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P11 'Messi keen on rejoining Barca'



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Inflation hits 11-year high

ZINA TASREEN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

If there is one indicator that epitomises the government's mismanagement of the economy in recent times, it is inflation – which raced to an 11 year high of 9.94 percent in May.

May's figure takes the average inflation so far this fiscal year to 8.95 percent, way above the budgetary target of 5.6 percent.

The government pinned the blame for the elevated inflation levels entirely on the Ukraine war that began in February last year.

"If inflation was 100 percent imported, why did it not rise elsewhere?" said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

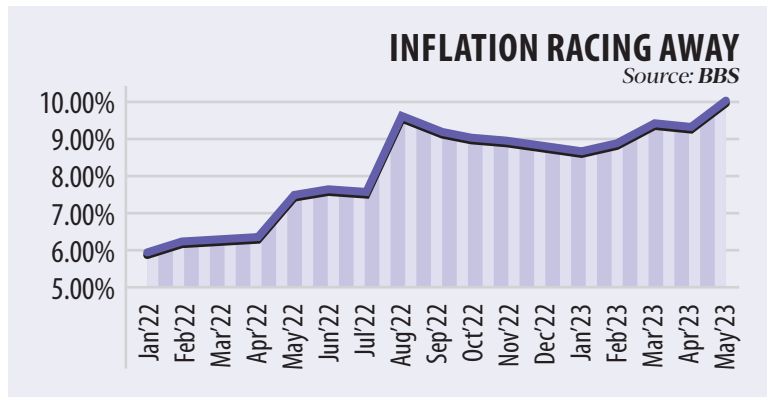
In reality, inflation is on the decline all around the world.

In May, Eurozone inflation fell to its lowest level since Russia's invasion of Ukraine to 6.1 percent. Inflation in Germany and France fell to 6.3 percent and 6 percent respectively.

Even the runaway inflation in Turkey hit its lowest level since 2021 in May. Thailand's inflation hit a 16 month low, while China's consumer price index was the lowest in more than two years. In Vietnam, inflation was 2.43 percent, the lowest level in 14 months.

Although the inflation data for the US and India are yet to be released for May, April's data give a good indication: it eased to 4.9 percent in the UK and 4.7 percent in the neighbouring country, which is an 18-month low.

The initial spiral in price level could be blamed on the war taking place 5,800 kilometres away.



"But that is not the case in the last six months," Hussain said. What it can be blamed on is the government's lack of measures to cool down demand.

"Of course, there is supply-side pressure stemming from the dollar crunch. But the government's measures fuelled inflation further."

One such misadventure of the government is the excessive bank borrowing to fund the budget deficit arising out of sluggish revenue collection from the decelerating economy, thanks, again, to the dollar crunch, according to Hussain.

Between July 1 last year and May 24, the government took loans to the tune of Tk 85,024 crore from the banking system. Of the sum, Tk 69,208 crore came from the Bangladesh Bank.

Thanks to the borrowing from the central bank, the volume of notes and coins in circulation is increasing manifold. In Bangladesh, this money can multiply by as much as five times. So, the Tk 69,208 crore may end up being Tk 346,040 crore.

This extra money in the hands of people is creating additional demand for goods and services, which, in turn, is driving up the prices.

Then the government's abandonment of the austerity stance taken at the beginning of the fiscal year nine months in also fanned the inflationary flames.

"The prime minister said the economic situation is okay now," Shamsul Alam, the state minister for planning, told reporters as he emerged from the meeting of the National Economic Council presided over by Sheikh Hasina on March 1.

Less than a fortnight later, most of the austerity measures were withdrawn. For instance, the ban on purchase of vehicles, aircraft, helicopters, boats, ships and barges, which was the centrepiece of the austerity measure, was lifted, while low-priority projects were given funds.

Amid dwindling dollar stockpile and inflationary pressure, what was the need to lift the bar on such expenditure?

May's inflation data also reflects the knock-on effect of the hike in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Customers check out rechargeable fans at a shop in the capital's Baitul Mukarram market yesterday. With the city experiencing frequent power cuts amid the searing heat, demand for rechargeable fans has surged, leading to rise in their prices by at least Tk 100 each.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Next nat'l election a challenge

PM to AL leaders

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the upcoming general election is a challenge.

"The next election is a challenge. Different types of conspiracies and plots are being hatched," she said while exchanging views with the leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League and its associate bodies at her

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BAN ON SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

No visible step to enforce HC order

Microplastics enter food chain, put consumers' health at risk

PINAKI ROY

Three and a half years into the High Court order to ban single-use plastic products in the coastal districts, there has been no visible progress towards implementation.

Every day large quantities of single-use plastic items are released into the rivers or dumped along the shorelines, which eventually flow into the Bay of Bengal.

Scientists and environmental activists say that single-use plastic items, when released into the rivers or the sea, affects biodiversity and hurt the fish and mammal populations, and all marine life.

The HC order, issued in January 2020 in response to a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA), tasked the Department of Environment with enforcing the ban by 2021.

The government department in 2021 launched a three-year project through a gazette notification to phase out single-use plastic

items in 12 coastal districts (Bagerhat, Barguna, Bhola, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Feni, Khulna, Lakkhipur, Noakhali, Patuakhali, Pirojpur and Satkhira) and eight areas of Chattogram.

"Apparently the Department of Environment has issued the notification just to avoid being held in contempt of court. But practically nothing has happened in the field," BELA Chief Executive Syeda Rizwana Hasan told The Daily Star.

Controlling the use of single-use plastic and managing the plastic waste properly is the only solution, said Ahmad Kamruzzaman Majumder, dean at the faculty of science, Stamford University Bangladesh.

"The government has to implement the High Court order properly," he said.

If plastic items go into the rivers and the sea, Majumder stressed, they may turn into microplastics, which eventually enter the food chain, putting consumers' health at high risk.

Even if it does not flow into the waters, it will

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

ONE-POINT MOVEMENT

BNP, Jamaat reconcile

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The awkwardness of the BNP-Jamaat relationship that emerged over a year is apparently fading with Jamaat deciding to join the BNP's one-point simultaneous movement to oust the government.

The top leadership of Jamaat has also come up with fresh programmes that go with the BNP's movement.

Senior leaders of both parties have been in talks to bridge the gap between the parties that had enjoyed a tested and trusted relationship.

"We have resumed discussions with the BNP regarding the simultaneous movement. We are restoring the relationship. I can't say anything more right now," Abu Taher, mayeeb-e-ameer of Jamaat, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Jamaat took part in the first two programmes of the BNP's simultaneous movement which began in December last year. After those, the BNP announced programmes without consulting with Jamaat.

Many Jamaat leaders and activists had been arrested but the BNP kept mum about those, which created a distance between the two parties, said sources.

Since then, Jamaat, which is not registered with the Election Commission, has been observing programmes alone and intermittently and the distance between the two parties grew.

But now they are getting organised to take to the street, said the sources.

BNP leaders, however, said that it was yet to be decided whether Jamaat would make an announcement that they would join the BNP's one-point simultaneous movement.

But a few BNP leaders said Jamaat may join the movement without making an official announcement.

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10 political leaders complicit in Tipu murder

Most of them belong to ruling party, one to JP; charges pressed against 33

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-three people, including at least nine leaders of different units of the ruling Awami League and its associate bodies, have been charge-sheeted in the murder case of Jahidul Islam Tipu, former general secretary of Motijheel thana AL.



Jahidul Islam Tipu

The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police submitted the charge sheet before a Dhaka court yesterday. Among the 33 accused are a Motijheel Jatiya Party leader and two

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



The traffic (north) division of Chattogram Metropolitan Police has drawn on the asphalt where a bus must stop to pick up passengers in the port city's Sholoshahar Gate-2 area. People are seen in this photo taken on Sunday getting on a bus that stopped on the middle lane.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

The picture doesn't reflect the reality

Rift between 2 brothers widening as Barishal city polls approaching



ASHIK ABDULLAH APU with SUSHANTA GHOSH

The recent photograph of Abul Hasnat Abdulalh hugging his younger brother Abul Khair Abdullah brought some relief to the grassroot Awami League leaders and activists of Barishal as they thought it was an indication of them uniting ahead of the city polls.

But the real picture is different because the AL failed

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

ACC sues ex-secy for corruption

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a case against former secretary Dr Proshanto Kumar Roy for amassing about Tk 1.25 crore beyond his known source of income.

ACC's Deputy Director Mashiur Rahman filed the case with its integrated district office against Proshanto, who was also the project director of 'Ekti Bari Ekti Khamar' project.

Investigators also found that the former secretary laundered huge money in Australia through hundi.

According to the case statement, the ACC issued a notice to the accused to file a wealth statement on December 08, 2019. Proshanto, who was secretary of the Rural Development and Cooperative Division, submitted the wealth statement on February 02, 2020.

He declared having moveable and immoveable properties worth about Tk 2,78,67,540. However, ACC's investigator found the total amount of his moveable and immoveable properties worth Tk 3,99,17,356.

"He concealed wealth about Tk 1,20,49,816 in his wealth statement which is a punishable offence," reads the case statement.

In his income tax file, the former secretary declared that his total earnings were about Tk 4.75 crore and expenditures Tk 2.01 crore. His neat legal earnings were Tk 2.73 crore.

After deducting his neat legal earnings from total assets, it is found that Proshanto had about Tk 1.25 crore in additional wealth which was beyond his known source of income.

During the investigation, the ACC also found the accused deposited about Tk 13.24 crore in different accounts belonging to him and his dependents at different times in 12 branches of Sonali Bank, National Bank, Prime Bank, Meghna Bank and Bank Asia.

At different times, he withdrew about Tk 12.98 crore.

"The transactions in the accounts of a government employee and his dependents were unusual and inconsistent," reads the case statement.

The statement said Proshanto had sent a huge amount of money to his two daughters who were studying in Australia.

"It is learnt that he sent Tk 35.95 lakh to them between 2013 and 2017 by banking channel and a lot of money through hundi," it said.

The investigation agency also found that the accused sent Tk 50 lakh to his nephew illegally through hundi.



Smoke billows behind buildings from a reported fire in Khartoum, Sudan yesterday, as fighting continues between two warring generals.

PHOTO: AFP

US, India agree on defence industry co-op plan

AFP, New Delhi

The United States and India agreed a roadmap for military industrial cooperation yesterday, as New Delhi seeks to reduce its reliance on key arms supplier Russia in the face of tensions with China.

"We established an ambitious new roadmap for defence industrial cooperation, which will fast track high priority co-development and co-production projects," US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said as he wrapped up an overnight visit to New Delhi.

But analysts warned that such pledges needed to be backed up by concrete action. Moscow and New Delhi have been allies for decades, with Russia by far India's biggest arms supplier.

Now India — which has not condemned Russia for its invasion of Ukraine — is looking to diversify, both by broadening its sources of imports and ramping up domestic production.

Western countries, including the United States and France, are negotiating multi-billion-dollar contracts, and diplomats say India is placing a high priority on technology transfer as part of any deal.

The agreement will fast-track technology cooperation and co-production in areas including air combat and land mobility systems, the "undersea

domain", and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, the US Defense Department said.

The initiative "aims to change the paradigm for cooperation between US and Indian defence sectors", it said, and "could provide India access to cutting-edge technologies and support India's defence modernisation plans".

India has displaced China as the world's most populous country this year, and relations between the Asian giants have been strained since a deadly high-altitude border clash in June 2020.

Diplomats say India is placing a high priority on technology transfer as part of any deal.

At the same time, Washington and Beijing are engaged in fierce competition on diplomatic, military, technological and economic fronts.

But India is walking a diplomatic tightrope: uniquely, it is a member of both the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which includes Russia and China, and the Quad, set up with the United States, Japan, and Australia to counter Beijing's growing assertiveness.

As well as arms, India also imports oil

from Russia, increasing its purchases since the Ukraine war began.

Analysts said they would wait to see whether the US-India roadmap was anything more than rhetoric.

Expectations that Austin would talk about transferring engine technology to India and an armed Predator drone deal had gone unfulfilled, said Indian defence analyst Rahul Bedi.

"We've heard this many times before from respective defence secretaries, as well as the Indian side," he told AFP.

"But unless something concrete emerges I remain sceptical. The right path (of India-US relations) has to be backed with firm contracts and firm assurances."

Austin, speaking to reporters after meeting his counterpart Rajnath Singh, said boosting partnerships with India came against a backdrop of "bullying and coercion" from China, as well as Russian "aggression against Ukraine".

India's defence ministry said discussions had a "particular focus on identifying ways to strengthen industrial cooperation" with Washington, including the "co-development of new technologies and co-production of existing and new systems".

Austin's visit comes ahead of a trip by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington this month.

Indian Army chief in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Indian Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande arrived in Bangladesh yesterday on a two-day visit at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiqul Islam to attend the Passing Out Parade at Bangladesh Military Academy, Chattogram.

His visit follows the recent visit of General SM Shafiqul Islam to India when he was invited by the Indian Army chief to attend the Passing Out Parade at Officers' Training Academy, Chennai, said a media release yesterday.



During his visit, the Indian Army chief will pay tributes to the members of the Bangladesh Armed Forces who made supreme sacrifice during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 by laying a wreath at the altar of Shikha Anirban in Dhaka Cantonment.

He will also hold discussions with the Bangladesh army chief and review defence cooperation between India and Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi man shot dead by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) along the Kalirhat border in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat early yesterday.

BSF took away the body of the victim, Yousuf Ali, 25, of Meserdanga village in Patgram upazila.

Commander of Kalirhat BOP Camp under BGB Battalion 61 Nayek Subedar Sadekul Islam confirmed the incident.

Jagatbar Union Parishad Chairman Mostafizur Rahman Sohel told The Daily Star that 10-12 Bangladeshi cattle rustlers trespassed into India to bring cattle.

The BSF patrolling team opened fire on them when they were bringing cattle from India's Sarkarpara area.

Yousuf was shot and died on the spot, the chairman said.

A protest letter has been sent to the BSF, which also sought the body of Yousuf, said Commander Sadekul Islam.

Rohingya man killed at Kutupalong camp

UNB, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya man was shot dead by masked criminals at Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The deceased identified as Mohammad Bashir, 19, son of Rahmat Ullah, was a resident of Camp 6. Sheikh Mohammad Ali, officer-in-charge of Ukhiya Police Station, said a group of 25-30 masked criminals, carrying firearms, fired at the victim, leaving him injured.

Later, he was taken to a local hospital where the doctors declared him dead, the OC said.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately.

Police are trying to arrest the attackers, said OC.

Next nat'l election a challenge

FROM PAGE 1

official residence Gono Bhaban.

Bangladesh is likely to hold a general election in December or January.

BNP, the country's main opposition, has vowed to boycott the polls unless the government steps down in favour of a non-partisan caretaker administration to make it free and fair.

The government has rejected the demand as unconstitutional.

Hasina, also the AL president, said whenever the life of the country's people improves to some extent, some black sheep of the country speak against Bangladesh and spread lies.

Some people raise false narratives about Bangladesh before foreigners to get international donations, she said.

She said those who didn't believe in the independence of Bangladesh, committed genocide and other offences, including plundering, rape, and repression, during the Liberation War, and their generations have been carrying out propaganda against Bangladesh.

The PM said BNP has a record of vote-rigging and snatching democracy. "But we now hear [the talk of] democracy from them," she said.

"Now we have to get the lesson on democracy and voting from a party which was formed in the hands of a military dictator. Stealing votes is their habit. So, what can the people of Bangladesh learn from thieves?" she added.

The AL chief asked her party members to work and strengthen their party.

Focusing on the development of Bangladesh, Hasina said this development has been possible as her party has been in power for 14 years in a row after the 2008 general election and has maintained a stable democratic environment in the country.

"We wanted to change Bangladesh. And, today we've successfully been able to do so," she said, adding that Bangladesh has graduated into a developing country.

"Our biggest achievement is that the

poverty rate declined in the rural area. The poverty rate is high in Dhaka city but lower in the rural areas. No one could think of it in the past," she said.

PM Hasina said her government kept its pledge by providing electricity to every house. But Bangladesh is facing difficulties as commodity prices, transport costs, and the prices of gas, fuel, and coal soared globally following the Ukraine war.

She said the interest rates of foreign loans have increased, which created pressure on the country's reserve of foreign currencies. However, there is still a reserve which is enough to procure food for five months, she added.

The PM asked to boost agricultural production by not keeping any piece of land uncultivated in the country, in order to meet the local demand and also export these.

She said food prices increased throughout the world and also in Bangladesh. People are suffering from the commodity price-hike, but the goods are available (in the market) and there is no scarcity of any item.

She said Bangladesh has witnessed a good yield of rice and other crops this time as well. Everything — vegetables, fish and meat — is being produced, even though the prices have increased, she said.

The premier said her government has recently had a record biggest national budget of Tk 761,785 crore. None could give such a big budget in the past. The most important matter is that the government has been able to give such a budget during this tough time.

She said both the number of beneficiaries and the size of allowance under different social safety net programmes were increased in the budget.

Besides, the government has arranged a card system so that low-income people can purchase some essential commodities including rice, pulse and edible oil at subsidised prices to ease their suffering, she said.

Inflation hits 11-year high

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electricity, gas, fuel and fertiliser prices that transpired earlier this fiscal year.

What is more unfortunate is the government does not seem to have any plan to rein in the escalating prices.

In the proposed budget for fiscal 2023-24, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal sought record bank borrowing to fund the deficit, a large part of which would most definitely be coming from the central bank.

"What could be a worse nightmare for the common people than the inflation rising and real wage rate and employment declining?" Hussain said.

In fact, for the poor and low-income people, their reality appears to be an endless trial.

Shariul Islam, a construction worker in Dhaka's Mirpur-II, is barely

getting by these days. Construction work has declined markedly over the last five-six months because of the price spiral of rods and cement, leaving Islam gainfully employed for 10-11 days a month.

That is not enough to feed three square meals to his family of four.

The family has already left out meat and fish from their meals and switched to a completely vegetarian diet along with cutting down on portion size to the bare minimum.

"But the vegetables are also becoming dearer. I have already borrowed money from many to continue with my children's schooling. If things continue this way, I don't know how I will get by at all," he said.

Food inflation rose to 9.24 percent in May from 8.84 percent the previous month. Non-food inflation increased 24 basis points to 9.96 percent in

May.

Islam's neighbour Kohinoor Begum, who runs a roadside tea stall, is scrimping in the kitchen, too.

"We can no longer afford oil, lentils, sugar, meat and fish in our meals," she said, while wondering if the comfortable life her family had two years back would ever come back.

The elderly Wasi Ahmed in Mohammadpur is wondering the same.

"We don't feel full after meals. But even then, our expenditure is only increasing. How will we survive like this?" he told The Daily Star yesterday.

In urban areas, inflation increased to 9.97 percent last month from 9.68 percent in April.

Over in Satkhira, Tauhidul Islam, an electrician, has similar grievances.

"It's tough to run the house with the prices of everything rising like this. My income did not increase."

Inflation in rural areas stood at

9.85 percent, up from 8.92 percent in April.

Islam has switched to all economic options for sustenance, but that will not be enough.

"If the government helps us, it will bring us some relief," he said.

But that is unlikely to happen.

In the proposed budget for the incoming fiscal year, Kamal did not make any allocation to cushion the poor from the wrath of inflation.

In fact, the social safety net budget is smaller than the current fiscal year's both in proportion to the overall budget and GDP.

Even then, as much as 60 percent would be going towards those not in dire need.

In reality, just 1.01 percent of the GDP would be spent on the poor via the social safety net schemes — and not 2.52 percent, as touted by the government.

10 political leaders complicit in Tipu murder

FROM PAGE 1

underworld criminals.

The DB said the accused planned the murder after failing to take control of tenders, footpaths, kitchen markets, cable TV business in Motijheel and admission to Motijheel Ideal School and College from Tipu.

Twenty-four of the accused have so far been arrested.

According to the charge sheet, some of the accused held several secret meetings at different places in Dhaka from the middle of December 2021. Fugitive top underworld criminals Zeesan Ahmed alias Monti, and Jafar Ahmed Manik alias Freedom Manik joined several of the meetings through video calls from the UAE and India respectively.

The last meeting was held at the Bird's Eye Rooftop Restaurant and Convention Hall in Purana Paltan and the final decision to kill Tipu was made.

On March 24 last year, three of the accused opened fire at Tipu's car in the capital's Shahjahanpur, leaving the AL leader and a college student,

Samia Afran Jamal Prity, dead.

Among the accused are Dhaka city (south) AL Organising Secretary Golam Ashraf Talukder, its member Maruf Ahmed Mansoor, also the ward-10 councillor of Dhaka South City Corporation, former general secretary of Motijheel Thana Chhatra League Khairul Islam, Motijheel thana Jatiya Party leader Juber Alam Khan Robin, former convener of Habibullah Bahar College Chhatra League Sohel Shahriar, expelled ward-10 Jubo League president Maruf Reza Sagar, former ward-II Jubo League president Kamruzzaman Babul, former member of ward-10 Jubo League Morshed Alam Polish, former ward-10 Swachhasebak League leader Aminul Islam Habib, ex-convener of Motijheel thana Chhatra League Arifur Rahman Sohel alias Ghatok Sohail, Arfan Ullah Imam alias Damal, Nasir Uddin Manik, Suman Sikdar Musa, Mahbubur Rahman Titu, Shamim Hossain Mollah, Mohammad Maruf Khan, Hafizul Islam, Masum Mohammad Akash, Sakendar Sikdar, Istiaque Ahmed Zitu, Imrun Hossain,

Rakibur Rahman, Toufiq Hasan Babu, Rifat Hossain, Nasir Uddin alias Killer Nasir, Omar Faruk, Abu Saleh Sikdar alias Shooter Sikdar, Moshir Rahman Ikram, Yeasir Arafat Saikot, Rana Mollah, Shamsul Haider Uzzal, Excel Sohel, Zeesan Ahmed alias Monti, and Jafar Ahmed Manik alias Freedom Manik.

Though the investigation officer of the case, Mohammad Yasin Sikder, also a DB inspector, found 34 people involved in the murder, he submitted the charge sheet against 33 accused as the identity of Excel Sohel could not be confirmed.

Tipu's wife Farhana Islam Doly, the complainant of the case, said she was satisfied with the charge sheet as it named those involved in the murder.

She, however, requested the law enforcers to arrest the fugitive accused.

"My life will be at risk if they are not arrested," she told The Daily Star yesterday.

Farhana, also the woman councillor in the reserved seat for wards-1, 11, 12, said she already lodged

six general diaries with the police following threats by unidentified callers.

She demanded expulsion of the accused who are holding posts in different organisations.

DB Chief Mohammad Harun Or Rashid said they filed the charge sheet against those found involved in the murder regardless of their political affiliations.

The charge sheet said Suman Sikder Musa, who was flown back home from Oman by the DB several months after the killing, was the main coordinator of the murder. He contacted Shamim Hossain who later selected his longtime friend Masum Mohammad Akash for the mission and assured him of accompanying him during the gun attack.

Musa, an accused in the Bocha Babu murder case, became annoyed with Tipu as he was assisting Babu's father for quick disposal of the case, the charge sheet added.

Musa, Shooter Akash and Nasir Uddin Manik made confessional statements before magistrates.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Plant trees to save Bangladesh

Urges PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the people to plant trees to protect Bangladesh from the adverse impacts of climate change.

"I would like to urge all to save the environment because it is our duty to offset the impacts of climate change in Bangladesh," she said after planting three saplings on the Gono Bhaban premises to mark World Environment Day 2023.

She also inaugurated the Environment Fair-2023, National Tree Plantation Campaign and Tree Fair-2023.

The PM said they have been implementing the

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina plants a sapling on the Gono Bhaban premises yesterday, marking World Environment Day.

PHOTO: PID

1 dead, 101 more hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One more dengue patient died and 101 were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday.

With the new death, all in Dhaka, the total number of deaths in dengue rose to 17 this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The total number of dengue cases this year rose to 2,477, of whom 696 are from outside Dhaka.

Some 392 dengue patients are still

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Shun plastic, plant more trees

Speakers tell event marking World Environment Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to the growing population and lack of arable land per capita, the country must preserve the environment and plant more trees to provide a healthy and secure living environment for future generations, said Information Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday.

He was addressing an event organised by the environment ministry, marking World Environment Day, at Bangabandu International Conference Centre, as the chief guest.

He also called for coordinated efforts among all the stakeholders to protect the environment.

Environment Minister Shahab Uddin underscored the need to stop the use of plastic and polythene. "We have adopted a national action plan to reduce plastic pollution, and by 2030, tree coverage will increase from the current 22.37 percent to 25 percent," he said.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of standing committee of the environment ministry, said the planet is currently facing

three challenges – climate change, losing biodiversity and plastic pollution. "Bangladesh is no exception to this. The ministry has to take the lead to fight those," he said.

Meanwhile, in a press release, Amirul Razib, convener of Movement to Protect Tree of Satmasjid

“The planet is currently facing three challenges – climate change, losing biodiversity and plastic pollution. Bangladesh is no exception to this.”

SABER HOSSAIN CHOWDHURY

Road, said the government must stop felling trees, filling up waterbodies and clearing forest in the name of development. "This tree felling spree going on at a time when people are struggling to cope up with the sweltering heat," he said.

He urged the government to bring those who are involved in the tree felling at the capital's road dividers to book.

Filling up DIT pond illegal, punishable

Bela serves notice to DSCC mayor, govt agencies, officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) yesterday served a legal notice to Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, some other government agencies and its officials, and individuals to protect the DIT plot pond at ward-47 under DSCC.

S Hasanul Banna, advocate of Bangladesh Supreme Court and lawyer of Bela, served the notice to the DSCC mayor, the land ministry, secretary to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Rajuk chairman, director general of the Department

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Budget reflects no concern for environment

Speakers tell discussion, demand 3.2pc of GDP for climate adaptation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should allocate 3.2 percent of the GDP for climate adaptation in the proposed national budget, since this will prepare the country to effectively combat the risks posed by climate change, said speakers at a programme yesterday.

Under the recently proposed national budget, an allocation of Tk 37,051 crore has been made for climate-related initiatives. It represents 4.86 percent of the total budget and 0.74 percent of GDP.

Civil Society (CSOs) and experts have voiced concerns that this budget allocation falls short of adequately addressing climate change challenges.

Climate change causes an economic loss of 2-3 percent of GDP each year. Failure to allocate adequate allocation in this sector could hinder the country's sustainable development.

COAST Foundation, Center for Participatory

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

JS body gets 90 more days to examine media bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Broadcast Ministry yesterday got another 90 days to examine the much-debated-about Mass Media Employees (Services Conditions) Bill 2022.

This is for the fourth time that the chairman of the parliamentary watchdog Hasanul Huq Inu sought the time in parliament as the committee couldn't scrutinise the bill for placing it before the House within the stipulated time.

The House yesterday unanimously approved the proposal.

On March 28 last year, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud placed the bill and it was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the respective ministry for scrutiny.

The committee earlier in June and August last

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Amid scorching heat, residents of the capital's Ahmedbagh queue up in front the area's water pump with cans to collect drinking water, following a power cut yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

9.43pc pass DU 'Ka' unit entry test

DU CORRESPONDENT

The admission test results for "Ka" unit under the science faculty of Dhaka University for 2022-23 session were published yesterday, with the pass rate being 9.43 percent.

A total of 11,109 students passed this year among 1,17,763 candidates who sat for the examination. A total of 1,851 students can be admitted under the unit.

Results are available at the university website and can also be received via SMS from mobile phone operators.

BR to launch 'mango special train' June 8

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With almost half of the season gone, Bangladesh Railway has decided to launch a special train service to transport mango from June 8 from Chapainawabganj and Rajshahi to Dhaka.

In 2020, the government began the "mango special train" to help growers' transporting their goods amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, the service may run only for two weeks as BR has to operate "Cattle Special Train" ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha, raising questions about the feasibility of the service.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan will inaugurate the "mango special



train" service at Chapainawabganj Railway Station on June 8, Asim Kumar Talukder, general manager (west) of BR, told The Daily Star yesterday.

One train will be operated every day from Chapainawabganj at 4:00pm and will take mangos from Rohanpur,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

No reg for parties that fail to meet criteria

Says EC Alamgir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Md Alamgir yesterday said they will not register parties that fail to meet their criteria.

He said this while speaking to journalists at his EC office.

The EC will scrutinise the applications and later publish an advertisement in the media. This way, people will get the chance to object, following which the EC will hold hearing before issuing registrations. Parties that meet all the conditions will only be given registrations, he added.

Only 12 of the 93 political parties, that had applied for a registration, were able to meet all the criteria during the preliminary selection process. The EC plans to complete their registration process by this month if they manage to keep up with the requirements.

The political parties that survived the preliminary selection are – Amar Bangladesh Party, Bangladesh Nationalist Movement, Bangladesh Humanist Party, Gono Odhikar Parishad, Nagorik Oikya, Bangladesh Sanatan Party, Bangladesh Supreme Party, Bangladesh Labour Party, Bangladesh Minority Janata Party, Bangladesh People's Party, Democratic Party, and Bangladesh Liberal Democratic Party.

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Plant trees

FROM PAGE 3
tree plantation programme on a massive scale so that Bangladesh would be more beautiful and developed.

She asked the people to plant trees in every available place and to bring every area under production to grow fruits and vegetables amid the global price hike of commodities.

Noting that many developed countries are also struggling due to the global high inflation, she said the government will continue efforts to protect the people of the country. She asked the students to plant trees on the premises of their schools, colleges and universities.

The AL president said her party will start the tree plantation campaign on the first day of Bangla month Ashar as it did in the previous years.

The environment fair is being held at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, adjacent to Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, from June 5 to 12. The fair is open for visitors from 10:00am to 8:00pm every day. The tree fair 2023 is being held from June 5 to June 26 and July 1 to July 12, keeping a 4-day break due to Eid-ul-Azha.

1 dead, 101 more

FROM PAGE 3
undergoing treatment while 2,068 have been released from hospitals.

Experts continue to urge the authorities concerned to conduct extensive drives identifying clusters of Aedes mosquitoes as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Md Atiqul Islam urged all imams and khatibs of mosques to play a vital role in controlling Aedes mosquitoes by raising awareness among people.

He said this while addressing a views-exchange meeting with imams and khatibs of mosques in DNCC.

The mayor said they could make people aware during the pandemic and they can now play a similar role regarding dengue.

The total number of deaths in dengue was 281 last year while the total number of cases was 62,382, of whom 23,162 were from outside Dhaka, according to the DGHS.

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D-72

KHULNA CITY POLLS

Councillor candidates the centre of attention

DIPANKAR ROY and MD ABBAS

Voters have been showing more interest towards councillor candidates rather than mayoral ones in the upcoming Khulna City polls, scheduled for June 12.

They said no strong candidate is running the mayoral race against the Awami League candidate.

Meanwhile, there is considerable enthusiasm among voters for councillor candidates. As no party, including the ruling Awami League, is endorsing councillor candidates, they are tirelessly campaigning to win over voters.

In most wards, BNP leaders have chosen not to participate in the councillor elections. Eight BNP members who defied the party's decision and are contesting for councillor positions, have been expelled from the party.

In 26 out of the city's 31 general wards, several Awami League leaders are competing for councillor positions. Similarly, in all 10 wards reserved for women, multiple party leaders are vying for these positions.

In the current election, AL has a single candidate in only five out of the 31 general wards of the city corporation. These candidates include SM Khurshid Ahmed Tona in ward 13, ZA Mahmood Don in



Posters of various councillor candidates have flooded Khulna city. This photo was taken in Boyra intersection. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

ward 24, Ali Akbar Tipu in ward 25, Golam Maula Shanu in ward 26, and Rafiuddin Ahmed Rafi, who is the brother of the current army chief.

Additionally, two AL supporters from ward 13 and ward 27 have been elected unopposed as councillors.

Md Babul Rana, general secretary of the AL city unit, said the party has extended support to the candidate from ward 27, while the remaining wards are open.

Analysing the data, it was found that four out of the five candidates in ward 3 are AL supporters. Incumbent councillor Abdus

Salam, AL ward general secretary Maksud Hasan Piku, Sramik League leader Abzal Jamaddar, and city unit Jubo League member Kazi Ibrahim Marshall are all councillor candidates. Similar scenarios are seen in most of the wards.

Mahbub Kaiser, former joint secretary of the Khulna City unit BNP and councillor candidate for ward 22, expressed that voters are eager to vote for them. "Voters will not consider party affiliation when voting for councillors. They will choose candidates based on their previous records and credentials."

Budget reflects no

FROM PAGE 3
Research & Development (CPRD), Centre for Sustainable Rural Livelihood (CSRL), EquityBD, An Organisation for Socio-Economic Development (AOSED)-Khulna, Climate Action Network on South Asia-Bangladesh (CANSABD) and LEDARS Satkhira jointly came up with this demand in a discussion held at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

Addressing the event, Syed Aminul Hoque, director of COAST Foundation, stressed that successful implementation of government plans, such as the Delta Plan 2100, Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan 2030, and National Determined Plan, require an annual allocation of around 3.2 percent of the GDP.

Jiaul Haque Mukta, president of CSRL, called for skillful planning and adequate allocation of funds for climate change adaptation.

Shamsuddoha, executive director of CPRD, highlighted the concerned ministries' lack of capability to effectively utilise financial resources and implement project-based planning.

"Separate climate finance mechanism is required to overcome this challenge," he said.

Ferdous Ara Rumea, co-director of the COAST Foundation, demanded climate financing as part of a safety net programme for climate-vulnerable women.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, executive director of COAST Foundation and moderator of the session, suggested that disaster risk reduction, social development, technical education, and employment generation programmes could be effectively implemented under this comprehensive plan, ensuring a strong protection system for the coastal population.

JS body gets 90 more

FROM PAGE 3
year sought 60 days and in January 90 days for scrutiny. According to the source, the Jatiya Sangsad committee did not sit for a single meeting till now.

Various journalist organisations and owner associations, and Transparency International Bangladesh have opposed various sections of the proposed law.

Filling up DIT pond

FROM PAGE 3
of Environment (DoE), Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner, director of (Dhaka metropolitan) DoE, OC of Shyampur Model Police station, councillor of ward 47 Shahana Akhtar, and Noushad Ahmed, Md Zakir Hossain and others.

In the notice, they stated that filling up the pond without serving any national interest is an illegal, punishable offence, regardless of its ownership.

The DIT plot pond is on a land of around 4 acres. A total of 13.59 acres of adjacent land were acquired

The Editors' Council (Sampadak Parishad) has said the space for independent media will shrink further if the proposed bill is passed in parliament.

The wages and benefits of journalists, employees and press workers, artists of broadcast, online, and print media outlets would be fixed under the proposed law.

in favour of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk).

Later, one Noushad Ahmed and others filed a petition to the High Court to release the land. The court ordered in favour of the petitioner. Rajuk's appeals were dismissed.

On June 2, locals announced a siege programme and human chain to protect the over sixty-year-old pond. However, the programme was cancelled as the organisers did not have authorisation from the police.

GRAMEEN KALYAN, TELECOM TRUST

HC bench sends 13 petitions to CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday refused to continue the hearing of 13 petitions, filed by Grameen Kalyan and Grameen Telecom Trust, and sent those to the chief justice for a decision.

The two non-profitable and charitable companies established by Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, filed the petitions – five writ and eight income tax reference applications – since 2015 to 2020 challenging the legality of the government imposing several hundred crores of taka as income tax.

Chief Justice Hasan Fozz Siddique may now assign another HC bench for hearing and disposing of the petitions.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Md Iqbal Kabir Lytton and Justice SM Maniruzzaman passed the order as Justice Maniruzzaman had been involved in the cases as a party on behalf of the state when he was a deputy attorney general before he was appointed as judge of this court.

Petitioners' lawyer Fida M Kamal had earlier mentioned this point before the bench during hearing of the petitions.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin represented the state during the hearing.

BR to launch mango

FROM PAGE 3
Rajshahi, Arani, Abdulpur and Ishwari stations, he said. However, they will allow mangoes from other stations too if a large amount of the fruit is pre-booked from those stations, he added.

To transport a kg of mango, one has to pay Tk 1.3, he added. The mango session in Chapainawganj started in the third week of May this year and will continue till mid-July, while mango harvesting in Rajshahi formally started on May 4 and gained

momentum from May 15. On May 16, Deputy Commissioner of Chapainawganj AKM Galiv Khan said BR will launch Mango Special Train from May 20.

Asked about the delay, a top BR official, requesting anonymity, said a number of important issues including inauguration of Chilahati Express by PM on June 4, activities related to the handover ceremony of 20 Indian locomotives on May 23, left little time for launching the service this year.

Violation of polls

FROM PAGE 5
Islamic Andolon Bangladesh mayoral candidate Mahmudul Hasan said, "We have not hung any banners but we started using plastic lamination after rain damaged our posters."

"The matter was discussed with the divisional and district commissioner in the recent

coordination meeting. A total of 14 executive magistrates are physically monitoring the campaigns. Legal steps will be taken against the rule violators," said Faysal Kader, Sylhet regional election officer and returning officer of SCC polls.

The SCC polls are slated for June 21.

2,379 trees felled

FROM PAGE 5
correspondent saw that trees are being cut on both sides of the road from the Kagmari intersection to Shamsan Ghat in Tangail town. Among those felled trees were mango, mahogany and banyan trees.

Azad Khan Bhasani, grandson of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and a Santosh resident, said among the trees cut on both sides of the road for development were many ancient ones from the zamindari period.

"These trees provided us with fruits and shade... The future generations will never see such old trees again."

"There is no doubt that the country is becoming increasingly unlivable with the rising heat over time. On the other hand, trees are being cut down indiscriminately, further contributing to the disaster. The authorities concerned should strive to implement any development plan in the future without harming trees," he added.

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CE/EOI No. 01/2023/E-752 Dated: 05-06-2023
1 Ministry/Division Ministry of Education.
2 Agency/procuring entity name Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (BUET).
3 Procuring entity name Chief Engineer, BUET.
4 Invitation for Mentioned in Identification of Packages (SI. No. 17)
5 Procuring entity district Dhaka, Bangladesh.
6 Expression of Interest for Selection of Supply & Service.
7 EOI Ref No. CE/EOI No-01/2023/E-752 Date: 05.06.2023
8 Budget and source of funds Revenue Budget of BUET.
9 EOI Package No. Mentioned in SI. No. 17
10 EOI publication date 05/06/2023
11 EOI last selling date 20/06/2023 (During office hours)
12 EOI closing date and time up to 21/06/2023 at 12:45pm (Dropping other days during office hours)
13 EOI opening date and time 21/06/2023 at 03:00pm. EOI shall be opened in presence of tenderer/participants/ authorized representative of (if any).
14 Name & address of the office(s) Dr. Engr. A.K.M Jahangir Alam PENG, Chief Engineer, Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology, Dhaka-1000.
Selling EOI document (principal) Office of the Chief Engineer, BUET, Dhaka.
Selling EOI document (others) Director, Planning and Development, BUET, Dhaka.
Receiving EOI document Office of the Chief Engineer, BUET, Dhaka.
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18 Name of official inviting EOI Dr. Engr. A.K.M Jahangir Alam PENG.
19 Designation of official inviting EOI Chief Engineer
20 Address of official inviting EOI Office of the Chief Engineer, BUET, Dhaka-1000.
21 Contract details of official inviting EOI Office of the Chief Engineer, BUET, Dhaka-1000.
22 Validity of EOI 90 days from the date of tender opening.
23 Special instruction The tenderer/participant must submit certified copy of (a) Valid trade license (b) Income tax certificate (c) Letter of Commitment for Bank's Undertaking for Line of Credit (d) VAT Registration certificate (e) Experience certificate (with work order). Price of EOI document must be deposited in BUET A/C, Sonali Bank BUET Branch, Dhaka by prescribed form or must be submitted a Bank Draft/ Pay Order in favour of Comptroller, BUET issued from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh located in Dhaka City amounting to Taka mentioned in SI. No. 16. The tenderer or their authorized representatives are allowed to attend the opening of EOI. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept any EOI, to annul the EOI process, or to reject any or all EOI at any time prior to contact award.
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Applications are invited from eligible Bangladeshi candidates for the post of Procurement Officer at Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology. The details regarding the Qualifications, Experiences and other information are available in the AUST website: www.aust.edu. The last date of application is 18 June 2023 and application should be sent together with all the supporting documents & two PP Photographs to regr@aust.edu with cc to vc@aust.edu, and the hard copy to the Registrar, Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, 141-142 Love Road, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208.

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This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any branch of any registered banks within the date mentioned in the tender notice. Further information & guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).
Prof. Sharif Atiquzzaman
Principal
Govt. Brajalal College, Khulna
GD-991

To save a Banyan tree

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Tangail

Amid the tree felling spree in Tangail in name of development work, the people of Ghatail's Gorjana village in the district have taken an initiative to save an ancient Banyan tree.

People of all ages used to enjoy the shade of the tree on the bank of the Jhenai river. However, due to the continuous river erosion, the ancient tree was about to be devoured.

Some villagers said they were thinking about how they could protect the ancient tree from erosion. Nearby, an earthwork was going on under the food-for-work programme.

They went there and requested the authorities to help them to protect the tree. On request, the earth was filled from the river to the base of the tree with an excavator.

Kamal Hossain, principal of a local school, said when trees are being cut in different places, the initiative taken by the villagers is commendable.



A SYMBOL OF RESILIENCE... Amid the tree felling frenzy, the people of Gorjana village in Tangail unite to save an ancient Banyan tree from the relentless river erosion. The community rallied together to protect this natural wonder and their efforts stand as a testament of the power of community.

PHOTO: STAR

TANGAIL-ARICHA HIGHWAY 2,379 trees felled for road expansion

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Around 2,379 roadside trees are being cut for the development work of the Tangail Aricha highway. These include mango, berry, jackfruit, mahogany, banyan and numerous other old trees.

According to the Roads and Highway Department (RHD), the government has undertaken the project of expanding the highway which goes from Manikganj to Tangail. The highway directly links Mymensingh and Dhaka divisions.

The total cost of its implementation has been estimated at Tk 1,635 crore.

Aliul Hossain, executive engineer of Tangail RHD, said the work has already started, for which, the trees are being cut.

The arboriculture department has already sold the trees through tender, he added.

Meer Mukut Abu Saeed, executive officer of the arboriculture department, said 1,370 trees are being cut on the Delduar-Lauhati-Saturia road under the highway development project.

Their survey value was estimated at Tk 16,56,000. They were sold through tender for Tk 21,60,000.

On the other hand, 1,009 trees are being cut on the Aricha-Ghior-Daulatpur-Nagarpur road under the same project. The survey price of these was estimated at Tk 19,95,000 and were sold at 27,50,000.

During a recent visit to the area, this

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



SYLHET CITY POLLS

JP suspends Yahya Chowdhury

He sought vote for AL at meeting

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Sylhet

Jatiya Party has suspended former parliamentarian and party's central vice chairman Yahya Chowdhury as he failed to show a valid cause for supporting Awami League mayor candidate in the Sylhet city polls.

JP chief GM Quader took the decision on Sunday as per the recommendation of party secretary general Mujibul Haque. JP central office secretary MA Razzak Khan, the signatory of the notice, confirmed the information. This correspondent could get not in touch with Yahya despite repeated attempts.

On May 14, Yahya was served a show-cause notice by the party for supporting AL candidate Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury.

Yahya on May 12 attended a meeting organised in support of the AL candidate where he sought vote for him.

Violation of polls code rampant

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Violating the electoral code of conduct, most of the mayoral and councillor candidates in Sylhet City Corporation elections have been seen putting up laminated posters and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) banners around the city roads.

As single-use plastic poses a serious threat to the environment, the High Court imposed a ban on using laminated posters for electoral campaigns in January 2020. The

vehicular showdown is permitted during campaigns. Section 13 of the code of conduct states, violation of these rules may lead to six months imprisonment or a fine of up to Tk 50,000.

Paper posters were initially hung by all the candidates. Later, they opted for laminated posters after all their posters were damaged in the rain on June 2, the same day the electoral symbols were distributed.

Several candidates, including the ruling Awami League and Jatiya Party's mayoral contenders, have put up PVC



Though the Election Commission has banned the use of laminated banners and posters, most of the candidates and their supporters continue to put up such campaign materials all over the Sylhet city, flouting rules.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Election Commission also claimed to have alarmed the poll contesters repeatedly.

However, no strict action has been taken by the authority in this regard.

Meanwhile, microphones are being used, motorbike processions are also being arranged as a part of the election campaigns, both of which are also against the electoral code.

According to the City Polls (Code of Conduct) Rules 2016, there is no provision to put up banners larger than the size of a poster (60cm by 45cm). The rules allow each candidate to use only one microphone at a time while addressing the locals in a ward and no

banners around the city. Many are bringing out motorbike processions, and using multiple microphones as a part of their electoral campaigns.

JP candidate Nazrul Islam said, "I have only put up a few banners. I don't think of it as a violation of the electoral code. However, the AL candidate has put banners all around the city but the authorities have turned a blind eye to the issue."

"I was not aware of the PVC banners. I only put up paper posters. We are working on taking the banners down," said AL mayoral candidate Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

According to the polls code, there is no provision to put up banners larger than the size of a poster (60cm by 45cm). The rules allow each candidate to use only one microphone at a time while addressing people and no vehicular showdown is permitted. Section 13 of the code of conduct states, violation of these rules may lead to six months imprisonment or a fine of up to Tk 50,000.

PRAYER TIMING
JUNE 6

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-45	5-00	6-45	8-15
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-50	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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GD-983

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

স্বাস্থ্য শিক্ষা অধিদপ্তর
মহাখালী, ঢাকা-১২১২
www.dgme.gov.bd

তারিখঃ ০৫.০৬.২০২৩খ্রিঃ

নং-৫৯.১৪.০০০০.১০৩.৩১.০০১.২৩.৬৩০

২০২২-২০২৩খ্রিঃ শিক্ষাবর্ষে বেসরকারি মেডিকেল কলেজে এমবিবিএস কোর্সের ভর্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তি

‘বাংলাদেশ মেডিকেল এন্ড ডেন্টাল কাউন্সিল’ কর্তৃক প্রণীত ভর্তি নীতিমালা-২০২৩ অনুযায়ী অনলাইনে নির্ধারিত ছকে আবেদন করতে হবে

- অনুমোদিত বেসরকারি মেডিকেল কলেজসমূহে ভর্তিগ্ৰহণার্থী শিক্ষার্থীদের টেলিটক এর মাধ্যমে অনলাইনে (<http://dgme.teletalk.com.bd>) আবেদন করতে হবে। ২০২২-২০২৩খ্রিঃ শিক্ষাবর্ষে এমবিবিএস ভর্তি পরীক্ষায় কৃতকার্য প্রার্থীরা অনলাইনে আবেদন প্রক্রিয়ায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন।
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ফোনঃ ৪৮৮১১২০০
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ভিডি-৯৯৫

বাংলাদেশ শিল্পকলা একাডেমির সুবর্ণজয়ন্তী উদযাপনের লক্ষ্যে
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গান ও লোগো আহ্বান

জাতীয় সংস্কৃতির গৌরবময় বিকাশকে অব্যাহত রাখতে ১৯৭৪ সালের ১৯ ফেব্রুয়ারি জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান বাংলাদেশ শিল্পকলা একাডেমি প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন। আগামী ১৯ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৪ বাংলাদেশ শিল্পকলা একাডেমি ৫০ বছরে পদার্পণ করবে।

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CP-994

After giving the audience two back-to-back hits with *Poran* and *Damal*, popular actress Bidya Sinha Mim became the talk of the town last year. Now, the talented actress is venturing into the world of cybercrime thrillers with her film, *Antarjal*, which will be released this Eid-ul-Azha. She also received the award for Best Actress in Kolkata at "Tele Cine Awards" yesterday.

Mim gains momentum ahead of ANTARJAL

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Apart from this, she will also be making her OTT debut with the new web-series titled, *Mission HuntDown*.

In a candid conversation with The Daily Star, Mim shared insights about her upcoming movie, and much more.

You have received the Best Actress award for your film "Poran" at India's Tele-Cine Awards. How do you feel?

It feels amazing. Especially after acting in my own country's movie, getting recognition from another country is truly heartwarming. This award will undoubtedly add a new dimension to my career. It really gave me momentum ahead of the release of my upcoming projects.

Do you think our audience will enjoy "Antarjal"?

I believe the audience will embrace

"Antarjal" wholeheartedly, since it is Bangladesh's first cyberthriller. Those who are students, thriller enthusiasts and interested in cyber-related subjects in general, will particularly enjoy it. This film will give audiences a Hollywood-like experience.

Tell us about your character in the film.

Last year, "Poran" was released around the same time. In this film, the audience won't see me smiling at all. So, this was a challenging role for me. I love to blend into different types of characters.

Is there anything you want to tell your fans?

I have love and faith in my audience.

My fans also love me. They have showered me with love for the film, "Poran". I believe they will show the same level of love for "Antarjal" as well. I urge the audience to watch "Antarjal" in theatres, with their friends and family.



PHOTO: SHEKHA MEHEDI TORSHED



'Taqdeer' gets an official Telugu remake

After gaining several accolades and winning the hearts of the audience in Bangladesh, Hoichoi's popular web-series, *Taqdeer*, has gotten its own Telugu remake. The new series will be released on Disney+ Hotstar.

The official remake has been titled *Dayaa*, directed by Pavan Sadineni. The series will star JD Chakravarthy, Eesha Rebba, Remya Nambesan, Prudhvi Raj, Kamal Kamaraju, and Josh Ravi in key roles.

Taqdeer director, Syed Ahmed Shawki confirmed the news to The Daily Star and said that the shooting of *Dayaa* has already been completed.

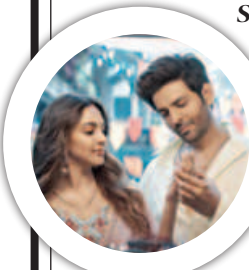
In the series, Chanchal Chowdhury plays a man who gets entangled in a murder scandal, when he finds a mysterious corpse in his freezer van.

Kartik-Kiara duo will hit theatres this June

The trailer of the Kartik Aaryan and Kiara Advani starrer romantic film, *Satyaprem Ki Katha* was released today. This romantic film reunites the dynamic duo of Kartik Aaryan and Kiara Advani, who previously shared the screen in the blockbuster film, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*.

Directed by Sameer Vidwans, *Satyaprem Ki Katha* takes us on a nostalgic journey with its delightful 90s elements. Throughout the trailer, we witness Kartik's relentless pursuit of Kiara for marriage and his earnest attempts to impress her.

Satyaprem Ki Katha also stars Supriya Pathak Kapur, Gajraj Rao, Siddharth Randheria, Anooradha Patel, Rajpal Yadav, Nirmite Saawaant, and Shikha Talsania, among others. The film is set to grace the silver screen on June 29.



NEWS

Govt counting on power plants under trial run

FROM PAGE 12

It has been supplying around 750MW daily since April 6. In recent times, the supply went over 1,000MW.

Hossain said, due to some transmission issues, they were unable to receive the total 1,496MW from the Adani Power. "It will be solved by next week."

Yesterday, Power Division officials met Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, and informed him of a three-phase outline to improve the ongoing power situation.

In the last two weeks, the supply shortage was between 2,500MW and 3,000MW.

The country produced 13,859MW against the demand of 15,700MW as of 9:00pm yesterday.

Amid the heatwave, people across the country are suffering immensely as power cuts are now more frequent. Yesterday, in Dhaka there were outages of at least four to five hours on average and over eight to 10 hours in rural areas.

According to the daily production report of the Power Grid Company

of Bangladesh, four power plants in Khulna and Chattogram with a combined production capacity of 1,365MW are on test runs.

Those are coal-fired SS Power, furnace oil-fired Khulna 330MW Power Plant, gas-fired Khulna 225MW Power Plant, and gas-fired Mirsharai 150MW Power Plant.

At least three of them have completed the reliability tests that require them to continuously run for 72 hours at full load, according to an official of the Power Division.

Mohammad Hossain said, "Regardless of the power plants' condition, the people will get electricity."

In a Facebook post yesterday, State Minister Nasrul Hamid regretted the situation.

"Before 2008, people were out of electricity for 16-18 hours a day. We have the capacity of producing 27,361MW, including captive power. We are capable of generating power as per demand. But due to the global fuel crisis and the devaluation of taka against dollar, imports of primary fuel have been affected," he wrote.

Two siblings die

FROM PAGE 12

He said the employees asked them to enter the house after two to three hours. The family members, however, took extra precautions and returned to the house after about 10 hours.

The inspector said all the family members fell sick and the children had to be rushed to a nearby private hospital.

Zayan died there on Sunday morning and Zahin breathed his last later that night, the inspector added.

The reason for their deaths is believed to be poisoning from the pesticides, he said.

Their sister is still undergoing treatment at the hospital, police said.

The family members and relatives alleged that the incident happened because of the "incompetent" staff of the pest control service.

When this correspondent called the cleaning and pest control service provider, a man, without identifying himself, said a technical team who worked at the house is now at Bhatara Police Station.

Md Shohidullah, deputy commissioner of Gulshan Division Police, said they allowed the family to bury the body of one child without an autopsy.

The other child's body was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue for autopsy.

When asked, the father said he was not sure what caused the death of his elder son on Sunday morning. So he went for the burial without an autopsy.

However, after the death of his second son, he began suspecting that the pesticides used by the service provider might have something to do with it.

Morgue sources said they primarily suspected that the boy died due to pesticide poisoning.

More will be known after the release of the forensic lab report, they added.

Till the filing of this report at 10:00pm, no case was registered with any of the police stations in the capital.

Dhaka to clear

FROM PAGE 12

political opponents; the government has also persecuted ethnic and religious minorities in Bangladesh."

Shahriar said such letters were sent by US congressmen in the past and more letters may be sent in future as the national election is approaching.

"But, as I said, we will reach out to all these members. Not only them, we will regularly update all those who have interest in the issues covered in the letter."

Asked for comments on Japanese Ambassador Iwama Kiminori's meeting some BNP leaders in Dhaka on Sunday and the discussion on the next parliamentary polls, Shahriar said he had no details on that.

He, however, said there was a time about six months ago when foreign ambassadors started talking about Bangladesh's internal issues. "If they do it again and go beyond their limits, the government will take necessary measures."

The state minister said the government has not noticed any such comments recently.

About speculations that some other countries may follow the new US visa policy, he said these are nothing but rumours and propaganda.

Under the visa policy, the US will restrict visas for Bangladeshis believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

Shahriar said as the general election approaches, more propaganda will be carried out and the mainstream media should verify all those information before publishing.

He the government does not believe in the policy of continuing relationship with a country while being under pressure.

Asked about Dhaka's reactions to the setting up of a mural in India's new parliament building that has triggered concerns in Nepal and Pakistan as it is being interpreted as a map of "Akhand Bharat" comprising parts of several neighbouring countries, the state minister said Dhaka has asked its mission in New Delhi for clarification.

The mural, as explained by the Indian foreign ministry, is the map of the Ashoka empire which existed 300 years before Christ, he added. "It has nothing to do with politics. This is not the map of 2023. There is nothing to be confused about," said Shahriar.

Deprived of funds

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million), Bangladesh (\$214.1 million), Algeria (\$196.3 million), Pakistan (\$188.2 million), and Lebanon (\$141.2 million).

The IATA urged governments to abide by international agreements and treaty obligations to enable airlines to repatriate the funds.

Officials of foreign carriers in Dhaka said they have to bring in US dollars to pay for refuelling their planes in Bangladesh even though they have money in Bangladesh.

A senior official of Turkish Airlines said, "We were forced to reduce the number of flights from Dhaka to minimise loss. From Bangladesh, we are not selling tickets of low fares. We are selling these tickets online from

outside Bangladesh or through our agents.

"We are discouraging Bangladeshi people from buying tickets from Dhaka as it will be expensive," the official added.

Ejaz Kadry, sales and station official at Turkish Airlines, said, "Usually an airline tries to sell as many tickets as possible. But we are trying to sell fewer from Dhaka so that we don't pile up the money we cannot repatriate."

Officials of Saudia and Singapore Airlines echoed Kadry.

An official of a foreign carrier said, "If the situation does not improve, foreign airlines will be forced to stop their operations here which will damage Bangladesh's image

abroad."

ATAB in January wrote to the civil aviation and tourism ministry, seeking its intervention. It said foreign airlines are now reluctant to do business in Bangladesh and are flying to destinations where profits are higher.

Aviation Expert Kazi Wahidul Alam said due to the reduction of flight frequencies of airlines, the number of available seats has dropped driving ticket prices high.

He said carriers will be forced to reduce flights if they cannot send the money back home on time.

Around 30 foreign carriers operate around 90 international flights from Dhaka daily, according to sources at the Dhaka airport.

The picture doesn't reflect the reality

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to unite the two factions and get the Hasnat-led faction to work for Abul Khair Abdullah, the AL mayor candidate in Barishal city. Rather, with the election nearing, the rift between the two brothers over the party mayor nominee is widening, said locals.

Hasnat's son is incumbent BCC Mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah.

On Sunday, Anisur Rahman Sharif, a member of ward-14 unit AL, alleged that Hasant Abdulalh gave Tk 3 crore to Islami Andolon Bangladesh (IAB) mayor nominee Syed Muhammad Faizul Karim's campaign.

"He has fielded at least three candidates in each of 10 wards to compete against us [loyalists to Khair]. Around Tk 30 lakh was distributed for their election expenditure," Anisur claimed at a press conference.

After his statement, Anisur was suspended from the party by the city unit AL on Sunday night.

The Daily Star could not reach Hasant Abdulalh for his comments.

Earlier, Anisur alleged that the unit's AL General Secretary Safin Mahmud Tarik was working for a pro-IAB councillor aspirant.

Tarik, who is known as a supporter of Hasnat, however, refuted the allegation and accused Anisur of beating him.

Sources inside the local AL said

such conflicts exist in at least 15 out of 30 wards of the Barishal city.

On Friday night, at least 10 people were injured as supporters of two councillor aspirants clashed at a meeting in the presence of Khair Abdullah in the city's Bandroad area.

Shekhar Das, a supporter of Khair Abdullah, was reportedly behind this clash as he did not allow an activist of councillor aspirant Joynal Abedin, a supporter of the incumbent mayor, to get on the stage.

General Secretary Parimol Dash of city unit Sramik League, also a supporter of Hasnat, alleged that his men were harassed by police.

Saiful Islam, commissioner of Barishal Metropolitan Police, said, "Police are not harassing or intimidating anybody... Those who are accused in any criminal cases are only being questioned."

Sources in both factions told this newspaper that the Khair- and Hasnat-led factions formed separate campaign committees.

Talking to The Daily Star, Sarwar Hossain Razib, a joint general secretary of the city unit AL and a supporter of Sadiq, said they have been campaigning separately.

The nine-member AL central coordination team is trying hard to end the feud.

During a closed-door meeting of the team on Sunday night, AL

Presidium Member Jahangir Kabir Nanak, said, "We should remember that there is no alternative to unity. We have to be united to get Abul Khair Abdullah elected in the Barishal City Corporation election."

"... the party has many weaknesses. We have to give momentum to the electoral campaign in every ward by bypassing those. Everyone should be treated as an equal contender," said meeting sources, quoting Nanak as saying.

Ever since the AL on April 15 picked Khair, Mayor Sadiq has been trying to keep his firm grip on Barishal as Khair has been gaining strength, locals and AL insiders said.

Trove of 750 looted

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to the ministry statement.

There are also precious gems set in gold, silver, bronze, as well as bone and amber.

Other pieces include weapons, sarcophagi, funerary urns, ritual objects, furnishings in bronze and marble, mosaic and painted decorations.

The artifacts originate from "clandestine excavations on Italian territory" and were illegally obtained by Symes Ltd, the company owned by Symes, a major trafficker of cultural goods, according to the ministry statement.

NEW SETTLEMENTS Blinken warns against Israeli expansion

REUTERS, Washington

Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged continued US commitment to both Israel's security and a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict yesterday, but warned the expansion of Jewish settlements would be an obstacle to peace.

In a speech to the pro-Israel lobby group AIPAC, Blinken also cautioned that moves toward annexation of the Israeli-occupied West Bank or that disrupt the status quo at holy sites would hurt the prospects for a two-state solution. He didn't name the specific holy sites he was referring to.

"Settlement expansion clearly presents an obstacle to the horizon of hope that we seek," Blinken said to muted response from the audience. The top US diplomat drew widespread applause when he outlined the longstanding American commitment to Israel.

SCHOOL POISONING Around 60 Afghan girls hospitalised

REUTERS, Kabul

Around 60 Afghan girls were hospitalised after being poisoned at their school in northern Afghanistan, police said yesterday.

The poisoning, which targeted a girls' school in the Afghan province of Sar-e Pol, comes after intense scrutiny of girls' education in the war-torn nation since the Taliban took over and barred most teenage female students and after a wave of poison attacks on girls' schools in neighbouring Iran.

"Some unknown people entered a girls' ... school in Sancharak District ... and poisoned the classes, when the girls come to classes they got poisoned," said Den Mohammad Nazari, Sar-e-Pol's police spokesperson, without elaborating on which substance was used or who was thought to be behind the incident.

Nazari said the girls had been taken to hospital but were in "good condition." No one had been arrested.

During Afghanistan's previous foreign-backed government, several poisoning attacks on girls' schools had taken place. The Taliban administration has prevented most female students from attending high school and university.

No visible step to enforce HC order

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pollute the soil, hamper the growth of plants and resist water recharging of the ground water, he added.

According to a World Bank study, Bangladesh's annual per capita plastic consumption in urban areas tripled to 9.0 kg in 2020 from 3.0 kg in 2005.

Consumption of packaging materials (plastic bags, etc.) increased fivefold from 2005 to 2020. Only 31 percent of 977,000 tonnes of plastic, consumed in 2020, were recycled. Single-use plastic items like shopping bags and wrappers are more mismanaged than other plastic items, says the WB study published in 2021.

Single-use plastic items pile up on coastlines and cram canals in Chattogram, Patuakhali, Khulna and Cox's Bazar.

The Chaktai canal in Chattogram has been choked by many types of single-use plastic packets, water and soft drink bottles, and empty packets of biscuits and chips. The canal is connected to the Karnaphuli, the port city's lifeline, reports our Chattogram correspondent.

Situation of other canals in the port city is not much different. Moderate or heavy rainfall, as a result, causes the streets in the port city to be flooded.

Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology



Activists dressed up as evil oil executives pour fake oil over a cardboard iceberg during a protest organised by Extinction Rebellion to call for a permanent ban on oil exploration in Antarctica as part of World Environment Day in Cape Town, South Africa yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Large-scale' Ukrainian offensive thwarted

Claims Moscow; Wagner chief says Russia lost ground near Bakhmut

REUTERS, Kyiv

Moscow said yesterday it had thwarted "a large-scale" Ukrainian offensive in the south of Ukraine's Donetsk region but Russia's main mercenary leader said Russian forces had lost ground around Bakhmut further north.

Asked whether the attacks represented the start of Ukraine's long-heralded counter-offensive against Russia's invasion, Oleksiy Danilov, Secretary of Ukraine's Security and Defence Council, told Reuters: "The war continues. Until complete victory."

Russia's defence ministry said Ukraine had attacked on Sunday morning with six mechanised and two tank battalions in southern Donetsk, where Moscow has long suspected Ukraine would seek to drive a wedge through Russian-controlled territory.

"On the morning of June 4, the enemy launched a large-scale offensive in five sectors of the front in the South Donetsk direction," the defence ministry said in a statement posted on Telegram at 1:30 am Moscow time (2230 GMT).

"The enemy's goal was to break through our defences in the most vulnerable, in its opinion, sector of the front," it said. "The enemy did not achieve its tasks, it had no success."

Asked to comment, a Ukrainian military spokesperson said: "We do not have such information and we do not comment on any kind of fake."

The commander of Ukraine's ground forces, Oleksandr Syrskyi, said yesterday that Ukrainian forces continued "moving forward" near the long-contested city of Bakhmut in northern Donetsk and an armed forces video showed Russian positions under fire.

Russian mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin said Ukrainian forces had retaken part of the settlement of Berkivka, north of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine,

calling it a "disgrace".

Prigozhin's private Wagner army captured Bakhmut last month after the longest battle of the war and handed its positions there to regular Russian troops.

The daily report from Ukraine's General Staff said only that there were 29 combat clashes in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine's Centre for Strategic Communications did not address Russian statement directly but said, without providing evidence, that Russia would seek to spread lies.

"To demoralize Ukrainians and mislead the community (including their own population), Russian propagandists will spread false information about the counter-offensive, its directions, and the losses of Ukrainian army," it said.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov published a cryptic message on Twitter on Sunday, quoting Depeche Mode's track "Enjoy the Silence".

Russian war bloggers reported fighting at several points across the front, particularly around Vuhledar, some 150 km (93 miles) southwest of Bakhmut.

Russia's defence ministry released video of what it said showed several Ukrainian armoured vehicles in a field blowing up after being hit. Reuters geo-located it to near Velyka Novosilka, a village west of Vuhledar but could not verify the date.

"There is a tough fight going on," wrote prominent Russian military blogger Semyon Pegov, who blogs under the name War Gonzo, saying Ukrainian forces were attacking in the area.

The ministry said Russian forces killed 250 Ukrainian troops as well as destroying 16 tanks, three infantry fighting vehicles and 21 armoured combat vehicles. Reuters was not able to verify the figures. Both sides have exaggerated casualties suffered by the other.



Iran embassy to reopen in KSA today

AFP, Riyadh

Iran is set to reopen its embassy in Saudi Arabia today following a seven-year closure, a diplomatic source told AFP, sealing a Chinese-brokered rapprochement deal announced in March.

Saudi Arabia severed relations with Iran in 2016, after its embassy in Tehran and consulate in the northwestern city of Mashhad were attacked during protests over Riyadh's execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

Iran's diplomatic mission, which was expelled by Saudi authorities, will return under the leadership of Alireza Enayati, who previously served as Iran's ambassador to Kuwait.

"The opening of the Iranian embassy will take place today at 6:00 pm local time (1500 GMT) with the presence of the newly appointed Iranian ambassador" to Saudi Arabia, a diplomatic source in Riyadh told AFP yesterday.

Saudi Arabia has yet to confirm when it will reopen its embassy in Tehran or its pick for ambassador.

Iranian media had named Enayati as the Islamic republic's Saudi envoy last month. He had previously served as assistant to the foreign minister and director general of Gulf affairs at the foreign ministry.

After years of discord, the two Middle East heavyweights signed a surprise reconciliation agreement in China on March 10.

2024 WHITE HOUSE BID

Ex-VP Pence enters race

AFP, Washington

Republican former vice president Mike Pence yesterday launched his hotly-anticipated challenge to one-time boss Donald Trump for the party's 2024 White House nomination, setting up the unusual scenario of two running mates becoming rivals.

The 63-year-old Pence filed his nomination papers with the Federal Election Commission ahead of an official declaration to be made by video tomorrow in the early voting state of Iowa -- joining an already crowded primary field.



He spent his 2017-21 tenure as vice president honing his reputation as a loyal deputy who brought the religious right into the tent and who was willing to defend the president against any accusation.

But he became a pariah in Trumpworld after rejecting Trump's demands that he overturn the 2020 election in his role as president of the Senate.

Pence has spent much of the last two years touring early-nominating states such as Iowa, S Carolina and New Hampshire to reinforce his political vision as a "Christian, conservative, Republican -- in that order."

His entry doesn't much change the dynamics of the race, which is divided into three lanes -- runaway leader Donald Trump, Trump's closest rival Ron DeSantis, and everyone else.

EU DISINFORMATION CODE Twitter 'chose confrontation'

AFP, Brussels

Twitter "chose confrontation" by exiting a voluntary EU disinformation code of practice that lays ground rules for an incoming European law on digital services, a European Union commissioner said yesterday. "We believe this is a mistake of Twitter. Twitter has chosen the hard way. They chose confrontation," commissioner Vera Jourova said. She said Twitter's compliance with the new Digital Services Act entering force on August 25 "will be scrutinised... vigorously and urgently". The European Commission announced May 27 Twitter had decided to leave the code of practice, to which other major online platforms such as Google, Microsoft and TikTok continue to adhere.

LEADERSHIP ROLE

Ardern receives NZ top honour

REUTERS, Sydney

Former prime minister Jacinda Ardern yesterday received one of New Zealand's top honours, recognising her efforts for leading the country

through the Covid-19 crisis, the terror attacks on two Christchurch mosques and the White Island volcanic eruption. Ardern was named "Dame Grand Companion," the second highest honour in New Zealand, on King Charles' birthday holiday celebrated by the country on June 5, and she made the coronation honours list for this year. The awardee is usually chosen in New Zealand by the prime minister and then approved by the British monarch, the head of state.



BNP, Jamaat reconcile

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"If the parties are on the street with their own programmes, will a formal announcement make any difference? Everyone will carry out the programmes from their positions ... this is a simultaneous movement," said one of the leaders wishing not to be named.

A senior BNP leader said, "The entire issue is political and strategic."

Sources said Jamaat decided to come up with more programmes after the US introduced a new visa policy on May 24 under which the US would deny visas to people believed

7,001 cases filed under DSA till Jan 31

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the Department of Public Security division of the home ministry as per the rules of the Secretariat.

In response to another query from Awami League MP Abul Kalam Azad, the law minister said that 36.70 lakh cases are pending in the trial courts till March 31 of this year.

Among them, there are 15.84 lakh civil cases and 20.86 lakh criminal cases.

Dhaka has the highest number with 5.44 lakh ongoing cases, and Chattogram follows next with 2.71

to be responsible for or complicit in undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

Jamaat had announced a programme in Baitul Mukarram area but was denied police permission. It announced a rally at the same venue on June 10. The party hopes to get the police permission this time as it is the weekend.

Two senior leaders of Jamaat said due to the US visa policy, it would be tough for the government to obstruct their programmes. And they believe it is the right time to take to the street with fresh anti-government programmes.

lakh cases.

In response to a query from AL MP Morshed Alam from Noakhali 2, the law minister said that the present government is working tirelessly to establish a modern judiciary to alleviate the suffering of the people seeking justice.

"If the steps taken by the government are implemented, the number of pending cases across the country will come down to a tolerable level and there will be effective and visible improvement in the speedy disposal of cases," he added.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Govt inaction on plastic is alarming

Plastic will be the end of our environment if drastic measures are not taken

It is unacceptable that despite repeated warnings about the grave dangers posed by plastic pollution to the environment, the government has failed miserably to address it. That didn't change even after the High Court in 2020 ordered the government to impose a ban on single-use plastic products by 2021. Even after three years, we see no active measures or willingness to comply with that directive. This lack of implementation has, unfortunately, become the hallmark of our environment authorities, a trend that stretches as far back as 2002 when Bangladesh became the first country in the world to ban polythene bags, albeit to little effect on the ground.

The use of polythene bags was banned through an amendment to the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995. Section 6(A) of the amended act imposed the ban on the manufacture, import, marketing, sale, demonstration, stock, distribution, commercial carriage, and commercial use of all kinds of polythene shopping bags, including polyethylene and polypropylene bags. Even a three-year action plan was reportedly submitted to the environment ministry. But no effective action has been taken ever since.

According to a study by the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO), only 10-15 percent of polythene and plastic bags are properly disposed of or recycled after use. Most of them end up in drains, sewage pipes, and open areas, which is responsible for up to 80 percent of Dhaka's waterlogging problem. A World Bank study, unveiled in December 2021, found that plastic use was increasing rapidly in Bangladesh. It said that 69 percent of disposable plastic products were left uncollected, and only 31 percent were being recycled. Between 2005 and 2021, our per capita plastic use tripled to 9kg from 3kg. And it is far worse in Dhaka, where the amount rose to 24kg, almost three times higher than that in other urban areas. This is really alarming.

The Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has recently called upon the government to ensure strict enforcement of law to control plastic pollution, including through the imposition of a "pollution tax" as well as its effective implementation. Without such strict measures, plastic will continue to destroy our environment. We urge the government to take this menace seriously, and also ramp up efforts to recycle plastic products and promote the use of healthier alternatives such as jute products.

Bring closed schools back to life

These non-government primary schools need assistance to reopen

We are alarmed to learn of the number of non-government primary schools that have been closed in the last two years. Reportedly, some 18,465 schools closed their doors for good in 2021 and 2022 because their owners could not bear the cost of running them. With the shutting down of these institutions, thousands of teachers lost their jobs, while lakhs of students had to drop out or go through other challenges. Data from the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) shows that a total of 1,14,429 teachers of non-government primary schools left the profession since 2020, while a staggering 14.5 lakh students left primary schools – a large number of them privately run – between 2020 and 2021. This needs urgent attention from the authorities.

While educationists have long been asking the government to take remedial actions and invest more in education to recover from the pandemic-induced learning loss – which has affected an entire generation of students – there has been little indication that it took those suggestions seriously. Its education budgets of the last few fiscal years made it very clear. And it has disappointed us again this year by proposing a record-low allocation of Tk 88,000 crore for education, which is only 1.76 percent of the GDP.

At a time when the government should have made desperate attempts to bring the missing students back to schools – by providing them stipends, mid-day meals, financial incentives for poorer households, etc. – we have not seen much effort in this regard. Moreover, struggling non-government primary schools also didn't get the help they deserved. Reportedly, the owners of these schools – NGO-run, kindergartens, etc. – sought financial assistance, soft loans, and waiver of utility charges during the pandemic, which they were denied.

Needless to say, such schools have been playing a significant role in ensuring education at the primary level. The government, therefore, must come up with proper incentives and plans to help them reopen and also to bring their teachers – many of whom may have remained unemployed till now – and students back to the classrooms.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Improve your museums!

During my visit to Bangladesh, I visited a couple of its museums. With most items, I saw a date only. Sometimes it was in English and Bangla, sometimes only in the local language. There were no stories describing why that item was of national importance.

For a tourist visiting Bangladesh, that is extremely disappointing. How are people from other land, and perhaps your future generations also, supposed to know why these items are precious to this land? If they are valuable enough to preserve, their stories should be written in both Bangla and English.

Museums are great tourist attraction spots. It seems the museums in Bangladesh have been prepared without much thought from its authorities. Bangladesh deserves better!

Rabbani, Singapore

Lead-up to the elections just got interesting



Tanim Ahmed is a dropout journalist who thinks, freely, comments a lot and writes a little.

TANIM AHMED

While loyalists and stalwarts are bending over backwards to explain how people made a free choice between two shades of the ruling Awami League, opposition activists and leaders are seizing every opportunity to say that the outcome owes everything to the new US visa policy announced on the eve of Gazipur city elections.

The mayoral race for Azmat Ullah Khan, Awami League's nominee, was all but won. Voting was expected to be a mere formality, with the only serious challenger – Zahangir Alam – disqualified by the Election Commission for loan defaults. A former mayor of Gazipur, Zahangir was expelled from his party, Awami League, and seemed to have expected his bid to fall through one way or another. As backup, he had a proxy in the form of his sexagenarian mother Zaida Khatun. She won. If BNP, the main opposition camp, had not boycotted the polls, it would have been interesting to see which way the voters would go amid the unexpectedly free voting environment.

The secretary of state (read foreign minister) of the United States, Antony Blinken, on May 24 invoked a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which states, "An alien whose entry or proposed activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable ground to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States is inadmissible."

His statement read, "Under this policy, the United States will be able to restrict the issuance of visas for any Bangladeshi individual, believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh." He said this would apply to current and former Bangladeshi officials, members of pro-government and opposition political parties, and members of law enforcement, the judiciary, and security services.

Insiders and close observers say his announcement was a game changer. The same officials who would otherwise have been rather enthusiastic to see the ruling party emerge victorious, suddenly lost their energy for enterprise and, allegedly, remained neutral.



Following the new US visa policy, the city corporation elections have become quite the draw.

FILE PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

This new political equation, at least on the surface, does not seem to be enough of an assurance for the BNP to get back into the race for the series of city elections scheduled throughout June. But thus far it has refrained, probably afraid that joining the elections might end up countering its own demand for a neutral caretaker government to conduct the general elections, more so if they end up winning. Still, with the possibility of a few independent or rebel candidates from either party, the mundane voting exercise has much promise to deliver rather exciting – if not nail biting – showdowns.

Although this new US visa policy is proving expedient, it would not be wise to believe that the country is intent on fostering democracy in Bangladesh. Indeed, it is very unlikely that the US would stray from its unblemished record of serving its own geopolitical interests regardless of the nature of regimes that it bolsters. This Western power has thwarted democracy, deposed democratic leaders like

endorsed throughout history would fill up entire volumes of this newspaper. Suffice it to say, the Awami League has not been able to serve US interests – whatever they may be.

The corollary, then, must be that the US is willing to do business with another regime, with the obvious proviso that the new regime would be more pliable, whether that is the incumbent, the BNP – winning on the coattails of its noxious ally, Jamaat-e-Islami – or any other amalgamation of opposition camps that come together for an electoral alliance. And that opens up possibilities for the Awami League, too, as it does for other parties.

The situation is not as grim for the Awami League as it appears to be on the surface, with regards to the new visa policy, especially because the US has a proven track record of being quite promiscuous about choosing whom it does business with. All the Awami League has to do is find out how it could satisfy US interests and agree to provide the necessary concessions

the time to consider its strategy and actually find out what would make the US look the other way. The other tactic that is already making its rounds is that the ruling party will manage to have a faction of the BNP join the elections, which would allow them to claim the polls to be inclusive. But the winners and losers will have been negotiated beforehand so as not to allow any inconvenient surprises that pesky voters tend to present so often.

And of course, the incumbent could resort to a more novel and rather radical tactic of trying to win people's hearts with (among other things) good governance, meaningful and effective measures towards development, and, most importantly, punishment of those guilty of corruption and other crimes. There is a slight problem that the voters might not be convinced with so little so late and rightly see it for what it is – cheap stratagem.

For now, though, the city corporation elections will all of a sudden become quite the draw.

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

Double standards of Western industrial policy



Joseph E Stiglitz is a Nobel laureate in economics, is professor at Columbia University and a member of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.

JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

With the enactment of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) last year, the United States fully joined the rest of the world's advanced economies in combating climate change. The IRA authorises a major increase in spending to support renewable energy, research and development, and other priorities.

True, the design of the law is not ideal. Any economist could have drafted a bill that would deliver much more bang for the buck. But US politics is messy, and success must be measured against what is possible. Despite the IRA's imperfections, it is far better than nothing.

Together with last year's CHIPS and Science Act – which aims to support investment, domestic manufacturing, and innovation in semiconductors and a range of other cutting-edge technologies – the IRA has pointed the US in the right direction. It moves beyond finance to focus on the real economy, where it should help to reinvigorate lagging sectors.

Those who focus solely on the IRA's imperfections are doing us all a disservice. By refusing to put the issue in perspective, they are aiding and abetting the vested interests that would prefer for us to remain dependent on fossil fuels.

Chief among the naysayers are defenders of neoliberalism and

unfettered markets. We can thank that ideology for the past 40 years of weak growth, rising inequality, and inaction against the climate crisis. Its proponents have always argued vehemently against industrial policies like the IRA, even after new developments in economic theory explained why such policies have been necessary to promote innovation and technological change.

It was partly owing to industrial policies, after all, that the East Asian economies achieved their economic "miracle" in the second half of the 20th century. Moreover, the US itself has long benefited from such policies – though these were typically hidden in the Department of Defense, which helped develop the internet and even the first browser. Likewise, America's world-leading pharmaceutical sector rests on a foundation of government-funded basic research.

US President Joe Biden's administration should be commended for its open rejection of two core neoliberal assumptions. As Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, recently put it, these assumptions are "that markets always allocate capital productively and efficiently," and that "the type of growth [does] not matter."

international cooperation. Even if the US and the European Union achieve net zero emissions by 2050, that alone will not solve climate change – the rest of the world must do the same.

Unfortunately, recent policymaking in advanced economies has not been conducive to fostering global cooperation. Consider the vaccine nationalism that we saw during the pandemic, when rich Western countries hoarded both vaccines and the intellectual property (IP) for making them, favouring pharmaceutical companies' profits over the needs of billions of people in developing countries and emerging markets. Then came Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which led to soaring energy and food prices in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, with virtually no help from the West.

Worse, the US raised interest rates, which strengthened the dollar against other currencies and exacerbated debt crises across the developing world. Again, the West offered little real help. Though the G20 had previously agreed on a framework to suspend debt servicing by the world's poorest countries temporarily, debt restructuring is what was really needed.

Against this backdrop, the IRA and the CHIPS Act may well reinforce the idea that the developing world is subject to a double standard – that the rule of law applies only to the poor and weak, whereas the rich and powerful can do as they please. For decades, developing countries have chafed against global rules that prevented them from subsidising their nascent industries, on the grounds that to do so would tilt the playing field. But they

always knew there was no level playing field. The West had all the knowledge and IP, and it did not hesitate to hoard as much of it as possible.

Now, the US is being much more open about tilting the field, and Europe is poised to do the same. Though the Biden administration claims to remain committed to the World Trade Organization "and the shared values upon which it is based: fair competition, openness, transparency, and the rule of law," such talk rings hollow. The US still has not allowed new judges to be appointed to the WTO's dispute-settlement body, thus ensuring that it cannot take action against violations of international trade rules.

To be sure, the WTO has plenty of problems. But it was the US that did the most to shape the current rules during the heyday of neoliberalism. What does it mean when the country that wrote the rules turns its back on them when it becomes convenient to do so? What kind of a "rule of law" is that? If developing countries and emerging markets had ignored IP rules in a similarly flagrant way, tens of thousands of lives would have been saved during the pandemic. But they did not cross that line, because they had learnt to fear the consequences.

By adopting industrial policies, the US and Europe are openly acknowledging that the rules need to be rewritten. But that will take time. To ensure that low and middle-income countries do not grow increasingly (and justifiably) embittered in the meantime, Western governments should create a technology fund to help others match their spending at home. That would at least level the playing field somewhat.

'Business, not city service, is being prioritised'

In view of the rampant commercialisation of Dhanmondi Lake Park in Dhaka, architect and designer Iqbal Habib speaks to Afia Jahin of The Daily Star regarding the initial plan for the park versus what remains of it.



Architect and designer Iqbal Habib

PHOTO: STAR

What was your original vision regarding the Dhanmondi Lake Park?

The Dhanmondi Lake was the first of the interventional urban design projects surrounding lakes in Dhaka. We understood that the lake was a part of a network of canals, channels, and reservoirs that are spread throughout the city.

One of our main goals in this project was to rejuvenate the lake's waterflow. But we also discovered that people often take these reservoirs for granted. Also, this lake was a preferred zone of waste disposal for citizens, the city authorities, and surrounding businesses and establishments. Back then, given that this waste would eventually flow into the old Buriganga channel, the effects of such disposal were not too noticeable. But it still needed to be rectified, alongside improving accessibility by keeping the lake's waterflow intact, finding ways to oxygenate the water, and shutting down all pollution inlets into the lake. Of course, another aim was to make the Dhanmondi Lake an accessible, nature-based recreational space for citizens.

For this, certain facilities needed to be included so that visitors had all of the amenities they needed. There was also an effort to include areas around the lake for cultural activities in which the youth could participate. Another aspect, which, in hindsight, might have been more of an indulgence, was to put up a restaurant beside the lake. But the main idea was to design the surrounding area in such a way that all three aspects of the park's maintenance could be financed from it. These aspects were ensuring security, diligently taking care of the greenery, and general upkeep. In the beginning, the cost for the overall maintenance used to be around Tk 10-11 lakh monthly, financed from the Tk 12.5-14 lakh the park would earn.

Something that architect Muzharul Islam had pushed for was public engagement with our plans for the Dhanmondi Lake Park. Thus, we began going back and forth with a handful of citizen groups. Though they were largely against the plan at the beginning, these groups eventually came around and began cooperating with us. During the inauguration, they even said it was because they were consulted that the park had been constructed so beautifully.

Alas, the one aspect of our initial plan that we were unable to fulfil was restoring the flow in the connecting waterways. These areas were outside our jurisdiction. We had to witness as projects sprang up all around. If not for the (market), we would have ensured the waterflow of the lake till Azimpur graveyard. We also wanted to restore the waterway connection between the Dhanmondi Lake and the water body in Rayerbazar, which would have gone through Pilkhana. The establishment of the Panthapath area was the final nail in the coffin.

During all of this, we also discovered an element of protection for water bodies: walkways. The Dhanmondi Lake Park was the pioneer in this regard.

How lawful is it for the city authorities to commercialise various sectors of the park?

These sectors have existed since the original plan. This division was supposed to aid in easier management and maintenance of the park. In our spending-from-earnings model, we were careful not to spend on anything unnecessary, especially concretisation and anything that would harm the greenery. Back then, there was an advisory committee (under a ministerial secretary) and a management committee (led by the CEO of the mayor's office). So, any changes or commercialisation within the park would have to be approved by the advisory committee and, by extension, the ministry. Stakeholders such as local residents, government employees, and even the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum were involved. Having so many people involved acted as a barrier against vested groups trying to make unnecessary changes to the

For the city corporation to commercialise the Dhanmondi Lake Park this way is a serious offence. A city corporation is not a business organisation; it is simply a provider of services. As such, even a greening, hydro-ecological, biodiversity project like the Dhanmondi Lake Park has now been handed over to business organisations.

park. Even when the opposition came to power, they could only go so far as to neglect the park, but they could never take over.

The appointment of the current mayor changed things drastically. For one, he nullified the two-committee system altogether. This, to me, seemed impossible from a legal perspective, because nullifying the two-committee system is something that the ministry can do, not a mayor. We involved so many stakeholders in the project in order to prevent such moves. But no one challenged this move. I believe if this move is challenged in a court, and if that court is unbiased, the move would be deemed unlawful. I am not sure whether the ministry later approved the mayor's nullification of the model or not.

A mayor has the duty of protecting greenery, as this is something he or she commits to when taking on the post. I also believe that for the city corporation to commercialise the Dhanmondi Lake Park this way is a serious offence. A city corporation is not a business organisation; it is simply a provider of services.

Now, even a greening, hydro-ecological, biodiversity project like the Dhanmondi Lake Park has been handed over to business organisations. On top of that, the park

is not being maintained properly either. It has become something of a zone for questionable and criminal activities. The original concept behind the project is now lost.

I want to say clearly that the Dhanmondi Lake Park project is one that was very close to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's heart. Not only her own house, but her father's house is also situated by the lake. One after another, actions are taking place to strip the Dhanmondi Lake of its intended character. Crores of taka were spent to divert the drainage routes of the area away from the lake. Now, all the waste from these commercial establishments is being dumped into the lake. This is unacceptable.

If the Dhanmondi Lake Park could be restructured, what would be the way to go about doing so?

The foremost task would be to eliminate all elements of commercialisation from the park. If needed, even the commercial structures in the original plan (besides a couple eateries and the public toilets) should be removed in order to revive the area's biodiversity. In my estimates, only Tk 15-16 lakh would be needed monthly for the park's maintenance, and this should be allocated from the city corporation. If needed, each visitor can be charged Tk 1 of entry fee. But the current concept of having businesses take over the park cannot be accepted.

Only by returning to the original spending-from-earnings model and by engaging the community in the management of the area can the Dhanmondi Lake Park be properly refurbished. Greening of the park and oxygenation of the lake water through boating activities should also be brought back.

Parks under the DNCC seem to be more people-oriented in comparison to those under the DSCC. Why do you think this is?

The answer in one line would be: Viewing public property through a business lens. If you look at the projects we have done under the Jol-Sobuje Dhaka campaign, you will see that no more than five percent of any of these spaces is occupied by structures, and that, too, by fitness centres or libraries. Then why are these changes being brought about now? Previously, the Golapbagh field was taken over by markets too. These were relocated, outside the field and concealed behind a gallery. The field was thus freed of commercial activities.

I urge the current authorities to resume the public space de-commercialisation initiatives of the previous mayors. The present way of building commercial structures in parks itself is very wrong. Business, not city service, is being prioritised. And this is not part of the job description of the mayor, the mayor's office, or the councillor.

What has happened with the Dhanmondi Lake Park causes me pain. If you look at the original masterplan, you will see that nothing outside of what people and nature would require was included. What kind of perspective is this, where one only thinks of commercialising everything? At a minimum, shouldn't our children be able to see greenery? Now, there is only uncontrolled concretisation.



The international community must ensure that any repatriation efforts are accompanied by guarantees of the Rohingya refugees' rights, security, and justice. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Prioritise the Rohingya's safety and well-being

San Thai Shin is a Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh who is a community-based researcher and freelance journalist.

SAN THAI SHIN

The Rohingya crisis continues to leave a tragic trail of immense suffering and injustice. As a persecuted minority group, the Rohingya people have endured decades of oppression, displacement, and violence, which have left an indelible scar on humanity. Their struggle for justice and repatriation has been marred by obstacles, false promises, and political manoeuvring, prolonging their agony and preventing a resolution to this humanitarian crisis.

The Rohingya people, who have faced systemic discrimination and persecution in Myanmar for decades, have been denied basic human rights and subjected to propagandistic campaigns that label them as foreigners and potential threats to the country's stability. The 1982 constitution stripped them of their citizenship and rendered them stateless, effectively erasing their identity and denying them access to education, employment, and freedom of movement.

Despite international calls for their repatriation and restoration of their rights, the Myanmar government has shown little genuine commitment to resolving the crisis. Instead, they have engaged in a deceptive repatriation process aimed at evading international scrutiny and appeasing the International Criminal Court (ICC). The construction of government buildings and settlements on Rohingya land, as well as the destruction of their villages, further reveal the government's ulterior motives and lack of sincerity.

The Myanmar military junta has played a central role in perpetuating the suffering of the Rohingya people. Their brutal campaign of violence in 2017, characterised by mass killings, rape and arson, resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled to neighbouring Bangladesh. The military's continued presence in the Rakhine state and their refusal to create a safe environment for the Rohingya undermine any prospects of a meaningful repatriation process.

China's involvement in the repatriation process has raised suspicions and concerns among the Rohingya population. China, known for its controversial policies towards its own Muslim minority, the Uyghurs, has consistently used its veto power to prevent international resolutions on the Rohingya refugee crisis. This has fuelled speculations that China's engagement in the repatriation process is driven by political motivations, rather than a genuine concern for the welfare of the Rohingya people.

The lack of trust and safety in the Arakan region, where the Rohingya would potentially be repatriated, adds another layer of complexity to the crisis. The region is currently under the control of the Arakan Army (AA), an armed group seeking to establish a Rakhine nation. The AA's opposition to recognising the Rohingya as an ethnic group and their mistreatment of the Rohingya population have created an environment of fear and uncertainty. The Rohingya people find themselves caught between the oppressive policies of both the AA and the Myanmar military junta, facing restrictions on their freedom of movement, livelihoods, and even their identity.

The AA's involvement in drug trafficking exacerbates the plight of the Rohingya community. Forced to serve as porters and subjected to punishment if they fail to

The Rohingya people, who have faced systemic discrimination and persecution in Myanmar for decades, have been denied basic human rights and subjected to propagandistic campaigns that label them as foreigners and potential threats to the country's stability. The 1982 constitution stripped them of their citizenship and rendered them stateless, effectively erasing their identity.

comply, the Rohingya are trapped in a cycle of exploitation and abuse. The AA's oppressive tax system further burdens the already impoverished Rohingya population, making their daily lives even more challenging.

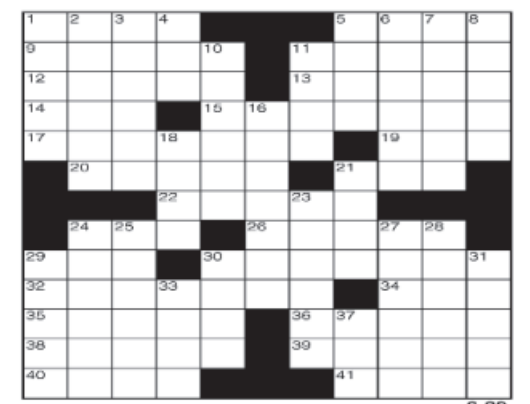
While some individuals hope that compliance with the AA's rules may lead to a more inclusive and tolerant Arakan, the overall sentiment remains one of fear and scepticism. The AA's disregard for the Rohingya's ethnic identity and their mistreatment of the population undermine any prospects for peaceful coexistence.

In light of these challenges, it is evident that the repatriation process is fraught with obstacles and uncertainties. The Rohingya people, already traumatised by decades of persecution, fear that returning to Myanmar under the current circumstances would subject them to further violence and oppression. The international community must prioritise the safety and well-being of the Rohingya people, ensuring that any repatriation efforts are accompanied by guarantees of their rights, security, and justice.

CROSSWORD

BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
1 Neighbor
5 Gush forth
9 Camp craft
11 Push rudely
12 Inclines
13 Was under the weather
14 Numerical prefix
15 Cameraman's activity
17 Authoring
19 Kicker's aid
20 Trap-shooting sport
21 Was a pioneer
22 Love to pieces
24 Back muscle, for short
26 Tennis star
Osaka
- 29 Shop tool
30 Wrestler's goal
32 Ogden Nash specialty
34 West of films
35 Blockhead
36 Wed in secret
38 Euro divisions
39 Derby prize
40 Border
41 Airport area
- DOWN**
1 Carry on
2 Johnson's middle name
3 Disconnect
4 Young one
5 Tibia's place
6 Civil
7 Made flat
- 8 Doorstop shape
10 Spotted
11 Warbled
16 Justice Scalia
18 Orderly
21 Writer Uris
23 Texas baseballer
24 Praised
25 Store-front sight
27 Champagne drink
28 Sulking
29 Cumin or coriander
30 Peach parts
31 Skein members
33 Staff symbol
37 Fireplace fuel



SUNDAY'S ANSWERS

S A M O A N S A G E
E M E R G E P H I L
W I N D O W G L A S S
E N S U E
J U R Y M E A N
T O N S F U N N E L
I N C M A P V I E
C E L L A R M I L D
S E E N B O L L
A G A I N
M E A D O W G R A S S
E X P O L O O K U P
T E E N S T E A M Y

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsoption@gmail.com.

CHURCHILL AND INDIA Manipulation or Betrayal?

Churchill understood nothing of India, having not read a single work on the subcontinent's syncretic, varied culture, heritage or philosophy.

KISHAN S RANA

Churchill in India, 1896-99

Winston Churchill spent three years in British India, a freshly minted cavalry subaltern, 1896-99. His attitude to Indians was initially benign, but later morphed into a profound, corrosive hostility. After 1921, he attacked the National Independence Movement, Hindus, the Upper Castes, and to a venomous degree Gandhi, as the cause and personification of India's ills. My book is the first full-length study of that major dark spot in a great life. Amidst 2000+ biographies and Churchillian life-accounts, it is the first holistic study of that connection.

Young officers in British cavalry regiments immersed themselves in army drill, sporting activities like polo, and lead the good life. Churchill followed suit, not bothering to cultivate any of the old British 'India hands'; he wrote to his mother that he met no one that could tell him about the country. It produced self-isolation.

As a Lieutenant in the 4th Hussars, Churchill developed friendships with Indian princes, the game's Indian patrons, profiting from his aristocratic lineage. His father, Lord Randolph, second son of the Duke of Marlborough had made a well-



A Japanese propaganda leaflet from 1944 captured an illustration of Winston Churchill, depicting him as severing the fingers of an Indian cotton industry worker. The accompanying text delivers a message, accusing the British rulers of sacrificing the livelihood of Indians, resulting in widespread hunger and poverty, all in the name of safeguarding Manchester.

Churchill's reaction is recorded by Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's personal representative, who was 'embedded' with Churchill for weeks on end, during much of 1942, spending most evenings and half the night in the War Bunkers. Hopkins went to London in early 1942, empowered with a letter of introduction to King George VI. It became one of the most unusual arrangements in diplomatic history, bypassing the US Ambassador in London. Hopkins wrote: FDR's message was greeted by Churchill with a 'string of cuss words lasted for two hours in the middle of the night' (Kimball, 1984). A reply was dictated to a stenographer on the spot, in which Churchill threatened to resign as PM. That draft message was not sent but was given to Hopkins and survives in the Kimball papers. The reply actually sent, used emotional blackmail; 'a serious difference between you and me would break my heart'. The 'draft not sent' became a Churchillian device to speak his mind, off the record, an innovation in summit-level diplomatic communication. After that episode, FDR only raised the India issue in correspondence, and once in direct talks in mid-1943.

Churchill's falsehoods

Author of *Churchill and Secret Service* (1997), David Stafford notes that Churchill was much ahead of his contemporaries in using intelligence services. India's Intelligence Bureau, from its earliest 1835 incarnation, predates its British counterparts. Perhaps they contributed with a speculative report, producing one of Churchill's biggest fibs of WWII. Churchill told Hopkins on 11 May 1942 that a nationalist government in India would recall Indian troops from the Middle East and give 'free transit' to Japanese troops through India to cross Asia and join up with German troops! (Davis, *FDR: The War President*, 2000, p. 470). That bizarre story was repeated in Churchill's 13 August 1942 message to FDR (Churchill was outraged when FDR sent him a message from Chiang Kai Shek about release from prison of Gandhi and Nehru). Churchill wrote: 'You could remind Chiang that Gandhi was prepared to negotiate with Japan on the basis of a free passage for Japanese troops through India in the hope of their joining hands with Hitler (Churchill Archives 20/76). This is a nonsense story, in facts, geography and logistics.'

Historical studies and archives

When key documents are missing, we are left with scraps of information, which read together make up a partial mosaic that points to hidden truths. My book also offers these and some other bits of evidence that bear reflection. I hope that my holistic survey of Churchill's India connections, the first

nothing of India, having not read a single work on the subcontinent's syncretic, varied culture, heritage or philosophy.

Churchill assiduously pursued military adventure, convinced that battle honors would gild his public image, providing a platform for his political career. Britain's Indian Army establishment (controlling both British and Indian troops) abhorred 'medal-seekers', especially those in the guise of 'war correspondents'. Despite Churchill's conspicuous bravery during bloody clashes at the Afghan frontier in 1897, plus his brigade commandant's recommendations, honours were disallowed, besides a minor award.

But war service had an unexpected outcome. In 1898, Churchill transformed his dispatches written for a British newspaper into a brilliant first book, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*. That brought fame. His self-managed secondment to Omdurman, Sudan in 1898, with further acts of courage, brought another literary success, *The River Wars*. Those royalty earnings spurred him to a subsidiary career as an author, which became the source of modest wealth from the outset; the earnings ballooned two decades later.

Churchill's deep reflections covering all he had studied, especially his father's worldview, formed the template of his political career. Its immutable core: the primacy of the Empire, with India as the Crown Jewel. He failed to grasp, and refused to accept reality, especially Britain's economic decline after WWI. For him, self-governance in British India, even at a glacial pace, became abhorrent. And he rejected new information. When in 1929, Viceroy Lord Irwin suggested that he meet some Indians to update himself, he exploded: he was perfectly comfortable in his knowledge of India, unwilling to be confused by 'bloody Indians'.

In 1921, Churchill, by then a 20-year veteran cabinet minister, saw in Gandhiji's first *Satyagraha* campaign (coinciding with the 5-month visit of the Prince of Wales, future King George V), the seeds of the dangerous phase of India's national movement. That antipathy grew into his 1929 break with his own Tory Party, and a decade of political self-exile. His motive: a solo, futile, campaign against the 1935 Independence of India Act. That gilded a reputation for stubbornness. And when he became Britain's Prime Minister in May 1940, his mishandling of India affairs produced major tragedy in those final years of British rule. As Prime Minister, he squandered three valuable years to prepare for Partition (see below). That was betrayal, of both the basic norms of governance and of human values.

Churchill and Jinnah

Churchill's India sojourn included a chance event that produced long shadows. Directly after the 1897 Malakand battles, his brigade commander sent him on a few weeks' attachment to the Indian 31st

Punjab Regiment, largely composed of Muslims. That first and only exposure to Indian troops, seared in his mind respect for Indian Muslims. In the 1930-40s that morphed into a relationship, a political partnership with Mohamad Ali Jinnah. This became a vital political choice for Churchill; in February 1940, before becoming PM, he told the Cabinet that India's Hindu-Muslim dispute was 'the bulwark of British rule'. It is not far-fetched to conclude that he fanned those flames.

Jinnah installed himself in London from December 1931 till the end of 1934, as a debonaire, astute lawyer, chauffeured around in a Bentley, clad in Saville Row suits (he collected around 70!). Jinnah explained to close followers that he chose voluntary exile, as the scene of 'political action' had shifted to the UK. He tried to get into the British Parliament, via by-elections, but failed.

Most documents pertaining to the Churchill Jinnah relationship are lost, perhaps willfully destroyed. At the British National Archives, I chanced upon a letter that Jinnah wrote to Churchill on 2 January 1941. It was not in the papers that Winston Churchill transferred to Churchill Archives at Cambridge in the 1960s. With that letter, Jinnah forwarded to Churchill an interview he had given to a visiting British Labour MP, promoting his own credentials

was willing to face a 'plebiscite' to prove his claim. Secretary of State Leo Amery acknowledged these two messages with a return telegram.

Roosevelt and India

Churchill sent copies of the above messages from Jinnah to Roosevelt; he also circulated them to the British Cabinet (that's how they survived in the British Archives). That was the only mention of 'plebiscite' in the political dialogue of that time. Of course, Jinnah stretched the truth by a wide margin. Remember, in the 1937 Provincial Elections, the Muslim League had won less than 24% of the community mandated seats, also failing to win power in any of the 14 provinces.

President Franklin Roosevelt sent a blunt message to Churchill on 11 April 1942, just as Stafford Cripps was leaving India at the termination of his infelicitous 'Mission'. FDR wrote: 'The feeling is almost universally held that the deadlock had been caused by the unwillingness of the British Government to concede to the Indians the right of self-government, notwithstanding the willingness of the Indians to entrust technical, military and naval defense control to the competent British authorities. American public opinion cannot understand why, if the British Government is willing to permit component parts of India to secede



Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, August 9, 1941.

When Churchill became Britain's Prime Minister in May 1940, his mishandling of India affairs produced major tragedy in those final years of British rule. As Prime Minister, he squandered three valuable years to prepare for Partition.

remembered 7-month 'Grand Tour' in 1884-85, before his appointment as Secretary of State for India.

Shaping a political career

What distinguished Churchill from his carefree cohort was his passion at gaining knowledge, and planning for the future. His parents did not send him to university. Pursuing self-education, he explored his mother for books, the classics like Gibbon, Macaulay, Burke, plus the books recommended by his father, reflecting the values of the late-Victorian era. His readings were eclectic, also covering Keats, Kipling, Milton and Tennyson, besides American authors. That engaged him for several hours each afternoon, and during his long rail travels in pursuit of polo tournaments.

Churchill pondered deeply on his future political career. This had three outcomes. One: He absorbed the speeches and life philosophy of Lord Randolph. That vision of India and the Empire is best summed up in Randolph's 'sheet of oil on the surging seas' speech of 1885, on his return from India, in which he compared Britain's management of chaos and dissensions of India, as laying down a sheet of oil to quell that 'vast sea of humanity'. Churchill kept coming back to that analogy during his key India speeches, decades later. [The ineptness of that analogy is different issue]. Two: Churchill absorbed much of what he studied, and thanks to a prodigious memory, decades later, he recalled verbatim large segments of those texts. Three: Churchill understood



Winston Churchill on horseback in Bangalore, India in 1897



Cover of Kishan S Rana's Book

as the only legitimate spokesman of Indian Muslims. Jinnah wrote: 'Of the 90 million of Mussalmans in this country I speak for fully 90% and my following is growing regularly. We are willing to submit to any reasonable test with regard to this assertion of mine.' Jinnah swiftly followed up with a telegram on 8 January 1941, adding for the first time that he

from the British Empire after the war, it is not willing to permit them to enjoy what is tantamount to self-government during the war.' (emphasis added). Clearly, FDR referred to a secret Churchill plan, dating at least to early 1942, to create a South Asian Muslim homeland. That's new information (Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, 1984, Vol. 1, pp. 445-7).

of this kind, may lead to other, deeper studies, in a shared, determined search of elusive truths. In all such efforts, it is the archival collections and personal papers that are vital to historical analysis.

Kishan S Rana is a former diplomat, teacher and author of *Churchill and India: Manipulation or Betrayal?* (2023).

'Leo wants to return to Barca'

REUTERS

Lionel Messi, who last week played his last game for Paris Saint-Germain, is open to making a return to LaLiga side Barcelona, the Argentine forward's father said on Monday.

Barca were forced to let their talisman leave in 2021 because his high wages coupled with strict LaLiga financial rules could have jeopardised the club's future.

Messi, who joined Barcelona's youth set-up aged 13 and went on to become the club's all-time top scorer and appearance maker with 672 goals in 778 games in all competitions, moved to PSG as a free agent on a two-year contract.

Barcelona's finances have slightly improved since then, but according to LaLiga, they are still over the cap and remain unable to register new contracts signed months ago, including defender Ronald Araujo and midfielder Gavi.

"Leo wants to return to Barca and I would also like him to return. We are confident that Leo can come back," Messi's father Jorge said in an interview



"Leo wants to return to Barca and I would also like him to return. We are confident that Leo can come back."

JORGE MESSI

with Twitch channel Jijantes FC.

Messi, who led Argentina to the World Cup title in Qatar and also boasts a record seven Ballon d'Or awards, won the Ligue 1 title in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 seasons with PSG as well as the French Super Cup in July 2022.

However, he opted not to renew his deal with the Ligue 1 champions.

His future has been the subject of much speculation recently, with a source close to the Argentine captain telling Reuters that he had received a formal offer to join Saudi Arabian club Al-Hilal next season.

The LaLiga champions' president Joan Laporta has often spoken of his desire to bring Messi back to Camp Nou, but any move for the 35-year-old would likely further complicate their ability to adhere to Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules.

Saudi ready to splurge to bring top talents

AGENCIES

Saudi Arabia is looking to lure some of the world's best known football players to join Cristiano Ronaldo in its national league. And to close the deals, it is relying on money, the one commodity it knows it can offer more of than any of its rival leagues.

According to a report by The New York Times, this remains a coordinated effort – supported at the highest levels in Saudi Arabia, and financed by the kingdom's huge sovereign wealth fund.

To make that happen, Saudi clubs are already approaching players receptive to moving to the kingdom with some of the highest annual salaries in sports history. The deals could require in excess of \$1 billion for wages for some 20 foreign players.

According to Saudi sources and state media this weekend, delegations flew to Paris and Madrid to secure the signatures of Lionel Messi and Karim Benzema after their final games for Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid.

Another report by AFP said that the Saudis are also "in contact with more than 10 players, many of them won the World Cup or the Champions League, to join the Saudi league next season."

In addition to Messi, "the list includes Benzema, (Sergio) Ramos, (Angel) Di Maria, Modric, Hugo Lloris, Kante, Firmino, (Jordi) Alba and (Sergio) Busquets".

The Saudi league's British chief executive, Garry Cook, a former Nike executive who briefly ran Manchester City after it was bought by the brother of the ruler of the United Arab Emirates, has been tasked with executing the plans.



Mominul Haque and Najmul Hossain Shanto were undergoing a session of slip catching as preparation for the Afghanistan Test continued yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. Tigers' struggle with slip catches are well known and with a pace-heavy attack this time around, slip catching could prove to be a difference maker.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Everyone says that I have good skill but I feel that I have to be mentally stronger to play at this level. Of course it's a matter of happiness and that's normal. Everyone wants to represent the national team some day and I am feeling that same level of happiness. I want to make sure to try and improve day by day.

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN DIPU on making the squad for the one-off Test against Afghanistan from June 14 in Mirpur.

Can Cabrera cure SCORING MALADY?

ANISUR RAHMAN

As Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera set his sights on the semifinal berth of comparatively tough SAFF Championship on the first day of the training session yesterday, the decades-long goal scoring problem of the national football team is expected to play in the mind of the Spaniard.

The men in red and green could not get out of the group stage in the last five editions of the regional football extravaganza, and the upcoming 14th SAFF Championship is expected to be tougher due to the inclusion of two middle-east nations – Lebanon and Kuwait.

Bangladesh, the 2003 champions, were drawn along with tournament's top-ranking side Lebanon, two-time champions Maldives, and Bhutan.

To emerge out of the group stage, Bangladesh forwards have to play the vital roles since goal drought in recent international matches has been evident of how the national football team badly suffered in those matches.

Under the guidance of Spaniard Cabrera, Bangladesh so far played 10 international matches in which they struck only five goals with forward Mohammad Ibrahim finding the opponent net twice, while forwards Rakib Hossain, Sazzad Hossain, and defender Tariq Raihan Kazi netted one goal apiece.

In the last edition of the SAFF Championship held in Maldives in 2021, Bangladesh forwards struggled heavily despite creating good opportunities before entering the final in the round-robin league basis championship. Bangladesh could score only three goals in four matches, with defenders Tapu Barman, Yeasin Arafat, and forward Suman Reza finding the opponents' net.

Nevertheless, Cabrera will be expecting the forwards to fire on all cylinders to take Bangladesh to the last-four battle this time around. However, as a matter of fact, the forwards in his 30-member preliminary squad have been inconsistent in the nearly-ended season,

BANGLADESH FORWARDS' STATS THIS SEASON				
Forwards	Indp Cup (Goal)	Fed Cup (Goal)	BPL (Goal)	BPL (Assists)
Eleta Kingsley	0	1	8	1
Rakib Hossain	4	0	4	5
Faisal Ahmed Fahim	0	3	4	2
Sazzad Hossain	0	2	3	0
Aminur Rahman Sajib	0	2	2	4
Sahriar Emon	0	1	2	1
Mohammad Ibrahim	2	0	1	1
Rabiul Hasan	0	0	3	2
Suman Reza	1	1	0	0
Mojibur Rahman Jony	0	0	1	0
Sheikh Morsalin	0	0	1	3



where the foreign recruits played vital roles to decide the fate of most matches.

Interestingly, 30 members of the preliminary squad possess a total of 52 goals struck by 17 players in three competitions – Independence Cup, Federation Cup and Bangladesh Premier League.

Although the collective number of goals may give a good impression that the players have been in good form,

11 forwards out of 17 scorers had been inconsistent as most of them got more or less 20 matches to perform.

With the final 23-member squad yet to be finalised, Cabrera would definitely bank on the top scorers but he would also pragmatically consider the in-form, promising ones to put an end to the long-sustaining unfruitful campaign in the regional football extravaganza, scheduled for June 21-July 4 in Bengaluru, India.



Bringing down the curtain on a long trophy-laden career, 41-year-old Zlatan Ibrahimovic announced his retirement from football on Sunday. Following their 3-1 victory over Verona at San Siro, the Milan forward left the pitch after receiving a guard of honour from his teammates. "It's the moment to say goodbye to football, not just to you," said Ibrahimovic during an on-pitch ceremony.

PHOTO: AC MILAN

Since starting his professional career at Malmo in 1999, Zlatan Ibrahimovic has scored a goal every year throughout his career that included spells at Ajax, Juventus, Inter Milan, Barcelona, Paris St Germain, Manchester United and AC Milan.

He remains the only player to score in his Premier League, Serie A, La Liga, Ligue 1, and UEFA Champions League debut.

He is also Sweden's all-time top scorer with 62 goals in 121 matches.

Ibrahimovic won over 30 trophies although his only major European trophy was the 2017 Europa League with Manchester United as he never got his hands on Europe's elite club competition trophy, the Champions League.

A different challenge awaits India batters in WTC final

REUTERS, London

India's batters should be prepared to grind out runs in tricky English conditions against Australia's fiery pace attack in the World Test Championship (WTC) final at the Oval, skipper Rohit Sharma said on Monday.

Facing a prodigiously swinging Dukes ball fired by Pat Cummins or Mitchell Starc would be a totally different experience for Rohit's team mates most of whom were busy in the Indian Premier League T20 competition until last week.

Rohit mastered these conditions during the 2019 World Cup when he smashed five hundreds in nine innings and, two years later, stroked a match-winning century in an Oval Test against England.

"England, in general, is pretty challenging conditions for the batters, but as long as you are prepared to have a good grind you can have some success as a batter," he said ahead of the WTC final beginning on Wednesday.

The key was not to be lulled into any false sense of security while batting, he said.

"One thing I realised batting here was you are never in actually, because the weather keeps changing a lot.

"So you've got to keep concentrating for longer periods of time and that is the challenge of this format."

"You'll get that intuition when it is your time to take the bowlers on and that is when you should be ready for it."

Rohit is particularly keen to capitalise on his strength square off the wicket.

"We know that this is probably one of the best batting wickets, as well you get value for your shots, you know the square boundaries are quite quick," he said.

With Jasprit Bumrah recovering from a back surgery, Mohammed Shami will lead the pace attack for India who were beaten by New Zealand in the inaugural WTC final in Southampton two years ago.



Ons Jabeur became the first Tunisian and Arab woman to reach the French Open quarterfinals on Monday as the seventh seed completed a 6-3, 6-1 rout of American Bernard Pera in the fourth round. "I was just taking it one match at a time, trying to make it to the second week. Now I'm going to push more for the next few matches," Jabeur told after the game.

PHOTO: REUTERS



HUMAN RIGHTS Dhaka to clear its stance to the six US congressmen

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

To clear Bangladesh's position on human rights and elections, Dhaka will communicate with six US congressmen, who recently wrote to President Joe Biden, said State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam.

Speaking to reporters at the foreign ministry yesterday, he said there were "exaggerations, inconsistencies and information gap" in the issues mentioned in the letter.

Congressmen Scott Perry, Barry Moore, Warren Davidson, Bob Good, Tim Burchett and Keith Self wrote to the US president on May 25 requesting urgent actions to stop the "human rights abuses" by the government in Bangladesh and give its people the "best possible chance for free and fair parliamentary elections".

The letter said, "The well-documented abuses by the Hasina government are not confined to her

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A re-excavated canal, known as Mora Posur, gets a new lease of life. Seven such canals, including this one, were re-excavated in Betaga union of Bagerhat's Fakirhat. Now farmers are getting irrigation water from them. The photo was taken in Betaga village recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

EC's power to scrap polling to be curtailed RPO amendment bill placed in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission will have less powers if the Representation of the People Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023, placed in parliament yesterday is passed as is.

If passed, the EC won't be able to postpone or cancel polls to an entire constituency if there were irregularities in one or some polling centres. And it will only be able to cancel or postpone voting on election day during the polling.

Law Minister Anisul Haq placed the bill in Jatiya Sangsad and it was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry for scrutiny.

The committee was asked to submit its report within 15 days.

According to section 91 of the Representation of the People Order, 1972, the EC may stop the polls at any polling centre or the entire constituency at any stage of the election if it is convinced that it will not be able to ensure the conduct of the election justly, fairly and in accordance with the law due to malpractices, including coercion, intimidation and pressures.

According to the amendment, the EC will be able to cancel the election in a polling centre or centres, not the entire constituency, several EC officials have said.

The bill proposes changing the word "elections" with "polls" in section 91 of the RPO. The change of the word limits when the EC can cancel or postpone elections.

"Polls" mean the process of voting in an election, in other words, election day. "Elections" mean the period between the announcement of the schedule and the declaration of the unofficial results.

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujon) Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said the new move of amending the RPO would reduce the EC's powers.

"It seems that the commission can take action just on the polling day instead of the total election process..." he added.

Jatiya Party MP Fakhru Imam objected to the amendment and said the powers of the EC are being curtailed through the amendment.

He said, "The constitution gives the Election Commission freedom. If this freedom is cancelled by the law, we are enacting then how will the Election Commission be free?"

"We saw the Election Commission cancel the bad polls in Gaibandha. I don't know why the law minister is now tabling that the Election Commission cannot cancel an entire election."

This contradicts the constitution, he said.

In response, the law minister claimed that the amendment to the RPO does not go against the constitution or democracy.

He said if the EC could cancel polls in all stations because of irregularities in two or three, then it would be anti democratic since people have exercised their rights in the other polling stations.

The law minister said that as per the amendment, if there is a disturbance in any of the polling stations, the voting can be stopped there.

He said power is not being given to stop the polls in other stations where fair polls have been conducted. It is not against democracy, he added.

The amendment also proposed punishment of those who obstruct media personnel covering the polls and election observers.

It also has a provision that allows candidates to reschedule their default loans or utility bills a day prior to collecting nomination papers.

Now, potential candidates can reschedule those seven days before collecting their nomination papers.

“The constitution gives the Election Commission freedom. If this freedom is cancelled by the law we are enacting then how will the Election Commission be free?”

Jatiya Party MP Fakhru Imam

Deprived of funds, airlines cut flights

IATA says Bangladesh withholding \$214m of foreign carriers, warns of operators leaving; fares for foreign destinations spike

RASHIDUL HASAN

Turkish Airlines used to fly to Dhaka twice a day but it has been operating one flight a day for a year since it cannot repatriate to Istanbul \$24 million it earned here from ticket sales and by moving freight.

Officials of the carrier said they have reduced selling tickets in Dhaka and are urging flyers to buy tickets online and outside Bangladesh.

Following suit, other foreign carriers, including Singapore Airlines, Malindo Air, Kuwait Airways, and Cathay Pacific, have cut flight frequencies to Dhaka as they too cannot take their money back to their countries, said leaders of Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB).

With fewer seats available, ticket prices have gone up.

Fund repatriation by foreign airlines operating in Bangladesh has been suspended since March 2022.

On Sunday, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the trade association of some 300 airlines or 83 percent of total air traffic, said Bangladesh is the second worst in the world in terms of blocking funds of carriers after Nigeria.

Bangladesh is withholding \$214 million of airlines' funds, it said, warning that this could result in carriers not serving Bangladesh.

"Airlines cannot continue to offer services in markets where they are unable to repatriate the revenues arising from their commercial activities in those markets," said Willie Walsh, IATA director general.

The IATA said the global aviation industry's blocked funds have increased by 47 percent to \$2.27 billion in April 2023 from \$1.55 billion in April 2022. The top five countries account for 68.0 percent of the blocked funds: Nigeria (\$812.2

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"Airlines cannot continue to offer services in markets where they are unable to repatriate the revenues arising from their commercial activities in those markets."

Willie Walsh
IATA director general

Two siblings die after pest control cleans home

STAR REPORT

Two siblings died allegedly from pesticide poisoning after a cleaning service provider used pest control chemicals in their house in Dhaka's Bashundhara Residential Area.

Shayan Mobarat Zahin, 15, an eighth grader, and Shahir Mobarat Zayan, 9, a third-grader, died on Sunday.

Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Bhatara Police Station, yesterday said they suspected that the two boys might have died due to pesticide poisoning.

Quoting the family members, Inspector (Investigation) Shariful Islam said Mobarat Hossain, the father of the two children, hired DCS Organisation Ltd to get rid of pests in their house at Block-1.

"The employees of the company applied pesticides there on Friday from 3:00pm to 6:00pm. I was there supervising the work wearing a mask, while my wife and 3 children were out attending an event," Mobarat told The Daily Star yesterday.

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PAYRA PLANT'S TEMPORARY CLOSURE Govt counting on power plants under trial run

ASIFUR RAHMAN

With the country's biggest power producer, Payra Power Plant, temporarily closing yesterday, the government is now looking at plants that are doing dry runs to ease load shedding.

At 12:15pm yesterday, the Payra 1,320MW Thermal Power Plant was turned off due to coal shortage.

Officials said the next shipment of coal would reach the plant after June 25.

The first unit of the plant, with 660MW capacity, has been out of operation since May 25, and the countrywide power cuts have been frequent since then.

Power Division officials said they will increase power production from gas and furnace oil until June 13 to fill the gap left behind by the Payra Power Plant's second unit.

"We are trying so that the current situation does not worsen, and it will improve after June 13," said Mohammad Hossain, director general of Power Cell.

He said from next week, Chattogram's SS Power, a subsidiary of Salam Group, will start supplying electricity to the national grid on a trial basis.

Besides, Adani Power of India will increase its power supply, he added.

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Trove of 750 looted artifacts returned to Italy



CNN ONLINE

Some 750 looted archaeological treasures have been seized from the notorious British antiquities trader Robin Symes and returned to Italy after a decades-long fight for their return, the Carabinieri art police said.

The artifacts, which according to the Italian cultural ministry are worth more than €12 million (\$12.9 million), will go on display in Rome's Castel Sant'Angelo museum as part of a collection of stolen art that has found its way home.

The objects "offer a cross-section of the many productions of ancient Italy and the islands," including "numerous and diversified archaeological contexts (funerary, cultural, residential and public) ... concentrated in particular in Etruria and Magna Graecia," according to a statement from the Ministry of Culture on Wednesday.

Among the recovered items from the Roman and Imperial eras is a bronze tripod table from an aristocratic Etruscan family, two parade headgear for horses, two funerary paintings, male busts in marble, various portions of statues and bronzes, and a wall painting with the depiction of a small temple, likely from a Vesuvian residence, according

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A rickshaw-puller, sweating profusely, takes a passenger to his destination in the scorching summer heat. The low-income people are the worst sufferers due to the ongoing heatwave, as they have to toil under the sweltering sun to make ends meet. The photo was taken in the High Court area in the capital.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

7,001 cases filed under DSA till Jan 31 Law minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 7,001 cases were filed across the country as of January 31, this year under the Digital Security Act, Law Minister Anisul Haq told parliament yesterday.

The minister said this in reply to a query from Gonoforum MP Mukabbir Khan from Sylhet-2.

The much-debated Digital Security Bill 2018 was passed in parliament in September 2018, ignoring the concerns of journalists, owners of media houses and rights activists over some of its sections.

Journalists and rights activists said the act goes against the main spirit of the constitution and will restrict free thinking, freedom of speech and freedom of expression. It will also impede independent journalism.

In his question, Mukabbir Khan wanted to know the number of cases and people arrested so far under the Digital Security Act.

In response, the law minister said, as the concerned authority, this part of the question has been sent to

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