the proposed Tk 761,785 crore budget for fiscal 2023-24 at the Lakeshore Hotel in the capital yesterday.

The CPD said that on the one hand, the government increased the tax-exempt income limit to Tk 350,000 from Tk 300,000 to give relief to individuals within this bracket.

But on the other hand, the provision requiring a minimum tax of Tk 2,000 regardless of income means that filing returns will be compulsory even for the people whose earnings fall below the zero-tax threshold.

As per income tax rules, individuals have to submit returns to avail 38 services.

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## INSPECTION OF LIFTS PUST postpones Turkey tour by 6-member team

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

The Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) yesterday postponed a trip for Turkey, set to be taken by a six-member team to inspect lifts under an official procurement project.

The PUST public relations department posted a statement on its official Facebook page about halting the trip in the face of widespread criticism and also informed the matter to journalists over the phone.

“The university authority has postponed the visit of the university delegation to Turkey as per the direction of the president, also the chancellor of the university.” Faruk Hossain Chowdhury, deputy director (DD) of the public relations department, stated in a Facebook post around 3:00pm.

Faruksaidallactivitiesurrounding the Turkey trip have been put off, and that they would complete the relevant paperwork when offices reopen after the weekend.

Earlier, the PUST authority formed a six-member delegation headed by pro-VC Mostafa Kamal Khan to go on a 10-day visit to Turkey on June 6 for a “pre-shipment inspection” of lifts to be purchased by the university.

On May 31, The Daily Star published an article titled “Off to Turkey to see lifts!” that was followed by widespread criticism across the country.

Anjan Chowdhury Pintu, PUST regent board member, told journalists yesterday that there were many lifts of the same company being used in Bangladesh, so there was no need to go to Turkey to inspect them, and that the planned inspection visit was an absolute misuse of public money.

The university undertook a Tk 520 crore development project under which five highrise academic and administrative buildings have been constructed; 25 lifts are needed for these buildings.

Hossain Construction Pvt Ltd, based in Dhaka, built them and the firm has also been awarded the job of installing 25 lifts.

“The lifts were supposed to be shipped to PUST after getting approval from the pre-shipment delegation team,” a source in the university said.

Asked about the next step of procurement of the lifts and their shipment, Faruk Hossain said the higher authority would take the decision on the matter.



Aran, a local resident, stands inside the shop he rents, which was destroyed by recent shelling in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict, in Makiivka (Makeyevka) outside Donetsk yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Ukraine repels new Russian air barrage Moscow contends with cross-border attacks

REUTERS, *Kyiv*

Ukraine fended off 36 Russian air attacks in and around the capital overnight while pro-Kyiv Russian fighters said they were battling Russian forces for a second day inside Russia, trading blame with Moscow for the deaths of two civilians.

Russia has launched about 20 waves of attacks on Kyiv since the beginning of May, a surge in strikes that the government says appears aimed at derailing Ukraine's preparations for a major counter-offensive to try to end Russia's invasion.

A child was one of two people injured by falling debris in a region outside the Ukrainian capital as air defences shot down what the air force said yesterday were 15 Russian cruise missiles and 21 drones.

“The occupiers are not stopping their attempts to terrorise the Ukrainian capital with strike drones and missiles,” it said.

Russian officials reported cross-border shelling from several areas of northern Ukraine yesterday in the latest sign that Kyiv is starting to push back beyond its borders after more than 15 months of all-out Russian assault.

The governor of Russia's Belgorod region said two people had been killed and

two others injured when Ukrainian forces shelled a road in the town of Maslova Pristan near the Ukrainian border.

“Fragments of the shells hit passing cars. Two women were travelling in one of them. They died from their injuries on the spot,” governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

Russia said on Thursday it had repelled a second attempted incursion into the Belgorod region in just over a week by what it casts as pro-Ukrainian militants. Ukraine denies involvement.

The Freedom of Russia Legion blamed Russia for the shelling on Telegram, while posting images of what it said was one of its tanks in the nearby Russian village of Novaya Tavolzhanka and soldiers taking cover behind a wall during a gunfight.

Putin told his Security Council yesterday that “ill-wishers” were increasingly trying to destabilise Russia. “We must do everything we can to make sure that under no circumstances will they be allowed to do this,” Putin said.

The governors of the Bryansk, Kursk, Smolensk and Kaluga regions all reported shelling or drone attacks, with some buildings damaged and energy infrastructure targeted, although no fires at oil facilities or injuries were reported.

## Spike in boats smuggling meth out of Myanmar Says UN report

AFP, *Bangkok*

Asian drug trafficking networks are increasingly using sea routes to smuggle methamphetamines out of Myanmar and ramping up ketamine production as they seek to expand their business, the UN said yesterday.

Meth from coup-hit Myanmar's northeastern Shan state – the regional epicentre for the drug's production – is being smuggled by boats to avoid tighter patrols on land routes through China and Thailand, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in an annual report.

The border region between Myanmar, Laos and Thailand has long been a hotbed of illegal drug production and trafficking, particularly of meth and opium.

Increased drug patrols in China's southwestern Yunnan province and along Thailand's border with Myanmar led to a drop in meth seizures by Chinese and Thai authorities in 2022 as drug traffickers turned to alternative maritime routes.

## Bangladesh, Vietnam open univs sign pact

A CORRESPONDENT, *Gazipur*

Bangladesh Open University (BOU) and Ho Chi Minh City Open University (HCMCOU), Vietnam, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in teaching and research, exchange of academic programs, and study opportunities.

The MoU will also cover research in fields of mutual interest, exploring potential research and program collaborations, faculty exchange, developing training programs, and joint seminars between the two universities.

BOU Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Syed Humayun Akhter and HCMCOU President Prof Dr Nguyen Minh Ha signed the agreement on Monday.

Speaking about the prospects, Dr Akhter said, “Many Bangladeshi students are now studying in Vietnam. The signing of the MOU will increase the educational and research cooperation between the two universities, which will elevate the friendly bilateral ties a step further.”

## College student beaten to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

A college student was beaten to death allegedly over a family feud in Patiya upazila, Chattogram early yesterday.

Shahedul Islam, 19, was a student at Patiya Government College.

The incident took place when some 10 to 12 miscreants ambushed him at Bathuya Bridge area in Chhanahara union and beat him to death on the spot at around 12:10am, said Priton Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Patiya Police Station.

“We have primarily come to know that the victim was attacked over a longstanding family feud in the area. We are investigating the incident to know more details.”

Baby Akter, the deceased's mother, filed a case with Patiya police against seven named and some 27 unknown suspects in connection with the incident.

## BGB seized goods worth Tk 282.33cr in May

UNB, *Dhaka*

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized various types of smuggled goods and arms and ammunition worth Tk 282.33 crore during raids in the country's border areas and other places in May.

The seized items include 20.569kg gold, 88.694kg silver, 1,51,645 cosmetic items, 2,766 imitation jewellery, 21,481 saris, 1,275 three-piece/shirt pieces/sheets/blankets, 3,911 readymade garments, 1,924 cubic feet of wood, 6,066kg tea leaves, 1,65,893cft of stone, 10 trucks/covered vans, 11 pickups, 5 private cars, 25 easy bikes, and 116 motorcycles, said a BGB press release yesterday.

The seized weapons include eight pistols, eight magazines, seven guns of all kinds, 100 kg of sulfur, four explosive sticks, seven detonators and 40 rounds of bullets.

Legal action has been taken against 220 smugglers for their involvement in various types of drug trafficking and other smuggling, and 31 Bangladeshi nationals, four Indian nationals and 28 Myanmar nationals for illegally crossing the border.

## Worrying but under control

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absolutely imported as commodity prices, including those of oil and gas, have gone up globally,” said Rouf.

Kamal said he has not framed the new budget on the basis of the advice given by the IMF.

“The IMF has given an overall prescription. We will accept only those portions of its prescription that we need to accept. The rest we will implement on our own.”

He said the IMF regularly looks into whether the balance sheets of member countries are okay.

“The practice is good for the countries. Often, we have a lot to learn from them. Sometimes, we become successful after working in line with their advice. We can be successful this time as well.”

The budget has kept corporate tax rates unchanged for 2023-24.

“We have reduced corporate tax rates gradually. If needed, we will cut it further.”

Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem,

chairman of National Board of Revenue, said if the corporate tax rate is cut further, revenue generation would fall.

Bangladesh has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world.

Kamal said the number of middle-income people in Bangladesh is high but many of them don't pay taxes.

“If they pay taxes then those who pay taxes regularly and at higher amounts will see their tax burden go down.”

“Now, the time has come to pay taxes. The IMF and the World Bank have set conditions that taxes have to be paid by the people whose income is taxable,” he said.

He stressed that he would be able to implement the budget as he did in the last five years. “I can clearly say that whatever commitments I made in the previous budget, I have delivered them,” he said.

The NBR chairman said taxpayer identification number (TIN) is mandatory for importers, exporters, trade licence holders, commission

agents, gun holders and property and car buyers in city corporation areas and some other groups, not for the poor.

“For these groups of people, becoming a partner in the national development by depositing Tk 2,000 in minimum tax to the state coffer every year should be a matter of pride. They should not see it as a burden,” he said.

Kamal defended the 9 percent ceiling on loans, saying that otherwise the economy would not have recovered so fast from the severe disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Rouf said the revenue expenditure of the government would not push up inflation since a major portion of it would be spent on making interest payments and clearing subsidy arrears.

“The government will not cut the annual development programme,” he said, adding that the reserves will gradually go up in the coming months.

In responding to questions related to higher consumer prices, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi said Bangladesh is now in a better position given the global situation.

Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque said: “We always aim for winning elections, so we always look to meet the demand of the poor. The new budget has been placed keeping their demand in mind.”

Education Minister Dipu Moni said the budget always places priority on women.

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Md Tazul Islam said the unemployment rate is 3.2 percent in Bangladesh while it is 2.59 percent in the US, the largest economy in the world.

“This shows that we are doing comparatively better,” he said.

State Minister for Planning Prof Shamsul Alam said women's participation in the labour force is going up gradually.

government for long to form a banking commission to address the lack of corporate governance in the sector,” he said.

Defaulted loans in the banking sector stood at Tk 21,000 crore in 2009 when the government came to power, but the amount has now reached Tk 131,000 crore, he added.

“Doesn't anybody have to worry about this?” he said.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, a research director of the CPD, said the weakest side of the budget is that no effective measure was taken to tackle the inflationary pressure.

The government is focusing on collecting indirect tax rather than direct tax, which is why rich people and big businesses are the beneficiaries of the policy, he said.

## Budget lacks tools to contain inflation

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This represents a hike of only 7.34 percent, which is way lower than the average rate of increase of 15.65 percent between FY10 and FY23.

The overall macroeconomic assumptions made for the upcoming fiscal year are far from reality, which is why the budgetary targets are likely to be missed by a substantial margin, Fahmida said.

“On the whole, the budget for FY24 failed to fully acknowledge the ongoing macroeconomic challenges and, therefore, offered inadequate remedial measures,” she said.

Achieving other targets relating to GDP growth, export, import, remittance and foreign exchange reserves may be difficult as well given the current reality, she added.

For instance, the government set an export growth target of 12 percent for FY24 against the 5.4 percent growth achieved in the period between July and April of this fiscal year.

Import growth target has been set at 8 percent for FY24, though the country logged a negative growth rate of 12.3 percent during the first 10 months of this fiscal year.

The government has also set a GDP growth target of 7.5 percent for FY24 in contrast to 6.03 percent for this fiscal year.

The projections for these indicators appear to be overambitious when compared to the latest available figures, the CPD said.

Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the CPD, said when the government had unveiled

the current budget in June last year, the crises in the local and global economies were already visible.

Despite the challenges, the government had set ambitious GDP growth and inflation targets, he said.

“But the projections were weak and ultimately put an adverse impact on the implementation of the current fiscal year's budget,” Rahman said.

The mobilisation of internal savings should be increased, he said adding that the NBR will have to increase tax collection by 40 percent in the next fiscal year.

If tax collection target is not achieved, other areas such as deficit financing, development budget and bank borrowing will be impacted, Rahman said.

“We have been urging the

## Minimum tax of Tk 2,000

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These services include obtaining or renewing trade licenses, borrowing over Tk 5 lakh from financial institutions, opening a postal savings account of over Tk 5 lakh, and purchasing a savings certificate of over Tk 5 lakh.

People who open and continue using bank accounts of any sort with a credit balance of more than Tk 10 lakh will also need to pay the minimum tax.

“Such a move will be a burden to low-income TIN holders,” Fahmida said.

She went on to say the government should scrap the provision as it would “hamper the main spirit” of increasing

the tax-free income limit.

The minimum net wealth exemption limit has been increased to Tk 4 crore from Tk 3 crore, leaving a number of affluent people out of the surcharge net. While the government is moving to end the zero-tax regime for poor people, it is giving exemptions to rich people.

“Such anomalies are not acceptable for a justified tax policy,” Fahmida added.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow of the CPD, Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director, and Towfiqul Islam Khan, a senior research fellow, also spoke at the event.

## Bank borrowing may pose

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increase but it should be ‘significantly increased’ in the proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

“The chamber is concerned that the increase in supplementary duty rates on imported goods may impact the rise in the cost of living. Poor and lower-income groups faced harsh realities because of high commodity prices.”

Inflation stood at 9.24 percent in April, so the 6 percent inflation target for next fiscal year ‘could be difficult to achieve’.

On the economy, the chamber said underdeveloped communication systems and infrastructure, inequitable distribution of utilities and bureaucratic complexity remain major impediments to economic growth.

Also, the weak revenue collection system and implementation of the annual development programme are causes for concern, it said.

“Given the high import trend and the fallout from the Russia-Ukraine war, we need to take prudent measures in foreign exchange spending to ensure macroeconomic stability.”

On tax issues, the MCCI welcomed the increase in tax-free income limit for individuals.

But it demanded the withdrawal of the proposal to collect a minimum

tax of Tk 2,000 for availing services even though the person's income stands below the tax-free ceiling.

“This may have a negative impact on income tax payers. The chamber feels that this rate will hamper the process of transformation of small and medium enterprises into an institutional sector.”

The MCCI also demanded the withdrawal of the minimum turnover tax for corporates as only profits can be taxed and not revenue or any other fund.

The proposal to increase tax for the transfer of flats and immovable properties may adversely affect individuals and companies, the 129-year-old trade body said.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry said there is no new incentive for the development of local industries.

The introduction of an environment surcharge for owning multiple cars is a ‘nice initiative’ for protecting the environment. But, corporates should be excluded as they need multiple vehicles for operation.

“The proposed budget aimed for a GDP growth of 7.5 percent and an inflation rate of 6 percent for the upcoming fiscal year. FICCI believes the proposed targets are challenging. However, if achieved, it will bring in momentum in the economy.”



## PM mourns death of ex-minister Afsarul Amin

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of Chattogram-10 lawmaker and former primary and mass education minister Dr Afsarul Amin.

In a condolence message, she prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

Dr Afsarul Amin died at a hospital in the capital yesterday afternoon. He was 65.

Dr Afsarul, who had been suffering from cancer for the last two years, breathed his last at Square Hospital around 4:00pm, his personnel assistant Didar ur Rahman Tushar told the news agency.

The politician left behind his wife Dr Kamrunnesa, two sons, friends and well-wishers, and political fellows to mourn his death.



**Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has faced protests and criticism for its tree felling activities on Satmasjid Road, which has raised concerns about the loss of greenery, right after its southern counterpart engaged in a similar development project that involves cutting down hundreds of trees on the median strip of Mohakhali-Gulshan Road to expand an island. This action contradicts DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam's recent commitment to planting two lakh trees.**

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## 'Tree felling without permission will be punished'

**Warns DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Md Atiqul Islam yesterday said those who cut trees without the city corporation's permission will be punished.

Addressing the inauguration of a campaign by Pran-RFL, titled "Let's Save the Planet", at Hatirjheel, the mayor said, "We have already instructed to carry on development projects cutting any tree from the median of a road. I have learnt that the contractor in Mirpur cut trees, for which he was blacklisted. We have already terminated two engineers from the project."

"If any person or organisation wants to cut a tree, they will have to inform the city corporation. We will allow them if necessary, after discussing with environmentalists and town planners," he said.

"We are the ones responsible for the damage to the environment. The environment is taking its revenge. It does not rain even during the monsoon. Dhaka, in particular, has become a heat island," the mayor said.

"Many might say that there is no place to plant trees in Dhaka. We have started plantation activities on canal banks, road dividers and footpaths. I have acquired a list of trees for road medians and footpaths from Horticulture and Forest Department officials," he added.

Pointing out that plastic bottles are constantly harming the environment, Atiqul said, "Businesses are making huge profits by selling products in plastic bottles. It is unacceptable that businesses are making profiting by harming the environment. To protect the environment, producers should reduce, recycle, and reuse plastic wastes as well as introduce the EPR (Extended Producers Responsibility) model."

## MOHAKHALI-GULSHAN ROAD MEDIAN STRIP

# Now DNCC felling trees in name of development

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Seems like the two city corporations of Dhaka cannot initiate a development project without cutting down trees.

After much protests about the tree felling in Satmasjid Road by Dhaka South City Corporation, its north counterpart is carrying out a development project at the expense of greenery.

DNCC felled hundreds of trees on the median strip of Mohakhali Gulshan Road to expand its island. Surprisingly, this comes in direct contrast to DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam's recent pledge to plant two lakh trees.

Over a span of more than six months, DNCC has felled trees while working on an almost 1.7km median strip development.

Beyond its devastating environmental impact, DNCC's tree felling also violates existing laws. The city authorities are cutting down trees without obtaining the necessary permission from the forest department, according to sources inside the department.

Despite the clear requirement to seek approval from the Divisional Forest Officer to cut any tree under Section 5 of the Forest Product Transit Rules 2011, the city authorities went ahead with the project without the necessary approvals.

However, the forest department failed to intervene when DNCC's assigned workers were felling the trees in front of their office. The old median was broken and trees were cut down to make the new median strip more convenient, said construction workers and locals.

Recently, the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Buet stated that 20 percent green space is required in Dhaka, where there is less than 8.5 percent of such spaces.

According to DNCC sources, DNCC spent nearly Tk 22 crore on development works under the "Traffic Infrastructure Development and Road Safety" project. The project was extended until June 30 of this year.

During a recent visit, this correspondent

found that the Mohakhali-Gulshan road has seen the loss of many trees due to the ongoing renovation work on the road island in front of the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital. Around 30 tree trunks are scattered in various places on the road median strip, with many tree branches also buried in the soil.

This correspondent also counted that there are 150 trees on the 1.7km road median strip. More than half of these trees are at risk due to the renovation work as over a dozen trees have already fallen victim to "development". Almost 20 trees have died due to the ongoing work.

According to Google Street View and local residents, there were almost 300 trees on the median strip of Mohakhali-Gulshan Road.

Jalil Uddin, a construction worker who joined the project almost three months ago, told The Daily Star that the trees have made it difficult for them to do their work properly.

"We are removing the old median strip structures as trees are leaning over the road, often causing accidents. We have to do this to prevent accidents," he added.

Meanwhile, residents of the adjacent to Mohakhali-Gulshan Road are outraged by DNCC's tree felling.

"After the mayor's pledge to plant two lakh trees, we thought things were going to change. But now we see that these are just empty words," said Aminul Islam, a local.

Joney Enterprise, a construction company, is the contractor for the project.

Dilip Babu, managing director of Joney Enterprise, said the trees that "died" during the construction of the median strip were taken away by DNCC so that they don't fall on

the road.

He claimed that they did not cut down any trees.

However, on February 1, this construction company sent DNCC officials a letter expressing concern that there is a risk that trees might fall while working.

Babar Ahmed, deputy assistant engineer of Zone 3 of DNCC, told The Daily Star that the trees were cut down for the convenience of the work. "Initially, none of the trees were felled."

However, he could not come up with a number when asked about these "risky" trees.

Requesting anonymity, a forest official said they did not receive any application from the DNCC and nor give any permission in this regard.

Contacted, Selim Reza, chief executive officer of DNCC, said a few trees might have been taken away due to the risks while working on the median strip.

When asked about the required permission from the forest department, Reza avoided the question.

Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon and a regular commuter of the Mohakhali-Gulshan road, recently witnessed the trees being cut down.

Discussing with the designers of the project responsible for the tree felling, Jamil said it is necessary to change the perspective of those involved with such development projects. "It is possible to construct a median strip without cutting down trees."

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said, "Tree felling is not acceptable in any way. The unnecessary median strip should not be built. This is a clear waste of money," she added.



## NATIONAL BUDGET 2023-24

# No fiscal resources for environment

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

Though the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has been allocated Tk 1,639 crore in the national budget 2023-24 -- a Tk 282 crore increase from the previous year's budget -- the government did not allocate any fiscal resources to deal with the environmental threats, including the rising temperature and natural catastrophes.

Climate finance experts labelled this allocation as "project-based allocation" and said this approach reflects the government's mindset of playing down the impact of rising temperatures and natural catastrophes stemming from climate change.

Out of the total allocation for the environment ministry, the operational cost amounts to Tk 788 crore, while the development cost stands at Tk 851 crore.

Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, chairman of the Department of Development Studies at Dhaka University, told The Daily Star that just a few weeks back, the country witnessed a devastating cyclone and will see many more in the coming days. On top of that, heat waves have also become regular in Dhaka and other areas.

"Despite the fact, there is no budgetary allocation to mitigate such impacts of climate change. We are still relying on our hopes of getting external loans to fight climate change. The recently appointed heat officer said Dhaka's green coverage must be expanded. However, allowing fiscal resources to that end is of paramount importance," he said.

"We ought to augment the budget for a Climate Trust Fund, which we did not. We keep discussing the impacts of climate action and the next course of action but there is

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## 2 killed in Jatrabari road accidents

STAR REPORT

Two persons were killed and two others injured in two separate road accidents in Dhaka's Jatrabari area early yesterday.

The deceased are Selim, 30, a bus driver of Somoy Paribahan, and Miraz Mia, 25, a tailor.

Selim, along with another driver Saddam, was returning to his Shanir Akhra home on a rickshaw after parking their buses in Chittagong Road area.

As the rickshaw reached Hashem Road, a bus of Thikana Paribahan hit it, injuring the two passengers and the rickshaw-puller, said Sajib Islam, another bus driver of Somoy Paribahan.

They were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where Selim died in the morning, he said.

Meanwhile, Miraz suffered critical injuries after a speeding bus hit him as he was crossing a road in Chourasta area. He was rushed to DMCH where doctors declared him dead, said police.

Sub-inspector Kamruzzaman of Jatrabari Police Station, said drivers of both buses fled.

## BNP to hold 'youth rally' from June 17

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three associate and front organisations of the BNP -- Chhatra Dal, Jubo Dal, and Swachchasebak Dal -- will conduct a "youth rally" in six districts to promote their "Youth Rally to Save the Country" slogan.

Sultan Salahuddin Tuku, president of Jubo Dal, made the announcement at a press conference at party's Nayapaltan headquarters yesterday.

The first rally will be held on either June 10 or 11 in Chattogram, Bogura on June 17, Khulna on July 7, Barisal on July 15, and Sylhet on July 22 and the last one will be held in Dhaka on July 29.

"We will conduct youth rallies in six locations across the country. In the preceding five years, over four billion young people were unable to vote. Today, those who do not participate in Awami League politics are unable to obtain employment. In such a circumstance, we will urge the youth to come forward to save the nation," he said.

Tuku said the youth will be encouraged to establish the rule of law in the country as there is no rule of law in the country.

"The main goal of the youth rally is to make the young generation aware of the injustice and corruption of the current Awami League government."

## A budget without any direction

### Says TIB in statement on national budget 2023-24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday said the proposed national budget for 2023-2024 has no direction and lacks a directive on fighting graft and money laundering as well as addressing governance and justice.

In a statement, the anti-graft watchdog said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal in his budget speech did not recognise graft and money laundering as reasons behind the ongoing economic crisis, widening inequality and decline in foreign exchange reserve.

His speech has sent the "idea of governance and justice to exile", reads the statement.

TIB said the Covid-19 pandemic and the global crisis that emerged from the Russia-Ukraine war have undoubtedly impacted Bangladesh's economy negatively.

However, the key challenges for sustainable and inclusive development

in the country are unabated corruption and money laundering. It is not clear how a budget that lacks a directive to address these issues can prove to be beneficial to anyone. It is also unlikely that the budget will contribute to the wellbeing of the masses, said TIB.

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said the finance minister, in his speech, has announced to enforce strict regulations on imports, continue to monitor letter of credit (L/C) openings and stability of the exchange rate to restructure the foreign exchange reserve and mitigate the dollar crisis.

"However,... [the minister] nonchalantly overlooked the issue of graft and continuous money laundering that have plagued the country's economy," he said.

It is not unknown to the government that the country's gross domestic product (GDP) could have been two to three percent more if corruption could be controlled even to a moderate extent, said Iftekharuzzaman.



**Demanding that the human rights and fundamental demands of the Dalit community be met, activists came out with a procession in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday.**

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

**PRAYER  
TIMING**

JUNE 3

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4:05 12:45 5:00 6:45 8:15

JAMAT 4:40 1:15 5:15 6:50 8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



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Two Buildings (each 6 Storied@ 90,000sqft) total 1,80,000sqft, Land 5.50 bigha with Electricity/ Gas/ Water Facility. Both Buildings Accord Approved with Full Compliance. Presently Garments Factory running at Dhaka Road, Vogra before Gazipur Chowrasta.  
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**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
PWD E/M Wood Workshop Division, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka  
Phone & Fax 88-02-55028813  
Website: www.pwd.gov.bd

Memo No-25.36.2680.534.14.170.23-2121 Date- 01/06/2023

**e- Tender Notice**

This is to notify all concern that the following tenders are invited in the national e-GP portal:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Last Selling Date	Opening Date
01	842188	11/06/2023	11/06/2023

This is an online Tender where only e-Tenderer will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

(Md. Shajedul Islam)  
Executive Engineer (E/M)  
PWD EM Wood Workshop Division,  
Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka.  
Email: ee\_wood@pwd.gov.bd

## No fiscal resources

FROM PAGE 3  
no budgetary initiative in this regard," he added.  
M Zakir Hossain Khan, founder and chief executive of Change Initiative, told The Daily Star that the economic loss caused by the overall pollution, including air, water and forest degradation, amounts to 3.5 percent of the total GDP. He said if the 3.5 percent loss in GDP is taken into account, the allocation of Tk 1,639 stands nowhere against the economic loss due to pollution.  
"On top of that, if we factor in the real inflation, the allocation did not increase at all. This is a project-based approach, while what we need is a basic allocation to mitigate air pollution," he said.  
He observed that a project-based solution does not result in a long-term solution. To achieve SDGs, which prioritise environmental sustainability, the country needs to opt for fiscal

resources to deal with the environmental crisis.  
Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela, said Bangladesh globally ranks 179 out of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index.  
"The scenario will not change if the capacity of the Department of Environment is not enhanced. As a regulatory agency, their monitoring capacity must be improved by ensuring that they have enough human resources for the job. The department also needs motivation," she said.

## Rajshahi flooded with plastic

FROM PAGE 5  
has listened to the concerns of city dwellers and made promises of improving infrastructure, creating jobs, and delivering better services if reelected.  
Amidst the symbol distribution ceremony, candidates from different parties, accompanied by supporters, took to the streets, conducting processions and using loudspeakers for their campaigns. The city's thoroughfares echoed with slogans from supporters of mayoral and councillor

candidates.  
Responding to the events, Saiful Islam, a candidate from Jatiya Party, expressed his commitment to adhering to the election rules, stating, "We don't want to say that some candidates are violating the election rules. Certainly, we will not."  
However, Murshid Alam, the candidate from Islami Andolan Bangladesh, acknowledged falling behind in his campaign, as some candidates had commenced campaigning before receiving their symbols. Despite this, no

formal complaint has been filed with the election commission regarding these violations.  
Returning Officer Delwar Hossain said magistrates were appointed to investigate any violations of the electoral code of conduct, including the hanging of plastic-laminated posters. He assured that appropriate actions would be taken after the investigations.  
The RCC polls, scheduled for June 21, will see a total of 162 candidates vying for various positions.

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
Chattogram PWD Division-2, Chattogram  
Phone: - 02333354456  
Web-www.pwd.gov.bd, E-mail: ee\_ctg2@pwd.gov.bd

**e-Tender Notice (OTM)**

Memo No. 25.361500.112.07.443.13/775 Date: 01/06/2023.  
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works given below.

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of Works	Tender Closing Date & Time
01	842366	Construction of a gate with sentry post at the entrance of Dewanbazar PWD Colony.	18-Jun-2023 14:00:00
02	842320	Digital Survey in Project Area under the Project "Establishment of Sheikh Russel Aviary & Eco-part at Rangunia, Chattogram.	19-Jun-2023 12:00:00
03	842284	Internal Repair work of prisoners barracks Padma, Meghna & Jamuna building at Chittagong Central Jail.	18-Jun-2023 12:00:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.  
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

(Abhijeet Chowdhury)  
Executive Engineer  
Chattogram PWD Division-2  
Rahamatgonj, Chattogram.

Size: 4"x4  
GD-977

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Local Government Engineering Department  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
LGED, Madaripur  
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No: 46.02.5400.000.07.136.22-1643 Date : 01/06/2023

**e-Tender Notice**  
**Tender No. e-Tender Notice : 61/2022-23**

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

Location	T-ID /Method	Name of the Work	Tender Closing	Remarks
Shibchar	837920 (OTM)	CAFDRIRP/Madaripur/UZR/ERW-08/2022-23 Rehabilitation of Shibchar H.Q. to Gopalpur Road via Chanderchar Growth Center Road from Ch.00m-4000m under Shibchar Upazila, District: Madaripur (Road ID No: 354872001)	26-Jun-2023 Within 12:00 PM	
	837921 (OTM)	CAFDRIRP/Madaripur/UZR/ERW-09/2022-23 Rehabilitation of Chanderchar G.C to Chilarchar R & H via Bhandarikandi High School, Bhandarikandi U.P. Office & F.W.C. Dakhin Korokchar Hat Road from Ch.00m-9482m under Shibchar Upazila, District: Madaripur (Road ID No: 354872013)	03-Jul-2023 Within 12:00 PM	

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.  
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required.  
The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system Portal have to be deposited on line through any e-GP registered banks Branches.  
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)) and also from e-mail: [xen.madaripur@lged.gov.bd](mailto:xen.madaripur@lged.gov.bd) or call to 0661-62445.  
**Interested persons can communicate with the undersigned during office hours.**

(Md. Ashraf Ali Khan)  
Executive Engineer  
LGED, Madaripur  
Tel: 0661-62445(Off)  
e-mail: [xen.madaripur@lged.gov.bd](mailto:xen.madaripur@lged.gov.bd)

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ  
পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ  
সেকশন-১৪, মিরপুর, ঢাকা

**উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন-২০০৬ ও পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ (সর্বশেষ সংশোধনী অনুযায়ী) এবং তৎসংশ্লিষ্ট সকল আইন ও বিধি মোতাবেক ২০২৩-২০২৪ অর্থবছরে পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ এর নিম্নবর্ণিত বিভিন্ন প্রকার মালামাল ক্রয়/সরবরাহ ও মেসারাজ কাজ উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে বাস্তবায়ন করার নিমিত্ত উপযুক্ত/যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন ঠিকাদারের নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী/প্রকৃত নাগরিক ও সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজে বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন আইনগত প্রকৃত ঠিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

সংখ্যা	বিস্তারিত	সংখ্যা	বিস্তারিত
১.	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	৪	সরঞ্জাম/সরঞ্জাম/সরঞ্জাম/সরঞ্জাম
২.	সাহায্য	৪	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
৩.	ক্রয়কারী সত্তার নাম	৪	রেজিস্টার, পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ
৪.	দরপত্র নম্বর ও তারিখ	৪	স্মারক নং-৪৪.০১.০৪০০.০১২.০৭.১৫.২৩/১৭২৪, তারিখঃ ০১/০৬/২০২৩খ্রিঃ।
৫.	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	৪	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (OTM)।
৬.	বাজেট ও অর্থনৈতিক খাত	৪	রাজস্ব বাজেটের আওতায় পুলিশ বাজেটের বিভিন্ন অর্থনৈতিক কোড।
৭.	দরপত্র সিডিউল প্রাপ্তি, গ্রহণ, উন্মুক্তকরণের স্থান	৪	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ, সেকশন-১৪, মিরপুর, ঢাকা।
৮.	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	৪	২২/০৬/২০২৩খ্রিঃ অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত।
৯.	দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	৪	২৫/০৬/২০২৩খ্রিঃ ১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১০.	দরপত্র সিডিউল উন্মুক্ত করণের স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	৪	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ, সেকশন-১৪, মিরপুর, ঢাকা; ২৫/০৬/২০২৩খ্রিঃ ১২:৩০ ঘটিকা।
১১.	দরপত্র দাতার যোগ্যতা	৪	যোগ্যতার শর্তাবলীঃ (১) হালনাগাদ বৈধ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স (২) আয়কর সার্টিফিকেট এবং হালনাগাদ আয়কর পরিশোধের প্রত্যয়নপত্র (৩) হালনাগাদ ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট (৪) দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি জারির পূর্ববর্তী ৬ মাসের ব্যাংক লেনদেনের হিসাব বিবরণী (৫) সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের ০৫ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা সনদ (৬) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের কপি (৭) কাগজ তালিকাভুক্ত নয় মর্মে প্রত্যয়ন পত্র (৮) দরদাতার ০২ (দুই) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবিসহ বর্ণিত কাগজপত্র প্রথম শ্রেণির গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক সত্যায়িত হতে হবে।

নং	কাজের নাম	পরিমাণ	দরপত্র জামানত (ফেরতযোগ্য)	দরপত্র দলিলের মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য)
১.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহারের জন্য বিভিন্ন প্রকার মনিহারী মালামাল ক্রয়	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	২০,০০০/-	৫০০/-
২.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহারের জন্য বিভিন্ন প্রকার ব্যবহার্য দ্রব্যাদি ক্রয়	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	৩০,০০০/-	১,০০০/-
৩.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহারের জন্য বিভিন্ন প্রকার স্বাস্থ্য বিধান সামগ্রী ক্রয়	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	১০,০০০/-	৫০০/-
৪.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহারের জন্য বিভিন্ন প্রকার আসবাবপত্র ক্রয়	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	২০,০০০/-	৫০০/-
৫.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহারের জন্য বিভিন্ন প্রকার কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী ক্রয়	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	২০,০০০/-	৫০০/-
৬.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহারের জন্য বিভিন্ন প্রকার কম্পিউটার ও আনুষঙ্গিক ক্রয়	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	৩০,০০০/-	১,০০০/-
৭.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহারের জন্য বিভিন্ন প্রকার যন্ত্রপাতি ও সরঞ্জামাদি ক্রয়	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	২৫,০০০/-	১,০০০/-
৮.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ বিভিন্ন প্রকার প্রকাশনা সংক্রান্ত কাজ	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	১৫,০০০/-	৫০০/-
৯.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ বিভিন্ন প্রকার মুদ্রণ ও বাঁধাইকরণ সংক্রান্ত কাজ	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	১০,০০০/-	৫০০/-
১০.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ খেলাধুলার কাজে ব্যবহৃত বিভিন্ন প্রকার ক্রীড়া সামগ্রী ক্রয়	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	১০,০০০/-	৫০০/-
১১.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ কর্মরত কর্মকর্তা/কর্মচারীদের পোশাক সেলাইসহ আনুষঙ্গিক কাজ	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	১৫,০০০/-	৫০০/-
১২.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহৃত বিভিন্ন প্রকার প্রশিক্ষণ সংশ্লিষ্ট মালামাল ক্রয়	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	৩০,০০০/-	১,০০০/-
১৩.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ দৈনিক ভিত্তিতে অনিয়মিত দক্ষ/অদক্ষ শ্রমিক সরবরাহ	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	১০,০০০/-	৫০০/-
১৪.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহারের জন্য মাসিক/দৈনিক ভাড়া ভিত্তিতে গাড়ী সরবরাহ	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	২৫,০০০/-	১,০০০/-
১৫.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহৃত গাড়ীসমূহের তৈরি/সংস্কার ও যন্ত্রাংশ	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	২৫,০০০/-	১,০০০/-
১৬.	পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ-এ ব্যবহৃত গাড়ীসমূহ মেসারাজ/সার্ভিসিং কাজ	চাহিদা মোতাবেক	১০,০০০/-	৫০০/-

**বিশেষ নির্দেশনাঃ**

- ★ দরপত্র সিডিউলে উল্লিখিত যাবতীয় নির্দেশনা/শর্তাবলী প্রতিপালনযোগ্য।
- ★ দরপত্র জামানত/পে-অর্ডার পরিচালক (প্রশাসন ও অর্থ), পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ এর অনুকূলে জমা প্রদান করতে হবে।
- ★ দরপত্রে উল্লিখিত যে কোন আইটেমের পরিমাণ/হাট/বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্ত চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।
- ★ বাজি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বত্বাধিকারীর স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত প্যাডে আলাদাভাবে আবেদনপূর্বক নির্ধারিত তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত দরপত্র সিডিউল সফ্রহ করা যাবে।
- ★ প্রতিটি দরপত্রের জন্য সীলগালা যুক্ত খামের উপর কাজের নাম উল্লেখ পূর্বক আলাদাভাবে দরপত্র জমা প্রদান করতে হবে, অন্যথায় দরপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।
- ★ দরদাতা প্রতিষ্ঠানকে কার্যাদেশ প্রাপ্তির পূর্বে ৩০০/- (তিনশত) টাকার নন জুটিশিয়াল স্ট্যাম্পে চিহ্নিত করতে হবে।
- ★ কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীত যে কোন অথবা সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিলের পূর্ণস্বত্ব সংরক্ষণ করেন।

৩১.৩.২৩  
মোঃ হিবাজ উদ্দাহ, পিপিএম  
বিপি-৬৭৯৫০১০০৩৬  
পরিচালক (প্রশাসন ও অর্থ)  
পদে/-রেজিস্টার  
পুলিশ স্টাফ কলেজ বাংলাদেশ

জিডি-৯৭৫

**Department of International Relations**  
**University of Dhaka**

**Admission Announcement**  
**10<sup>th</sup> Batch, Summer-2023**  
**Professional Masters in International Relations (PMIR)**

The Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka invites applications from the interested candidates for admission in Professional Masters in International Relations (PMIR) for Summer 2023 session. This eighteen-month accelerated professional degree programme contains the following features:

- (a) a total of three semesters;
- (b) 12 course units consisting of 48 credit hours;
- (c) research module on International Relations;
- (d) classes on weekends (Fridays and Saturdays).

**Application Requirements**

1. Bachelor's degree in any discipline from any recognized university with at least 2<sup>nd</sup> class or a CGPA of 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale) in their academic career.
2. The applicants with a CGPA of at least 2.5 in the Post-Graduate Diploma in International Relations (PGDIR) Programme offered by the Department are eligible for direct admission.
3. Applicants in service must apply through proper channel.

**Admission Procedure**

- Prospective applicants can collect application forms from and submit them to the office of the Department on working days (10 a.m-4 p.m.). Each form costs Tk.1500/-
- Last date of submission is 03 July 2023.
- Attested copies of all certificates & transcripts along with 2 passport size photos should be submitted with the application form.

**Contact Details**  
Office of the Chair, Department of International Relations, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Social Sciences Faculty Building, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000. Phone: 9661920-73 ext. 6541 & 6542 (between 10am-4pm). Mobile: 01871542055, 01715057819 01922113262 (between 11 am-5 pm only). Email: [ir.admin@du.ac.bd](mailto:ir.admin@du.ac.bd); Website: <http://www.duir.ac.bd>  
\*The Programme Coordination Committee reserves the right to make necessary changes to the above provisions \*

*The PMIR programme offers comprehensive understanding of a wide range of theoretical and empirical perspectives on issues of regional and international politics, security and development. It is thus designed for further academic and career development of the professional and practitioners.*

GD-980



VIOLATION OF ELECTION CODE

Rajshahi flooded  
with plastic-  
laminated posters

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

In a blatant violation of the electoral code of conduct, the streets and adjacent walls of Rajshahi were inundated with plastic-laminated posters, seeking votes for the boat symbol, just hours before the distribution of election symbols for the upcoming Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) elections. This move has drawn severe criticism, considering the High Court's ban on such posters during the elections of Dhaka North and South City Corporations back in January 2020, due to concerns expressed by environmentalists.

AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, the incumbent mayor of Rajshahi and the Awami League nominated candidate seeking a fourth term in office, is at the centre of this controversy. Liton, also a presidium member of the Awami League, previously advocated creating a green city. However, the sight of plastic laminated posters endorsing his candidacy has sparked widespread condemnation.



The distribution of electoral symbols began yesterday at the Rajshahi Shilpakola Academy auditorium, with the returning officer Delwar Hossain leading the proceedings. The symbols were first distributed among the candidates for reserved seats for women, followed by the mayor candidates between 11:30am and 12:00pm. Councillor candidates continued receiving their symbols until 5:00pm. Surprisingly, the polythene-laminated posters were visible in the city since the early hours of the day, raising questions about the negligence of those responsible.

When questioned about the posters, Liton claimed ignorance, stating that “enthusiastic party workers” might have hung them. He further justified the use of plastic lamination, arguing that the posters would not withstand the rains unless adequately covered.

Liton and several councillor candidates have been engaging with the electorate since the announcement of the election schedule in April. Holding over 70 meetings with various groups, including traders, businessmen, professionals, cultural activists, and students, Liton

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

KHULNA CITY POLLS

Talukder Abdul Khaleque is running for mayor in Khulna on the ruling Awami League ticket. His key opponent Mohammad Abdul Awal is nominated by the Islami Andolon Bangladesh, the party which was founded by late Fazlul Karim, popularly known as Charmonai Pir. The Daily Star's Dipankar Roy and Ashik Abdullah Apu talked to them about their aspirations and plans.

I promise  
progress



TALUKDER ABDUL  
KHALEQUE

**Within the Khulna Awami League, there are no internal conflicts or divisions. All party leaders and activists are working together to secure our victory.**

**DS:** How is the electoral atmosphere in Khulna?  
**Khaleque:** The electoral atmosphere is good. There is no conflict regarding the election. We are conducting our campaigns in a proactive manner, reaching out to voters and addressing their concerns.  
**DS:** What pledges have you made to the city dwellers?  
**Khaleque:** Having served as the mayor of Khulna twice before, I acknowledge that there are unfinished development projects from my previous term. I have assured the voters that once the ongoing projects are completed after my re-election, visible improvements will be noticed in the city.  
**DS:** Are you receiving full support from the leaders and activists of your party?  
**Khaleque:** Within the Khulna Awami League, there are no internal conflicts or divisions. All party leaders and activists are working together to secure our victory.  
**DS:** Some mayoral candidates have alleged that you might win the election by leveraging the influence of the ruling party. How do you respond to these?  
**Khaleque:** Those who have raised these allegations need to provide detailed explanations of where they have faced any hindrance. I'm a proponent of free and fair elections. Although I belong to the ruling party, I have experienced defeat in the past while the party was in power. I have gracefully accepted the people's verdict before and will do that in the future as well.  
**DS:** Many are concerned about a low voter turnout as the major opposition party, BNP, has boycotted the election. What is your perspective on this issue?  
**Khaleque:** I have repeatedly told Khulna residents that casting their votes is their responsibility and a reflection of their will. Despite BNP boycotting the election, the response I have received from the people indicates that they are committed to going to exercising their right to vote.

We want to serve  
the community



MOHAMMAD  
ABDUL AWAL

**Our primary goal is to transform Khulna into a modern and pollution-free city. We have highlighted the need to address issues such as waterlogging and food security.**

**DS:** How is the electoral atmosphere in Khulna?  
**Awal:** The atmosphere is pleasant. We've been conducting campaigns since the day of the symbol allotment. Our focus is on presenting our ideology to the voters.  
**DS:** How confident are you about winning?  
**Awal:** If the situation remains favourable and the people can freely exercise their right to vote, we are confident of securing a victory.  
**DS:** Many allege that you never stood by the people and only approach voters during elections. What is your response to this?  
**Awal:** These allegations are untrue. We have always stood by the people and followed the principles of our Islamic ideology. We are committed to serving the community regardless of any election cycle.  
**DS:** BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami have boycotted the election but they have significant vote banks in Khulna. Where do you think their votes will go? There have been allegations that you have secretly joined hands with them.  
**Awal:** We do not categorise anyone as BNP-Jamaat. We are seeking votes from all the peace-loving people of the city, irrespective of their party affiliations.  
**DS:** Do you think voters will show up at the polling centres?  
**Awal:** The Gazipur city polls set a positive example of voters exercising their democratic rights. Furthermore, the assurance provided by top officials of the administration, including the Chief Election Commissioner, has instilled confidence in people.  
**DS:** What will be your priority if you are elected?  
**Awal:** Our primary goal is to transform Khulna into a modern and pollution-free city. We have highlighted the need to address issues such as waterlogging, food security and substance abuse.

SYLHET CITY POLLS

Campaign begins  
after symbol  
allocation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

With the official allocation of the symbols among mayoral and councillor candidates of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) polls, candidates have started the campaign for the election slated for June 21.

Sylhet Regional Election Officer and the Returning Officer of SCC polls Faysal Kader distributed the symbols among the candidates yesterday.

Of political party nominated mayoral candidates -- Md Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury of Awami League was allocated 'boat', Jatiya Party candidate Md Nazrul Islam 'plough', Islami Andolon Bangladesh candidate Mahmudul Hasan 'hand fan' and Zaker Party candidate Md Zahirul Alam 'rose'.

Independent mayoral candidates -- Abdul Hanif Kutu was allotted 'horse', Md Salah Uddin Rimon 'cricket bat' and Md Shah Jahan Miah 'bus'.

The candidates of general councillors and reserved women councillors also got symbols by the returning officer.

So far 273 candidates vying for general councillor posts of 42 wards in the city while another 87 women candidates participating for reserved women councillor seats.

After receiving symbol from the returning officer, the candidates brought out a procession and started official campaign.

All candidates have opened up their electoral campaign offices and started hanging posters and distributing leaflets. The campaign will continue till June 19.

Four more dengue  
cases reported

UNB, Dhaka

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

Of the new patients, two were admitted to hospitals in Dhaka and the rest outside it, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Three-hundred-thirty-two dengue patients, including 289 in the capital, are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.

So far, the DGHS has recorded 2,138 dengue cases, 1,793 recoveries, and 13 deaths this year.

The country logged 281 dengue deaths in 2022 -- the highest on record after 179 deaths recorded in 2019. Also, it recorded 62,423 dengue cases and 61,971 recoveries last year.



With the Barishal City Corporation elections up ahead, a poster maker cuts out the campaign flyers of the candidates to hang throughout the city's roads and prominent locations. This photo was taken in Barishal city's Ray road yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

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# At least 50 killed as trains collide in India

## More than 350 hospitalised

REUTERS, Bhubaneswar/Kolkata

At least 50 people were killed and 350 injured when two passenger trains collided in the eastern Indian state of Odisha yesterday, Indian media reported.

The Coromandel Express, which runs from Kolkata to Chennai, collided with another passenger train, the Howrah Superfast Express, railway officials said.

The Howrah Superfast Express derailed and became entangled with the Coromandel Express, South Eastern Railway authorities said in a statement. Media reports had earlier said that the crash was between the Coromandel Express and a goods train.

There was no official confirmation yet on the number of dead in the disaster, which took place in Balasore district. Media reports said at least 50 people had died.

So far more than 350 injured passengers had been admitted to various hospitals, Odisha's Chief Secretary Pradeep Jena told reporters.

Images from the scene showed rescuers climbing up the mangled wreck of one of the trains to find survivors.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said authorities' priority was "removing the living to the hospitals, that's our first concern, to look after the living".

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



The Jamuna has devoured houses, roads and farmland at Brahmangram village in Sirajganj's Shahjadpur upazila. Many villagers have become destitute due to erosion of the river bank over the last few years. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

# Country logs first Covid deaths in 2 months

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh reported two more Covid-19 deaths in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, read a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The last death from Covid-19 was reported on March 28.

Of the dead, one was male and another female. They were aged between 61 and 70 and from Dhaka, according to the press release.

With the latest count, the total number of casualties in the country due to Covid-19 increased to 29,448.

Meanwhile, the DGHS also reported 89 Covid-19 cases after testing 1,509 samples in the same 24 hours.

The positivity rate was 5.87 percent.

In the past few days, case positivity rate started rising and hovered around 6 percent.

# No measures to drive up remittance

## Budget offers remitters no new incentive

JAMIL MAHMUD

The government has not come up with any new measure in the proposed national budget to encourage remitters despite a sluggish growth in remittance inflow in the outgoing fiscal year.

Instead, the government has kept unchanged the 2.5 percent cash incentive for remittance.

In his budget speech, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal on Thursday said the cash incentive would encourage expatriates to remit their earnings through formal channels.

He said remitter-friendly processes are being promoted. "Thanks to these initiatives, our remittance is increasing."

The country received \$19.41 billion in remittance during July-May of outgoing fiscal year, a 1.13 percent rise from the amount remitted at the same period in the previous fiscal, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

After the introduction of two percent cash incentive in July 2019, the country saw a 10.87 percent growth in remittance.

In 2020-2021, the country saw a staggering 36.10

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

# Prospects for job creation gloomy

## Govt initiatives may falter for falling foreign direct investment, higher bank borrowing

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The government's promise to create jobs for a massive number of people in the current fiscal year has not translated into reality as most of the initiatives aimed at generating employment have not been implemented.

This is not good news for an economy where at least 22 lakh people enter the job market every year.

The alarm bell will sound even louder at a time when many people reportedly lost jobs in the last couple of years because of large-scale disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

The lingering energy and power shortage, the sharp drop in foreign currency reserve and the difficulty in opening letters of credit for imports have already made it difficult for existing entrepreneurs to keep their industrial units operational and retain workforce. So, expanding the existing capacity and setting up new factories are out of question for many.

Under such circumstances, some of the initiatives taken by the government for the creation of new jobs would have given some relief to the economy. But the schemes have not moved at an expected pace.

For instance, the government has got down to establishing 100 economic zones where one crore people are expected to be employed as part of efforts to ensure a balanced distribution of employment

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

# Heatwave sweeping 3 districts

UNB, Dhaka

A severe heatwave is sweeping over Rangpur, Dinajpur, and Rajshahi and it is likely to continue.

Meanwhile, a mild to moderate heatwave is sweeping over Sylhet, Patuakhali, Bhola, Barishal, Chandpur, Noakhali and Feni districts.

Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, and some parts of Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions were also hit by the mild to moderate heatwave.

Rain or thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Chattogram and Sylhet divisions. The weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy skies elsewhere in the country, according to Bangladesh Meteorological Department's morning bulletin.

# European Space Agency hosts first Mars live stream

CNN ONLINE

Here is Mars in real time. The European Space Agency (ESA) is streaming on YouTube the first live images directly from Mars.

Over the course of an hour, new images of Mars are expected about every 50 seconds, according to statement from the agency. Updates will also be available at ESA's Twitter account and the hashtag #MarsLIVE, the agency said.

The images, shared on YouTube, ESA's Twitter account and with #MarsLIVE, will show the planet as it has never been seen before, ESA said.

The event is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the launch of the agency's Mars Express orbiter — a mission to take three-dimensional images of the planet's surface to see it in more complete detail.

"Normally, we see images from Mars and know that they were taken days before," said James Godfrey, spacecraft operations manager at ESA's mission control center in Darmstadt, Germany, in a statement. "I'm excited to see Mars as it is now — as close to a martian 'now' as we can possibly get!"



This rickety building of Golachipa Upazila Health Complex in Patuakhali is a risk to healthcare workers and patients. Inaugurated on July 1, 1992, the two-storey building has not been renovated in years. On average, 90 patients remain admitted to the health complex. The Patuakhali civil surgeon has written to the higher authorities for funds to renovate the building. The photo was taken on Tuesday. PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

23

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আমাদের এই সুদীর্ঘ পথ চলায় গ্রাহক, শুভানুধ্যায়ী ও চেকিংহোল্ডারদের নিয়ে আজ আমরা একটি সুবিশাল পরিবার। আপনাদের আস্থা, বিশ্বাস এবং বন্ধনই আমাদের প্রেরণা যোগায় সাফল্যের সাথে সামনে এগিয়ে চলার। সাফল্যের এই পথ চলায় আমাদের সাথে থাকার জন্য সবাইকে জানাই আন্তরিক শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন।

আমরা গর্বিত, আমরা যমুনা ব্যাংক পরিবার।

JAMUNABANK





# TANZIKA AMIN’S remarkable return

ANTARA RAISA

From the glimmering stages of the Lux Anandadhara Miss Photogenic contest in 2014 to the captivating world of web series, Tanzika Amin has graced the media industry for nearly two decades. While her journey may have been sprinkled with relatively fewer projects, her recent resurgence in the web series *Mohanagar 2* has reignited the spotlight on this talented actress.

Stepping back into the game with grace and poise, Tanzika reflects on her remarkable comeback, shedding light on the industry’s challenges and more with Star Showbiz.

After ‘Mohanagar 2’, you caught the attention of the audience after a long time. How does it feel to get back in the game again?

I have been working in this industry for a long time. However, due to some personal reasons, I took a break from acting, and that’s why the current generation has not seen me on the screen that much. This comeback is a remarkable one for me, as it is filled with love and appreciation for the audience. It feels nice.

Do you think that it was a turning point in your career?

It can’t be said for sure, because a journey in showbiz is unpredictable. There is a syndicate in the industry, and because of that, sometimes good projects or actors get ignored. Let’s see what happens next.

Although you have been working in the industry for a decade, you have worked in a few projects. What’s the reason behind this? Is this because of the syndicate that you speak of?

Mostly, it’s because of me. I am a very lazy person. However, syndicate is also a

‘I have been working in this industry for a long time. However, due to some personal reasons, I took a break from acting, and that’s why the current generation has not seen me on the screen that much. This comeback is a remarkable one for me, as it is filled with love and appreciation for the audience. It feels nice.’

reason. You will see specific actors and directors in most of the projects. They always cast those artists who are more comfortable with them.

Do you want to know more about the industry syndicate?

I am not only telling it for myself. I am speaking for all the artistes who lost in the passage of time due to the industry syndicate. If I had not performed well in *Mohanagar 2*, nobody would remember me now. So, sometimes good artistes go unnoticed because the producers work with specific actors in all the projects.

Do you have any regrets about your life?

I am a very happy-go-lucky person. I believe in spreading happiness and positivity. I just want to stay healthy until the end of my life.

When will the audience see you next?

Very soon. I am in talks with some directors. I will be a regular in television dramas because I call it my ‘government job’ (laughs).

## OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



**Adam Surat**  
June 10 – June 12 | 7 pm  
Experimental Theater Hall,  
Bangladesh Shilpakala  
Academy



**Obastob Live**  
June 3 | 3 pm  
TSC Auditorium, University of  
Dhaka



**Radio Riot 2.0**  
June 3 | 10 am  
TSC, University of Dhaka

### TV TALKIES

## ‘KILLING EVE’

### When love and obsession become blurred

After *Fleabag*, Phoebe Waller-Bridge lends her wit and flair to this 2018 dramedy, *Killing Eve*. The series features a seductive and intriguing relationship between a bored MI5 desk agent and a ruthless killer. Eve (Sandra Oh) is someone who hates her job, having to research about the threats and killers the country faces, until she comes across Villanelle (Jodie Comer). Due to a twist of fate, Eve becomes obsessed with catching



Villanelle, which later on becomes less of a chase to pursue, but rather to interact. In a refreshing take on a male centric genre, Villanelle presents a curious perspective into a female mercenary, and how she deals with her targets and the payment she gets after. The series casts a myriad of exceptional actors and Waller-Bridge’s exceptional writing provides a reprieve for viewers looking to have a lingering taste of her wittiness after *Fleabag*.

## STYLE STATEMENT Ayushmann Khurrana

Ayushman Khurrana looked like a million dollars in a glossy, metallic-silver jacket. The *Badhaai Ho* actor showed off his perfectly chiselled body in the transparent shirt, which he paired with a slim fit patterned jacket. The actor donned a buckbrush hairdo and sprinkled a little extra glamour on his overall look by wearing black-ceramic chronograph watch.



### TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix  
Fubar



Chorki  
Luca



Amazon  
Prime  
Tom Clancy’s  
Jack Ryan  
season 4



Disney Plus  
Secret Invasion



Hoichoi  
Bird of Dusk





## Proposed budget is grossly inadequate

Govt should make major changes before finalising it

There is no denying that preparing a budget at this hour of crisis is a difficult task. But that is what makes the formulation of a realistic, effective and implementable budget all the more important. Unfortunately, as experts across the nation have expressed, the budget proposed by the finance minister failed to live up to that task and the expectations of the people.

There is no reason to believe the government will be able to achieve the revenue target proposed in the budget. And that will only widen the already significant budget deficit. All available options in terms of financing the deficit will put a greater burden on the economy – on small and medium enterprises in particular, as well as downwards from the middle class. For example, should the government choose to borrow more from Bangladesh Bank – print more money – it will only further fan the flame of inflation, which would make life most difficult for the already struggling middle class and lower income groups.

The overall budget is not at all pro-people – not for the majority at least. It provides very little relief for the middle class who arguably face the greatest burden (as the government will rely heavily on indirect taxes), while the social safety net allocation will barely provide any cushioning for vulnerable groups. These decisions, alongside the proposed relief for the rich, shows that the government has consciously chosen to ignore the two most important problems presently plaguing our economy: inflation and inequality. Hence, the budget proposed no concrete measures to tackle inflation, and nearly altogether ignored the inequality issue. Similarly, it did not provide any remedy for default loans or the forex reserve crisis, both of which have resulted in Moody's downgrading Bangladesh's sovereign rating – which could be very bad news for the economy.

Development allocation for education has decreased, getting us farther away from the Unesco-recommended six percent allocation of total GDP. And the development allocation for healthcare has also decreased – although the operation allocation has increased, which mostly concerns salaries, etc – which could further worsen the quality of our healthcare system.

Instead of addressing our biggest economic challenges – corruption, for example – the budget, over the years, has become a tool to further extend benefits to wealthy and politically connected groups. And this budget is no different. It fails to ensure better utilisation of government subsidies, most of which ends up in the pockets of the politically connected, and ignores much-needed reforms and policy changes. The government should, therefore, revise it considerably – keeping in mind the concerns expressed.

## Alarming rise of dengue needs urgent action

Heed experts' advice to prevent another deadly outbreak

The dengue situation in the country is getting worse with each passing day. According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), in May this year, the number of dengue patients was 1,036, which is five times higher than the same month in 2019, when the country saw over 1,00,000 dengue cases – the highest in our history. Meanwhile, last year, when the highest number of people died from the dengue outbreak, there were 163 cases in May. The high number of cases this May points to a possibly deadly situation looming on the horizon.

While previously dengue was considered a seasonal disease, with most cases being recorded during the monsoon, now cases are being reported throughout the year. Last year, a majority of the dengue infections were reported in the second half of the year, with over 50 percent of total cases reported in October. This means that if we cannot contain the spread of the virus right now, we may experience another deadly outbreak in the later part of the year. And with the number of cases being recorded already, the situation seems quite dire. The presence of four distinct serotypes of the virus – DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3 and DENV-4 – in the country may also increase the severity of the infections. Therefore, we have no time to waste and must take urgent action to control dengue.

The authorities, however, do not seem like they have taken any preparations in this regard. So far, no notable action was taken by the two city corporations of the capital, although the LGRD minister had said that he had instructed them to take all the measures – such as preventing waterlogging, making people aware – in advance to prevent dengue outbreak. Our experts' call to all relevant organisations, including city corporations, municipalities, and union parishads, to play a strong role in controlling the disease also seems to have fallen on deaf ears. Such systematic failure is unacceptable.

The authorities should immediately identify the dengue hotspots across the country, start conducting regular anti-mosquito drives, prevent waterlogging, destroy all possible dengue breeding grounds and conduct regular awareness campaigns. Engaging the communities with their work is crucial here. They must also build a robust dengue surveillance system so that the actual number of dengue cases in the country can be recorded, without which making proper interventions is not possible.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### More entertainment options needed

Dhaka barely has any open space or recreational facilities. The only type of entertainment options available for teenagers, young people and even the elderly is to go out and eat at restaurants. But how often can one eat at restaurants? With prices of everything rising, eating out has also become very expensive. It is beyond the reach of many now. What are people supposed to do? We need more entertainment options badly.

**Sanjana Chowdhury, Dhaka**

## NATIONAL BUDGET 2023-24

# Education lags again in funding and action



**Dr Manzoor Ahmed**  
is professor emeritus at Brac University, chair of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), and vice-chair of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE). The views expressed are his own.

MANZOOR AHMED

The official rhetoric of priority for education and human development has once again failed to be reflected in the national budget proposed for fiscal year 2023-24. The record-high national budget of Tk 761,785 crore has in it the record-low allocation of Tk 88,000 crore for education – which amounts to 11.57 percent of the total budget and 1.76 percent of GDP. Though marginally higher in nominal amounts than the current year's allocations, these numbers mark a historic low proportionately. So much for the government's vaunted priority for education!

Civil society members and even politicians have, in pre-budget discussions, routinely called for larger government budgets for education. They have tried to make the case that the national goal of scaling the heights of an upper-middle-income country and eventually reaching the rank of a developed nation requires this investment. They cite the very low public education budgets compared to those of neighbouring and other developing nations. They mention the recommended international standard of six percent of GDP and a commensurate 20 percent or so of national budget for the education sector.

In his budget statement, titled "Towards Smart Bangladesh Sustaining the Development Achievements in a Decade and a Half", Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said, "Enhancing the quality of education at all levels is our special commitment." He confidently asserted that, "We are reaping the benefits of the government's policies as well as targeted spending in education and skill development over the past 14 years."

Observers of the education scene and concerned citizens will commend the expression of commitment to quality, but most will dispute the assertion that we are reaping the benefits of policies and targeted spending.

In the budget details of the activities to be supported, it can be seen that it is a continuation of what is being done within the existing pattern and structure. As much is admitted when it is said, "In the primary education sector, we will continue our regular activities, especially infrastructure development; expansion, repair and renovation; stipend; distribution of textbooks and other education materials; recruitment and training of teachers; digitisation,



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

school feeding etc." A similar emphasis on infrastructure, supplies, and expansion is seen at other levels of education.

Not that infrastructure and expansion are not needed. Educators, however, argue that the inputs do not guarantee outcomes in students' learning and competencies unless the inputs are put to good use through necessary measures. These include good pedagogy, enough qualified teachers, devoted work by skilled teachers, supervision and accountability in each school, a facilitative learning environment in schools, and fair assessment of what students have and have not learned.

Access to education at all levels has certainly expanded, especially so at the primary stage. Besides the expansion, available evidence on a student's learning outcome and reducing inequity and exclusion in the system does not offer much reason for comfort.

The disruptive impact of the pandemic – especially the lengthy school closure – and putting students back on track, have been a worldwide concern. Education Watch and other studies have warned about the immediate and likely long-term harm caused by the pandemic to learners and the education system in Bangladesh. They have pleaded for urgent remedial measures with resource support and funding for schools and teachers.

The new budget has not displayed cognisance of the need for post-pandemic recovery and remedial actions. We have seen the same denial of pandemic effects and the need for recovery support for education in previous years' budgets (between FY 2020-21 to 2022-23) during the peak of the pandemic and its immediate aftermath.

political decision-makers towards civil society education advocates' pleas for re-imagining 21st century education.

The education re-imagination agenda includes moving towards greater and more genuine decentralisation of education governance, attracting talented people towards the teaching profession and keeping them there, a major initiative to widely and effectively

When the national budget fails to give due recognition to the needs and priorities of a vital sector such as education, is it the failure of the minister of finance, who presents the budget on behalf of the government? The budget planners at the Ministry of Finance are not expected to be knowledgeable about the intricacies of the right strategies and programmes regarding education or what should be given priority among competing demands. The education authorities – in Bangladesh, the two Ministries of Education – have to make a case and be persuasive about it.

Education activists who have argued for bold new initiatives in education enhancing skills and capabilities for the next generation have found it difficult to engage with the education authorities in a serious dialogue. Having two ministries of education with divided turf even for managing school education has not helped the shaping of a holistic vision for change. The senior functionaries of the two ministries who seem to be calling the shots are happy with the status quo, not inclined to rock the boat.

We do not know what the two ministries asked for in terms of raising allocations for the sector and whether any innovative thinking found a place in their budget submission. There has not been great receptivity in the two ministries of education and from the

apply the blended approach (merging tech-based and teacher-supported learning), building partnerships between government and non-state actors, and establishing a permanent education commission to guide and monitor education system changes. These could be the components of an education sector plan and a 10-year megaproject for education.

At the political level, as in the senior education bureaucracy, there appears to be little appetite for thinking about and acting on transformative changes in education that goes beyond mere lip service.

A case in point is a Tk 100 crore special allocation in the budget proposal for the skills development of the youth. It is expected that "research and innovation centres of various local universities will train 80,000 youth in advanced technology and entrepreneurship development." The intention is laudable. It is, however, not likely that a standalone project of this kind can succeed when most "local universities" cannot meet minimum standards of academic environment and performance.

The bottom line is that Bangladesh's education system needs much larger public investment, but the desired results can be achieved only when the priorities, programmes and strategies for effective action are in place and backed up by high level political decisions.

# There is no consistency or logic in the targets set



**Dr Selim Raihan**  
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SELIM RAIHAN

Given the unprecedented crisis Bangladesh's economy is facing – high inflationary pressures and macroeconomic instability – my expectation from the proposed budget of FY 2023-24 was that it would ease pressures and bring about much-needed stability to the economy. Instead, what the budget has done is ambitious – and in my opinion, it has posed unrealistic targets. For instance, the GDP growth target has been set at 7.5 percent, and it is being claimed that a major driver of such growth will be much accelerated private sector investment. Surprisingly, it is being said that private sector investment will increase by around six percentage points with respect to the GDP in the upcoming fiscal year. The total GDP-to-investment ratio will be 33 percent, while GDP to private sector investment will be 27.5 percent, which was 21.8 percent this fiscal year. Such a dramatic improvement in private sector investment in such a short period of time has not happened in Bangladesh, and is not feasible – it is completely

unrealistic.

Let me talk about another anomaly. It is being said that there will be a dramatic improvement in private sector investment. But the question is, where will the investment for private sector financing come from?

Traditionally, our banking sector has been a big source of financing for the private sector via credit. Yet, when you look at the government's budget deficit financing this time – about 5.5 percent of GDP – more than Tk 1 lakh crore will be taken as loans from the banking sector. If the government takes up so much of the loans, what will be left for the private sector?

And if the government does not borrow so much from the banking sector, who will the government turn to for such financing? If it goes to the central bank, it will provide the financing by printing new money, which will increase the inflationary pressure within the economy.

Another completely unrealistic target is that of inflation, which the

budget states will come down to six percent in the upcoming fiscal year. For more than a year, inflation could not be tamed because the government's policies and steps were inadequate. Meanwhile, there were a lot of anomalies in domestic market management, and on the fiscal side, too, import tariffs and duties could not be streamlined. Even now, we are citing the Russia-Ukraine war and the increase in prices in the international market as the causes behind our inflation, even though prices of many products, including oil, have actually decreased in the global market. If we look at our neighbouring countries – and we should not be citing the examples of Pakistan or Sri Lanka, whose economies are collapsing – such as India or the Southeast Asian countries, they were able to successfully use their fiscal and monetary policies to rein in inflation.

What should the focus of budget 2023-24 have been instead?

We should have focused on addressing the macro-fundamentals, which would create a launching pad for the coming year's economic prosperity.

The main focus should have been on addressing inflationary pressures and providing a much-needed break to lower income groups. Addressing inflation is the most pro-people move the government could have made.

The IMF has already set some conditions – an important one is to

improve the revenue side. To that end, some new taxes have been introduced – such as green tax on extra cars and additional tax on flat registration. Meanwhile, Tk 2,000 has been imposed as mandatory income tax annually for those who want to avail 44 government services, including acquiring a trade licence. While it is a good thing that the government has increased the income tax ceiling from Tk 3 lakh to Tk 3.5 lakh, if someone from a low-income household wants to get a trade licence, they will have to pay Tk 2,000.

So, are we assuming that when many low-income people go to avail a service such as getting a trade licence, they have concealed information regarding their wealth?

But what about those who are actually concealing information about their wealth? Or those who are loan and tax defaulters. Or those involved in money laundering? What services are we withholding from them? Is there any bar on foreign travels for them? Or are they VIPs wherever they go?

The whole tax structure is still very regressive, and the proposals in the new budget will make it even more regressive.

I believe we should look into these fundamental aspects. My expectation was that the main priorities would have been highlighted and would receive more focus. Instead, we have been set on the same old path.



# More roads are not the answer to Bangladesh’s traffic problem



Abida Rahman Chowdhury is a journalist at The Daily Star with interests in wildlife and biodiversity conservation.

ABIDA RAHMAN CHOWDHURY

That evening, it rained and it rained, and then it rained a little bit more. A group of friends were returning from the beach town of Cox’s Bazar on a microbus. As rain dribbled down on the window panes, everyone settled into their seats for the journey ahead. One-third of the way out, the group got stuck on a flyover in the port city, for seven whole hours. Why? The downpour had inundated the city below, and bumper-to-bumper traffic lay ahead. There was no choice but to ride out the rain on the flyover – incidentally one that had been constructed to tackle traffic jams. The wait was so long that one of the passengers had to fashion a holder out of a bottle to relieve their bladder. The bottle was left on the curbside; slowly filling to the brim with urine. I have been told that the group watched – in horror and some amusement – as it filled up with water, mixing with human excreta, to eventually spill onto the road.

An excruciating 19 hours on the road to complete a 251 km journey, then three more hours to get to Dhanmondi from Uttara, or the regular peak-hour traffic that sucks out our will to live, are commonplace in a Dhaka resident’s life.

The city with a population of nearly 4.5 crore people has one of the highest population densities in the world. To accommodate its exponentially growing population, the capital too has grown on all fronts. The pro-development ruling party has altered the cityscape during its lengthy tenure. The elevated expressway is starting to take shape, the roads around the airport have changed, many U-loops have been inaugurated, the Metro Rail is no longer a far-off dream, and all the flyovers around Pragati Sarani and the one in Kalshi (promising to take you to the airport from Mirpur in 15 minutes) were also constructed during this government’s tenure.

Many of these projects were undertaken as a means to cure Dhaka of its traffic problems. After all, for years everyone kept saying the big problem was that we did not have



The more roads you build, the more cars there will be to fill them up. I am no expert, but the numbers don’t lie.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

enough roads. Chattogram, too, has experienced a similar flurry of construction specifically focused on improving its road network. Despite these interventions, people still get stuck on flyovers for hours, couples still think one of them living in Uttara and another in Mohammadpur is akin to being in a long-distance relationship, and the country – deep in the throes of an economic crisis – continues to lose a few billion dollars in GDP each year to traffic. In fact, the economy lost Tk 56,000 crore in 2020 due to traffic, according to the Accident Research Institute (ARI) of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet). A previous

extra hours.

Our traffic problem has time and again been blamed on an insufficient number of roads, traffic mismanagement, lack of operational traffic signals, and the disorderly movement of pedestrians. A development-obsessed Bangladesh decided to first tackle the problem of insufficient roads. I have watched as Dhaka changed before my eyes – the widening of roads, expansion of footpaths, building of flyovers, overpasses, underpasses, expressways – all in a bid to solve the traffic problem.

So, clearly, trying to make up for insufficient roads with more roads is

not the answer to our traffic problem. This is true for other megacities as well. Why else is a 50-lane highway in China regularly plagued by gridlock?

Economists describe this phenomenon as induced demand. The more roads you build, the more cars there will be to fill them up. I am no expert, but the numbers

the total number of miles driven in those cities between 1980 and 2000. What they found was described as a one-to-one relationship. If a city increased its road capacity by 10 percent between 1980 and 1990, then the amount of driving in said city went up by 10 percent. According to their paper, “The Fundamental Law

not gotten worse – it has remained the same and has readjusted.

So, what exactly is the solution?

Dhaka’s traffic problem was not born out of just one issue, and there is no one answer, either. Experts have recommended discouraging the use of cars, increasing taxation on the ownership of multiple cars, mandating school buses – especially for English medium schools –, investing in public transit, introducing bicycle lanes, and lastly, not building more roads.

The existing roads should introduce more and more bicycle lanes, encouraging people to opt for other modes of transport while simultaneously discouraging car use. Adding to that, big cities such as Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, and Sylhet should think about introducing both parking and congestion pricing. It should be ensured that if someone is parking illegally during rush hours, they have to pay a hefty fine. As for congestion pricing, it is a tested tool to tackle traffic congestion that works by charging people during rush hour. One way to do this would be to introduce a kiosk or toll plaza at choking points to charge people using private cars during rush hours, unless they are in a medical emergency. Moreover, there should be dedicated lanes for ambulances and emergency vehicles so that they always have access to free roads.

In a city starved for public spaces, existing roads can serve the purpose of community spaces. This has been done in many neighbourhoods abroad, so why not for us? During weekends, the main thoroughfares can be used to host fairs or garage sales, hence encouraging more community participation.

Added to that, more and more investment in public transit – the Metro Rail and a fully functional bus service which is women-friendly – can change how we commute altogether. If people are aware that taking their cars out for a spin means more trouble, it is more likely they will try to avoid using their cars for everything. People need to know that there are other modes of reliable transport that are easily available. This in turn will reduce overall car use, hence bringing down both air and noise pollution. At the same time, the city needs to ensure that pedestrians can walk freely without their safety being compromised.

All in all, if we do not find a way to disincentivise the overuse of cars, we may never get out of this gridlock.

# The water tank with many holes



BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND

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

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

As I was about to check in for a domestic flight, a young man with excess baggage requested me to claim one of his bags as my own. It was right in front of the ground staff, who would not have allowed the switch. The transit passenger said he was coming from South Africa and had only Tk 700 on himself. The Biman staff was asking for Tk 2,100 to allow the extra weight.

So, I went to the counter and thought to help this fellow human being and do something good. I gave him a Tk 1,000 note and said to the staff, “Please don’t tell him. He can pay his Tk 700 and check in.” I didn’t want to hurt his pride and walked towards the security check. As I was sitting in the boarding area, the young man came to me and said that he had already asked his brother to bring the extra cash to Sylhet airport to pay me back. I told him that he was not even supposed to know that I had paid. It could have been me in another time and place. The grateful man disappeared for a while and came back with a bag of chocolate bars. He insisted I take them. He had likely brought them for his family members. Out of courtesy, I took a small wafer. But he pulled out the priciest bar of the lot and gave it to me. During the conversation, I also found out that the man had returned home for medical treatment, which he couldn’t afford in Freetown.

Now, what lessons can we learn

from this anecdote featuring an honest man who is willing to repay his loan? He is unlike those who create an aura of wealth by skimming the banks or the financial system. He is a wage-earner who brings foreign currencies home, without finding a “home” for our own currency abroad. The government earlier announced a seven percent penalty on those willing to bring back the money they had illegally laundered abroad. Nobody showed any interest in cleansing their tainted money through this amnesty.

The amount of money that we hear has been illegally sent abroad is staggering. My pay scale does not even allow me to envision the zeroes that are thrown about in newspapers. How do they make such obscene amounts of money? Bank fraud, share fraud, over-invoicing, bribing, thuggery – you name it.

Once again, hints of the dark world are available to us through some rare factual investigative reporting

or some fictional representation in ink or pixels. But here I was with a hardworking “remittance warrior” whose sweat does not lie. He and his kind are trying to refill the proverbial tank of many leaks with their one pipe of inflow. I used to find Jadav Chandra Chakravarti’s Arithmetic difficult as a child; now I find it even more difficult to conceptualise those arithmetical problems as a metaphor for our existence. How can we sustain ourselves as a nation when the number of persons who are keen on repaying debts is fast dwindling?

We see project after project in the name of development. For instance, iron grills surrounding parks are now being replaced with tempered glass. While they have become visually attractive, they are stopping the flow of wind, not to mention that they require heavy maintenance in terms of cleaning. The paved areas of the park are replacing greenery in the name of beautification. The city medians are undergoing serious cosmetic surgery. All these projects create opportunities for dirty money and their subsequent cleansing. How do I know? Oh, I have watched Ozark on Netflix. While I am getting ideas from the media, I am sure there are a million others who are getting the urge to apply them in real life.

A confession made by a freelancer from Chattogram, who was running a blackmailing racket based on an

adult app, proves my point. Last week, the actors behind the Telegram app-based group called Pompom were eventually nabbed by police. Abu Sayem, who used the alias of Mark Suckerberg, told the media how he saw the opportunity to make easy money by leaking intimate images of app users to the web to milk money.

Our greed is on the run. There are too many tutorials available online on how to make quick money. We want

chancellor of Pabna University of Science and Technology, going to Turkey sponsored by a construction firm to inspect the lifts that have been procured? And the university officials showed no remorse in claiming that the foreign trip was included in the project proposal. Then we heard of two vice-chancellors making a gentleman’s agreement in recruiting their offspring to respective universities through quid



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

**When corruption occurs at the top, what can we expect from the bottom? The former president in his outgoing speech lashed out against the corruption, nepotism, and incompetence corroding our education sector. But it was too little too late. The water tank is leaking.**

everyone to become entrepreneurs; make their own rules. We do so because we do not have the system to engage our workforce in the production schema. There was a time when being honest was considered a virtue. Now we live in a time when vice is advised at the topmost level.

Why else is a team of six university officials, including the pro-vice-

pro quo. When corruption occurs at the top, what can we expect from the bottom? The former president in his outgoing speech lashed out against the corruption, nepotism, and incompetence corroding our education sector. But it was too little too late. The water tank is leaking. How can the government plug these leaks and refill what’s been lost?

his debt is becoming a rarity. Yet, he represents the hardworking, honest Bangladesh that can bring real change to the system. Those who are at the helm need to protect and guide these individuals with the incentives they need to check in to the future with dignity and pride. That would be the smart thing to do for a Smart Bangladesh.



## Umps' urgency to expel racists wins over visitors

SPORTS REPORTER

There were high-fives and congratulations being passed on at the end of the day's play but rather than celebrating a win at the end of a match, it was the umpires who were at the receiving end of words of thankfulness.

Recently, racist chants against Real Madrid superstar Vinicius Jr. brought the problem of racism back into the limelight in the world of sport and in Sylhet, where only a few were present in the stands, racist remarks hurled at Windies A players on day two were a lot more pronounced due to the empty arena.

This time, unlike in the Vinicius incident, the umpires stepped in.

Visiting captain Joshua Da Silva inquired about the chants, not completely clear on what he was hearing, but on-field umpire Masudur Rahman's walkie-talkie was malfunctioning so he could not catch the attention of the groundstaff.

Soon, however, the umpire stepped in and brought it to the



third-umpire's attention quickly and the fans chanting racial slurs were evicted.

"There were some unfortunate chants coming from the stands on the second day and the Windies A skipper brought it to the umpires' attention. The situation was handled quickly. Since the matter falls under racism, we dealt with it according to ICC protocols. Thanks to the West Indies team, umpires as well as security officials," match referee Neeeyamur Rashid told The Daily Star.

"Their captain really appreciated how we dealt with the situation and the players personally came to shake my hand. After the day's play, their coach came and thanked me and the whole team of match officials. We were lucky that our people reacted quickly and handled the situation quickly," on-field umpire Masudur told The Daily Star.

Da Silva had commented at the end of the second day's play at Sylhet that he was a bit disappointed.

"It's always disappointing when those things [racist remarks] come about and I'm very happy it was dealt with in a very quick and speedy manner," Da Silva had told Cricfrenzy.

The camaraderie between the two sides was evident throughout the series and the umpires ensured that the game went on in the right spirit.

Since racist incidents are rare occurrences in the sports arena in the country, the umpires had a hard task on their hands, especially in terms of dealing with the matter strongly. As with occurrences of racism, often there is a tendency to sweep things under the rug. This time, things were done right. "They appreciated us and there were high-fives at the end of the day's play," Masudur added.



Premier League champions Manchester City will arrive at Wembley hoping to complete the second part of their incredible bid to a rare treble, with Manchester United, the only other English club to have ever achieved the feat, all set to wreck Pep Guardiola and his troops' dream in the FA Cup final on Saturday. Sir Alex Ferguson's United won the FA Cup, Champions League and the Premier League in 1999.

PHOTO: MANCHESTER CITY

# 'The boys saw how tough it can get at the next level'

SPORTS REPORTER

Although Mahmudul Hasan Joy's unbeaten hundred eventually rescued the third and final four-dayer for Bangladesh A and secured a draw, their visiting West Indies counterparts clinched the series 1-0 at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Joy's showed great patience during an unbeaten 114, which came off 268 balls and featured 14 fours. The right-handed opener batted for four sessions and was probably the only positive for the hosts in a series where their batters failed to make any sort of impression.

Bangladesh resumed the final day on 47 without loss with Joy at the crease on 28 with a mission to play out the day and save the game after the West Indies had posted a huge 461-run target.

Joy and Yasir Ali added 117 runs during a fourth-wicket stand before the latter was dismissed after scoring 67. But the



series for the hosts when it came to performances and displaying their longer-version mentality with both bat and ball as the visitors dominated the majority of the three games, winning the second four-dayer.

According to selector Habibul Bashar, it was a tough series where the visitors tested the hosts and posed a good challenge. "I think it was a good practice for the boys. The series showed the boys how tough things can get at the next level. I think the wicket was very good and the West Indies A team tested us and posed a good challenge," Bashar told The Daily Star

yesterday.

Interestingly, Joy's century in the third and final four-dayer was the only hundred scored by a Bangladesh A batter in the series although Shahadat Hossain Dipu also impressed with a few knocks.

Mominul Haque was included for the third and final game as part of preparations for the upcoming one-off Test against Afghanistan later this month but the left-hander was unable to make an impact. Although Bashar backed the proven campaigner, the former Bangladesh captain was disappointed by the performances of the top order in the series.

"It was a one-off game for Mominul and he missed out. It would have been good if he could have spent some time at the crease. But I am not worried about Mominul since he is a proven cricketer. But we did expect some better performances from the others. I am not happy with the batting, especially the top order, and I felt we could have done better. I think our bowlers could also have bowled better than they did," he said.

Despite the fact that Bangladesh lost the series, Bashar believed such tough outings against quality opponents helped selector gauge players better.

"As selectors, we follow a lot of things. Despite the fact that we count the performances in the domestic leagues, playing against an international opponent allows us to see whether they can replicate their performances in the domestic circuit onto the international stage. So from that aspect, such series give us ideas about who is prepared to play at the next level in future," Bashar added.

## Kings exact revenge on MSC

SPORTS REPORTER

Federation Cup winners Mohammedan fell to a 2-1 defeat against Bangladesh Premier League champions Bashundhara Kings in a league encounter under floodlights at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday.

With Kings having ensured their fourth consecutive league title in the previous round, Abahani yesterday confirmed the runners-up spot with two matches in hand after beating Sheikh Jamal DC 3-0. Abahani now have 37 points from 18 matches, 11 more than third-placed Bangladesh Police, who have three matches in hand.

Meanwhile, newcomers Azampur FC were relegated from the top-flight despite playing out a 1-1 draw against Sheikh Russel yesterday. They could secure only five points from 17 matches.

Mohammedan came at the Kings Arena having regained the Federation Cup title after 14 years with a tiebreaker win over Abahani in the final. The Black and Whites had gotten the better of Bashundhara Kings 2-1 in the semifinals.

The visitors, however, could not carry the



momentum as coach Alfaz Ahmed brought a good number of changes in the playing eleven. Fed Cup final's four-goal hero Souleymane Diabate was one of those rested against Kings, who too rested league's top-scorer Dorielton Gomes and Iranian defender Reza Khanzadeh. The hosts, however, did not face much challenge from Mohammedan despite conceding an early lead.

Miguel Ferreira cancelled out a second-minute strike from Emmanuel Sunday in the 10th minute before Rakib Hossain struck the winner five minutes from the break. Promising midfielder Sheikh Morsalin set up both goals for Kings. Mohammedan played with 10 men in the last 10 minutes.



World number two Aryna Sabalenka booked her place in the French Open last 16 for the first time with a straight-sets win over Russian Kamilla Rakhimova at Roland Garros on Friday. Sabalenka is yet to drop a set in the tournament after a comfortable 6-2, 6-2 win against the world number 82. Sabalenka will face either former US Open champion Sloane Stephens or Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva in the fourth round.

PHOTO: TWITTER



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ এর কার্যালয়

সড়ক বিভাগ, শরীয়তপুর।

☎ ০৬০১-৬১৪০৬/ই-মেইল

[eesar@rhd.gov.bd](mailto:eesar@rhd.gov.bd)



তারিখ:

স্মারক নং : ৩৫.০১.৮৬৬৯.৪৬৮.০৭.০০২.২২-

e-Tender is invited in the Nation al e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the below works.

Tender ID No	Package No.	Name of Work/Package Description	Last Selling date & time	Opening date & time	Remarks
840575	e-GP/20/ee/SRD/2022-2023.	Repairing, Painting & Others work at Divisional, Sub-Divisional Office Building at RHD Office Compound under Shariatpur Road Division, during the year-2022-2023.	14.06.2023 16:00 AM	15-06-2023 14:00 PM	Only online tender.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).



(Bhuiya Redwanur Rahman)  
ID No-602254  
Executive Engineer (c.c.), RHD  
Road Division, Shariatpur.

GD-976

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD  
Munshiganj Road Division  
Dashkani, Panchasar (Mukterpur), Munshiganj.  
Phone # 02-7611259  
E-mail: [eemunrhd@gmail.com](mailto:eemunrhd@gmail.com)

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender are invited in The National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by the Executive Engineer, RHD, Munshiganj Road Division, Munshiganj for the procurement of

SL No	Tender ID # & Package No	e-Tender Description	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
1	841624 71/e-GP/Mundiv/2022-2023 (Re-Tender)	Construction of One Side Cantilever Direction Signboard (Signboard on Both Side=2-8'x5') & Construction of 2 pole Overhead Direction Signboard (Span=9.50 M and Signboard on Both Side=2-10'x5') Different Road of Keraniganj Road Sub-Division Under Munshiganj Road Division, During the Year 2022-2023.	11/06/2023 16:59	12/06/2023 08:40	12/06/2023 08:40
2	841473 76/e-GP/Mundiv/2022-2023	Construction of Weigh-in-Motion (WIM) Lanes-Island Extension & Existing Island Casting work (Island Direction Mawa to Dhaka) at Dhaleshwari Toll Plaza at Ch. 11+800 km of "Jatir Pita Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Mohasarak" (N-8 Expressway) Road under Munshiganj Road Division during the year 2022-2023.	11/06/2023 16:59	12/06/2023 08:45	12/06/2023 08:45
3	841474 77/e-GP/Mundiv/2022-2023	Construction of Weigh-in-Motion (WIM) Lanes-Island Extension & Existing Island Casting work (Island Direction Dhaka to Mawa) at Dhaleshwari Toll Plaza at Ch. 11+800 km of "Jatir Pita Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Mohasarak" (N-8 Expressway) Road under Munshiganj Road Division during the year 2022-2023.	11/06/2023 16:59	12/06/2023 08:50	12/06/2023 08:50
4	841476 78/e-GP/Mundiv/2022-2023	Supplying Fitting & Fixing C.C Camera Monitoring system on Banga Toll Plaza & Sreenagar Road Sub-Division at Under Munshiganj Road division, During the Year 2022-2023.	11/06/2023 16:59	12/06/2023 08:55	12/06/2023 08:55

1. The above tenders are online Tenders. 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 (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

2. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National E-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branch.

3. Further information and guidelines are available in the National E-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

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GD-974





PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# Harsh realities of WOMEN’S CRICKET

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

The 2018 Asia Cup triumph was a watershed moment for women’s cricket. It turned heads, showed that women cricketers in the country can bring glory to the nation despite taking a backseat to the men’s game in terms of the magnitude of facilities, fan following, and so forth. Five years on, there is a certain stagnation with little progress.

Many promises were made but little has come to fruition. A part of ICC’s current revenue sharing model categorises the performance of women’s teams in ICC events as a metric alongside men’s game, but the Tigresses have not made much impact besides being mere participants.

Bangladesh’s performance in such ICC tournaments has fallen below the expectations set after breakout 2018. Despite the success that year, a proper setup is still unavailable to enable growth of the women’s game. By and large, there are little means of training facilities available across the country. Thus, talents do not come through, impeding the competitive grind of domestic tournaments.

The Women’s Dhaka Premier League

**Bangladesh are languishing at eighth in the ICC Women’s Championship Standings 2022-25 – used to determine qualification into the World Cup – and their only points so far have come from abandoned matches. Winning qualifying tournaments to get to ICC events have come easily for the Tigresses but continuously failing to get past the group phase in main events reflects shortcomings in terms of results.**

(WDPL) is ongoing at the moment but how competitive is it when there is an inherent lack of quality players? Two teams dropped out of the tournament before the start of this season, citing they did not have enough time to build squads. Was it a lack of interest? It is the lack of long-term planning around the women’s game showcased once more. With WDPL being the torch-bearer for developing the domestic circuit, two teams dropping off at the eleventh hour shows the prevalent culture of decision-making without forethought.

If this is prevalent in domestic cricket, it is indeed more serious at

international level since without proper long-term planning and its execution, propensity for success diminishes. In the last T20 World Cup in 2023 in Australia, the Tigresses returned home without a win in the group phase – as they did in three preceding editions of the showpiece event.

Bangladesh are languishing at eighth in the ICC Women’s Championship Standings 2022-25 – used to determine qualification into the World Cup – and their only points so far have come from abandoned matches. Winning qualifying tournaments to get to ICC events have come easily for the Tigresses but continuously failing to get past the

group phase in main events reflects shortcomings in terms of results.

A look at the current status of the women’s game around the world gives an idea of how far off Bangladesh still are but the bigger headache should be about coming out of the stagnation at present. One or two wins will certainly have merits but will not satisfy the need for long-term plans required for growth.

In the 2020 T20 World Cup, the highest attendance for a women’s game was attained in Australia. While ICC continues to boast about the growth in women’s cricket’s audience, the game here is yet to pull in crowds. As a result, it is harder to attract sponsors as the women’s game is still a supplementary commodity alongside the men’s game in Bangladesh. Meanwhile, India have inaugurated their own franchise tournament, WPL, which has been making waves.

While there are societal constraints to the women’s game here more pronounced than in most countries which impeded the growth of women’s cricket here, the lack of long-term planning, unfulfilled requirements of financial security and facilities have stagnated progress and hurt the Tigresses.

## ‘Parameters need broadening’

**Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, a revered figure in the sporting fraternity and a mentor of many cricketers here, once closely monitored women’s cricket as its wing development manager. The veteran coach identified some vital issues that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) should give highest priority in order to ensure proper growth of women’s cricket in the country. The excerpts of his observations are as follows:**



● We don’t play enough domestic tournaments, which consequently keep the girls in the field for barely six-seven weeks out of a whole season. So, they need to be in a competitive environment for a longer period of time. Girls still have to wait for men’s schedules before their games can take place. The matches are loosely arranged as well, unlike the case in most countries where women’s cricket is thriving.

● The women have no separate training facilities. We have around 20 players under contract who get salaries but excluding them, the promising ones have no one to look after them. They should be brought under some sort of rookie contract or scholarship, so they don’t feel insecure financially or consider leaving the sport. I think we should go beyond what other countries are offering such players [outside the national pool].

● Barring the national team players, the rest don’t have much access to training facilities. The boys have U-19, U-17, U-15, HP, A team and Bangla Tigers camp, where more than 100 players are involved, but until now the girls only had a national pool of players, and that’s all. The parameters need to be broadened.

● We need to increase the number of players, which can be done by bringing promising players from various domestic competitions and giving them access to training facilities. This will increase the competitiveness of domestic competitions and, in turn, help produce quality cricketers.

● Most of the players I saw playing in 2017 are still playing now. My expectations were to see a good number of new players get into the national team but I haven’t really seen that. I haven’t seen much change. The ones who did come through, in most cases didn’t graduate with outstanding pedigree.

● Board is taking initiative by bringing in foreign coaching staff into the system but it’s important to look at domestic structure if we want to do well in international cricket. The height reached in 2018 was a big opportunity for us to take women’s cricket to a different level but we didn’t really capitalise on that.

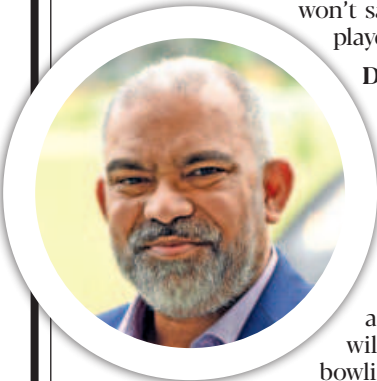


## ‘We do not give women’s cricket the attention it deserves’

Despite showing huge potential after winning the Women’s Asia Cup in 2018, the Bangladesh national cricket team were unable to capitalise on the triumph to take things to the next level. The **Daily Star’s Ekush Tapader** spoke to the chairman of the Bangladesh Cricket Board’s women’s wing, Shafiul Alam Chowdhury Nadel, to get an overview of the women cricketers, their current state and the future plan regarding them during an exclusive interview. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS):** What are the areas you feel the Bangladesh women’s cricket team needs to work on?

**Shafiul Alam Chowdhury Nadel (SACN):** We will not claim to be satisfied with where we are now. Questions like whether women’s cricket is in very good shape, in a satisfactory state, or just in a good state were raised. So, in that context, we can say the condition of our women’s cricket is going well but it is not at a satisfactory level. We have already started the longer version cricket, age-level tournaments, and we are going to start the school cricket tournament form this year. We also have two age-level national teams and we have an A team and there is the national team as well, which will enrich the pipeline. However, we won’t say that we have enough players in the pipeline.



**DS:** Are there any plans to reform the selection committee and the coaching panel of the national team?

**SACN:** We have already appointed former Sri Lankan cricketer Hashan Tillakaratne as the head coach. We will also have a foreign bowling coach by the next two weeks and we are also in the process of roping in a foreign physio and a trainer for the national team. We have been understaffed but our board president [Nazmul Hassan Papon] has always supported us and now we are going to have a complete committee. Much like school cricket, we are planning to have tournaments at the district level.

**DS:** Since the Bangladesh women’s team got the Test status, did the board set any plans for Test cricket?

**SACN:** We have already started the two-day longer version tournament and we may transform it into the three-day format in the coming days so that our players are able to adapt and adjust to the longer version. After that, we will plan to play Test matches.

**DS:** Do you think there are limitations in terms of infrastructure and facilities in women’s cricket?

**SACN:** There are socio-economic influences in all aspects of life and since we live in a male dominated society, at times, we don’t give as much importance to the women’s national team as we give to the boys under-15 team. I am not blaming anyone individually. If we talk about sponsors and media coverage...we do not give the attention to the women’s cricket it deserves. I think rather than raising questions, we can take a step forward from all parts of the society and then women’s cricket in Bangladesh will go a long way.

STATS AND HIGHLIGHTS
Total number of players in central contract: 24
Grade A – Tk 60000
Grade B – Tk 48000
Grade C – Tk 36000
Grade D – Tk 25000
Total number of active women’s cricketers in Bangladesh
Around 400 cricketers in junior level
Around 500 cricketers in senior level
Tournaments and programmes
Dhaka Premier League
First division league
First division qualifier
National Cricket League consists of eight teams
Bangladesh Cricket League (two-day longer version) consists of three teams
Under-17 yearly player hunting programme
Under-18 National Cricket League consists of eight teams
The BCB Women’s wing is planning to organise Women’s school cricket this year.
Around twelve cricketers completed Level 1 coaching course.
Around seven to eight coaches currently involved in coaching with clubs and divisional teams.





# At least 50 killed as trains collide in India

## More than 350 hospitalised

REUTERS, Bhubaneswar/Kolkata

At least 50 people were killed and 350 injured when two passenger trains collided in the eastern Indian state of Odisha yesterday, Indian media reported.

The Coromandel Express, which runs from Kolkata to Chennai, collided with another passenger train, the Howrah Superfast Express, railway officials said.

The Howrah Superfast Express derailed and became entangled with the Coromandel Express, South Eastern Railway authorities said in a statement. Media reports had earlier said that the crash was between the Coromandel Express and a goods train.

There was no official confirmation yet on the number of dead in the disaster, which took place in Balasore district. Media reports said at least 50 people had died.

So far more than 350 injured passengers had been admitted to various hospitals, Odisha's Chief Secretary Pradeep Jena told reporters.

Images from the scene showed rescuers climbing up the mangled wreck of one of the trains to find survivors.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said authorities' priority was "removing the living to the hospitals, that's our first concern, to look after the living".

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



The Jamuna has devoured houses, roads and farmland at Brahmangram village in Sirajganj's Shahjadpur upazila. Many villagers have become destitute due to erosion of the river bank over the last few years. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

# Country logs first Covid deaths in 2 months

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh reported two more Covid-19 deaths in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, read a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The last death from Covid-19 was reported on March 28.

Of the dead, one was male and another female. They were aged between 61 and 70 and from Dhaka, according to the press release.

With the latest count, the total number of casualties in the country due to Covid-19 increased to 29,448.

Meanwhile, the DGHS also reported 89 Covid-19 cases after testing 1,509 samples in the same 24 hours.

The positivity rate was 5.87 percent.

In the past few days, case positivity rate started rising and hovered around 6 percent.

# No measures to drive up remittance

## Budget offers remitters no new incentive

JAMIL MAHMUD

The government has not come up with any new measure in the proposed national budget to encourage remitters despite a sluggish growth in remittance inflow in the outgoing fiscal year.

Instead, the government has kept unchanged the 2.5 percent cash incentive for remittance.

In his budget speech, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal on Thursday said the cash incentive would encourage expatriates to remit their earnings through formal channels.

He said remitter-friendly processes are being promoted. "Thanks to these initiatives, our remittance is increasing."

The country received \$19.41 billion in remittance during July-May of outgoing fiscal year, a 1.13 percent rise from the amount remitted at the same period in the previous fiscal, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

After the introduction of two percent cash incentive in July 2019, the country saw a 10.87 percent growth in remittance.

In 2020-2021, the country saw a staggering 36.10

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

# Prospects for job creation gloomy

Govt initiatives may falter for falling foreign direct investment, higher bank borrowing

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The government's promise to create jobs for a massive number of people in the current fiscal year has not translated into reality as most of the initiatives aimed at generating employment have not been implemented.

This is not good news for an economy where at least 22 lakh people enter the job market every year.

The alarm bell will sound even louder at a time when many people reportedly lost jobs in the last couple of years because of large-scale disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

The lingering energy and power shortage, the sharp drop in foreign currency reserve and the difficulty in

opening letters of credit for imports have already made it difficult for existing entrepreneurs to keep their industrial units operational and retain workforce. So, expanding the existing capacity and setting up new factories are out of question for many.

Under such circumstances, some of the initiatives taken by the government for the creation of new jobs would have given some relief to the economy. But the schemes have not moved at an expected pace.

For instance, the government has got down to establishing 100 economic zones where one crore people are expected to be employed as part of efforts to ensure a balanced distribution of employment

**The alarm bell will sound even louder at a time when many people reportedly lost jobs.**

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

# Heatwave sweeping 3 districts

UNB, Dhaka

A severe heatwave is sweeping over Rangpur, Dinajpur, and Rajshahi and it is likely to continue.

Meanwhile, a mild to moderate heatwave is sweeping over Sylhet, Patuakhali, Bhola, Barishal, Chandpur, Noakhali and Feni districts.

Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, and some parts of Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions were also hit by the mild to moderate heatwave.

Rain or thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Chattogram and Sylhet divisions. The weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy skies elsewhere in the country, according to Bangladesh Meteorological Department's morning bulletin.

# European Space Agency hosts first Mars live stream

CNN ONLINE



Here is Mars in real time. The European Space Agency (ESA) is streaming on YouTube the first live images directly from Mars.

Over the course of an hour, new images of Mars are expected about every 50 seconds, according to statement from the agency. Updates will also be available at ESA's Twitter account and the hashtag #MarsLIVE, the agency said.

The images, shared on YouTube, ESA's Twitter account and with #MarsLIVE, will show the planet as it has never been seen before, ESA said.

The event is celebrating the 20th anniversary of the launch of the agency's Mars Express orbiter — a mission to take three-dimensional images of the planet's surface to see it in more complete detail.

"Normally, we see images from Mars and know that they were taken days before," said James Godfrey, spacecraft operations manager at ESA's mission control center in Darmstadt, Germany, in a statement. "I'm excited to see Mars as it is now — as close to a martian 'now' as we can possibly get!"



This rickety building of Golachipa Upazila Health Complex in Patuakhali is a risk to healthcare workers and patients. Inaugurated on July 1, 1992, the two-storey building has not been renovated in years. On average, 90 patients remain admitted to the health complex. The Patuakhali civil surgeon has written to the higher authorities for funds to renovate the building. The photo was taken on Tuesday. PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

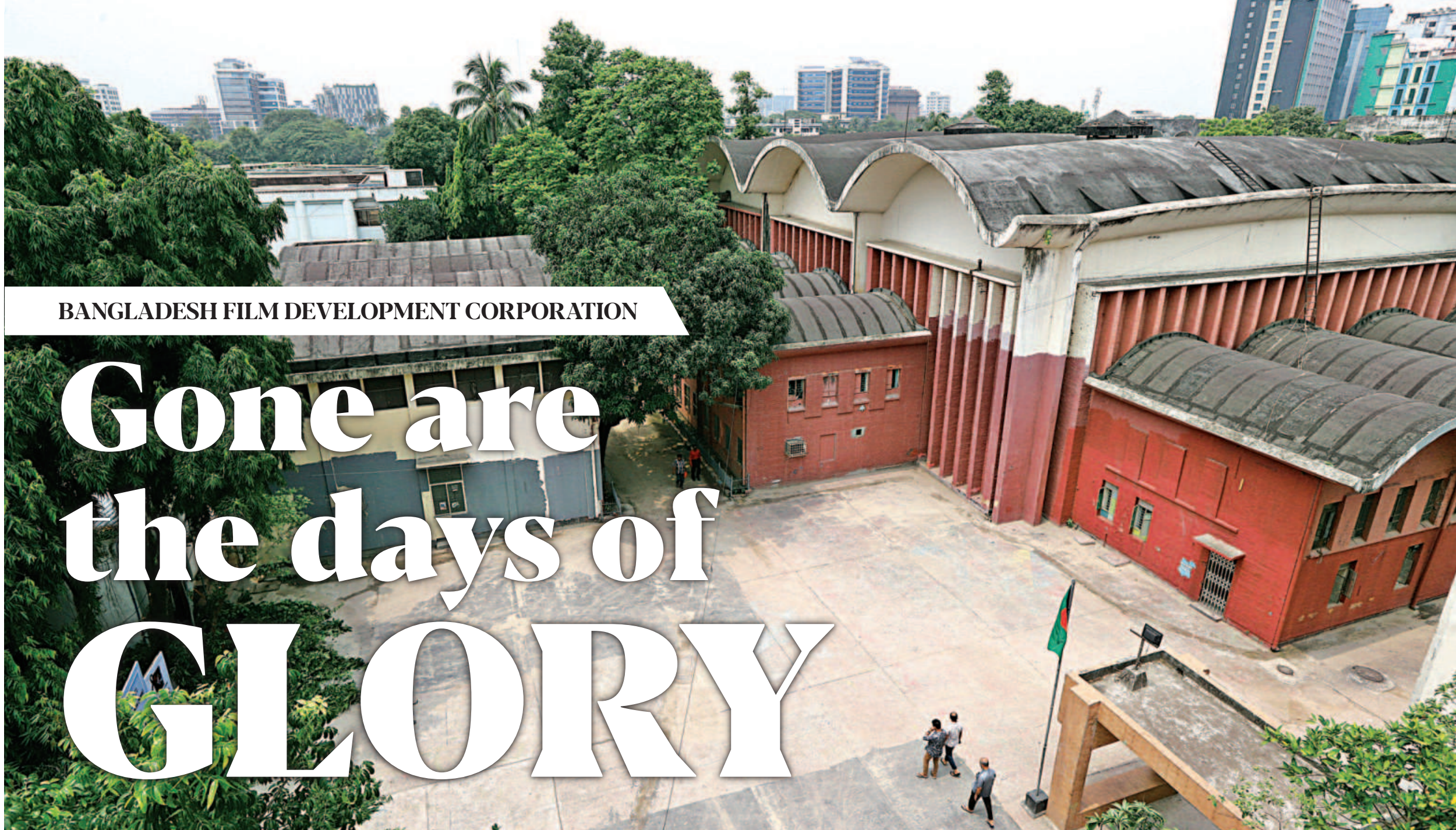
## অটুটি থাকুক সকল বন্ধন যত্নে থাকুক সকল সঞ্চয়

আমাদের এই সুদীর্ঘ পথ চলায় গ্রাহক, শুভানুধ্যায়ী ও ঠেকহোতারদের নিয়ে আজ আমরা একটি সুবিশাল পরিবার। আপনাদের আস্থা, বিশ্বাস এবং বন্ধনই আমাদের প্রেরণা যোগায় সাফল্যের সাথে সামনে এগিয়ে চলার। সাফল্যের এই পথ চলায় আমাদের সাথে থাকার জন্য সবাইকে জানাই আন্তরিক শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন।

আমরা গর্বিত, আমরা যমুনা ব্যাংক পরিবার।

# JAMUNA BANK





BANGLADESH FILM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

# Gone are the days of GLORY

The once vibrant Bangladesh Film Development Corporation now wears a deserted look due to lack of activities.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



**The entire process of purchasing equipment was time-consuming. By the time FDC completed the process, more updated pieces of equipment hit the market. Naturally, filmmakers prefer the updated technology.**

KAZI HAYAT  
President of Bangladesh Film Directors Association.

**When the film industry shifted from analogue to digital after 2011, FDC took a long time to decide its course of action. The delay eventually knocked them out of the competition.**

GIAS UDDIN SELIM  
Noted Filmmaker

SUKANTA HALDER AND  
ASIFUR RAHMAN

There was a time not so long ago when Bangladesh Film Development Corporation was abuzz with various activities -- from shooting films to dubbing and editing.

Starting from early in the morning, its premises, widely known as FDC, used to be packed with superstars, supporting staff and technicians working till midnight in a lively environment.

The traditional cue -- "light, camera, action" -- used to reverberate from different floors of FDC. It was making profits for quite some time after paying regular salaries and allowances to the officials and staff.

Those days, however, are gone. Established in 1957, the state-run corporation started losing its charm during the 2000s with fewer movies being produced every passing year. It started incurring heavy losses, particularly in 2007 and had to depend on government assistance to pay its staff.

In the last 16 years, FDC had a total loss of Tk 150.88 crore, according to its documents.

The situation only got worse. FDC had to borrow from the government to pay monthly salaries and bonuses to its 224 employees before Eid-ul-Fitr this year.

The reasons behind FDC's current state include a lack of readiness in adopting state-of-the-art technology, producing low-quality films, higher charge of its spaces than private-



Staffers are often seen passing idle time amid lack of work.



These structures still stand as a reminder of FDC's lost glory.

modern equipment. But now, it has lost its relevance.

"Back in 2011-2012, the filmmaking process went through a digital transformation. At that time, private companies began making films in digital format and shooting them with digital cameras," said an FDC official.

"However, FDC was not prepared for this transformation. This resulted in us losing our audience and consequently, revenues. We brought in digital instruments in 2014. It was too late by then. The private companies captured almost all the business," added the official, requesting anonymity.

Echoing a similar view, noted filmmaker Gias Uddin Selim said when the film industry shifted from analogue to digital after 2011, FDC took a long time to decide its course of action.

"The delay eventually knocked them out of the competition," he said. Although FDC bought modern equipment, there is a shortage of skilled human resources in technical sections like editing and dubbing, he added.

Renowned film director Kazi Hayat said, "I don't know if anyone is thinking about increasing the income

from the existing resources of FDC. I don't see anyone is concerned about it either."

He said he made several requests to the FDC authorities to take measures to reduce the time in purchasing equipment and complete the process quickly, but to no avail.

"The entire process of purchasing equipment was time-consuming. By the time FDC completed the process, more updated pieces of equipment hit the market. Naturally, filmmakers prefer the updated technology," said Hayat, also president of Bangladesh Film Directors Association.

Moreover, FDC charges a high amount for renting out the equipment which discourages the filmmakers, he said.

Morshedul Islam, another popular filmmaker, said what FDC lacks is planning. "They buy expensive cameras and unnecessary equipment for their interest."

Regarding FDC's shift system, he said, "Filmmaking is not possible in a fixed timetable like a government office schedule of 9:00am to 5:00pm. When we needed extra hours to complete shooting, we had to pay extra, increasing the production costs."

"There was a time when filmmakers had no choice but to go to FDC for shooting as it was done on celluloid film (typically the 35mm stock). But after the transformation into the digital format, many private firms started renting the equipment at cheaper rates," added Morshedul.

BFDC Managing Director Nuzhat Yeasmin said raw films and laboratories accounted for 85 percent of FDC's revenue in 2003, 2004 and 2005. However, due to the transformation from analogue to digital, FDC's income decreased significantly.

"FDC needs to pay around Tk 1 crore per month as salaries, allowances and other expenses to its officials and employees. On the contrary, the income of this corporation is around Tk 50 lakh only," she claimed.

## TK 20.79CR OVERDUE FROM PRODUCERS

The total amount that 398 film producers, from 1980 to date, owe for technical support, floor rent and positive-negative purchase stands at Tk 20.79 crore.

Many film producers who took FDC's equipment on rent and used its other facilities did not pay them back.

FDC officials sent letters several times to these producers to retrieve the owed money but to no avail.

"Some letters came back to us as the producers gave us the wrong addresses. There is no other way for us to find them," said Hemayet Hossain, FDC's accounts officer.

"After failing to get the dues, we sued some of the producers," he added.

## REVIVAL BID IN LIMBO

To bring back the past glory and make the institution profitable, FDC initiated two projects. However, one of them got delayed for three years.

In 2018, the government took up a Tk 322.77 crore project to build a 15-storeyed FDC complex for the corporation to become "self-dependent".

According to the project documents, the complex will have FDC's head office, a film archive and museum, shooting floors, rehearsal rooms, residential hotels, shopping malls, a swimming pool, a gymnasium and a multiplex.

The project was supposed to be completed by December 2021. However, as of now, only the basement of the complex has been completed.

In last 16 years, FDC had a total loss of Tk 150.88 crore

FDC had to borrow from govt to pay monthly salaries, bonuses to its 224 employees before Eid-ul-Fitr this year



Lack of maintenance has left this shooting spot in a sorry state.

BFDC MD Nuzhat said the complex is expected to be completed by 2024.

In 2015, the government took up a Tk 18.21 crore project to establish a film city named "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Film City (Phase-I)" in Gazipur's Kaliakair. It was built on a portion of 105 acres of land donated by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after the country's independence.

FDC was the implementing agency of the project and completed in June 2018, said an FDC official, requesting anonymity.

Filmmaker Kazi Hayat, however, said, "Some private shooting spots near the film city have become popular. The film city failed in that regard as it was developed without proper planning."

The second phase of the same project is now awaiting approval from the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnc) meeting. Under the project, shooting spots and floors, and a post-production studio will also be built at the film city.

Nuzhat claimed that the film city would gain a vibrant environment after the completion of the project's second phase.

## AT A GLANCE

Established in 1957

It's a state-run corporation

Started losing its charm during the 2000s

Started incurring losses

Had to depend on government assistance to pay staff

## REASONS BEHIND CURRENT STATE

Lack of proper policy support

Unwilling to adopt state-of-the-art technology

Producing low-quality films

Higher charge of its spaces than private-owned studios

Rise of digital content

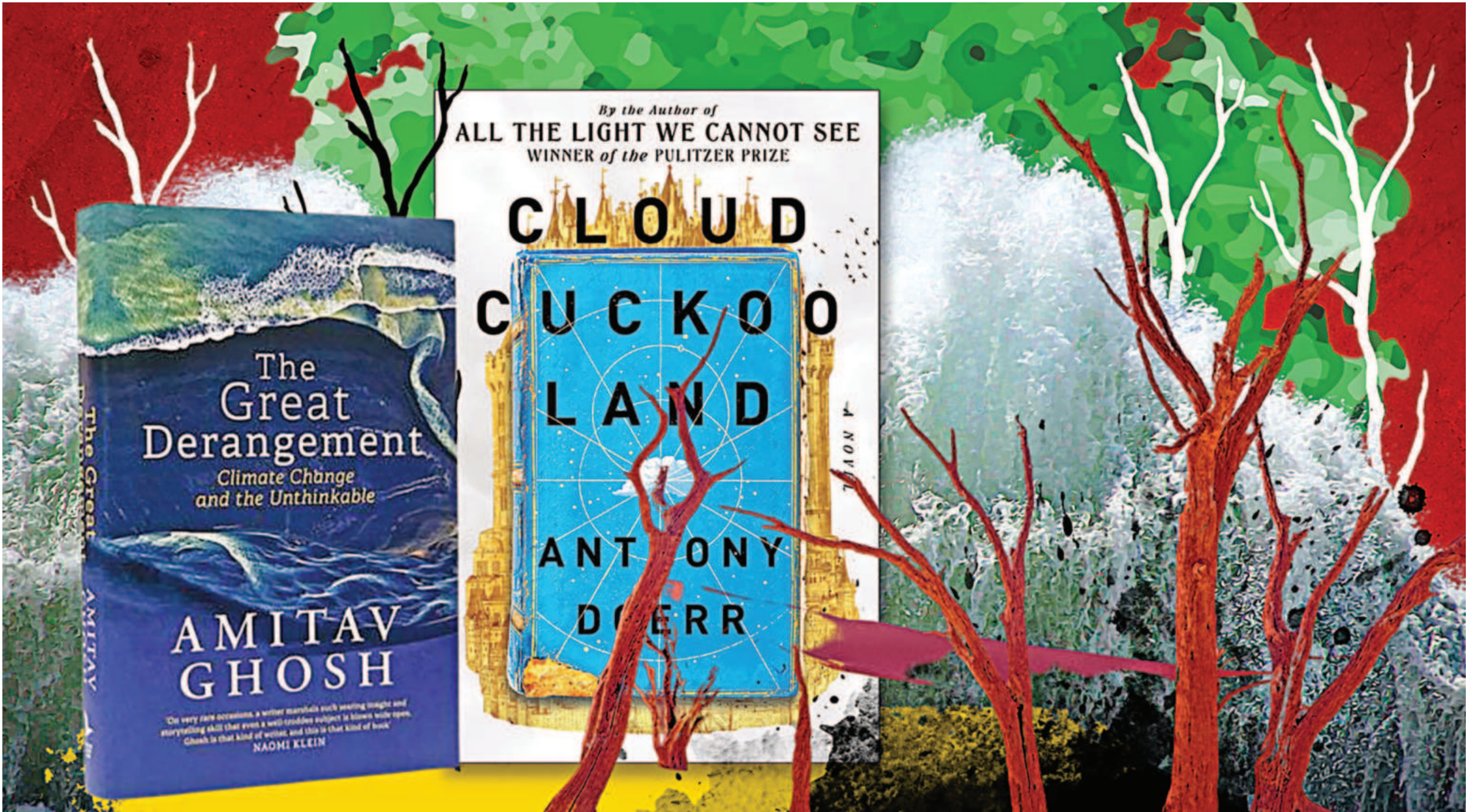


These days, people hardly visit the once-coveted destination.

owned studios, and the rise of the digital content, according to the FDC officials, staff, film directors and producers.

FDC started with a mission to support world-class movies through policy support, enhancing technical capacity, human resource development, and procurement of





DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI

ESSAY: WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2023

# Climate fiction and the fictions we tell ourselves

**What is the truth about our climate? Where does all the evidence point to? By and large, a critical consensus has been set: a crisis is imminent, and we are woefully underprepared for it. What then, are the consequences of a truth we are unwilling to accept?**

NAZIA MANZOOR

There is an element of the unexpected in the twinning of fiction and ecology. A sense of unease of sorts exists in the pairing together of fiction, a form of narrative that is untrue, with the imminent ecological disaster, an environmental inevitability that is true. That discomfort is also linked with the concept of truth itself. Because of the times we are in, because of the climate of our current politics, the concept of truth has a kind of fluidity to it; it has become a porous thing, a thing that can produce ugly effects.

What is the truth about our climate? Where does all the evidence point to? By and large, a critical consensus has been set: a crisis is imminent, and we are woefully underprepared for it. What then, are the consequences of a truth we are unwilling to accept? What are the ethical implications of a truth that disturbs, that troubles, that demands to be denied? One way to answer that question is to turn to fiction, a genre about the untrue to tell the most potent truths of our time.

In *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), Amitav Ghosh discusses how before the birth of the modern novel, the unlikely, the exceptional, and the unbelievable very much made up the fabric of

storytelling. But with the advent of European modernity, the uncanny has been unceremoniously relegated to a genre—be it science fiction, speculative fiction, zombie fiction, or post apocalyptic fiction. Ghosh wonders why so few contemporary writers, himself included, were addressing the biggest crisis of our time i.e. the climate catastrophe. The answer perhaps lies in understanding the foundational question of modernity itself.

Everything that had originally converted the premodern world into the modern—advances made in practically all areas of human life including industry, transportation, technology, culture, science—is crumbling all around us and creating impacts that are threatening to undo the entire modern ecosystem. It is a realization at the level of existence; it is the existential crisis of our times. And so, the storytellers of our time are taking note. From Richard Powers in *The Overstory* (2018) to Shubhangi Swarup in *Latitudes Of Longing* (2018) to Anthony Doerr in *Cloud Cuckoo Land* (2021), to Amitav Ghosh in *The Hungry Tide* (2004), novelists are asking us, urgently that too, to think, to reevaluate, and to recalibrate. And here's what we must rethink: can we make art that conceals the truths of our time? How can we read and make fiction that does not address

our climate? Whose stories must our stories now tell?

What does climate fiction accomplish? For one, this genre of fiction speaks to the political and ecological violence of our time and for another, it establishes nonhuman actors as protagonists and storytellers. The landscape of climate fiction brims with beautiful, horrifying, numbing imagery—of turtles and trees, disappearing oceans and burning woods, spirits and Gaia. In many ways then, the genre displaces humanism's human centrality and compels us to rethink human supremacy over other forms of life. Eco-fiction writers also urge us to fathom a world where humans will have to learn to live in a post-human world. In short, cli fi or eco fiction as a genre asks its readers to consider the scope of life itself. And perhaps most crucially, the genre asks us to be better, more conscious, more conscientious humans, the kind that takes the time to care for the world around us.

It seems like a hard ask. One might even say an almost impossible one. Asking fiction to tell the truths of our time as well as asking us to be better beings? Yet, the act of reading and writing has an uncanny ability to accomplish the unthinkable. As an impressionable teen, I remember

reading strange little pieces titled “The Autobiography of a Tree”, and “The Autobiography of a Road” in our school coursebook. Back then, we used to mock the poetic, otherworldly descriptions of the road exhibiting anthropomorphic angst. The road's tragic attempt at evoking empathy at being walked all over ceaselessly amused us, its self-obsessed teen readers. Decades later, theorists of Object Oriented Ontology or New Materialism are asking us to do exactly that—decenter our human-centric thought processes and broaden our perspectives of “life” itself.

When I think back on Rabinranath Tagore and his evocative, poignant short stories such as “Borai”, which is a tale of a boy and his boundless love for a tree, I cannot help marvel at fiction's ability to instill compassion in us. I remember Bhabhutibhushon Bandopadhyay's *Aranyak* (1939), and the protagonist's hypnotic affection and eventual guilt for the forest land he is in charge of. Ghosh, too, recalls the elemental truth the river from his past forces him to confront. He finds the river asking him, “Do you recognize me, wherever you are?” Fiction teaches us much about the power in recognition, as a kind of presence that emerges with what Ghosh calls a “quiet insistence”.

That recognition of quiet insistence, that awareness, those moments and

instances of other lives and experiences that cannot be ignored are found in places and spaces that are intimately our own—it is there in the tidal waves of the Sundarbans, in the dusty leaves of ignored plants in the city's lonely balconies, in the crowded alleyways of Dhaka. We are surrounded by those that are unlike us.

The French philosopher Bruno Latour insists that Western modernity's impulse to deepen the gulf between nature and culture has caused a lot of the current climate crisis. Ultimately, climate fiction and nature writing urge that it will be our ability to see the ecological for what it is that will help us see our future. If we open our eyes to the truths of our time, and let our art reflect that truth, that reflection and recognition may reverse the narrative of resistance and alter our future. It's a hopeful take but one we need. If we don't allow the scale of change, the enormity of change that is upon us to be reflected in our creative and indeed, critical work, we will not reach the ontological turn that is necessary. While I am afraid of remaining bound by denial, I worry more about what the denial represents—our inability to care for others.

**Dr Nazia Manzoor** is an assistant professor at the Department of English and Modern Languages, North South University.

## POETRY PTSD

NOORA SHAMSI BAHAR

Like puppets that dance to the tune of the puppet master  
Bodily integrity we had to barter  
For a pawn's role in groupement  
Dictated was our every movement  
Down to our index trigger finger  
Zombie-esque mindlessness  
Anesthetized consciousness  
Marching on, committing sins  
Break-ins, bombings, burnings, slayings  
Etched onto memories that retain the rawness  
Some made it back  
Seemingly in one piece, but with many a crack  
On the inside, that cannot be discerned  
Recurring nightmares of haunting experiences not penned  
Self-annihilation the only thought that stuck  
Martyrs and slash-or heroes they call us  
Is it worth all the fuss?  
While they celebrate  
We ache to recuperate  
Our stories history shall never discuss

Noora Shamsi Bahar is a senior lecturer at the Department of English and Modern Languages, North South University, and a published researcher and translator.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA



PHOTO: COLLECTED



## I am found in fields

RAIAN ABEDIN

In the morning  
where you will stand under shoddily set-up clouds  
and imperfect people getting shuteye  
instead of working, you will visit the lake  
they cover now in sand. The world belongs to them  
and you play second fiddle, you always play  
the secondary roles and the role of the passing seconds.  
Holes fill the street as they will fill the night  
and the stomachs of the empty-eyed children of the roads  
that lead to dead ends and concrete patriarchs  
and plastic bags with glue flipping off the sleeping tricycles  
and the broken wheels that represent us all.  
I am a god when I am asleep, I am found to be inside the shimmer  
of water as it fights against the brilliance of the screams that emanate  
from the sky. I am found in fields where things stop growing  
and I am found in prettier ideas than what exists between the spaces  
of concrete and word and brick and mud. Ever moving, like the fleeting  
resilience of the morning; and yet this is where so much of my heart  
feels the ache to stop moving, this is the motion, this is the end;

Raian Abedin is currently working toward making his name as a poet.



BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

# Racism and geopolitics IN SOUTH AFRICA

‘The Girl Who Saved the King of Sweden’ by Jonas Jonasson (HarperCollins, 2013)



**Nombeko’s first-hand encounter with violent apartheid, backed by nuclear deterrence, draws parallels with Israel’s own system of systematic apartheid and presumed nuclear deterrence.**

**KAZI MAHDI AMIN**

Swedish journalist and writer Jonas Jonasson, known for his comical approach to history, demonstrates his ability to entertain and educate in his book, *The Girl Who Saved the King of Sweden*. While his previous work, *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* (2009), revolved around the whimsical adventures of a centenarian, this book delves into the life of a young South African protagonist from Soweto, shedding light on the injustices of apartheid and the shadowy world of global power dynamics.

The story takes us across two continents,

introducing us to Nombeko, a young girl born in a South African slum. Despite facing challenges such as fending off rapists and coping with an alcoholic mother seeking solace in unrefined spirits, Nombeko manages to overcome her circumstances. She even becomes involved in South Africa’s nuclear weapons programme, driven by her unwavering determination to change her fate. Surprisingly, her journey culminates in saving the King of Sweden from her deranged Republican brother-in-law.

The characters in the novel are far from ordinary; they exist on the fringes of society. Themes such as institutional racism in colonies, migration, flawed anti-

monarchy sentiments stemming from personal vendettas, and the need for rebellion permeate the lives of these characters. They grapple with their lack of control over their situations. Nonetheless, the extraordinary events they experience captivate readers, offering a fascinating exploration of apartheid South Africa’s nuclear programme, Israel’s involvement, the assassination of the King of Sweden, the US labelling Nelson Mandela as a terrorist, and even the mention of Chinese Han dynasty ducks.

The novel’s message is clear: never give up. However, inquisitive readers will also recognize the geopolitical undertones within its pages. Nombeko’s first-hand encounter with violent apartheid, backed by nuclear deterrence, draws parallels with Israel’s own system of systematic apartheid and presumed nuclear deterrence. For those seeking a combination of historical insight and a light-hearted, absurd narrative, *The Girl Who Saved the King of Sweden* proves to be time well spent.

Although the book maintains an effortless fluidity of language, the pacing could have been improved. The build-up to the climactic moments feels lengthy, but it serves as an ideal book to enjoy for a peaceful night’s sleep before diving into another weekday.

Jonasson, as a writer, embodies cosmopolitanism. His stories, including the two I have read so far, take readers on immersive journeys through humanity’s triumphs and missteps. *The Girl Who Saved the King of Sweden* is a book you’ll happily recommend to friends who appreciate absurd comedy.

**Kazi Mahdi Amin** is a development worker interested in geopolitics and social injustices. He can be reached at [kmahdi007@gmail.com](mailto:kmahdi007@gmail.com).

ESSAY

## Like father, unlike son: Martin Amis’s place in literature

SHAHRIAR SHAAMS

News of Martin Amis’s recent death on May 19, 2023 from cancer reminded me of the time I read a good portion of *Experience* (2000), his memoir, at the British Council library while waiting for a friend. Having been more of an admirer of his father’s writing than his, I considered Amis to be the least profound of his generation, a cohort which comprised some of Britain’s most celebrated writers of the 1980s. His contemporaries included Kazuo Ishiguro, who went on to win the Nobel Prize in 2017, Salman Rushdie, whose *Midnight’s Children* clearly is among the best novels to be written post-World War II, and Ian McEwan, who has had a late-career surge with novels such as *Nutshell* (2016). The younger Amis’s reputation, in contrast, seems to be still shaky.

Reading through *Experience* that day, I was left surprised at the casual rudeness:

My mouth talks too much. Only a week earlier my mouth had soured a New Yorker dinner at the Caprice in London by indulging in this ‘exchange’ with Salman Rushdie:

— So you like Beckett’s prose, do you? You like Beckett’s prose.

Having established earlier that he did like Beckett’s prose, Salman neglected to answer.

— Okay. Quote me some. Oh I see. You can’t.

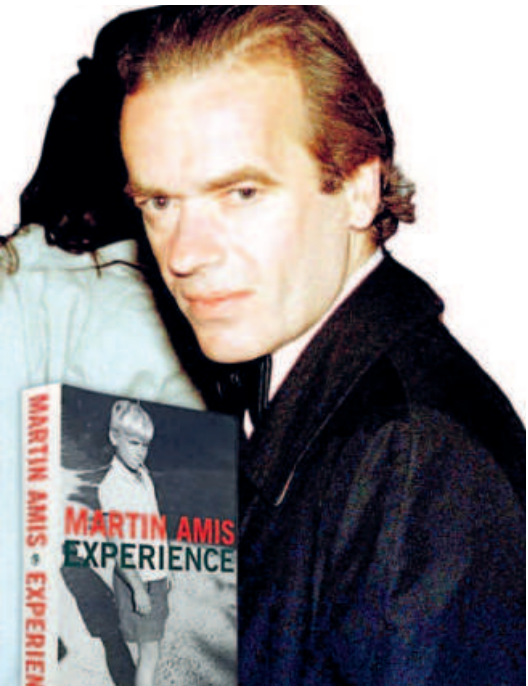


PHOTO: REUTERS

Martin’s final book, *Inside Story* (2020), billed as a novel though really it’s a loosely drafted memoir, carries on, unfortunately, with the same smarmy tone that tries hiding the vapidness of his interactions and memories. His incessant need to address the “reader” drags on the patience of any actual reader. One almost sympathises with his father, who according to an anecdote, had once flung his son’s book across the room when he discovered that Martin had used his own name for a character. For Kingsley Amis, this was akin to breaking a contract with the reader. There should be “no fooling around with reality.” But fooling around with reality is somewhat of a specialty for Martin. His notable works succeed because he is so unbearable with it. It wouldn’t be a good Martin Amis book without his narrators breaking the fourth-wall or playing around with some postmodern gimmick.

*London Fields* (1989), arguably his best work, is a glossy murder-mystery embossed with such a tone of meta-narrative fashionable of the ‘80s. Here, it is evident that Amis’s charms (and inevitable obnoxiousness) is a result of his tiresome devotion to style (being as he was a major fanboy of Nabokov), aided by themes of glamour, celebrity, and debauchery, which the book is chock full of. In *London Fields* and its preceding novel *Money* (1984), Amis does imbue an anger, but it is a different sort of feeling, not the “Angry Young Men” humour of *Lucky Jim* or *The Old Devils*, novels which made his father’s literary name rather there is a sense of boredom in Martin Amis’s work. After a while, one gets the idea that Amis is hellbent on being a “disinterested aesthete”. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his nonfiction work *Koba the Dread*, a “study” of Stalin’s brutality, which reads hollow and impersonal, almost clinical.

Perhaps Martin Amis’s works do not grab me for the most part because they veer too far away from the humanism of, say, Saul Bellow—a writer Martin greatly admires and has written about extensively. Where Kingsley Amis was often a much needed dose of angry wit, his son’s anger came off as decadent, rebellious without much cause, and unnecessary to an extent. Martin’s great literary achievement is that with a set of forgettable novels he was able to carve out his own place, away from his father’s shadow. There is no doubt that he could write. He was by the age of 27 a literary editor of a major outlet and had been a part of the British scene ever since his childhood. But to what extent the intoxicating personality and the good looks will translate to a readership beyond his life is at best unanswerable. The odd Islamophobia and right-wing remarks do not, of course, help. What is certain however is that as a celebrity and intellectual, Martin Amis definitely has a place as 20th century literature’s most remarkable and original nepo baby.

**Shahriar Shaams** has written & translated for SUSPECT, Third Lane, Six Seasons Review, Arts & Letters, and Jamini. Find him on twitter @shahriarshaams.

BOOK EXCERPT: NONFICTION

## Snapshots of history—Golam Mustafa meets Manzoor Alam Beg

TRANSLATED FROM THE BANGLA BY HRISHIK ROY AND SARAH ANJUM BARI

A history of Bangladeshi photography would be incomplete without the stories of Golam Mustafa—the first Director of Photography of Bangladesh Television, the first person to produce a commercial film using the U-matic format in post-Liberation Bangladesh.

Born on November 30, 1941, the Ekushey Padak-winning photographer was among the first batch of students at the Begart Institute of Photography and a founding member of the Camera Recreation Club, Bangladesh’s first photography organisation.

*Modhurimay Alap* (Swapno ’71, 2023), released at the Ekushey Boi Mela this year, transcribes two days of conversations between Golam Mustafa and Shahadat Parvez, a photographer, teacher, and researcher who is currently Photography Editor at the daily *Desh Rupantor*. Their discussions take the reader through Mustafa’s youth during the 1947 Partition, the documentation of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s homecoming, Bangladesh’s place in the world of photography, the revolutionary phases of East Bengal photography, and more.

In this excerpt from the book, Golam Mustafa shares how he first became acquainted with Manzoor Alam Beg, considered to be the Father of Photography movements in Bangladesh.

**Shahadat Parvez (SP): How did you get to know Manzoor Alam Beg?**  
**Golam Mustafa (GM):** I was trying to catch a bus one day when I noticed a studio—Roxy Photo Service. A few large photographs hung on the walls inside. I went in to look around and found a man standing at the counter, fervently pulling a cigarette. He was thin, bearded, dark complexioned; he had a very interesting face.

“I have a few negatives that I want to print. Can I do that here?” I asked him.

“You can”, he said.

“Will you do it for me?”

“These are a bit oversized. It’s alright, I will manage with some

paper”, he said after looking at the negatives.

I went back to the studio the next day. “I’ve printed your photos”, he said upon seeing me. “But let me keep it for another day. This needs softer paper for better quality print.”

Of all the studios that had printed out photos for me, no one had ever asked to keep them with such interest and compassion. I left the images with him and returned the next day. There was a world of difference between the two sets of photos. He explained to me



PHOTO: FARZANA YASMIN

why the quality differed.

The man wanted to know what I did, and then he looked at my camera. “This is an ordinary camera”, he told me, “but you can produce good work with it if you read the manual closely.”

I spent all of that night with my camera on my bed, reading its manual page by page. I went back the next day and told the man that there were three points I hadn’t understood.

Beg Shaheb realised that a lot of customers came to him, but I was no customer. There was a certain madness to me.

One winter, I clicked a picture of the old high court building. Do you

remember it? It is still there—the one in front of the Eidgah field. There was a vast lake there. A beautiful lake with clear water. The peak of the high court building would reflect on the water body. I couldn’t perfectly capture that reflection in the picture I had taken. I showed it to Beg Shaheb.

“This picture can’t be taken like this”, he told me. “You have to climb at least 20 feet. Try putting up a ladder against the tree in front of the building.”

Trust me, I wouldn’t dare to do it

you are a photographer.

They don’t understand what this means. They say, “Sir, how can we see with our eyes closed?”

I tell them that if you have your eyes open, you only see what is in front of you. If you close your eyes, your horizons expand.

I see it now. I climb up as those four people hold the ladder for me. The higher I climb, the more the ladder rattles. My camera hangs by my neck. There are 12 exposures, and I capture all 12. I switch right and left, change exposures and capture images. Beg Shaheb had asked me to change the stop and capture pictures. I fix my shutter speed to 125 and click pictures on F 22, 16, 11, 8 and 5.6.

The next morning, I reach Beg Shaheb’s studio very early out of excitement. He arrives on his Suzuki motorcycle and asks me, “Oh, Mustafa. You are here already? Didn’t you go to university today?”

“I will go after I develop my roll and observe the negative”, I tell him. “You had asked me to try to take a picture of the high court from atop a ladder.”

Beg Shaheb opens the dark room in the back. The madness of my excitement had gotten to him by then. He didn’t even submerge it in water after fixing it.

“It has happened. You pulled it off”, he tells me. “You can go to class now. I will print out the best shot from your negative by this evening.”

I sat in class for what felt like forever. I looked at my watch constantly. Finally, finishing my class, I rushed to the studio. “Your picture is done. It’s being dried in the studio”, Beg Shaheb told me.

He had printed a panoramic view on a 12 by 16 inch paper. He said, “I will put this up in the studio. You took the picture the way I recommended, so this will be here in your honour. I will print out a smaller one for you.”

I became his student on that day.

I took pictures alongside him, went to different places, had both good and bad experiences. I was with him beyond life and death. And that picture of mine was in that studio until the very last day.

now, but the next day—on a holiday—I managed a ladder from a friend of Beg Shaheb’s from the Crescent electrical shop on the east end of the Topkhana Road.

Four people brought in the ladder and set it up against the tree. I got up on it and saw...

**SP: Have you gone back to that scene now?**  
**GM:** Yes, I can see it in front of me. I can see the peak of the high court reflected on the water.

I often tell my students that you can see more with your eyes closed than when your eyes are open. It is when you reach that stage that you know





The set of the movie Cleopatra in the Atlas Studios



Marinid Tombs in Fes



Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca



In Chefchaouen -- known as the Blue Pearl of Morocco



A part of the luxury camp in the Sahara Desert

## Morocco: a timeless wonder



**Maisha Zaman** currently works in research and policy in the UK. You can reach her with any queries via email: maisha.zmm@gmail.com.

Nestled between the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, Morocco unveils a treasure trove of vibrant colours, cultural heritage, and centuries-old traditions that captivate a traveller. From the mesmerising Sahara desert to picturesque beaches, majestic mountains, bustling souks, delectable cuisine, and enchanting riads, Morocco seamlessly blends the allure of bygone eras with the modern world.

Surprisingly, this captivating destination is yet to gain popularity among Bangladeshi travellers. In this experience guide, I aim to unlock the wonders of Morocco, offering valuable insights and tips to inspire and assist future adventurers in embarking on a memorable journey to this captivating land.

### GLAMPING IN SAHARA DESERT

I was taught about the Sahara desert -- the world's second-largest desert -- and its big



A snippet from the Sahara Desert

The Mummy, Cleopatra, and Alexander were filmed there.

The desert and the Atlas Mountains serve as the perfect base to mimic countries such as Beirut, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, and even the Himalayas. In other words, Ouarzazate and Ait Ben Haddou (World Heritage Site for harbouring the best preserved kasbah (fortress) complex in Morocco) are the places we see as the aforementioned countries in movies.

After this, our next stop was "Khattara", a tunnel and well network built around the 15th or 17th century to provide a better irrigation system in the desert.

### EXPLORING TIMELESS WONDERS OF FES

Often referred to as the "Mecca of the West", Fes is also known as the spiritual capital of Morocco and its medina is a Unesco World Heritage site. After spending the night in a beautiful Riad, the next day was all about exploring Fes and getting subsumed by the alleyways of its medina -- Fez El Bali.

One of the highlights there was the University of Al-Qarawiyyin -- the oldest university in the world. This university was founded by a Muslim woman and to date, it operates as one of the most traditional universities in Morocco.

We continued roaming around the winding alleys of the medina, often getting lost in the smell of the local delicacies and ator (perfume) which gave me a déjà vu of the streets of New Market in Dhaka.

Known as one of the world's greatest craft centres, the streets of Fes filled our ears with the clacking of metals, along with the smell of fresh leather goods and the not-so-pleasant smell of the tanneries. Be it the potters, weavers, wood painters, or leather makers -- all these craftsmen as old as 90 years in age gave a glimpse of the century-old, traditional craftsmanship with their hand-made goods.

Before ending the day, we stopped at some more must-visit places such as the Merinid Tombs, the Royal Palace (the king's palace) in Fes El Jdid, and the renowned pottery stores.

### GETTING LOST IN SOUKS OF CHEFCHAOUEN

Amidst the enchanting blue hues of

Chefchaouen, the "blue pearl" of Morocco, a traveller finds themselves unexpectedly disconnected from the world, navigating language barriers in a place where English is scarcely understood. The panoramic view of the Rif Mountains and the entire city of Chefchaouen from the summit left me breathless. Originally built in the 15th century, it was in the 20th century that the city was painted blue by Jewish residents as a tribute to God, faith, and the celestial realm.

### DAY TRIP TO ESSAOUIRA

During my 3-day stay in Marrakech, I took a day trip to Essaouira which was a 3-hour drive from Marrakech. I was a bit worried about how the beach area would feel amidst the cold winds of January but when I stepped out of the car, I was blown away not by the winds, but by the soothing charm of this port city.

The sky-blue water, the chilly yet warm wind, the smell of fresh fish and the billowing waves immediately drew me in. I also devoured some reasonably priced, delicious fresh fish from one of the arrays of fish stalls.

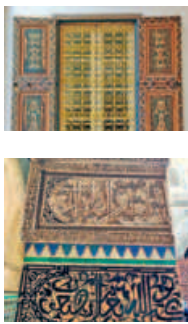
Afterwards, I spent some time roaming around the white and blue alleys of Essaouira's medina. While the medinas in Fes, Marrakech, and Chefchaouen bustle with people and clatters of the potteries, Essaouira's medina was quieter with people simply sipping on mint teas in the small cafés and enjoying traditional Moroccan music performances by the locals.

I also stopped in Casablanca to visit a much-awaited location, the Hassan II Mosque -- the second-largest mosque in Africa and the seventh-largest mosque in the world. It also has the second-tallest minaret in the world.

Immersed in the vibrant medina of Marrakech, I found myself captivated by its bustling streets, enchanting aromas of exotic spices, and the delightful taste of freshly squeezed sugar cane and pomegranate juices. Beyond the popular tourist attractions like Jamaa el Fna Square, Koutoubia Mosque, and the exquisite Jardin Majorelle at Yves Saint Laurent's Mansion, I discovered the true essence of Marrakech by indulging in aimless wanderings through its labyrinthine alleys, savouring the sunrise from the rooftop of my riad, and encountering fascinating sights such as snake charmers. As I explored hidden gems like Bahia Palace, Badi Palace, Ibn Youssef School (madrasa), and Dar Si Said Museum, my love for this enchanting city grew deeper. Marrakech revealed its timeless allure, leaving me with unforgettable memories of a truly magical journey.

### TRAVEL TIPS

- I booked a guided tour for my whole trip with Marrakech Desert Travel. They provide great hospitality and will make you feel like family. They will also customise your trip according to your preference. You can find them on Instagram: @marrakechdeserttravel
- Morocco is one of those countries that is best explored with friends and family or, in groups.
- If you have a Bangladeshi passport, you will need a tourist visa by applying to the embassy in Bangladesh and possibly with the help of an agency. However, if you have a Bangladeshi passport and you also have a multiple-entry visa to the US, UK, New Zealand, Schengen countries, Australia, or Ireland which is valid for more than 90 days, you can apply for an e-visa.
- Morocco has a closed currency which means that the currency can be bought after arriving in Morocco. It's best to exchange currency in the shops outside the airport does not give a good exchange rate.
- Maroc Telecom and Orange are the preferable telecoms tourists can use.
- Google maps do not work too well in the medinas.



**Known as one of the world's greatest craft centres, the streets of Fes filled our ears with the clacking of metals, along with the smell of fresh leather goods and the not-so-pleasant smell of the tanneries.**

cactuses and sand dunes in school geography classes. After embarking on a 2-day journey, I ended up welcoming this year by watching a gorgeous sunrise there, immersing myself in the captivating landscape adorned with towering cacti and vast sand dunes.

Earlier, I traversed the desert on a camel, savouring the view of the last sunset of 2022. As night fell, I was treated to a delectable feast prepared by the hospitable Berber people, followed by lively African dances, a joyous cake-cutting ceremony welcoming the New Year, and the comfort of a luxurious tent. The desert's chill can surprise even a hardened traveller!

### OUARZAWOOD: HOLLYWOOD OF MOROCCO

On December 30, we drove for around 6-7 hours and had an overnight stay at Kasbah Yu Palace in the Ouarzazate province. I was completely blown away by its regal corners. On December 31, we started our journey towards the Sahara desert, and on the way, we stopped to visit the Atlas Studios in Ouarzazate. Ranging from The Gladiator, Prince of Persia, Game of Thrones, and Prison Break to even Bollywood movies like War, Atlas Studio offers a tour across its movie sets and props. Parts of the studio will also make someone feel like they are in Egypt, as movies such as

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