

## SHAHIDUL MURDER

### Will be watching the case carefully

#### Says US envoy Haas

UNB, Dhaka

The US has condemned the murder of labour leader Shahidul Islam and called on Bangladesh authorities to investigate the crime thoroughly and hold the perpetrators accountable.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas made the call yesterday.

Ambassador Haas visited the headquarters of the Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation to express condolences over labour leader Shahidul Islam's death.

The US said it supports the rights of workers everywhere to organise and bargain collectively without fear of violence or retribution.

"We will be watching the case carefully to make sure that there is accountability," Haas said.

He said they hope that there will be a complete investigation into the murder and those responsible will be held accountable.

Shahidul was the president of the Gazipur unit of Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation.

His colleagues alleged that local criminals attacked him for speaking in favour of clearing workers' arrears.



A platform of Kamalapur Railway Station full of people after an intercity train arrived yesterday. Eid holidaymakers are returning to the capital after celebrating the festival with their near and dear ones outside Dhaka.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Bogura's yogurt among 4 products gets GI tag

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

The Department of Patents, Deigns and Trademarks (DPDT) has granted Geographical Indication certificates to Chapainawabganj's Langra and Ashwina mangoes, Bogura's yogurt, and Sherpur's spaddy variety Tulsimala.

"GI certificates were granted to the four products last month. One more will be given the certificate this month," Md Zillur Rahman, deputy registrar of the DPDT, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said Kachagolla of Natore, Black Bengal goat of Bangladesh, Tiler Khaja of Kustia, Rasmalai of Cumilla, Agar Attar and Agar Wood Chips of Moulvibazar, and Haribhanga mangoes of Rangpur will receive GI registration if there are no complaints about the issuance of certificates after publications of GI journals.

Zillur said they received applications from the respective districts about the four products and after scrutinising those, the DPDT published journals in April.

As no complaints were received after the publication of the journals, the applicants were granted the GI certificates after payment of registration fees.

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## MANIPUR VIOLENCE

### Indian security forces foil weapon loot attempt

One killed, several injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian security forces prevented an attempted loot of weapons by suspected armed militants from an army camp during a skirmish that left one person dead in Khangabok in Thoubal district of ethnic riot-hit Manipur state on Tuesday, ANI reported yesterday.

Quoting a statement by the Spear Corps of the Indian Army, ANI said while one individual involved in the attempted loot was killed, several others sustained injuries during the incident.

The Spear Corps took to Twitter and said, "An attempt to loot weapons from an India Reserve Battalion at Khangabok in Thoubal district of Manipur was successfully thwarted by security forces today. One rioter was killed while a few others were injured during the failed attempt."

According to the statement, the situation was brought under control by the deployment of additional units from the Assam Rifles and Rapid Action Force. The reinforcements successfully managed to address the roadblocks set up by a mob, thereby ensuring the restoration of normalcy.

It said the mob had set up roadblocks to prevent the movement of reinforcements. However, additional columns of Assam Rifles and Rapid Action Force were able to induct reinforcements and the situation was brought under control by "synergised efforts of security forces."

Meanwhile, nearly all schools remained shut in Manipur despite a government order to reopen them yesterday in a bid to restore normalcy.

Students, teachers and support staff did not show up at schools in the morning, said a state education department official. Four private schools opened but all government-run schools were still closed, he added.

"There is a sense of fear and insecurity among the people and hence we decided against sending our children to school," said Ibotombi Singh, a businessman from the state capital Imphal.

The state government, run by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's political party, had ordered schools to reopen from yesterday for children aged between five and 14 even as sporadic fighting between ethnic groups continued in the hilly state that borders Myanmar.

## Food hoarders can be jailed for life

### JS passes bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Food hoarders can be imprisoned for up to 14 years.

Keeping this provisions, a new law titled "Production, Storage, Transfer, Transportation, Supply, Distribution and Marketing of Food Products (Prevention of Prejudicial Activity) Bill, 2023," was passed in parliament yesterday.

Hoarding will be a non-bailable offence. Marketing of food products under fictitious names will also be consider a criminal offence.

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder placed the bill, which was passed by voice votes.

JP MP Kazi Firoz Rashid said, "It is a terrible law."

Anyone can be arrested under this law at any time. A festival of bribery will begin in the country. As a result of this law, fear will spread among the farmers of the country. Farmers often stock grains with the hope of getting better prices. They will also be affected by this law.

The food minister said it is easy to identify the real hoarders. There is no danger of enforcement of this law on farmers. This will be further clarified in the rules made under this act.

## Mother, son stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

A homemaker and her eight-year-old son died after they were stabbed in their sleep at home in Cumilla's Chaudagram upazila early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Nipa Akter, 27, wife of Anwar Hossain, an expatriate in Dubai, and their son Ali Ahsan Mujahid.

Nipa's father Jalal Ahmed alleged that Anwar had a longstanding dispute over land with his brother Mir Hossain. Mir's sons are behind the killings, he claimed.

Police detained Mir's two sons, including Mainul, from Pachora village in Chaudagram after talking to Nipa's family.

Jalal said they suspect that the killers entered Nipa's home and hid in the toilet sometime on Tuesday night after the mother and her son went to a relative's house around 9:00pm.

The killers stabbed the two around 2:30am. Hearing screams, neighbours rushed to the scene and took the two to the Chaudagram Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared Nipa dead, Jalal added.

Mujahid died on the way to a hospital in Dhaka.

The bodies were handed over to the victims' family members after autopsies at Cumilla Medical College morgue.

## Man dies after being 'tortured, shot by BSF'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A Bangladeshi man died on Tuesday night after allegedly being tortured and shot by the Indian Border Security Force along the Sukani border in Panchagarh's Tentulia upazila.

Sujan Rana, 30, was from Dangapara village in the upazila, said Officer-in-Charge of Tentulia Police Station Abu Sayed Chowdhury.

According to family members and locals, Sujan was shot by the BSF after being brutally tortured early Tuesday. He was left on the Bangladesh side in a critical condition, they added.

Locals rescued him and took him to a clinic. He died when he was being taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

## Thakurgaon journo fined under DSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi court yesterday fined a Thakurgaon journalist Tk 1 lakh in a Digital Security Act case for defaming physically challenged people on Facebook.

In the verdict, judge Md Ziaur Rahman also said if the convict Abdul Latif Litu fails to pay the fine, he would have to serve three months in jail.

Litu works for Bangladesh Protidin.

On September 2021, Litu in a Facebook post addressed a physically challenged official without naming and used offensive and defamatory words against him.

Later, Md Zahidur Rahman, president of Rajshahi chapter of Badhon Protibondhi Shangstha, filed a case against him with the Cyber Tribunal under the DSA.

## Govt created

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He also said that in the last four and a half years, this law has been applied to suppress dissent and free thought or criticism of the ruling party. The freedom of expression of journalists has been severely curtailed due to this law. This law has given unlimited powers to the police, he added.

Mokabbir also mentioned the harassment of Prothom Alo journalist Samsuzzaman under this law.

"... The law minister is talking about amending it in the face of strong objections from civil society, human rights activists and journalists. Hopefully, the law minister will take an initiative in this regard quickly," he said.

AZI BILL

The Agency to Innovate (AZI) Bill 2023 was passed in parliament to form an agency to encourage innovation in the information technology sector.

The autonomous agency will be formed with a 15-member board of directors and the ICT minister will be the chairman of the board.

## A visit crucial

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US State Department Counsellor Derek Chollet, during his visit to Dhaka this February, said the "erosion of democracy" limits its ability to cooperate with any country, including Bangladesh.

On May 24, the US declared a policy saying those involved in vote rigging and intimidation will be denied US visa. Earlier in 2021, the Biden Administration imposed sanctions on RAB and some of its officials, while it also did not invite Bangladesh to the Democracy Summit.

The US and EU are the major destinations for Bangladesh's exports that bring home much-needed foreign currencies.

Humayun Kabir also said the controversies centring the last two elections have had negative implications for Bangladesh as a democracy, as well as in terms of good governance.

## Digital debacle

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purchasing desktops, laptops, photo printers, laser printers, scanners, modems, headphones, webcams, solar power systems, POS machines, finger vein machines, chairs and tables.

About 20 percent of the e-centres were never inaugurated, so the equipment there had never been used.

About Tk 18.83 crore was spent to purchase 8,450 computer tables, 8,450 computer chairs and 16,900 visitor chairs.

No furniture was found in 630 of the 900 centres visited by the CAG team.

"That means, 70 percent of furniture has been lost," the report said.

The CAG auditors also found Tk 7.81 crore was wasted by purchasing devices not required.

At almost every centre, the colour printers are falling apart due to lack of use as people are not aware of their availability at the e-centres.

Similarly, the 8,500 webcams were

purchased even though the laptops have built-in webcams. Scanners were purchased separately when photo printers could do the job.

"The webcams and scanners are left unused."

Some 500 external hard drives were purchased although the hard drives in computers had enough storage.

And due to the purchase of low-quality laptops, one or two devices were found damaged in every centre. Solar panels were damaged within a year of installation, according to the report.

But no such service delivery was observed, according to the report.

A total of 8,500 Teletalk modems had been purchased for the e-centres to provide internet services to rural communities. But those modems remained unused.

The e-centres were supposed to be manned by individuals with the view to turning them into small entrepreneurs.

But those manning the e-centres

were found unable to help rural people with services. They were also found to be involved in various other professions and are unable to give enough time to the e-centres.

The e-centres also failed to provide mobile banking and remittance services and safety net disbursement.

Under the project, 17,000 POS machines and 10,000 finger vein machines were purchased to provide more reliable and speedy disbursement of allowances under the social safety net.

Only one centre was found to be providing the allowance during the visit.

In its response, the audited organisation said no unnecessary devices were purchased and all devices that were purchased, following the approved DPP, are being used in the centres.

Besides, some of the e-centres could not be opened due to a lack of people to man them.

The CAG auditors did not accept the explanations.

## Canada, allies take Iran to ICJ over downed jet

AFP, The Hague

Canada, Britain, Sweden and Ukraine have taken Iran to the International Court of Justice to seek damages for families of passengers on a jetliner downed by Tehran in 2020, the tribunal said yesterday.

The case at the UN's top court says Iran "violated a series of obligations" under a convention on civil aviation by shooting down Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 after take-off from Tehran.

All 176 people on board were killed. Three days after the January 8, 2020

crash, Iran admitted that its military had targeted the Kyiv-bound Boeing 737-800 plane by mistake.

Canada, Britain, Sweden and Ukraine -- which had a number of citizens on board -- said last month they would go to the Hague-based court to seek reparations on behalf of victims' families.

Their filing at the tribunal says Iran breached a 1971 multilateral treaty on threats to civil aviation, and that attempts to seek binding arbitration with Iran had failed.

They asked the court to "order full reparation for all injury caused" and

to make Iran pay "full compensation to the applicants for the material and moral damages suffered by the victims and their families".

Iran should also return the belongings of the victims and publicly acknowledge its "internationally wrongful acts".

In June, Iran took Canada to the ICJ accusing Ottawa of allowing victims of alleged terror attacks to claim damages from Tehran.

Tehran's case claims that Ottawa, which listed the Islamic Republic as a sponsor of terrorism in 2012, had violated Iran's state immunity.

## Govt forms Nat'l Pension Authority

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One of the rules will pertain to how the beneficiaries will deposit instalments and register themselves with the authority.

Software is being developed for the smooth operation of the scheme.

Like savings certificates, beneficiaries of the universal pension scheme will be able to register themselves at banks. The scheme will initially be available through state-owned Sonali Bank.

The government is considering introducing four types of schemes: private sector jobholders, expatriate Bangladeshis, informal sector workers and the destitute.

For the destitute, the government might come up with a subsidy.

In January, the government enacted the Universal Pension Management Act, of 2023. There will be a 16-member governing body headed by the finance minister.

Secretaries of different ministries, the Bangladesh Bank governor, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission chairman and the presidents of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce

& Industries, Bangladesh Employers Federation and Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry will be its members.

Under the proposed scheme, a beneficiary can enjoy pension benefits subject to the payment of a subscription fee up to the age of 60 if the person enrolls between 18 and 50 years of age.

Those who enrol after their 50th birthday will have to pay the subscription fee for at least 10 years.

If the pensioner dies before hitting 75, their nominee will be entitled to the pension.

If the subscriber dies before paying the subscription fee for at least 10 years, the deposited money will be returned to the nominee with the profit.

A subscriber will be able to withdraw a maximum of 50 percent of the deposited amount as a loan.

Contributions to the pension fund will be treated as investments and tax rebates can be availed against it. Besides, the amount received as a monthly pension will be exempted from income tax.

## Test run from Agargaon to Motijheel

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give you a fixed time of the performance test."

Last month, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader announced that the metro rail route from Agargaon to Motijheel will be open to public from October this year -- two months ahead of the pre-announced schedule.

The Uttara-Agargaon section of the country's first metro-rail line, formally known as MRT Line 6, was opened in December last year.

Since then, the demand of the Agargaon-Motijheel section has increased as the major catchment area runs through Mirpur to Motijheel.

At that time, it was announced that the Agargaon-Motijheel section would open in December, while the Motijheel-Kamalapur one would open in June 2025.

But at a June 18 programme, Quader said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the Agargaon-Motijheel section in October.

At the programme, MAN Siddique gave details about the project's progress and preparation.

He said the metro rail's performance test on the Agargaon-Motijheel section will begin in July, followed by the integrity test in September.

Then, in October, they will conduct a passenger-free trial run before launching the formal operation, he added.

Till June this year, the section saw 95.20 percent progress, shows the DMTC monthly progress report.

The government is implementing the fast-track project to build the 21.26km elevated metro line, which will have 17 stations, from Uttara to Kamalapur at a cost of Tk 33,472 crore.