

"We made clear that we were not involved... This was part of a struggle within the Russian system."

President Joe Biden on US role in Russia's Wagner mutiny

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FRUIT PRODUCTION A silent revolution waged by farmers

Bangladesh among top 10 tropical fruit producing countries

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

There was a time when people grew orchards or fruit trees in homesteads primarily for their own consumption. But things have massively changed as farmers are turning to fruit production for its commercial viability.

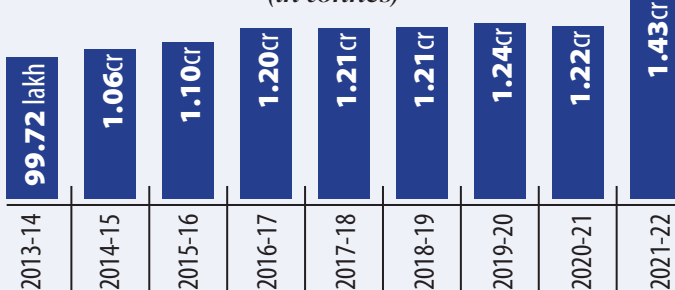
Over the past two decades, fruit production in the country has seen a silent revolution due to the success of commercial farming.

Bangladesh is now among the ten largest tropical fruit-producing countries in the world and has been maintaining an 11.5 percent growth in fruit production on average for the past 18 years, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

The sustained growth despite the limited availability of land has led to an average increase of per capita fruit intake to 85 grams in 2018 from 55 grams in 2006 for a massive population which now stands at around 170 million.

Commercial production of local fruits has increased substantially between 2013-14 and 2021-22. Especially remarkable in this period is the growth in mango, papaya, guava, SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

FRUITS PRODUCTION (in tonnes)



MANGO
2013-14
17,94,235
2021-22
23,50,499



JACKFRUIT
2013-14
16,18,696
2021-22
18,93,303



LITCHI
2013-14
1,91,291
2021-22
2,25,898



GUAVA
2013-14
3,02,069
2021-22
4,30,124



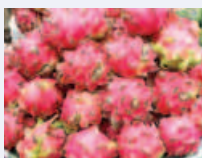
BANANA
2013-14
15,80,485
2021-22
29,78,723



PAPAYA
2013-14
4,68,706
2021-22
7,13,944



PINEAPPLE
2013-14
3,66,224
2021-22
4,69,536

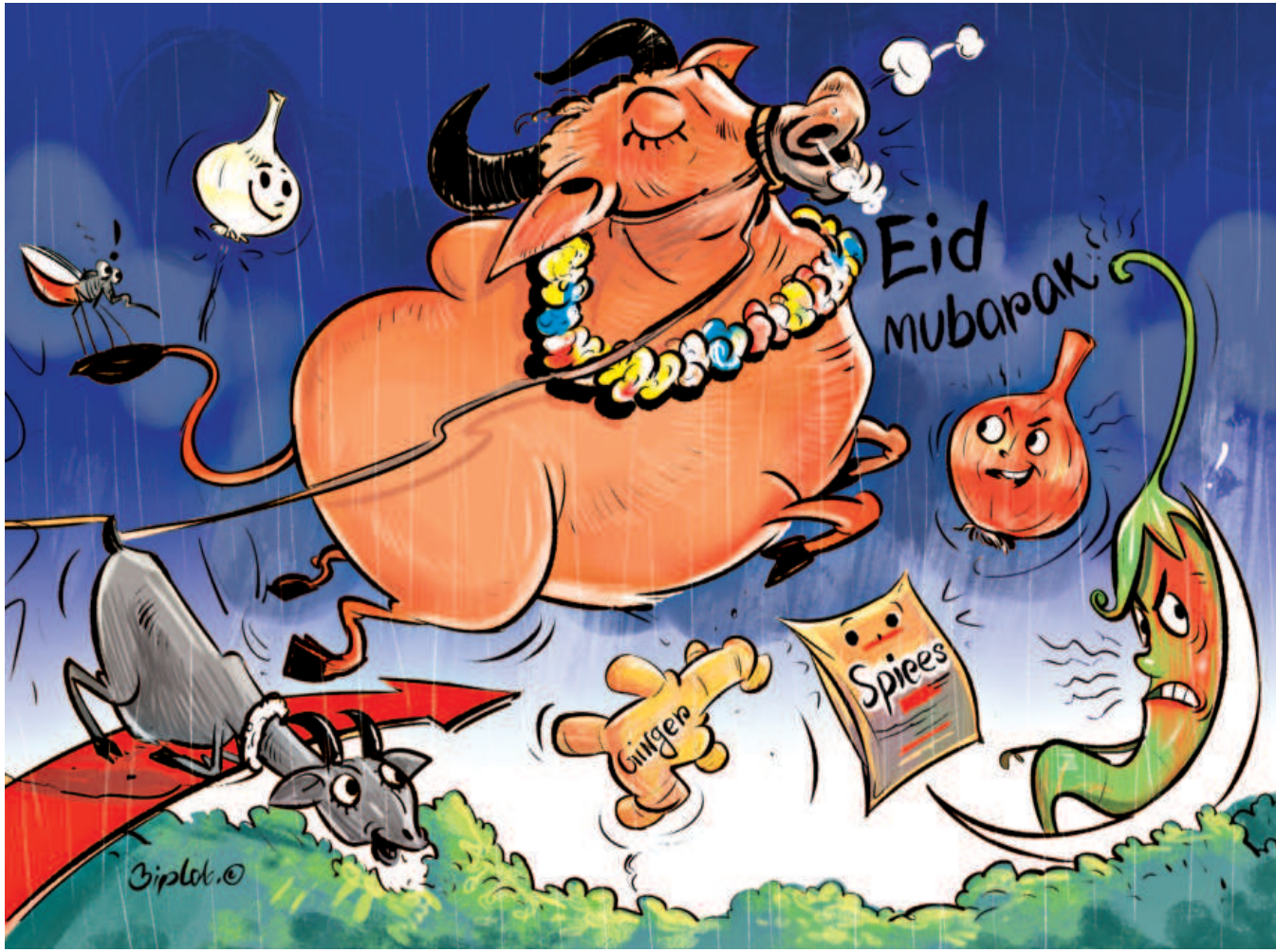


DRAGON FRUIT
2014-15
66
2021-22
13,872



MALTA
2013-14
3,304
2021-22
54,399

SOURCE: DAE



**EID
MUBARAK**

The Daily Star
wishes its valued
readers, patrons,
advertisers and
well-wishers a
very happy Eid

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star offices will remain closed for 3 days from today on account of Eid-ul-Azha. There will be no issue of the newspaper from June 29 to July 1. However, our digital version will serve the readers 24/7 during the holiday.

Irregularities rife at state-run Essential Drugs Company

Finds CAG audit

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

On June 26, 2013, the state-owned Essential Drugs Company (EDCL) acquired a drug production machine. Let alone use it, the state-owned company did not even unbox it for the next seven years.

And when it did, the machine's productivity went down dramatically, rendering it almost useless, showed an audit of the Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh that was submitted to the parliament on Sunday.

Thanks to this negligence, the government had to count a loss of Tk 3.82 crore to the government in fiscal 2019-20.

"This was a serious financial irregularity," said the CAG.

When quizzed by the CAG auditors, the EDCL authorities claimed the machine's trial run was ongoing and the output was 95 percent and not 19 percent or 39 percent as reported. This was not accepted by the CAG auditors as no supporting documentation was provided.

The CAG auditors also wrote to the secretary of the health services division for punitive actions on September 19, 2021. As of February 2, no response was received from the ministry.

Subsequently, the report called for finding out the persons responsible and depositing the disputed amount in the state coffers.

The audit found six other counts of financial irregularities that yielded a loss of about Tk 32 crore in fiscal 2019-20 alone.

One of the irregularities involves the failure to manufacture the antibiotic Meropenem that is used to treat lung infection during the pandemic – when the demand was high.

The EDCL management thrice cancelled the tender for procuring the raw materials without any good reason and advised the public hospitals that were demanding the antibiotic to procure it from the local pharmaceuticals instead.

Had the company, which was founded in 1962 produced the drugs by importing the raw materials through the second tender, it would have made a profit of Tk 4.47 crore, the report said.

When asked about the carelessness, the EDCL authorities said the tender processes were cancelled as the procurement committee found the quoted prices of the raw materials to be much higher than those prevailing in the international market then. In so doing, the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

World Cup from Oct 5 to Nov 19

REUTERS, New Delhi



The Cricket World Cup will begin on October 5 with England facing New Zealand in Ahmedabad and the same venue hosting the final on November 19, organisers said on Tuesday, with the schedule for the showpiece in India also confirming Pakistan's participation.

The fixtures were revealed by the International Cricket Council during an event in Mumbai, less than four months before the start of the 50-overs tournament, with the delay partly due to sour political relations between India and Pakistan.

India's refusal to travel to Pakistan for the Asia Cup in August-September triggered the latest dispute between the bitter

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

ANTI-GOVT DEMO BNP aims to tap Eid to mobilise public support

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP wants to take its ongoing anti-government movement to the final stage within the next one or two months.

Keeping this in mind, the party will announce its fresh anti-government programmes focusing on one-point demand, resignation of the government and election under a non-party polls-time government, from next month, said party sources.

The BNP has already asked its leaders to go to their localities ahead of Eid to pass on the message to the grassroots.

Party leaders said the gatherings for tomorrow's Eid is going to be the last major opportunity before the next parliamentary election for the BNP to mobilise public opinion in favour of its one-point demand.

According to the leaders, the BNP will not go for any tough agitation programmes at the beginning of the one-point movement.

"Every political party has its own movement strategy. In the last few months, we have seen that people are joining our movement. We will go for the one-point movement from next month. The movement will be intensified gradually," Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, a member of the BNP standing committee, told The Daily Star.

The party's front and associate bodies, including the Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, Swachchhasebak Dal and Chhatra Dal, have already started holding "youth rallies" in divisional headquarters to engage youths in the anti-government movement.

From next month, Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal, Tanti Dal, Sramik Dal and Mathsyajibi Dal will bring out processions to engage people in the movement, said Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the BNP.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Holidaymakers face tailbacks on northern routes

Congestion at exit points in
Dhaka, Chandra and near
Bangabandhu bridge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tens of thousands of people left the capital yesterday on the first day of Eid holidays, with travellers facing long tailbacks even before making it out of the city.

In the evening, gridlocks at Chandra and Nabinagar intersections, two main gateways to the northwestern routes, made people suffer for hours.

"Vehicles got stuck on the flyover as well as the road under it at Chandra on Dhaka-Tangail highway," said an on-duty official of the central control room of Road Transport and Highways Division.

Despite the rain and risks, many desperate holidaymakers travelled on flatbeds of trucks and pickups as the buses and trains remained packed.

Like the other years, people alleged that bus operators sold tickets at higher prices to make a quick buck.

Most of the intercity trains left Dhaka on time. But as hundreds of passengers kept arriving at railway stations in and around Dhaka in the evening, the authorities did not stop people from climbing to the roofs of trains.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



People leaving the capital got stuck in a long tailback on Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover near Postagola yesterday morning. Motorists coming towards the city also faced congestion because of the sheer number of vehicles on the road.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Never had talks with Dhaka on St Martin's

Says US spokesperson

DIPLOMATIC
CORRESPONDENT

The US has never engaged in any conversations with Bangladesh about taking over the St Martin's Island, said US State Department in response to recent remarks by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"I will just say that it is not accurate," said Matthew Miller, spokesperson for the US Department of State, at a briefing on Monday when he was asked about Hasina's comment that the AI would not stay in power by giving away the island.

"We respect Bangladesh's sovereignty, and we have never engaged in any conversations about taking over St Martin's Island.

"We value our partnership with Bangladesh. We strive to bolster our relationship by working together to promote democracy,

HONG KONG CONVENTION Dhaka ratifies UN accord on ship recycling

REUTERS, London

An international accord on recycling ships is set to begin within 24 months after Bangladesh and Liberia became the latest countries to ratify the accord, officials said on Monday.

The Hong Kong Convention, a treaty set up by the UN shipping agency – the International Maritime Organization (IMO), is aimed at ensuring that ships, when being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives, do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health, safety, or the environment.

Much of the world's shipbreaking takes place at sites across South Asia in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan and involves dangerous manual labour where workers dismantle ships and are exposed to toxic substances.

Working conditions still remain perilous, including fires and falling steel plates, which kill or seriously injure workers across the breaker yards in South Asia, according to analysis from campaigners with the NGO Shipbreaking Platform, which monitors conditions at sites.

The Hong Kong Convention was adopted in 2009 by 63 countries aiming to boost working conditions.

Nevertheless, it needed to meet various criteria, including having at least 40 percent of the world's merchant shipping by gross tonnage represented by ratifying nations, which had not been met previously despite other large maritime nations such as India already ratifying it.

The accession of Bangladesh and Liberia means the total of 22 contracting states to the convention represent approximately 45.81 percent of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant shipping, the IMO said in a statement.

The combined annual ship recycling volume of the 22 contracting states during the preceding 10 years amounted to 23.8 million gross tonnage, equivalent to 3.31 percent of the required recycling volume and above the required 3 percent threshold.

Lenn Eugene Nagbe, chief executive of the Liberia Maritime Authority, said it was “a great and historic day for world shipping”.

Bangladesh had “demonstrated global leadership and commitment as a major ship recycling country to environmentally safe and sustainable ship recycling” by acceding to the Convention, Saida Muna Tasneem, Dhaka's permanent IMO representative, added to the statement.



Bachelors' struggle to find apartments

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

There is no shortage of buildings in Dhaka. So many apartments all around but if you are a bachelor who is looking to rent one of them then truly you are in tough luck. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when it became so difficult to rent an apartment as a bachelor but there's no denying that it's one of the most dreaded things in Dhaka ranking closely behind traffic congestion.

Whether one is a student or a working person, it makes little to no difference. As long as they are bachelors, the chance to get a suitable apartment in Dhaka is staggeringly low.

There are a number of challenges while apartment hunting as a bachelor. The most common one and perhaps often a bit insulting is the fact that landlords will not even speak to a bachelor or show them the apartment just merely for the reason that they are bachelors and he will not rent to bachelors.

Take Saikat Barua for example. Barua has recently graduated, finishing his Master's degree and started working at a private company. So, naturally he had to leave his dormitory and find a new place to live, preferably a place near his office.

“Naturally you start on the streets, browsing through the posters. But

often the posters say nothing about bachelors. So, when you go to see the apartment, the landlord is annoyed at you for being a bachelor even though the poster said nothing about whether or not they are willing to rent to bachelors. Waste of time and energy to go see a place that you had no chance of getting in the first place,” said Barua recalling those tough times.

Even if you manage to find a landlord who is willing to rent out to bachelors, the deals are not exactly reasonable. Chilekotha or attics for example – they are unbelievably warm at any time of the day and the facilities are a bare minimum, yet such rooms go for equal or higher rent as any other apartment in the building.

The bachelors are not allowed to even explore the other apartments but the attic is a take-it-or-leave-it deal and such is the lodging facility in Dhaka that bachelors will jump at the chance.

Shamim, a young man who works at a bank, has recently moved into a place near Jatrabaria after two weeks of exhausting effort.

“You can never find an apartment within the first few floors. The floors above the 5th or the 6th or a single room on the roof; that's what you get for being a bachelor. It's difficult walking up the stairs to the 6th floor a few times a day without a lift. But you have to pick that one because

there's really no other decent places available for bachelors,” Shamim said with a sigh, perhaps recalling the time a landlord asked him for two months' advance even though the common practice is one month's advance.

Bachelor or not, apartment hunting itself is a physically and emotionally demanding task. If one is alienated by the landlords on top of that, it becomes a truly herculean task to find a place. There's also the issue of increased rents for bachelors. And on top of that, comes a set of rules set by the landlord that can be reasonable but often stands on the edge of being unfair.

Why landlords act this way is perhaps not entirely unjustified. They often point out that bachelors leave abruptly; leaving them with empty apartments and it takes a while to find new tenants so they suffer financially. There's also the accusation that bachelors are often irregular with their rents and many landlords strongly disapprove of the lifestyle that some bachelors lead.

It's true that some people truly are terrible tenants but punishing every bachelor in the city for the crimes of a few is a bit unfair. But the reality is this – if you are a bachelor looking to rent a place, you better prepare with your best smile and your suit of armour because this feels very much like a battle.

Special reward for clearing waste fastest on Eid day: DNCC mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Waste management will be prioritised on Eid day in Dhaka North City Corporation and there will be “a special reward” for the ward that can complete clearing up waste first, said DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam yesterday while visiting a cattle market in Uttara.

He also reiterated that waste disposal in the city corporation will be done by 10:00pm on Eid day.

Mayor Atiqul urged everyone to cooperate in ensuring that the waste-related work is done within the designated eight hours. He also distributed leaflets among cattle traders about cleanliness during Eid-ul-Azha.

“Nearly 11,000 DNCC workers will be involved in the process. Poly bags, bleaching powder, and shovels have been distributed through ward councillors,” he added.

He also said that dung from cattle markets would be collected and used as fertiliser for trees under DNCC's tree plantation programmes.

“DNCC has taken up extensive tree plantation initiatives. This year we are collecting dung from the cattle markets,” said Mayor Atiqul.

“The collection process has already begun. We will use them as organic fertiliser,” he added.

Man drowns in lake of botanical garden

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man drowned while swimming in a lake at National Botanical Garden in Dhaka's Mirpur area yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Md Hamza, 19, son of Monir Hossain Sarkar and a resident of Rupnagar area in the city.

Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shah Ali Police Station, said Hamza along with his uncle Sumon Sarkar went to the Botanical Garden in the morning.

He drowned while swimming in the lake around 8:00am, said the OC.

On information, divers from local firefighting units rushed to the spot and recovered his body, the police official added.

2 coaches detach from moving train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Two coaches got detached from a moving train while crossing Akhaura Railway Junction Station of Brahmanbaria yesterday morning.

No one was reported injured in the incident that took place around 10:30am, said Senior Deputy Assistant Engineer (Head TXR) Md Shamim Ahmed.

The last two compartments of the Dhaka-bound Intercity Subarna Express from Chattogram were separated from the running train after the buffer shank of the joint between bogie 1305 and 1310 got damaged, the engineer said.

The train left for Dhaka around 11:45am after the joint was repaired.

BNP aims to tap Eid

FROM PAGE 1

They will hold programmes in Dinajpur on July 19, Rajshahi on July 28, Jashore on August 5, Habiganj on August 12, and in Barishal on August 19.

BNP leaders observe that people's involvement in agitation programmes has increased over the last few months and this involvement will increase further if the party can create a momentum.

This is because people are upset with the government for various reasons, including price hike of essentials and load shedding, they added.

“Leaders have been instructed to drum up public support for the party's one-point movement during their visits to their localities,” Rizvi said, adding that most of the leaders have already reached their areas.

The BNP has also instructed its leaders to stand by the family members of those leaders who are now behind bars or have become victims of enforced disappearances.

Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu, organising secretary of the BNP, said he was holding meetings with party leaders in his area and exchanging Eid greetings with the people.

“We are motivating people to join the one-point movement. Most of the leaders are already working to garner public support for the movement,” he said.

EU, Unesco to help developing countries shape AI rules

AFP, Paris

The European Union will help fund a Unesco scheme supporting developing countries as they create laws regulating artificial intelligence, the UN cultural body said yesterday.

Four million euros (\$4.4 million) from Brussels will go towards organising events and advising governments.

A silent revolution waged by farmers

FROM PAGE 1

banana and watermelon production.

Production of mango has hit its highest mark this year since the country's independence, say officials of Department of Agricultural Extension.

The country now holds the second position in annual jackfruit production, seventh in mango and eighth in guava production in the world, according to latest FAO estimates.

Besides, java plum (jaam), litchi, jujube, star fruit (kamranga), wood apple, lemon, pineapple, lotkon (Burmese grape), custard apple and sapodilla (safeda) are also included on the list of fruits being farmed on large scales.

Production of non-native fruits has also reached new heights to meet growing demands for strawberry, dragon fruit and malta.

“A silent revolution has taken place in fruit production. New areas like the Chattogram Hill Tracts have been included in commercial fruit production. We are even exporting fruits now. Foreign fruits like strawberry, rambutan and dragon fruit are also showing good prospects,” Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque told The Daily Star.

In addition to a gradual change in food habit towards a healthy diet, people's purchasing capacity has increased, according to agricultural experts. These factors have led to an increase in the demand for fruits, which explains why more and more farmers are showing an interest in fruit production, they say.

“Since rice as a staple food is not as profitable as it was, a large number of farmers have turned to fruit production. The farmers are using every conceivable space for cultivating fruits,” said Sattar Mandal, former vice chancellor of Bangladesh Agriculture University.

Soil condition is also favourable for the cultivation of foreign fruits like malta, strawberry and dragon fruits, he said.

Even a decade ago, most of the local fruits were available for only three months during the hot and humid summer. People eagerly waited for May, June, and July when mango, litchi, jackfruit and the other tropical fruits would appear in markets.

The scene has changed, however. Several fruits are found year-round.

“Fruits are not only available for three months now. We can have guava, banana, papaya and some other fruits round the year. Besides, due to the introduction of early and late varieties of mango, we are trying to create an opportunity to have the popular fruit throughout the year,” said Mehedi Masood, the Project Director of the Year-Round Fruit Production for Nutrition Improvement Project.

The goal of the project is to make fruits available round the year and meet the nutrition demand of the population, Masood told The Daily Star, adding that the DAE has been implementing it since 2014-15.

He said that progress has been made in increasing per capita fruit consumption.

“But there is still a long way to go in attaining the ideal consumption of 250 grams of fruit daily for adults,” he said.

Since the inception of the project, over 1.77 lakh farmers have been given training in fruit cultivation through the horticulture centres, DAE officials said.

Besides, over 47 lakh fruit trees were planted across the country during this period.

According to the DAE, in the 2006-07 fiscal year, fruits were cultivated on 4.74 lakh hectares of land and the yield was 87.86 lakh tonnes.

In 2021-22 FY, agricultural land for fruit farming has jumped to 7.34 lakh hectares and fruit production to 1.43 crore tonnes.

“Due to changes in weather patterns, we are having longer spells of summer. The change is conducive to growing more tropical fruits round the year,” said Mandal.

The agricultural minister, however, said that fruit storage is still a big challenge and that's why the government is focusing on setting up multipurpose cold storage facilities across the country under a project called Programme on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, and Resilience in Bangladesh (PARTNER).

“We are also encouraging scientists to find out the way how the shelf life of the fruits can be expanded,” said the minister.

Meanwhile, Masood said that they have taken an initiative for dried jackfruit, mango and pineapple so that those can be consumed later.

According to the agriculture ministry, the number of fruit varieties cultivated in Bangladesh has increased from 56 a decade ago to 72 now.

Irregularities

FROM PAGE 1

company saved about Tk 1.53 crore.

The CAG, however, said the explanation is valid for the cancellation of the first tender and not the successive tenders.

Subsequently, the report called for taking action against those responsible for the production loss of an important medicine during a public health crisis in the country.

Besides, EDCL also caused a loss of about Tk 18.38 crore by keeping another purchased equipment uninstalled and unused at its Gopalganj pharmaceutical factory plant-3 for two and a half years.

When quizzed, the company pinned the delay on the pandemic. The audit team dismissed the excuse as “illogical”.

The audit also found that the company incurred a loss of Tk 1.58 crore for extending a special allowance meant for employees who were directly involved in treating Covid-19 patients to those who were ineligible.

The CAG audit team called for refunding the allowance to the company fund.

Never had talks with Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1

including by supporting free and fair elections.”

At a press conference on June 21, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina vowed not to compromise the sovereignty of Bangladesh as she called the BNP's motives into question, suggesting it would be willing to “mortgage” St Martin's Island in order to assume power.

Hasina said the BNP rose to power in 2001 “promising to sell gas” and questioned whether the opposition party was looking for votes by promising to sell off the country or St Martin's Island.

Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon MP recently claimed in parliament that the US had eyes on the southernmost island of the country.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu also recently questioned in parliament whether

the US meddling in Bangladesh affairs was for democracy or for the control of St Martins Island.

The US, which has been critical of the 2014 and 2018 national elections for alleged irregularities, declared a visa policy for Bangladesh on May 24, saying that it would deny visas to any Bangladeshi individual believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

Top US officials have also been visiting Bangladesh in the recent months and US Ambassador Peter Haas held talks with different political parties stressing the need for free and fair elections.

Twelve Congressmen – six Republicans and six Democrats – also recently wrote to the Biden Administration calling for steps for upholding democracy and human rights in Bangladesh.

World Cup from Oct 5 to Nov 19

FROM PAGE 1

neighbours, who play each other only in multi-team events.

Pakistan responded by threatening to boycott the World Cup if they were not allowed to stage at least some matches of the Asia Cup on home soil.

The stalemate was finally resolved this month when Pakistan agreed to split matches with Sri Lanka, where India will play their Asia Cup matches.

South Asia's arch-rivals meet in the tournament's most anticipated match on Oct. 15 in Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium - the biggest cricket venue in the world by capacity.

However, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) added a caveat saying they would still need government clearance for any tour to India, including World Cup match venues.

India begin their campaign on October 8 against five-times champions Australia in Chennai.

England's opener against New

Zealand is a rematch of the 2019 final in which England prevailed via a now-scrapped boundary count rule.

Among other key fixtures, 1992 champions Pakistan meet Australia in Bengaluru on October 20, while England take on South Africa the following day in Mumbai.

The first semifinal will take place on November 15 in Mumbai with Kolkata hosting the second the following day. Both games, as well as the final, will be day-night fixtures.

There will be a total of 10 venues for the 10-team tournament – Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Dharamsala, Delhi, Chennai, Lucknow, Pune, Bengaluru, Mumbai and Kolkata.

Apart from hosts India, the teams that have qualified include Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, New Zealand, Pakistan and South Africa.

Two more sides will join them following a qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe, which will conclude on July 9.

Main Eid jamaat in Jatiya Eidgah at 7:30am

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main Eid congregation will be held at Jatiya Eidgah maidan, located adjacent to the High Court, around 7:30am on the day of Eid-ul-Azha.

As per the Dhaka South City Corporation, Jatiya Eidgah has the capacity to accommodate a total of 35,000 devotees, including both men and women.

The expansive grounds cover an area of 25,400 square metres, providing ample space for the congregational prayers.

Special arrangements have been made to ensure separate prayer areas for women at the venue as well.

Meanwhile, five congregations will be held at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, starting from 7:00am on Eid day. The second one will be held at 8:00am while the next three jamaats will be held at 9:00am, 10:00am and 10:45am respectively.



A child nestled on her mother's lap, waves goodbye to her father through the window of a North Bengal-bound bus. As Eid draws near, families embark on journeys to celebrate holidays with their loved ones, while others stay behind, their hearts connected by the joyous spirit of the season. This picture was taken at Dhaka's Kalyanpur Bus Stand yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Cattle trouble on Eid? Call 999

Law enforcers vigilant; receive 282 calls in 7 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite the vigilance of law enforcers, various criminal activities such as extortions, spreading counterfeit currency and incidents of forcing traders to take cattle to a particular market continue to occur in the lead-up to Eid-ul-Azha.

According to data from the national emergency helpline number 999, 282 calls were received between June 20 and June 26 in this regard.

Among these calls, around 100 reported incidents of extortion at cattle markets, rivers, and roadsides.

Besides, approximately 111 calls were made regarding the forcible transportation of cattle to markets, 11 were related to dope gang activities, and four were concerning counterfeit notes.

Mohammad Tabarak Ullah, the additional deputy inspector general of the national emergency helpline number, told The Daily Star that special measures have been put in place to address and resolve these issues, ensuring a safe Eid experience for the public.

He said upon receiving any complaint, they collaborate with local police stations to ensure swift legal action.

Meanwhile, Khandker Golam Faruq, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, stated that the police force is working to ensure the safety and comfort of individuals travelling home for Eid. "We have implemented sufficient security measures," he said.

However, to prevent accidents, Faruq urged the youth not to engage in racing with motorcycles or private

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Braving rain, gridlock to reach home



PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid rain, homegoers are rushing to celebrate Eid with their relatives in trucks and pickups, failing to avail seats in buses.

Besides, many low-income people are forced to choose the good carrying vehicles as means of reaching destinations due to the extra fare in public transport.

Visiting the Chandra and Kaliakair areas in Gazipur, this correspondent saw the pressure of homegoers has increased as Eid vacation in different factories started yesterday.

Many along with families were seen waiting for a long time with luggage to board buses and trucks to go to the districts in the north and north-eastern regions. Buses were filled to the brim with holidaymakers.

Habibul was going to Sirajganj on a truck. He said they paid Tk 300 per person to go to Sirajganj from Chandra. Failing to find a seat on a bus, Rafiqul Islam boarded a truck to reach Rangpur by paying Tk 500. This correspondent talked to him in Kaliakair when he was already drenched by rain. Rafiqul said he will try to catch a bus after reaching Sirajganj.

There is often a high demand for transport as people travel to celebrate Eid with their families and loved ones. This increased demand leads to overcrowded buses, forcing people to travel on trucks or pickup vans, risking their lives.

Rain falls, cattle price drops

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The price of sacrificial animals, especially bulls, at different cattle markets in the capital, saw a slight drop yesterday, compared to the last two days.

Traders blamed the inclement weather since Tuesday morning and poor buyer turnout against a huge supply for the declining prices.

Though the market got momentum yesterday as many visited the spots, the numbers were still low compared to the cattle available at the markets.

"I purchased a bull for Tk 1.60 lakh today (yesterday) from Dhupkhola cattle market. The price of the same animal was around Tk 2 lakh for the past two days," said Minhazul Abedin of Shorafatganj Lane.

Ahmed Nabi, a resident of East Shewrapara, purchased a bull for Tk 1.48 lakh from Kachukhet cattle market.

"The asking price of similar sized bulls was over Tk 1.80 lakh for the last three days," he added.

The price of small-sized bulls has dropped by Tk 5,000-10,000, while that of a bull has decreased by Tk 15,000-30,000, said Anwar Hossain of Gandaria.

While the customers were happy with the prices, the traders complained of losses and meagre profits.

They, however, were happy

with the customer rush in the last moments before the grand day.

"I have sold a bull for Tk 1.10 lakh today, incurring a loss of Tk 10,000. I had bought the animal for the same price a couple of months ago and also had to invest additionally for its food and transporting it to Dhaka from Faridpur," said Masud, a victim of the



PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

recent Bangbazar fire incident, who brought nine bulls to the Dholaikhal cattle market six days ago.

"I had lost around Tk 30 lakh in the fire and taken up this business, hoping for profits. However, the reality is different," he added.

"The bull supply this year is higher than the market demands. Thus, the prices are lower," said Mohammad

Shamim, who bought two bulls for Tk 2.5 lakh each but has not been able to sell them yet.

Mohammad Aziz Mollah, a trader of Kazir Hat in Pabna, said he brought 17 bulls to the Kachukhet cattle market three days ago. However, only six of them were sold, at a loss of around Tk 5,000 each.

"I was offered Tk 52,000 for

a bull at the local market. But I had to sell the same animal for a loss of Tk 1,000. However, I expect a rush of customers tonight and hope to profit from the remaining ones," he said.

Meanwhile, Uzzal Mollah, who brought 21 sheep to the Kachukhet market, said he made profits selling his animals.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Govt must uphold workers' rights

Solidarity Center condemns murder of labour leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Solidarity Center, a US rights platform, yesterday condemned the murder of Shahidul Islam, a workers' leader who had been negotiating to get workers of a factory their arrears in Gazipur.

Shahidul, president of Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF) Gazipur district committee, fought for workers' rights throughout his 25-year-long journey as a trade union organiser, said the Solidarity Center in a statement.

As evident in this case, some employers use hired goons and yellow unions to systematically prevent independent unions from representing workers effectively.

The organisation also said 11 years ago, in April 2012, another worker leader, Aminul Islam, was tortured and murdered.

Aminul was also an organiser with BGIWF, a key player in the country's movement to advance workers' rights.

The Solidarity Center knew both Shahidul and Aminul personally, and for decades admired their dedication.

The statement also said the fear stoked by a second horrific murder of a BGIWF leader will undoubtedly make the task of organising trade unions in Bangladesh even more difficult.

"As evident in this case, some employers use hired goons and yellow unions to systematically prevent independent unions from representing workers effectively."

Shahidul's murder this week and Aminul's murder over a decade ago underscore the absence of an environment where workers can freely exercise their rights without intimidation, the statement said.

According to the first information report of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

DHAKA-17 BY-POLLS Arafat's absence at meeting irks CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal expressed his irritation as Awami League candidate for Dhaka-17 by-polls did not attend a views-exchange meeting yesterday.

Dhaka north city AL office secretary William Pralay Samaddar -- who represented party candidate Mohammad A Arafat, said at the meeting that he did not join it as he "was unwell".

The Election Commission held the meeting with candidates regarding electoral code of conduct.

Except for Arafat, all attended the programme held at EC office.

Journalists were allowed at the event.

The meeting started on time at 11:00am. About half an hour later, Samaddar entered the room. At that time, the CEC wanted to know Samaddar's identity.

The CEC was then informed that he had come as a representative of Arafat.

The CEC expressed some irritation. He turned off the microphone, and said, "Why did the candidate not come, why did the representative come... and that too after 30 minutes."

At one point, the CEC also said the AL candidate was not present at the views-exchange programme during the Cumilla City Corporation election.

Later, the meeting went on.

After the programme, Samaddar told reporters that Arafat received the letter of invitation to the EC's meeting on Monday.

"He is feeling unwell after campaigning in two or

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Rain may continue during Eid

UNB, Dhaka

Rain may continue in Dhaka and other parts of the country over the next 72 hours starting from 9:00am yesterday, according to Bangladesh Meteorological Department's (BMD) forecast.

As per the prediction, people may experience rain on the day of Eid-ul-Azha to be celebrated on Thursday.

"Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind are likely to occur at most places over Khulna, Barishal, Dhaka, Chattogram, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions; at many places in Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions, with moderately heavy to very heavy falls at places across the country," the Met Office said.

The highest, 66mm, rainfall was recorded in Barishal's Khepupara in 24 hours, till 6:00am yesterday.



ENJOYING MONSOON... Even though their parents seemed a bit worried and tried to shelter them from drizzle, these two toddlers were having a blast as they kept on enjoying the scenic rain. This photo was taken in Mugda area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



SIMPLE JOYS OF LIFE... A girl plays with bubbles in her balcony in Barishal city's Chadmari area. Her face lights up as she dips one end of a pipe into soap water and blows through it to shoot bubbles into the air.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

DG of drug admin gets 'integrity award'

STAR REPORT

Major General Mohammad Yousuf, director general of the Directorate General of Drug Administration, has received the "Integrity Award 2022-23".

He received the award among the heads of the affiliated directorates of the health ministry.

Integrity award is given to the officers and employees of the government for their outstanding contributions for prevention of corruption and promotion of integrity.

Mohammad Yousuf was among the four officers and employees of the Health Services Division of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare who received the award, according to a circular published recently.

Arafat's

FROM PAGE 3
three areas. He had a fever. Therefore, he did not come to the meeting considering the risk to his own health and that of others. He will get tested for Covid-19," he added.

Meanwhile, at the meeting, the CEC warned that they would monitor the polls through CCTV camera and would "stop the election" if there is any electoral irregularity.

Blacksmiths back in business



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

DIPAN NANDY

With only two days left for Eid-ul-Azha, one of the biggest religious festival of Muslims, blacksmiths and the knife sharpeners all over the capital are experiencing busy times in their shops.

Akbar, a blacksmith in Karwan Bazar, shared his experience while forging a burnt iron sheet to create a sharp knife locally known as a "Chapati".

"Prior to Eid-ul-Azha, we find ourselves swamped with work, while remaining relatively idle for the rest of the year. Although we do have wholesale buyers for knives and slaughtering tools throughout the year, it is during Eid-ul-Azha that retail buyers flock to us in large numbers," said Akbar.

The price of these essential tools vary based on the quality and quantity of iron used. Presently, Chapatis are being sold for Tk 450-900, butcher knives for Tk 150-300, small knives for Tk 50-250, and cleavers for Tk 250-450.

Adjacent to the blacksmith workshops in Karwan Bazar, there are shops dedicated to selling cut outs of tree trunks that are used for chopping large pieces of meat and bone. These tree trunks are priced at Tk 150-450 for general consumers whereas sturdier trunks, intended for professional butchers, cost Tk 800-2,000.

Not only are the city's blacksmiths reaping the benefits of this peak season for their ironwork, but knife sharpeners are also capitalising on the increased demand.

These knife sharpeners can be spotted along various city roads, offering their sharpening services at a reasonable cost ranging from Tk 50-100 per piece.

Ashraf Miah, a knife sharpener operating in the Segun Bagicha area, highlighted, "I provide this service throughout the year, but the period leading up to Eid-ul-Azha is particularly busy for us."

Dengue

FROM PAGE 5
of whom 1,795 are from outside Dhaka.

Some 1,410 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment, of whom 399 are from outside the capital.

A total of 6,297 dengue patients were released from hospitals across the country so far.

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

As many residents are expected to leave Dhaka for the Eid vacation, experts are concerned about the potential increase in dengue breeding grounds that may emerge during this period of vacant households. Without adequate measures in place, the empty houses become potential hotspots for stagnant water accumulation, the ideal breeding habitat for Aedes mosquitoes.

Rain falls

FROM PAGE 3
"I have already sold six sheep, the price of which is between Tk 8,000-11,000. I was able to make profits as fewer sheep were brought to the market this year. I hope to sell all the animals by tomorrow," said Uzzal, who sold 15 sheep last year. Khورشed Alam, who sold six sheep out of his eight for Tk 10,000-13,000, making Tk 1,000 in profits for each, expressed his satisfaction. "Sheep ensure profits in the markets almost every year," he said.

National Zoo ready to welcome Eid visitors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, the National Zoo is being prepared to entertain the city-dwellers during the Eid holidays.

Cleaning and decoration works are going on in various animal sheds. The authorities are expecting at least 1.5 lakh visitors to visit the zoo during this holiday.

The Daily Star spoke to National Zoo curator Mazibur Rahman about the upcoming Eid preparations.

"As always, this time too, we anticipate an increase in visitors during Eid," he said. "We have two tasks for Eid, one is organising the zoo and the other is cleaning the animal sheds."

The number of directional sign boards will be increased for easier movement and also for beautification.

The authorities have taken various initiatives considering the needs and benefits of the visitors coming to this zoo located in Mirpur of the capital. Some designs have also been made to modernise the zoo.

At the same time, new animals have

been brought from different parts of the world in last year. So far 16 animals of five species have been brought. These include four African lions, three pelicans, three wildebeests, two kangaroos from the Netherlands and four llamas, he said.

Mazibur Rahman said, "There is a children's park and a museum in the zoo. Since children are the main visitors of the zoos and it's also a great medium of education for them -- the park is designed to give children a different taste."

The largest zoo in the country is spread over an area of 186 acres. Established in 1974, thousands of visitors come from far and wide to this entertainment center every day. The zoo has 42 animals of eight species of carnivores, 271 of 19 species of large animals (herbivores) and 198 of 18 species of small mammals.

There are also 72 reptiles of 10 species, 1,162 birds of 56 species, 3,065 animals including 200 species of fish are kept in the aquarium. Altogether there are 162 animal and bird cages.

The authority said the zoo will be open from 9:00am and will close after sunset during Eid holidays.



A leading cause of child death

FROM PAGE 5

death registration plays a crucial role in obtaining an accurate picture of child drowning fatalities.

Referring to the SDGs aimed at reducing child mortality, a spokesperson for SoMaSHTe stated, "If ward members are made aware, every drowning fatality can be registered and stored in the database. If each union receives instructions from the Ministry of Local Government, the UPs will accord them due consideration."

Despite frequent attempts via phone calls and messages over a three-day period, Md Rashidul Hassan, registrar general of the Local Government Division's Birth and Death Registration office,

could not be reached for comment.

Dr Robed Amin, the spokesperson for the Directorate General of Health Services, said since drowning is recognised as a community death, it requires verification through verbal autopsy.

"In a few upazilas, DGHS has launched a pilot project in which specially trained healthcare workers visit the deceased's home, interview the family, and analyse the data to identify the scientific cause of death. Expanding this project nationwide could provide a comprehensive understanding of community deaths, including drowning," he said.

He said with comprehensive data, they

can strategically plan interventions based on geographic locations with high death tolls, areas abundant with rivers, specific age groups facing higher risks, and areas requiring special attention.

According to SoMaSHTe data from January 2020 to May 2023, approximately 3,533 people died due to drowning in Bangladesh. Of these, 3,099 (87.71 percent) were children who drowned in nearby waterbodies while being unattended.

The highest number of deaths was documented in August 2021, indicating that the rainy seasons, when the waterbodies are filled, are the most critical periods.

Another century-old building

FROM PAGE 5

ornaments -- a hallmark of heritage structures in Old Dhaka.

The rear of the building encompasses another open courtyard and a shorter block that extends towards the back boundary. However, it is the building's street-side appearance that captivates onlookers with its unique architectural style and ornamentation.

The structure exhibits two semi-octagonal blocks on either side, with a swing-porch nestled between them -- a characteristic influenced by French architecture, prevalent in the Farashganj-Sutrapur area.

Additionally, metal bracket supported

balconies, a common feature in neighbouring buildings, further enhance the visual charm of Mangalaya.

Of particular note is the second floor of the building, where three decorative pediments [triangular upper parts of a building] grace the roof in the elegant French Rococo style. Among these, the central pediment prominently displays a portrait of its founder Ashutosh Babu.

The sale of Mangalaya by Dilip Das, the grandson of Ashutosh Das, who migrated to India, has cast a shadow of uncertainty over its future. Activists and concerned citizens are advocating for the

preservation of this cultural treasure, hoping to avert its potential demolition and ensure that Mangalaya continues to stand as a testament to Dhaka's rich heritage.

Taimur Islam, chief executive of the USG, said, "This building holds immense significance for all citizens passionate about preserving cultural heritage due to its aesthetic importance. The unique decorations and distinctive architectural elements make it unparalleled in Dhaka. The three decorative triangular pediments on the roof of this centennial two-story building are not found in any other building in Dhaka."

Caution issued

FROM PAGE 5
utilisation of custom malware and payloads, defacements, sinkhole botnets, ransomware incidents, data destruction, sensitive data disclosure, and impersonation, among others, according to the notice.

To mitigate these risks, BGD e-GOV CIRT recommends several measures, including strict 24/7 monitoring of network and user activity, especially during non-office hours. Entities should remain vigilant for any signs of data exfiltration, repeated patterns indicating lateral movement, discovery, or command and control behaviour.

Furthermore, mobile users have been advised to exercise caution while browsing the internet, refraining from accessing untrusted sites or downloading files from them.

Entities are also encouraged to enhance their capability to combat evolving cyber threats and promptly report any suspicious activities observed within their environment. Reports of such attacks can be submitted through the BGD e-GOV CIRT's incident reporting portal at <https://www.cirt.gov.bd/incident-reporting/> or by emailing cti@cirt.gov.bd.

Tripled in last 3 years

FROM PAGE 5
initiated by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Shishu Academy, said Mir Masrur Zaman, director of Society for Media and Suitable Human communication

Techniques, an organisation committed to prevent drowning deaths through media campaigning.

"Such cases usually rise during the monsoon. Children should not be allowed to bathe in ponds

or play around them without adult supervision," he added.

Meanwhile, locals also urged that the authorities must scale up drowning prevention programmes in the district.

Cattle trouble on Eid? Call 999

FROM PAGE 3
vehicles on empty Dhaka roads.

He delivered this statement while addressing the media at the Mohakhali bus terminal yesterday.

He advised individuals to report any complaints they have by contacting the national emergency helpline number, assuring that lawful actions will be taken against all irregularities.

"We implemented effective security measures

during the previous Eid, resulting in a peaceful environment in empty Dhaka. This time, we have also taken ample security precautions. Alongside uniformed officers, undercover law enforcers will be on duty," Faruq added.

The DMP commissioner said a special operation against theft and drug gangs has been conducted over the past month before Eid.

"We have apprehended 600 individuals involved

in such incidents and brought them to justice. Additionally, our efforts to confiscate counterfeit currency are ongoing, with a significant amount already recovered and several individuals, including a gang leader, arrested," he explained.

Faruq further disclosed that CCTV cameras, watch towers and counterfeit money detection machines have been arranged to ensure the security of the 21 cattle markets.

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MANGALAYA IN FARASHGANJ

Another century-old building faces demolition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mangalaya, a century-old heritage building situated in Old Dhaka's Farashganj area, is currently facing the imminent threat of demolition.

The new owner of the property has already started the destruction of a significant portion of the building, including its unique ornaments and features, known as Putul Bari on BK Das Road.

While the site is not officially recognised as a protected heritage by the Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) and the Department of Archaeology, it holds significant historical values, being included in the Urban Study Group's list of 2,200 British-era buildings marked as heritage sites in Old Dhaka, as mandated by a 2018 High Court directive.

Following a complaint filed by the USG, local residents, and citizens, Sutrapur Police Station yesterday intervened and halted the ongoing demolition activities, confirmed the station's Officer-in-Charge Mainul Islam.

But activists remain skeptical, citing past instances where demolition has resumed once the issue fades from public attention.



In the first image at the top, the iconic “Mangalaya” building in Dhaka’s Farashganj stands proudly, showcasing its architectural grandeur. However, in the two pictures below, a scene of devastation unfolds as workers dismantle the unique features on the second floor (Right), and the current state of the building (Left). However, the local police station yesterday intervened and halted the ongoing demolition activities, but the threats to this century-old heritage site still remain.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

President, PM greet people on Eid

BSS, Dhaka

President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday greeted countrymen as well as the Muslims around the world on the occasion of the Eid-ul-Azha to be observed on June 29. On the eve of the day, the president and prime minister issued separate messages wishing the people of the country a prosperous Eid.



In his message, the president said the global inflation is on the rise due to the impact of the pandemic and war-conflicts in different parts of the world.

In this context, low income people around the world are facing various obstacles, he added.

He urged the affluent people of the country to stand by those affected by these hardships so that they can enjoy the Eid this year.

The president also called upon the citizens to sacrifice their animals in government designated places.

In her message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, “On the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, I am extending my greetings to all the Muslims across the globe, including Bangladesh.”

“I want to say ‘Eid Mubarak’ [to all].”

She hoped that like every year, this Eid will bring happiness and joy to all.

Hasina prayed to Allah for continued peace, progress and prosperity of the country and Muslim ummah on the holy day.

3 including 2 children die in road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Three persons including two children were killed in a head-on collision between a CNG-run auto-rickshaw and a human haulier – locally known as (Bhotbhoti) – in Bogura yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as Ashamoni, 6, her sister Khadiza, 3, and the auto-rickshaw driver Aminul Islam, 54, said Imtiaz Ahmed, sub-inspector of Bagura Sadar Police Station.

The parents of the two sisters were seriously injured, he said. “The accident took place at 8:30am in Erulia area under Bogura Sadar upazila when a Bogura-bound CNG-run auto-rickshaw collided head-on with a Bhotbhoti coming from the opposite direction,” the SI said.

Ashamaoni and Khadija’s parents Rashed Sheikh and Josna are now undergoing treatment at a Hospital.

50,000 people travelled through Benapole in 12 days

STAR REPORT

The number of passengers crossing through Benapole International Check-post has increased significantly ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

In 12 days (June 16 to June 25), at least 52,739 passengers have travelled between Bangladesh and India through the Benapole check-post.

Among the travellers, 22,673 have gone to India and 30,066 returned from India.

Benapole Check-post Immigration Officer-in-Charge Ahsan Habib said that due to the long Eid holidays, the number of passengers travelling through Benapole has increased significantly from last Friday.

“The immigration authorities are fully prepared to handle this pressure,” the OC said, adding that all formalities of passengers were being completed at Benapole part as quickly as possible.

In the morning, there was half a kilometre long line outside the immigration check-post.

Abul Kalam told The Daily Star said that they will spend Eid holiday in India as the Indian visa is easily available to Bangladeshis.

CYBER THREAT

Caution issued for govt, other entities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Government’s Computer Incident Response Team (BGD e-GOV CIRT) has issued a notice urging government, military, and financial institutions to remain vigilant and take necessary security measures against potential cyber-attacks ahead of Eid.

The notice issued yesterday and signed by Mohammad Saiful Alam Khan, project director of BGD e-GOV CIRT, mentioned that various sectors including government and military entities, critical information infrastructures (CII), law enforcement agencies, banks and NBFI, pharmaceuticals, retail and industrial organisations, and energy and education sectors could be targeted.

The potential adversaries mentioned in the notice include Ransomware Threat Actors, Nation-state Threat Actors, script kiddies with credential harvesting expertise, as well as Ransomware and APT Threat Actors such as “Money Message” and “Akira”.

The cyber-attacks may involve credential theft, DDoS attacks, brute force attacks, web attacks,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

DEATH BY DROWNING

Tripled in last 3 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

On June 5, Mahinur, a homemaker, found his son Tamim, 10, floating in a nearby canal upon returning from a nearby meadow in Londa village of Patuakhali’s Galachipa upazila.

His father Helal Matubbor, a farmer, was still in the field when he was informed of the incident.

Tamim was rushed to the upazila health complex where the doctors declared him dead.

“I had just stepped out to feed the cows. I wish I had taken him with me...,” said Mahinur.

Another four-year-old boy drowned in the same upazila that day.

Zobayer, 4, son of Jalil Mridha of Haridebpur village, fell into a pond near his home while playing with other children. He was taken to the same hospital only to be declared dead by the doctors.

A total of six children drowned in Patuakhali that day, two more in Galachipa and one each in Kalapara and Mirzaganj upazilas.

On May 12, three children of the same family – Soheli Fakir’s children Sharmin, 5, and Ruman, 7; and Marium, 8, daughter of Rubel Fakir – drowned while they were bathing in a nearby pond in Kalapara’s Itharia village.

According to the Patuakhali Civil Surgeon Office, 106 children drowned in the district in 2022. The numbers were 56 in 2021 and 29 in 2020. A total of 44 children drowned in the district between January 1 and June 7 this year.

“The rate of drowning children is slightly higher in this district as it is situated near the Bay of Bengal and is home to a lot of canals and waterbodies. The incidents mainly occur between 8:00am and 2:00pm as the kids remain unattended at home with their parents being busy with work and household chores. However, these incidents can be prevented if the children are taught swimming at an early age and fences are built around waterbodies,” said Dr SM Kabir Hasan, the district’s civil surgeon.

Noting the issue, the government has approved “Integrated Community Based Center for Child Care, Protection and Swim Safe Facilities”, a project jointly

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

According to Patuakhali Civil Surgeon Office, 106 children drowned in the district in 2022. The numbers were 56 in 2021 and 29 in 2020. A total of 44 children drowned in the district between January 1 and June 7 this year.

A leading cause of child death

Registering incidents key for policy intervention, say experts

NILIMA JAHAN

In Bangladesh, media reports indicate a threefold increase in child deaths due to drowning, which is recognised as a leading cause of mortality among children under five in rural areas.

However, the lack of comprehensive national-level data poses a significant challenge in effectively addressing this issue.

Experts highlighted that when it comes to citing drowning-related death data, they rely solely on the 2016 Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey, which revealed a shocking statistic of 30 children under five dying from drowning every day.

Regrettably, due to a lack of awareness, preventable drowning deaths in rural areas are often categorised as natural deaths and not properly recorded in vital statistics.

Despite the presence of a vital registration system in all union parishads, deaths resulting from drowning are largely unreported, hindering the development of appropriate policy responses.

Experts emphasised that if these deaths were accurately registered, the government would gain insights into specific trends in different areas and implement effective interventions to prevent these avoidable fatalities.

Sadrul Hasan Mazumder, convener of National Alliance for Drowning Prevention, highlighted the societal factors that hinder the registration of child drowning deaths.

“After visiting many union parishads and talking to UP chairmen and secretaries, I noticed

some disturbing discoveries. Parents are less motivated to report child deaths under 5 because there are no property-related concerns,” he said.

“Parents also avoid post-mortem investigations for unnatural deaths like drowning due to police involvement, which they find burdensome. Families and society often view such deaths as natural events, discouraging death registration,” he noted.

“Additionally, in cases where a child under 5 dies from drowning,

RECOMMENDATIONS

- National strategy
- Awareness campaign
- Govt, NGO intervention
- Developing rescue skills
- Adult supervision for children
- Teaching children swimming

there are usually no opposing parties involved (although mothers often bear the blame for negligence despite the absence of any opponents), which also contribute to the underreporting of such deaths and discourage parents from registering,” he added.

Sadrul noted that union parishads have standing committees for vaccination, child marriage prevention, and violence prevention, but not for drowning prevention or registration.

He stressed that policymakers and parents have failed to recognise

and adequately address drowning tragedies.

Dr Aminur Rahman, deputy executive director of the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research Bangladesh and director of CIPRB’s International Drowning Research-Bangladesh, expressed a similar concern.

He stressed that a yearly thorough record of deaths in a specific location would help determine whether drowning deaths are rising or falling following an intervention.

He also underlined the significance of having a regular reporting system to accurately track the trend, as annual surveys after an intervention are neither practicable nor cost-effective.

SoMaSHTE, an agency that investigates drowning deaths from national and local media reports, also finds it difficult to get the full story from media reporting.

This is due to the fact that the media may be unaware of what is occurring in remote areas, where

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Local traders fish out shrimps from netted enclosures on the bank of Kirtankhola river in Barishal during low-tides. They said they make around Tk 1,000 selling a kilo of the catch. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Dengue claims two more lives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more dengue patients died and 145 others were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With this, the total number of deaths in dengue rose to 47 this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With the new cases, the total number of dengue this year rose to 7,754,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

PRAYER TIMING	
JUNE 28	
Fazr	Zohr
Asr	Maghrib
Esha	
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-54 8-17	
JAMAAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-57 8-45	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION	



OTT releases this Eid

A feast of mystery, action, and thrills!

As Eid-ul-Azha approaches, OTT platforms are preparing to enthrall audiences with a diverse array of web-series and films that promise to keep viewers on the edge of their seats. From heart-pounding action dramas to suspenseful thrillers, these offerings are set to provide an unforgettable experience for audiences seeking great stories.

ANTARA RAISA

HERE'S OUR LIST OF WHAT TO WATCH ON OTT PLATFORMS THIS EID:

'Mission Hunt Down' (Hoichoi)

Hoichoi is all set to bring audiences an action-packed, drama-thriller with its web-series, *Mission Hunt Down*. The show will be released today, as part of the upcoming Eid celebrations.

The Sanwar Hossain Sunny directorial, *Mission Hunt Down* stars Bidya Sinha Mim and FS Nayeem in the lead roles, weaving a tale of suspense and adventure.

Neera, played by Mim, arrives in Dhaka searching for her missing husband. As she seeks help from the police, she crosses paths with ATS Chief Mahid (played by Nayeem)—a ruthless cop whose only mission is to bring down terrorist organisations. Together, they embark on a mission to find Neera's husband, uncovering a

terrorist conspiracy along the way.

'Infinity 2' (Binge)

Sariful Razz and Mumtaheena Chowdhury Toya reunite in the second season of the action-thriller series, *Infinity*. The dynamic duo finds themselves embarking on another adrenaline-pumped mission, filled with adventure.

Directed by Mehedi Hasib, this gripping series introduces an invisible mastermind behind a series of criminal events, challenging the SUP team to unravel the mystery. Brace yourself for an action-packed

Eid with *Infinity 2*, featuring Shajal Noor, Sanju John, and Sumon Anwar, among others.



'Mercurius' (Chorki)

Prepare to be enthralled by the eight-episode web-series *Mercurius*, directed by Abu Shahed Emon. The series will be released today on Chorki.

Sabila Nur will be making her web-series debut as Joyeeta, who

sets out on a journey to find her missing boyfriend, Robin. However, a mysterious figure named Mercurius starts eliminating rapists, raising

suspicion among the characters.

The trailer and the promotional activities surrounding the series have already created a hype on the internet.

With a star-studded cast including Zakia Bari Mamo, Fazlur Rahman Babu, Gias Uddin Selim, Sharif Siraj, Aisha Khan and Rashed Mamunur Rahman, *Mercurius* promises to deliver a gripping storyline filled with twists and turns.

'Rokto Joba' (iScreen)

Nusrat Imroz Tisha and Sariful Razz will share the screen for the first time in this film. Directed by Niamul Mukta, the web-film will be available on iScreen during Eid-ul-Azha.

The story of the movie revolves around a letter that comes to a retired headmaster, which takes him back to his past. As the film progresses, the viewers get to see various mysteries unravel.

Rokto Joba also stars Lutfor Rahman George, Shilpi Sharkar Apu,

and Jayita Mahalanobish in pivotal roles.

'Nikosh' (Deepto Play)

A few days back, Tasnia Farin uploaded a video where she was asking for everyone's help on Facebook live to find her sister. Later, it was revealed that the video was part of the promotional activities for the web-film, *Nikosh*. The web-film will be released on Deepto Play this Eid.

Nikosh delves into the lives of two sisters, who are entirely different from each other. While one sister strives to uphold family bonds and relationships, the other yearns to break free and chase her dreams. However, one day an incident changes their life for good. Will they find a way back to the light, or will they be forever consumed by the darkness?

The film also stars Mir Naufel Ashrafi Jisan, Mahima Sultana and Joyraj, among others.

NEWS

Whenever

FROM PAGE 12

He said that the nation is not interested in any "outline" prepared and prescribed by the "murderer and fugitive" Tarique Rahman.

People will not allow them to make their dream of taking power through the backdoor come true, the AL leader added.

He said the so-called joint declaration and "all-out movement" made by Fakhrul or the BNP is nothing but a mockery with the people.

Quader said people have seen BNP making many threats about the movement and they have repeatedly rejected the party's call for an "imaginary mass uprising".

The BNP's agitations mean carrying out arson, creating anarchy and disrupting normal life, he said, adding that people will resist their "evil politics of killing people".

He said the BNP's tool of conspiracy is defaming the country and assassinating the character of AL leaders through making fictitious and baseless allegations.

The BNP also hatches conspiracy through conducting anti-state propaganda by employing or hiring lobbyist firms spending millions of dollars, Quader alleged.

He hoped that the AL leaders and activists will resist all anti-national conspiracies with the support of the people.

Holidaymakers face

FROM PAGE 1

More than 70 launches left the Sadarghat terminal before the evening, and 50 more were expected to leave later, said Alamgir Kabir, joint director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, adding that the number of launch passengers increased sharply in the evening.

The tailbacks caused all long-haul buses to be behind schedule by almost an hour, said Suvenker Ghosh, joint secretary general of Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners Association.

He added that the cattle markets and the pressure of vehicles were the main reasons behind the tailbacks at the entry and exit points of the capital.

As the day progressed, traffic on Dhaka-Nabinagar-Chandra highway became heavier, and by afternoon, vehicles were seen moving slowly in many places while hundreds of people were seen waiting for buses at Hemayetpur, Ulail, Savar Bazar, Nabinagar, Baipail, Ashulia and Chandra.

"I tried to get on board a bus for two hours. Now, I am planning to travel by truck," said Armina Begum at Savar's Baipail.

On Dhaka-Tangail highway, an 8-km tailback formed on the east side of Bangabandhu bridge early yesterday after a vehicle broke down and two crashes happened on the bridge.

Pilgrims ascend

FROM PAGE 12

waiting for my entire life," said Fadia Abdallah, 67, from Egypt, wearing a white abaya and sitting on the ground beneath an umbrella.

High temperatures have been a constant challenge for the pilgrims, who come from around the world. Tree-shaped water towers sprayed cooling showers on the visitors, and free water bottles and snacks were handed out from large trucks.

Six field hospitals with more than 300 beds have been arranged in Arafat, Yasser Bair, a Saudi defence ministry official, told the state-run Al-Ekhabariya TV.

The hajj is a life goal for many Muslims, who are expected to perform the pilgrimage at least once if they are financially and physically capable.

The pilgrims prayed all day at Arafat, where the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is said to have given his final sermon. After sunset,

Tailbacks on the east side of the bridge persisted throughout the day. Shariful Islam, additional superintendent of police in Tangail, said police were trying to ease congestion.

Saiful Islam, who was on a Sirajganj-bound bus, said, "I was stuck for almost one and a half hours at Chandra. Then the bus moved slowly only to get stuck near the Bangabandhu bridge."

At regular times, some 17,000 to 18,000 vehicles use the bridge, but in the 24 hours from 12:00am on Monday, 42,560 used it, said Ahsanul Haque Khan Pavel, executive engineer at Bangladesh Bridge Authorities.

However, once the vehicles made it across the Jamuna, the journey to the north was smooth.

On Dhaka-Chattogram highway, vehicles moved slowly in the 13-km stretch between the Meghna bridge and Baushia Pakhir Mor in the evening.

At least 18 ferries operated on the Paturia-Dauladia ferry route and five on the Aricha-Kazirhat route, officials said.

Only three trains did not leave Dhaka on time, said Shah Alam Kiron Shishir, divisional commercial officer (Dhaka) of BR.

(Our Correspondents from Savar, Tangail, Pabna, Manikganj, Munshiganj contributed the report)

they will travel the short distance to Muzdalifah, where they will sleep in the open air.

They will gather pebbles and hurl them at three giant concrete walls in the symbolic "stoning of the devil" ritual today.

Then they will return to Makkah's Grand Mosque – Islam's holiest site – for a final circumambulation of the Kaaba, the giant black cube that Muslims worldwide pray towards each day.

At this year's hajj, which follows the lunar calendar and is not always held in summer, a maximum age limit has also been removed, allowing thousands of elderly to attend.

American engineer Ahmed Ahmadine said he felt "blessed" to be able to take part in the pilgrimage. "I try to focus on praying for my family and friends," said the 37-year-old. "This is an opportunity that will not be repeated."

Modi bats

FROM PAGE 12

women. Several Muslim-dominated countries have banned triple talaq."

"People who advocate triple talaq are vote bank hungry and they are doing injustice to Muslim women. triple talaq destroys the entire family," he added.

Modi said if triple talaq had been an important aspect of Islam, "then why is it not there in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Qatar, Jordan and Syria?"

Recalling his recent visit to Cairo, he said Egypt had "removed" the practice of triple talaq "80-90 years ago."

"Some people want the license to discriminate against Muslim women all the time through the triple talaq noose," said Modi.

Modi said the Supreme Court has maintained that there should be universal civil code but political parties who believe in appeasement politics oppose it.

"The politics of appeasement by a few political parties with vested interests is causing social rifts," said the PM.

Referring to the opposition parties meeting to forge unity among them to take on BJP in coming parliamentary elections, Modi said "those (opposition leaders) who used to curse and abuse each other are now touching each other's feet. Such is the level of their desperation."

"These opposition parties are a guarantee of corruption and scams. A few days ago, there was photo-op event of these parties. History of these parties shows that all of them together were involved in scams running into over Rs 20 lakh crore," he said.

Modi named Congress, RJD, DMK, TMC and NCP, and cited cases of alleged corruption in which leaders of these parties are accused.

"The anxiety among the opposition parties is making it evident that the people have decided to bring the BJP to power in 2024. A massive victory for the BJP is certain in 2024. This is the reason why these opposition parties are freaking out," according to Modi.

"The desperation among these parties was not as palpable in 2014 and 2019 as it has been now. Those who used to abuse Congress have bowed to the later. Their desperation shows that these parties have realized that the BJP is poised to win 2024 Lok Sabha polls," Modi said.

Booters eye semis

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh are in joint second position in the four-team group alongside Maldives, having three points each while Lebanon top the table with six points, leaving Bhutan at the bottom with no points.

The charges of Javier Cabrera might need a victory to confirm the semifinal berth of the regional football event after 14 years, depending on the outcome of Maldives' match against Lebanon.

Bangladesh have never lost to the Himalayan kingdom in six previous meetings in the SAFF Championship, with their only draw coming in the 2008 edition. However, they did lose against Bhutan once, during the Asian Cup pre-qualifiers in 2016 which virtually sent them into exile from international football for 18 months.

"We all are hungry for a victory as we have a golden opportunity to make it to the semifinals. And, of

course, the opportunity is in our hands and we don't want to waste it," captain Jamal Bhuiyan said before the final practice session at KSFA Stadium yesterday.

"We are confident about getting three points but not over-confident, which may cause problems because we lost against Lebanon by playing with over-confidence," added the 33-year-old.

Although Bhutan lost against both Maldives and Lebanon, they put on impressive and spirited displays in both games.

Bhutan coach Pema Dorji hopes they can still have a shot at semifinal berth with a win over Bangladesh and a defeat for Maldives against Lebanon, which will see three teams finish on equal points.

"The tournament is still not over for us. We want all three points in the last match. That will be our determination and focus," Pema said on Monday night.

UN special envoy

FROM PAGE 12

Morales said despite adopting legislative and policy measures to regulate labour migration, he was concerned by the remaining gaps relating to unfair and unethical recruitment practices that led to the exploitation of aspiring migrant workers at the pre-departure stage.

"The high cost of migration continued to be problematic, and the vulnerability of many migrants to exploitation, trafficking and other human rights abuses needed to be effectively addressed," he said.

Aspiring migrants often must provide as much as \$3,000 to \$5,000 to gain access to work abroad, he said. As per the ILO Convention, migrants should not pay any fees for jobs.

According to the report, around 90 percent of the cost of migration is transacted through illegal brokers, as they were often individuals within their communities to whom they had easy access.

Aspiring migrants often have no proper knowledge about their rights and the important services provided by the authorities and thus become victims of abuse and fraud, Morales said.

He highlighted the need to enhance data collection on migrant workers and strengthen support for

returning migrants.

The special rapporteur expressed concerns over the Rohingyas' lack of legal status and the protracted humanitarian situation in the camps of Cox's Bazar.

Speaking on behalf of the country, Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Sufiur Rahman said the report reflected progress made and challenges remaining.

He said Bangladesh was championing the Global Compact for Migration and was instrumental in the first Global Forum on Migration and Development of 2022. Bangladeshi legislation promoted opportunities for overseas employment and protected the human rights of the migrants it hosted.

Sufiur said Bangladesh attached great importance to the development of migrant workers' skills and seeks to prevent the exploitation of migrant workers through dialogue with host countries.

He added that Bangladesh extended support for the Rohingyas and is facilitating education to Rohingya children.

The government will carefully examine the recommendations of the special rapporteur, Sufiur added.

WEST BANK US defunds science for Israeli univs

AFP, Washington

The US said Monday it would stop funding scientific research with Israeli academic institutions in West Bank, taking a new step away from validating the occupation of Palestinian territories.

The decision by Biden's administration reverses a move made under Donald Trump that rejected the wide international consensus that Israel illegally occupies the West Bank.

New guidance to US government agencies advises that "engaging in bilateral scientific and technological cooperation with Israel in geographic areas which came under the administration of Israel after 1967 and which remain subject to final-status negotiations is inconsistent with US foreign policy," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.



A man dressed as a clown entertains children ahead of Eid al-Adha in the port city of Sidon, Lebanon yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

EXILED EX-PM NAWAZ SHARIF Pakistan passes law paving way for his return

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's national assembly has passed legislation limiting how long lawmakers can be disqualified from office, a state spokesman said yesterday, paving the way for exiled former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's return to politics.

Sharif served as Pakistan's prime minister three times -- the last before being ousted over graft allegations in 2017. The Supreme Court barred him from politics for life and he was later sentenced to seven years in jail.

In 2019 he was granted medical bail and flew to Britain, where he has remained ever since, continuing to steer his PML-N party from behind the scenes.

His brother Shehbaz Sharif became prime minister last year, and the country is due to hold fresh general elections no later than October.

Yesterday, a government spokesman said the acting president had signed into law an amendment which says courts can only disqualify parliamentarians "for a period not exceeding five years".

The spokesman said senate chairman Sadiq Sanjrani served as acting president signing the bill on Monday, in absence of President Arif Alvi who is abroad on Hajj pilgrimage. "The ruling PML-N and its coalition partners want to bring Nawaz Sharif back," political analyst Hasan Askari told AFP.



Intercepted UK warplanes over Black Sea Says Russia

AFP, Moscow

Russia's defence ministry said Monday it had scrambled two fighter jets as British warplanes approached its border above the Black Sea.

"As the Russian fighter jets approached, the foreign warplanes turned around and distanced themselves from the Russian border," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry said the planes involved were two British Typhoon jets accompanied by an RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft.

"The Russian planes safely returned to their airfield. There was no violation of the Russian border," said the ministry.

Incidents involving Russian and Western aircraft have multiplied over the Black Sea and Baltic Sea in recent months, as Moscow pursues its offensive in Ukraine.

In May, Moscow said it had intercepted four American strategic bombers above the Baltic Sea in two separate incidents in the space of one week.

Russia also scrambled warplanes to intercept French, German, and Polish aircraft.

In April, an American Reaper MQ-9 military drone crashed in the Black Sea after a confrontation Washington blamed on two Russian fighter jets.

Russia has started tactical fighter jet exercises over the Baltic Sea with the goal of testing readiness to perform combat and other special operations, the country's defence ministry has said.

"The main goal of exercise is to test the readiness of the flight crew to perform combat and special tasks as intended," Russia's defence ministry said yesterday.

Enough Senate support for top job Thai PM front runner claims after his party won the most seats at last month's election

AFP, Bangkok

The front runner to become Thailand's next prime minister, Pita Limjaroenrat, said yesterday he had secured enough support from the Senate to take the top job.

Pita's progressive Move Forward Party (MFP) won the most seats at last month's election as voters delivered a crushing rejection of military-linked parties that have run the kingdom for nearly a decade.

To become PM, Pita has to muster a majority across both houses, including the Senate, whose 250 members were handpicked by the last junta.

His eight-party coalition has a total of 312 seats in the lower house, but needs another 64 -- from either house -- for a majority.

Asked yesterday how many senators would endorse him, Pita told reporters at the parliament building: "Enough to make me become PM."

Thailand's parliament is set to sit next Monday for the first time since the election and a vote on the prime minister is due in mid-July.

MFP's determination to amend Thailand's tough laws against insulting the royal family has spooked the royalist-military conservative establishment.

Pita dismissed speculation that his party's stance on reforming royal defamation laws could be a barrier to forming a government.

Several senators have already said they will not vote for him as prime minister.

Earlier this month the election commission set up an investigation to look at whether Pita



was qualified to run for office, because of his alleged ownership of shares in a now-defunct media company.

Legislators are not allowed to own media shares.

MFP and fellow opposition outfit Pheu Thai dominated the May 14 election, in which voters roundly rejected Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, a former army chief who came to power in a 2014 coup.

The coalition has announced ambitious plans to rewrite the constitution -- scripted by Prayut's junta in 2017 -- as well as ending military conscription and allowing same-sex marriage.

The country's election commission last Monday certified the winners of all 500 seats of the lower house which must convene within early July to elect a speaker and two deputies. The speaker will then call for a joint session of parliament between the elected lower house and the appointed senate to vote on a new prime minister.

The alliance has control of 321 seats, still short of the 376 needed in the vote for the next premier. To elect Pita prime minister the alliance will have to must a majority of the 500 seats in the lower house and the 250 seats in the senate. The senators were appointed under military rule after a 2014 coup.

The Move Forward Party won the election on an anti-establishment platform that has put it on a collision course with conservatives royalist generals and old-money business elite that have long controlled Thai politics.

Sudan conflict worsening to 'alarming levels' in Darfur: UN

AFP, Geneva

The Sudan conflict is worsening to "alarming levels" in Darfur and taking on a worrying ethnic dimension, the United Nations said yesterday.

Darfur, a vast western region bordering Chad, has witnessed the deadliest violence since the conflict between rival armed forces broke out on April 15.

The army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, has been battling the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, after the two fell out in a power struggle.

"We are particularly concerned about the worsening situation in West Darfur," Raouf Mazou, the UN refugee agency's assistant high commissioner for operations, told a briefing in Geneva.

"According to reports from colleagues on the ground, the conflict has reached alarming levels, making it virtually impossible to deliver life-saving aid to the affected populations.

"Increasing numbers of injured civilians are among the newly arrived refugees in Chad," including women and children.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING RAID Philippines detains over 2,700 people

AFP, Manila

Philippine authorities have detained more than 2,700 people during a raid on several buildings in Manila where alleged trafficking victims were paid to recruit players for online games, police said yesterday. Chinese, Indonesian, Vietnamese, Singaporean, Malaysian, Pakistani, Cameroonian, Sudanese, Myanmar and Philippine nationals were among the people found inside a compound in the capital on Monday night. Authorities were interviewing 2,724 detainees to identify who was a victim or suspect, said police Captain Michelle Sabino, a spokeswoman for the anti-cybercrime unit.

Trump heard discussing secret docs on tape



AFP, Washington

Former US president Donald Trump can be heard discussing secret documents he had apparently held on to and acknowledging he had not declassified them in an audio recording aired by CNN. The two-minute recording comes from an interview Trump gave at his Bedminster, New Jersey, golf club in July 2021 for people working on a memoir by his former chief of staff Mark Meadows. Parts of a transcript of the recording were cited as evidence in special counsel Jack Smith's indictment of Trump on charges he had mishandled classified documents after leaving office.

US-INDIA STATEMENT Pakistan summons US deputy mission chief

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's foreign ministry on Monday summoned the US embassy's deputy chief of mission to express concern over a statement last week by US President Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi that called on Pakistan to ensure its territory was not used as a base for militant attacks.

The statement from the US and India was released after a meeting between the two countries' leaders at the White House on Friday and had received criticism from Pakistan, which called it contrary to diplomatic norms.

"It was stressed that the United States should refrain from issuing statements that may be construed as an encouragement of India's baseless and politically motivated narrative against Pakistan," Pakistan's foreign office said in a statement.

"It was also emphasized that counter-terrorism co-operation between Pakistan and the US had been progressing well and that an enabling environment, centred around trust and understanding, was imperative to further solidifying Pakistan-US ties."

US State Department spokesperson Matt Miller told reporters in a daily news briefing that Pakistan had taken important steps to counter terrorist groups, but said Washington advocated for more to be done.

Relations between India and Pakistan have been fraught for years. Since independence from Britain in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought three wars.



A multi-purpose anti-dust truck sprays water for cooling on a street during hot weather conditions in Handan, in China's northern Hebei province yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

WHO warns Covid 'has not gone away'

AFP, Copenhagen

The World Health Organization's European office yesterday warned the risk of Covid-19 has not gone away, saying it was still responsible for nearly 1,000 deaths a week in the region.

The global health body on May 5 announced that the Covid-19 pandemic was no longer deemed a "global health emergency."

"Whilst it may not be a global public health emergency, however, Covid-19 has not gone away," WHO Regional Director for Europe Hans Kluge told reporters. The WHO's European region comprises 53 countries.

"Close to 1,000 new Covid-19 deaths continue to occur across the region every week, and this is an underestimate due to a drop in countries regularly reporting Covid-19 deaths to WHO," Kluge added, and urged authorities to ensure vaccination coverage of at least 70 percent for vulnerable groups.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Ensure smooth
Eid preparations

Eid-ul-Azha brings familiar joy
but also worries

As we get ready to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha, the second most important festival for Muslims, we hope that we can go beyond the ritualistic practices and embrace the spiritual side of the occasion. Through the slaughter of sacrificial animals, the message that is intended is that of sacrifice, sharing, restraint and cleansing our minds. Since Eid-ul-Azha involves a lot of activities and preparations for both individuals and institutions, it is important that all of us do our part properly so that the spirit of the festival can be upheld.

There are three aspects that deserve particular attention. First, the movement of people across the country as they head to their home districts to spend time with loved ones. As expected, the highways have been witnessing heavy traffic, but thankfully, no major gridlocks have been reported so far. However, the closure of garment factories will further increase traffic flow and congestion on the highways. Transport authorities have reportedly taken various steps to manage the surge in travellers, but care must be taken to ensure a hassle-free journey, with special attention given to preventing accidents. We don't want to see a repeat of the tragic road crashes that follow every Eid holiday.

Secondly, the Eid brings familiar concerns for workers, particularly those at the RMG industry. According to a report, out of 3,164 garment, textile, and jute factories across the country, at least 2,501 did not pay workers their 15 days' wages for June as of Monday, while 728 factories did not pay their Eid bonuses. This is quite unacceptable. The spectre of pending dues continues to haunt workers every Eid. The news of a labour leader beaten to death in Gazipur over his attempt to get salaries for workers shows how powerless the latter still are when it comes to protecting their rights. We hope the authorities will promptly address these issues.

Another issue that needs to be kept in mind is the importance of a prompt clean-up after slaughtering animals. In Dhaka, both city corporations have taken steps to manage waste. The deployment of thousands of sanitation workers, along with the distribution of eco-friendly jute bags and disinfectants, showcases a commitment to maintaining cleanliness, but citizens must cooperate and dispose of their waste responsibly. We hope, in the end, everything will go smoothly and the holiday will be an enriching experience for everyone. Eid Mubarak!

Graft eating away
public funds

CMSD, public hospitals must
answer for reported anomalies
in procurement

We are shocked to learn of the sheer lack of accountability and transparency at the country's Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD) and government healthcare institutions when it comes to procuring medical equipment. According to a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), prepared for the period between FY2014-15 and FY2018-19, irregularities in budget spending by CMSD caused the government to lose Tk 459 crore in these five years. The report, placed at the parliament recently, revealed how this procurement agency had been involved in various malpractices.

During this five-year period, the CMSD supplied medical equipment to medical colleges and hospitals which remained largely unused. In many cases, it supplied the machinery without following proper protocols. Among the institutions audited, three – Khulna Medical College Hospital, Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, and Rangpur Medical College Hospital – alleged that the CMSD supplied those products unduly and without their consent, while other auditees said that the machinery in question would be installed soon. Moreover, in FY2016-17, different government institutions acquired medical and surgical supplies from CMSD at prices that were up to 18 times more than that offered by the Public Health Institute and the Essential Drug Company for similar products, which is outrageous.

The question is, can the CMSD just supply machinery without consent or request by the hospitals? Also, why would government institutions take supplies from it if they do not need them, and also at inflated prices? Clearly, the CMSD has been conducting these illegal activities with help from inside the hospitals, which must be looked into.

Our health sector has been riddled with corruption for long. The CAG audit report has just exposed it once again. Irregularities in medical equipment purchase are, however, just one aspect of the problem, with corruption permeating every level of the health sector, as the High Court has recently observed. We urge the authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into the irregularities done by the CMSD in connivance with public hospitals, and identify those responsible for such a waste of public money.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Duplicity of politicians

The recent comments made by ruling party members in response to international pressure for a free and fair election in Bangladesh, about how the ruling party has promoted democracy in the country, is laughable. They have basically held onto power for over a decade by taking away people's voting rights. The destruction of our state institutions, which were weak to begin with, has set the country back by decades. For those who have unethically benefitted from all of these to now speak about the interest of ordinary people is beyond duplicitous.

Sharlimeen
Banani DOHS, Dhaka

INCOME TAX ACT 2023

Yet another mortal blow
to ACC



Dr Iftekharuzzaman
is executive director of
Transparency International
Bangladesh (TIB).

IFTEKHARUZZAMAN

With the enactment of the Income Tax Bill, 2023, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has been inflicted such a mortal blow that it will now have to struggle to swim in the deep sea of corruption with legs and hands tied. The bill provides that the ACC cannot access tax, income, wealth and other related data of individuals under investigation for alleged corruption without a court order, the timely securing of which, in the abiding context, is likely to be a pipedream in most cases.

The ACC's expectations to catch the big fish or even small fries of corruption have thus been further undermined, while the scope of impunity of the corrupt has been reinforced. This is also rewarding news for forces outside and within the ACC who never wanted the commission to be effective. This has to be treated as yet another evidence on how the ruling party's pledge of zero tolerance against corruption, repeated quite often from the highest level, is blatantly undermined.

This is not the first time that the ACC's authority in the key areas of its mandate have been tactfully curtailed. One of the reasons that Bangladesh's Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012 was considered to reasonably meet the global standard is the fact that it provided the ACC with full authority to investigate all the scheduled offences treated as money laundering. But for some inexplicable reasons except to chop off the powers of this specialised anti-corruption agency, the law was amended in 2015 to take away all but one category of offences out of 27 from its mandate. All remaining jurisdictions were handed over to authorities, most of whom heretofore had no track record of expertise or interest in anti-corruption work. By a single stroke, not only did the ACC lose its power, but the specialised tasks of anti-money laundering were converted into a tertiary assignment. Civil society and media concerns against the amendment met deaf years. The result, as ACC insiders lament, is that the ACC is now the whipping boy for all inactions or failures of effective actions against money laundering, though it is only marginally responsible.

The government's successive actions, including the Public Service



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

Act, 2018, to deprive the ACC of the authority to take into custody any public officials for investigations on alleged involvement in corruption is no longer any important news. This demonstrated the government's high stake and determination to curtail ACC's investigative authority to selectively protect sections of public officials from accountability. It was also an example of violation of the constitutional pledge of equality before law.

An equally pernicious follow-up of such manipulative disempowerment of the commission to protect and promote those enjoying favour within the government and beyond took place on January 18, 2023, when the ACC's key executive authority was transferred to ACC bureaucracy. Though executed as an apparently inside job through an office order, this could not be viewed in isolation from the overall strategic trend to make the ACC legally and institutionally dysfunctional, which has now been crowned by the Income Tax Act, passed in parliament on June 18.

Sections 309 (2) and 309 (3) of the new Income Tax Act provide that notwithstanding the Evidence Act, 1872, Anti-Corruption Commission

income and wealth disproportionate to legitimate income.

In recognition of the key importance of these data for corruption investigation, the ACC Act made it mandatory for the relevant authorities to provide such information upon request and collaborate with the ACC as and when requested in the interest of investigation. The law even authorised the ACC to seek action from the government if any organisations failed to provide information the commission sought in the interest of corruption investigation. The Right to Information Act, 2009 also provides that access to corruption-related information cannot be treated as exempted.

Making it now conditional upon court order makes it practically impossible for the ACC to conduct any meaningful investigation of corruption based on illicitly earned income and wealth related data, unless it is small fries or individuals out of grace of the powers that be. This is contradictory to Article 20 (2) of the constitution, which criminalises unearned income. Creating arbitrary barriers against ACC's access to key information, as the new Income Tax Act does, will not only have a crippling effect on the

provision as well as other examples cited above may have found it convenient to protect and strengthen their power base with short-term gains in view, but they have clearly ignored implications in terms of the government's own pledge against corruption. Belying such aspirations, signals are being sent systematically that there are legal, procedural and institutional provisions that actually invite and encourage people to engage in corruption.

All these show how public interest is trampled to serve kleptocratic interests, and how protection and promotion of corruption can make public policies and institutions ridiculed. By allowing such a corruption-friendly policy regime to take such deep roots, the government has not merely undermined its election pledge, which may perhaps be repeated soon, but also undercut the Perspective Plan 2021-41, which promises governance reforms for transparency and accountability and reduction of corruption and abuse of power. The Perspective Plan also makes a specific pledge to strengthen the Anti-Corruption Commission. What purpose do such pledges serve is anyone's guess.

Key takeaways from the Paris
summit on climate finance



POLITICS OF
CLIMATE CHANGE

Dr Saleemul Huq
is director of the International Centre for Climate
Change and Development (ICCCAD) and professor
at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

SALEEMUL HUQ

Recently, I had the privilege of being invited to the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, hosted by President Emmanuel Macron of France, alongside over 20 heads of government. Bangladesh was represented by Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Climate Envoy Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

I was invited to speak at three events during the summit. The first was an official side event organised by civil society groups on raising funds by making polluters pay. It was attended by high officials from France, Barbados and the European Union. I raised the proposal for an air passenger solidarity levy of five euros per passenger, on all passengers, to provide additional funds for the new Loss and Damage Fund, to be set up at COP28 in Dubai in December. Such an air passenger levy has already existed in France for 10 years, and it raises nearly 200 million euros a year, which is donated to the global health fund.

Such an air passenger levy could be applied unilaterally by other European

governments across the EU. If the EU were to apply such a levy, it would raise over one billion euros a year, which would be a good start for the Dubai Loss and Damage Fund. Frans Timmermans, who is the European head on climate change, said it was an interesting idea.

My second side event was organised by Brac, and it presented an opportunity to showcase Bangladesh's efforts to tackle climate change in a whole-of-society approach. It included Saber Hossain Chowdhury speaking on behalf of the government, Dr Golam Rabbani from the Climate Bridge Fund (CBF), managed by Brac, representing Bangladesh's civil society, and me representing academia showing how the Bangladeshi population is preparing to tackle climate change at the scale that is required.

My third event was a public event at the centre of Paris at the Academie du Climat, which attracted many hundreds of young people from the city to a series of interactive events.

I was given the opportunity to speak to the young Parisians about how young people around the world need to join forces to tackle climate change as a truly global movement, without necessarily waiting for their leaders to act with the necessary speed.

My young colleague, Towrin Zaman, was also interviewed about the losses and damages from human-

**My overall impression
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induced climate change suffered in Bangladesh.

Finally, the summit itself resulted in some very good ideas and speeches from a number of heads of government. I would like to mention the speech from Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados, who has been pushing for

debt relief for all developing countries suffering climate change impacts as part of her Bridgetown Initiative. Also, President William Ruto of Kenya made a powerful speech accusing the developed countries of making promises they do not keep. He argued for a more equal distribution of global power in global financial institutions.

The heads of government were also made to listen to a young activist from Africa, Vanessa Nakate, who told them they were failing in their duties to the younger generation.

My overall impression of the summit was that it was certainly an admirable attempt by President Macron to raise the important issue of reforming the global financial system in light of the climate change emergency. He was indeed able to get some key allies and heads of government to support his call. At the same time, the heads of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), who were also present at the summit, promised to take necessary actions to enhance their climate change funding.

The summit was also an event for young people and climate activists to come together to both protest and celebrate together.

Whether the summit will result in any new concrete action going forward remains to be seen, but it has certainly given a positive push in the right direction, and President Macron and the people of France should be recognised for their positive actions.

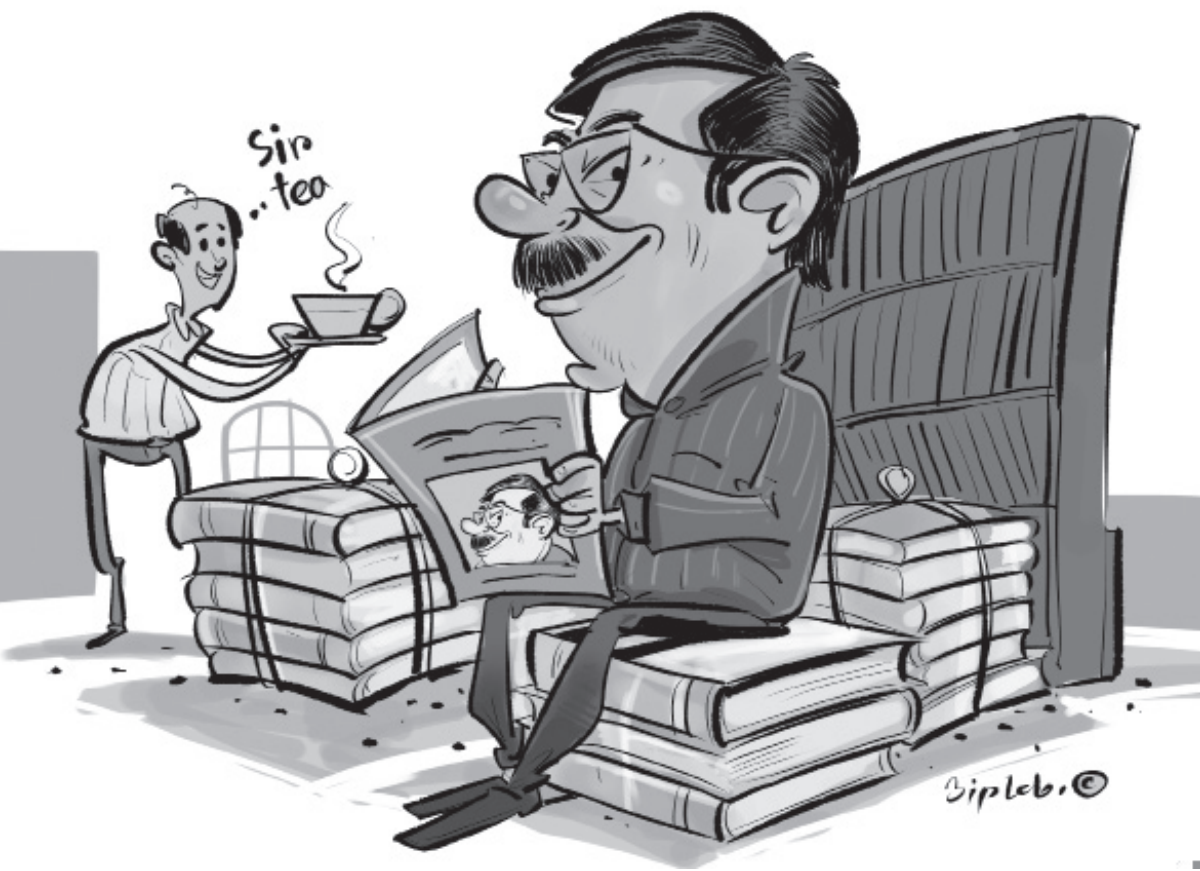


ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

Books and bureaucrats are a dangerous mix



OF MAGIC
& MADNESS

Badiuzzaman Bay
is assistant editor at
The Daily Star.

BADIUZZAMAN BAY

Do you feel, whenever the realms of books and bureaucracy converge, that something very non-bibliophilic is about to happen? I do, and my instincts tend to be accurate. After all, it is bureaucracy that is largely responsible for restricting the free flow of ideas and undermining academic freedom in Bangladesh. It is bureaucracy that punishes critical publications. It is bureaucracy that compromises the integrity of school textbooks through undue additions or omissions. It is bureaucracy that has reduced the quest for knowledge to a quest for BCS jobs. It is bureaucracy that has robbed the spirit of our Language Movement by marginalising mother languages – including Bangla. It is because of bureaucracy that once-revered state awards for writers are now objects of ridicule.

I can go on and on about the detrimental effects of bureaucracy on the world of literary endeavours, but you get the point. There is something about the intertwining of paperwork, protocols and politics that can lead to a tragic loss in translation. As grand visions and initiatives of the government are filtered through layers of bureaucracy, they emerge altered, diluted, or even entirely lost.

Take, for example, the case of Jatiya Grantha Kendro, or National Book Centre. Few people are perhaps aware that there is a specific government institution responsible for overseeing non-government libraries. There can be any number of reasons for its relative lack of familiarity. If I had to guess, I would say it's because this is how those in charge of it want it to be – less known, less scrutinised.

For there is a lot about this institution that, bureaucrats would hope, is better left buried under the rug. As per a recent report by this daily, the centre, since its establishment following the enactment of the National Book Centre Act, 1995, has been consistently failing to fulfil its mandate due to poor infrastructure, a shortage of manpower and resources, and lack of care and planning. There it goes again: the bureaucratic mechanism being an Achilles' heel in literary initiatives. Everything about the centre is thus ill-conceived and poorly executed, ranging from the shabby, largely nondescript building in which it is housed, to its lack of promotional activities, to the way it engages with the recipients of its annual grants.

Its pathetic state is perhaps best reflected in the management of its own library, which has over 11,000 books, including many rare reference materials. However, as

the librarian himself admits, there hasn't been a visitor looking for books in years! What is a library for, then? To read newspapers? To play host to BCS crazies? To collect books (and dust)? The disorganised arrangement of the books in this library, with stacks of old newspapers and rare books piled haphazardly in dark corners, would be an eyesore to any bibliophile. The authorities couldn't archive them systematically, let alone digitise them, even after 28 years of its establishment.

In addition to the poor

country, as is its mandate. Private libraries, built through voluntary initiatives all over the country, give us hope amid the deteriorating state of most public libraries. They have challenges of their own, of course, especially in terms of finances, quality of services and book collection. In this digital era, they also suffer from the prevailing apathy towards books. But their very existence is a defiant counterpoint to this situation. And with proper assistance and guidance, they could be moulded into genuine drivers of change in local communities.

Although any private initiative must ultimately depend on its own strength for survival, government oversight, and grants, if properly distributed and followed up on, can help in a big way. Such assistance must be provided with a genuine interest in promoting a culture of reading and intellectual engagement among people, especially the younger generation.

It was only in 2018 that the government started to observe the National Library Day, on February 5. Given how the day is observed – through issuing a circular, some discussion, maybe a procession if someone is feeling outdoorsy – you cannot help but see “perfunctory” written all over it. It almost seems as if bureaucrats merely wanted to tick a box. It makes them look good, and feel useful, except it is of no use in a practical sense. No change to our troubled interaction with books was sought, none achieved.

management of its library, the centre is also being hamstrung by various problems in its handling of non-government libraries. For one, the financial assistance given to the listed libraries is woefully insufficient. The annual allocations – divided into categories A, B, and C – barely cover a couple of months' operational costs for them, leaving them financially strained. The bureaucratic hurdles involved in accessing the funds further compound their difficulties. There are also allegations of favouritism and lack of quality control when it comes to giving them books. Often, substandard books on political and administrative issues, written by ruling party leaders and bureaucrats, dominate the offerings, while books of diverse genres and perspectives are ignored. We have seen the same thing happening in August 2022 when a book reading programme for government officials included over a hundred books written by 25 high officials. Why select books that no one in the four hemispheres would want to read?

All this is quite hard to accept because the National Book Centre could be a vital player in building a strong library culture in the

This interest is precisely what is lacking now. It was only in 2018 that the government started to observe the National Library Day, on February 5. Given how the day is observed – through issuing a circular, some discussion, maybe a procession if someone is feeling outdoorsy – you cannot help but see “perfunctory” written all over it. It almost seems as if bureaucrats merely wanted to tick a box. It makes them look good, and feel useful, except it is of no use in a practical sense. No change to our troubled interaction with books was sought, none achieved.

Why should we read? Because books – the right kind of books – can educate, inspire, and transform. It is not for nothing that the pen is believed to be mightier than the sword. But don't expect much when bureaucrats wield their pens to shape the destiny of literary initiatives. Their ability to complicate the simplest of decisions, their blunders and misplaced priorities, and their interest in preserving the prevailing politico-administrative status quo can derail even the noblest of efforts. A reader-friendly environment that helps to think and critically engage is not in their best interest.

UN RECOGNISES COMMUNITY CLINICS

Capacity enhancement is the need of the hour

Shahnoor Wahid
is a senior journalist.

Noushin Mouli Waresi
works at Bangladesh Health Watch, Brac James P Grant School of Public Health.

SHAHNOOR WAHID and NOUSHIN MOULI WARESI

The innovative model of “community clinics,” introduced in Bangladesh by the Awami League government in 1998, has been recognised by the United Nations as a unique example of public-private partnership in the health sector. As part of global recognition of the efficacy of community-based healthcare in the country, the UN resolution, titled “Community-based primary health care: a participatory and inclusive approach to universal health coverage,” was unanimously adopted on May 17, 2023.

While introducing the “Community Clinic Model of Bangladesh,” the resolution asked member-states to explore measures to scale up, stressing that “the implementation of the resolution can make a world of difference to the lives of billions of people around the world who need basic healthcare facilities closest to their homes.” It also acknowledged women's empowerment, community engagement and mobilisation towards achieving universal access to health.

This morale-boosting UN resolution, a veritable recognition of the hard work put in by thousands of health assistants, family welfare

present condition, to go to the town for availing health services. But now we receive these health services in our village at the community clinic.” This, in a nutshell, is the kind of services women in distant villages are getting from community clinics.

Though community clinics proved to the world that it's a model that can deliver desired healthcare services at the grassroots, they were shut down with the change of government in 2001. In 2009, they were revived through a project titled “Revitalisation of Community Health Care Initiatives in Bangladesh (RCHCIB).” While we appreciate the government giving full attention towards the restoration and revamping of community clinics by adding important features, we feel the concept of public-private partnership needs to be emphasised further and explained elaborately among the rural populace for better maintenance of the clinics.

Since most of the over 20-year-old buildings are now in a dilapidated state, each community clinic must be housed in a spacious new building with better storage facilities for medicines and equipment. Efforts should also

clinic every day, cleanliness of the premises is an important factor that has to be addressed regularly, especially when infectious diseases are coming in full fury and taking lives.

The role of community healthcare providers (CHCP) is important for the smooth functioning of a community clinic, but there are allegations that many of them are not qualified and trained enough to handle even common ailments. They, therefore, need to attend regular training courses to upgrade their skills.

Absence of CHCP, HA and FWA during rush hours is a common complaint at many clinics. Patients coming from far-off villages on foot will feel frustrated if they fail to find anyone at the clinic. Community leaders and senior district health officials must address this issue and search for a suitable answer.

Some senior health experts are of the opinion that the government should appoint at least one registered doctor at every community clinic to provide minimum healthcare. If implemented, we believe this would take rural healthcare service towards fulfilling our goal of Health for All. But in reality, the pertinent question of whether a qualified doctor would like to stay in a remote village for months would come up eventually. We have seen that qualified doctors are reluctant to stay even in upazila health complexes for long.

We believe that community clinics can play a major role in reducing the child mortality rate, which is on the rise at the moment. A study report



The community clinic model has been successful in delivering desired healthcare services at the grassroots across Bangladesh.
FILE PHOTO: STAR

assistants, midwives and health staff at grassroots level for over two decades, will no doubt inspire them to make the community clinics even more people-friendly, offering essential primary healthcare services.

The clinics operate on the basis of a public-private partnership agreement. Under this agreement, the government provides structural services, medicines, service providers (CHCP, HA and FWA) and other logistical support. The local communities, on the other hand, donate land for the construction of clinics and ensure the overall safety and security.

It is now widely acknowledged that community clinics are the first frontier from where our fight to reduce child and maternal mortality, arrest malnutrition, provide antenatal care to pregnant women, organise vaccination drives, etc begins. Hosne Ara (not real name), an expecting mother, said in an interview, “I stay in a village which is located in a hilly area. It is not possible for me, in my

be undertaken to create the sense of ownership among the locals to make community clinics sustainable and equitable. No doubt, this is an ideal way to universalise healthcare in Bangladesh, but it will need continued allocation of resources and full political commitment.

The beneficiaries must not consider the clinics as mere medicine shops and thus take undue advantage of them. If medicines for diabetes and non-communicable diseases are made available, it has to be ensured that these medicines are given only against genuine prescriptions. Qualified manpower has to be posted there to stop pilferage and monitor the inflow of medicines and proper use of medical equipment. There is a shortage of medical equipment in most community clinics, and many of the outdated ones do not function properly. These need to be replaced immediately by new supply so diagnosis can be accurate and easy. Since hundreds of people visit a

published by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) on June 13 says that in 2021, under-five child mortality rate was 28 per thousand. But it increased to 31 in 2022. And deaths of children under one year has increased to 25 per thousand from 22 per thousand during the same period.

In this regard, regular and timely interaction among the community people and community clinic healthcare providers will help in creating awareness regarding childhood diseases, importance of vaccination against killer diseases and urgency of timely intervention to reduce child mortality rate in the country.

There is no denying that community clinics have all the promises to save lives if run by qualified people. They will need full support of the government in terms of funding and manpower. At the same time, the community stakeholders must participate with the zeal of ownership.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

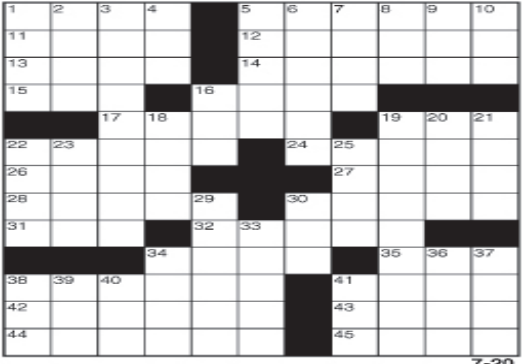
- 1 Job for a lawyer
- 5 Houston team
- 11 Farm team
- 12 Cube face
- 13 Pinochle score
- 14 Prospector's find
- 15 Completely
- 16 Floral rings
- 17 Like some testimony
- 19 In shape
- 22 Sore spots
- 24 The ones here
- 26 Italy's shape
- 27 Baseball's Rodriguez
- 28 Explode
- 30 Cove
- 31 Suitable
- 32 Ice, in bars
- 34 Snug

- 35 Rooster's mate
- 38 Arizona native
- 41 Murder mystery find
- 42 Primitive primate
- 43 Longing
- 44 “Bonanza” star Lorne
- 45 Dele undoer

DOWN

- 1 Robin Cook book
- 2 Skating jump
- 3 Underestimate
- 4 Conclude
- 5 Ed of “Up”
- 6 React to bright light
- 7 Gentle pulls
- 8 Dusting cloth
- 9 Smelter supply

- 10 Match part
- 16 – Angeles
- 18 Moistens
- 19 Didn't meet expectations
- 20 “Got it”
- 21 Phone message
- 22 “Fernando” group
- 23 Overthrow
- 25 Slugger Aaron
- 29 Hector, for one
- 30 Frigid
- 33 Fresh air
- 34 Arrived
- 36 Keenness
- 37 Russian refusal
- 38 Old horse
- 39 Spring mo.
- 40 Neckline shape
- 41 City vehicle



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

CELEBRATING EID the Chatgaiya way

The people of Chattogram prefer to offer their sacrifice on the very first day of Eid-ul-Azha, however, in a few cases that may be an exception.

ARUN BIKASH DEY

From the infectious enthusiasm in the air to the meticulously prepared delicacies and vibrant gatherings, the Chatgaiya way of celebrating Eid-ul-Azha showcases a fusion of prosperity, religious devotion, and cultural heritage. With its historical reputation as a prosperous city and a hub of religious passion, Chattogram stands apart from other regions during this joyous occasion. Prof Dr Monzur-Ul-Amin Chowdhury, senate member of Chittagong University, says



while many traditional practices continue to thrive, some have gradually faded away with the passage of time. However, the spirit of the Chatgaiya community remains intact, as they proudly embrace their unique identity and



rejoice in their distinctive way of observing Eid-ul-Azha. **STARTS WITH THE SACRIFICIAL RITUALS** The people of Chattogram prefer to offer their sacrifice on the very first day of Eid-ul-Azha, however, in a few cases that may be an exception. Traditionally, they prefer a single animal's sacrifice, be it – a cow, buffalo, or camel under the name of seven people. In the case of goats, sheep, and ewes, there is a religious provision for sacrificing under a single name. Sending sacrificial animals to the daughter's in-law's house is also an age-old custom in Chattogram. This practice still goes on in the region per the person's affordability. **THEN COMES THE FOOD** If there's one word synonymous with extravagance, it would

undoubtedly be Chattogram's cuisine during festivals. Households prepare special dishes using the meat of sacrificial animals, elevating the culinary experience to new heights. Hosting guests with freshly cooked meat and hand-made bread is a must-have of Chatgaiya culture. It is also a traditional custom in Chattogram to distribute these hand-made flatbreads and cooked mezbani meat or kala bhuna to the homes of relatives. Meanwhile, the tradition of city dwellers returning to their village homes to celebrate Eid with extended families is gradually fading as the concept of joint families transforms into smaller nuclear units. Nevertheless, many families in the port city continue to uphold this practice, taking advantage of the closure of educational institutions during

the festive period and travelling to their village homes four to five days prior to Eid. In villages, the afternoon on Eid day is marked by the serving of different types of pitha (traditional rice cakes) among family members and visiting guests, a custom absent in city areas. The meat from the sacrificial animals is divided into three parts in villages, with one part distributed to the poor, one sent to relatives, and one retained for personal consumption. This distribution process commences in the afternoon and continues into the evening. Evening meals in villages consist of meat dishes paired with traditional ruti (flatbread), while in cities, meat dishes are served with parata or bakarkhani (types of flaky bread). In villages, the male members of the family gather in the yard, engaging in lively conversations and adda (informal discussions) from evening till night, while women focus on preparing delectable meat-based dishes in the kitchen. Meanwhile, children enjoy the evening with their cousins and friends. In contrast, city dwellers typically remain in their houses or apartments during the evening. Thus, the conclusion of Eid day unfolds in its own distinctive manner, with varying traditions and activities, encapsulating the diverse celebrations of village and city life.

QHWAB a preserved delicacy

SIFAYET ULLAH

From the eighties till the 2000s, Rabeya Begum, a home-maker from Chattogram's Hathazari upazila had no refrigerators at their house. So whenever Eid-ul-Azha came around, she had to opt for a unique technique to preserve the meat – by making Qhwab. “Qhwab is our traditional technique of preserving meat. We use this method to eat meat throughout the year,” she said. Every year during Eid-ul-Azha, people of each region preserve the meat of the sacrificial animals differently. However, for many in Chattogram Qhwab is a very popular method of preservation. Many residents also make Qhwab to send it to relatives and friends living abroad. Khaleda Begum, a mother of two expatriates, said, “My two sons stay in other countries so we make Qhwab and send it to them every year.”



MAKING QHWAB

Aysha Siddika, a home-maker from Chattogram, shared her way of making Qhwab. She said, “At first, we separate the fat from the meat. Then we cover the meat in a spice paste and season it adequately with salt. After marinating, the pieces of meat are cooked several times without water.” She added, “The meat should be boiled until dried but not burned. After this process is over, the dry meat pieces are kept under the sun. After a few days of sun-drying, the meat is kept in large containers.”



Going cashless at cattle markets

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Abul Hossain, a resident of the port city's Hamzarbagh area, bought a cow from the Sagarika cattle market for Tk 1.30 lakh. The trader Abdul Hannan received the full amount from the digital transaction booth of city corporation sitting in the market. While visiting the cattle market, many like Abul are doing digital transactions at the cashless of “Smart Bangladesh Smart Haat” organised for the first time in Chattogram to avoid hassle. Traders are also taking this as a positive initiative by the Bangladesh Bank and the city corporation. More than 12 banks and mobile banking services are facilitating facilitate the service at two cattle markets in Sagorika and Nurnagar Housing areas. Abul Hossain told The Daily Star, “I came to the market without cash when I learned about the digital initiative a few days ago.” Abdul Hannan, the seller, said, “Three of us from Dinajpur came to Chattogram with 27 cows. So far 14 cows have been sold. Among them I sold two of them digitally. I have been selling cattle at this market for the last 12 years. I used to keep the cash with me, which was quite risky.” Sagarika Cattle Market supervisor Anisur Rahman said the response they got this time is quite positive. It will become more popular in the years to come. Mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said, “This initiative has been taken to stop the fake money business centring Eid and make transactions between buyers and sellers safe and hassle free.”



MEAT DISTRIBUTION

Traditions a must for Eid

SIFAYET ULLAH

In terms of festivities, Eid-ul-Azha has always had a special place in homemaker Shamsun Nahar's heart, a resident of South Pahartali under Chattogram's Hathazari upazila. Every year she eagerly awaits the day, thinking of when her father will visit her in-laws' house with freshly cooked meat and hand-made rice flour bread. “My parents' house is my prime identity. So, every year I wait for their arrival with the sacrificial gifts,” she said. Sending freshly cooked meat and hand-made rice flour bread to daughter-in-laws' houses is a long-standing practice within Chattogram's tradition. Following this, every married Chatgaiya woman waits the same way



every year. Sirajul Islam, a 60-year-old father of two daughters and a resident of Anwara upazila, said, “After cutting meat, I go to my two daughters' house every year on Eid day with raw and cooked meat as it's our tradition.” Rokeya Begum, a mother from the port city's Oxygen area, said, “We share our joy with loved ones through the exchange of such sacrificial gifts.” In addition to distributing meat, sending whole sacrificial animals to the daughter's in-laws is also a tradition in Chattogram. However, sometimes this tradition creates pressure on the lower strata of the society when it becomes mandatory. Still, many people of this region feel that these traditions help them share happiness among each other.

Butcher for a day!

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Abdullah, a rickshaw-puller, was waiting in front of a blacksmith's shop at Halishahar on Sunday. Every Eid-ul-Azha, the 35-year-old transforms into a seasonal butcher. “I have to sharpen my butchering tools as Eid is just around the corner,” he said. Like him, many low income people become butchers to earn some extra money. Such “professionals” from different upazilas gather around cattle markets in Chattogram city's Devanhat, EPZ, AK Khan intersection, Muradpur, Bakalia, and Sadarghat areas. Day labourers, rickshaw pullers, transport workers, and many others usually crowd the spot two days before Eid to take up butchering contracts in exchange for money and meat. “The demand for professional



butchers is high, so many hire us instead as we demand lower wages. I even assisted a professional a few times,” said Rubel Mia, a vendor in the Bandar area. It costs around Tk 8,000-20,000 to hire a group of 3-4

professional butchers. The expenses for similar sized groups of seasonal butchers are as low as Tk 2,000, said Fazlul Karim Manik, a trader in New Market's Tamakundi Lane. “While many workers sell the

meat they receive as donations in roadside markets because they live alone, others take the meat home to enjoy a good home-cooked meal with their families on this special day,” shared Azizul Islam, a street vendor in the same market.

Bangladesh ready for ‘MEMORABLE ACHIEVEMENT’

ANISUR RAHMAN FROM BENGALURU

It was raining heavily at the KFA football Stadium but Bangladesh team kept their focus in training yesterday, on the eve of their Bhutan fixture in Bengaluru.

With head coach Javier Cabrera instructing from the center of the artificial turf, the booters tried to execute game plans before they went for set-piece drills.

After a one-hour training, Bangladesh players and coaching staff left field with smile on their faces.

It remains to be seen whether they would be able to keep those smiles intact as Bangladesh are on the verge of qualifying for the semifinals of SAFF Championship for the first time in 14 years.



Bangladesh v Bhutan	Overall	In SAFF Championship
	Matches: 13	Matches: 6
	Bangladesh won: 10	Bangladesh won: 5
	Bhutan won: 1	Bhutan won: 0
	Draw: 2	Draw: 1

However, the equation may become complex if Maldives beat Lebanon in today's first match and Bangladesh go on to win against Bhutan. In that case, three teams will have equal six points, bringing head-to-head, goal difference and goals scored into play.

Despite a superior head-to-head

record against Bhutan, they are "not going to be an easy opponent," said Anisur Rahman Zico, reflecting on their lone defeat during 2016 Asian Cup Pre-qualifiers.

"We were so close to get out the group stage in last two editions of SAFF Championship but we could not

do it (progress). It will be a memorable achievement if we can repeat our Maldives display," said Zico, who was also part of 2021 SAFF Championship in Male -- where Bangladesh needed a victory over Nepal but they threw away a lead to play out a 1-1 draw.

Defender Tapu Barman also echoed similar sentiment.

"If Maldives lose to Lebanon in first match, we need a draw to qualify for the semifinals. The most important thing is that we are not going to lose the motivation we gained from the Maldives match," said the central defender.

Cabrera said "there is very positive atmosphere in the camp.

"We have a good mix of young and experienced players. Many of our players have experience of 2021 SAFF Championship. We depend on ourselves rather thinking of what happened in 2021 or before."

Center-back Tariq Raihan Kazi is set to miss the match against Bhutan and Cabrera is likely to field two changes in the squad that beat Maldives 3-1.

Tamim upbeat as WC fixtures revealed

SPORTS REPORTER

The International Cricket Council (ICC) yesterday revealed the much-awaited fixtures of the upcoming ODI World Cup in India, set to begin from October 5.

Bangladesh ODI captain Tamim Iqbal said that their experience and familiarity to the conditions make him "very confident" of the makeup of the team ahead of the showpiece event.

"This is the ultimate event. Nothing compares to a one-day World Cup because this is the most challenging white-ball format which continuously tests your game awareness and temperament. The tournament's structure gives you no scope to relax. Every team is tough and there are no easy games," said Tamim.

With Afghanistan as their first challenger in the World Cup, the Tigers will be looking to find any mental edge they can manage in the upcoming series at home on starting from July 5.

The wicket at the picturesque Dharamsala may lend help to Tigers' pace unit against Afghanistan although England at the same venue on October 10 will be a formidable challenge. The venue, however, is familiar to the Tigers as they played there during the 2016 T20 World Cup. Their third game comes against New Zealand on traditionally slow Chennai wickets which could be an added benefit as a subcontinent side.



BANGLADESH FIXTURES AT WORLD CUP

- October 7 –vs Afghanistan, Dharamsala
- October 10 –vs England, Dharamsala
- October 14 –vs New Zealand, Chennai
- October 19 –vs India, Pune
- October 24 –vs South Africa, Mumbai
- October 28 –vs Qualifier 1, Kolkata
- October 31 –vs Pakistan, Kolkata
- November 06 –vs Qualifier 2, Delhi
- November 12 –vs Australia, Pune
- **November 15 -Semifinal 1, Mumbai
- **November 16-Semifinal 2, Kolkata
- **November 19-Final, Ahmedabad

Bangladesh would play England at Dharamsala and traverse multiple Indian cities before returning to play in Pune in their last round of fixtures.

"Playing in India is always very enjoyable. The electric atmosphere, great stadiums and the very knowledgeable cricket fans make the experience fulfilling. We have always received excellent support whenever we played there," Tamim told the ICC.

"I am very confident with the side we will take to the World Cup. There is a nice blend of experience and talent, and the conditions will be familiar."

Ahead of the marquee event, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram and Hyderabad will host warm-up matches from 29 September to 3 October.

Bangladesh's best performances in World Cups have not seen them win more than three matches. If the Tigers want to take a bigger step in attaining their dreams, starting from the Afghanistan series, the plans leading up to the event will be crucial.

Stokes ‘deeply sorry’ after report exposes discrimination

AFP, London

England captain Ben Stokes said Tuesday he is "deeply sorry" to learn of the scale of discrimination in the sport after a damning report revealed "widespread" racism, sexism and classism in the game.

His comments followed the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC), set up by the England and Wales Cricket Board, publishing its much-anticipated report, Holding Up a Mirror to Cricket.

The commission makes 44 recommendations, including that the board makes an "unqualified public apology" for its failings.

Stokes reacted to the publication of the report on the eve of the second Ashes Test against Australia, which starts at Lord's on Wednesday.

"To the people involved in the game who have been made to feel unwelcome or unaccepted in the past, I am deeply sorry to hear of your experiences," he said.

"Cricket is a game that needs to celebrate diversity on all fronts because without diversity this game would not be where it is at today."

He added: "Everyone has a different story to tell. I am Ben Stokes, born in New Zealand, a state-educated pupil who dropped out of school at 16 with one GCSE (qualification) in PE. I need help with the spelling and grammar in this speech and I am currently sitting here as the England men's Test captain."

The ICEC was established in 2021 in the wake of a racism scandal centred around the treatment of Pakistan-born bowler Azeem Rafiq at English county cricket club Yorkshire.

Of the more than 4,000 individuals interviewed for the ICEC report, 50 percent described experiencing discrimination in the previous five years, with the figures substantially higher for people from ethnically diverse communities.

Ashes rivals to stick to their guns in Lord's Test

AFP, London

England and Australia have vowed to remain loyal to their contrasting tactical approaches, setting up the prospect of another thrilling Ashes clash in the second Test at Lord's starting today.

Australia, bidding for a first Ashes series win in England in 22 years, went 1-0 up in a five-match campaign with a dramatic two-wicket win in the first Test at Edgbaston last week.

England were in sight of victory when they had their arch-rivals eight down and needing 54 more runs to win, only to be undone by an unbroken partnership between Australia captain Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon.

Poor fielding, with several chances missed, did not help England's cause either.

Attention, however, soon turned to their aggressive 'Bazball' approach, even though this was only their third defeat in 14 Tests since captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum joined forces last year.

Several former England internationals, including Geoffrey Boycott, suggested Stokes's side had been too gung-ho in Birmingham, notably in declaring on the first day at 393.8.

Australia, however, are the World Test champions and there is no guarantee a more orthodox approach would have had led to greater success -- after all it was while playing in such a traditional style that England won just one out of 17 Tests before Stokes

succeeded Joe Root as red ball skipper.

It may grate to hear England seamer Ollie Robinson say Australia will have to "change their approach to keep up with how we're going to play" following a Test his side lost.

But as Mike Brearley, a former England captain, once wrote, "you cannot expect a tortoise to jump like a gazelle" and it may be asking too much of the current side to deviate radically



from a policy that has served them well.

Ollie Pope, Stokes's vice-captain, said there was more to the team's tactics than met the eye.

"I know sometimes it can look like it's just moments of madness but all the decisions that are made are well thought out with a vision of the end goal," Pope insisted at Lord's on Tuesday.

The bigger issue for England arguably lies in team selection.

Off-spinner Moeen Ali, tempted out

of red-ball retirement at Edgbaston, unsurprisingly suffered a finger injury on a bowling hand not used to lengthy spells.

England have called up teenage leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed as cover. They could also rely on Root's part-time off-spin as a way of getting express quick Mark Wood back into the side.

Australia too must decide whether to recall Mitchell Starc after the left-arm



quick was left out at Edgbaston, where England went after Scott Boland -- the normally miserly seamer -- conceded runs at a rate of 5.65 per over.

Australia will hope star batsmen Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith, who managed just 35 runs between them at Edgbaston, return to form.

The Ashes holders have no such qualms over Lyon, with the off-spinner set to appear in his 100th consecutive Test after an eight-wicket haul that left him just five shy of 500 at this level.

Sri Lanka into Super Six as group winners

AFP, BULAWAYO

Sri Lanka defeated Scotland by 82 runs Tuesday to advance to the Super Six stage of the Cricket World Cup qualifiers with maximum points, while Ireland secured a consolation win over the United Arab Emirates.

Opener Pathum Nissanka made 75 and Charith Asalanka scored 63 as Sri Lanka were bowled out for 245 in Bulawayo, with Scotland spinners Chris Greaves (4-32) and Mark Watt (3-52) combining for seven wickets.

Scotland slid to 73-5 in reply and were eventually dismissed for just 163 after two run outs in the same over sealed their fate despite an enterprising 56 not out from Greaves.

Sri Lanka, the 1996 champions, go through as winners of Group B and will start on four points in the next round ahead of matches against the Netherlands, Zimbabwe and the West Indies.

Scotland carry over two points following Sunday's win over Oman, the third team to qualify from the section.

The next phase of the tournament

begins Thursday when hosts Zimbabwe play Oman. The top two finishers in the Super Six will qualify for the World Cup in India in October and November.

Paul Stirling clubbed 162 off 134 balls as Ireland romped to a 138-run victory over the UAE in the other group game between two eliminated nations.

Stirling's knock comprised 15 fours and eight sixes but arrived too late for an Ireland side who lost their first three matches in Zimbabwe.

Captain Andy Balbirnie added 66 and Harry Tector struck a breezy 57 to lift Ireland to a total of 349-4 after they were put in to bat.

UAE skipper Muhammad Waseem made 45 before he was bizarrely run out after wandering out of the crease having been hit on the gloves.

His wicket triggered a collapse that spelled the end of the UAE's hopes despite resistance from Basil Hameed (39) and Sanchit Sharma (44) as they were all out for 211.

Ireland and the UAE head into the play-offs for seventh to 10th place with the United States and Nepal.



Top-tier footballers are on a much-deserved breather following a long and thrilling season with the FIFA World Cup played for the first time in its midway. While Cristiano Ronaldo is on a "vacation mood" with his family and former clubmate Diego Dalot, on the other hand, Lionel Messi took part in two farewell matches of compatriots in Argentina and could soon likely meet Enzo Fernandez, Paulo Dybala, and Sergio Agüero in Miami. Elsewhere, Andre Onana and Zambou Anguissa are enjoying their holidays in Cameroon and fellow African star Mohamed Salah has been doing the same in his homeland, Egypt.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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Pilgrims ascend Mt Arafat in hajj climax

AFP, Mt Arafat

Hundreds of thousands of Muslim pilgrims prayed at Mount Arafat in searing heat yesterday at the height of an annual hajj pilgrimage held in the Saudi Arabian summer.

Worshippers crowded the rocky rise and surrounding area from before dawn and when the sun appeared, it revealed vast numbers of white-robed worshippers thronging the sacred site.

The ritual is the high point of the annual pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam.

This year's hajj pilgrimage has drawn more than 1.8 million worshippers, Saudi Arabia's statistics authority said yesterday, a long way short of a record despite predictions of peak attendance.

"I'm very happy. It's a moment I have been

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Muslim pilgrims crowd Saudi Arabia's Mount Arafat, also known as Jabal al-Rahma or Mount of Mercy, during the climax of the Hajj pilgrimage yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

BANGLADESHI MIGRANTS UN special envoy concerned over rights abuses

Points at lack of probe, prosecution in destination countries

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A special rapporteur told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that the lack of investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of human rights abuses of Bangladeshi migrants in the countries of destination was concerning.

Felipe González Morales, the UN special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, who visited Bangladesh on January 20 to 31, presented a report at the 53rd session (19 June to 14 July) of the council on Monday.

"Reports of widespread human rights abuses in the countries of destination continued, including abuses instigated within the kafalah system against domestic workers."

He urged the countries of destination to conduct a continual and thorough monitoring of the conditions of migrants, particularly women in the domestic service sector.

Morales particularly highlighted the rights abuses faced by the women migrants, who comprise around 10 percent of some 12 million Bangladeshi migrants working mostly in the Gulf and Southeast Asian countries.

They annually send home over \$ 21 billion, which is about 40 percent of the total foreign exchange earnings and 7 percent of GDP. However, gaps in regulations and enforcement at home, as well as, lack of protection mechanisms in the destination countries often lead to exploitation.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

DHAKA AIRPORT 3rd terminal to open partially in October 77.5pc work complete

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 77.5 percent work of the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport has been completed and there could be a soft opening in the first week of October.

"We want to complete 90 percent of the project before October. We hope the work will be completed before time," said Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman during a press conference on the first floor of the terminal yesterday.

Work on the interior of the terminal and installations of various equipment are going on.

Mafidur said the terminal will be fully functional in 2024 and that work was going on round the clock so that the soft opening could happen.

"Although the Eid-ul-Azha holiday starts today [yesterday], our 3,000 to 4,000 workers will work even during the Eid holidays," said Mafidur.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in December 2019 inaugurated the construction work of the third terminal which will cost Tk 21,399 crore.

The three-storey terminal building, which will be 2.30 lakh square metres, will have 115 check-in counters, 64 departure and 64 arrival immigration desks, 27 baggage scanning machines, 40 scanning machines, 12 boarding bridges, 16 carousels, and 11 body scanners.

Wagner chief starts exile in Belarus

President Lukashenko confirms; Russia drops criminal case against mutineers; Putin praises troops for 'stopping civil war'

REUTERS

Russian mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin arrived in Belarus yesterday under a deal that ended a brief mutiny against the Russian military by his fighters, state news agency BELTA said, quoting Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

A plane linked to Prigozhin and believed to be carrying him into exile landed in Belarus from the southern Russian city of Rostov early yesterday, a flight tracking service said.

"I see Prigozhin is already flying in on this plane," Lukashenko was quoted as saying by BELTA. "Yes, indeed, he is in Belarus today."

In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin praised Russia's armed forces for "stopping a civil war" as he sought to reassert his authority after the mutiny led by Prigozhin in protest against the Russian military's handling of the conflict in Ukraine.

Russian authorities also dropped a criminal case against his Wagner Group mercenary force, state news agency RIA reported, apparently fulfilling another condition of the deal brokered by Lukashenko late on Saturday that defused the crisis.

Prigozhin, a former Putin ally and ex-convict whose mercenaries have fought the

bloodiest battles of the Ukraine war and taken heavy casualties, had earlier said he would go to neighbouring Belarus at the invitation of Lukashenko, a close Putin ally.

Flight tracking service Flightradar24's website showed an Embraer Legacy 600 jet, bearing identification codes that match a plane linked to Prigozhin in US sanctions documents, descending to landing altitude near the Belarus capital Minsk.

It first appeared on the tracking site above Rostov, the southern Russian city Prigozhin's fighters had captured during the mutiny.

Putin meanwhile told some 2,500 security personnel mustered for a ceremony on a square in the Kremlin complex that the people and the armed forces had stood together in opposition to the rebel mercenaries.

"You have defended the constitutional order, the lives, security and freedom of our citizens. You have saved our Motherland from upheaval. In fact, you have stopped a civil war," he said.

In Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his nightly address that the military had made advances on Monday in all sectors of the front line, calling it a "happy day".

Kyiv hopes the chaos caused by the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Whenever in power, BNP indulged in graft, looting Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the BNP engaged in "corruption and looting" whenever it came to power.

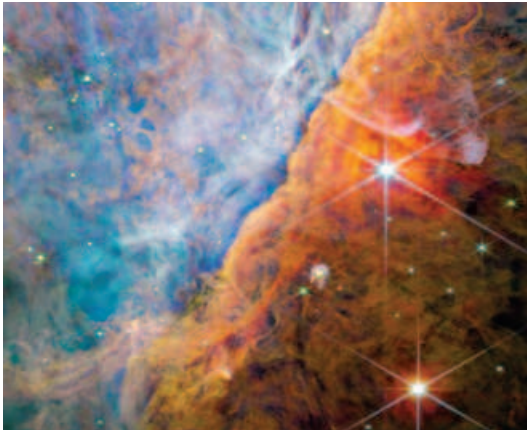
"In continuation of that, they have already finalised the outline of conspiracy and robbery," he said, referring to BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's recent statement on the outline of a non-party caretaker government.

Protesting and condemning the statement, Quader said the BNP never cares about the welfare of the country and its people.

The people of the country will not support any outline on returning to the terrible rule of corruption and looting by Hawa Bhaban and brutal killings like those of August 21, militancy and terrorism, said Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, in a press statement.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Webb detects crucial molecule in space for first time



CNN ONLINE

Astronomers have detected a crucial carbon molecule in space for the first time using the James Webb Space Telescope.

The compound, called methyl cation, or CH₃⁺, was traced back to a young star system located 1,350 light-years away from Earth in the Orion Nebula, according to Nasa.

Carbon compounds are intriguing to scientists because they act as the foundation for all life as we know and understand it. Methyl cation is considered a key component that helps form more complex carbon-based molecules.

Understanding how life began and evolved on Earth could help researchers determine if it's possible elsewhere in the universe. The highly sensitive capabilities of the Webb telescope, which views the cosmos through infrared light that is invisible to the human eye, is revealing more about organic chemistry in space.

Modi bats for uniform civil code Says Muslims being instigated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday made a strong pitch for a uniform civil code, a key ideological issue for his Bharatiya Janata Party, and had a dig at the opposition parties' attempts to firm up a united front against him in coming general elections.

"Muslims of India should understand who are those inciting them for their own gains. Today we are seeing some people inciting others (Muslims) in the name of uniform civil code. The Constitution talks about equal rights to the citizens. The Supreme Court too has backed it," Modi said during an interactive session with BJP workers in Bhopal.

Asked by a BJP worker about triple talaq, Modi said those opposing triple talaq "are doing injustice to the Muslim



SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



These boats on display at Salutikar Bazar are for sale. The demand for boats increases in the rainy season as it becomes the main mode of transport for the people of the haor regions during the time. Boat prices range between Tk 3,000 and Tk 10,000. This around 100-year-old market in Sylhet's Gowainghat remains open on Saturdays and Tuesdays. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Booters eye semis after 14 years



SPORTS REPORTER

From Bengaluru

Fresh from a morale-boosting 3-1 win over Maldives, Bangladesh are eager to make it to the semifinals of SAFF Championship as they take on Bhutan in their final Group B fixture at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru today.

The match will kick off at 8:00pm (BST) after Lebanon take on Maldives in the day's first match at the same venue.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5