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Resilient Growth of Bangladesh's Tiles Industry A PROMISING JOURNEY

AKANDA MUHAMMAD JAHID

The tiles industry in Bangladesh has emerged as a resilient and dynamic sector, demonstrating remarkable growth since its inception and successfully overcoming various challenges.

The demand for tiles has experienced a sharp increase due to the rapid urbanization and evolving lifestyle trends, creating opportunities for both local tile producers and importers.

According to data from the Bangladesh Ceramic Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BCMEA), the tile industry in Bangladesh has been witnessing a 20% annual growth.

AKM Ziaul Islam, the chief operating officer for Meghna Ceramic, expressed confidence in the industry's potential and stated, "I believe this industry has the potential for another 20 years of growth."

S M Arafatur Rahman, the head

of marketing at RAK Ceramics Bangladesh, highlighted the significant urbanization that has taken place in recent years. While tiles were previously limited to wealthy individuals in urban areas, they are now being utilized by the middle class, lower middle class, and even rural populations.

Currently, there are 32 functioning tiles companies in the country, with an annual production capacity of 21 crore sq m of tiles. In the fiscal year

According to data from the Bangladesh Ceramic Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BCMEA), the tile industry in Bangladesh has been witnessing a 20% annual growth.

MD Shirajul Islam Mollah, president of the BCMEA and managing director of CBC Tiles, expressed the need for the removal of the supplementary duty in order to increase tile demand and sell at reasonable rates.

Moreover, the raw materials imported by tile producers from various countries, including China and Malaysia, contain moisture levels ranging from 30 to 40 percent, as stated by Mollah. However, the customs assessment includes this moisture content, resulting in additional duties being imposed. Consequently, the tiles producers demand that the duty calculation excludes the weight of the moisture.

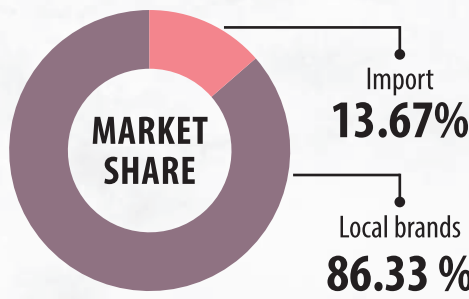
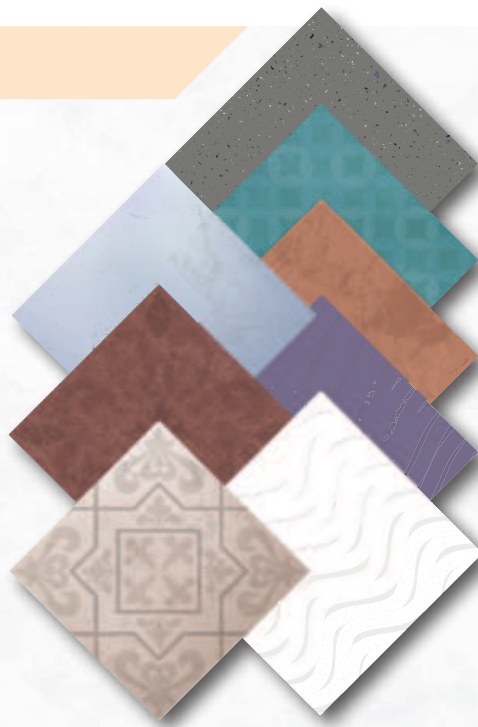
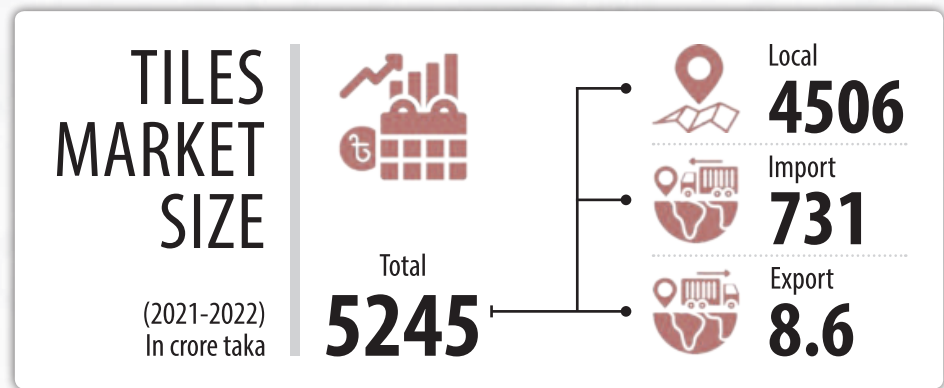
Mollah identified natural gas as the most significant constraint to the industry's growth. He highlighted the lack of uninterrupted gas supply despite accepting the government's increased gas prices on the condition of guaranteed supply.

Tile producers maintain that despite the existing challenges, the sector will continue to grow in the years to come. They emphasize that housing is a fundamental requirement for everyone, and tiles have become an integral part of building construction. As the demand for houses increases, the prospect for all construction materials, including tiles, will grow accordingly. This is why the country's tiles industry has consistently shown resilience, even during tough times like the Covid-19 pandemic, according to industry experts.

Furthermore, they see great potential for exporting high-end tiles manufactured in the country.

Md. Bayazed Bashar, the head of operations at DBL Ceramics Ltd., emphasized the quality of tiles produced in Bangladesh, stating that they are already on par with international standards. To foster further growth, the tiles industry in Bangladesh should proactively explore opportunities for exporting its products and expanding internationally, added Bashar.

TILES INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH



2021-22, the tile market size in Bangladesh surpassed 5000 crore taka, with local producers accounting for more than 4500 crore taka.

This sector has experienced robust growth in recent years, largely due to substantial investments by major companies, according to Islam.

Meghna Group, for instance, now produces 1.5 crore sq.ft of tiles on a monthly basis and has invested approximately Tk 900 crore. UAE-based RAK Ceramics is also investing around Tk 1000 crore to build a tile factory in Gazipur.

However, the sector is currently facing some difficulties.

Tiles sales have declined recently due to prevailing market panic resulting from the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, as reported by tile producers.

On top of that, the price of gas has experienced a significant increase of approximately 150%, putting additional pressure on production costs.

The tile producers are also experiencing delays in opening LCs, which are causing disruptions in the production process.

The price of tiles has doubled since August of the previous year.

Nevertheless, it is believed that the situation will improve in the coming months if the government takes certain measures.

The tiles industry leaders asserts that a 15 percent value-added tax (VAT) and 15 percent supplementary duty are imposed on the sector.



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GP3060-008GGR



GP3060-009GGR



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SMART, SUSTAINABLE, AND STYLISH

The Next Generation of Tiles

SARAH BINTAY SHAKHAWAT

In the world of home design, tiles play an indispensable role, often operating as the unsung heroes that silently breathe life into living spaces. Within Bangladesh, the ceramic industry, particularly the tiles sector, has witnessed remarkable growth, solidifying its position as one of the country's fastest-growing manufacturing industries. This expansion can be attributed, in large part, to the ever-evolving preferences of individuals, which continuously inspire a myriad of innovative advancements within the tile industry. Moreover, the integration of cutting-edge technologies has revolutionized the functionality, sustainability, and visual appeal of tiles, further propelling their significance in the domain of home decor.

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION PROCESS

With the advent of modern technologies, the manufacturing process in the tile industry has undergone significant changes to prioritize sustainability and reduce energy consumption. Traditionally, tiles were fired in gas heaters within kilns, but the current low pressure of natural gas in our country has posed a threat to this gas-dependent approach. In response, tile companies are actively seeking alternatives to mitigate their reliance on gas.

Mohammad Ashraful Haque,

DGM of Sales at Akij Ceramics Ltd., shares, "Initially, we had to rely on CNG as a support, but we are striving to develop additional resources. In addition to utilizing coal, we are exploring the conversion of wood waste into fuel. By regenerating heat and exploring other energy sources, we can alleviate some of the pressure on natural gas. Moreover, we have plans to invest in solar energy support, which will soon be implemented."

On the other hand, companies like RAK Ceramics are introducing globally acclaimed SACMI machines that are not only efficient but also produce high-quality tiles. S M Arafatur Rahman, DGM of Marketing & Communication at RAK Ceramics, explains their focus on reducing gas consumption, stating, "Previously, our machinery generated 200 liters of output from 100 liters of gas input. However, with advanced technology, we can achieve the same output with only 10 liters of gas input." Rahman also highlights their commitment to exploring the use of recycled materials for tile production in the future, ensuring a sustainable approach.

Md. Bayazed Bashar, Head of Operations at DBL Ceramics Ltd, emphasizes the importance of all industry players incorporating eco-friendly and sustainable practices into their production processes to meet the growing consumer demand for environmentally

friendly products.

The influence of cutting-edge technologies extends beyond sustainability efforts. Swapan Kumar Sikder, Associate Professor of the Department of Ceramics at Dhaka University, commends the rapid development of the tile industry, particularly through the implementation of automated machinery. This transition has led to reduced reliance on manpower,

In line with the digital era, the tile industry is also incorporating smart technologies into their products. Leading tile companies in the country are actively working towards bringing these innovative features to consumers in the near future.

with robots taking on a majority of the work.

STYLE REVOLUTIONS

In addition to the pursuit of innovation, the tiles industry has been dedicated to enhancing the array of styles and designs available. Previously, tiles were often overlooked as a mere protective layer for the floor, receiving minimal consideration in terms of aesthetics. However, they are now

recognized as an integral part of interior design, capable of elevating the overall look and feel of a space.

To cater to the growing demand for diverse and visually appealing tile options, the market now offers a wide range of glazes. From mirror glaze and sugar glaze to non-glaze or matte finishes, there is a plethora of choices available. Thanks to modern high-tech printing technology, tile companies can now offer an infinite variety of outlooks with impeccable finishes.

Gone are the days when limited options restrained homeowners. Nowadays, tiles can mimic the textures of wood or create the elegant look of marble, allowing individuals to select styles that seamlessly align with the aesthetic of their entire house. The availability of such a vast range of options empowers homeowners to fully customize their living spaces and bring their design visions to life.

SUPERIOR TILES

With the advent of modern technology, tiles in the Bangladesh market are embracing advanced functionalities through innovative glazes. In today's health-conscious era, where hygiene takes precedence, new technology has introduced anti-microbial tiles that not only sanitize and disinfect but also inhibit the growth of bacteria, safeguarding surfaces from contamination. These tiles feature a thin coating of glaze composed

of ceramic compounds that activate upon exposure to UV rays from indoor lights and sunlight, effectively oxidizing microbes and bacteria on the surface.

Dr. Muhammad Hasanuzzaman, Associate Professor of the Department of Nanomaterials and Ceramic Engineering at BUET, emphasizes the long-term hygiene benefits of anti-microbial or anti-bacterial glazes. He explains, "Even when using disinfectant cleaners, their effects may only last up to eight hours. Beyond that, the growth of bacteria tends to increase. However, with anti-microbial or anti-bacterial glaze, we can ensure sustained hygiene."

Additionally, there are anti-skid tiles available in the market that offer moisture resistance, preventing slips even on soapy and wet surfaces. These tiles are commonly used in bathrooms in combination with anti-microbial tiles. Furthermore, heavy-duty tiles designed to withstand wear and tear are also available, catering to specific requirements.

In line with the digital era, the tile industry is also incorporating smart technologies into their products. Leading tile companies in the country are actively working towards bringing these innovative features to consumers in the near future.



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THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CHOOSING THE PERFECT TILE



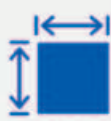
PURPOSE AND LOCATION

Consider the area of installation: high-traffic, wet area, or decorative accent. Prioritize safety and functionality. Account for foot traffic to ensure durable, lasting solutions.



EXPLORE TILE TYPES

Ceramic, porcelain, natural stone, and glass are popular tile options. Research their characteristics, advantages, and limitations to understand which type suits your requirements best.



EVALUATE TILE SIZE

Tile size affects the visual perception of a space. Larger tiles can create an illusion of a bigger area, while smaller tiles are suitable for intricate designs. Consider the proportions of the room.



STYLE AND DESIGN

Identify your desired style, whether it's modern or traditional. Explore various colors, patterns, textures, and finishes that complement your overall design.



SEEK PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Consult with tile experts or interior designers to get their insights. They can provide valuable guidance based on their experience and knowledge of current trends.



Maintenance Requirements

Consider the effort you're willing to invest in tile upkeep. Some may require regular sealing, while others are low-maintenance.



SET A BUDGET

Determine your budget range before exploring tile options. This will help you narrow down choices and focus on tiles that align with your financial plan.



INSTALLATION CONSIDERATIONS

Consider installation complexity, whether professional assistance is required, and ensure you have the necessary tools. Evaluate the surface preparation needed to achieve desired results.



WARRANTY AND RETURN POLICY

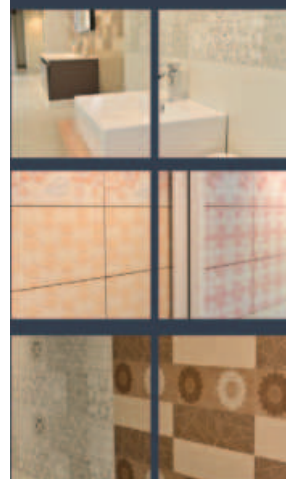
Review the warranty and return policy offered by the tile manufacturer or retailer. Familiarize yourself with the warranty coverage, including any limitations or conditions.



TEST SAMPLES

Obtain tile samples and evaluate them in the intended space. Observe how they interact with lighting, existing decor, and other elements. This will help you visualize the final look.

Content: Md. Fozlay Rabby Ansary
Infographic: Md. Akram Hossen



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A ROADMAP FOR THE TILES INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH

The leaders of the tiles industry in Bangladesh have shared their insights with The Daily Star regarding the key challenges that require attention, areas for improvement, and initiatives to propel the thriving industry to new heights.

<p>A.K.M Ziaul Islam Chief Operating Officer Meghna Ceramic Industries Ltd.</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embrace digitalization, automation, and advanced manufacturing techniques Invest in a strong customer service team Stay updated with global trends and tailor them to the local market 	<p>Khourshed Alam Director (Operations) AkijBashir Group</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure consistent natural gas supply Withdraw supplementary duty Increase tariff value for imported tiles 	<p>Md. Shirajul Islam Mollah Managing Director China-Bangla Ceramic Ind. Ltd.</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw the 15% supplementary duty at the production level Consider wastage percentage quantity during duty assessment on imported raw materials Ensure uninterrupted gas supply at a reasonable price 	<p>Md. Bayazed Bashar Head of Operations DBL Ceramics Ltd.</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in advanced ceramic manufacturing technology and processes Conduct regular testing and obtain certifications to meet international standards Conduct comprehensive market research to identify potential export markets 	<p>Sadhan Kumar Dey Chief Operating Officer & Chief Financial Officer RAK Ceramics Bangladesh Ltd.</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure uninterrupted supply of gas and electricity Ensure timely availability of letters of credit Implement industry-friendly regulations, particularly regarding customs and VAT.
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FOR THE **FIRST TIME** IN BANGLADESH

INTRODUCING THE FULL LINE OF **DOUBLE CHARGE**



60x60cm



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Eid gift for 1.25cr ultra-poor families

To get 10kg rice each; PM calls for foreign funding for rural projects

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The government is set to distribute 10 kilograms of rice to each of the 1.25 crore ultra-poor and destitute families ahead of Eid-ul-Azha to soften the blow of a spiralling inflation.

The disclosure was made yesterday by Enamur Rahman, the state minister for disaster management and relief, after a meeting of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

At the meeting, Hasina expressed concerns about the escalating prices. The Daily Star has learnt from people informed on the discussion.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



People use illegally dredged silt from rivers to fill low-lying areas and floodplains so that those can be turned into housing plots. They use pipes like the one in the photo to conduct their illegal activity on an industrial scale. The photo was taken at Trimohani in the capital.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Rab framing me for robbery attempt'

Man alleges; court finds the case statement at odds with what Rab told his mother over phone

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

According to the case statement, Rab arrested a man preparing to commit a robbery near a footbridge at Mayakanan in the capital's Sabujbagh at 6:10pm on February 15.

But according to security camera footage seen by these correspondents, the 26-year-old rickshaw puller named Mojaffor was walking near his home at 6:38pm that day on Dotala Masjid Road in Meradia, about three kilometres away from Mayakanan.

In the CCTV footage from Meradia, he was wearing the same pink hoodie seen in the mugshot provided to reporters by Rab after his arrest.



During a hearing of Mojaffor's petition for bail on February 28, a court listened to recorded phone calls between a Rab-3 officer and Mojaffor's mother Modhumala Begum and found discrepancies in the complaint.

The court ordered departmental action against Rab-3 Deputy Assistant Director Ikhtiar Hossain who filed the case.

In the order, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mehedi Hasan wrote that the Rab officer told the mother of the accused over the phone that her son was detained for accompanying drug addicts and hanging out with some "women of questionable character".

"But the man is accused of attempted robbery, and the record shows a cutter was recovered from him. This is suspicious," the magistrate added.

The list of seized items was made at 6:45pm, but the Rab member did not tell the mother about finding a cutter in her son's possession during the call around 10:45pm that day, reads the order.

When Mojaffor's mother repeatedly asked what her son had done, the Rab officer said something different.

It primarily appears to the court that the Rab personnel had an ulterior motive behind detaining him and showing

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

POLLS TO SCC AND RCC

Councillor races to be close in Sylhet

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, ASHIK ABDULLAH APU from Sylhet

The battle for Sylhet city mayor in all likelihood will be "one-sided" today but the races of councillors will be tight, said voters of the city.

Awami League mayor nominee Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury is relieved as major opposition BNP boycotted the polls and the candidate of Islami Andolon Bangladesh quit the race on June 13 after its mayor contender in the Barishal city polls came under attack on June 12.

Anwaruzzaman is only to face Jatiya Party candidate Nazrul Islam Babul.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

AL worried over turnout in Rajshahi

MD ABBAS and ANWAR ALI, from Rajshahi

Turnout in today's polls remains a concern for the camp of the Awami League mayor candidate in Rajshahi city.

Intra-party rivalry between AL candidate AHM Khairuzzaman Liton and Rajshahi City AL General Secretary Dablu Sarkar have heightened the concern, party insiders said.

The AL nominee, however, said that they have devised an elaborate plan to increase turnout and ensure maximum votes for "boat", his electoral symbol.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Bangladesh set to seek BRICS membership

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh will apply to join BRICS alliance, and the process to formally seek its membership is underway, according to an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On June 19, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said Bangladesh would welcome if BRICS formally invites it to join the grouping of five member states - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

"We will surely join once they invite us. We have yet to receive any formal letter.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



Embracing The Youth, Welcoming New Possibilities

Heartiest Congratulations to **Mr. Ahsanul Alam** on being elected as the Chairman of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited.

Earlier you have set a remarkable example of leadership as Chairman of Union Bank. We firmly believe that your legacy will take the banking sector to new heights.



'DEFAMING' INFO MINISTER Seven sued again in 2nd DSA case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Another case was filed yesterday against seven people under the Digital Security Act for making a "fake, baseless, and defamatory" video on Information Minister Hasan Mahmud and publishing it on YouTube and Facebook.

The minister's personal assistant, Emrul Karim, filed the case with Chattogram Divisional Cyber Tribunal.

The accused are Nazmus Saquib, who runs the YouTube channel and Facebook page titled "Nagorik TV", HM Kamal, Azad Sahadat, Sany Prodhhan, Saiful Islam Talukdar, Khondokar Islam, and Md Hazi

Taking the case into cognisance, tribunal Judge Jahirul Kabir yesterday ordered the counter terrorism unit of Chattogram Metropolitan Police to investigate the case and submit a report, said Nikhil Kumar, lawyer of the plaintiff.

Harun Rashid.

This is the second case filed against the seven on same charges.

The channel and Facebook page has no connection with private TV channel Nagorik TV.

The persons who liked, shared, and commented on the video were also made accused.

Taking the case into cognisance, tribunal Judge Jahirul Kabir yesterday ordered the counter terrorism unit of Chattogram Metropolitan Police to investigate the case and submit a report, said Nikhil Kumar, lawyer of the plaintiff.

"The plaintiff also filed a petition seeking removal of the content from Facebook and YouTube. The court asked the Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission and the other authorities concerned to take necessary steps in this regard," the lawyer told The Daily Star.

On Sunday night, Md Ariful Islam, 36, forest and environment affairs secretary of Rangunia upazila Jubo League, lodged a DSA case with Chawkbazar Police Station in Chattogram city against the same people.

The FIRs of the two cases are similar.

According to the case statement, accused Nazmus Saquib defamed the information minister by spreading "false, baseless, and fabricated information" by uploading a 13-minute video on YouTube and a Facebook page.



The many images of DHAKA METRO RAIL



SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

I have been using the metro rail service sporadically through the past couple of months, and I have to admit, I treat it like a bit of a luxury. Even though I have had the privilege of using private transport for my commute to and from work, which is about 17 kilometres away from my home, I often find myself feeling like I have indulged a bit when I use the metro. While the obvious advantage of not having to sit in traffic for hours has a lot to do with this feeling, I believe that the spectacle of the station and the metro itself is what takes the cake for me.

I often opt to wait a few extra minutes and catch the next train instead of getting on the first train I can find. In those six minutes, give or take a couple of minutes, I find myself observing all the people around me. I admit, a lot of the time people are also staring back at me, often judging me for my eccentric sense of fashion.

However, as I indulge myself in this odd kaleidoscope of familiar images, there are a few that I enjoy most.

Almost every time that I have used the metro rail, I have come across a family with children whose eyes are filled with wonder as they prepare themselves for their first-ever metro rail journey. With almost identical expressions, these kids rush towards the train as the gates open, and at the insistence of their parents, sit down, only to jump up as soon as the train has started. They sometimes press their faces against the windows, and sometimes circle around the poles holding on for support. Sometimes, if they notice their parents getting distracted, they even let the poles go for a few seconds, just for the rush.

However, what may just be my favourite picture is when I notice young girls, often college students travelling by themselves, lugging around their heavier-than-self backpacks and slouching on the first seat they can

find empty. What I love observing is the ease with which young girls find themselves boarding the metro.

Just a few months ago, I would not have been able to fathom a situation where a young girl would be able to avail the services of a public transport service in Dhaka by herself with such ease. Having been on the receiving end of many unsolicited remarks and unwelcome shoves on the streets of Dhaka, it is refreshing to see that the female compartment has amounted to more than mere lip service.

I have found a peculiar sense of reflection and familiarity in the vast sea of unfamiliar faces I get to see at the stations and in the trains, filled with people from all walks of life going about their regular days. While we have all heard of the many strides, we, as a nation, have been taking towards the concept of development, the metro rail is the one that has resonated the most with the idea of moving forward for me.

SSC exam on full syllabus, HSC still on short

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Exams for the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) next year will be held following the full syllabus, while exams for Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) will be held with a curtailed syllabus.

The decision was taken yesterday in a meeting held at the International Mother Language Institute in the capital, chaired by Education Minister Dipu Moni.

Prof Tapan Kumar Sarker, chairman of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka, confirmed the matter to The Daily Star.

He said that HSC exams for next year will be based on a curtailed syllabus, while the SSC exam of the same year will be held on the complete syllabus like the pre-Covid 19 times.

SSC and HSC exams for 2021, 2022, and 2023 were all held on curtailed syllabuses due to study loss during Covid 19 pandemic.

4 sued for medical staff hiring irregularities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission sued four people yesterday over irregularities in the recruitment process for medical staff in 2020.

ACC Deputy Director Faruk Ahmed filed the case with its integrated district office in Dhaka, accusing Dr Sheikh Mohammad Hasan Imam, former director and president of the recruitment committee; Dr AFM Akhtar Hossain, former deputy director of DGHs; Harunur Rashid, Senior Assistant Teacher, Khilgaon Govt High School; and Professor Showkat Ali, chairman of Dhaka University's applied mathematics department.

According to the case statement, the DGHs recruitment process was marred by allegations of cheating. The answer sheets were tampered with, and it is suspected that this was done with the knowledge and cooperation of the two professors who were responsible for grading the exams.

Ex-customs official, wife sued for graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed two cases against a former customs official, his wife, and his daughter for accumulating around Tk 12 crore of wealth illegally beyond his known source of income and concealing information in the wealth statement.

The accused are Golam Kibria Hazari, former Revenue officer of Customs, Excise and VAT Training Academy, his wife Selina Akter, and his daughter Sadia Akter. They are residents of Masterpara in Feni.

Md Abdul Malek, assistant director of ACC Integrated Office-2, Chattogram filed the case accusing the trio, Md Atiqul Alam, deputy director of Chattogram ACC, told The Daily Star.

"Two separate cases were lodged for concealing wealth information in their statements and hiding huge amounts of money earned illegally from unknown sources. ACC filed the cases after investigation," he added.

'Rab framing me for robbery attempt'

FROM PAGE 1

on documents that he has been arrested in the case, reads the order.

The recorded calls heard in the court corroborate what the accused's mother has been saying, it reads, adding that the complainant has not been able to satisfactorily explain the discrepancies.

The magistrate directed the Rab director general to conduct a departmental investigation into the matter and take steps accordingly within 30 working days.

In one of the recorded calls produced before the court by Mojaffor's lawyer, Mojaffor was heard telling his mother that he was brought to the Rab office from Kamalapur.

Modumala said her son was arrested in a false case.

"Rab picked up my innocent son. He is the breadwinner of the family. The legal expenses are a major burden for us," she told The Daily Star.

After he walked out of jail on bail on March 1, Mojaffor said when he was detained, officers in plainclothes told him to pay Tk 10,000 if he wanted to be free.

He alleges that he was framed in the attempted robbery case because he failed to pay the money.

THE CASE

The case was filed on February 16 with Sabujbagh Police Station against Mojaffor and two other men named Hasan and Raju. A court sent them to jail the same day.

Just one and a half months later, Sub-Inspector Yakub Ali of the same police station pressed charges against the accused.

The charge sheet mostly echoed what was written in the complaint and said the accused were preparing to commit a robbery when they got arrested.

About the charge that Rab found a steel cutter from his possession, Mojaffor told The Daily Star that nothing like that happened.

"After taking us to their office, a

Rab member brought something like cutters or knives before us," he said.

He added that he did not pull a rickshaw on February 15 as he felt unwell. He went to Kamalapur railway station around 7:30pm with Hasan to pick up a relative of Hasan.

"After reaching Kamalapur station, we had tea at a cup of tea stall outside the station. As we were walking on the footpath in front of the Eastern Kamalapur Commercial Complex, several men in plainclothes held us and forced us to go near Dhaka Railway Station Central Jame Masjid.

"I asked them why they detained me, but they did not reply. I also requested them repeatedly to release me, saying my family depends on my income, but would not listen."

He and Hasan were then forced to get into a white HiAce along with another man. They waited in the microbus for one and a half hours before being taken to a footbridge in Sabujbagh. From there, they were taken to the Rab-3 office in Shahjahanpur.

Noted rights activist Nur Khan said, "The Rab members, for whom a man was accused in a case, should be thoroughly investigated. Otherwise, an incident like this will become a disaster for the force one day."

He also urged the authorities to relieve Mojaffor from the case soon.

A hearing on the case will be held today.

Rab-3 Commanding Officer Lt Col Arif Mohiuddin Ahmed neither answered the phone when The Daily Star called him nor replied to text messages.

Mojaffor's lawyer HM Rohul Amin Mollah said, "The investigation officer pressed charges against my client without a proper investigation. If the case was properly investigated, Mojaffor would have been relieved from the charges."

Despite several attempts over the phone on April 12, The Daily Star could not reach Sub-Inspector Yakub Ali for comments about his charge sheet.

Councillor races to be close in Sylhet

FROM PAGE 1

Besides, there is a huge difference between the two mayor aspirants in terms of the organisational strength of their parties.

The ruling AL has deployed its full strength to get back the Sylhet City Corporation mayor post, which a BNP man has occupied for the last 10 years.

Eight candidates are running, but the main battle will be between Anwaruzzaman and Nazrul, said locals.

However, participation of leaders of the BNP and its associate bodies in all 42 wards, Jamaat contenders in at least 20 wards and more than one AL candidates in several wards has made the polls to councillor posts competitive.

"The outcome of the mayoral race is clear. The real contest will be among the councillor aspirants," Imran Hossain, a tea stall owner in Tilagarh area, told The Daily Star.

AL worried over turnout in Rajshahi

FROM PAGE 1

The party activists would work to take voters to the polling stations, Liton told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said his supporters made door-to-door visits to urge the voters to exercise their franchise.

Nurul Islam Sarkar Aslam, chief election agent for Liton, said the city AL organised at least 200 meetings with voters from all sections of the society, including marginalised communities, to encourage them to go to the polling centres.

"Though there is no strong rival for Liton, we didn't take the electioneering lightly," he told The Daily Star.

He said they expect that the turnout would be at least 65 percent.

With the BNP staying away from the election, Liton, also an AL presidium member, anticipates that the supporters of the opposition party and Jamaat-e-Islami would show up at the policing centres to vote for their favourite councillor candidates.

"If the supporters of the BNP and the Jamaat vote for other mayor candidates, it might make victory

SYLHET CITY POLLS	
TOTAL VOTERS	4,87,753
POLLING STATIONS	190
MAYOR CANDIDATES	8
WARD COUNCILLOR CANDIDATES	273
RESERVED WARD COUNCILLOR CANDIDATES	87

A significant number of the councillor candidates are either leaders or activists of BNP and its associate bodies.

The BNP suspended 43 of its leaders

RAJSHAHI CITY POLLS	
TOTAL VOTERS	3,51,982
POLLING STATIONS	155
MAYOR CANDIDATES	4
WARD COUNCILLOR CANDIDATES	111
RESERVED WARD COUNCILLOR CANDIDATES	46

difficult for me," he said.

Abdul Hamid Sarkar Tekon, a five-time councillor of ward-22 and also the elder brother of Dablu Sarkar, alleged that despite being the general secretary of the city AL, his brother was left out of Liton's electoral campaign.

Attempts were made to show Dablu

for joining the polls ignoring the party decision to boycott the election. Around 50 more BNP men are also in the councillor race.

In ward-5, four BNP men - Kamal Miah, former convener of the ward unit BNP, members of the unit Khaled Akbar Chowdhury, Aminur Rahman Khokan and BNP activist Shahed Siraj - are running.

There is a similar situation in ward-30 where four BNP activists are running.

In ward-31, -32 and -33, two BNP men are running.

Beside the contest among BNP men, races between AL men are also hot.

For instance, in ward-39, suspended president of Chhatra Dal's Sylhet district unit Altaf Hossain Sumon is competing against three AL leaders - Rezaul Rahman Mostafa, Shahab Uddin Lal, and AL Amir Uddin, organising secretary of Sadar upazila unit.

Sarkar as an anti-Liton politician, he added.

"Despite all these obstacles, my brother is working independently to ensure the victory of the Awami League candidate," said Tekon, who is running for councillor.

Asked about the reason for the exclusion of Dablu Sarkar from electioneering, the AL nominee said that they received several complaints against him.

"Some senior party leaders had raised concern about involving him in polls campaigns as a scandalous video clip of him went viral on social media. We wanted to avoid controversies in our electoral activities as it could potentially have a negative impact on the polls results," Liton said.

Nawsher Ali, a key person in Liton's campaign team and also the city AL vice-president, said even though a party rebel ran in the 2008 mayoral election, he could not bag more than 5,000 votes. Liton won that election by a significant margin.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Mohammad Shahriar Alam, local

Three AL men are vying in ward-20. They are Sylhet city unit AL Joint General Secretary and incumbent councillor Azadur Rahman Azad, Swechhasebak League leaders Mithu Talukder and Shubhra Chakraborty.

Talking to this newspaper, Abdul Quyum Chowdhury, president of Sylhet district BNP, said, "We have been closely monitoring so that no BNP supporters can work in favour of the expelled BNP leaders. We also asked them not to go to polling centres and we are expecting they will follow the instruction."

"In the absence of the BNP, it has become a one-sided mayoral race, which may also impact the voter turnout. On the other hand, candidates of different parties in councillor races have made voters interested," said Shah Shaheda Akter, general secretary of Sylhet chapter's Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujan), a civil society platform for good governance.

Mir Iqbal said, "We must vote for 'boat' without thinking about who has been given the party ticket."

Asked if their supporters would go to the polling stations to vote for the AL candidate, he told The Daily Star that they would do it for sure.

Jatiya Party mayoral candidate Saiful Islam Swapan said he had expected that the polls to Barishal and Khulna city corporations would be free and fair, "but that did not happen".

"The situation in Rajshahi could be the same," he told this newspaper yesterday.

Four candidates are running for mayor while 112 are vying for the 30 posts of general ward councillors and 46 candidates are running for 10 reserved councillor seats for women in today's polls to Rajshahi City Corporation.

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Rajuk plans to extend its jurisdiction

State minister tells JS; govt mulls rehabilitation of Urdu-speaking community

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha has planned to extend its jurisdiction to the Meghna River in the East of Dhaka and Padma Bridge in the West.

State Minister for Housing and Public Works Sharif Ahmed said this in parliament yesterday while responding to a tabled question from Awami League MP Enamul Haque from Rajshahi.

About the extension of Rajuk's jurisdiction, Sharif Ahmed said Dhaka, Narayanganj, Savar, Keraniganj and Gazipur areas are located in 1,528 square kilometres of 8 regions under the jurisdiction of Rajuk.

The entire area of Savar upazila is under Rajuk, he further said.

The state minister said as the area in Gazipur City Corporation under the jurisdiction of Rajuk is currently considered as an area under the jurisdiction of Gazipur Development Authority, there is a plan to redefine the jurisdiction of Rajuk excluding that area.

He also said necessary plan will be taken by Rajuk following instruction of the government.

Meanwhile, the government has plans to build 5,600 residential flats in Dhaka's Keraniganj to rehabilitate Urdu-speaking community living at Mohammadpur, the state minister added.



Thousands of Hindu devotees yesterday celebrated the Ratha Yatra (chariot festival) across the country with processions carrying the deities of Lord Jagannath. In the capital, with colourful banners and festoons, male and female devotees in traditional attires assembled at Swamibagh. The photo was taken in Dayaganj area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

AEDS LARVAE DSCC fines 5 building owners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mobile courts of Dhaka South City Corporation yesterday fined building owners in Dhanmondi and Jatrabari a total of Tk 1.15 lakh for finding Aedes mosquito larvae there.

A mobile court, led by the executive magistrate of DSCC, fined Concord Real Estate Limited site engineer Zillur Rahman Tk 50,000 for finding Aedes mosquito larvae at its under-construction building in Dhanmondi.

The magistrate also fined two other building owners on Satmasjid Road for the same reason.

Another court, led by DSCC executive magistrate Md Safi Ullah, fined two building owners in Jatrabari.

Meanwhile, at least 334 dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The total number of

'A sign of neglect and disregard'

Says Oikya Parishad on budget allocation for religious minorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday said the allocation for religious minorities in the proposed national budget is a sign of disregard, neglect, and discrimination towards the communities.

During a press conference at Jatiya Press Club, the organisation said it strongly condemned and protested the fact that there has been no change in the religious discrimination in the budget.

DEMANDS

- Annual funding from national budget
- Enact minority protection law
- Accurate representation in census
- Pay scale for Sanskrit, Pali edu board teachers
- Tk 5,000cr for dev, welfare of minorities

In a written statement, Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of the organisation, said the Ministry of Religious Affairs' expenditure and development budget had received an allocation of Tk 2,176.15 crore.

The funding for the welfare of religious minority communities amounted to only 6.4 percent of this allocation, which is far less than the ratio of the population made up by religious minorities.

He further mentioned that while the Islamic

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

GABTALI CATTLE MARKET

High price irks buyers

Traders point at inflation, rising cost of animal feed; authorities assure of sufficient supply

HELEMUL ALAM

With nine days left for Eid-ul-Azha, Dhaka dwellers have started to visit Gabtali, the city's permanent cattle market.

Meanwhile, despite government statistics and assurances from traders that there is an ample supply of local cattle to meet the demand, buyers have expressed their dissatisfaction with the higher prices this time around.

Parveen, a resident of Bongaon, said, "Like other years, I have purchased a bull from the Gabtali cattle market much earlier at Tk 74,000, which is around Tk 15,000 higher compared to last year."

Rafiqul Bari, a resident of Mohammadpur, also expressed his disappointment with the inflated prices.

"I purchased two bulls for Tk 2 lakh, which is at least Tk 30,000 more compared to last year," he said.

Bari, who usually buys his sacrificial animal just before Eid, explained that his departure for performing Hajj on June 22 compelled him to make the purchase earlier this year.

Having been unable to sacrifice animals last year, Nazrul Islam, a resident of Bhutergoli in Dhaka, decided to buy early this year.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

"The cow which I purchased for Tk 70,000 was around Tk 55,000 in 2021," he said yesterday, speaking to this correspondent.

TRADERS' TAKE

When asked about the high price, Abul Bepari, a trader hailing from Manikganj, said the market price of meat is high this year, so traders are trying to cash in this opportunity to earn a bit extra.

"The price of a bull meat is Tk 30,000 per maund," he explained. He purchased five bulls ahead of Eid and sold one already.

The price of buffaloes is also high.

"Buffaloes this year is at least Tk 20,000 higher than last year," said Md Mosharraf, a trader of Rajshahi who brought 14 buffaloes on Monday.

Md Rahman, another trader of the Gabtali, blamed the high cost of animal feed for the higher price of cows this year.

Traders said though the number of sacrificial animals at the Gabtali cattle market is still low, it will increase from Friday.

"The number of local cows is sufficient this year and there will be no shortage of bulls this year,"

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

EVALY CEO, CHAIRMAN

No bar to run criminal cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared the way for the lower courts concerned to continue trial proceedings of all criminal cases against Evaly founder and CEO Mohammad Rassel and his wife Shamima Nasrin, chairman of the e-commerce platform.

The HC bench of Justice Khazir Ahmed Chowdhury rejected a petition filed by Rassel and Shamima seeking stay on the trial of the cases.

Barrister Syed Mahshib Hossain, a lawyer for subscriber Farhad Hossain who moved a petition before the court seeking to wind up Evaly, told The Daily Star that there was no legal bar for the lower courts concerned to continue trial of criminal cases against the couple.

Hundreds of cases were filed with the courts across the country against the couple on charges of giving fake checks and commitments to subscribers. Shamima is now on bail while Rassel is in jail.

RIVER ENCROACHMENT

HC summons Savar UNO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summoned the UNO of Savar to appear before it on July 18, for not complying with its directive to submit a report after evicting encroachers from the Bangshi river at Banshpatti.

The Savar UNO was asked to place his explanation before the HC bench on that day about non-compliance with its directive.

The HC bench of Justices JBM Hassan and Razik-Al-Jalil passed the order while hearing a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Md Bakir Hossain Mridha in 2019.

Set Tk 25,000 as minimum wage, demand RMG workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid rising living costs, readymade garment (RMG) workers yesterday demanded Tk 25,000 as their minimum wage and payment of their salaries and dues before upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

They made the demand from a rally held in front of Jatiya Press Club.

Taslina Akther,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Demanding result publication within three months of exams being held, Students from seven Dhaka University-affiliated colleges block the Mirpur Road in Dhaka's Nilkhet area for around four hours yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Students of DU-affiliated colleges block Mirpur Road

STAR REPORT

Students from seven Dhaka University-affiliated colleges blocked the Mirpur Road in Dhaka's Nilkhet area for around four hours yesterday to place their seven-point demand, which includes result publication within three months of exams being held.

Huge gridlock was created due to the blockade, which started around 10:30am and was finally lifted around 2:45pm.

The students held a meeting with Supriya Bhattacharjee, principal of Eden College and coordinator of the seven colleges, in Dhaka University at 4:00pm.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Body formed to demolish Gulshan-2 kitchen market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation yesterday formed an 11-member committee to promptly remove the abandoned "Gulshan Kitchen Market (North)" in Gulshan-2.

The decision was announced through an official notice posted on the DNCC website.

According to the office order issued by DNCC Secretary Mohammad Mamun ul Hasan, the committee has been formed to promptly address the issue of the derelict Gulshan Kitchen Market.

Councillor Mofizur Rahman of Ward 19 has been summoned to the 11-member committee to oversee the necessary measures for the removal or demolition of the market. Additionally, the regional executive officer of Zone 3 of DNCC has been appointed as the member secretary of the committee.

The committee comprises several key members, including DNCC additional chief engineer, chief property officer, chief revenue officer and executive engineer.



JUNE 21

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-52 8-17

JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-55 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

'It's baseless, confusing' TIB on Quader's statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Ctg

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday expressed grave concern regarding Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader's comment on Bangladesh's involvement in UN peacekeeping missions.

In a statement yesterday, TIB termed the comments "baseless and confusing", and said it allegedly implicated Transparency International (TI) in undermining Bangladesh's involvement in UN peacekeeping missions. Such remarks from a politician holding a significant ministerial position not only showcase desperation but also demonstrate a lack of responsibility, the statement reads.

In reference to a recorded statement by the minister, in which he mentioned TI, Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, expressed his disappointment and said the confusion was caused by state-run BSS and some other news outlets, as they incorrectly, whether intentionally or not, implied TIB instead of TI.

Iftekharuzzaman said such instances of mix-ups have happened in the past too, which is unexpected, he added in the statement. Mentionable Quader, Awami League general secretary, on Monday made the remarks while talking about Bangladesh's peacekeeping mission.

CU journo beaten by BCL men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Ctg

A group of Chhatra League men attacked the Chattogram University correspondent of a Bangla daily on the campus Monday night.

Dost Mohammad, CU correspondent of Bangla daily Amader Notun Somoy, was admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital. He is a fourth-year student of CU's communication and journalism department.

A group of BCL men, led by CU BCL Law Secretary Khaled Masud and Deputy Office Secretary Arafat Hossen, carried out the attack, said witnesses and campus sources.

The BCL men attacked the victim over a trivial matter around 9:00am.

They beat him again knowing that the victim was a journalist. Meanwhile, CU Journalists' Association formed a human chain in front of CU Administration Building protesting the attack.

Later, CU Vice-Chancellor Prof Shireen Akhter assured CUJA members that the administration will take necessary actions.

BCL leader Khaled Masud claimed that he had a scuffle with the journalist over sitting on a bench. It's a scuffle nothing else.

However, CU BCL President Rezaul Haque Rubel said he will inform the matter to the central BCL committee to take necessary actions.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Ctg

Brac's "Ultra-Poor Graduation Programme" is making a positive impact on poor families in Cox's Bazar and Ukhiya, said speakers at a discussion in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The event was organised by Brac, Brac Institute of Governance and Development, and the UNHCR. The UPG programme focuses on helping individuals living below the poverty line by understanding their vulnerabilities, risks, and needs.

Palash K Das, director of the UPG programme at Brac, said, "A total of 2,000 members from ultra-poor families participated in the one-year pilot project, jointly implemented by Brac and UNHCR."

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Rain dampens polls

FROM PAGE 5

Meanwhile, a group of locals, in support of councillor candidates, have been paving bricks and filling sand on the ground leading to the polling centres, in an effort to provide a stable pathway for voters to navigate through the potential waterlogging caused by the rainfall.

Additionally, the group is setting up a cover in one corner of the centre to provide shelter for voters in the event of rain.

Borhan Uddin, a member of this group, said, "We are trying our best to make the centre accessible."

Shah Md Shajib, assistant meteorologist of Sylhet Met office, said, "It rained 43 millimetres from 6:00am to 3:00pm yesterday, and there is a forecast of heavy rainfall today."

Meanwhile, the Surma river is flowing 44 centimetres below the danger level at the Sylhet city point. However, upstream at Kanaighat upazila in the district, the river has surpassed the danger level by 10 centimetres, leading to concerns about potential flooding in the region.

In light of the waterlogged roads and difficulties faced by people in commuting, candidates have begun renting rickshaws to provide transportation for voters if the weather worsens.

Manik Miah, a rickshaw-puller from Temukhi area, said, "Many roads in the villages are waterlogged, and it is hard for people to commute. Me and nine others have already been rented by a councillor candidate to carry voters to the polling station."

Also, the AL election management committee has distributed umbrellas among party activists. The AL mayoral candidate Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury expressed his hope for favourable weather on polling day.

Contacted, Faysal Kadir, the returning officer of the polls, said, "Necessary steps will be taken depending on the situation."

our college authority. And when we go to our college authority, they tell us to talk to DU authority again. Where should we go, then?"

On February 17, 2017, the government affiliated Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Begum Badrunnesa Government Mohila College, Mirpur Government Bangla College and Government Titumir College with Dhaka University.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Ctg

Vehicle movement on the road was halted during that time. However, only school and college vehicles were allowed to go through.

According to the protesting students, they appeared for exams several months ago but the results have not been published yet.

Shagor Newaz, a third-year student of Bangla department at Government Bangla College, said, "If any trouble comes, we go to the Dhaka University authority, but they ask us to talk to

our college authority. And when we go to our college authority, they tell us to talk to DU authority again. Where should we go, then?"

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Will ensure violence-free

FROM PAGE 5

environment for the smooth exercise of voting rights."

Keeping the weather conditions in mind, the EC's team will be active to ensure that there are no technical issues centring the Electronic Voting Machines.

He informed that EC has not faced much trouble in holding the previous city polls in Gazipur, Khulna and Barisal and he hopes that they will also not face trouble in Rajshahi and Sylhet city polls.

"We will also monitor the election directly from Dhaka through CCTV cameras," he added.

Election not on advice

FROM PAGE 5

with India whether there will be any talk about Bangladesh there," he added.

Quader said the US visa policy is going to be implemented to make elections free and fair in Bangladesh and whether the Indian premier has anything to do, as a democratic country, is up to him from his point of view.

After the discussion, a colorful procession was brought out on the occasion. Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Pranay Kumar Verma inaugurated the Rath Yatra.

EVM remains

FROM PAGE 5

to voters in the queues, teaching them how to use the EVM effectively.

Over 1,730 voting machines will be used in the elections, he added.

Meanwhile, the EC has completed all the preparation for the city polls. They have distributed election equipment and sent those to the polling centres with police escorts.

Also, security has been beefed up at the city centering the election.

Over 3,500 policemen, 1,935 Ansar members and 250 Rab personnel were deployed in the city to monitor security during the polls.

Besides, 10 platoons of BGB members have been seen patrolling the city

since yesterday. In addition, 30 executive magistrates and 10 judicial magistrates will perform their duties on the election day.

Meanwhile, the authorities identified 148 of total 155 polling stations as "important".

In the RCC polls, four candidates are vying for the mayoral race while there are 112 councillor candidates in 30 general wards and 46 women councillor candidates in 10 reserved seats.

In the 96.72 square kilometres area of the city, the total number of voters are 3,51,982 with 1,71,167 male, 1,80,809 female and six transgender. The voting will start at 8:00am and end at 4:00pm.

We may see three-peat

FROM PAGE 5

BNP Media Cell arranged the programme, marking the first anniversary of its formation.

Fakhrul said the political parties that believe in democratic politics, and independence of the country and that want to make Bangladesh a truly democratic state have launched a simultaneous movement to restore democracy.

"We want to bring back democracy and establish people's rights in the country to materialise the dreams of independence. It's not our prime goal to take the BNP to power," he observed.

The BNP leader said lack of democracy is the main crisis now in Bangladesh

as the government has destroyed all the democratic institutions by establishing a one-party rule.

He said BNP Media Cell can play an important role in restoring people's lost rights since the mainstream media cannot work independently. "It's also a big challenge that the media in the country has been controlled by various tactics."

The BNP leader said the government has shut down different newspapers and TV stations since it came to power to regulate the media.

He also accused the government of repressing and harassing journalists by enacting black laws, including the Digital Security Act.

A sign of neglect

FROM PAGE 3

Foundation, established for the development and welfare of the Muslim community, runs on annual budget allocations, the Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian religious welfare trusts operate solely on interests earned from deposits.

He said, "Bangladesh Sanskrit and Pali Education Board is the only recognised institution for institutional religious education for the Hindu and Buddhist communities. However, the institutions under this board are rapidly dwindling, resulting in continued deprivation of religious education for the Hindu and Buddhist communities."

"As a consequence, the second largest religious minority in the country, the Hindu community, is becoming almost completely devoid of religious consciousness and moral education."

The parishad also placed six demands at the event. They are: allocation of annual funding from the

national budget for the development and welfare of religious minority communities; enactment of a minority protection law for the preservation and development of the interests of religious and ethnic minority communities with the establishment of a minority ministry and a national minority commission; ensuring an accurate representation of religious and ethnic minority communities in the census; establishment of model temples, pagodas, churches, and cultural centers at every district and upazila level; allocation of Tk 5,000 crore for the development and welfare of minorities as compensation for the religious discrimination in the budget over the last five decades; and national pay-scale inclusion for teachers and employees working under the Bangladesh Sanskrit and Pali Education Board.

The press conference was chaired by Nim Chandra Bhowmik, one of the chairmen of the organisation.

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High price irks buyers

FROM PAGE 3

said Akkas Bepari, who brings bulls from Rajshahi and Kushtia.

However, Shafiqul Islam Saju, a goat trader who brought nine goats to the Gabtali cattle market, said the price of goats did not increase like cow and buffalo.

"We are demanding Tk 16,000 for a goat which is 16kg... the price is quite reasonable," he said.

AUTHORITIES' TAKE
Fish and Livestock Minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Ctg

Set Tk 25,000 as minimum wage

FROM PAGE 3

president of Bangladesh Garment Workers Solidarity, who chaired the rally, said, "Minimum wage was fixed at Tk 8,000 in 2018 disregarding the then living cost... The workers are going through a silent famine due to the rising cost of essentials, which exceeded all previous records. The wage structures must be revised..."

Mosrefa Mishu, president of Garment Sramik Oikya Federation, said, "Workers lead a miserable life while the country's garment sector

tops the export list in the world. The initiative to raise the wage will benefit all in the sector."

They also urged the government to repel the Essential Service Act which prevent workers from holding any work stoppage.

Sadekur Rahman Shamim, general secretary of Garment Trade Union Kendra; FM Abu Sayed, general secretary of Bangladesh Textile Garments Sramik Federation; and Prokash Datta, general secretary of OSK Garment and Textile Sramik Federation, spoke at the rally, among others.

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Ctg

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Students of DU

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On February 17, 2017, the government affiliated Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Begum Badrunnesa Government Mohila College, Mirpur Government Bangla College and Government Titumir College with Dhaka University.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Ctg

Vehicle movement on the road was halted during that time. However, only school and college vehicles were allowed to go through.

According to the protesting students, they appeared for exams several months ago but the results have not been published yet.

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Ctg

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Gurudayal Govt. College
Kishoreganj
website: www.gdc.gov.bd

Memo No. CEDP/GDC/Goods/G3/2022-23/137(4) Date: 20/06/2023

e-Tender Notice 02/2022-2023

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last Date and Time of Tender Security Submission	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	847404	Supply and Installation of Campus Network for Gurudayal Government College, Kishoreganj	5/7/2023, 1.00 pm	5/7/2023, 2.00 pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks' Branches up to 4 July 2023, 4.00 pm.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP Help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Professor A N M Mustakur Rahman)
Principal
Gurudayal Govt. College, Kishoreganj
Phone: 02997761680/02997761567
E-mail: gdgckishoreganj@gmail.com

GD-1029

LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
STATUARY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 195 OF 2023
Md. Jakir Hossain SarkarPetitioner
-VERSUS-
National Tea Company Limited and othersRespondents

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that an application under section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994 has been filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of Supreme Court of Bangladesh for passing an order setting aside the resolutions passed in the 655th Board Meeting of the company dated 16.04.2023 and the special resolution passed in the Extra Ordinary General Meeting dated 20.10.2022 so far as it relates to the agenda No. 2 namely "কোম্পানির পরিশোধিত মূলধন বৃদ্ধির অনুমোদন" and to call, hold and conduct an Extra Ordinary General meeting of the company with the agenda namely "কোম্পানির পরিশোধিত মূলধন বৃদ্ধির অনুমোদন" whilst ensuring proportionate issuance of shares among its shareholders in accordance with the Section 155 of the Companies Act, 1994 under the Chairmanship of an independent chairman appointed by the Hon'ble Court within a time period set by the Hon'ble Court. Upon preliminary hearing, Hon'ble Mr. Justice Khizir Ahmed Choudhury vide an order dated 29.05.2023 was pleased to admit the said application. Any person interested to the application, may appear before the Court wither in person or through an Advocate and Contest the matter.

Any person or persons having interest in the said application may appear either personally or through duly authorized Advocate on or before the date fixed for hearing.

Copy of the said application may be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of required costs.

Yours faithfully
(Kazi Ershadul Alam), Barrister-at-Law,
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Tanjib Alam & Associates,
BSEC Bhaban (Level 11),
102 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue,
Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
District Primary Education Office
Jhenaidah
<http://dpe.jhenaidah.gov.bd>

Memo No. 38.01.4400.000.99.010.2022-331 Dated: 20.06.2023

Invitation for e-Tender Notice No. 03/2023
Open Tendering Method (OTM)

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.
2	Implementing agency	District Primary Education Office, Jhenaidah.
3	Project/program name	Need Based Infrastructure Development of Govt. Primary Schools Project (1st Phase)
4	Package No.	01) NBIDGSPS-1/G1.0275 02) NBIDGSPS-1/G1.0276 03) NBIDGSPS-1/G1.0277
5	e-Tender IDs	834478, 834480, 834483
6	Description of works	Supply of different types of Furniture for different Govt. Primary School of Kalligonj, Kolchandpur, Jhenaidah Sadar, Moleshpur, Shaikupa & Harinakundu Upazila under Jhenaidah district.
7	Tender publication date and time: 21-06-2023, 10.00	Tender closing date and time: 06-07-2023, 14.00

This is online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested person/firms can see details in the website: www.eprocure.gov.bd

Ananda Kishore Saha
District Primary Education Officer
Jhenaidah
E-mail: dpeojhina@gmail.com
☎ 02477747299

GD-1026

North-West Power Generation Company Ltd.
ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 & ISO 45001:2018 Certified
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Office of the Chief Engineer
Sirajganj Power Station, NWPGL
Soydabad, Sirajganj

Ref: 27.28.8878.001.18.002.21.329 Date: 20/06/2023

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

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	842734	Construction of floor to increase the Storing Space inside warehouse and other works.	19/06/2023	09-Jul-2023 15:30 PM	10-Jul-2023 10:00 AM

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. Shafiqul Islam
Chief Engineer
Sirajganj Power Station
NWPGL, Soydabad, Sirajganj
Contact No.: +8801755630007

GD-1027

POLLS TO SCC, RCC

EVM remains a concern as Rajshahi goes to polls today

ANWAR ALI and MD ABBAS, from Rajshahi

As Rajshahi is set for the polls today, many voters have expressed concern about casting votes using electronic voting machines due to lack of training.

"No one taught me about EVM, I didn't even hear that EVM will be used in this election," said Md Shahabuddin, a voter of ward no. 18 of Assam Colony.

Senior citizen Md Nurul Islam from ward-3 shared similar concerns. "I peddle rickshaw all day, that's why I could not learn about EVM. None came to my vicinity to teach me the process of using EVM," he added.

These correspondents have talked to 20 individuals, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, who have echoed the same frustrations.

While many have easily learned how to use EVM, there are still individuals who harbour apprehensions about technology, said Prof Zubaida Ayesha Siddika, the principal of Rajshahi Govt Women's College.

"It's undoubtedly an easy technology," she said. However, she pointed out that those voters who are not familiar with smartphones, might encounter difficulties with the EVM as well.

Jatiya Party mayoral candidate Saiful Islam Swapan has been vocal about his opposition to the use of EVM in the RCC elections from the very beginning. He expressed concern over the reluctance of his voters to cast their votes using EVM.

Swapan cited previous experience in the Barishal and Khulna city elections, where EVM allegedly caused significant problems. He warned that similar issues might arise in the RCC polls as well. "The EC promised to conduct extensive campaigns about the use of EVM before the election, but their campaigns were inadequate," he said.

Contacted, Delwar Hossain, the returning officer of the RCC polls, stated that they have taken adequate measures to address any potential issues with the EVM.

"We have provided one and a half times more EVM machines at each polling centres than required to account for any possible malfunctions," he said.

Hossain acknowledged that certain groups of voters, such as day labourers or the elderly may face challenges with fingerprint recognition while using the EVM. In order to mitigate this issue, the Election Commission has made additional arrangements, including providing soap, handwash, lemon, and turpentine oil at each polling centre.

Furthermore, Hossain assured that the assigned election officials would provide assistance and guidance

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



Moiarchar Government Primary School, a polling centre for ward-39, went underwater following continuous downpour yesterday. To ensure a stable path for voters today, a man was seen filling sand and laying bricks in front of the school.

PHOTO: STAR

Rain dampens polls festivity in Sylhet

Downpour, fear of flood may result in low voter turnout

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

With no formidable opponents in sight, rain has emerged as the major hurdle for Sylhet Awami League, which may result in a low voter turnout at the city corporation polls scheduled for today.

There's a forecast of mid to heavy rainfall in Sylhet region today, according to the Met office.

With rain persisting since June 15 and the Surma flowing just below danger level, concerns are mounting over a potential interim flood situation in low-lying areas of the city.

As the rain persists, the playground of Moiarchar Government Primary School, designated as a polling centre for ward-39, has already gone underwater.

Similarly, Nasiba Khatun High School in Bhartakhala area found itself submerged for a few hours following a heavy rainfall on Monday.

The prospect of heavy rain and potential flooding may deter residents from venturing out of their homes, contributing to a potential decline in voter turnout.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Will ensure violence-free city polls

Says EC Ahsan Habib

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Ahsan Habib Khan yesterday said the Election Commission has instructed the authorities concerned to ensure that no polls and post polls violence can take place centring Rajshahi and Sylhet city elections.

He also said all candidates are equal to the commission.

"The administration, police, law enforcement agencies and polling officials have been given 100 percent assurance to maintain a peaceful

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Election not on advice of external power: Quader

BSS, Dhaka



Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday reiterated that the next general elections would be held in line with the provisions of the country's constitution, not on the advice of any external power.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, was speaking at a discussion at ISKCON Swamibag Ashram on the occasion of Sri Sri Jagannathdev's Rath Yatra festival.

The AL general secretary said their party is not going to the elections considering anyone's visa policy or sanctions as it always gives priority to the country's constitution and its people.

Terming India a time-tested friend, he said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is going to the United States and it has no relations with the politics of Bangladesh.

"There are many issues in today's world like war, inflation and energy crisis. We have not discussed

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

We may see three-peat of rigged elections: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that the country's people will not be able to cast their votes in the next national election, same as the last two, if it is held under the current government.

"The government is planning to hold the election in that way again. Our people want to elect their representatives with their votes. But it'll never be possible if the present Awami League regime remains in power," he said.

Speaking at a programme at a city hotel, the BNP leader also said their party has long been demanding the national elections under a neutral and non-partisan government to enable people to elect their representatives freely by exercising their franchise.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



People of all ages, mostly school-going children, are forced to use this makeshift bamboo bridge to cross the Burir Dhan canal as the government-constructed concrete bridge remains unrepaired for over a year. The photo was taken in Bhola's Lalmohan upazila.

PHOTO: MONIR UDDIN ANIK

'Life through Rohingya eyes'

Photo exhibition launched at Liberation War Museum



PHOTO: COLLECTED

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A photo exhibition titled "Life Through Rohingya Eyes" was inaugurated at the Liberation War Museum in the capital yesterday, marking World Refugee Day.

The exhibition, jointly organised by UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Liberation War Museum under Rohingya photographer Collective, a refugee-led project supported by the

agency. It features works of 19 Rohingya photographers, read a press release.

Most of the photos on display offers an intimate peek into the lives of Rohingyas living the world's largest camp for them in Cox's Bazar.

Curated by Sahat Zia Hero, the founder of the collective, its mentor David Palazón and Amena Khatun of the Liberation War Museum, the photos on display at the exhibition portrays the spirit of the deserted

community and highlights their challenges, social position and the overall environments of the camps.

Johannes van der Klaauw, the UNHCR representative in Bangladesh; Sara Zaker, trustee of the museum, and two of the featured photographers spoke at the event, which was attended by diplomats and dignitaries.

The open-for-all exhibition will end on July 10.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার					
প্রধান প্রকৌশলী (পূর্ব) এর কার্যালয় বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম-৪০০০					
ই-জিপি টেন্ডার নোটিশ					
ফোনঃ ৮৮০৩২৮৬৩১৬২, ই-মেইলঃ cee@railway.gov.bd					
নং-৫৪.০১.১৫০০.১০৯.০৭.০৮৭.২২					
তারিখঃ ১৮.০৬.২০২৩খ্রিঃ					
প্রধান প্রকৌশলী (পূর্ব), বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম কর্তৃক National Electronic Government Procurement Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) এ নিম্নে বর্ণিত কাজসমূহের দরপত্র আহবান করা হয়েছেঃ					
ক্রম নং	টেন্ডার রেফারেন্স নং	আইডি নং	করের ধরণ ও কাজ/সরবরাহ কাজের নাম	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও শেষ সময়
১.	CE/E/Rev/TS/69/e-Tender/2022-23	846115	Works: At SSAE/WAY/JLX Section: Through renewal of railway track by 75A rail (S/H) and steel sleeper (S/H) including supplying & spreading of Ballast at km. 403/8-412/4=8.6 Km. in between Jamalpur-Kendua Bazar section with other related works.	OTM, NCT	10-Jul-2023 at 12:10Hrs.
২.	CE/E/Rev/TS/70/e-Tender/2022-23	846123	Works: At SSAE/WAY/JLX Section: Thorough renewal of railway track by 75A rail (S/H) and steel sleeper (S/H) including supplying & spreading of Ballast at km. 412/4 to 425/5 =13.1 Km. in between Kendua Bazar-Sarishabari section with other related works.	OTM, NCT	17-Jul-2023 at 12:00Hrs.
৩.	CE/E/Rev/TS/71/e-Tender/2022-23	844982	Goods: Manufacturing & Supplying of 1 in 12 MG point & crossing and Trap point of 75 lbs A Rail with supply of all necessary accessories for regular maintenance of Railway Track under Eastern zone of Bangladesh Railway.	OTM, NCT	10-Jul-2023 at 12:30Hrs.
৪.	CE/E/Rev/TS/72/e-Tender/2022-23	846127	Works: At SSAE/WAY/KYTO Section: Thorough renewal of Points & Crossing by oil treated wooden sleeper including manufacturing & Supplying of MG point & crossing with all necessary accessories (except Rail) at Mymensingh yard with other related works.	OTM, NCT	10-Jul-2023 at 12:00Hrs.
৫.	CE/E/Rev/TS/73/e-Tender/2022-23	784659	Works: Making anchoring system of elastic rail clip with insert of existing concrete sleeper under DEN-1/CTG Jurisdiction with other related works.	OTM, NCT	10-Jul-2023 at 12:25Hrs.
৬.	CE/E/Rev/TS/74/e-Tender/2022-23	783457	Works: Making anchoring system of elastic rail clip with insert of existing concrete sleeper under DEN-2/DA Jurisdiction with other related works.	OTM, NCT	10-Jul-2023 at 12:15Hrs.
৭.	CE/E/Rev/TS/75/e-Tender/2022-23	844963	Works: At SSAE/Way/SLHR Section: Spot/Casual renewal of Bridge sleeper over of Bridge No: CN/4 (Up & Dn), CN/9 (Up & Dn), CN/11 (Up & Dn), CN/22, CN/29, CN/30, CN/31, CN/34, CN/35, CN/37, CN/40, CN/47, CN/48, CN/49, U/2, U/4, U/6, CN/53, CN/56, CN/57, CN/60, CN/65, CN/66, CN/68, CN/70, CN/72, CN/73, CN/74, CN/76, CN/78, CN/80, CN/83, CN/84, CN/87, CN/90, CN/91, CN/92, CN/94, CN/96, CN/100, CN/101, CN/102, CN/104, CN/105, CN/107, CN/110 in between Chattogram-Najirhat section with other allied works.	OTM, NCT	10-Jul-2023 at 12:20Hrs.

বিঃদ্রঃ
১. শুধুমাত্র ই-জিপি সিস্টেমে নির্ধারিত eligibility শর্তাবলী পূরণকারী দরদাতাগণ সরাসরি অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন।
২. দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য দরপত্র দলিল ক্রয় ও দরপত্র জামানত বাবদ প্রাপ্য অর্থ নির্ধারিত ব্যাংকে জমা প্রদান করতে হবে।

মোঃ আরিফুল ইসলাম
ট্র্যাক সাপ্লাই অফিসার (পূর্ব)
পক্ষে-প্রধান প্রকৌশলী (পূর্ব)
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, চট্টগ্রাম

এস(২৩) (১৯৭)
জিডি-১০৩০

I miss the life I left behind

MOSHARRAF KARIM

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Mosharraf Karim is one of the most talked about actors of the present time. His success in television dramas is enviable. In recent times, he received a lot of praise in Bangladesh and Kolkata for his performance in the second season of the web series, *Mohanagar*. Usually, the audience is eagerly waiting for the release of his new dramas and web projects.

The actor recently spoke with The Daily Star at a shooting-house in Pubail, Gazipur.

Which Eid drama are you shooting in Pubail?

I am shooting for a drama called *Arai Talaq*, which is being directed by Sakal Ahmed. *Arai Talaq* is a rural-based drama. The story follows the lives of the people of the village. In the project, everything comes to a sudden standstill, including the life of me and my wife. It's a very entertaining story. This is one of the few dramas I have done for Eid.

Could you tell us about your character in the drama?

Here, I play the role of a member of the village. I have enjoyed playing the character. As an artiste, I always try to blend in with my roles. This also happened with this character. I hope the audience will enjoy my role in *Arai Talaq*.

Many people argue that audiences do not watch dramas as much nowadays. What do you think about that?

Those of us who act, do it for the audience. The audience is the lifeblood of such shows. I love acting because of them. Personally, I think the audience enjoys watching dramas. They love this culture. There is still an audience for dramas and usually these types of projects are well received.

How much do you enjoy acting?

I enjoy 100 percent of it and I love it as well. The only reason I can act, is because I enjoy it. Otherwise, it would not have been possible to spend so many years of my life acting.

You received a lot of appreciation for your role in 'Mohanagar' season 2. What are your thoughts?

Season 2 of *Mohanagar* has been well received by the audience. A lot of discussions are taking place about the show, in a variety of platforms, which has inspired me as an artiste. I am happy that they enjoyed my performance. All of us involved in *Mohanagar* have given our best to making the series a success. Our director, Ashfaq Nipun, has done everything with the utmost care and with a lot of hard work.

As a child, you spent a few years in Barishal, after which you came to Dhaka and worked in theatre. Do you ever miss the life you left behind?

I do miss the life I left behind and I think about it quite often. There is a river near my old house in Barishal. As a child, I would bathe in that river, swim in it and spend many hours in the water. I miss all of that. After coming to Dhaka, I spent many years in theatre. I miss those days as well.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Mahiya Mahi-Symon Sadik's 'Live' coming to OTT this Eid



On the occasion of Eid ul-Azha, psycho-thriller film, *Live* featuring Symon Sadik and Mahiya Mahi in the lead, will be premiering on the OTT platform, Bongo. The film was released in theatres on September 9.

Live revolves around a shocking murder that takes place within the family of Milon (Symon) and Joya (Mahi). The film delves into the investigation, unraveling the identity of the killer and their motive, while delivering an array of thrilling twists and turns to keep audiences on the edge of their seats.

Produced by Shapla Media and directed by Shamim Ahamed Roni, the film also boasts a talented ensemble cast including Shiba Shanu, Amin Sarker, and Saberi Alam, in pivotal roles.

Juboraj Shamim's 'Adim' to screen in Kurigram

Initially released in only four theaters on May 26, *Adim* garnered unexpected success, selling tickets worth BDT 1 lac and prompting a demand for wider screenings.

However, due to commercial reasons, mainstream cineplexes were unable to continue showing the film. Undeterred, young filmmaker Juboraj Shamim decided to take an alternative path to ensure that audiences from different districts could experience the movie.

The cinematographer of *Adim* Amir Hamza, was determined to overcome this obstacle. He collaborated with local supporters to organise screenings of the film, in Kurigram. This initiative aims to bring the film closer to audiences who have been eagerly anticipating its release.



NEWS

Doctor blames hospital for deaths

FROM PAGE 12
her regular patient.

"Akhi visited me twice in March but did not continue the follow-up with me, and I had no knowledge of her admission to the hospital on that day."

Speaking to this newspaper, Shakhawat Hossain Shamim, a cousin of Akhi, however, disputed Sangjukta's claims.

"Akhi visited her [Sangjukta] at Central Hospital at least four times. Sangjukta recommended multiple diagnoses on at least two occasions, each costing Tk 10,000-11,000 for those diagnoses alone."

Akhi's husband, Yakub, earlier claimed that he contacted Sangjukta's assistant, Zamir, in the evening on June 9 before starting for Central Hospital. "Zamir confirmed that Sangjukta would be available to assist with Akhi's delivery."

According to a copy of the "Shifting Note" to the intensive care unit issued at 2:30am on June 10, obtained by this newspaper, Akhi was admitted to the hospital under Prof Sangjukta Saha.

About this, Sangjukta claimed that Zamir was not her assistant. "And those physicians who performed the

delivery and C-section do not belong to my team either."

This newspaper, however, could not reach Zamir for his comment in this regard.

Sangjukta Saha used to campaign on social media by posting promotional videos featuring herself holding newborns.

Replying to whether this was ethically right and breached the privacy of the patients, she said, "I think this is ethically okay...I posted the videos upon consent from my patients."

In a video posted on her Facebook page on June 2, Sangjukta claimed to have made 12 normal deliveries out of 15 cases admitted to Central Hospital in the span of 24 hours.

When asked how she could handle so many patients with equal concentration, she said, "I have a dedicated team to assist me."

Authorities at Central Hospital, meanwhile, did not give an explanation for the allegation raised by Sangjukta.

"Our investigation team is working. They will submit their probe report by today or tomorrow [Tuesday or

Wednesday]. We will let you know our explanation once we get the report," MA Quasem, vice-chairman of the hospital's board of directors told The Daily Star yesterday.

"The hospital authorities will hold a press conference at 10:00am today to address the issue," MA Quasem added.

Meanwhile, the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh (OGSB) yesterday demanded the release of two physicians who were sent to jail on Thursday over their alleged "mistake" during the C-section.

The doctors are Shahzadi Mustarshida Sultana and Muna Shaha. They are among the six physicians and supporting staffers sued in the case filed by Yakub.

The OGSB has also expressed condolences and sympathy for the deaths of Akhi and her baby.

"Simultaneously, the OGSB condemned the arrest of Shahzadi and Muna based on allegations before they were proven guilty," read a press release signed by Prof Farhana Dewan, president and Prof Salma Rouf, secretary general of the OGSB.

Suspect Babu 'threatened journo' four months ago

FROM PAGE 12
is Babu chairman," said journalist Imdadul Haque Lalon, also Nadim's cousin.

"This audio clip proves that Babu chairman targeted Nadim ...," Lalon said.

Nadim was the Jamalpur district correspondent of banglanews24.com and the Bakshiganj upazila correspondent of Ekattor TV.

He died on June 15, a day after he was attacked.

Babu, who is now on a five-day remand, masterminded the murder because of a personal vendetta against him over news reports, Rab has said.

The case has been transferred to the Detective Branch of police yesterday and it has already started investigation.

Meanwhile, National Human Rights Commission Chairman Kamal Uddin Ahmed yesterday visited Nadim's home at Gomerchar of Bakshiganj and expressed his condolence to the bereaved family.

Titanic tourist sub still missing

FROM PAGE 12
Paul-Henri Nargeolet and Stockton Rush, founder and CEO of the vessel's US-based operating company OceanGate, were also reported to be on board. Authorities have not confirmed the identity of any passenger.

"We are very grateful for the concern being shown by our colleagues and

friends and would like to request everyone to pray for their safety," Dawood's family said yesterday.

US and Canadian ships and planes have been sweeping the area about 900 miles (1,450 km) east of Cape Cod, some dropping sonar buoys that can monitor to a depth of 13,000 feet (3,962 meters).

Gono Odhikar Parishad

FROM PAGE 12
A council will be held by July and the names of members of the new central committee will be given to the Election Commission.

"We are the founders and we made him a convener. The Election Commission does not give registration of a party to an individual," he added.

The leaders of Gono Odhikar Parishad held a meeting at Reza's home in Dhaka on Sunday, but could not resolve the problem between the two leaders.

Reza also alleges that if Nur joins the election, he will be a lawmaker and make money.

"His lust for money is immense. When we ask him about the financial

transactions -- from where the money comes from and where it is spent -- he becomes angry," Reza said.

Several party insiders believe that Reza's lack of active participation and the ego of the two leaders are the main reasons why the party is splitting up.

No decision has been made about removing Reza from the party, said Rashed, after taking the responsibility of acting convener. Rashed is very close to Nur.

"Since he is abroad, I was given the responsibility," he said.

The Gono Odhikar Parishad was launched on October 26, 2021, with Reza as convener and Nur as member secretary.

Eid gift for 1.25cr ultra-poor families

FROM PAGE 1

In May, inflation hit an 11-year-high of 9.94 percent, taking the average inflation so far this fiscal year to 8.95 percent, way above the target of 7.5 percent.

"People are suffering due to inflation -- it is everyone's responsibility to fight against inflation," said Planning Minister MA Mannan quoting the prime minister as saying.

Subsequently, she instructed the respective ministries to find ways to give people respite from the soaring price level.

After Hasina raised her concern, Rahman informed the meeting about his ministry's plan for the poor ahead of Eid.

The rice, which is already being shipped to the districts, will be distributed through the deputy commissioner's office before Eid, said a top official of the ministry of disaster management.

Meanwhile, at the meeting, 16 projects worth Tk 24,362 crore were approved.

Of these, nine are revised projects where the cost escalated by 52.82 percent to Tk 19,835 crore. The original cost was Tk 12,989 crore. Many of the projects were revised two to five times.

Three projects were taken for the rural development of Chattogram and Rajshahi divisions and three districts including Noakhali, Feni and Laxmipur. The estimated cost of the projects is Tk 8,160 crore.

While approving the projects, Hasina quizzed why the projects are not implemented with foreign funds as many of the development partners are interested in such projects.

Had the projects been implemented through foreign funds, it would quell the inflationary pressure and shore up strained foreign currency reserves.

"I am approving this. But the concerned ministries will have to find foreign funding to implement these," said a top official quoting Hasina as saying.

In response, an official of the Economic Relations Division, the government wing that negotiates

foreign loans, told the prime minister that such projects never come to their desk.

They would have sought funds from the development partners if they got it beforehand.

From now onwards, such project proposals would be forwarded to the ERD to solicit foreign funding, said a planning ministry official.

"Huge volumes of foreign loans remained unutilised in the pipeline. If these can be used, it will reduce the pressure on local currency and increase foreign currency reserves," Mannan told reporters after the meeting.

At the meeting, the prime minister instructed the finance and ERD secretaries to take measures to utilise more foreign loans.

More than \$50 billion of foreign loans is remaining unused in the pipeline, said Shamsul Alam, the state minister for planning.

The interest rate for foreign loans is only about 3 percent whereas the interest rate for domestic borrowing is 7 percent.

Using foreign loans will reduce expenditure and increase efficiency in the education, health and energy sectors, he added.

One of the three projects that got approval at the Ecneec meeting is taken to improve connectivity such that farmers can get a fair price for their produce in Chattogram.

Under the project worth Tk 3,110 crore, about 1,149km of roads will be improved in 67 upazilas of the Chattogram division.

Another project involves extending 783 km of upazila roads and 44 km of union roads in Rajshahi division's 65 upazilas for Tk 2,400 crore.

A similar project will be taken for Noakhali, Feni and Laxmipur involving Tk 2,650 crore.

Asked why these projects are being taken up now when there is little fiscal space, Mannan said: "Rural connectivity is very important for the country as it is the lifeline of the rural economy. These are not luxurious projects. We are not constructing four lanes or six lanes now."

Mother drowns

FROM PAGE 12

Board. At another point, where the danger level is 14.8 metres, water is flowing at 13.17 metres.

The water level has been rising in the last two days and is likely to increase over the next two to three days to the danger level, said Ronojit Kumar Sarkar, subdivisional engineer of Sirajganj WDB.

The low-lying areas down the river have been submerged, with no one affected yet, he said.

Our Moulvibazar and Pabna Correspondent contributed to the report

Chhoto Monir

FROM PAGE 12

confidence" claim to the court, saying that the names of the masterminds were dropped from the chargesheet.

Later, the Detective Branch (DB) of police submitted a similar probe report to the court. The Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) is now investigating the case.

Asked about the matter, Muhammad Siraj Amin, superintendent of police (SP) of PBI in Tangail, said, "The investigation remains in primary stages."

Contacted, Monir said he had no idea who Sumon was, and he had never seen him before.

"It might be a conspiracy to tarnish my image," he claimed.

Charges against

FROM PAGE 12

Tipu was the former general secretary of Motijheel AL.

Dhaka City (south) AL Organising Secretary Golam Ashraf Talukder; its member Maruf Ahmed Mansoor, also the ward-10 councillor of Dhaka South City Corporation; former general secretary of Motijheel thana Chhatra League Khairul Islam; and Motijheel thana Jatiya Party leader Juber Alam Khan Robin are among the 33 charge-sheeted accused.

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

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

Russia attacks Kyiv, other Ukrainian cities

One rescue worker killed, 8 hurt in Kherson

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia attacked military and infrastructure targets across Ukraine early yesterday, including in the capital Kyiv and the western city of Lviv, Ukrainian officials said.

Ukraine said it had shot down 32 of 35 Iranian-made Shahed drones launched from Russia's Bryansk region and Azov Sea.

But a "critically important facility" was struck in Lviv, far from the front lines and around 70 km (43 miles) from the border with Nato member Poland, regional governor Maksym Kozitskiy said. He gave no other details of the facility.

At least one emergency worker was killed and eight others were wounded in Russian shelling in the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson yesterday, the head of the president's office said.

The air force said on Telegram messaging app air defences had been in action in most regions of Ukraine.

"However, the main direction of attack

by Iranian drones was the Kyiv region. More than two dozen Shaheds were destroyed here," it said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky's office said drones attacked the Kyiv region in several waves, with the air alert lasting for over four hours. Several commercial and administrative buildings and some private houses were damaged, it said.

The Energy Ministry said debris from falling drones damaged electricity lines in the Kyiv region and also in the Mykolaiv region in the south, cutting off electricity for hundreds of residents.

Air force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat said in a radio interview that it was simply not possible for air defence systems to

cover all of a country as large as Ukraine. The air force said Russia had also hit the southeastern industrial city of Zaporizhzhia with Iskander and S-300 missiles.

Meanwhile, the European Union was set to unveil yesterday an aid package for Ukraine worth 50 billion euros, officials said ahead of an announcement.



Palestinian refugees gather with national flags outside the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza City yesterday, to protest cuts in aid. The head of UNRWA warned that a funding squeeze could jeopardise access to basic services for millions. PHOTO: AFP

Modi heads to US to deepen ties

Says no doubting India's position on Ukraine

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi left for the US yesterday on a state visit that has been projected as a milestone in ties between the two countries that would deepen and diversify their partnership.

Modi has been to the US five times since becoming prime minister in 2014 but the June 21-24 trip will be his first with the full diplomatic status of an official state visit.

The visit is expected to see the two countries expand cooperation in defence industry and high technology sectors, with India getting access to critical technologies that Washington rarely shares with non-allies.

"This special invitation is a reflection of the vigour and vitality of the partnership between our democracies," Modi said in a statement ahead of his departure.

Modi's visit comes amid differences in positions of Washington and New Delhi over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Asked in an interview with the Wall Street Journal about critical comments in the US for not taking a more forceful stance against Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Modi said: "I don't think this type of perception is widespread in the US."

"I think India's position is well known and well understood in the entire world. The world has full confidence that India's top-most priority is peace," he said in the interview published yesterday.

Himalayan glacier melt accelerates

Scientists warn as climate change bites; glaciers in the region feed 10 of the world's most important river systems, including the Ganges, Indus and Yellow

AFP, Kathmandu

Himalayan glaciers providing critical water to nearly two billion people are melting faster than ever before due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters, scientists warned yesterday.

The glaciers disappeared 65 percent faster from 2011 to 2020 compared with the previous decade, according to a report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

"As it gets warmer, ice will melt, that was expected, but what is unexpected and very worrying is the speed," lead author Philippus Wester told AFP. "This is going much faster than we thought."

Glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region are a crucial water source for around 240 million people in the mountainous regions, as well as for another 1.65 billion people in the river valleys below, the report said.

Based on current emissions trajectories, the glaciers could lose up to 80 percent of their current volume by the end of the century, said the Nepal-based ICIMOD, an inter-governmental organisation that also includes member countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar and Pakistan.

The glaciers feed 10 of the world's most important river systems, including the Ganges, Indus, Yellow, Mekong and Irrawaddy, and directly or indirectly supply billions of people with food, energy, clean air and income.

"With two billion people in Asia reliant

on the water that glaciers and snow here hold, the consequences of losing this cryosphere (a frozen zone) are too vast to contemplate," said ICIMOD's deputy chief Izabella Kozielec.

Even if global warming is limited to the 1.5 to 2.0 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels agreed to in the Paris climate treaty, the glaciers are expected to lose a third to a half of their volume by 2100, the peer-reviewed report said.

"It underscores the need for urgent climate action," Wester said. "Every small increment will have huge impacts and we really, really need to work on climate mitigation... that is our plea."

Wester said improving technologies and previously classified high-resolution satellite imagery meant predictions could be made with a good degree of accuracy.

The world has warmed an average of nearly 1.2 C since the mid-1800s, unleashing a cascade of extreme weather, including more intense heatwaves, more severe droughts and storms made more ferocious by rising seas.

Hardest hit are the most vulnerable people and the world's poorest countries, which have done little to contribute to the fossil fuel emissions that drive up temperatures

Amina Maharjan, a livelihoods and migration specialist at ICIMOD, said communities do not have the support they need.

"Most of the adaptation is communities and households reacting (to climate events). It is inadequate to meet the challenges posed by climate change," Maharjan said.

"What is going to be very critical moving forward is anticipating change," she said.

Unique species are also threatened by adverse changes to the climate of the diverse ecosystems that include tropical and subtropical rainforests, temperate coniferous forest and cold deserts, the report said.

Fourteen species of butterflies have already become extinct from the Murree Hills of Pakistan, according to the report, while endemic frog species are among the most impacted by climate change as they experience breeding problems and developmental deformities.

Melting glaciers also pose a danger to downstream communities. Runoff pools in shallow lakes, held back by rocks and debris. The risk comes when a lake overfills, bursting through its natural barrier and sending a torrent of water rushing down mountain valleys.



A man walks on the rubble of a damaged house following reported Russian air raids on the outskirts of Syria's rebel-held northwestern city of Idlib yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

500,000 fled Sudan fighting

Says UN refugee chief

AGENCIES

The head of the UN's refugee agency Filippo Grandi said yesterday that the number of people who have fled the fighting in Sudan was now more than 500,000 while two million are internally displaced.

"Today we pass the mark of half a million refugees from Sudan following the beginning of the conflict," he said at a press conference in Nairobi. "Two million people are displaced inside the country."

Sudan has been riven by conflict since April 15, with the army led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan battling the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

"If we don't silence those guns, the exodus of Sudanese people will continue," said Grandi.

He was speaking on World Refugee Day, a day after donors at a UN conference pledged close to \$1.5 billion to combat the humanitarian crisis in Sudan and help its neighbours host those fleeing the fighting.

NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Pakistan, China sign \$4.8b deal

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan and China yesterday signed a \$4.8 billion deal to build a 1,200-MW nuclear power plant, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said, hailing the investment by a country that Pakistan views as its most dependable ally.

Work on Chashma 5 project would begin immediately, Sharif said on PTV following the signing of MOU between China National Nuclear Cooperation and Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission.

"Investment from China in this project to the tune of \$4.8 billion sends a message loud and clear that Pakistan is a place where Chinese companies and investors continue to show their trust and faith," Sharif said.

FOMENTING AMINI PROTESTS

Iran accuses 20 countries

AFP, Tehran

An Iranian intelligence officer has claimed that the United States and France are among some 20 countries involved in nationwide protests last year sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini. The demonstrations erupted following the September 16 death in custody of Kurdish-Iranian Amini, 22, after her arrest for allegedly violating Iran's dress code for women. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands were arrested in connection with what officials labelled "riots" which they said were fomented by foreign countries after Amini's death. "Investigations carried out by the intelligence services of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) indicate that around 20 countries were involved in the riots," said the head of the services.

Bangladesh set to seek BRICS membership

FROM PAGE 1

BRICS leaders are thinking of taking some emerging economies -- around eight new countries including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, and Bangladesh," he told reporters at his ministry on Monday.

Earlier in Geneva, Momen hinted that Bangladesh is likely to become a member of BRICS in August this year.

He said the issue of Bangladesh joining was raised when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on South African President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa in Geneva on June 15.

Momen recently said BRICS invited Bangladesh as a guest and would invite Bangladesh to join the platform in the future.

BRICS, the platform of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, are described as fast-growing economies that would collectively dominate the

global economy by 2050.

Meanwhile, commenting on Bangladesh's interest in joining BRICS, Mao Ning, spokesperson for the Chinese foreign ministry on Monday said, "The expansion of BRICS is a political consensus reached by all five BRICS members. China is committed to advancing the BRICS expansion and stands ready to bring more like-minded partners into the big family of BRICS."

Ningsaidasanimportant platform for cooperation among emerging markets and developing countries, BRICS is committed to upholding multilateralism, vigorously advancing the reform of the global governance system, and increasing the representation and say of emerging markets and developing countries, according to the briefing note sent by the Chinese embassy in Dhaka to the media.

Nadim's life could have been saved!

Stop normalising threats faced by journalists

We are extremely disheartened to learn that journalist Golam Rabbani Nadim, who was brutally murdered in Jamalpur recently, could have, in fact, been alive today had the authorities responded to his pleas for security. Before he was attacked, the 42-year-old was harassed by not only Mahmudul Alam Babu, the UP chairman whose supporters allegedly killed him, but also the upazila Awami League president, Shahina Begum, and her supporters. According to a report, Nadim made a complaint two months ago to Bakshiganj Police Station in Jamalpur that he was getting death threats after reporting on Shahina's "misdeeds." But police neither recorded his complaint nor did anything to ensure his safety. And so the inevitable happened.

As horrific as the tragedy is, it is harder to accept knowing that it could have been prevented. Who should we hold responsible for that? Is it the culprits and those behind them who orchestrated the attack, or is it the police that allowed it to happen? Given how crime and power intersect in our country, perhaps it is both. Both are beneficiaries of a deeply politicised administrative culture that allows abuse of power and criminal negligence to go unpunished. Journalists, whose job involves frequent interaction with those in power, are particularly vulnerable in this climate. From DSA cases to death threats to physical violence – most recently, for example, by Chhatra League leaders who beat up a journalist for sitting at a tea stall "without permission" – some form of intimidation is now an essential part of life for them, particularly district correspondents.

It is these unchecked, everyday instances of harassment and the pervasive lack of accountability that eventually lead to precious lives being lost. Nadim's murder thus serves as yet another reminder of how journalists are really faring beyond the rosy picture often drawn of their freedom by the authorities. This must change. We urge the government to take stern action against those responsible for the murder of Nadim and other slain journalists. As a nation, we must reverse the desensitised silence about the reality journalists continue to face.

Govt should check its spending spree

Increased expenditure on low-priority projects will further fuel inflation

We fail to understand the logic behind the government considering undertaking seven low-priority projects worth Tk 21,765 crore at a time of great economic challenges. The government had earlier suspended such low-priority projects at the beginning of the fiscal year in 2022 as part of its austerity measures. Evidently, the conditions and challenges that led to the suspension then haven't changed. Why then has the government decided to change its policy regarding spending on less urgent projects?

Apparently, the government's logic for taking up these projects, which concern propping up the rural economy, is that they would provide cash in hand for the rural people who are grappling with high inflation. The projects involve building roads, culverts and drainage systems, as well as expanding people's scope of employment. All this sounds good on paper. For example, one of the projects concerns extending 1,149 km of roads to improve connectivity so that farmers can get a fair price for their produce. The problem, however, is with the timing. Is now the right time for the government to spend on such projects?

As the government is planning a big budgetary deficit, which will be covered through massive borrowing, we can safely assume that this could further fuel inflation. Increased inflationary pressure would end up hurting the common people, including those living in rural areas, by lowering their purchasing power. So, that will basically bring them back to square one. Based on that logic, it seems the government's drive for said projects is grounded less on economic rationales, and more on political factors. It is possible that the government, by increasing expenditure which could make people happy in the short term, is trying to win brownie points among rural voters during an election year. But that does not mean it's a prudent decision for the economy in the long run. And as past experience shows, such projects could end up losing steam once the election is over.

Given the severity of the economic challenges that the country and its people are currently facing, the government should refrain from making such rash expenditure decisions and focus on better management of its finances/resources. Instead of increasing spending on low-priority projects, it should prioritise increasing spending on social safety net programmes which can give people who are suffering the most some relief from the ongoing inflationary pressure.

New Message

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Write to us: letters@thedailystar.net

Five concerns that the FY2024 budget fails to address



MACRO MIRROR

Dr Fahmida Khatun is executive director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

FAHMIDA KHATUN

In light of the economic hardships Bangladesh has been going through, there were certain expectations from the national budget of 2023-24 fiscal year. But the proposed budget has been disappointing in that regard, seeing as it has failed to address some major economic concerns at present.

Key macroeconomic targets detached from reality

The FY2024 budget lacks consideration of the existing economic reality and the trend of the country's economic performance in FY2023. The outgoing fiscal year has undoubtedly been challenging for the economy as there is pressure from both domestic and external sources, including the shrinking fiscal space due to low growth in domestic resource mobilisation, excessive dependence on bank borrowing to cover budget deficits including borrowing from the central bank, depreciating external sector balance and foreign exchange reserves, volatility in the dollar exchange rate, and, most importantly, high prices of essentials leading to the erosion of the people's purchasing power.

Unfortunately, these aspects were not recognised while making projections of key economic indicators that determine the performance of the economy. For example, the GDP growth target has been set at 7.5 percent in FY2024. This is much higher than the revised estimate for FY2023, which was brought down to six percent from 7.5 percent in the revised budget.

Investment is a vehicle of growth. In this case, while the public investment to GDP ratio has been kept close to that of FY2023, the expectation for private investment is set too high. In FY2024, private investment-GDP ratio is projected to reach 27.4 percent from 21.8 percent. To achieve this growth, an additional Tk 404,097 crore will be required for the increased private investment, which is a 41.8 percent increase in nominal terms. There is no change in incremental capital output ratio (ICOR) that can boost this growth. Private sector credit growth, which is

As the budget goes for the final approval, one does not know how much of these concerns will be addressed in the final version. It has been a long-standing demand that an important national document such as the annual budget should be discussed and debated before it is formulated and approved. This will help design more practical measures based on realistic assumptions.

required for private investment, has been set marginally higher (15 percent) than that of FY2023. Indeed, private investment has been hovering around 24 percent of GDP for many years. How this spectacular improvement with this ICOR and rate of private sector credit growth is possible within a year is unclear.

Projections for the external sector have also been done in the same manner, ignoring the performance of FY2023. Growth of export, imports and remittances have been set at 12 percent, 8 percent and 10 percent, respectively. However, during July-May of FY2023, export growth was 7.1 percent and remittance growth was 1.1 percent. The import data available till April 2023 reveals that import growth as of April 2023 was negative at (-) 14.4 percent. Another important component of the external sector, the forex reserves, are estimated to reach \$35.8 billion in FY2024, which was set at \$34.6 billion in the revised

budget of FY2023. As of June 7, 2023, the forex reserves were \$29.8 billion. However, the budget does not report on what the net forex reserves are or what the accumulation of external payment arrears is.

Some resource mobilisation measures need consideration

The challenge of domestic resource mobilisation has been a persistent issue in Bangladesh. Narrow tax net, high tax avoidance and large-scale illicit financial flow could not be resolved in the absence of a meaningful reform of the tax system. As per an IMF conditionality, revenue mobilisation should be enhanced by an additional 0.5 percent of GDP in FY2024. Hence Tk 500,000 crore has been projected as revenue in the proposed budget. That is, revenue mobilisation is estimated to grow by 15.5 percent in FY2024. However,



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

given the trend of revenue collection so far in the outgoing fiscal year, there could be a shortfall in collection in FY2023. Given the revenue collection trend till February 2023, the required growth will be more than 39 percent in FY2024. One hopes that this requirement can be reduced during the rest of the ongoing fiscal year. Even then, the growth has to be more than what is projected for FY2024.

On the other hand, reliance on indirect tax, which is not progressive, has been on the rise.

The new Income Tax Act, 2023 has brought significant changes in the definition of "company." The new definition includes educational institutions, NGOs, private foundations, cooperative societies, chambers and associations, societies, micro-credit institutions, government institutions, local authorities, and autonomous bodies. However, the inclusion of some organisations in this definition, including educational institutions and NGOs, is not justified and should be revised. Any additional tax on educational institutions will be passed on to the students. Besides, the NGOs are non-profit organisations. Their contribution to social development including women's empowerment and educational and health services cannot be ignored.

Abysmally low allocation for social sectors

The education budget as a share of the total budget increased slightly, from 10.67 percent in the revised budget of FY2023 to 11.57 percent in the proposed budget of FY2024. It has also increased slightly as a share of GDP – from 1.59 percent to 1.76 percent. However, this is only a meagre amount compared to the needs of the country. The Eighth Five Year Plan states that the education budget should grow from two percent of GDP in FY2019 to three percent of GDP by FY2025.

Though Bangladesh will graduate out of the Least Developed Country (LDC) status in 2026, its average education expenditure as a percentage of GDP during 2016-2022 was the fifth lowest among 41 LDCs.

The case of the health budget is no different. Here again, the allocation for health both as a share of the total budget and GDP has increased only marginally. For example, the allocation for health as a share of the total budget has increased from 4.5 percent in FY2023 to 4.99 percent in FY2024. On the other hand, as a share of GDP, it has increased from 0.67 percent in FY2023 to 0.76 percent in FY2024. The budget allocation on health per person per year increased by only Tk 70 – that is, from Tk 2,158 in FY2023 to Tk 2,228 in FY2024. Because of low public expenditure on health, people have to cover a major part of their health expenses out of their own pockets. This out-of-pocket expenditure for health was 74 percent in 2020 (latest available data). In fact, over the past two decades, this expenditure shows an increasing trend in Bangladesh, whereas out-of-pocket health expenditure shows a declining trend in neighbouring India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The need for social safety net

the inflationary pressure.

Following the demand for a few years, the annual tax-free threshold for personal income has been raised to Tk 3.5 lakh from Tk 3 lakh. For women, elderly, physically challenged, war-wounded gazetted freedom fighters, and third-gender taxpayers, the respective thresholds have been raised as well. This is a welcome move in view of the impact of high inflation on low-income families. But this is not enough. Without more support through fiscal measures, inequality cannot be reduced.

On the other hand, raising the tax-free threshold for personal income will not help many low-income individuals since it mandates the submission of tax returns as proof when accessing a number of government services, which are used by both wealthy and poor individuals. Consequently, even if someone's annual income is below Tk 3.5 lakh, they have to pay a minimum tax of Tk 2,000. This conflicting requirement undermines the very essence of a tax-free income threshold.

There are no concrete measures to reduce the prices of essentials through fiscal measures. As mentioned above, instead of reducing the pressure, some fiscal measures will create pressure on the consumers as some of the fiscal measures will be passed on to the

consumers by the producers in the form of higher prices. Allocation for direct support through social safety nets is inadequate. For example, old age allowance has been increased to Tk 600 from Tk 500, allowances for the widow, deserted and destitute women have been raised to Tk 550 from Tk 500. Sadly, at a time of high prices of commodities, allocation for food-related SSNPs has declined by 1.8 percent.

Budget preparation, implementation process should be inclusive

As the budget goes for the final approval before the end of June 2023, one does not know how much of these – and many other – concerns will be addressed in the final version. It has been a long-standing demand that an important national document such as the annual budget should be discussed and debated before it is formulated and approved. This will help design more practical measures based on realistic assumptions. However, there is a lack of interest and enthusiasm among the lawmakers for reviewing and scrutinising this important document. People's voices are supposed to be brought by the public representatives to the national parliament as people elect them to perform such duties. Alas, this has always been neglected.

In the absence of any accountability, the formulation and implementation of the annual budget continues to be a routine exercise. As a result, transparency regarding public expenditure also suffers. The business-as-usual mechanism of preparing and implementing the budget does not hold anyone responsible for not fulfilling the budgetary targets. If the national budget is to be taken seriously by the policymakers, there must be quarterly review of the implementation status to assess the outcome of budgetary measures in addressing the ongoing and emerging challenges.



ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

Barishal, Khulna city polls exposed what's wrong with our elections



Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar is the secretary of SHUJAN: Citizens for Good Governance.

BADIUL ALAM MAJUMDAR

The elections to Barishal and Khulna city corporations held on May 12, 2023 cannot be considered free, fair and credible, as they were non-competitive. The main opposition BNP did not take part in them because of their experience with "managed elections" of the past, which I termed the "Khulna model" (*The Daily Star*, July 17, 2018).

In 2018, during the "Khulna model" city polls, ruling party supporters, partisan bureaucrats and certain members of law enforcement agencies, in connivance with the Election Commission, helped deliver the election results in favour of ruling party candidates. The law enforcement agencies' partisan role was so blatant that the late Election Commissioner Mahub Talukdar in his book *Nirbachonnama* observed, "Based on the overall considerations, I came to realise that the election's control was transferred from the Election Commission to the law enforcement agencies. The 'Khulna model' was in operation in five city corporations: Khulna, Gazipur, Barishal, Sylhet, and Rajshahi." In BNP's absence and with only minor political parties participating, these so-called contests can hardly be called "elections" as an election truly means choosing among alternatives – credible alternatives.

This year, the city polls were relatively peaceful in Khulna – again, mostly because of the absence of BNP candidates, and the new US visa policy may also have been a deterrent. But it was not so peaceful in Barishal. The attack on Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) candidate Syed Faizul Karim, however, appears to be a mere spur of the moment act by some ruling party zealots who viewed him as the stronger opponent and a potential threat to their candidate's victory. What

this attack truly reflected, though, was hatred and intolerance, which are the trademark of toxic politics in Bangladesh. Fortunately, the violence did not escalate despite a demonstration staged by the IAB supporters with sticks in protest of the attack – perhaps because the ruling party high-ups restrained themselves due to the threat of American visa restrictions.

Although the attack caused minor injuries to the IAB candidate, the real "victim" of the incident appears to be the chief election commissioner (CEC) himself because of his unguarded remark, "Did he [Karim] die?" As a consequence of what happened in Barishal, the IAB has announced that it will not participate in the elections to Sylhet and Rajshahi city corporations, further denting the credibility of these one-sided, so-called elections. There has been speculation that the IAB had a behind-the-scenes negotiation with Awami League, as a result of which they have been contesting all the elections. The Barishal incident may have damaged that relationship, to the detriment of the Awami League interest in making all elections participatory.

Other than the violence in Barishal, the city elections in Khulna and Barishal were largely uneventful. Can the Election Commissioner take credit for holding "successful" elections in these two cities, though? My answer to the question is an emphatic "no," because in the absence of BNP in the game, these were not real tests for the commission. As we saw in 2018, the behaviour of the ruling party supporters, the bureaucrats, and the law enforcement agencies would have been different if AL's arch rival BNP was in the contest.

The voter turnout was 42-45

percent in the Khulna city polls and over 50 percent in Barishal, which were higher than expected – especially in the case of Khulna. Some political parties attribute this relatively high turnout to the manipulation by using electronic voting machines (EVMs) – results of voting via EVMs cannot be verified by recounting since our EVMs do not have the VVPAT (voter verifiable paper audit trail). However, voter turnout is normally high in the city corporation elections because ward councillor candidates draw voters to the polling centres. BNP's absence as well as the absence of the fear of violence may have encouraged neutral voters to go to the polling centres.

Interestingly, Talukder Abdul Khaleque, the AL-backed candidate in Khulna who won the mayoral race, received about 20,000 fewer votes in 2023 than in 2018. Likewise, Barishal mayor-elect Abul Khair Abdullah, also an AL candidate, received about 20,000 fewer votes than his predecessor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah in 2018. What does this mean? They may reflect the ruling party's overconfidence that their candidates will win the elections anyway. It may also mean that because of the price hikes, power crisis, corruption and other anomalies, the soft supporters or neutral voters who voted for the Awami League in 2018 decided against doing so this time.

Given the experience of the city elections so far, the Sylhet and Rajshahi city polls will surely be peaceful, and the boat will easily sail through. But the same is unlikely to happen in the upcoming general election, which is a different ball game. Since power changes hands through the general election, major political parties will make all-out efforts to win – maybe even by resorting to violence. However, the weaponisation of the constitution by making the holding of elections under the party in power a requirement, through the 15th amendment, still stands as the biggest threat to a credible national election.

Bangladesh cannot become smart with a gaping digital divide



A CLOSER LOOK
Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is @tasneem_tayeb

TASNEEM TAYEB

Despite the Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041 turning into a central theme of the nation's futuristic progress narrative, the digital divide remains a major issue.

According to Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics (BSVS) data, despite the increase in the number of internet users, only 37.1 percent of the rural population uses the internet, while the figure stands at 53.7 percent for the urban population. Similarly, while 47.6 percent men use the internet, for women the figure stands at only 34.6 percent. Even among women internet users in rural and urban areas, the digital divide is gaping at 30.5 percent and 47.9 percent, respectively.

While the government has taken many initiatives to realise the Smart Bangladesh vision, a significant chunk of the population remains beyond the digital umbrella, especially in rural areas where digital connectivity is hard to find. This is despite the Digital Bangladesh 2021 vision being driven since 2008. I have worked in many remote villages of Kushtia and Rangpur on youth skill development and women empowerment projects over the last few years, where WiFi or broadband internet were not only unheard of, but mobile internet was also difficult to find.

While the city centres and upazilas are somewhat covered by pricey mobile internet packages or broadband connections – despite the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC)'s "One Country, One Rate" initiative launched in June 2021 that set the standard tariff for a 5 Mbps connection at Tk 500, many service providers are still charging users a higher price – there are many villages in the fringes where the youth (especially girls) face difficulty in accessing the internet for academic purposes.

While experts have blamed lack of infrastructure and technological resources for the low penetration of internet in rural areas, there are two major factors that need to be taken into consideration: socio-economic ability and literacy level.

The cost of internet in Bangladesh is high. A report by VPN provider Surfshark revealed that people in Bangladesh pay 6.9 times more for internet access than the rest of the world.

Logically speaking, at current prices, and amidst the burden of unbridled inflation and economic volatility, one cannot expect the underserved rural population to be able to afford internet services,

especially since it is not a need for them.

Secondly, access to digital literacy among the youth is very limited in rural areas, especially in remote villages. While some of these youths have access to smartphones and mobile internet, they use it mostly for entertainment and friendly communication. As such, the ability of these youths to use digital devices and the internet to generate income – through e-commerce, outsourcing, etc – remains severely stunted.

Then there is the problem of

and the digitisation process remains full of discrepancies to this day. For instance, toll booths are still operated manually, resulting in long queues during holidays, despite the commitment in 2008 to automate 50 percent of the toll collection booths countrywide. And while corrections on national ID (NID) cards can be requested online, the process is not fully digitalised, with individuals being required to go to the office to update their addresses, for example. While people with NID cards should not have to give their fingerprints again, they are still required to when trying to get a driving licence.

It is high time the government took a closer look at the deeper, more strategic implementation layers of its Digital Bangladesh vision to see where it had gone wrong in fully materialising it and take lessons from these past experiences and mistakes to effectively implement the new Smart Bangladesh vision.



While corrections on NID cards can be requested online, the process is not fully digitalised. REPRESENTATIONAL PHOTO: STAR

mobile internet speed. Ookla's Speedtest Global Index of 2022 ranks Bangladesh at 121 out of 141 countries, with its maiden download speed of 14.34 Mbps. Among South Asian countries, Maldives stood 25th globally, and India ranked at 79 with a maiden download speed of 25.29 Mbps.

Not that Bangladeshis cannot manage the basics at its existing internet speed – making calls, sending text messages, viewing content. But for those working in outsourcing, especially in jobs involving graphic design and VFX, data transfer can be a painful challenge.

At a glance, it looks like the government is operating at a beginner level in materialising its digital vision, with a significant population outside the digital coverage unaware of these initiatives or unable to avail the services. For instance, although the government has made many of its services digital – or is "computerised" more accurately – their utility remains limited, especially outside the cities.

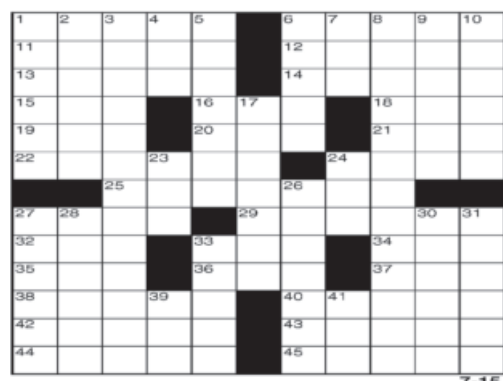
Moreover, many of the important services are yet to be digitalised,

The government should also look at its global scores in various rankings – including the UN's E-Government Development Index (EGDI) which assesses three dimensions of e-government: provision of online services, telecommunication connectivity, and human capacity – to identify blind spots and room for improvement, so that these can be navigated better while implementing the Smart Bangladesh vision.

In essence, this vision is about being inclusive; about empowering citizens with Smart Governance, Smart Economy, and Smart Society. It is about bridging the digital divide. But for all this to happen, the government needs to work on the basics, such as chalking out a reasonable, time-bound, goal-oriented strategy, formulating relevant policies, onboarding partners and service providers, forging effective collaborations, identifying logistics and resources and channelling them without pilferage, and taking all these one step at a time.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
1 Country division
6 Bank meetings
subtraction
11 Two-dot character
12 Kagan of the Supreme Court
13 Modify
14 Loses freshness
15 Research site
16 Misery
18 Ran into
19 LAX guess
20 Wall climber
21 Galena, for one
22 Downfall
24 Travel stops
25 Draw in
- 27 Reduced amount
29 Secret meetings
32 Fire leftover
33 Target
34 Woolen cap
35 Hotel amenity
36 Bond, for one
37 Copying
38 Benefits
40 Creative sort
42 Like argon
43 Happening
44 Moves slowly
45 High homes
- DOWN**
1 Climbed
2 So far
3 "Hold On" band
4 Summit
- 5 Interweave
6 Loser to Truman
7 Inventor
Whitney
8 Triple Crown leg
9 Hospital worker
10 Samples
17 Add too much to the bill
23 "– been real!"
24 Far from cordial
26 Green plastic toys
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Memo No.46.02.7900.000.07.001.2023- 3825 Date-19.06.2023

e-Tender Notice No-51/2022-2023 (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works office of the under signed.

Sl. no.	Tender ID No.	Package No and Name of works	Last selling date & time	Closing & Opening Date & Time
1	837802	(BDIRWSP/PIR/BAN/DW-62) Widening & Strengthening of Bhandaria- Kawkhali RHD (Mohasin Chorasta) via Sordarer hat & Enayet Khan hat road at Ch. 0.00-2000m including 03 Nos. 2.00mx2.00m RCC Box Culvert at 500m, 750m & 1500m under Bhandaria Upazila, District-Pirojpur. Road ID No: 579144040. Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 402304.00	12.07.2023 16:00 PM	13.07.2023 13:00 PM
2	837803	(BDIRWSP/PIR/BAN/DW-63) Widening & Strengthening of Bhandaria- Kawkhali RHD (Mohasin Chorasta) via Sordarer hat & Enayet Khan hat road at Ch. 4000-6200m including 03 Nos. 2.00mx2.00m RCC Box Culvert at 4250m, 5500m & 5700m under Bhandaria Upazila, District-Pirojpur. Road ID No: 579144040. Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 432320.00	12.07.2023 16:00 PM	13.07.2023 13:00 PM
3	837804	(BDIRWSP/PIR/BAN/DW-64) Widening & Strengthening of Nadmulla UP - Nadmulla Madrasha Hat via Chinguria and Coloni Bazar road at Ch. 0.00-2000m including 02 Nos. 2.00mx2.00m RCC Box Culvert at 1400m & 1750m under Bhandaria Upazila, District-Pirojpur. Road ID No: 579143010. Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 381024.00	12.07.2023 16:00 PM	13.07.2023 13:00 PM
4	837805	(BDIRWSP/PIR/BAN/DW-65) Widening & Strengthening of Bhandaria-Gazipur-Banai-Bhagirathpur bazaar (Mathbaria) road at Ch. 2900-5000m including 02 Nos. 2.00mx2.00m RCC Box Culvert at 4500m & 4900m under Bhandaria Upazila, District-Pirojpur. Road ID No: 579142006. Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 379904.00	12.07.2023 16:00 PM	13.07.2023 13:00 PM
5	837806	(BDIRWSP/PIR/BAN/DW-66) Widening & Strengthening of Nadmulla UP - Nadmulla Madrasha Hat via Chinguria and Coloni Bazar road at Ch. 2000-4000m including 02 Nos. 2.00mx2.00m RCC Box Culvert at 3300m & 3800m under Bhandaria Upazila, District-Pirojpur. Road ID No: 579143010. Salvage Materials Cost Tk. 353024.00	12.07.2023 16:00 PM	13.07.2023 13:00 PM

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

(Md. Abbas Satter Howlader)
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LGED, Pirojpur
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GD-1028

SHIFT

AUTOMOTIVE PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star



WORLD MOTORCYCLE DAY 2023

Embrace the spirit of ADVENTURE

Remember, adventures are best enjoyed with company. Team up with your fellow two-wheeled enthusiasts, and if you're lucky enough to be part of a motorcycle club like the Yamaha Riders Club, turn it into a club activity.

R.A. HAQ

Rev up your engines, folks, because World Motorcycle Day 2023 is here. It's time to saddle up your iron horse and hit the road. Celebrated on June 21, the longest day of the year, this global event is a celebration of the joy and freedom that motorcycles bring to our lives. Whether you're a die-hard biker or a part of the industry, this day is for you.

HOW IT BEGAN

Before we talk about the day let's take a ride down memory lane and explore the origins of motorcycles. Back in 1860, a chap named Pierre Michaux in Paris had the genius idea of attaching a steam

engine to a bicycle. It was a bold move, but not exactly practical. The first motorcycle powered by good old-fashioned dino juice made its debut in 1885, thanks to one Edward Butler from England. However, much like the automobile, it was the Germans

the day to promote motorcycles for both transportation and leisure. Since then, it has grown into a global phenomenon, captivating motorcycle communities around the world.

Each year, the day revolves around a specific theme, and for 2023, it's all about 'embracing the spirit of



who truly turned the concept into a commercial success, introducing the world's first series production motorcycle in 1894 - the impressive 1,489cc Hildebrand & Wolfmüller Motorrad (the last word is German for 'motorcycle').

Let's throttle our engines back to the present day. The story of World Motorcycle Day began in 2012 when a US-based advocacy group called RideToWork.org came up with

adventure'. This theme encourages riders to embark on epic road trips, seek out hidden trails, or even just take a different route to work. It's all about embracing the freedom and exploration that only a motorcycle can offer.

If you want to make this year's World Motorcycle Day truly unforgettable, especially in Bangladesh, here are some suggestions to consider.

GO ON A ROAD TRIP ADVENTURE

First off, it's time to hit the road. Embrace the spirit of adventure by



planning an exhilarating trip. Wake up at the crack of dawn, gear up, and hop on your bike to conquer the open roads. Whether it's a ride on the 300 Feet expressway or an epic journey to the Padma Bridge, make the most of the experience.

Remember, adventures are best enjoyed with company. Team up with your fellow two-wheeled enthusiasts, and if you're lucky enough to be part of a motorcycle club like the Yamaha Riders Club, turn it into a club activity. There are enthusiasts always itching for an adventure, so gather your like-minded club members and let the thrill begin.

TREAT YOUR BIKE TO QUALITY SERVICE

If a long-distance journey isn't in the cards, whether due to unpredictable weather or perennial Dhaka traffic,

don't worry. Treat your bike to a top-notch service instead. Maybe if you own a Yamaha, better take it to one of their world-class service centres and give it the love and care it deserves, ensuring it's in tip-top shape for future rides. A well-maintained bike is a happy bike, and a happy bike means an even happier rider.

PULL THE TRIGGER AND GET YOUR DREAM BIKE

Lastly, if you don't have a bike, or have been dreaming of owning your ultimate two-wheeled beauty, now is the time to make it happen. Take the leap and invest in your dream bike. There is no better way to celebrate World Motorcycle Day than by bringing your dream to life and hitting the road on the machine you have always longed for.



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Tigers renew focus with white-ball camp today

SPORTS REPORTER

The lone Test against Afghanistan ended in emphatic fashion for the hosts on Saturday but a few Bangladesh players have already begun training individually at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium indoor nets yesterday.

While veteran batter Mushfiqur Rahim was seen sweating it out and seemingly in search of adding a few new shots to his repertoire, the likes of pacer Hasan Mahmud also underwent a session with the bat at the indoor nets on the eve of official white-ball practice, starting from today.

Hasan's bowling partner, Taskin Ahmed, suggested earlier that the upcoming ODI series against Afghanistan -- scheduled to begin from July 5 -- will "be challenging".

"Everyone had been preparing well [with white ball] even before the Test began. We are hopeful of something good, although it won't be easy [in the ODIs against Afghanistan]," Taskin said following a commercial event on Monday.

Taskin relayed the emphatic 546-run Test win "is in the past now" and that the "next game will begin from the first ball". The Tigers' pace spearhead believes their work will now begin anew to maintain growth of improvement, with two major tournaments in sight.

"The pacers are doing well but everything will start with focus on that match [on July 05]."

"Normally, Chattogram offers sporting, batting-friendly wickets. However, we are all hopeful that if we can maintain our consistency in terms of improvement, everyone will be gradually prepared for the upcoming World Cup and Asia Cup," Taskin concluded.



Pat Cummins throws his bat and helmet and clenches his fists as he celebrates a thrilling two-wicket victory over England in the Edgbaston Test in Birmingham yesterday. The Australia captain scored an unbeaten 44 as the visitors chased down a 281-run target in the extended final session of the final day of this seesaw opening Test of the Ashes series. PHOTO:AFP

Australia seal thrilling win in Ashes opener

REUTERS, Birmingham

Australia captain Pat Cummins sealed a remarkable two-wicket victory for his side over England in a thrilling climax to a gripping five-day battle in the opening Ashes Test on Tuesday.

The visitors, set a 281 victory target, began a rain-delayed day on 107 for three but their chances looked remote when they were reduced to 227-8.

But Cummins, in partnership with Nathan Lyon, launched a fightback and sealed victory with an unbeaten 44.

In suffocating tension, he struck the final boundary to take his side over the line for a 1-0 lead in the series.

After a rain-delayed start, unflappable Australia opening batsman Usman Khawaja had kept his team on course for victory, but a match full of momentum shifts swung England's way when Khawaja was bowled by England skipper Ben Stokes for 65.

But Cummins sparked the fightback with huge sixes off Root's off-spin as England delayed taking the new ball and was the calmest person in the stadium as he secured victory.

New dimension enlivens SAFF Championship

India take on Pakistan on opening day

SPORTS REPORTER

The 14th edition of SAFF Championship will feature a new dimension of competitiveness as two Middle Eastern nations enter the fray with the curtains set to be raised at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bangalore today.

Defending champions India will start their campaign by taking on cross-border rivals Pakistan in the second game of the opening day after Kuwait play last edition's runners-up Nepal at the same venue.

Since the introduction of the South Asian football extravaganza 30 years ago, the competition was confined to seven sub-continental nations until Afghanistan joined in 2005. After failing to add much spice to proceedings in their first three appearances, Afghanistan started challenging India by reaching all three finals from 2011-2015 and even lifting the trophy once.

But after the Afghans quit SAFF in 2018 and joined the Central Asian Football Association, India became virtually the only contenders, clinching eight titles in 13 editions.

With India climbing up in the FIFA ranking relentlessly and other South Asian nations struggling to match the standards set by their predecessors, India's proposal to invite the stronger teams from beyond the South Asian region to increase the tournament's competitiveness has led

Sunil Chhetri
India captain

Yousaf Butt
Pakistan captain

"For the first time we have Lebanon and Kuwait participating in SAFF Cup. With due respect to other teams of SAFF region, their [Lebanon and Kuwait] level is better which is a good thing. It will be different than what other SAFF Cups we have played."

"As devoted sportsmen, we understand the power of sports in transcending political boundaries and fostering strong relationships between nations. We will put in a worthy performance despite zero sleep and jetlag -- and off the field will try to win hearts to ease the tension."

to the inclusion of 99th-ranked Lebanon and 143rd-ranked Kuwait.

The two are expected to challenge India's stranglehold while two-time champions Maldives, one-time champions Bangladesh and Nepal will also hope to make their presence felt.

Prolific Indian striker Sunil Chhetri felt it would provide a different challenge. "For the first time, we have Lebanon

and Kuwait participating in the SAFF Championship. With due respect to other teams in the SAFF region, their [Lebanon and Kuwait] level is better and that is a good thing. It will be different than the other SAFF Championships. The champions are going to have a different challenge," Chhetri said in an interview with SAFF.

The championship will also mark the

return of five-time semifinalists Pakistan, who missed the last edition of the championship due to a suspension from FIFA. Although the team was set to land early today, the Pakistanis are expected to pose a threat to India and Kuwait in Group A, especially after coming into the tournament on the back of a four-nation tournament in Mauritius and a host of foreign-based players in their ranks.

India and Lebanon are also coming into the tournament in full flow following their participation in a four-nation Intercontinental Cup in Bhubaneswar, where India beat Lebanon 2-0.

Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Bhutan have also had good preparations at home and abroad, but the race is expected to be confined to India, Lebanon and Kuwait.

Although Bangladesh were once contenders, they have failed to progress past the group stages in the last five editions. This time around, the men in red and green are targeting the semifinals, hoping to make it out of a group also featuring Lebanon, Maldives and Bhutan.

"I think the competition in this group is going to be very tough because all of us want to progress," Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera said. "For us, it is quite important because it has been five editions without qualifying for the semifinals. We will do our best by following our idea. We expect strong competition and three tough games."

Basketball team storm into five-nation final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh moved into the final of the Five Nation Basketball Championship in Male, Maldives yesterday, beating Pakistan 79-65 in the first semifinal.

The men in red and green took a 25-17 lead in the first quarter before Pakistan staged a bit of a fightback in the second quarter. Despite seeing their lead decrease, Bangladesh still led 40-36 after the second quarter.

However, Bangladesh raised their game in the third quarter and took a 64-47 lead before adding 15 more points in the fourth quarter against 18 scored by Pakistan.

This was vengeance for Bangladesh, who had lost to Pakistan 84-66 to finish third in the group stage.

Bangladesh will play in the final tomorrow against the winners of the second semifinal between Nepal and Bhutan, which was scheduled to take place later last night.



PHOTO: REUTERS

After Bukayo Saka struck his first senior career hat-trick in England's 7-0 rout of North Macedonia in Euro 2024 qualifying on Monday, his national team manager Gareth Southgate was asked if the 21-year-old is nearing soccer's top echelon. "He's there," Southgate replied matter-of-factly.

Bangladesh to play India today in final

SPORTS REPORTER

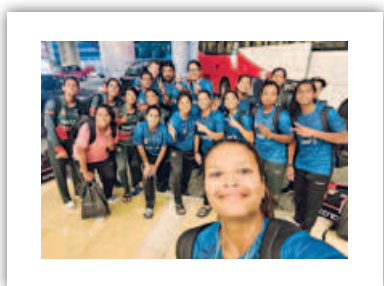
Bangladesh A were reduced to 16 for six in just 3.4 overs in a rain-curtailed game at Mong Kok against their Pakistani counterparts after winning the toss in the semifinal of the Women's Emerging Teams Cup. But despite the setback, the Tigresses held their nerve in a tight match to secure a six-run win against Pakistan in a nine-overs-a-side game and make it through to the final against India, set to be played today.

The semifinal had gone into the reserve day and Pakistan's pace-bowling all-rounder Fatima Sana began with fire, scalping the first three wickets. She sent back Sathi Rani, Sobhana Mostary and skipper Lata Mondal. Dilara Akter then became Anosha Nasir's second victim to leave Bangladesh reeling.

Number seven Rabeya Khatun and number eight Nahida Akter eventually spared the team's blushes with a 37-run partnership as Bangladesh reached 59 for seven in their allotted overs. Rabeya scored 10 while Nahida struck a vital 16-ball 21.

In reply, Pakistan were restricted to 53 for four as Sanjida Akter Meghla defended 13 runs off the final over. Rabeya and Nahida were stars with the ball as well, with Rabeya bagging two for 13 and Nahida producing a wicket for 8 runs.

"We struggled with the bat at the start but our middle-order managed it well. Our bowlers also bowled well which brought the result," captain Lata said.



'Hungry to become a world class bowler'

Ebadot Hossain has been a great example of how hard work can help a cricketer take the next step on the world stage. The 29-year-old has become a key member of the Tigers' pace-bowling unit and once again made his impact felt during Bangladesh's record Test win against Afghanistan on a sporting Mirpur pitch. The Sylhet native was also included in the ODI and T20I squad for the upcoming Afghanistan series and the pacer spoke about his bowling, future plans, work ethic and a few other topics during a candid conversation with **The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin**. The excerpts are below:

The Daily Star (DS): How satisfied were you with your bowling in the Test against Afghanistan?

Ebadot Hossain (EH): The most important thing was that we went on to the field to win. We had that hunger from the beginning. We lost badly to Afghanistan in the previous Test and I was on the bench and felt really bad. My mindset was that I would contribute to such an extent that we could beat them convincingly if I was able to play. I felt the same mindset in all my teammates. We were determined to beat them by a big margin.

Personally, I did not have a very good start to my Test career initially. So the hunger is there to become a world class bowler and I felt I needed to work even harder to reach that level. I am trying to develop my skills and execute the team's plans but I think I still have a long way to go.

DS: How do you plan to translate your bowling rhythm from Tests to limited-overs formats?

EH: I think fitness plays a very big role if you want to play across formats. I have been consulting with our trainer for the past two years. I was willing to transform into an all-format bowler mentally and

physically after Tamim (Iqbal) bhai took me to the one-day side. I played the last T20 World Cup and have seven wickets in four T20Is. I have been working on my batting for the last two years with Jamie Siddons and now with Nick Pothas. I also realise the importance of being a good fielder in the limited-overs formats since there is no chance to hide.

DS: How much does having a good bond between the pacers on and off the field help?

EH: I should credit two people for this. One is former Test captain Mominul Haque bhai and the other is Ottis Gibson. The way Mominul bhai backed us was unbelievable. To me he is the best captain. He helped forge the bond between the fast bowlers by taking us to dinner and spending time building that rapport with us. The same goes for Gibson. They made us realise that once we want good for others, we will smile at each other's successes and stick together in bad times. We try to share that love with younger bowlers like Hasan Mahmud, Shoriful Islam and others. If Taskin gets hit for a boundary, I feel the pain. And if you remember, I was the one who ran towards him and hugged him after he picked up

the fifth wicket. I felt like I got that wicket. The same goes for others. This is the type of bond the bowlers share.

DS: Do you think the positive mentality of providing exposure to pacers will encourage the next generation to become fast bowlers?

EH: Since the team management has started to show faith in us, Taskin and a few others have been phenomenal. (Such as in) The win in the Mount Maunganui Test, where I was fortunately able to perform well, and the win against Afghanistan, where our pacers took 14 wickets, which was the most by our pacers in Tests. I think the entire bowling department, including spinners, are trying to contribute to wins. We want to pave the way so future generations can take things even further.

DS: Which fast bowler do you follow?

EH: I believe that if I try to become like someone else, then it's a problem. I just want to develop my skills gradually. The more I am able to achieve and help win matches, the more my confidence will grow. When I play ODI cricket, I try to stick to my strengths. In T20s, it is important to develop variations.



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FLOOD WORSENING Mother drowns, her children missing

STAR REPORT

Fire service yesterday recovered the body of a woman who was washed away in a strong torrent with her two children while crossing a river at Chayar Hoar of Shalla upazila in Sunamganj district.

The body was identified to be of the 30-year-old Durlab Rani Das, wife of Rathindra Das from Bilpur Village of Habibpur Union of the upazila.

Her two children -- Joba Rani, aged 7, and Bijay Das, aged 5 -- remain missing. Efforts are underway to recover the missing children, said Abu Taleb, upazila nirbahi officer of Shalla upazila.

Subrata Das, a local who witnessed the incident, said he requested the woman not to cross the river, which had a strong current that submerged its culvert. She did not pay heed.

Meanwhile, water level in Jamuna River has been swelling to dangerous levels, inundating low-lying areas.

The water is flowing at Sirajganj hard point at 11.85 metres, which is just 1.05 metres below the danger level, according to the Water Development

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Motorbikers park their vehicles under an exit ramp of the Hanif flyover at Sayedabad during rain yesterday blocking eastbound lanes. This resulted in long tailbacks.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

TIPU, PRITY MURDER Charges against 33 accepted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday accepted the charges brought against 33 people, including nine members of the ruling Awami League and its associate bodies, in the case filed over the killings of AL leader Jahidul Islam Tipu and college student Samia Afran Jamal Prity.

Afterwards, the magistrate issued arrest warrants against nine people, including two top-listed criminals Zeesan Ahmed alias Montu and Jafar Ahmed Manik alias Freedom Manik, as they were shown as "fugitives" in the charge sheet.

The magistrate also cancelled the bail of three accused -- Toufiq Hasan Babu, Moshir Rahman Ikram and Arifur Rahman Sohel alias "Ghatok" Sohil -- and sent them to jail as their bail period expired yesterday.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Rajesh Chowdhury passed the order after scrutinising case dockets and other relevant documents.

He also directed officers in charge of the police stations concerned to submit by August 17 the progress report on the execution of the arrest warrants.

On June 5, Md Yasin Sikder, a DB inspector, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

The criminals opened fire at Tipu's car in the capital's Shahjahanpur area on March 24 last year. Tipu and rickshaw passenger Prity were hurt.

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Gono Odhikar Parishad descends into chaos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Gono Odhikar Parishad is on the verge of splitting up as Reza Kibria and Nurul Haque Nur have removed each other from the leadership positions.

At a meeting on Monday night, Nur, who is the member secretary, and the other leaders of the party removed Reza from the post of convener and replaced him with Rashed Khan, who was the joint convener.

A day later, Reza, currently abroad, issued a statement announcing that Nur and Rashed

had been temporarily suspended from the party and both of them had been served with a notice to explain their conduct in seven days.

Founding convener Hasan Al Mamun would be the acting member secretary, as per Reza's statement.

In response, Nur said Reza should not issue statements at whim.

"How can he remove us without holding a meeting? It is illegal. We made the decision [of replacing Reza] at a meeting," he added.

The party has been in turmoil for days as Nur and Reza often engaged in public spats over different issues.

Meanwhile, 45 members of Gono Odhikar's convener committee in a statement last night said they were concerned by the "mud-slinging" evident division within the party.

They also formed a five-member committee to investigate the matters and determine the appropriate course of action in seven working days.

Reza often says that Nur and several other leaders of the party want to participate in the upcoming national election even though they represent a party that has "shunned the polls".

Besides, Nur does not disclose the source of the money that comes from abroad and he has yet to explain why he met an Israeli citizen, Reza said.

Nur, meanwhile, alleges that Reza regularly participates in the programmes of the Insaf K a y e m Committee led by Farhad Mazhar.

Besides, Reza harbours dreams of becoming the prime minister, Nur said.

When asked whether the party was splitting up, Reza said: "It seems the Gono Odhikar Parishad is splitting up. A section of the party may join in the election. But we will not."

Asked whether he will form any new party, he said: "We will not form a new one. The party is registered in my name. So, our party is a real party. They may make announcements, but as of now, there is no instance of a party led by its secretary."

Contacted, Nur said: "Reza Kibria is becoming a danger to the party. He is involved in different conspiracies and he tries to split up the party."

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NADIM MURDER Suspect Babu 'threatened journo' four months ago

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Jamalpur

Suspended union parishad chairman Mahmudul Alam Babu, a suspect in the journalist Golam Rabbani Nadim murder case, reportedly threatened to teach Nadim a lesson around four months prior to his killing.

"It won't take more than a minute to teach Nadim a lesson," allegedly he said in an audio clip that has been making the rounds on social media.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the tape, but locals claimed that the voice is of Babu, also expelled general secretary of Sadhurpara union unit Awami League.

They said Babu also made spiteful comments against Nadim over the last few months.

Several local journalists and politicians told The Daily Star that Babu made the threat while addressing a meeting of his party's upazila unit.

"After hearing the audio clip, we can easily identify the speaker's voice. This

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Chhoto Monir 'ordered' Nixon's killing: suspect

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Ruling Awami League lawmaker Tanvir Hasan (Chhoto Monir) threatened several men into killing his party rival Aminul Islam Talukder Nixon in Tangail in 2020, said an accused of the murder case.

In a video message that has now gone viral on social media, accused named Suman, who is now in jail, is seen saying that Monir had threatened to kill him and several others unless they kill Nixon.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the authenticity of the footage.

College teacher Nixon, 48, a local leader of the AL in Gopalpur upazila of Tangail, was stabbed to death on August 1, 2020, a day before Eid.

His younger brother Abdullah Al Mamun Talukder later filed a murder case against five named and several unnamed people with Dhanbari Police Station.

One of the accused, Sumon, confessed to his involvement in the killing. Police later pressed charges against eight people.

But Nixon's family members made a "no

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Chhoto Monir

BOTCHED C-SECTION Doctor blames hospital for deaths

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gynaecologist Sangjukta Saha yesterday blamed the authorities of Central Hospital for the death of Mahbuba Akter Akhi and her newborn.

During a press conference at her residence in the capital, Sangjukta said the authorities did not take her consent verbally or in writing while admitting Akhi to the hospital on June 10.

The authorities also spoke "falsely" about her presence at the hospital, she claimed. "I was not in Bangladesh during Akhi's operation."

"How could I be responsible if I was not there? The responsibility is totally the hospital's to bear."

"To cover up the real incident and hide their faults, vested quarters are using all means and are always busy misleading people of the country with false information," she added.

Eight days after the death of her newborn, Akhi died Sunday.

On June 14, her husband Yakub Ali Sumon filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station, bringing allegations of botched C-section and fraud against the doctors concerned and the hospital.

According to the case statement, Akhi was under the supervision of Sangjukta for the last three months, and her condition was stated to be normal.

However, Sangjukta claimed that Akhi was not

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Sangjukta Saha

NATURAL DISASTERS Indian police retain carrier pigeons as backup



REUTERS, Cuttack

Even in today's world of instant messaging, video calls, the internet and mobile telephones, police in India's eastern state of Odisha are preserving a flock of carrier pigeons for use when disasters sever communication links.

Dating from the days of British colonial rule when police stations used the birds to communicate with each other, the state's carrier pigeon service employs more than 100 Belgian Homer pigeons.

"We have kept the pigeons for their heritage value and to preserve them for future generations," said Satish Kumar Gajbiye, an inspector-general of police in the district of Cuttack.

Police said the pigeons, which can fly at a speed of 55 kph (34 mph), for up to 500 miles (800 km) at a stretch, have proved a lifeline at least twice in the last four decades.



A bull being taken to a cattle market in Postagola in the capital yesterday after being unloaded from a truck, not in frame. Traders believe sales will gradually pick up as Eid nears.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Titanic tourist sub still missing Rescuers race against time

REUTERS

Rescuers were in a race against time to find a missing submersible yesterday, two days after it lost communication while taking wealthy tourists to see the wreckage of the Titanic in deep waters off Canada's coast.

One pilot and four passengers were on board the submersible that disappeared on Sunday. The operating company said it had the capacity to stay underwater for up to 96 hours -- giving those aboard until early on Thursday before air ran out.

US Coast Guard Rear Admiral John Mauer in television interviews yesterday said rescuers continued their efforts overnight and were expanding their search into deeper waters, telling NBC News that authorities were prioritizing the area where the vessel was operating.

Those aboard the submersible, the highlight of a tourist expedition that costs \$250,000 per person, included British billionaire Hamish Harding and Pakistani businessman Shahzada Dawood with his son Suleman.

The 77-year-old French explorer

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