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The silent demise of National Book Centre



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Reshma paves a path to success



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Mediators announce new Sudan truce



WR4

Concertgoers honoured with medals of heroism

BCC POLLS

Sadiq's men may decide his successor

SUSHANTA GHOSH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, from Barishal

With only two days until Barishal city goes to polls, the division in the ruling Awami League is still the talk of the town.

Many do not know if supporters of incumbent Mayor



Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah will vote for the AL nominee.

During his five-year tenure, Sadiq organised the ward committees of AL with his loyalists.

He also has influence in the city committee as well as over 15 councillor candidates out of 30. The 15 councillor hopefuls have their personal vote banks, said AL insiders and locals.

For this, votes from Sadiq's supporters could be a deciding factor for electing the BCC mayor, they added.

Sources said his supporters are under intense pressure, from AL mayor candidate Abul Khair Abdullah's followers and the law enforcers.

Sources in the city AL said steps would be taken to keep those, who do not wholeheartedly back Khair, on the sidelines.

Some supporters of Sadiq alleged that they are facing police harassment.

"Some intelligence officials are trying to put pressure and giving directives by calling our men at their workplaces. All they want is the favour for the ruling party candidate," a close aide to Sadiq told The Daily Star.

"For that reason, some might vote for the ruling party candidate. While some are planning to abstain or not even go to the polling centres."

The Daily Star spoke to one such leader who claimed to have been approached by intelligence men.

Md Saiful Islam, commissioner of Barishal Metropolitan Police, dismissed the allegation and said they are not harassing anyone. "We are only taking legal actions against those wanted in criminal cases."

Tarun Chanda, vice president of the district AL, said Sadiq's supporters are dissatisfied with the nomination of Khair. "But they have no alternative to voting for the boat."

In the absence of Sadiq's support, Khair has to rely mainly on leaders, who are not of Barishal, for his campaign. Those who did not get any party posts during Sadiq's rule have also joined the electioneering of Khair.

For instance, Md Jashimuddin, former Barishal city unit Chhatra League president, and Moin Tushar, former VP of Government BM College, are lead campaigners of Khair.

Chaitali Chakrabarty, a member of the Swachhchasebak

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Two workers cooling off in the rain while riding atop a moving pickup on Dhanmondi's Shat Masjid Road around noon yesterday. Dhaka residents welcomed the day-long downpour that brought much-needed relief from the ongoing heatwave.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Garments export to US declines

Bangladesh still doing better in America than most exporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Garment exports to the US, the single largest export destination of Bangladesh, declined by 17.88 percent year on year in January-April period.

During this period last year, Bangladesh exported goods worth \$3.28 billion to the US, but this year it was \$2.7 billion, according to data from the Office of Textiles and Apparel (OTEXA) of the US Department of Commerce.

In 2022, Bangladesh earned \$9.72 billion from garment shipments to the US.

Due to high inflation in the US, America's garment imports from all countries declined.

In June last year, the US had an inflation rate of 9.1 percent, but in April this year, it dropped to 4.9 percent.

Faruque Hassan, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said even though inflation is showing down in the US, Bangladesh's export there may continue to decline for a few more months.

"We are expecting garment export to the US to rebound from December onwards as US consumers are still spending less on clothing items," he told The Daily Star.

Faruque added that in the first quarter of this year, garment exports to the US declined by 19 percent in value and 30 percent in volume year on year.

This trend may continue for a few months as bank interest rates in the US and Canada have been hiked to contain inflation, he said.

Bangladesh seems to be doing better than many other garment exporters, according to the OTEXA data.

Apparel exports to the US from China, the largest clothing items supplier worldwide, declined by 32.45 percent year on year in the January-April period. Vietnam's exports to America dropped by 27.33 percent, India's by 16.59 percent, and Indonesia's by 25.57 percent.

In the January-April period, the US imported \$25.21 billion worth of garments, which is 22.15 percent lower than what it imported in the same period last year, said OTEXA.



SERAJUL ALAM KHAN 1941-2023

The passing of the 'mystery man' in politics

GOLAM MORTOZA

He was more of a fictional character than a real person. Most of our countrymen never saw him; they only heard stories about him.

The stories fascinated the youth and, in all likelihood, they'll continue to do so. In them, sometimes he appears like Kapalik from Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's "Kapalkundala", while some other times he is the "Dada Bhai" of politics. In the words of ASM Abdur Rab, leader of a faction of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, "He is the leader of our leaders, a great leader, a philosophical leader." His secretive lifestyle

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Trump took secret docs on nuclear, weapons programmes

Say US prosecutors as they unseal a 37-count indictment

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump took secret documents dealing with US nuclear and weapons programmes from the White House after leaving office, potentially putting national security at risk, according to the indictment of the former president unsealed yesterday.

The 76-year-old Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, took "hundreds" of classified government documents to his Mar-a-Lago residence and club in Florida, the 49-page charge sheet said.

Trump kept the files, which included documents from the Pentagon, CIA and National Security Agency, unsecured at Mar-a-Lago, which regularly hosted large social events involving tens of thousands of guests over time, the indictment said.

On at least two occasions, Trump showed classified documents on US military operations and plans to people



SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



The recent demolition of the decades-old Karatoya bridge in Bogura's Chelopara has made it difficult for commuters from Gabtali, Shariakandi, and Sonatala upazilas to get to the district town. Some 20,000 people from the three upazilas now use a rickety bamboo bridge, which the Roads and Highways Department put up instead of building a proper alternate route.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Many Dhaka dwellers still without water

DIPAN NANDY

Anamika Roy, a resident of Azimpur's New Paltan Lane, has been without tap water supply at home for five days.

Desperate for a shower, she bought a 20-litre water gallon, typically used for a water dispenser, she told this correspondent yesterday.

"I cannot take this anymore."

For the last one week, a large number of Dhaka residents have been experiencing an acute water crisis, with the elderly, children, the sick, and pregnant women, being the worst sufferers.

Also speaking to this newspaper, Nilima Jahan, a 35-week pregnant woman from Mirpur's West Kazipara, said the power outages coupled with the water crisis had made her life miserable over the last few days. "I'm at such a stage of my pregnancy that I cannot just move out."

"I called the Dhaka Wasa hotline on Friday, and they said it would take another 2-3 days for the water supply to return to normal," she added.

She went on to say that her family was buying bottles of mineral water in order to partially meet their daily needs.

Half of the city residents have been suffering from an acute water crisis

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

More rain likely today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Light to heavy rain in most parts of the country brought down the temperature yesterday, giving people relief from the scorching heat that swept over the country during the last couple of weeks.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), more rain or thundershowers in different parts of the country including Dhaka will occur in the 24 hours from 9:00am yesterday.

“The country experienced light to heavy rain yesterday and Dhaka will get more rainfall in the next one or two days,” said Tariful Nevaz Kabir, meteorologist of BMD.

The country’s highest rainfall was recorded in Tangail, 84 millimetres, within 12 hours from 6:00am yesterday while 47 millimetre rainfall was recorded in Dhaka during this time, according to the Met office.

“This rain brought relief to all who had been suffering in the scorching heat since the last week of May,” said Noorjahan Begum, a resident of Gandaria.

She said it was difficult for her to live in their rented house, which is the top floor of the building, during the hot weather.

“I even fell sick due to the excessive heat and was forced to go to the house of my daughter whose house is a little cool,” said Noorjahan.

Mohammad Salehin, a resident of the city’s Kolabagan said he could not sleep for the last few days due to unbearable heat and load shedding but he could sleep peacefully for a long yesterday morning due to the rain.

Many residents of Dhaka were seen getting wet in the rain on purpose while many children played football in the open or on the street under the rain.

“The rain was badly needed as we were exhausted due to the scorching heat as well as load-shedding,” Mohammad Shamim, a resident of Mirpur 12.

According to the forecast of Met Office, rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at many places over Chattogram and Barishal divisions; at a few places over Rangpur, Dhaka, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions; and at one or two places over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions.



Activists of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal take part in a rally protesting the price hike of essentials and demanding a caretaker government for the next national election yesterday. The photo was taken in Shantinagar area.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SOUTHERN UKRAINE FRONT

Russia reports heavy fighting

Claims to have destroyed 21 armoured vehicles; Kyiv silent on counterattack

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia reported heavy fighting along the front in southern and eastern Ukraine yesterday, while Kyiv maintained a strict silence about its long-anticipated counterattack.

With virtually no independent reporting from the front lines, it was impossible to assess the degree to which Ukraine’s operation was under way or whether it was having success in penetrating Russian defences to drive out occupying forces.

Ukraine’s counter-offensive is ultimately expected to involve thousands of Ukrainian troops trained and equipped by the West. Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said Ukraine had begun a major offensive against Russia’s army but that Ukrainian forces had failed to achieve their objectives despite intense fighting over at least three days.

Pro-war Russian bloggers reported intense battles on the Zaporizhzhia front

near the city of Orikhiv, around the mid-point of the “land bridge” linking Russia to the Crimea peninsula, seen as one of Ukraine’s main potential targets.

The Russian army claimed to have destroyed more than 21 armoured vehicles in the past 24 hours. Such claims are unverifiable.

Ukraine generally forbids independent accredited journalists from reporting on its side of front lines during offensive operations.

The initial days of the counter-offensive have been overshadowed this week by a humanitarian disaster after the destruction of the Kakhovka dam holding back the waters of the Dnipro River that bisects Ukraine.

Thousands of people have been forced to evacuate homes flooded in the war zone, vast nature preserves have been wiped out and the destruction to irrigation systems is likely to cripple

agriculture across much of southern Ukraine for decades.

Kyiv said yesterday it had intercepted a phone call proving that Russian forces in control of the dam had blown it up. Moscow says Ukraine sabotaged it.

In its few comments, Ukraine has reported gains of territory in the east around the city of Bakhmut, which Russian forces captured last month after nearly a year of the deadliest ground combat in Europe since World War Two.

But Kyiv has said virtually nothing about the southern front, widely assumed to be the focus of its main assault as it tries to push towards the coast and cut Russia’s access to Crimea.

In his nightly video address, delivered on a train after a visit to the flood zone in the south, President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked Ukrainian troops and repeated earlier claims of success in Bakhmut, but gave no further account.

3 Rohingya women held while fleeing to India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh yesterday detained three Rohingya women who were trying to flee to India through Dhalai border in Moulvibazar’s Kamalganj upazila.

They are Minara Begum, 20, wife of Syedul Amin of Ukha camp 14; Formina Begum, 20, daughter of Iqbal Ahmad of camp 5; and Hamima Begum, 20, daughter of Noor Alam of camp 14.

According to police sources, three women and four men escaped from Kutupalong Transit Camp in Cox’s Bazar early Thursday. The BGB members detained three women.

Sanjoy Chakrabarty, officer-in-charge of Kamalganj Police Station, said four Rohingya men entered India after crossing the border. Members of Indian Border Security Force detained them, he added.

Man beaten to death by co-workers over theft

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A construction worker was beaten to death and another injured allegedly by their fellow workers in Sylhet city yesterday.

The deceased, Nayan, 20, of Sylhet’s Bishwanath upazila, was working at a under construction building of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital. Injured Aiyub Ali is now undergoing treatment there.

Talking to this correspondent, Fazlul Haque, another construction worker, said the supervisor of the construction work and other workers detained Nayan and Aiyub over the allegation of stealing Tk 1.2 lakh and a mobile phone around 6:00am and started beating them.

After Nayan’s condition deteriorated, they took him to the hospital where doctors declared him dead, Fazlul added.

Mohammad Ali Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said they detained four construction workers in this connection. The detainees are Aminul Islam, Aynam, Saban Ali and Rubel Miah.

OCCUPIED WEST BANK

Palestinian killed by Israeli forces

AFP, Ramallah

Israeli forces yesterday killed a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry and the army said, with the latter adding that a soldier was lightly wounded.

Mehdi Bayadsa, 29, was killed by “bullets from the occupation (Israel) near the Rantis military checkpoint, west of Ramallah”, the ministry said in a statement.

Sadiq’s men may decide his successor

FROM PAGE 1

League central committee, said she came to Barishal from Dhaka along with 17 other leaders and activists to campaign for Khair.

To resolve the conflict between Sadiq and Khair, some central AL leaders visited Barishal and even some of them are staying there. The leaders include AL presidium members Abdur Rahman and Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Joint Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim and Organising Secretary Afzal Hossain.

But they failed to address the rift and launch a united campaign.

Al Nahian Khan Joy, former president of Chhatra League, said he

has been in Barishal for the last two days to campaign for Khair.

When unknown faces are campaigning for Khair, many AL leaders became nonchalant.

Afjal Hossain, election agent of Khair, told this newspaper that the central leaders are taking part in the campaign following the electoral code of conduct.

He, however, declined to comment when asked about the absence of district committee leaders and activists in the campaign.

Meanwhile, councillor aspirants in most words are seeking votes for boat, electoral symbol of AL, first and then for themselves, said locals.

Abdul Haye Mahabub, general secretary of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal of Barishal city unit, said Joynal Abedin and ATM Shahidullah Kabir are contesting for the councillor post in ward 10. “When we talked to them during a visit to the ward recently, both of them were seen seeking votes for the ruling party mayor candidate first and then for the councillor post.”

POLLS CODE

Khair yesterday offered Juma prayers at Markaj Mosque in the city’s Choumatha area.

After the prayers, his supporters were seen distributing leaflets. They entered the mosque compound

and sought votes for boat, which is a violation of section 20 of the electoral code of conduct.

Khair, however, did not take part in the campaign.

Md Humayun Kabir, returning officer of the BCC election, told The Daily Star that “the majority of our magistrates offered Juma prayers in different mosques in the city. They did not allow any candidates campaign in mosques.”

Asked about circulating leaflets, he said he did not get any complaints regarding this. “If we receive any complaint, we will definitely take action.”

Campaigning now intense

FROM PAGE 1

“We are putting in all-out effort in every ward, especially the BNP-leaning ones. We are reaching out to everyone and trying them to bring to the polling centres,” a joint general secretary of Khulna JP told this paper.

POLLS CODE OF CONDUCT

Violating the electoral code of conduct, Khaleque and his supporters campaigned during Friday prayers at Baitun Noor Jame Masjid in Khulna’s New Market area.

According to the Election Code of Conduct, candidates are not allowed to campaign in places of worship.

Khaleque delivered a five-minute speech, sought blessings from everyone and urged them to go to the polling stations on election day.

After the prayers, around 20 supporters of Khaleque distributed campaign leaflets among the devotees inside the mosque.

A colourful election festoon of Khaleque was seen in the Rupsha Bus Terminal area.

Contacted, Khaleque said he did not violate any election code by seeking blessings and that he had no idea who put up the festoon there.

[Our Khulna correspondent also contributed to this report]

Trump took secret docs

FROM PAGE 1

not cleared to see them at his Bedminster, New Jersey, golf club, it said.

Trump faces 37 separate counts in the indictment including 31 counts of “willful retention of national defense information,” which carries up to 10 years in prison on each count.

Other charges include conspiracy to obstruct justice, withholding a document and false statements.

“The classified documents Trump stored in the boxes included information regarding defense and weapons capabilities of both the United States and foreign countries,” the indictment said.

Other records dealt with US nuclear programs and the potential vulnerabilities of the United States and its allies to military attack along with plans for retaliation, it said.

“The unauthorized disclosure of these classified documents could put at risk the national security of the United States, foreign relations, the safety of the United States military, and human sources,” according to the indictment.

Trump is to appear in court in Miami on Tuesday for an initial hearing in the case, the first ever in which a former US president faces federal criminal charges.

Trump announced on his Truth Social platform Thursday that he had been indicted by the “corrupt Biden Administration” in what he called the “Boxes Hoax.”

In a defiant video, Trump repeatedly declared his innocence and framed the indictment as election interference by a Justice Department “weaponized” by the administration of Democratic President Joe Biden.

“They come after me because now we’re leading in the polls again by a lot against Biden,” Trump said in the clip.

Trump was already the first former or sitting president to be charged with a crime – in his case over election-eve hush money payments to a porn star who said she had an affair with him.

That indictment was handed down by Manhattan’s district attorney in March.

The classified documents investigation was carried out by a special counsel, Jack Smith, who was named by Attorney General Merrick Garland.

Smith is also looking into whether Trump should face charges over the January 2021 assault on the US Capitol by his supporters.

And Georgia prosecutors are investigating whether Trump illegally attempted to overturn the 2020 presidential election outcome in the southern state.

Two children ‘still critical’ after France knife attack

AFP, Paris

Two children were fighting for their lives a day after being stabbed by a man in a park in the French Alps, the government said yesterday.

“There are still two children considered to be in critical condition,” government spokesman Olivier Veran said in an interview with French media, adding that the children had undergone “surgical interventions”.

He also cautioned against jumping to conclusions in the case, in which the alleged attacker is a Syrian refugee.

“We obviously need transparency, and everything must be done so that this type of drama does not happen again, but once we have done preliminary work,” he said.

This eco-park will be for people of all ages. Here, we will build a city forest. The prime minister has built the Hatirjheel project in Dhaka, we will build a similar nature-based eco-park in Kalyanpur.

MD ATIQUUL ISLAM
DNCC Mayor

WHY WE NEED RETENTION AREAS


- Manage storm water runoff
- Improve water quality in adjacent bodies
- Prevent flooding, downstream erosion
- Bank stability, aesthetic benefits

KALYANPUR RETENTION AREA

- Total space 178.82-acre
- Much of the land was encroached
- Project to protect retention areas
- To turn the place in another Hatirjheel

ECO PARK AT A GLANCE

- Total zones 10
- All connected by waterways
- No entrance fee for visitors
- 12-14 points of entrance



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE.

KALYANPUR ECO PARK

DNCC looks to fast-track work

DIPAN NANDY

In the rainy season, waterlogging is a regular occurrence in Mohammadpur, Kalyanpur, Mirpur. The water of these areas is deposited in Kalyanpur retention pond (reservoir).

Retention ponds are used to hold and distribute rain runoff, which in turn helps prevents flooding. They are often landscaped with a variety of grasses, shrubs, and/or wetland plants to provide bank stability.

Dhaka North City Corporation has taken up an elaborate plan to construct an eco-park using the retention areas at Kalyanpur.

In the meantime, many unauthorised structures have also been demolished. At present, the eco-park is being designed and the soil is being dug up, as part of accelerating the progress of work.

City corporation officials said the initiative will protect the retention areas and transform the entire area into a recreational area similar to Hatirjheel.

According to DNCC statistics, the retention space covers a total area of 178.82 acres. The Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADCO) owns 98.35 acres, Bangladesh Water Development Board (WDB) owns 6.36 acres, and the government owns 11.40 acres. DNCC now controls 9.71 acres of Dhaka Wasa's own land and 53,004 acres of acquired land.

Visiting the area recently, this correspondent saw illegal structures have been demolished around the reservoir.

The reservoir is filled with trash. DNCC's engineering division is cleaning it with three separate excavators. They could not, however, specify how long it would take to excavate the entire reservoir or how much waste and sediment would be removed.

As of May, DNCC's engineering division said over 30 lakh cubic feet of soil and debris have been removed from this reservoir.

According to officials, five of the project's 10 zones will be nature-based, including a youth base camp, a biodiversity island with bee colonies, a butterfly garden, a bird aviary, and an aquatic park.

All the zones will be connected by waterways and there will be no entrance fee for visitors. According to officials, people will be able to enter through 12-14 points.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

RPO will curb EC's power

Says TIB in statement
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday raised concern over the Representation of the People Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023, saying the bill will further curb the Election Commission's power once it is passed in the Jatiya Sangsad.

In a statement, TIB said if the proposed amendment is made, the EC's power to cancel polls to any constituency, if it is convinced on the ground of irregularities, will be scrapped.

TIB said as per section 91 (a) of the RPO, 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 following the law due to malpractices, including coercion, intimidation and pressures.

On the other hand, in the new bill, it has been proposed to limit the EC's power to cancel voting in only related polling centres that will face irregularities, it said.

As a result, if the bill is passed then the EC will not have the power to cancel constituency-based polls, it added.

This will be "adding insult to injury", TIB

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Final nail in jute mills' coffin?

BJMC leasing those out to textile, RMG factories

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Three years after the closure of state-run jute mills, Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) is still failing to attract investors to re-open its jute mills.

Now, BJMC is leasing out the mills to textile mills and RMG factories.

Worker leaders and industry experts are seeing this move as the dead end of state-run jute industries from which reopening of the jute mills may never be possible.

BJMC took the initiative to lease out 19 of its jute mills in 2021. So far, only five jute mills went into production under private management.

Many manufacturers who completed the bidding process and were given notification of awards (NoA) ultimately backed down from taking over these mills.


For instance, on April 27, 2021, BJMC published an expression of interest (EoI) to lease out 17 of its jute mills. BJMC published NoAs against five jute mills. In the end, two bidders backed down and their NoAs were cancelled as they could not pay the security deposits.

On February 7, 2022, BJMC published a second EoI to lease out 13 of its mills but none of the mills could start their operation. Although the corporation published NoA to seven of its bidders, five of them backed down in the end due to fund shortage and their disagreement with the ToR. Only two bidders applied for an extension to pay the security deposit.

Due to a similar experience in the 3rd EoI, BJMC published another EoI on May 16 to

lease out nine of its mills and added that RMG manufacturers now can also compete in the bidding process.

According to BJMC officials, despite the repeated publication of EoIs, only three of its mills went into full production under private management. The leasing process could not be finalised against six to seven mills as the bidders have not paid the security deposit yet. Consequently, these mills could not be included in the fourth EoI.



According to the ToR, successful bidders have to deposit 36 months' rent as security money, which has proven too high for some bidders. For instance, Saad Musa Group, a Chattogram-based conglomerate was supposed to pay around Tk 15 crore to finalise the leasing process of Hafiz Jute Mills.

Initially, the group paid a deposit of Tk 50 lakh but could not pay further. As a result, their NoA had to be cancelled by BJMC.

The experience was the same for Mimu Jute Mills Limited who wanted to lease the

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BJMC has devised such a plan that would leave hundreds of thousands of jute mill workers permanently unemployed as there is no doubt that these mills will ultimately be taken over by the non-jute industries.

RUHUL AMIN
Coordinator of Sramik-Krishak Oikya Parishad

Due to the economic situation all over the world, private jute mills and jute goods exporters are also struggling. Under these circumstances, we received a policy decision from the higher authority to lease out the mills to non-jute manufacturers.

GOLAM KABIR
Chairman of BJMC

Leasing the mills to jute-based manufacturers is our priority. However, if we do not get capable bidders from the jute sector, we would like to open the door to textile and RMG manufacturers who are also under the purview of this ministry.

ABDUR ROUF
Secretary of Ministry of Jute and Textile

BANGABAZAR FIRE

Shop workers seek compensation ahead of Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 15,000 shop workers affected by the Bangabazar fire have demanded Tk 50,000 to Tk 1 lakh each as compensation before the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

Under the banner of "National Shop Employees Federation", they said if they don't get the money by June 20, they will march towards the Prime Minister's Office to realise their demand.

The federation announced the programme during a press conference at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Its secretary Amirul Haque Amin said these workers are living an inhumane life without job and salary. They did not get salary during last Eid-ul-Fitr.

The compensation must be paid before the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, he said.

There is no accurate information on how many shop workers have been affected by the fire, he said, adding that around 5,000 shops have been burnt in Bangabazar fire.

It is assumed that three employees worked at each store, he further said.

Hesaid, "We will be handing over memorandums to the mayor, state minister for labour, local lawmaker, DC and the Bangladesh Shop Owners Association on June 12-17 and will march towards the Prime Minister's Office on June 20."

Federation president Rofiqul Islam Babul and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



FILE PHOTO

FOOD SECURITY

FAO chief lauds Hasina's leadership

UNB, Dhaka

Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Qu Dongyu lauded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's leadership in ensuring food security in Bangladesh when Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen met him in FAO headquarters in Rome recently.

The FAO DG recalled his fruitful meeting with Hasina during the 36th Asia-Pacific Regional Conference held in March 2022 in Dhaka.

The foreign secretary urged the FAO to support Bangladesh in agro-and-food processing.

Later, the FAO director general took the foreign secretary and the accompanying delegation for a tour to show the progress of the ongoing construction of the "Sheikh Mujib-Bangladesh Room" at the FAO headquarters.

The curious case of INCREASING HONEY PRICES

Traders and retailers have connected the increase in honey prices to that of the prices of sugar. Beekeepers mentioned that with the end of the peak season, they now have to feed sugar to millions of bees in their farms.

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

It is natural to attribute the increasing prices of daily essentials to the Russia-Ukraine war. However, questions arise when the price of honey – a supposedly locally produced good – also increases due to a war occurring on the other side of the globe.

While talking to multiple traders and vendors, two explanations were found for the mysterious case of increasing honey prices.

According to them, January to April is the peak season for honey collection. With mango buds and lychee blossoms blooming in abundance, the supply of honey remains normal. During winter too, the supply remains uninterrupted due to the blooming of the mustard flower, a highly coveted source of honey.

The end of the season implies that the only source of honey is from the beehives in the Sundarbans, hence the prices can increase due to a reduction in supplies.

However, another interesting factor remains beyond our knowledge.

Traders and retailers have connected the increase in honey prices to that of the prices of sugar. Beekeepers mentioned that with the end of the peak season, they now have to feed sugar to millions of bees in their farms.

Hence, with the increasing price of bee feed, honey prices also increase.

Sugar is currently being sold at Tk 135 to Tk 140 per kilo, even though the government set the price at Tk 104 around a month ago. Consequently, the price of honey is increasing by Tk 100 to 150 per kilo, depending on the location and quality.

Honey is being sold at Tk 600 to 650 per kilo at roadside vendors', which was Tk 500 just a month ago. Small shops

are selling the same amount from Tk 800 to Tk 900.

On the other hand, branded honey is being sold at Tk 60 per 50 grammes and Tk 110 per 100 grammes. According to a shopkeeper at New Eskaton, this reflects a Tk 10-20 increase per bottle.

There is another possible aspect to this correlation between the prices of honey and sugar that traders are not too keen on discussing.

Vendors mentioned that all the products claiming to be hundred percent natural might not necessarily be true. A huge portion of honey sold in the market is adulterated with sugar syrup. Law enforcers keep uncovering fake honey-making factories frequently.





PHOTO: STAR
People from all walks of life formed a human chain yesterday to save the old Brahmaputra river.

DNCC looks to fast-track work

FROM PAGE 3
The zones will have over 50 services, including sidewalks, bicycle lanes, children's playgrounds, waste disposal and management, and a rehabilitation facility (housing area) for evicted residents. Zone-7 will host 900 square-foot flats while zone-8 will have farmland, cold storage, and a seed warehouse. Zone-9 will have a training centre, multipurpose hall, and exhibition space; zone-10

will have a solar-aquatic treatment plant and a park. Boats will take tourists between all the zones. According to sources in the DNCC's property division, Dhaka Wasa transferred 13 canals and waterbodies to the DNCC in 2020 for dewatering and beautification purposes. Later, DNCC initiated the removal of trash and unauthorised structures from these canals. Earlier this year, DNCC took the initiative to free the 53-

acre retention pond of encroachment. DNCC Mayor Md Atiqul Islam said, "No matter how many obstacles come, a hydro eco-park will be built in Kalyanpur for people's benefit." "This eco-park will be for people of all ages. Here we will build a city forest. The prime minister has built the Hatirjheel project in Dhaka, we will build a similar nature-based eco-park in Kalyanpur," he added.

From abandonment

FROM PAGE 5
uphill battle, but her determination knew no bounds. She vowed to carve a path where her name would shine independently, transcending the limitations of her circumstances. **TURNING THE WHEELS OF FORTUNE**
In 2014, she seized an opportunity to receive training in fish farming and tailoring from the District Juba Unnoyan Kendra. "Besides, with a loan of Tk 50,000 from the Kendra and additional support from my mother, I acquired a cattle and a goat, laying the foundation for my venture," she told The Daily Star recently. "In 2016, I expanded my repertoire by engaging in the production of vermicomposting (the use of earthworms to convert organic waste into fertiliser) and tricho-compost (a type of compost used to improve soil fertility and increase crop yields)," she added.

Armed with training from Bogura's Rural Development Academy, she ventured into the world of poultry-pigeon farming in 2018. Ever determined, she diversified her endeavours, cultivating an assortment of vegetables and crops that yielded a bountiful harvest of 100 maunds of maize from three bighas of land. Today, Reshma's dedication bears fruit as her monthly earnings exceed Tk 2 lakh. Her sales

encompass 45 tonnes of vermin-compost, 10 tonnes of tricho-compost, and earthworms, contributing an additional Tk 40,000 to Tk 50,000 per month. Furthermore, her poultry, milk-egg, and fish farming efforts generate an impressive Tk 50,000 to Tk 60,000 each month. Through her relentless pursuit of success, Reshma has acquired substantial assets, having acquired six bighas of land valued at Tk 2 crore since 2016. Her meteoric rise has garnered recognition and accolades, including the esteemed National Youth Award in 2022 and the Rajshahi Divisional Joyita Award, for her financial achievements. In March of this year, Reshma clinched the Channel-I Award-22 in the Sangrami Nari Krishok category. Reshma acknowledges the support she has received from the agriculture office, livestock office, Juba Unnoyan Kendra, and the Bogura Rural Development Academy. Above all, she cherishes her mother's unwavering support, who she describes as "an anchor amidst life's tempestuous seas". Md Raihan, livestock officer of Sherpur upazila, commended Reshma's indomitable spirit, hailing her as a self-confident and exceptional example of self-employment. "Her tenacity and economic ac c o m p l i s h m e n t s have ignited a spark

of inspiration among countless women, proving that one's destiny need not be dictated by circumstances," he said. Tosaddek Hossain, deputy director of the Bogura Juba Unnoyan Kendra, echoed the same by reflecting on Reshma's remarkable journey, highlighting the hurdles she overcame. **SHE ALSO GIVES BACK**
Not content with her achievements, Reshma empowers others through her various self-employment initiatives. On her farm, a dedicated workforce of 20 to 30 individuals diligently toil alongside her. Moreover, she actively nurtures the growth of new entrepreneurs across the country, catalysing change. Reshma's impactful work has attracted the attention of researchers from institutions like Bangladesh Agricultural University and foreign countries, who visited her farms to witness the fruits of her labour. Additionally, the Bogura Rural Development Academy organises training programmes at Reshma's farms, where she imparts her knowledge and expertise to aspiring entrepreneurs, especially women. Reshma's commitment to self-employment has not only transformed her own life but has also sparked a ripple effect, empowering individuals to overcome their own limitations.

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REHAB MEMBER (4 Bed, Corner plot)
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RFP Ref. No.: LRPS-BAN-2023-9183315
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UNICEF Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a strong record and credibility of providing the above-required service. To receive the detailed scope of work and procedure to submit the bid response, please email to supplybangladesh@unicef.org
The deadline to submit the proposal is **Wednesday, 05 July 2023; Time: 11:00 Hrs.**
Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.
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Shop workers

FROM PAGE 3
vice president Kamrul Hasan also spoke at the press conference. A massive fire ripped through the capital's Bangabazar Shopping Complex on April 4, burning down at least 3,000 shops full of clothes and ruining the livelihood of several thousand traders just weeks before Eid. The fire, reported at 6:10am, spread rapidly in the cramped market while plumes of dark smoke blanketed the nearby neighbourhoods. Goods stored in the adjacent Anexco Tower, Banga Islamia Market, and Banga Homeo Market were also gutted and a police barrack next to the Police Headquarters was damaged, firefighters said.

Rebel trouble haunts

FROM PAGE 5
Mabu is a three-time councillor of the municipality and less known in Cox's Bazar's politics compared to Mujibor, the incumbent mayor and general secretary of Cox's Bazar district AL. One of the nomination seekers, Masedul Haque Rashed, former organising secretary of district unit AL, decided to continue running for the mayor's office as an independent candidate. Later, he was expelled as a member of district AL for being the rebel candidate. His sister Tahamina Chowdhury resigned from the post of president of the district Juba Mahila League in solidarity with her elder brother. On June 1, the municipal AL expelled its 13 leaders and activists for running the race against the AL candidate.

In the latest development, Cox's Bazar district Juba League general secretary Shahidul Haque Sohel was expelled from his post and the district Juba League committee was dissolved by the central Juba League on Thursday. Sohel is the younger brother of Mashedul Haque Rashed. He was expelled on the allegation of participating in the election campaign for his brother. Rashed's other two younger brothers --

Shaheenul Haque and Kaisarul Haque Jewel -- are chairman of Cox's Bazar district council and Cox's Bazar Sadar upazila chairman respectively. Kaisarul earlier resigned from the post of secretary of district Swechhasebak League unit in Cox's Bazar to participate in the election campaign for his brother. Meanwhile, in a video clip that went viral on social media, SM Imrul Kaws Chowdhury, chairman of Haldiapalang union under Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya upazila was heard saying he rigged the votes in eight centres during the 2019 elections on behalf of Sadar upazila chairman Kaisarul Haque Jewel and termed him ungrateful. He said it while participating in the campaign on behalf of Mabu at Tarabuniachhara. However, Kaisarul told the journalists that he was elected through a fair election. He also filed a complaint in this regard with the district election office. Following Imrul's speech, the Election Commission in a letter to the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives has asked to take action against Imrul after investigating the issue. Earlier, AL candidate Mabu alleged that the rebel candidate has been offering money to different quarters for buying the votes.

Swindlers active

FROM PAGE 5
An unknown person used the election commissioner's name and photograph on his WhatsApp profile to call the councillor candidate and sought some Tk 8,000 on Thursday morning, said councillor candidate Arman Hossain of ward no 24. Hossain stated that the individual claimed he would assist in winning the election if the candidate pays him the money and more in the future. Before the person could give him the details for mailing the money, Hossain went to the police. The police later investigated the matter and found that an unknown person called him using WhatsApp from Cox's Bazar, said OC Suhrawardy Hossain of Boalia police station. "We sent the details to Cox's Bazar police for further action," he said.

RPO will curb EC

FROM PAGE 3
Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said in the statement. Iftekharuzzaman said in October last year, the EC postponed the by-polls of the Gaibandha-5 constituency on the ground of irregularities after it observed the polls on CCTV camera. Later, election observers observed that such a step by the EC could be a concern for the ruling party. "The proposed bill justifies the observation. If the EC's power is curbed

through the passing of the bill, it will further intensify the 'lack of trust' on the chances of holding free, fair, participatory and neutral elections in the country," added Iftekharuzzaman. Law Minister Anisul Huq placed the bill in Jatiya Sangsad on June 5. It was later sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry for scrutiny. The committee was asked to submit its report within 15 days.

In Khulna, it's AL versus AL

FROM PAGE 5
"I was elected four times as a councillor from ward-14. I was also elected as a panel mayor. But my rival candidate does not tolerate me as he has aligned himself with a group of land grabbers," alleged Anisur. Kazi Abul Kalam Azad, the incumbent councillor and member of ward-22 AL, and Sadar Thana Juba League Joint Convener Tajul Islam are contesting for the post of councillor. They have been repeatedly complaining regarding the vandalising of their offices since May 26. In 28 out of the city's 31 general wards, 159 Awami League leaders are competing for the posts of councillor. Similarly, in all 10 wards reserved for women, multiple AL leaders are vying for these positions. In the upcoming 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 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. Two AL loyalists from wards 13 and 27 have been elected unopposed as councillors. Analysing the data, it was found that 10 out of the 5 candidates in ward 14 are AL leaders. Incumbent councillor Shahjahan Jamaddar, ward general secretary former councillor Mofizur Rahman Palash, Monirul Islam, Juba League leader Yasir Arafat Yasin and Sramik League leader Nasir Sardar are all councillor candidates. Similar scenarios are seen in most of the wards. Mofizur Rahman Palash, a councillor candidate of ward-14, told The Daily Star, "I wanted to get the support of the party. However, the party is not directly supporting any of us. So we are going to the voters ourselves. We are trying to prove our worth on the field," he said. "The party's image will not help us in this regard, as it is not supporting any particular candidate directly. Our work and

image are our main strengths in the campaign," he said. Palash Das, a resident of ward-14, said there is no candidate outside the AL loyalists. "All candidates maintain a good relationship with each other. No one is tearing down anyone's poster....," he said. "With no support from the party, all the candidates are relying on our opinion. Even we are in a fix regarding whom we want to vote for. The councillor candidates are constantly visiting my house to seek for our votes," he added. Md A 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. "Instructions have been given so that supporters cannot participate in the campaign for the mayoral candidate and the councillor candidate at the same time. No scuffle of any significance has occurred yet. Whatever has happened is usual in any election," he added.

Final nail in jute mills' coffin?

FROM PAGE 3
Crescent Jute Mills, the largest jute mills in the country in terms of area and production capacity. However, the initiative failed ultimately. Mohd Shafiqul Islam, chairman of Bangladesh Jute Goods Exporters' Association, said, "The terms and conditions for leasing these mills are so strict that most of us, who work exclusively on jute, cannot afford to take them. We have to invest a lot of money just to maintain the huge property of these mills." "Again, the machineries of these mills are very old and cannot be used anymore. It will take a lot of time just to remove these machineries and make the establishments operable," he added. Md Abul Hossain, chairman of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA) said, "We have tried several times but ultimately we get rejected as BJMC expects an impossible price for quotation." "We could have taken these mills if we could take bank loans on a reduced interest rate. However, we also do not get any preference in getting bank loans. As a consequence, only very large groups of industries, that can spare millions of dollars, will be awarded ultimately. In this way, these mills might

be taken over by the non-jute sector. Considering the current state of the jute industry, very few mill owners are in a position to take these mills under the current terms and conditions," added Hossain. However, BJMC says jute mill owners are largely uninterested to invest in these mills. Golam Kabir, chairman of BJMC, said, "We tried a lot to lease the jute mills to private jute mill owners and jute product manufacturers but the response was not satisfactory. The recent EoI is the fourth attempt to lease out these mills to the private sector." "Due to the economic situation all over the world, private jute mills and jute goods exporters are also struggling. Under these circumstances, we received a policy decision from the higher authority to lease out the mills to non-jute manufacturers," he added. Abdur Rouf, secretary of the Ministry of Jute and Textile, said, "Some of our mills have already gone into production and they are producing jute-based products. It is not true that we are leasing all our mills to non-jute industries." "Leasing the mills to jute-based manufacturers is our priority. However, if we do not get capable bidders from the jute sector, we would like to open the door to textile and

RMG manufacturers who are also under the purview of this ministry." "At present, our priority is to lease out these mills to the private sector at the soonest possible time. As soon as we can lease out these mills, we shall be able to generate employment for the public and revenue for the government," he added. Nevertheless, workers are seeing this step as a direct betrayal of the promise of reopening the state-run jute mills that were made in 2020 while shutting down the mills. According to Ruhul Amin, coordinator of Sramik-Krishak Chhatra-Janata Oikya Parishad, "BJMC has devised such a plan that would leave hundreds of thousands of jute mill workers permanently unemployed as there is no doubt that these mills will ultimately be taken over by the non-jute industries." "These workers have been waiting for more than three years, as BJMC promised that they would reopen the factories and re-employ the former workers. They are skilled in this sector and many of them will not find suitable employment elsewhere. The new EoI is just sheer treachery with these impoverished workers," he added.

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Office of the Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)
Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-1)
Soydabad, Sirajganj.

Ref: 27.28.8878.101.07.001.19.158
Date: 08/06/2023

e-Tender Notice
The following e-Tenders have been invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Publication Date	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date
1	840155	Supply of Filters for Natural Gas Conditioning Station	08/06/2023	25/06/2023, 15:45	26/06/2023
2	840156	Supply of lube oil for Fusheng SA75W series Instrument Air Compressor	08/06/2023	25/06/2023, 15:45	26/06/2023

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Engr. Brojendra Kumar Sarker
Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)
Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-1)
NWPGCL, Soydabad, Sirajganj.

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Located on Dhaka-Tangail Highway besides General Pharmaceuticals Prime Land 7 bigha (Can be extended up to 17 bigha with Gas connection) and 150,000 Sqft. fully Compliant Building with 1500 kva Transformer, 180,000 gallons underground water reservoir, Generator all other amenities for sale. Contact: **01640-651225, 01715-479375**

RACE FOR COUNCILLOR

In Khulna, it's
AL versus AL

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Awami League leaders and activists have become the main contenders of each other for most of the councillor posts in the Khulna City Corporation election.

The mayoral candidates are selected by the parties, whereas councillor candidates are the ones with a local supporter base. Any party can formally endorse any of such candidates.

With the ruling party's support, AL leaders and activists have become the prime contenders in

Five candidates contesting for the councillor post in ward-16. Among them, Mohammad Anisur Rahman Biswas is the incumbent councillor. He joined AL from BNP before the 2018 KCC election and is now an executive committee member of Khulna city unit of AL.

Sheikh Hasan Ittekhhar Chalu, general secretary of ward 16 AL, is also a candidate.

A clash occurred between the supporters of Anisur and Ittekhhar on Sunday night. Ittekhhar has already submitted a written complaint to the returning officer in this regard.



Voters have been showing more interest towards councillor candidates rather than mayoral ones in the upcoming Khulna city polls, slated for June 12. Posters of various councillor candidates can be seen covering most of the city streets and alleys.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

almost all 31 wards of KCC.

In the KCC election, 136 candidates are contesting in the general wards and 39 women candidates are contesting for the reserved seats. Among them, 161 candidates are affiliates with AL, 9 with BNP and 5 with Jamaat, according to sources.

The supporters of councillor candidates from different parties have already reportedly been engaged in scuffles with one another. Some have been hospitalised after being beaten by their rivals.

He said Anisur's supporters beat up his men centring the election.

"He has been threatening us from the very beginning of my candidature. I have already submitted a written complaint to the returning officer but no action has been taken yet," said Ittekhhar.

On the other hand, Anisur said there was a conflict between the two candidates due to business reasons, which has been given a political colour ahead of the KCC polls.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Barishal gears
up for city polls

SUSHANTA GHOSH and MD ABBAS, from Barishal

The Election Commission started installing CCTV cameras at each polling station and secret ballot booth in preparation for the upcoming Barishal City Corporation elections.

The city polls, featuring seven mayoral candidates, 118 general councillor candidates, and 42 reserved councillor candidates, are scheduled for June 12.

Md Shaheen Sharif, convener of the Camera Installation Committee and the Nesharabad upazila election officer, said a total of 1,146 cameras will be installed at 126 polling stations. He further said the installation process will end by Saturday.

According to Sharif, there will be 894 secret booths for voting. Each secret booth will have one camera installed, and the entrance of each centre will have two cameras.

A trial run is planned for Sunday.

SECURITY TIGHTENED

While visiting various locations within the city, it was found that police check-posts had been set up, and law enforcement agencies were diligently examining vehicle licences to prevent any potential disturbances that may arise.

In response to inquiries regarding this matter, Saiful Islam, chief of Barishal Metropolitan Police, affirmed their heightened state of vigilance.

He said, "We are currently maintaining a high level of alertness, with more than 2,300 police personnel deployed."

He further said 4,400 law enforcement members, including Armed Police Battalion, Ansar, and Border Guard Bangladesh, will be actively present in the field.

MAGISTRATES

Meanwhile, the Barishal district administration is responsible for performing magisterial duties to prevent crime and control law and order in the city on election day.

Confirming the matter, Md Moniruzzaman, assistant returning officer of Barishal city polls and the media coordinator, said an executive magistrate has been assigned to each ward for overseeing the code of conduct.

Additionally, there will be ten judicial magistrates who will be responsible for imposing penalties in case any violations occur. Judicial magistrates will be assigned to three wards.

SADIQ-BACKED CANDIDATE'S CANDIDATURE REJECTED

In other news, the candidacy of Raiz Ahmed alias Manna, a follower of BCC incumbent mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah and former city

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PHOTO: TITU DAS

CCTV cameras and monitoring screens being set up at Barishal's polling centres.

Swindlers active
to put RCC polls
in question

Says returning officer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi



A group of swindlers have begun extorting candidates for the Rajshahi City Corporation election, according to officials from the regional election commission.

They used Election Commissioner Brig Gen Md Ahsan Habib Khan's (ret'd) photo while demanding money from one councillor candidate and offering him a win in the election in exchange, the returning officer Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

The councillor candidate and Boalia thana election officer filed separate general diaries with Boalia Police Station, he said.

In a press release, the RO asked people for information leading to the capture of the culprits and said the miscreants have become active to put the election's occurrence in question.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

COX'S BAZAR POLLS

Rebel trouble
haunts AL

MOKAMMEL SHUVO



The politics of Awami League in Cox's Bazar is in utter chaos ahead of the municipality election scheduled for June 12.

The situation escalated since both mayoral candidates, who have the potential to win the polls, belong to AL.

Mahbubur Rahman Chowdhury got the AL ticket for the mayoral race, while his opponent Masedul Haque Rashed, an expelled AL leader, is taking part in the election as an independent candidate for the mayoral post.

The debate started when AL announced the name of Mahbubur Rahman popularly known as Mabu, as its mayoral candidate on April 15, dropping Mujibor Rahman, a heavy-weight politician, and five other AL leaders, who sought the AL nomination.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Save old
Brahmaputra

Demand residents
of Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

A group of locals yesterday threatened to continue their protest if the ongoing dredging of the Old Brahmaputra in Mymensingh is not completed within the specified time frame.

Nagorik Andolon organised the "Nagorik Ahajari" rally at the Kachari Ferry Ghat on the river.

People from all walks of life participated in the event.

Participants said the Old Brahmaputra is nearly extinct and steps have to be taken to save the river.

The protestors said they were born by the river and they must raise voice in unison to protect the Brahmaputra.

The secretary of the forum, freedom fighter Nurul Amin Kalam, said before beginning the excavation in 2019, the authorities claimed that the river would have a reasonable depth and width during the dry season, but the waterbody is drying up at various locations.

He said the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority began the dredging work at a cost of approximately Tk 2,763 crore at the end of 2019, with its completion scheduled for 2020.

However, the work is still unfinished.

Forum president AHM Khalequzzaman, joint-secretary Shabbir Ahmed Liton, and member Md Mizanur Rahman Liton spoke at the occasion, among others.

PRAYER
TIMING

JUNE 10

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-45	5-00	6-50	8-15
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-55	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



In a landscape where adversity often extinguishes the flicker of hope, a resilient woman has emerged as a beacon of self-employment, defying all the odds with determination. Suraiya Farhana Reshma, 37, an entrepreneur, has overcome the harsh blows of abandonment from both her father and her estranged husband to forge her indomitable path.

From abandonment to
EMPOWERMENT

Reshma paves a path to success

MOSTAFA SHABUIJ, Bogura

Her story is nothing short of a fairy tale.

Reshma was only two months old when her father left her mother Hosne Ara. Every day was a battle for Hosne Ara to provide for her baby girl, and as Reshma entered eighth grade, poverty forced her into an arranged marriage.

To make things worse, her husband turned out to be a gambler and drug addict, subjecting Reshma to relentless abuse in his pursuit of drug money, even in front of her mother, who used to live with them.

So she decided to divorce him, liberating herself and her mother from the clutches of despair.

Rebuilding their shattered lives, Reshma and her mother found solace in Bonga village, nestled in the Sherpur upazila of Bogura. However, the shadows of Reshma's past haunted her every move. People's curiosity about her absent father and estranged husband served as a constant reminder of her painful past, igniting a fire within her to establish her own identity.

With no financial means or formal education, Reshma faced an

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Reshma acknowledges support she has received from agriculture and livestock offices, Jubo Unnayan Kendra and Rural Development Academy. Above all, she cherishes her mother's unwavering support, who she describes as "an anchor amid life's tempestuous seas."

OUR CUSTOMERS SPEAK FOR US

"I am genuinely happy with the excellent customer service and their impressive commitment for timely handover."

Shafiqul Mannan
Apartment Owner, Project: Grand Nawab

EU ministers seal ‘historic’ migration deal

REUTERS, Brussels

European Union ministers agreed on Thursday on how to share out the responsibility for looking after migrants and refugees, after 12 hours of negotiations got Italy and Greece to sign up to a deal that has eluded the bloc for nearly a decade.

Home affairs ministers from the 27-member bloc sealed the deal, hoping to end years of division dating back to 2015 when more than a million people – mostly fleeing war in Syria – reached the EU across the Mediterranean.

Germany’s Nancy Faeser hailed the agreement as “historic”. The bloc’s top migration official said it amounted to “a win-win” situation for member states. “This is a great, great achievement, showing that it’s possible to work together on migration,” home affairs commissioner Ylva Johansson said.

INDIA’S MANIPUR

3 killed, 2 hurt in shooting by ‘insurgents’

NDTV ONLINE

Fresh violence in India’s Manipur state has claimed at least three lives, including of a woman. Two others were injured in the attack, by suspected insurgents in Khoken village yesterday, Army sources said.

The Khoken village lies on the boundary between Kangpokpi and Imphal West district.

The suspected militants and the victims belonged to different communities.

According to police sources, the attackers camouflaged themselves in army fatigues and drove vehicles resembling those used by the military.

They went to the Khoken village early yesterday morning and fired upon the villagers with their automatic rifles.



A Lebanese protester plants the national flag across the fence from an Israeli tank during an anti-Israeli demonstration near the “blue line” area, a demarcation line drawn by the UN to mark Israel’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, near the Lebanese southern village of Kfar Shuba yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SUDAN CONFLICT

US, Saudi mediators announce new truce

Warn warring sides of adjourning talks if ceasefire fails

AFP, Khartoum

Sudan’s warring generals have agreed to a 24-hour ceasefire from today, US and Saudi mediators said, acknowledging that previous attempts to pause a conflict now nearing its third month had proved abortive.

“Representatives of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) agreed to a 24-hour countrywide ceasefire beginning on June 10 at 6:00 am (0400 GMT),” said a joint statement from the mediators released by Saudi foreign ministry yesterday.

Multiple ceasefires have been agreed and broken, and Washington slapped sanctions on both the warring generals after the last attempt collapsed at the end of May, blaming them for the “appalling” bloodshed.

“Should the parties fail to

observe the 24-hour ceasefire, facilitators will be compelled to consider adjourning” talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah which have been suspended since late last month, the mediators said.

Since April, fighting between the regular army and the paramilitary RSF has gripped Khartoum and the flashpoint western region of Darfur, defying a series of truces.

Upwards of 1,800 people have been killed, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, and the UN says nearly two million people have been displaced, including 476,000 who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

The Saudi and US mediators said they “share the frustration of the Sudanese people about the uneven implementation of previous ceasefires”.

“If observed, the 24-hour ceasefire will provide an important opportunity... for the parties to undertake confidence-building measures which could permit resumption of the Jeddah talks,” the statement said.

Yesterday’s announcement comes a day after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia, where he held discussions on Sudan with top Saudi officials.

It also comes a day after Sudanese authorities loyal to the regular army declared UN envoy Volker Perthes “persona non grata”, accusing him of taking sides. UN chief Antonio Guterres has repeatedly defended Perthes.

Witnesses yesterday reported hearing clashes near the Yarmouk weapons manufacturing depot plumes of smoke were seen rising,

GOVT STUDY

11 percent of Indians diabetic

REUTERS, New Delhi

Some 11 percent of Indians are diabetic, a government study found, adding that diabetes, hypertension and obesity are much more common in India than previously estimated.

The study of more than 113,000 people also found that around 15 percent of Indians were pre-diabetic and around 35 percent have hypertension. It was conducted between October 2008 and December 2020 across 31 Indian states and territories.

“It is quite evident from the study results that India has a substantial population at risk of cardiovascular disease and other long-term organ complications,” R.S. Dhaliwal, head of the non-communicable diseases division at ICMR, said.

China slams US over reported ‘spy base’ in Cuba

AFP, Beijing

China warned the United States yesterday against “interfering in Cuba’s internal affairs”, in response to reports that Beijing was planning to set up a spy base on the island just off American shores.

The media reports, based on comments by anonymous US officials to The Wall Street Journal and CNN, were dismissed by Cuba’s deputy foreign minister as “mendacious and unfounded”, while the White House called them inaccurate.

When asked about the alleged spying base at a regular press briefing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said he was “unaware of the situation” before criticising US policy on Cuba.

“As we all know, spreading rumours and slander is a common tactic of the United States, and wantonly interfering in the internal affairs of other countries is its patent,” said Wang.

“The United States should reflect on itself and stop interfering in Cuba’s internal affairs under the banner of freedom and democracy, and immediately cancel economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.”

The reports suggested that the Chinese spying base would be capable of eavesdropping on communications across broad swathes of the southeastern United States.

The developments come as Chinese leader Xi Jinping has pushed a rapid expansion of the country’s security presence around the world.

A base in Cuba, which lies 90 miles (150 kilometres) off Florida’s southern tip, would present the most direct challenge yet to the continental United States.

Saudis not asked to choose between US, China: Blinken

AFP, Riyadh



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Saudi Arabia was not being forced to choose between Washington and Beijing, striking a conciliatory tone in Riyadh following tensions with the long-time ally. Blinken, appearing alongside his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan at the end of a three-

day visit, denied that Saudi Arabia’s warming ties with China were a problem for the US. He added that the United States supported the humanitarian goals that Prince Faisal said were behind lifting Syria’s suspension from the Arab League, a move that was condemned by Washington. “We’ve... been very clear we’re not asking anyone to choose between the US and China,” Blinken told media after a meeting of the global coalition fighting the IS group. “We’re simply trying to demonstrate the benefits of our partnership and the affirmative agenda that we bring.” China demonstrated its growing clout in the Middle East when it brokered a surprise rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran in March.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Rescuers, servicemen and volunteers evacuate local residents from a flooded area after the Nova Kakhovka dam breached in Kherson, Ukraine, yesterday.

Many Dhaka dwellers

FROM PAGE 1

as Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) blamed load shedding.

They include people from Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Aftabnagar, Banashree, Jowarsahara, Badda, Shahjadpur, Dayaganj, KB Road, Madhya Basabo field-adjacent area, Maniknagar, Chan Mia Housing, Adabar, Shyamoli, East Rajabazar, Mohakhali, Jurain, Matuail, Azimpur New Paltan Lane, Gandaria, Rahmatpur, Konapara, Kadmatli, Utara Sector II & I2, Uttarkhan and Dakshinkhan, Ibrahimpur, Kafirul, and Bhashantek, said Wasa hotline sources.

Johirul Islam, of Dhalkanagar Lane, Gandaria, yesterday said he had to wait all day for Wasa’s tap water supply.

Despite claiming to have the capacity to supply water in surplus every day, Wasa has been failing to provide sufficient water to city dwellers when they needed it the most, the hottest time of summer.

Wasa claims to have the capacity to supply an average of 280 crore litres of water per day against the daily demand of 255-260 crore litres.

Dhaka Wasa’s Managing Director Taqsem A Khan said on Thursday that there is a water supply crisis in 5 out of 10 zones of Dhaka Wasa due to load shedding. “The pumps could not be operated for a sufficient amount of time due to the power crisis.”

“Last week, 158 of Dhaka Wasa’s 914 pumps remained idle for about 275 hours due to power outages. There is no alternative source of power to run the pumps.”

Adil Mohammed Khan, executive director of the Institute for Planning and Development, suggested that Wasa carry out a proper assessment of water demand while taking every possible situation into consideration.

He also suggested the agency keep ready alternative ways to solve the water crisis in the summer.

5 killed in Munshiganj

FROM PAGE 12

Police seized the truck but its driver managed to flee.

Meanwhile, tragedy struck a family twice as a man was killed in a road accident while returning home with his father’s body who died at a hospital in Dhaka due to old-age complications.

The deceased was identified as Emdad Hossain Shaon, 28, son of late Delwar Hossain of Miyapur village in Noakhali’s Begumganj upazila.

The accident happened when Delwar’s body was being taken to Begamganj for burial by an ambulance while a microbus carrying Emdad and his relatives was accompanying it.

When they reached the Baushia Pakhir Mor area under Munshiganj’s Gazaria upazila on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway at around 3:30am, an unidentified vehicle suddenly hit Emdad’s microbus from behind.

The microbus hit a road divider and overturned, leaving three of its passengers and the driver seriously injured, said ASM Rashedul Islam, in charge of Gazaria Bhabberchar Highway Police Outpost.

Locals took them to a local health complex where on-duty doctors declared Emdad dead, he added, quoting the victim’s family members and witnesses.

Two of his relatives – Ratna Begum, 40, and Kajal, 35, – and the microbus driver Al Amin, 28, were seriously injured in the accident.

“An unidentified vehicle hit the ambulance and fled the scene quickly. We are trying to trace the vehicle,” the police official said adding that Emdad’s body was handed over to his family members without autopsy on their request.

[Our correspondents from Munshiganj] and Jamalpur contributed to the report]

No question of Prof Yunus dodging tax

FROM PAGE 12

Yunus Trust, (PMYT)”, a usual philanthropic trust, and the other, a smaller one (6 percent of the total money), for the benefit of his family members, called the “Yunus Family Trust (YFT)”.

He incorporated a provision in the trust deed of the YFT so that the remaining fund of this trust is transferred to the PMYT after one generation, read the statement.

He did it to ensure that the money in the trusts would be safe under the supervision of the trustees during his lifetime, and beyond and that the trustees would be active in achieving the objectives of the trusts, the statement also read.

How did the question of gift tax arise, the statement questioned.

If he had kept his money with him he would actually have to pay less tax, because the rate of personal income tax is lower than institutional tax. His income tax advisor advised that he would not have to pay gift tax if he donated the money to PMYT because it is a philanthropic trust.

As for the YFT, his tax advisor’s advice was that in such a case (the case of making some arrangement

for the safety of his wealth in his absence) he would not have to pay any tax because the law allows it, the statement read.

On the basis of this advice, Prof Yunus did not pay any tax at the time of transferring the money to both trusts. But the tax officer concerned, after Prof Yunus’s tax return was submitted, imposed a gift tax since there was a declaration of gift in the tax return, read the statement.

In consultation with his tax lawyer, Prof Yunus decided to seek a decision from the court. The court has given its opinion in favour of paying the tax.

There is no question of “evading tax” as being accused in the press. It was Prof Yunus who went to the court to seek a decision on whether he had to pay the tax. The government did not go to court to demand the tax. Tax authority never said, at any stage, that he evaded tax. There is no question of tax evasion here. The question was all about the interpretation of the law relating to the matter, the statement also read.

Now that the lower court has given a verdict in favour of paying the tax, Prof Yunus will have the option to pay the tax or go to the higher court

to get their judgement on the issue. If the relevant tax law does not require Prof Yunus to pay the tax, then he will have the opportunity to use the money for the benefit of the people and the planet in the way he thinks would be best. That was his sole concern with regard to the payment of the tax. He does not personally benefit from either paying or not paying this tax, the statement read.

A question has been raised in the media by some important people that Prof Yunus spends a large chunk of the trust money on his frequent personal travels abroad. It is not true at all, the statement added.

All his international travel expenses are borne by the host organisations who invite him to speak at their conferences and other events. In addition, host organisations pay all costs for an additional person to travel with him as his companion, the statement also read.

Arafat

FROM PAGE 12

According to the election schedule, the last date for submitting nomination papers is June 15, while the date for scrutinising nomination papers is June 18. And, the last date for withdrawal of candidacy is June 25.

Responding to a query, Quader said the government does not have any plan to hold dialogue with the BNP at this moment.

“No decision was made to hold dialogue and we have no such plan now,” he said adding that only future can tell what will happen in the days to come.

Pointing out BNP’s three conditions – resignation of the prime minister and the government, and restoration of the caretaker government system – the AL general secretary said no such situation prevails in the country that requires resignation of the PM, the government and the caretaker government is a dead issue.

Quader also reiterated that the next national election will be held in the way elections are being held in other democratic countries.

GHAASHPHORING CHOIR

A family of harmonies

When talking about the challenges they face in the industry, Moinak Kunango, who is in charge of the arrangement and guitar in the group, said, “The main challenge we face, is that we have to explain the difference between choir and chorus singing to people. We are easily confused with acapella groups.”

ANTARA RAISA

You might know them for their marvellous takes on *Chaina Bhabish* or *Aha Ki Anondo*, a soothing mishmash of trained-untrained voices in perfect harmony. One might even follow them solely because of the achievements of Armeen Musa, jointly Bangladesh's first Grammy nominee for Berklee Indian Ensemble's album *Shuruaat*.

However, most at the moment would know them from their involvement in Coke Studio Bangla's (CSB) *Deora*, a cultural phenomenon, the fandom of which went as far as Africa.

Ghaashphoring Choir takes on many forms – like a family, they laugh, make music together in enviable symmetry; like an institution, members ‘graduate’ and move on, making space for another starry-eyed newcomer looking to make it in the industry, or perhaps just have a good time.

Founded in 2015, Armeen's passionate choir released their debut album, *Kichu Kotha Kichu Gaan* in 2019. Fast forward to their newfound fame through CSB, we sat with them over many a cups of coffee at The Daily Star's premises.

“We are very humbled and grateful to

Arnob and the whole team of CSB for giving us such a wonderful opportunity,” said Armeen. “We have also performed in another track of Coke Studio Bangla, *Bonobibi*. It was an amazing experience for us.”

“In *Deora*, we sang and harmonised 15 layers of vocals. To enhance the ‘gospel vibe’ which was suggested by Pritom Hasan, we added choreography typically seen in gospel choirs, involving clapping and dancing,” she continued, enthusiastically.

Sadia Rahman, a long-standing member of the group, shared her journey of joining the Ghaashphoring Choir. She stumbled upon Armeen Musa's Facebook post calling for singers, unaware that it was an audition for a choir group. The process involved solo and group auditions, which proved to be an eye-opening experience for Sadia, who had only previously sung in choruses during her school and college days.

“This was an interesting experience for me because I didn't know how choir singing works. I have always sung in the chorus in schools and colleges. I never knew that group of people can harmonize their voices on different scales this beautifully,” said Sadia.

Armeen's journey into choir singing started quite similarly to Sadia's, during her musical studies at Berklee College of Music, she inadvertently auditioned for a choir group. However, she became a part of various choirs throughout her academic journey.

When talking about the challenges they face in the industry, Moinak Kunango, who is in charge of the arrangement and guitar in the group, said, “The main challenge we face, is that we have to explain the difference between choir and chorus singing to people. We are easily confused with acapella groups.”

Their dreams extend beyond borders, with aspirations to perform both locally and internationally. Ghaashphoring had even planned to participate in the International Choir Festival in Russia, but unfortunately, the pandemic disrupted their plans.

Exciting projects lie ahead for Ghaashphoring Choir in the future. It is currently working under the direction of the legendary Syed Jamil Ahmed, in his production *Ami Birangona Bolchi*. The play will be staged every day from June 16 to June 30, at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. Additionally, they are preparing to release an EP, consisting of music videos from their previous album.

“We just want to keep singing. We want to give people relief from this chaotic world by singing,” concluded Armeen.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Manifest



Chorki
Antonogor



Hoichoi
Rajneeti



Disney plus
Stan Lee



Amazon Prime
My Fault



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Adam Surat

June 10 – June 12 | 7 pm

Experimental Theater Hall, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Theaterian presents “Death of a Salesman”

June 17 | 7 pm

Bangladesh Mohila Samity



Rabindranath Tagore’s “The Petrified Place”

June 11 | 7 pm

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academi

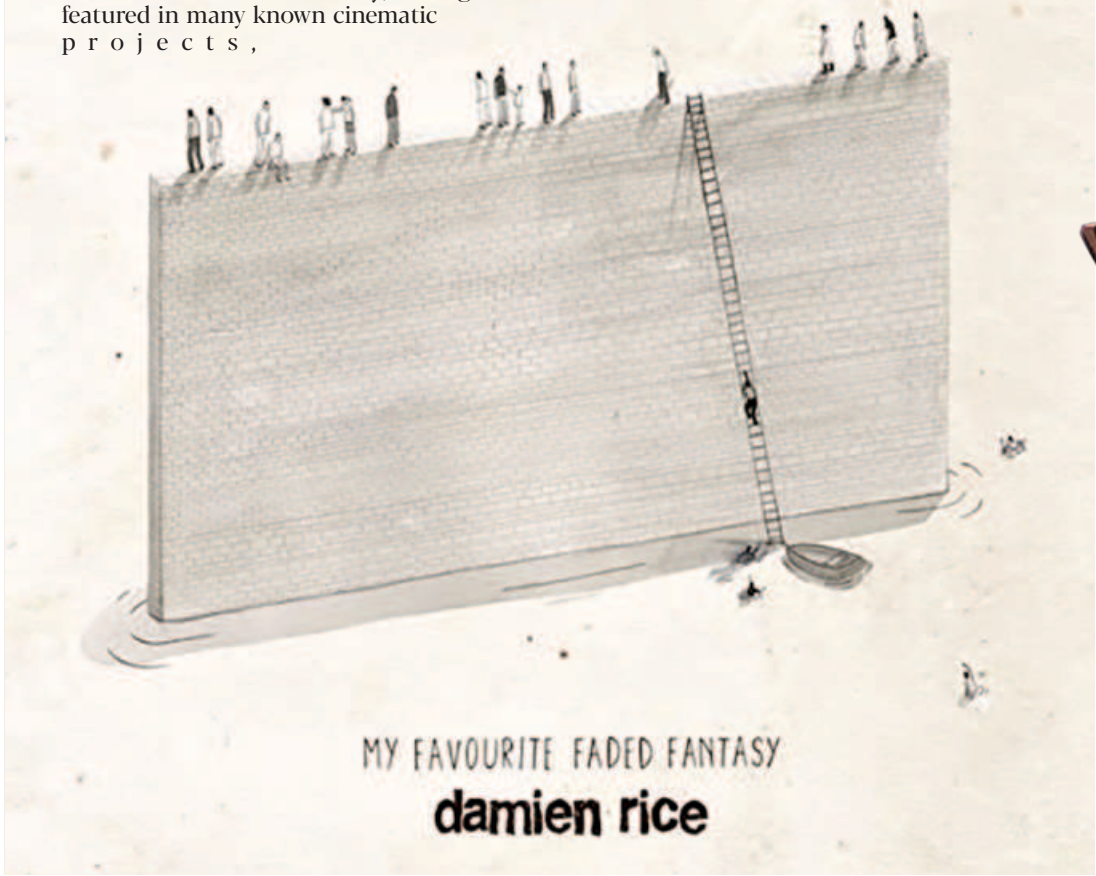
WHAT'S PLAYING

My favourite faded fantasy DAMIEN RICE

Just as Rice's Asia tour commences, folk fans around this continent heave a sigh once again as a European artiste skips over their country. Thus, to appease the taste of missing out, Damien Rice's *My favourite faded fantasy* offers a slow-strummed lament to all the things that could've been. It is also the title track from his last album of the same name, which was released back in 2014. He had been a part of the hidden corners of the indie-bricked walls of the industry, having been featured in many known cinematic projects,

even *Shrek 3*. Rice's rich lyricism and simple sounds became a corner stone for melancholic music, with notable hits under his belt like *The Blower's Daughter*, *9 Crimes*, *Cheers Darlin'* and more.

Damien Rice is currently busy with his upcoming “Sailboat Tour”, that will go around Europe, accompanied by Jana Jacuka, Francisca Barreto and Silvia Perez Cruz.



WHAT'S ON THE GRAM?

SHAMEIK MOORE

Shameik Moore looked ruggedly stylish for the promotion of his film *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* at Good Morning America. He wore a stylish white jacket and matched it with a pair of dark tangerine-orange pants. The colourful combo paired with stylish accessories gave the look a whole new dimension.



Why is 1 in 5 buses in Dhaka unfit?

Authorities must wake up from their perpetual slumber

We are at a loss as to how the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), the sole government agency responsible for ensuring a sustainable, safe and environment-friendly modern road transport system in the country, is allowing hundreds of buses to operate in Dhaka without any fitness certificates for years on end. By the BRTA's own estimates, 21.92 percent of the buses plying the roads in the capital do not have the necessary fitness clearances. But while the transport authority claims that there are 75 companies running 3,974 buses, transport sector insiders have told this daily that there are over 120 operators running more than 5,000 buses in the city. This means that the number of unfit buses wreaking havoc on our transport system, and putting the lives of commuters and pedestrians at risk on a daily basis, is much higher than the BRTA estimates.

It is now an open secret that unfit buses are allowed to operate in Dhaka – and in Bangladesh – in exchange for hefty bribes, a despicable process in which a host of actors are involved, from BRTA officials to members of law enforcement. For how long will the BRTA continue to turn a blind eye towards such criminal activities taking place right under its noses? How many more lives will be lost to needless crashes caused by unfit vehicles before our authorities start taking their mandate of monitoring and regulation seriously?

In 2019, the government formed a committee to rationalise bus routes and have a limited number of bus service providers in Dhaka for effective regulation. The rationalisation of bus routes was supposed to be a marked departure from the current “trip system,” where the more trips drivers make – and the faster they drive, in violation of traffic rules – the more money they make. Although the committee stopped issuing fitness certificates from 2019, only three of the 42 routes in the capital have been rationalised thus far. The buses that were denied permits have continued to roam the streets in the meantime, with the authorities seemingly nonplussed about its implications on an already fragile transport system.

Experts have aptly pointed out that the drivers of these unfit buses are even more reckless as they are accountable to no one. These buses pose a grave danger to the city dwellers as well as to the environment. Under the circumstances, we urge the BRTA authorities to wake up from their perpetual slumber and take their job of monitoring and regulation seriously. Not being able to deliver on their mandate is not an issue of manpower – as is oft-cited by them when asked why they are failing to monitor unfit vehicles – but one of willpower.

A super specialised hospital that serves no one

Ensure that BSMMU’s new unit is ready to serve the public

It is unacceptable that despite being inaugurated nearly eight months back, the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University's (BSMMU's) super specialised hospital is still not ready to serve patients. Constructed at a cost of Tk 1,500 crore (Tk 1,047 crore of which was provided as a loan by South Korea), the hospital was intended to provide state-of-the-art treatment at a relatively cheaper cost to patients who mainly seek treatment abroad.

Delays in project implementation has been a persistent problem in Bangladesh, and the BSMMU's super specialised hospital is, unfortunately, yet another case in point. Reportedly, the authorities have been instructed to open the hospital by July 1. Now, they are rushing to open it in a haphazard manner and asking various departments to provide funds from their income to the new hospital each month to meet the operational costs. The hospital needs a 1,000-strong workforce to be operational, yet as of June 7, only 250 people have been recruited. While the authorities must speed up their procedures to meet the deadline, they must also make sure that they don't end up glossing over important details in the process, hence jeopardising the safety of patients in the future. It is also a matter of concern whether the authorities can actually keep up with the high-tech medical solutions that are supposed to be offered at the unit.

BSMMU is one of the oldest medical schools in the country, and it is extremely disappointing to see how it is riddled with corruption and incompetencies. Just a few days ago, even the High Court expressed dismay at the state of affairs at the hospital and criticised its overall environment. Meanwhile, the super specialised hospital of BSMMU is already under fire for alleged corruption during the recruitment process. The allegations are apparently being looked into, but as we see in most cases in Bangladesh, these issues simply fizzle out and the corrupt continue on their merry way. This impunity to the corrupt must end.

Every year, approximately 800,000 Bangladeshis travel abroad for treatment, spending millions of dollars in foreign currency. Given Bangladesh's severe foreign currency crunch, it is all the more pertinent now to ensure we scale up our healthcare services. To this end, we urge the BSMMU authorities, who have already wasted too much time and resources, to ensure smooth operations of the super specialised unit without any further delay.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Bring DCS to justice

The news of two young brothers dying from poisoning due to fumigation has shaken me to the core. Being a mother of two boys, I can't begin to imagine what their family must be going through. The pest control company whose neglectful action led to these preventable deaths must be brought to justice. An example must be made out of them.

Shirin Akhter
Paribagh, Dhaka

The life of insects



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

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

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

I once teased a business boss with patriotic bait. “Why do you hire so many foreign nationals to do your everyday job? Can't you just hire trainers or short-term consultants to develop local human resources instead?” I was not ready for the answer he gave me, “Believe it or not, we are a very entrepreneurial nation. The moment we elevate people to top managerial positions, they are sure to replicate our business and start their own. With foreigners, you are at least guaranteed that they are happy with hefty paycheques and aren't interested in starting rival businesses with your institutional knowledge.”

Now that two of the pest controllers in Dhaka, responsible for the tragic demise of two young boys, have gotten stuck in the sticky traps of police, we hear that the owners broke away from their former employer to start their own business, DCS Organization Ltd. There is nothing wrong with it as long as they have the professional knowledge and training to do so. The official website of DCS says they have 200-500 employees at their disposal to offer services to households, hotels and industries. There is no way of knowing whether all their service staff are adequately trained. Any aspiring commercial pest control operator can apply for a licence from the Khamarbari office of the Department of Agricultural Extension, certifying that they have two registered technicians and one MBBS doctor. Given the size of the organisation, DCS probably has more than two expert technicians, but whether they engage their most trained staff to administer pesticides for a one-off residential job remains questionable. The death of the siblings following their pest control activity confirms their professional and technical shortcomings.

I remember calling one of the pest



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

controllers to negotiate with unwanted critters that have invaded my home. Since we have two dogs and two cats in our house, we asked how long we would need to stay out of the house during the pest-cleaning process. Sensing our inconvenience, the guy said two to three hours at the most. Something did not sound right and we did not seek their service.

The dead siblings are an uncanny reminder that their fate could have been ours. All these gimmicks and ad stunts on social media make you think that you really should hire professionals to deal with the insects with whom we have evolved for God knows how many years. The inefficacy of medicines or aerosol spray that you buy from the stores may lead you to believe that you should give these new start-ups a chance. It is a mystery why your trusted branded aerosol has

I am trying to imagine what is going on with the family of those two young boys. What about the father who ordered the services to get rid of the parasites? Did the mother pester her husband to do something about the disgusting insects? Did the children complain about not being able to be in their rooms for such a long time while their house was being cleansed? What about the toxic smell they felt? Did they cover their food and water? Were there enough instructions from the technicians? How will this family survive the shock? All they wanted was to get rid of the invisible inhabitants of their households. The price that they paid is unbearable.

The death of the brothers is a stark reminder of our insignificant existence in the grand scheme of things. Their insignificance is no greater than the insects that were being targeted. The

manhunt of the insect hunters will hopefully bring a change to the system. The businessmen would stop using aluminium phosphide tablets, which are normally used in big warehouses over a longer span of time, as a shortcut to kill pests in households. The deaths will be construed as a sacrifice that has perhaps saved the lives of many others. The intertwined fate of humans and insects is the story of life.

IMPACT OF THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

Supporting the extreme poor in Cox’s Bazar



Nusrat Jahan
is the head of Communications
and Knowledge Management at
Brac Institute of Governance and
Development (BIGD).

NUSRAT JAHAN

There is no denying the fact that more than 730,000 forcibly displaced Rohingyas living in the camps at Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas in Cox's Bazar since August 2017, with a traumatic past and an uncertain future, is a grave humanitarian crisis. But this large-scale influx, in an ecologically vulnerable region like Cox's Bazar, has had a significant negative impact on the host communities, particularly the poor population. While the Rohingya have received massive international and national attention and resources, and rightly so, the plights of these poor locals brought on by the Rohingya influx usually does not get the attention it deserves.

Several research and surveys indicate that since 2017, when the Rohingya crisis began, income and employment opportunities in the host communities have significantly fallen. For example, a study by SMA Ullah, et. al. found that between 2015 and 2020, the average income decreased by 11 percent in the host communities while the national income grew by about five percent every year during the same time. A 2021 survey by the Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) found that the employment rate in Cox's Bazar was almost 20 percentage points lower than the national average, even among men.

The negative impact can be attributed primarily to the increase in labour supply, with the Rohingya people informally (and illegally)

offering labour at a cheaper rate as they do not have any other option. And naturally this increased supply has had the worst impact on the poorest locals, because their livelihoods - manual labour, petty business, and primary activities (notably fishing in Cox's Bazar) – are usually the jobs taken up by the Rohingya, who are unlikely to have the necessary skills or resources to pursue other (better) livelihood

they are vulnerable, too, due to poverty.

There are some initiatives to support the poor in the host communities, and the ultra-poor graduation (UPG) programme offered by Brac to the extreme-poor households is a notable one, which started in Ukhiya and Teknaf in 2018, in collaboration with partners including the UNHCR. Since then, 8,000 extreme-poor households in these two upazilas have received a host of services to improve their livelihoods, including technical and soft skill training, savings, healthcare and social safety nets, community integration, awareness raising, and hands-on coaching under the UPG programme. They also received funding to buy productive assets or to start a business. The most vulnerable households received a grant, and the slightly better-off ones received a combination of grants and credit.

Supporting the poor people affected by the Rohingya crisis is crucial for maintaining stability in the region and a good relationship between the two communities. Many members of the host communities now harbour negative feelings about the Rohingya because of several reasons, including the competition in the local labour market. Supporting them also has a strong humanitarian appeal.

options.

Supporting the poor people affected by the Rohingya crisis is crucial for maintaining stability in the region and a good relationship between the two communities. Many members of the host communities now harbour negative feelings about the Rohingya because of several reasons, including the competition in the local labour market. Supporting them also has a strong humanitarian appeal; after all,

BIGD researchers Narayan Das, et.al. evaluated the programme and found encouraging results. The study found that the programme significantly increased the labour supply among the participating households who received support in 2018, especially women. As a result, two years after the programme started, the per capita income increased by more than 25 percent. The value of their assets increased significantly, over 25

percent for land and more than 150 percent for other productive assets. Their savings and food security also increased significantly.

One important aspect of the UPG programme is creating market linkages for the participants who are now producing different marketable products and accumulating productive assets to expand their trade. To this end, the programme increased the capacity of 2,000 participants – how to negotiate, how to ensure quality, etc – organised them in groups for bulk-supplying and purchasing and better negotiating, and finally connected them with backward and forward linkages. The participants were also linked with relevant government extension services for accessing available technical services and inputs.

In Cox's Bazar, the size of the local economy is increasing due to both the Rohingya crisis and tourism. However, the local poor do not necessarily have a share in this growing pie; rather they suffer without intervention, as is clear from the data shared here. Thus, building their capacity to produce marketable goods and then connecting them with the market so that they can sell their products at good prices seems to be working well.

Intensive, holistic programmes like the UPG hold a strong promise to reverse the economic damage done by a major crisis, not only related to a sudden, large-scale human migration, but also in other crisis situations such as natural disasters.

It is usually the poor who suffer the brunt of any crisis, be it man-made or natural, because they do not have the necessary power, resources or voice to protect themselves. The poor and the vulnerable, thus, must be provided support to weather a regional or national crisis. It is crucial for continuing our progress, and avoiding any regress, towards human development and building a just and prosperous Bangladesh.



ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

FY24 budget ignores fiscal policy as a tool for equitable growth



Dr Rizwanul Islam is an economist and former special adviser to the Employment Sector, International Labour Office, Geneva.

RIZWANUL ISLAM

Inequality has been growing in Bangladesh over the past couple of decades or so. Any effort at halting this process and reversing the trend has to start from a political commitment, an understanding of the factors at work, and adoption of necessary measures to attain the goals.

Instruments of fiscal policy – viz, policies for generating revenues and allocating public expenditures – are potential tools for attaining the twin objectives of economic growth and income redistribution. For example, lower tax rates on low-income groups can result in higher post-tax incomes in their hands, thus enabling them to spend more. Higher expenditure on goods and services, through expanding markets, can create an incentive for investment and output growth. Thus, the goals of equity and growth can be attained simultaneously. On the other hand, the lowering of taxes on profits can be used as a means of promoting growth through the investment route. That route is expected to generate incomes in the hands of lower-income groups indirectly through employment growth which may or may not materialise.

Fiscal policy instruments help move towards a higher growth trajectory and an equitable and just society when an economy relies more on direct taxes, because they can be made progressive. For example, rates of income taxes can be varied by income groups – with progressively higher rates for upper-income groups. Wealth taxes can be progressive if imposed on wealth above a certain level.

Examples of progressive taxes and equitable income distribution are present in the Nordic countries (e.g. Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark). In these countries, tax rates for high-income groups are quite high, and income distribution is more equal than other capitalist countries. The rich people in these countries do not resent high tax rates simply because the revenues generated through taxes are utilised efficiently, and benefits are received by the people. Furthermore, the process of tax payment is smooth and hassle-free, and the use of taxpayers' money is transparent.

Indirect taxes are by nature regressive, and hence a greater reliance on them go against the principle of equity. For example, VAT and import duties are usually borne by buyers of the relevant goods and services, irrespective of their levels of income. Buyers of all income groups bear these taxes at the same rate. Of course, some nuances can be introduced by using multiple rates – with lower rates for items that are more likely to be bought by the lower-income people in larger quantities.

Tax policies in developed countries usually vary depending on the political party in power.

Conservative parties (e.g. Republicans in the US, Conservatives in the UK) usually favour low corporate taxes as a means of encouraging businesses to invest. The argument is that low taxes will encourage investment, and hence growth of output and employment. Democrats and social democrats, on the other hand, favour lower rates of income taxes for lower-income groups and higher expenditures, especially on infrastructure and social sectors like education and health. Lower taxes for low incomes would result in more take-home income for such people, which, in turn, should encourage investment through the multiplier effect of a rise in consumption expenditure.

Going beyond taxes, public expenditure can be used to provide benefits to the poor and lower-income groups. Examples of such expenditures include: i) free healthcare for people of low-income groups; ii) education grants for children of such groups; iii) employment programmes for the poor; and iv) social safety nets for the poor.

The tax regimes in Bangladesh are more dependent on indirect taxes like VAT, import duty, etc, and hence are regressive in nature. The incidence of such taxes is usually on the consumers, irrespective of their income levels. In the budget for FY2022-23, the rates of corporate tax were reduced. Although they have been kept unchanged in the proposed budget for FY2023-24, the overall policy environment remains geared towards providing favours to big businesses. This kind of policy is not only not conducive to reducing inequality, but they help exacerbate it.

Historically, issues of equity and social justice have not been given much importance in the process of budget formulation in Bangladesh. Although there is a brief mention of this issue in the budget speech for FY2023-24, the rhetorical nature of this mention is exemplified by the continued reliance on indirect taxes, reluctance to raise direct taxes (e.g. income tax) on the upper-income groups, and neglect of wealth and inheritance taxes as a means of taxing those who are capable of paying taxes. Instead of doing so, the more regressing path of relying on indirect taxes has continued. The latest example of such an approach is the mandatory contribution of Tk 2,000 irrespective of whether a person has taxable income or not.

Currently, income tax accounts for only a third of the total tax revenue of the country. The rest comes from VAT, import duty, supplementary duty, etc. Revenue from income tax registered the lowest growth during July-January period of FY2022-23. Direct tax-GDP ratio declined over almost a decade. No attempt has been made to reduce the dependence on indirect taxes.

The only notable effort to raise

revenues is to expand the tax net. This, of course, is desirable, because out of the 40 million people who are regarded as capable of paying taxes by the National Board of Revenue (NBR), only 8.8 million have TIN and 3.2 million submitted returns in FY2022-23. However, reliance on only this for raising revenues and taxing people even if they don't have taxable income show the government's attitude towards inequality.

While efforts are needed to expand the tax net, not considering additional measures like raising the tax rates for higher income slabs and ignoring the possibility of wealth tax are indicative of the lack of seriousness regarding the issue of equity and social justice.

Coming to public expenditure, beyond free primary education, there is very little by way of pro-poor policies. Likewise, in health, community clinics were ostensibly thought of as a means for providing health care to the poor, but the quality of services provided through them is a big question. Also important is the issue of healthcare for the urban poor.

Productive employment is an important means of generating income for the poor and low-income people, and hence policies in this area can have important implications for equitable growth. But the proposed budget, like its predecessors, offers precious little in terms of incentives for job creation by private entrepreneurs. The lone paragraph on the issue in the speech mentions that the government is "implementing suitable programmes for sustainable employment generation," although there is nothing more on what those programmes are. In the paragraph on industry, export diversification and support to labour intensive industries are mentioned, but nothing specific is seen on how to achieve such goals, and especially on how non-RMG labour-intensive industries can be promoted.

Programmes for job creation through infrastructure are common in developing countries, and are used especially when the growth of output fails to generate jobs needed to absorb the growing labour force. Although such programmes continue to exist in Bangladesh, allocations for them have remained static for some years now. In the FY2023-24 budget, the wage rate for such programmes have been raised to Tk 400 per person per day, but that is still lower even than the going wage rate in agriculture.

Social safety nets consist of a plethora of minuscule programmes, many of which were designed basically to serve political purposes. For example, even after the proposed increase to Tk 600 per person per month, the old age allowance will be just about one day's wage in the rural areas. The coverage, despite a small increase, remains small compared to the total number that is potentially eligible.

On the whole, it seems that fiscal instruments as a tool for equitable growth continue to be ignored in the budgetary process. If the government is serious about the issue of equitable growth, it can undertake measures necessary in the areas of revenues and expenditures that are well-known. What is important is the political will to do so.



JEFFREY D SACHS

President John F Kennedy was one of the world's great peacemakers. He led a peaceful solution to the Cuban Missile Crisis and then successfully negotiated the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union at the very height of the Cold War. At the time of his assassination, he was taking steps to end US involvement in Vietnam.

In his dazzling and unsurpassed Peace Speech, delivered exactly 60 years ago, on June 10, 1963, Kennedy laid out his formula for peace with the Soviet Union. Kennedy's Peace Speech highlights how Joe Biden's approach to Russia and the Ukraine war needs a dramatic reorientation. Until now, Biden has not followed the precepts that Kennedy recommended to find peace. By heeding Kennedy's advice, Biden too could become a peacemaker.

A mathematician would call JFK's

easy to fall into the trap of insisting that only the adversary should change their attitudes and behaviour. Kennedy is very clear, "We must reexamine our own attitude – as individuals and as a Nation – for our attitude is as essential as theirs."

Kennedy attacked the prevailing pessimism at the height of the Cold War that peace with the Soviet Union was impossible, "that war is inevitable – that mankind is doomed – that we are gripped by forces we cannot control. We need not accept that view. Our problems are man-made – therefore, they can be solved by man."

Crucially, said Kennedy, we must not "see only a distorted and desperate view of the other side." We must not "see conflict as inevitable, accommodation as impossible, and communication as nothing more than an exchange of threats." Indeed, said Kennedy, we should "hail the Russian

arms race. Agreements to this end are in the interests of the Soviet Union as well as ours – and even the most hostile nations can be relied upon to accept and keep those treaty obligations, and only those treaty obligations, which are in their own interest."

Kennedy emphasised the importance of direct communications between the two adversaries. Peace, he said, "will require increased understanding between the Soviets and ourselves. And increased understanding will require increased contact and communication. One step in this direction is the proposed arrangement for a direct line between Moscow and Washington, to avoid on each side the dangerous delays, misunderstandings, and mis-readings of the other's actions which might occur at a time of crisis."

In the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, Biden has behaved almost the opposite of JFK. He has personally and repeatedly denigrated Russian President Vladimir Putin. His administration has defined the US war aim as the weakening of Russia. Biden has avoided all communications with Putin. They have apparently not spoken once since February 2022, and Biden rebuffed a bilateral meeting with Putin at last year's G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia.

Biden has refused to even



President John F Kennedy delivers the commencement address at American University on June 10, 1963, which later came to be known as the Peace Speech.

SOURCE: JFK PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

speech a "constructive proof" of how to make peace, since the speech itself contributed directly to the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty signed by the US and Soviet Union in July 1963. Upon receipt of the speech, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev told Kennedy's envoy to Russia, Averell Harriman, that the speech was the greatest by an American president since Franklin D Roosevelt, and that he wanted to pursue peace with Kennedy.

In the speech, Kennedy described peace "as the necessary rational end [goal] of rational men." Yet, he acknowledged that peacemaking is not easy, "I realize that the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war – and frequently the words of the pursuer fall on deaf ears. But we have no more urgent task."

The deepest key to peace, in Kennedy's view, is the fact that both sides want peace. It is easy to fall into the trap, warned Kennedy, of blaming a conflict only on the other side. It is

people for their many achievements – in science and space, in economic and industrial growth, in culture and in acts of courage."

Kennedy warned against putting a nuclear adversary into a corner that could lead the adversary to desperate actions. "Above all, while defending our own vital interests, nuclear powers must avert those confrontations which bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war. To adopt that kind of course in the nuclear age would be evidence only of the bankruptcy of our policy – or of a collective death wish for the world."

Kennedy knew that since peace was in the mutual interest of the US and the Soviet Union, a peace treaty could be reached. To those who said that the Soviet Union would not abide by a peace treaty, Kennedy responded that "both the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies, have a mutually deep interest in a just and genuine peace and in halting the

acknowledge, much less address, Russia's deep security concerns. Putin repeatedly expressed Russia's ardent opposition to Nato enlargement to Ukraine, a country with a 2,000-kilometre border with Russia. The US would never tolerate a Mexican-Russian or Mexican-Chinese military alliance in view of the 2,000-mile Mexico-US border. It is time for Biden to negotiate with Russia on Nato enlargement, as part of broader negotiations to end the Ukraine war."

When Kennedy came into office in January 1961, he clearly stated his position on negotiations, "Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate. Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belabouring those problems which divide us." In his Peace Speech, JFK reminded us that what unites the US and Russia is that "we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 "Why don't we!"

5 Walk unevenly

9 Confusion

10 Pop stars

12 Flared dress

13 Cruller's kin

14 Sand substance

16 Anger

17 Beholds

18 Zany

21 Snaky shape

22 Disavowal

23 Singer Neville

24 Arthur's adviser

26 Used a chair

29 Of a major artery

30 Diamond corner

31 Scary shout

32 Serengeti setting

34 "My Fair Lady" lady

37 Beer type

38 Oxford parts

39 Clickable pictures

40 Knot of hair

41 Pitched shelter

DOWN

1 Easter flowers

2 Banishes

3 North African capital

4 Blueprint number

5 Jar part

6 Wedding words

7 One of TV's "Friends"

8 Like mice and men

9 Billiards shot

11 Choreography

15 Uncle Sam's home

19 Shortly, in poems

20 Racket

22 Surrealist Salvador

23 Museum focus

24 Dinero

25 Beethoven symphony

26 Ho Chi Minh City, once

27 Climb

28 Sign of sorrow

29 Cain's brother

30 Prepare for a jolt

33 Move like a moth

35 Buddhist school

36 Inquire

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

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

Let me put it this way, I don't think there is any wish greater than that for our team and the club right now. There is nothing we want more than to win this Champions League.

Manchester City captain
ILKAY GUNDOGAN



Can old school stand the test of evolving times?

ATIQUE ANAM

Simone Inzaghi may have spent his entire playing career under the shadow of the more illustrious of the Inzaghi brothers – Filippo, but the current Inter Milan coach has already outdone many experienced coaches in the peninsula, including his elder sibling, as evidenced by his trophy cabinet as a manager.

Defensive and rigid, and averse to taking risks – Simone is not considered among the visionary coaches in the European game, yet the 47-year-old continues to reap the rewards with his old school coaching style, with two Coppa Italia and two Supercoppa Italiana titles already in the bag in two years at the Nerazzurri. Prior, Simone's time at Lazio yielded two silverware in Supercoppa Italiana and Coppa Italia; indicating that he is a serial winner, at least as far as cup competitions are concerned.

So, it shouldn't come as a massive surprise if the Piacenza-born tactician lands the biggest prize of all in Istanbul on Saturday night, even though Manchester City will definitely go into the game as the favourites.

Going into the final as the underdogs might be a good thing for Inzaghi's men as they have already exceeded expectations this season with a deep run in the competition. Very few people would have expected Inter to make it this far when they were pitted in the same group with Bayern Munich and Barcelona. True, they had a difficult group stage, but since progressing through there, the three-time champions have only grown stronger. Having won 11 out of the last 12 matches in all competitions, with the only defeat coming against league winners Napoli shows the Nerazzurri have all the momentum they need to overcome the final hurdle.



INTER MILAN IN EUROPE
Champions League: 3
UEFA Cup: 3

SIMONE INZAGHI AT INTER MILAN (2021-)
Coppa Italia: 2
Supercoppa Italiana: 2

It is going to be a very difficult match. The odds are not in our favour, but this is what makes football so thrilling.

We are playing against one of the strongest teams in the world, with a coach we all know well, but we are going to try to be ready.

Inter Milan coach
SIMONE INZAGHI

The squad that Simone has been so successful with is basically inherited from the Antonio Conte era. A few big names have made their exits since the Conte days, but that only seemed to have turned Inter into a more cohesive unit.

Inzaghi's forward play is based on quick transitions from a solid three-man defensive base and relies heavily on two overlapping wingbacks, delivering crosses for the front men. The two centre-forwards come handy as most teams these days are not used to defending against two strikers. Lautaro Martinez, Edin Dzeko, Romelu Lukaku, and Joaquin Correa – the four options up front offer vastly different characteristics, which is what makes Inter, despite their lack of depth compared to City, so formidable.

And then there are technically gifted players like Nicole Barella and Hakan Calhanoglu alongside the experience and calm of Marcelo Brozovic in midfield, ensuring the solidity at the middle of the pitch while providing enough outlets for forward thrusts when oppositions are out of possession.

While City coach Pep Guardiola thrives on the flexibility of game plan and the fluidity of his squad, Inzaghi has built his team around the philosophy of repetition and perfection. Here is a well-drilled unit which goes out there week in week out, working like clockwork as the same script is repeated every time they play. Despite the lack of depth in the squad, Inzaghi has made sure that he gives his key players enough game time and enough rest, having made 187 substitutions out of a maximum available of 190 in the 38 league matches this season.

There is not much of a surprise factor in Inzaghi's game – oppositions know his formation and style of play and even the personnel he would deploy. Should it play into the hands of Guardiola, who always seems to have enough surprises up his sleeve? Only time will tell, but one thing is for sure, Inzaghi will not 'overthink' and maybe he will not need to overthink, given what his team has achieved with his tried-and-tested method.

City's title to lose

SABBIR HOSSAIN

The burden of their own expectations might come back to bite them, again, but considering Manchester City's evolution this season, despite the obstacles en route, it remains highly improbable.

City are only one step away from being the second English and the eighth European team in history to complete the prestigious continental treble. Tonight, in Istanbul, City will be up against Inter Milan – “the best Italian team at present,” according to Zlatan Ibrahimovich – in the Champions League final.

Inter have won the Champions League three times and have a richer history. However, with all due respect to the Nerazzurri, City have ticked all the boxes so far to be considered the hot-favourites to become maiden champions.

City were favourites in the 2021 final too, against an opponent with similar playing style. Against Chelsea in that game, Pep Guardiola had some doubts about his starting lineup because City had lost two games to Chelsea before the Champions League final. This time though, he has acknowledged that the atmosphere at City is different.

City of the old lacked a Plan B when the going went tough. The worry among the City fans that Guardiola would tinker more than necessary in pressure matches.

His squad had remained formidable as ever, but this time the starting eleven has the necessary characteristics to find solutions when cornered.

Before the second leg of the Champions League semifinal match against Real Madrid, the City coach joked that he wouldn't “overthink.” Then, with the same starting line up as the first leg,

with his off-the-ball movements while he keeps bullying his markers.

Despite Haaland being someone who would not be categorised as Guardiola-esque No 9, the 22-year-old is the leading scorer in this season's Champions League, and it is frightening to think that he might have underachieved even after tallying 52 goals and nine assists across all competitions so far.

He is the obvious threat and his opponents cannot go overboard in marking him, as it would work in favour of Bernardo Silva, Jack Grealish, Kevin De Bruyne and especially Gundogan, who has been in stellar goal-scoring form since April.

The emergence of Stones and his superior chemistry with Rodri at the base of midfield makes it hard for opponents to pressurize the central defenders and goalkeeper in possession. Moreover, the likes of Gundogan and De Bruyne have acquired the luxury to creatively initiate attacks from the spine, freed from the need to fall deeper, and thus they have managed to establish a formidable combination of numerical and positional superiority for long stretches in a match.

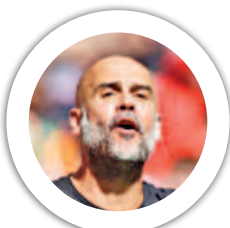
Having wrapped up the league title earlier than anticipated, City have been able to keep their players fresh, and injury-free, before the biggest test of the season.

One factor that could work against City's favour is their desperation to win the coveted title as their season could still be termed a disappointment despite a league double. Inter, on the other hand, could frustrate City by slowing the game down, being difficult to break down, deploying a deep, compact, defensive low-block, capitalise on set pieces. Tactically, Inter coach Simone Inzaghi has been superb in the Champions League this season and he has the blueprint to defeat at least the City of 2021.

For now, the English Premier League champions appear to have one hand on the trophy that has long eluded Guardiola's side, a trophy more likely to be lost by them than won by their opponent.

Guardiola's marauding team eliminated the defending champions with a 4-0 thumping at home. No less impressive was how City clawed back in the first leg to score the equaliser, at a time when Madrid were dictating tempo.

Two players have seemed like the missing piece in a puzzle. The addition of Erling Haaland has given City's offense an unprecedented direct path to attack. Even better than his goal-scoring prowess is Haaland's presence, the Norwegian's unselfish nature – as seen



With our club, I've learnt that overexcitement doesn't suit us. We will travel there to accomplish a dream, [and] we will try to have a good game and win the final. We know we had a chance two years ago; we didn't make it by the narrowest margin last year. We are there again this year and will try to give our best.

MANCHESTER CITY COACH
PEP GUARDIOLA

MANCHESTER CITY IN EUROPE

Cup Winners' Cup: 1

PEP GUARDIOLA AT MANCHESTER CITY (2016-)

Premier League: 5

FA Cup: 2

EFL Cup: 4

Community Shield: 2

MANCHESTER CITY

GROUP STAGE

Sevilla 0-4 City
City 2- 1 Dortmund
City 5 – 0
Copenhagen
Copenhagen 0 – 0
City
Dortmund 0 – 0 City
City 3 – 1 Sevilla

ROUND OF 16

City 8 – 1 Leipzig (aggregate)



QUARTERFINAL

City 4 – 1 Bayern (aggregate)

SEMIFINAL

City 5 – 1 Real Madrid (aggregate)

INTER MILAN

GROUP STAGE

Inter 0 – 2
Bayern
Victoria
Plzen 0 –
2 Inter
Inter 1 – 0
Barcelona
Barcelona 3 – 3 Inter



Inter 4 – 0 Plzen

Bayern 2 – 0 Inter

ROUND OF 16

Inter 1 – 0 Porto (aggregate)

QUARTERFINAL

Inter 5 – 3 Benfica (aggregate)

SEMIFINAL

Inter 3 – 0 Milan (aggregate)

TREBLE WINNERS IN EUROPE

Barcelona: 2

Bayern Munich: 2

Celtic: 1

Ajax: 1

PSV Eindhoven: 1

Manchester

United: 1

Inter Milan: 1

Giant-killing Muchova in Swiatek’s way

AFP, Paris

Reigning French Open champion Iga Swiatek will attempt to become the first woman to successfully defend the title in Paris in 16 years on Saturday when she faces surprise finalist Karolina Muchova.

World number one Swiatek is bidding for a third Roland Garros crown in four years – which would see her join an exclusive club of three-time winners including Serena Williams and Monica Seles – and fourth Grand Slam title following her 2022 US Open victory.

Justine Henin was the last woman to win back-to-back French Open titles when she captured her third in a row and fourth in total in 2007.

Swiatek, 22, has yet to drop a set in this tournament but will be wary of her Czech opponent who knocked out second seed Aryna Sabalenka in the semifinals after recovering from 2-5 and match point down in the final set.

Swiatek’s last-four win over Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil coupled with Sabalenka’s agonising defeat ensured the Pole will remain at number one heading into the grass-court part of the season.

She is the youngest woman since Monica Seles in the early 1990s to reach three French Open finals, while world number 43 Muchova

Muchova		Swiatek
12h 4 mins	Time on court	7h 41 mins
143	Games Played	89
2	Sets dropped	0
175	Winners	120
12	Aces	7
65%	1st serve win %	69%
29/63	Break Points won	29/39



is the fourth lowest ranked player to reach the showpiece match here.

It is still early in her career but Swiatek is starting to establish a dominance at Roland Garros best associated with Rafael Nadal, the record 14-time French Open champion.

“Rafa, what he did and what he’s still doing, it’s pretty amazing,” said Swiatek. “I never kind of knew that it’s gonna be possible for me.

With a 27-2 record at Roland Garros, Swiatek will be the overwhelming favourite, but Muchova has won all five matches in her career against players in the top three – four of them at Grand Slams.

“It’s nice. I didn’t really even know about this statistic. It just shows me that I can play against them,” said the 26-year-old.

She came from a set down to beat top-ranked Ashleigh Barty in the quarterfinals at the 2021 Australian Open, showing she has a knack of rising to the occasion in a career slowed by injuries.

It will be the fifth French Open in a row featuring a first-time Grand Slam finalist and just the second time Swiatek has played Muchova.

Their only previous meeting came in Prague in 2019 when Muchova won in three sets against Swiatek, who had come through qualifying to reach the main draw.

“I really like her game, honestly. I really respect her, and she’s like a player who can do anything,” said Swiatek. “She has great touch. And she has a great technique.”



Novak Djokovic reached his seventh French Open final in dramatic circumstances on Friday when world number one Carlos Alcaraz (inset) suffered “whole body” cramping and intense tension which torpedoed his challenge.

PHOTO: REUTERS/AFP



Eleta, Sazzad exclusions raise eyebrows

SPORTS REPORTER

Spanish coach Javier Cabrera yesterday vowed to take Bangladesh to the semifinals of the upcoming SAFF Championship after surprisingly dropping striker Eleta Kingsley and in-form forward Sazzad Hossain as he announced his final 23-member squad for the regional football extravaganza, set to begin from June 21 in Bengaluru.

In their stead, the 38-year-old named two fresh players in the form of attacking midfielder Sheikh Morsalin and winger Rafiqul Islam in the squad, which will remain unchanged for a FIFA-sanctioned friendly against Cambodia on June 15 as part of their preparations for the SAFF Championship. The booters will leave for Phnom Penh today.

However, the decision to leave out two in-form strikers and instead opt for Suman Reza raised questions about the selection process, especially considering that the Bashundhara Kings forward got little match time in domestic competitions this season and failed to score a single goal over 10 league matches.

“Suman is a player who has the capacity and quality to contribute to what we are trying to do and the idea we want to develop. We made the decision that was best for the team. Right now Suman can provide more to the team. It’s nothing against Eleta and Sazzad. That is the situation. It was a tough list to make. Suman is ahead of

the other strikers,” Cabrera explained.

Nigeria-born Kingsley, who made his international debut for Bangladesh against Seychelles last March, was the top-scoring local player this season, netting eight times for Abahani in the Bangladesh Premier League and once in the Federation Cup. Sazzad also had good performances for Mohammedan in the league, striking three goals.

Replying to a query, Cabrera confidently said: “The team will manage to score.”



Apart from Eleta and Sazzad’s exclusion, Cabrera was forced to drop defenders Rimon Hossain and Tutul Hossain Badsha due to injury, which leaves the backline looking a bit vulnerable as Bangladesh attempt to reach the semifinals after five consecutive failed attempts to do so.

Those omissions left Cabrera’s side with a relatively inexperienced defence, with only Bishwanath Ghosh, Rahmat

Mia, Tariq Raihan Kazi and Tapu Barman, who is still recovering from a hamstring injury, the only experienced campaigners among the squad’s seven defenders.

“Some important players like Rimon and Badsha are not in the squad due to injuries so we called up other players who have had enough playing time and have been with us before like Isa Faisal. We have full confidence in the performance of these players and are convinced we can perform well and will perform well,” Cabrera added.

To reach the semifinals, Bangladesh must win at least two of their three matches in Group B, which also features the Maldives, Bhutan and the tournament’s top-ranked side, Lebanon.

“Obviously, Lebanon are quite a strong team in terms of ranking and physical condition, but we believe in our capacity to compete against them. If we want to go to the semifinals, we must win games. It is absolutely difficult because the Maldives are a higher-ranked side and may be more favoured than us, but we are convinced we can beat them,” said Cabrera.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan said: “As there are two new teams, the competition will be a bit greater but I think every championship is different. It’s going to be a challenge again. The last time we were so close [to playing the final] and of course, we want to be in the same situation but we want to reach the semifinals first.”

Djokovic eyes No. 23 as Alcaraz breaks down

REUTERS, Paris

Novak Djokovic made a huge leap towards a record 23rd Grand Slam title with a 6-3, 5-7, 6-1, 6-1 French Open semifinal victory against an ailing Carlos Alcaraz in a clash of titans that ended in anticlimactic fashion on Friday.

World No. 1 Alcaraz had just levelled the contest when disaster struck as he limped to his bench holding his right leg at 1-1 in the third set. But Djokovic was merciless, dropping only one of 12 games to book a spot for Sunday’s showdown against Casper Ruud or German Alexander Zverev.

“It’s been really tough for me, honestly. I disappointed myself honestly in a match like this,” said Alcaraz. “The first set and the second set were really, really intense and I started to cramp in my arm. At the beginning of the third set I started to cramp every part of my body, not only the legs. The arms, as well, every part of the legs.”



AUSSIES in control at the Oval

REUTERS, London

Pat Cummins produced a vicious bowling onslaught to leave India battered and bruised as Australia took a 296-run lead on day three of the World Test Championship (WTC) final at The Oval on Friday.

Australia’s four-man pace attack claimed nine wickets between them to dismiss India for 296 in their first innings, with captain Cummins picking up three scalps.

Australia will resume day four on 123 for four in their second innings with Marnus Labuschagne batting on 41 along with Cameron Green on seven.

Earlier, Ajinkya Rahane blocked out the drama engulfing his team mates at the other end of the pitch as he top scored for India with 89, while Shardul Thakur survived some painful hits to his arm to contribute 51.

After a dismal showing on day two when India were left hanging on at 151-5 in response to Australia’s first innings total of 469, the morning session got off to a painful start for the world’s top-ranked team.

Fans were still filing into the ground in their thousands when fast bowler Scott Boland produced a ferocious delivery to dislodge KS Bharat’s stumps with the second ball of the day.

As Bharat departed for five, India trailed the Australians by 317 runs and were left facing a monumental challenge to avoid following on.

Injury concerns ahead of AFGHANISTAN TEST

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have a few injury worries to deal with as the one-off Test against Afghanistan approaches. ODI captain Tamim Iqbal and stand-in Test skipper Liton Das are battling with back issues. However, the injuries are not of an acute nature.

Tamim was rested on Thursday owing to a recurring back pain. Practice was foiled due to rain and the Tigers got an extra day’s rest on Friday. Afghanistan are due in the country today and both teams will check in at the team hotel.

Tamim’s back pain resurfaced after a few practice sessions during the preliminary camp of the national team.

“Tamim is undergoing rest today (Friday) and we will see him again tomorrow (Saturday). If he has pain, he will have to rest,” the chief physician of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB),



Debashish Chowdhury, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bangladesh’s match against Afghanistan will begin on June 14 while practice is set to commence from Sunday, June 11. Tamim’s current condition is yet to make him uncertain for the Afghanistan Test.

“It’s no use talking about if he (Tamim) is uncertain for the match this early,” Debashish further informed.

Tamim missed the series against India last year due to a groin injury but

returned for the one-day series against England before also playing both the home and away ODI series against Ireland.

Meanwhile Liton, captain for the one-off Test against Afghanistan in Shakib Al Hasan’s absence, is facing a back issue and has not attended training since June 6. He had also been suffering from fever.

“Liton, or anyone else, does not have an acute injury. Liton’s issue is related to back pain. There are a few injuries and we are working on those. Overall, the team is ok,” Debashish added.

Tasfin Ahmed, too, is looking to meet his workload quota ahead of the Test, although he has been declared medically fit.

The BCB have introduced GPS trackers from this series, so that keeping a tab on players’ workload after returning from a forced break due to injury will be more efficient.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hands over the prize money to Union Bank, the winners of the inaugural Sheikh Hasina Inter Bank Football Tournament 2023, organised by the Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB). Union Bank beat Al-Arafah Islami Bank 2-1 in the final at Army Stadium yesterday.



With a train approaching, a man with a bicycle precariously ducks below the lowered gate at the Mohakhali level crossing in the capital. Despite several mishaps, such dangerous movements of people are a common sight in the capital.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

ROAD ACCIDENTS 5 killed in Munshiganj, Jamalpur

STAR REPORT

At least five people were killed and several others injured in two road accidents in Jamalpur and Munshiganj yesterday.

In Jamalpur, four people were killed in a head-on collision between a battery-run-auto rickshaw and a truck in Sadar upazila.

Three others suffered injuries. The deceased were identified as Solaiman, 55, Abdul Mojid, 48, Shahed Ali, 60 and Joynal, 42. All of them are residents of the upazila's Kandarpa village.

They were travelling from Jamalpur to Sherpur riding an auto-rickshaw. When they reached the Ranagacha area on the Jamalpur-Mymensingh highway at around 1:00pm, the auto-rickshaw collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction, said locals and witnesses.

The accident left two people dead on the spot, said Shah Newaz, officer-in-charge (OC) of Jamalpur Sadar Police Station.

Locals took the injured to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. Two of them succumbed to their injuries on the way.

The three injured are now receiving treatment at the hospital, said the OC.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

408 died on the roads in May

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 408 individuals lost their lives and 631 sustained injuries in 491 road accidents across various parts of the country in May, said a report.

The report released by the Road Safety Foundation (RSF) also highlighted that out of the total fatalities, 67 were women and 78 were children.

The report further revealed that motorcycle accidents accounted for a significant portion of the deaths, with 141 individuals losing their lives in 156 such incidents, representing 34.55 percent of the total fatalities.

Additionally, 104 pedestrians were killed in accidents, accounting for 25.49 percent of the total casualties.

The RSF compiled the report based on information gathered from nine national dailies, seven online news portals, and electronic media sources.

72 drivers and their assistants also lost their lives in road accidents last month, constituting 17.64 percent of the overall fatalities.

According to the report, 36 individuals riding trucks, covered-vans, pickups, tractors, trolleys, lorries, and tankers suffered fatal accidents. 18 individuals in private cars, microbuses, and ambulances died during this time.

The report said 68 passengers of three-wheelers (easy bike, auto-rickshaw, mishuk) lost their lives in May and 15 individuals were killed in accidents involving locally modified vehicles (Nosimon-Karimon-Mahindra-Brickhanga machine cars).

20 individuals were killed in accidents involving bicycle-rickshaw-rickshaw vans.

According to RSF, 165 accidents occurred on national highways, 201 accidents on regional roads, 73 accidents on rural roads, 48 accidents on urban roads, and 4 accidents took place in

other locations.

Furthermore, during the same period, six boat accidents resulted in the death of four individuals, with two others reported missing. In addition, 25 railway accidents claimed the lives of 23 people, while injuring six, according to the press release.

The report highlighted various causes behind these accidents, including defective vehicles, reckless speed and driving, inefficiency, physical and mental illnesses, non-fixed pay and working hours, low-speed vehicular traffic on highways, reckless motorcycle riding by youth, public ignorance and noncompliance with traffic laws.

To address these pressing issues, the RSF proposed several recommendations.

According to RSF, 165 accidents occurred on national highways, 201 on regional roads, 73 on rural roads, 48 on urban roads, and 4 took place in other locations.

They emphasised the need to increase efforts to develop skilled drivers, establish clear guidelines for drivers' payment and working hours, enhance the capacity of the BRTA, ensure strict enforcement of traffic laws for transport operators, passengers, and pedestrians, construct separate side roads (service roads) for low-speed vehicles on highways, gradually install road dividers on all highways, eliminate extortion in public transport, improve railway and waterway systems to alleviate road congestion, and develop and implement sustainable transport strategies.

Additionally, they urged the unhindered implementation of the "Road Transport Act-2018."

No question of Prof Yunus dodging tax Says Yunus Centre

STAR REPORT

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus's personal funds, which have been at the centre of discussion in the media, are all his personally earned money from the sale of his authored books, prize money, and honorarium for lectures, said the Yunus Centre.

All the money earned by him from abroad is brought through proper banking channels. The tax authority remains fully informed of the matter as all sources of his money and income are presented in his tax returns, it added. The Yunus Centre yesterday sent a statement to the media to clarify the matter and present the actual information to all.

According to it, Yunus never wanted to be the owner of any asset and does not own any asset anywhere. He wants to remain free from any ownership (land, house, car, shares, etc). So he decided to form two trusts with his money.

These trusts are "Professor Muhammad

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Arafat gets AL ticket for Dhaka-17

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League Central Working Committee member Mohammad Ali Arafat got party nomination for Dhaka-17 by-polls.



A joint meeting of the AL Parliamentary Nomination Board and Local Government Representative Nomination Board yesterday made the decision unanimously. The meeting was presided over by President Sheikh Hasina, held at the Gono Bhaban last night.

A total of 22 aspirants bought the ruling party nomination forms and after scrutinising the forms, the party selected Arafat.

After the meeting, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader briefed the outcome of the meeting at the Gono Bhaban gate.

The meeting also finalized party nominations for the posts of chairman of nine municipalities and 40 union parishad.

The Dhaka-17 constituency fell vacant following the death of AL lawmaker and noted film actor Akbar Hossain Pathan, alias Farooque, in May.

The upcoming by-polls in the Dhaka-17 constituency is scheduled to be held on July 17.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Largest ruby ever sells for \$34.8m

CNN ONLINE



A 55.22-carat ruby has become both the largest and most valuable gem of its kind ever to sell at auction, netting \$34.8 million on Thursday.

The stone went under the hammer in New York in June, less than a year after Canadian firm Fura Gems discovered it at one of the company's mines in Mozambique.

Ahead of the sale, Sotheby's described the jewel as "exceedingly rare" and "the most valuable and important" ruby ever to come to market. It was named Estrela de Fura — or Star of Fura in Mozambique's official language, Portuguese.

Although record gemstone sales are dominated by diamonds — coloured ones, in particular — rubies are also considered among the world's rarest and most valuable gemstones.

The previous auction record for a ruby was set by the Sunrise Ruby, a 25.59-carat stone found in Myanmar that fetched \$30.3 million in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2015.

Estrela de Fura was cut from a rough stone that made headlines when it was unearthed by miners last July. Originally weighing 101 carats, almost twice as much as in its current form, it was the largest gem-quality ruby ever discovered.

The huge stone was cut into a smaller symmetrical shape and polished, processes that remove impurities and enhance the colour and brilliance of a gemstone before it is put onto the market. According to Sotheby's, a report from the Swiss Gemmological Institute said that this had "resulted in vivid red hues due to multiple internal reflections."

UNESCO-BANGABANDHU PRIZE Music Crossroads of Zimbabwe wins it

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Abdul Momen handed over the Unesco-Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman International Prize for the Creative Economy at a gala ceremony at the Unesco Headquarters in Paris on Tuesday evening.

Melody Zambuko received the award on behalf of the winning organisation Music Crossroads of Zimbabwe which was organised after the conclusion of the first day's session of the Unesco 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expression.

Unesco Assistant Director General for Culture Ernesto Ottone Ramirez, ambassadors and delegates of nearly a hundred countries, conference participants, high officials of Unesco, Bangladeshi expatriates and correspondents of the print and electronic media attended the ceremony.

The award instituted in 2020, on the occasion of the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was unanimously adopted at Unesco. This is widely regarded as a diplomatic success of Bangladesh. In 2021, the two living daughters of Bangabandhu, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana handed over the award at the same venue to the first winner, MoTIV Creation of Uganda.

Foreign Minister Abdul Momen recalled the sacrifice and contribution of Bangabandhu in rebuilding a war-ravaged nation and paid deep homage to his memories. He mentioned Bangabandhu's idea of engaging youth in emancipation of the country's socio-economic situation through creative entrepreneurship. The minister believed

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Vehicles stand still in Rasulpur in Tangail on the Dhaka-Rangpur highway and its service lane yesterday. A couple of road mishaps on the approaches to the Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge at both ends caused long tailbacks yesterday morning.

PHOTO: STAR

Star SPORT

Inter in way of City's treble dreams

Manchester City are huge favourites heading into Saturday's Champions League final against Inter Milan in Istanbul as Pep Guardiola's side aim to finally get their hands on the greatest prize in European club football, and complete a historic treble.

Guardiola delivered an 11th trophy in seven years to owner Sheikh Mansour when City beat Manchester United to win the FA Cup last weekend, having claimed a fifth Premier League title in six seasons a couple of weeks earlier.

Now only Inter stand in the way of a treble that would match Manchester United's still unique feat of 1999.

STORY ON PAGE 10



A part of a storeroom of National Book Centre where tens of thousands of books rejected by the libraries are left unorganised.

PHOTO: STAR, PALASH KHAN

The silent demise of National Book Centre



Most of the books offered by the centre are political books written by the leaders and activists of the ruling party. Again, many influential government officials who write books to attract the attention of the political high-ups force the centre to buy them and distribute them to the local libraries.

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

In a shabby, derelict building located at Gulistan's Bangabandhu Avenue, lies Bangladesh's only state-run organisation that looks after non-government libraries and takes initiatives to popularise reading books.

The organisation, called Jatiya Grantha Kendra (National Book Centre), a statutory body under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, is barely serving its purpose.

According to the National Book Centre Act, 1995, the centre is supposed to do a range of activities such as developing readership among children and youth, establishing and maintaining a library at the centre, providing financial and technical assistance to non-government libraries, conducting research on readership and the publication industry, collecting and exhibiting rare books and manuscripts and so on.

However, due to poor infrastructure, extremely low manpower and resources, the centre is not in a position to conduct any of these activities. Many people, who are related to library management, and publishing industries and general readers do not even know that such an organisation exists at all.



The centre hardly sees any visitors.

such a meagre annual allowance, they can bear a maximum of two months' worth of establishment costs.

"Even collecting this allowance is a difficult task. We have to get several approvals from the district administration. Then we have to go to Dhaka to collect the money and the books," said one of the librarians.

"Nowadays, the centre is including more libraries in the donation list whereas they are not increasing the amount. As a result, the amount of donation per library will decrease in the future," he added.

A director of a community-based library in Dhaka told this correspondent, "We have been demanding that at least the salary of the librarians of every library should be paid by the centre. If they can provide this support, we shall be able to revive many declining libraries."

Again, there are also questions about how the centre selects libraries for their donations. It has been alleged that many libraries that are receiving books are not functional at all.

When asked, Minar Monsur, director of the centre, assured that several initiatives have been taken to resolve these issues.

"Despite a severe shortage of resources, we

with a fee of only Tk 100.

However, the condition of the books in this library is also disastrous. The books have not been arranged in a systematic order since the establishment of the library in 1995.

Like all other state-owned libraries, this one was supposed to collect all the national dailies and archive them systematically.

However, this important task was halted many years ago due to the shortage of staff. Heaps of files of old newspapers and hundreds of rare, old books were found stacked over each other outside shelves in the dark corners of the library.

Another irony is the fact that a year ago, the authorities purchased three Amazon Kindles, a device to read, download and buy e-books, to attract readers to their library whereas the library does not have any digital platform.

Even the authorities could not systematically organise the books in the last 28 years let alone digitising the books. The devices remain useless in the storeroom of the centre since their purchase.

Besides maintaining its library, another task the centre has been doing is to assist non-government libraries all over the country in the form of books and funds.

However, the libraries can hardly benefit from the assistance. There are allegations that the centre does not provide quality books to the libraries.

This correspondent talked to the authorities of several libraries which regularly receive assistance from the centre. The librarians of those libraries told this correspondent, requesting anonymity, that most of the time they do not take the books offered by the centre as most of these books will not attract readers.

One of the librarians said, "Most of the books offered by the centre are political books written by the leaders and activists of the ruling party. Again, many influential government officials who write books to attract the attention of the political high-ups force the centre to buy

them and distribute them to the local libraries. Sometimes we have to accept these books but we know very well that nobody is going to read them."

The librarians fear that if their names are disclosed they may face retaliation from the centre's authority.

However, their statements were found quite factual. One of the storerooms of the centre is full of books rejected by the libraries. There is no facility to preserve these books. As a result, tens of thousands of books are rotting in a large room piled up upon each other.

One of the officials in charge of the storerooms said, "I do not know how many books are in this room, as we do not have any designated official or any resource to store these books in an organised manner."

"I feel sorry about these books as there are many books here which are extremely valuable but rejected by the libraries as they could not appreciate their values. However, we cannot transfer them to our libraries or anywhere else as we do not have the space and required human resources to maintain them. Then again, we cannot save them either. They are just being eaten by the worms," he said.

He pointed to some albums which he claimed were collections of historic photos, some of which are of the Liberation War. However, the books are stashed in such an inaccessible corner that they could not be reached despite several attempts.

The authorities of the non-government libraries are not happy about the financial assistance either. Every year, the centre spends around Tk 5 crore to assist libraries. Last year, the centre distributed Tk 4,70,00,000 (half of it in books) to 891 libraries. Libraries which are of Category A received around Tk 30,000 each, those belonging to Category B received around Tk 24,000 and the Category C libraries received around Tk 20,000 in cash.

According to the library authorities, with



The entrance to the building remains occupied by vendors.

have already recruited some skilled staff with the help of whom I have started modernising the centre. I have already started reorganising the library using modern software. We shall gradually digitise the entire library," he said.

"We verify the operations of the libraries through the district administration. We do not have any district or divisional-level staff. We do not have any monitoring mechanism. Currently, I'm running this office with only 10 officers," he added.

The director assured that obstacles in disbursing the funds will be removed soon as funds will be transferred electronically from the finance ministry directly to the bank account of the library from the next fiscal year.

Regarding the quality of books and ways of preserving them, Minar said, "Many authors donate books to us whom we cannot say no to. However, we do not force anybody to take our books. They can select freely which book they want."

"This building is not suitable for preserving or reading books at all. The building is very old and quite risky. We will move to the new library building at Shahbagh once it is finished. So, these problems will also be solved soon," he added.



Newspaper collections and old books are lying without any care.



Many valuable books are decaying in the shelves of the centre for lack of maintenance.



Jatiya Grantha Kendra, country's only state-run organisation that looks after non-government libraries, is situated in a shabby, derelict building located at Gulistan's Bangabandhu Avenue.

For instance, there is a library of more than 11,000 books in this centre. Many of these books are rare reference books, which cannot be found anywhere else in the country. However, very few people visit this library.

According to the librarian of the centre, he has not seen any readers who came to read books in the last couple of years. "Some people come here sometimes to read newspapers and rest," he said. The library offers an annual membership

FICTION

Myth of the witch



TASNIM ODRIKA

I killed my lover. I killed the love of my life and watched the life drain out of her eyes. Eyes that were golden brown turned pitch black; as if her soul left the body taking away all the colours of life. I wondered for a minute if this soul would go on and enter the life of another poor woman who would be trapped again in this world, cursed to live.

I laid her lifeless body down on the porcelain tiled floor of the bathroom. I had all the necessities laid down around me in a circle. A clean bowl, a surgical knife, the book of Mantra, and candles. The candles were only for the ambience really; a soft glow of light dancing around in the shadows. A lot of

people have this misconception but wizardry does not require the use of candles although most wizards I knew did like candles.

I nimbly brushed my fingers on the cover of the withering book of Mantra and turned to the very end of the book. The book was brown, the colour of faded parchment that had withstood the test of weather. Some of the pages were loose and it required careful handling to turn the pages, lest one of the pages fell off and got lost. I turned them delicately, as precious relics from a forgotten era. They felt like crumbling autumn leaves under my thumb.

The paragraph containing the incantations was barely visible but I had it memorised by

heart anyway. I ran my finger along the thin penmanship one last time. Then, as custom, I picked up the small surgical knife with my left hand to make a precise incision on her throat and drained out the seeping elixir in my bowl. The clear bowl darkened. The only sound in that empty apartment was now the “drip, drip, drip”. The bowl was heavier than usual. This one had lived a full life but it would be my life to live now. I gulped down the inky red elixir as I chanted the blurry words on the pages.

I liked to carry out my enchantment in bathrooms as the huge mirrors allowed me to witness the transformation in grave detail. I felt the warm liquid travelling down my body. My hands felt stronger and my eyes glistened with new life. It took me long enough to find her. I saw now the lines that had formed on my marble-like features. It all became more evident as they erased themselves. As the elixir travelled through my body it smoothed out all the creases.

I had nothing but respect for her sacrifice. I usually leave the bodies in the bathrooms with all the objects as is, except for my book. When they get discovered after a week or two, the headline reads, “Witchcraft gone wrong; another woman dead”.

The crackdown on witches for the past decade has been hard. No woman over 18 is allowed to purchase or use any sharp objects without the written consent of a male guardian. According to the media, the witches drain their blood to remain young but then sometimes these rituals go wrong and you end up dead in empty apartments. They blame the intrinsic vanity of women for falling for such insidious deeds. The world hates the non-existent witches. They say they have been corrupting womankind.

Tasnim Odrika is a biochemist by day and a writer by night. Reach her at odrika02@gmail.com.

POETRY

Meursault rediscovered

FAHMIDA SHARMIN

Mother sold him and he never knew a father; Born adult, as though he never had a childhood. He remembered the fading face of his mother, Fragments from the early years of his life As he smoked the last cigarette from the packet. The memory is still vivid in his mind, He could recall the lullaby that she hummed, “Does it matter?”-the train of thoughts stopped at this, He threw the empty packet of cigarettes and walked to work, He wants to live the moment without a second thought.

Fahmida Sharmin is a contributor.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

ESSAY

The once and future bedes & ‘Gypsies?’

JOHN DREW

Szilvia Reif, a student of mine from the (indicatively named) Gandhi School in Pécs, Hungary, wrote a poem that tells what it feels like to be a ‘Gypsy (properly Roma).

Stanza by stanza she reviews what associations have accrued to the word “Gypsy”. Yes, it causes bad feelings. But also, more positively, a unique talent for music, for sticking together and sharing a unique language and for predicting the future.

Szilvia’s complaint is that she is seen only in terms of her community, never as a person, an individual. While the Jews honour a number of brave goys who risked their lives by sheltering individual Jews during Hitler’s Holocaust, the ‘Gypsy poet Bari Károly tells me there is not a single known case of a gadzê sheltering a Roma.

There are obvious differences between the land-based ‘Gypsies in Europe and their river-based counterparts, the Bedes of Bengal, the names of the latter pretending to an origin among the Bedouin of Arabia rather than among the Egyptians. Whether the Bedes, as Rizia Rahman has it in her *Bam Theke Bamla*, are aboriginal to the delta and have a common origin with the ‘Gypsies either there or among the lower occupational “castes” in north India, their lifestyles have a lot in common.

At least the Bedes have not suffered discrimination, as have their counterparts in Britain, for being “Asian”. However, both have suffered persecution on account of their lifestyle, being vagrant, nomadic, outcasts to settled society, a threat to property owners. As Nazrul Islam observes in his play *Baner Bede*, the Bedes do not build homes since the whole world is their home.

Szilvia’s images of her people accord closely with those elaborated in British literature. It is the Romantic era that provides the most romantic but also arguably realistic glimpse of the ‘Gypsies. The most convincing portrait comes in Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering*. This novel might more accurately have been called, as it was in its dramatisation, *Meg Merrilies*, the name of the main protagonist, a ‘Gypsy woman.

Scott was intimately familiar with the no-man’s-land Border Country between Scotland and England where the ‘Gypsies had first surfaced purporting and taken to be Kings of Egypt. Ben Jonson actually wrote a masque for the king and his courtiers to play at being ‘Gypsies.

Scott’s ballad, “The Gypsie Laddie”, valued by Burns, catches the atmosphere of those origins when Johnny Faa persuades a rich lady to elope with him. While its plot differs, the tragic denouement that follows the social transgression in this ballad has much in common with the equally seminal and popular Bengali ballad on a Bede woman, Mahuya.

Meg, based on a real-life character, is one of the Faas, brooding over the action of the novel (that extends as far as India) and determining its outcome. Scott exposes the stereotypes to which a ‘Gypsy is subjected—she is assumed to be stealing a child just

as the ‘Gypsy in DH Lawrence’s *The Virgin and the Gypsy* is assumed to be bent on murdering the girl when actually both are on life-saving missions.

Fortune-telling, being able to foretell the future, is the most commonly observed occupation of the British ‘Gypsies. Most presciently, Scott shows that the prophetic voice Meg speaks in is in fact practical insight based on an awareness of human nature, an ability to see into the heart of things. This image of a shrewd ‘Gypsy female figure, strong and faithful, traduced and tragic, though unique in British literature,

because Clare himself, wishing only to be granted their way of life, ended up being shut away in an asylum.

William Hazlitt, the essayist who traversed every mile of the English countryside, castigates Wordsworth for having no sympathy for the beggarly ‘Gypsies, in one poem regarding an unmoving group of them around a campfire as “torpid”. Not only is Wordsworth himself “the prince of poetic idlers” but he fails to realise the lifestyle of the ‘Gypsies is of even more value to humankind than is his poetry. They are “an everlasting

Matthew Arnold provides a useful hybrid word for such Bohemians in his poem, “The Scholar-Gypsy”. Its story is based on that of a 17th century Oxford scholar who abandoned his studies to go and live with the ‘Gypsies. One of the slogans of the English Revolution at that time highlighted the attraction: “Gypsy Liberty”.

By the time DH Lawrence wrote his novella *The Virgin and the Gypsy* in the 20th century, in some ways a modern re-telling of Scott’s “The Gypsy Laddie”, he posited a stark opposition between the settled, respectable, deadening life of a vicarage and

Kanyar Kahini). For them, as for Lawrence, nagas are a principle of energy. This is in contradistinction to Judaeo-Christian Europe where they are generally perceived as a symbol of Evil.

Lawrence’s poem shows him realizing what the Bedes and the ‘Gypsies instinctively know: that instead of destroying Nature, killing snakes no less than raping the Earth for its resources and denuding the seas of fish on an industrial scale, we need to learn to live with it.

Alun Lewis’s short story, “The Orange Grove”, returns us to the ‘Gypsies in India. The driver of a British Army truck is killed by nationalists and his officer must get the dead body back to base. The truck breaks down in a river miles from anywhere and the corpse is taken up by a party of ‘Gypsies. The officer is in the hands of people living a migratory life stripped to its essentials. He doesn’t know where they are going and maybe neither do they. To a pasture, perhaps, or a well.

In the time since Lewis wrote, the stranglehold of urban civilization in the tight little island of Britain has virtually done for the countryside and so for those who traditionally lived in it and off it. ‘Gypsies and their fellow, often New Age, travellers are not welcome to settle and, if they try to camp by the roadside, are moved on.

One ‘Gypsy in my native valley, Levi Smith, observed: “What I thinks to myself what they should do is put us all in some big field about a mile round and then drop a bomb on us”. Bangladesh is now experiencing the urban stranglehold at a faster pace and the glittering city has sucked demoralized Bedes, among others, into its bars and brothels.

For those Bedes who remain on the Meghna the destined bomb is a time-bomb. Thanks to the corporate behemoth devouring Earth’s resources right across the globe, greed trumping need, the Tibetan glaciers, like the polar ice-caps, are melting, as Bangladeshis know better than anybody, the Bay of Bengal rising.

And here is the irony. The great maw of urban consumer society is set fair to consume not only the ever more numerous rural outcasts but the select urban elites themselves in their gated communities. At their gates there will be a land first flooded and then dried up. The universally predominant lifestyle of conspicuous consumption is manifestly unsustainable.

One alternative may be to look again, sooner rather than later, and value, as our literatures have done, aspects of the subsistence lifestyle traditionally practised by the Bedes and ‘Gypsies, whether aboriginal, nomadic or migrant. Getting by—individually and collectively—may be the most viable, perhaps only, way of getting on?



Vincent van Gogh's 'The Caravans - Gypsy Camp near Arles' (1888, Oil on canvas)

is widespread in Bangladeshi literature on the Bedes.

John Keats drew on Scott’s portrait of Meg to write some lively verses celebrating her free, simple life in the country, but the countryman John Clare is the Romantic poet who knows that way of life best. Taught to fiddle by the ‘Gypsies, he saw how the lifestyle that he shared with them was increasingly threatened by the enclosures of common land enacted by the rich.

In poems valuing his ‘Gypsy friends for their common sense and shrewdness, Clare described them in one line as “a quiet, pillering, unprotected race”. It is that final adjective that strikes home, the more so

source and reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of the progress of civilization”.

Hazlitt’s claim is part of an important tradition that highlights the shortcomings not only of a marginalized people but of the mainstream society that oppresses them. Most of the more sympathetic literary perceptions of the ‘Gypsies come from writers who are themselves what Hazlitt calls “professional Bohemians”, intellectuals who have grave reservations about the progressiveness of their own urban societies. In this respect, the pastoralist Jasim Uddin might come to Bangladeshi minds.

the unshackled life of a ‘Gypsy wayfarer. The latter belongs to a more vital, pre-industrial England, uncrushed by industrial-scale war—or enervating domesticity.

Incidentally, Lawrence’s well-known poem, “Snake”, points to a distinctive aspect of the sub-caste of Bedes known as Sapures, snake-charmers, unafraid of snakes, able to cure snake-bite under the aegis of the Snake Goddess, Manasa Mangal. It is in this capacity that the Bedes are most frequently encountered in Bangladeshi literature.

Moreover, the Sapures live by the waters that in the subcontinent’s oldest myths are seen as the province of the serpentine nagas (glimpsed in Tarashankar’s novel *Nagini*

This article, based on John Drew's own monograph, *Images of the 'Gypsies in English Literature*, is indebted for its Bangladeshi prompts to Carmen Brandt's *The Bedes of Bengal*.

John Drew is a peripatetic poet, tutor and contributor to *Star Literature*.



Jabbarer BOLI KHELA

Like each year, Jabbarer Boli Khela took place at the Laldighi Maidan in Chattogram on April 25. Sixty wrestlers took part in the 114th edition of the historic tournament. According to its organisers, Abdul Jabbar Saudagar, a merchant from Badarpati in Chattogram city, started this wrestling competition on Baishakh 12 in Bangla 1316 (1909 AD). His aim was to prepare the youth for the anti-British movement by keeping them physically fit. Though British rule ended more than 7 decades ago, the yearly tournament accompanied by a three-day fair still draws a large crowd from across the country.

PHOTO: STAR





Concert goers had to keep hands raised at all times so they could make space to fit in the overcrowded hall

PHOTO: TIJS VAN LEUR

CONCERTGOERS honoured with medals of heroism

“Having 10,000 attendees is simply inconceivable. Perhaps in the heat of the moment, people felt that way, but it’s not accurate. There were only 9,000 people,” one organiser corrected.

NUTBOLTU

The city recently witnessed an epic concert featuring a YouTube sensation from our neighbouring country. Tickets sold out faster than you could say “barbecue sauce,” because the people realised the only other thing they can do in this city is to go to a food shop and eat concoctions dipped in barbeque sauce. Either that or visit a bridge.

The demand for tickets was so great that organisers upped the price because, why not. If you are willing to pay three times the amount to eat ‘aaloo bhorta’ simply because it is spelled Pomme Puree in the french looking menu, then yeah, pay up.

However, the concertgoers soon discovered

that the event would not only give them audio stimulus but also crushing despair. The faced poor ventilation, no complimentary deodorants, overwhelming crowds, and scams to sell plots in the mystical Foy’s Lake. Some frustrated attendees took to social media accusing the organisers of greedily overselling tickets well beyond the venue’s capacity of 3000 people.

“Having 10,000 attendees is simply inconceivable. Perhaps in the heat of the moment, people felt that way, but it’s not accurate. There were only 9,700 people,” one organiser corrected.

Some concert goers were prevented from taking their water bottles inside and had to throw them outside all over the lawn. “Water

bottles are a safety hazard. People throw them when they forget the lyrics. But you could buy them from stalls inside which are significantly pricier and thus safer. You don’t throw around a pricey new iPhone, do you?”

In the end, the organisers decided to award a medal of honour to all ticket holders because they risked their lives to contribute to the economy. Not only that they showed great resilience by not fainting or dying more than once.

A concert is all about igniting the senses and arousing emotions. As it stood, people were feeling all kinds of emotions starting from rage to confusion and severe hysteria. “What doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger,” said the organiser in a Scrapchat tweet post gram.

Tobacco company angered as low air quality makes their products useless

JEAN PAUL SATIRE

In a joint statement signed by Churut International (CI), tobacco companies expressed their disappointment at the rapidly deteriorating air quality in Dhaka and adjacent areas of the country.

On Wednesday, a press conference was held in the palatial headquarters of CI, where journalists were laughed at and ridiculed for their meagre pay by a group of employees for the tobacco company, who had all recently returned from a vacation in Dubai. After it was sufficiently established that not working in the tobacco industry is the biggest professional mistake an educated individual could make, Shahzada Cigarsson, CEO of CI, read from a prepared statement and answered questions.

“Our products have been around for centuries for those who are sick and tired of breathing in fresh natural air and want something a little spicier for their lungs. But for the last couple of decades, we have noticed that the difference between the air that is naturally available and the fumes that come out of the ends of our death sticks is rapidly diminishing. This is an existential threat to our trade and we will not accept it,” he said.

A presentation was shown at the press conference where it was shown that the city’s air quality index (AQI) is one of the worst on the planet, and prolonged exposure to it can severely damage internal organs.

“Damaging internal organs is OUR job,” Shahzada Cigarsson cried out and interrupted the presentation. “We massively overpay hundreds of BBA graduates every month to make sure that this job is done right. But with this AQI problem, our Universal Graduates™ are left helpless. Why would anyone choose to smoke if taking a walk around town has the same effect?”

As a solution to this industry threatening problem, CI announced a campaign focused on improving the air quality of the city. “For every packet of cigarettes of any brand – even the cheap ones – sold, we will plant one tree. In this way, we intend to create a positive change in society where even the act of smoking might help the environment,” the CEO said.

In his closing remarks, Cigarsson said, “For centuries, the tobacco industry has been at the forefront of innovation. From solving the European labour crisis with the Transatlantic Slave Trade to pioneering the practice of using industry-sponsored research in false advertisements during the 1950s and 60s, we have shown time and again that we only have the best interests of society in our hearts. Now that air pollution is something we have set our eyes upon, the world better brace itself for what’s about to hit them. I can guarantee that this will be something we talk about for decades to come.”

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HR head angry at rain for inspiring office workers to go home on time

STEVE TASKS

Our city, akin to Singapore in many ways, has been experiencing a temperature spike over the last three weeks. The temperature was determined to keep climbing, making many wonder if the city was becoming the new Dubai.

During this time, office attendance was showing record highs in most organisations. HR managers were pleased with their daily performance reports which mainly showed who came in and how long they stayed.

“We follow a metric called KPI (Keep People In) to measure employee performance. Longer they stay the more we think they work,” stated Mobasher Ahmed, junior executive HR at a local bank that cannot be named because of ongoing investigations in misappropriating large funds for buying office staplers.

Employees were averaging at least 12 hours a day for large organisations like media houses, ad agencies, MNCs and NGOs. Office goers were spending more time in the offices than previously recorded in biometric logs. “Productivity, yeah!” exclaimed the CEO of All Time Support Solutions when asked for a comment. He promptly hung up because CEOs don’t have time from counting all their money.

This spike in attendance likely had to do with

current frequency of electricity load shedding. “It’s so hot outside that I prefer being in the office where it is air conditioned 60 percent of the time,” Raida Azila, 25, said when asked why she was logging in seven hours more at the office each day.

Unfortunately for many HR and admin, it rained the last two days causing temperatures to drop. This comes just a couple of days after the newly appointed chief heat officer was seen planting a tree. Following the rain, employees were seen leaving the workplaces on time. Some even had the audacity to stay home during the weekend. This caused great grievance for HR because now the KPI is down. “It is easy to get disconnected from family and friends when we get engrossed in work where air conditioning exists. I almost forgot I was married,” said Tanzeel Arman, 23, who was stocking up on soap and toothbrushes for the office.

Abida Sharmin, head HR at Headway Networks, expressed anger at the change in events and mostly at the rain. “We cannot grow as a nation if we are more concerned about going home and enjoying our free time. This is the time to hustle,” she texted from her weekend retreat in Gazipur. She wanted to fire all the employees leaving office on time but that meant she had to send them home for good. And that would kill the KPI.



PHOTO: ANNIE SPRATT

Impacted by loadshedding, joint families decide to break up

AFIZAN HADIAR

An alarming case has propped up in the capital recently, faced with surging rates of loadshedding. Forced to spend a lot of time together in the sweltering heat, and at times in complete darkness, joint families are deciding to live separately as the truth getting spilled has spilled bad blood among members.

As loadshedding becomes a regular part of their lives, the heat, the darkness, and the lack of entertainment options become breeding grounds for frustration, arguments, and sometimes even all-out war.

This correspondent recently got the opportunity to dive headfirst into the world of loadshedding and the havoc it wreaks on joint families. Buckle up, it’s gonna get dark.

This newspaper talked to the Mirza family, the latest victims of loadshedding, cracking open their family like a relationship therapist.

We begin with Aunt Sheila. This woman is plugged in more than an IV drip. When the power cuts hit, she loses her mind like a contestant on a cooking show with no butter. She’s running around the house like a mad scientist, searching for a single socket to power her phone.

Meanwhile cousin Ronny (or maybe Tonny) suddenly decided to dust up his harmonium and set up “Sangeet Sessions” for the family. But much to the other members’ misfortune, a shalik sings better than he does.

However, as per convention goes, none of the family members ever had the heart to tell him.

Shimul, the eldest in the family among the second generation of members, said, “I thought my woes were over after the pandemic ended. But now my tinnitus is back for all the out of tune Rabindra Sangeet.”

Meanwhile the adolescents of the household seem to be faced with a finger scrolling disorder as they were seen sitting at the dining

table, mindlessly scrolling on the smooth surface of the dining table as if it were a screen.

Ritu, a 15-year-old snapchat influencer with 6,000 followers, is obsessed with perfect lighting for her Instagram feed. When the lights flicker off, she’s like a vampire caught in the sun. She’s lighting candles all over the place, posing with them like she’s in some bizarre gothic photoshoot. Talking to this correspondent, Ritu disclosed her plans to start a candle-selling pyramid scheme.

But here’s the kicker, folks. The Mirza family have decided they’ve had enough. They start dividing the house like it’s a war zone, using masking tape to mark their territories, which seemed to be a more viable plan than seeking therapy.

I mean, who needs therapy when you can just grab some masking tape and say, “This is my side and that’s yours, and if you cross this line, I’ll cut out your share of the property?”

37 percent increase in poetry submission since loadshedding occurred.

PHOTO: MATTHEW HENRY