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## PM brings Tamim back

Her intervention leads to retirement U-turn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was under extraordinary circumstances that ODI captain Tamim Iqbal had announced his shock retirement



on Thursday and, just as surprisingly, he withdrew his decision to retire from international cricket the following day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's intervention.

Last evening, some 28 hours after his announcement, the situation changed drastically.

The Prime Minister had invited Tamim to Gono Bhobon, instructing former skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza to get her in touch with the Bangladesh's incumbent ODI captain. Tamim and his wife Ayesha Siddiqa, accompanied by Mashrafe, entered the residence around 2:30 PM and BCB president Nazmul Hassan came in at around 4:10 PM.

Following a three-and-a-half-hour meeting, Tamim came out to announce that he was withdrawing his retirement.

"The honourable PM invited me to her home this afternoon. We discussed for a long time with her and she instructed me to return to the game. So, I am withdrawing my retirement from this moment because I can say no to everyone, but it's impossible to say no to the greatest leader in the country," Tamim told the media on Friday.

Tamim also informed that he was taking a one-and-a-half month's leave from the game in order to get required treatment for his injury.

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The metro traverses Farmgate during the first of a series of test runs between Agargaon and Motijheel. Officials say commuters will be able to use this part of the route from late October.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## AGARGAON-MOTIJHEEL 3 metro rail stations to open in Oct

Test run begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The metro rail authorities are planning to open three stations on the Agargaon-Motijheel route at the beginning of commercial operations, which is likely to be in October.

The three stations are Farmgate, Secretariat (Jatiya Press Club), and Motijheel, said Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader while launching the test trip on the route yesterday.

The rest of the four stations will be opened later in phases, he added.

"We have completed first performance on viaduct

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## A project riddled with anomalies

Dhaka-Tongi-Joydebpur railway expansion project taken without feasibility study, revised and delayed several times leading to cost escalation

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Dhaka-Tongi-Joydebpur railway expansion project was taken up without any feasibility study and approved without a fixed work scope, leading the authorities to revise the project several times, a government monitoring report said.

The project, which was supposed to be completed in 2015, will now take till June 2027 – a whopping 12-year delay – and will cost Tk 3,342.55 crore, almost four times the original estimate.

Besides, 20 percent of the ballast used

by the project contractor were oversized, going against design specifications, while the project authorities showed negligence in the concrete cube testing, said the report.

The in-depth monitoring report of the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) has asked the authorities to retest the qualities of the ballast, rail and sleeper at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

Bangladesh Railway undertook the project in November 2012 to increase the

capacity of a vital section that connects the capital with most of the country's rail network.

The Tk 848.60 crore project, aimed at constructing third and fourth dual-gauge railway lines on the Dhaka-Tongi route and a second dual-gauge line on the Tongi-Joydebpur route, was supposed to be completed within June 2015.

However, the physical work of the project began in February 2019 due to complications over design and the tender process. As per the latest revision, the

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## EU for 'genuine' talks among key political parties

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Union wants "genuine" talks among the main political parties in Bangladesh and ample space for the civil society as the next national election is getting closer.

It also wants all parties and citizens of Bangladesh to exercise their political rights and participate in the parliamentary polls to build confidence in the election process.

The high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, Josep Borrell, said this in response to a

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A woman breaks down in tears as her 22-year-old son who has dengue shivers in fever and pain at Mugda Medical College Hospital. Since the hospital is at capacity, the patient is being treated on the floor. As of yesterday, deaths caused by the disease were 65, according to official records.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## UKHIYA ROHINGYA CAMP 5 killed in gunfight between 2 gangs

Body of another Rohingya man recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Five Rohingya men were shot dead yesterday in what police said was a gunfight between two gangs at a refugee camp in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar.

Four of the victims are Anwar Hossain, 24, Muhammad Hamim, 16, Nazibullah, 28, and Nurul Amin, 24, said Amir Zafar, commanding officer of Armed Police Battalion 8, adding one other victim had not been identified yet.

The gunfight took place between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) around 6:15am in Balukhali, he added.

"We came to know that the victims were ARSA members. Three of them died at the scene while two others were pronounced dead at a hospital," the APBn official said.

Police recovered a firearm and a bullet from the scene, he said, adding that police were looking for the suspects.

The incident happened only a day

after a Rohingya community leader was killed at a camp in Ukhiya despite the security measures taken for a visit by International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim AA Khan.

In another incident at the same camp, police around 5:00pm recovered the body of a 45-year-old man named Sanaullah. His throat was slit and there were multiple stab wounds on the body, said Sheikh Mohammad Ali, officer-in-charge of Ukhiya Police Station.

Officers are trying to find out whether the two incidents are linked, he added.

According to police and Rohingya leaders, at least 57 Rohingyas, including 17 community leaders and 11 ARSA members, got killed in clashes over the last six months.

Around 1.2 million Rohingyas are living in the camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas of Cox's Bazar. Most of them came here fleeing a military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State in 2017.

## DEFAMATION CASE HC rejects Rahul's plea to stay conviction

REUTERS, New Delhi

A high court in western India yesterday rejected an appeal by opposition leader Rahul Gandhi to suspend his conviction in a defamation case, quashing for now his hope of returning to parliament and contesting national elections due next year.

Gandhi can now take his appeal to a larger bench of the same high court and then to the Supreme Court, his last option.

Gandhi was convicted in March in a case brought by a Gujarat state lawmaker from the ruling Bharatiya



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## BNP hopeful about success of one-point movement

Fakhrul holds talks with leaders of Gonoforum, People's Party

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has expressed optimism that their planned one-point movement will lead to the fall of the government.

"We are very hopeful that we will be able to defeat this government and force it to step down, dissolve parliament and arrange the next election under a non-party neutral government through our one-point movement as the people are now united," he said.

The BNP leader made the remarks while talking to reporters after a meeting with the liaison committee of a faction of the Gonoforum and People's Party at the BNP chairperson's political office in Gulshan yesterday.

Fakhrul said the BNP is also confident that a pro-people

**Fakhrul said the BNP is confident that a pro-people government would be formed through a credible election under a neutral administration to give democracy an institutional shape.**

government would be formed through a credible election under a neutral administration to give democracy an institutional shape.

He said they discussed in the meeting the next course of action on the ongoing simultaneous movement. They also talked about how and when the one-point movement can be launched.

Gonoforum General Secretary Subrata Chowdhury said there will be no election without a non-party neutral government and the people will not participate in any polls under the incumbent government.

"That's why we are going to launch the one-point movement soon."

Subrata said they reached a consensus with the BNP on presenting a joint statement on their movement within a short time and then intensifying their anti-government movement.

"A public opinion has been formed in favour of holding a fair election under a neutral government. We are also getting cooperation from the international community in this regard," he said.

## PM brings

FROM PAGE 1

"Papon bhai and Mashrafe bhai were big, big factors. Mashrafe bhai took me along and Papon bhai was with me. The Prime Minister has given me one-and-half-month time off in case I require treatment or if I need to get mentally free. I can do that and play the games there are after one-and-a-half months," he relayed.

The BCB president also briefed the media on the incredible developments. He had said on Thursday that he still considered Tamim the captain of the ODI team as he had not received a letter of resignation. However, the letter in question arrived on Friday morning.

"I had a feeling from seeing his [Tamim's] press conference that he took a decision from an emotional point of view. I felt that if we could sit with him then maybe we could find a solution."

"Today, through the honourable Prime Minister's involvement, we could sit with him. And, as he has told you, he is withdrawing his letter of retirement," Hassan said.

"Yes a letter arrived today. Since he is not physically or mentally fit yet, that's why he is taking time off. In these one-and-a-half-months, he will go for rehab and we are hoping he will return to cricket soon. It's a relief for everyone. If our captain is not there, how will we play?" he further said.

Mashrafe later told The Daily Star that the responsibility bestowed on him by the Prime Minister was accomplished. Tamim, as it stands now, will return to the team ahead of the Asia Cup in September.

Mashrafe felt the issue of captaincy was best left to Tamim and the BCB president. "I don't quite know about that [whether Tamim would take on captaincy again]. It's up to them and they have discussed it. The main thing is that the Prime Minister wanted Tamim to play the World Cup. That's final and that's what happened," he remarked.

Amidst the backdrop of an extraordinary evening, meanwhile, the Bangladesh cricket team, under Liton Das' captaincy, prepared for the must-win second ODI against Afghanistan at Chattogram's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, hoping to level the series with a win.

## Sudan paramilitaries loot, 'terrorise' remote town

Say witnesses; fresh fighting reported in Khartoum, Darfur

AFP, Wad Madani

Gunmen from Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces were accused of attacking a remote town yesterday before going on a shooting and looting rampage that witnesses said "terrorised" its people.

For nearly three months, the RSF commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo has fought the regular army under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in a war that has claimed the lives of at least 3,000 people and displaced millions.

The RSF was "looting banks and public buildings" in Bara, 50 kilometres (30 miles) northeast of El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan, a witness in the town said.

"We're being terrorised: they shoot and loot, and the army and police are nowhere to be seen," said another resident, Abdelmohsen Ibrahim.

"Even if the army tries to come from El Obeid, the RSF are in control of the El-Obeid-Bara road."

El-Obeid, 350 kilometres south of Khartoum, is a strategic logistical and commercial hub, with an airport and huge warehouses for the storage of foodstuffs.

The fighting since April 15 has been centred on the capital Khartoum as well as North Kordofan and the vast western region of Darfur, where the United Nations has warned of possible "crimes against humanity".

Many civilians have accused the RSF of carrying out acts of violence against them, while

also charging that the armed forces have done little to protect them.

Since the war erupted, the RSF has established bases in residential areas while the army has struggled to take advantage of its air superiority.

The RSF has been accused of forcing civilians out of their homes, seizing their vehicles, robbing them and raping women as they flee to neighbouring countries.

Fresh fighting was reported on Thursday in Khartoum and Darfur, including air strikes, heavy shelling and fighting on the ground.

The RSF paramilitary group traces its origins to the Janjaweed – feared Arab militiamen who committed widespread atrocities against non-Arab ethnic minorities in Darfur starting 2003.

Saudi Arabia and the United States brokered several ceasefire deals at talks in Jeddah that were suspended last month after both sides violated the truces.

Nearly 2.8 million people have been displaced since the start of the fighting in mid-April, including almost 650,000 who have crossed into neighbouring countries, according to the latest UN figures.

According to a report published last week by Heritage For Peace, a cultural heritage NGO in touch with local researchers and archaeologists, at least 28 cultural and archaeological sites around the country have been targeted or suffered collateral damage, reports Reuters.

## WEST BANK RAID 2 Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces

REUTERS, Nablus

Israeli security forces yesterday killed two Palestinians suspected of carrying out a shooting attack against police this week, Israel's military said.

Israeli forces raided the occupied West Bank town of Nablus, the military said, and "both terrorists were killed following an exchange of fire."

The official Palestinian news agency WAFA said Israeli troops had cordoned off a house where the two had holed up and that they had been "executed". It reported that clashes with residents later broke out.

Yesterday's raid into Nablus followed a two-day Israeli operation earlier this week in the densely populated Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank, which has been a flashpoint in a wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence that has convulsed the West Bank for more than a year.

## Next year's HSC exams on short syllabus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Next year's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) exams will be held on a revised or short syllabus, said Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday.

Replying to a question, the minister said the decision was taken as the candidates who would appear for the exam were not getting enough classes to cover the full syllabus.

So, the syllabus will be revised for next year's HSC exams scheduled to be held in August, she added while interacting with journalists at Chandpur Circuit House around noon.

On July 7, a circular signed by the inter-boards coordination committee president Tapan Kumar Sarker said the HSC and equivalent examinations in 2024 will be held on the revised syllabus formulated in 2023. Tests will be held on all subjects. Each examination will be three hours long and will carry full marks, it added.

## Barguna fisherman drowns in Payra river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A fisherman drowned in the Payra river in Barguna's Taltali upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Md Zakir Hossain, 40, of Zakirtabak area, said Shahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Taltali Police Station.

According to locals, Zakir fell into the water from a fishing trawler in the Tetulbaria area and went missing around 9:00am.

His foot had gotten tangled in the anchor rope of the trawler before it was dropped into the river.

After two hours of searching in the river, locals recovered Zakir's body.

Taltali Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sifat Anwar Tumpa said the local administration will provide financial assistance to the family of the deceased.

## Man dies, brother hurt as train hits trolley

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A man was killed and his brother was injured when a train hit a tractor trolley near the Guakhora rail station area in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila yesterday afternoon.

The deceased is Abdul Karim, 35 from Faridpur upazila. He was driving the tractor trolley that hauled goods.

The accident took place at the Bejjara area near the Gakhora station at around 1:30pm when a Dhaka-bound intercity train Chilahati Express was crossing the area.

Chatmohar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Selim Reza said the train hit the trolley when its driver Karim along with his brother Likhon was crossing the rail line without noticing the train.

Karim died on the spot while his brother Likhon was injured, who was taken to Chatmohar Upazila Health Complex.

There was no authorised level crossing in the area.

Just the previous day, two men, who were also brothers, died as a train hit their motorbike in Santhia upazila.



The chassis of a lorry is left on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway while its body is being repaired at an automobile workshop, *not in picture*, by the road. This poses a risk of accidents. The photo was taken in the capital's Matuail yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## A project riddled with anomalies

FROM PAGE 1

project cost rose by Tk 2,493.95 crore and the deadline was set for June 2027.

Project authorities cited the Dhaka Elevated Expressway construction over the rail line in the capital, complexities over land acquisition, the Covid 19 pandemic, and the hold up in starting the physical work as the major reasons behind the delay.

**WHAT THE IMED REPORT SAYS**

According to the recently released IMED report, the project saw 63.75 percent progress till May this year, against the revised target of 86.36 percent by this time.

The report stressed how this project was taken up without any feasibility study, while such a study is vital for any project.

On the other hand, the project's original Development Project Proposal (DPP) was approved without identifying and specifying the work scope, the report said.

The DPP was then revised twice, with the latest revision done last month, documents show.

Asked, Project Director Nazneen Ara Keya admitted that the project indeed was taken without a feasibility study and the work scope was not fixed beforehand.

As per a provision included with the project, a detailed design was done and thus, the work scope was widened after that, she said.

The IMED report suggested conducting proper feasibility tests before taking up any project and that DPPs be prepared considering reality to avoid time and cost overrun.

**POOR MATERIALS & TEST NEGLIGENCE**

The report said an inspection of the site found a laboratory with insufficient facility, rendering it incapable of ensuring quality of the material.

The team observed the curing management of concrete cubes and a fixed date for testing but found that no initiative was taken for cube testing even after its maturity date had passed, it said.

The responsibility for such negligence or working against the

contract falls on the consultants, engineers and contractor, the report further said, adding that the project implementing agency cannot avoid its responsibility either.

The non-performance of the concrete cube test within the stipulated time raises a question about whether the structure was constructed as per the quality mentioned in the contract, it said.

The report recommended that a third party test samples from the infrastructure and the results be scrutinised by the BR's design department.

However, the project director denied the allegations and said they

<b>TIME &amp; COST OVERRUN</b> Original deadline: <b>June 2015</b> Revised deadline: <b>June 2027</b> Original cost: Tk <b>848.60cr</b> Revised cost: Tk <b>3,342.55cr</b> <b>OTHER ANOMALIES</b> Work scope not fixed before taking up project  20pc ballasts were oversized Negligence in concrete cube testing Insufficient facility in lab to test material
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were based on a "wrong perception".

She also claimed they have done the test on time and following due procedure.

The report also said that when, during a field visit, it was found that 20 percent of the ballast used were oversized, the project consultant could not properly explain why it was so.

"Proper compaction is not possible if there is abundance of oversized ballast," it said.

Less compacted ballast worsen the riding quality, which may cause the rail to bend and may even lead to train accidents, the report said, adding that it appears that the contract provision was violated in this regard.

The report further said the rail line installation work from Tongi to

Joydebpur was completed but the thickness of ballast on the section was found to be 20 percent less than the estimate.

The project director said, "How did they [IMED] determine that 20 percent of the ballast were oversized? They are saying it based on an assumption. We have checked and not more than five percent of ballast were oversized – which is permitted as per the contract."

Besides, the project work has not been completed yet and they will be able to add ballast, if necessary, she said, adding that they have already asked the contractor and consultants to recheck.

The report further said meetings of the Project Steering Committee and Project Implementation Committee were not being held regularly.

**REASONS FOR DELAY, COST ESCALATION**

Project Director Nazneen Ara said the Dhaka Elevated Expressway being constructed over the rail line in the capital was the main reason behind the delay in implementation, adding that the physical work of the railway project from Banani to Kamalapur could not begin because of this.

The expressway authority, in a letter sent to the rail authority, said it would clear the rail line up to Mohakhali, Tejgaon Station and Malibagh by July and August this year and March of next year respectively, she said.

"So, we have to plan our work accordingly," Nazneen said, adding that the expressway authority is yet to say when they will clear the Malibagh-Kamalapur section.

About land acquisition complications, she said the problem is "almost solved". Besides, the Covid-19 pandemic and the long delay in starting the physical work are other reasons behind the time extension, she added.

Meanwhile, the increase of work, redesign of the Turag Bridge, a spike in land acquisition costs, and the strong dollar were the major reasons behind the cost escalation, the project director said.

## 3 metro rail stations

FROM PAGE 1

from Agargaon to Motijheel successfully," ABM Arifur Rahman, a project manager of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the train took 43 minutes to reach Motijheel from Agargaon as it was operated at a speed of 10 to 15km per hour on section and 5km per hour in station areas.

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 for trains on the Agargaon-Motijheel route has increased as the major catchment area runs through Mirpur to Motijheel.

At that time, it was announced that commercial operations on Agargaon-Motijheel route would begin in December and on the Motijheel-Kamalapur route in June 2025.

But Quader at a programme on June 18 said the prime minister will inaugurate the metro rail services on the Agargaon-Motijheel route in October. Till June this year, this section saw 95.20 percent progress, shows the DMTCL monthly

progress report.

Speaking at a brief programme at the Agargaon Metro Station yesterday, Quader said they were going to cross another milestone as the performance test or test run of the metro rail on the Agargaon-Motijheel route is going to start.

He said different types of tests, including system integrity test, and trial run will be carried out till October 15 and the PM will inaugurate the services in late October.

Tests will be conducted every day, the minister said, adding the tests will be done in daytime on Fridays and at night on the other weekdays.

Quader later boarded a train for moments and got down before flagging it off at 4:30pm.

Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, DMTCL Managing Director MAN Siddique and Project Director Atabuddin Talukder were present at the programme.

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

## HC rejects Rahul's plea

FROM PAGE 1

Janata Party (BJP), Purnesh Modi, after comments he made in 2019 were deemed to be insulting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other people surnamed Modi.

"How come all thieves have the name Modi?," Gandhi had asked in an election campaign speech, referring to two fugitive businessmen, both surnamed Modi.

Gandhi, the scion of a dynasty that has given India three prime ministers, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment but the jail term was put on hold and he was given bail.

Gandhi also lost his parliamentary seat following the conviction since lawmakers sentenced to jail terms of two years or more are automatically disqualified.

They are also barred from running for election for six years after the end of the two-year jail term.

Gandhi has separately challenged the conviction in a district court, which is yet to hear the case.

Justice Hemant Prachchhak of the Gujarat High Court said in his order yesterday that a stay of conviction is not

a rule but an exemption to be resorted to in rare cases.

"The refusal of stay of conviction would not in any way result in injustice to the applicant," the judge said.

"There is no reasonable ground to stay the conviction of the applicant in view of the facts and circumstances of the case."

There was no immediate response from Gandhi to the verdict.

Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said the judgment would be studied. "The judgement only redoubles our resolve to pursue the matter further," Ramesh tweeted.

During the hearing of the case, Gandhi's lawyer Abhishek Singhvi had argued that the crime for which Gandhi had been convicted is not "serious" and not being allowed to contest elections for eight years is "virtually semi-permanent in politics".

Gandhi is only the second lawmaker in India to be disqualified from parliament after being convicted. The other case was in January this year, but the lawmaker was subsequently reinstated.







OCA MEETING

Army chief leaves for Thailand

UNB, Dhaka

Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed left for Bangkok,

Thailand yesterday to join the 42nd general meeting of Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) scheduled to be held on July 8.

The army chief will represent Bangladesh at the meeting as the president of Bangladesh Olympic Association, said an ISPR release.

Representatives from 45 national Olympic committees from different Asian nations will take part in the meeting.

He will also cast his ballot at the OCA executive committee election and exchange views with other guests at the meeting.

The army chief is scheduled to return home on July 11.



PHOTO: TITU DAS

**THE FIRST DIVE...** Four-year-old Zayed taking his first swimming lesson from his father in a pond in Jhalakathi's Nolchhiti area. The boy flaps through the waves while being supported by two plastic containers beneath his arms, celebrating his accomplishment with a smile.

2 arrested for raping speech impaired girl

STAR REPORT

Police arrested two teenagers in a case filed for allegedly raping a speech impaired girl in Jhalakathi's Rajapur upazila early yesterday.

The boys, one 16 and another 17, were arrested after the victim's father filed a rape case against them with Rajapur Police Station last night, said Pulok Chandra Roy, officer-in-charge of the police station.

According to the case statement, the 20-year-old victim was going to her elder sister's house alone in Gazir Haat area from her house on Thursday afternoon.

On her way, the accused forcibly took the girl inside a banana orchard and raped her, it added.

Bangladesh elected member of FAO Council for 2nd time

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has been unanimously elected a Member of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for the second consecutive term from the Asia Region for three years from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2027.

The election took place on July 6 at the 43rd Session of the Conference of the FAO held in Rome. Around 194 member states participated in the election.

Being a member at the FAO Council, Bangladesh with other members will lead the organisation at both policy and executive levels in deciding and advising on matters pertaining to the implementation of programme and budget, monitoring of activities under the new results-based framework and monitoring of the implementation of governance decisions for three years.

Bangladesh embassy in Rome yesterday said it remained pro-actively engaged to obtain support in favour of the country.

The ongoing 43rd Session of the FAO Conference is being held on a hybrid modality at the FAO Headquarters, Rome. Bangladesh was earlier elected as a member at the Council in its 42nd session for the term July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2024.

Empowering women

FROM PAGE 5

In 2021, 2,000 women completed the two-year programme and subsequently participated in a year-long market linkage pilot initiative in 2022, she said.

"We offer asset transfers, technical and soft skill training, financial literacy, savings, and linkage to the government's social safety net, all of which are delivered through hands-on coaching," she further explained.

CHANGING LIVES IN UKHIYA

Around 16.6 percent of Cox's Bazar's population lives below the poverty line, according to the World Bank and 2016 poverty maps.

Women in Ukhiya are facing serious challenges, as they even have to struggle to ensure two meals a day. However, the reality is now different,

as people like Josna and Anjuman are now bringing about positive reformations.

"I received a cow and its food from the project. With time, I increased the number of cows, as they were assets. I sold three cattle for Tk 2.12 lakh, making around 90,000 as profits," shared Anjuman who now looks to ensure education for her children.

A recent Brac survey on market linkage intervention revealed a 3 percent increase in profits, a 13 percent reduction in production costs, and a 63 percent increase in the selling ratio of their products compared to individual efforts.

"We now want to scale up this initiative across the entire nation within the next couple of years," said Upoma.

BNP must

FROM PAGE 5

holding any dialogue on caretaker government issue.

Hasan said the next general elections will be held as per the constitution of Bangladesh and the incumbent government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will act as the poll-time government.

BNP must accept the reality, he added.

He said BNP's demand for a caretaker government didn't get any support from home and international arena. BNP will have to come in the polls by accepting the reality, the information minister continued.

Replying to another query over the upcoming visit of a delegation of European Union (EU) at the invitation of the Election Commission, he said this visit is very important and it proves that the EC is working independently.

LABOUR LEADER'S DEATH

HRW calls for fair probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) has urged Bangladesh authorities to ensure an independent and transparent investigation into the murder of RMG union leader Shahidul Islam.

The Bangladesh government is yet to act comprehensively to end continuing violations of garment workers' rights, including anti-union tactics by managers and assaults on union organisers, HRW said in a statement issued on Thursday.

The authorities should undertake an independent investigation into Islam's murder with technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that it is timely, independent, and complies with international investigation and fair trial standards, it said.

"Ensuring justice and compensation for Shahidul Islam's death will be a huge test for Bangladesh as the world watches," said Claudio Francavilla, senior EU advocate at HRW.

"A labor leader's murder is a disturbing setback for workers' freedoms to organize and to seek the support of union leaders to solve labor disputes," he added.

Shahidul, 50, president of Gazipur unit of Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation, was beaten to death right after he left a meeting at a factory where he had been negotiating to get its workers their arrears on June 25.



Shahidul Islam

Veggies too costly

FROM PAGE 3

sold at Tk 130. A week before the Eid, its price began to crawl up. During the Eid vacation, its price went above Tk 600 per kg. Yesterday, it was sold at Tk 300 per kilo at Karwan Bazar. On Wednesday, the price was Tk 400 per kilo.

Fearing a drive by the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection, traders reduced green chili price within a day, said retailer Mosharraf.

"During monsoon, price of vegetables rises as low-lying areas get inundated. This creates a shortage in market," said Md Selim, a retailer in Karwan Bazar.

Md Sabuj of Bikrampur Banijaloy said the price of potato increased by Tk 2 per kg in the wholesale market. They are selling potatoes at Tk 33-36 per kg to retailers. It was sold at Tk 31-34 before Eid.

"The supply from farmers

and other sources depleted much earlier this year. As a result, we have been buying potatoes from cold storage for the last month at a high price," he said.

The imported onion is being damaged quickly and the wholesalers have increased its price by Tk 10 to Tk 42-45 per kg, said Sajib Sheikh, proprietor of Matribandar.

The price of coarse rice dropped by Tk 5 per kg to Tk 50 in one month. On June 6, the retail price of per kg coarse rice was Tk 55. The price of flour dropped by 2.73 to 4.93 percent, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

A Department of Agriculture official said there is a supply shortage due to the Eid vacation and vegetable prices may drop soon. He also said potatoes are released slowly from the cold storages, resulting in price hike.

The wind of change

FROM PAGE 5

Goni said more than 300,000 kilowatt units of electricity was received from this power plant last June.

A total of 22 wind turbines will be installed under this project and 60MW of electricity will be produced from this plant.

A maximum of 3 megawatts of electricity can be obtained from one turbine at a certain wind speed, he said.

He also said when all the 22 turbines are commissioned in December, the rest of the electricity will be supplied to the national grid after meeting the town's demand.

US-DK Green Energy (BD), a private firm, is implementing the project at a cost of \$116.51 million, said project manager Mukit Alam Khan.

Mukit said the height of a tower is 90 metres, while each of the blades is 60 metres long.

"We need an average

wind speed of 5.5 metres per second [m/s] to generate power since we are using modern technology. And for running the turbines at full capacity, we need a minimum 10 m/s wind speed," Mukit said, adding that they were getting even 15 m/s wind speed in the project area.

He said Wuling Power Corporation Ltd, a subsidiary of China's State Power Investment Corporation Limited, is funding the project.

Imtiaz Ahmed Faridi, deputy director of Independent Power Producer Cell-3 of Bangladesh Power Development Board, told The Daily Star that the cost per kilowatt hour of electricity will be \$0.12, and the company will supply the electricity for 20 years according to the contract.

On March 31 in 2022, State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid laid the foundation stone of the project.

Plastic waste chokes Khulna drains

FROM PAGE 5

drains. I have only seen a cleaner stepping into them with a few hand tools," he said.

Meanwhile, Sohorab Ali of ward-6 complained of inadequate dustbins in the area.

"There are no bins on the 1.5km road connecting Kabirbattala and Karikarpara. All the trash here is dumped in

the drains, ignoring civic responsibility. The ward councillor lives on this road, but I have never seen him take any measures to stop this. The situation is the same near the diabetic hospital in Nurnagar area," he said.

Babul Hawlader, member secretary of Khulna Civil Society, said, "The re-elected mayor and newly-elected

ward councillors should visit each ward and raise awareness among locals. They should take charge and devote themselves to solving this long-standing problem."

Contacted, Abdul Aziz, chief conservancy officer of KCC, said the city corporation makes sure that the drains are regularly cleaned to prevent mosquito breeding.

Passengers suffer as train service suspended

FROM PAGE 5

the pandemic, the railway authorities cancelled the train service.

According to the BR, more than 4,000 commuters used this route every day. Besides, many traders used freight carriages of the trains to bring vegetables from Chandanish to the city.

There are 12 stations under the route and train used to be the preferred mode of transport for lower income people of the area.

Jamshedul Islam, a

businessman, said, "Our income has reduced as we have to take vegetables on truck instead of train."

Mohammed Nizam, master of Patiya Railway Station, told The Daily Star, "It was a profitable route for the railway and low-income people are suffering as the train service has been closed for years."

Kamal Uddin, general secretary of Train Passengers Welfare Council of this route, said they spoke to the railway authorities in this regard

several times but to no avail.

According to the traffic office, the railway has added the engines and coaches of the trains -- which used to ply Chattogram-Dohazari route earlier -- to other trains currently running on different routes.

It is not possible to run trains on this route due to the vulnerable Kalurghat Bridge, shortage of engines and coaches, said Tarek Bin Imran, divisional traffic officer (DTO) of the railway in Chattogram.

"The continuous process is sometimes disrupted due to manpower shortages. The city corporation has already started a Tk 52.57 crore project in Dumuria's Solua area, where 375 tonnes of waste will be recycled on a daily basis."

At the same time, he said, people should change their mindset stop dumping waste into the drains.

He said the newly-procured heavy weight engines cannot ply through the vulnerable bridge.

According to the railway engineering department, BR has recently signed an agreement with a contractor to renovate Kalurghat Bridge by September 30 at a cost of Tk 43 crore.

"Train service will resume on this route after the ongoing renovation work of Kalurghat Bridge is complete," the DTO added.

amnesty offered by the Malaysian government.

He said it also needs to be looked at that the new migrant workers in Malaysia are getting their promised jobs.

Apart from Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, the other top destinations in June were Oman (8,566 workers), the United Arab Emirates (6,414), Kuwait (4,279), Singapore (4,020), and Qatar (3,154), shows BMET data.

This year till June, Bangladesh has sent 6.17 lakh migrant workers abroad for employment, it shows.

Dengue spike rings

FROM PAGE 3

m a n a g e m e n t , entomologist Prof Kabirul Bashir of Jahangirnagar University urged initiating drives in areas where dengue infection rate is dominant.

"Killing adult mosquitoes is essential in those areas where they are most likely to be carrying the virus. Each of us should take the responsibility of checking for stagnant water sources around their residences, especially open spaces and yards, at least once every week to keep those from becoming Aedes breeding grounds," he said.

Hospitalisation is necessary when infected for the second time, as these patients are more vulnerable, he added.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, advised residents to keep windows and doors shut in the morning and evening, as Aedes mosquitoes are normally active during these periods.

"People should get tested as soon as they show early symptoms of the disease, which include fever, severe stomach ache, nausea, difficulty breathing, and blood in nose, gums, vomit or stool. Repellents may prove to be beneficial," he added.

According to Nazmul Ahsan, there is a high possibility of a patient reaching a critical stage within 24-48 hours of showing these signs. However, immediate treatment can help most patients if get hospitalised on time.

"Patients suffering from cardiac, kidney, and liver

complications and cancer, and pregnant women have to be taken under special supervision," he added.

According to National University entomologist GM Saifur Rahman, the mosquito population tends to grow steadily over time.

"Untimely rains and extended monsoons contribute to the year-round transmission of the disease. Moreover, 70-80 percent of dengue patients are asymptomatic (producing or showing no symptoms), and

**People should get tested as soon as they show early symptoms of the disease, which include fever, severe stomach ache, nausea, difficulty breathing, and blood in nose, gums, vomit or stool. Repellents may prove to be beneficial.**

HM NAZMUL AHSAN  
Associate professor at  
Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical  
College Hospital

their infection can only be detected via Serosurveillance.

Serosurveillance is a blood test that checks for the presence of antibodies against a particular disease.

"Laboratory-based active surveillance systems are required for this process. However, we don't have any such facilities. Effective insecticides, surveillance systems, and control measures are essential to combating dengue," he added.

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# Plastic waste chokes Khulna drains

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

Due to unplanned waste disposal and improper management, most drains of Khulna City Corporation have turned into garbage heaps.

As a result, residents are not only facing environmental degradation and health risks due to blockages in the drainage system, but also contamination of water resources near uncontrolled dumping sites.

More alarmingly, these clogged drains have now become ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Around 1,200 tonnes of waste are generated around the city. However, the KCC has the capacity to collect 800-850 tonnes, while the remaining waste is dumped onto open drains, defying law, said locals.

Locals alleged that conservancy workers of the city corporation seldom clean the drains while officials claimed since very few drains are covered, locals use those as dumping spots.

This correspondent visited many wards including 5, 6, 9, 14, 19, and 21 recently to observe the drainage condition, and found most of the drains full of plastic, bottles, rags etc.

In some cases, water could not flow properly through them, while many were covered with thick layers of discarded plastic waste. Some of the drains were also found damaged.

According to KCC, the total length of drainage network of the city is 600km, of which around 300km are made of concrete,

55km are half concrete and 305km are soil drainage.

The corporation started a Tk 823.79 crore project in 2018 to reconstruct 225 drains, culverts and dig seven canals in 31 wards to prevent waterlogging. However, according to KCC sources, only 67 percent of the work is complete.

Upon visiting the area, this correspondent saw that excavation works on only two of the aforementioned canals, Mayur Nodi and Khudia Khal, were completed during this period.

**Locals alleged that conservancy workers of the city corporation seldom clean the drains while officials claimed since very few drains are covered, locals use those as dumping spots.**

Only 105 drains have been reconstructed so far while a few of the existing ones were cleaned. Most of the ditches were blocked with plastic bottles, packers, and clothes.

Most of the drains in Khalishpur's Alamnagar area are in a deplorable condition. The KCC has started renovating a few roadside drains. However, the ones in narrow alleys and lanes are still in the same condition, said Robiul Gazi Uzzal, a resident of the city's ward-12.

"I have never seen any comprehensive effort to clean the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Several wind turbines now stand on this field in Khurushkul area of Cox's Bazar, while construction works of others are going on in full swing. Every day, around 15-20 megawatt of electricity is being added to the national grid from this wind power plant.

PHOTO: STAR

## The wind of change 20MW added from wind power plant in Cox's Bazar

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, *Cox's Bazar*

When the country is struggling to manage coal to run power plants to produce electricity, Cox's Bazar, the district, which has the longest sea beach in the world, has a different story.

Every day, around 15 to 20 megawatt electricity is being added to its daily consumption of power without burning any fossil fuel.

This electricity is coming from a green source -- wind. Cox's Bazar gets the electricity from the wind power plant set up in Khurushkul union around five to six kilometres away from the town.

The plant started generating electricity from wind on a test basis from May 25.

Abdul Kader Goni, executive engineer of Cox's Bazar Power Development Board and the project director, said, "Since the test of power generation, 15 to 20 megawatts of electricity have been added to the national grid from this wind power plant daily. This electricity is available from seven out of 10 completed turbines."

He also said a portion of the total 45MW of electricity demand in Cox's Bazar town and adjacent areas is being met with from this.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



This major drain near the city's Bypass road remains barely visible under a thick layer of discarded plastic waste.

PHOTO: STAR

# Empowering women in Ukhiya, Teknaf

2,000 marginalised households  
benefitted under Brac programme

SAJJAD HOSSAIN, *back from Cox's Bazar*

Anjuman Ara, 34, of Bhalukiya Palang village in Ukhiya and her two children had to survive on stale rice and vegetables. Her life turned around when took up kitchen gardening work a couple of years ago.

"I am now financially independent," said Anjuman, who is also engaged in cattle farming and tailoring works.

Her husband Syed Alam, 35, runs a tea-stall from which he earns around Tk 500-600 daily.

Anjuman Ara is one of the 2,000 beneficiaries (1,238 from Ukhiya and 762 from Teknaf) of Brac's ultra-poor graduation (UPG) programme's one-year pilot project for establishing a link between local cultivators and the market.

"I could barely make Tk 1,000 per week by selling 10kg vegetables, but now I can sell the same amount for a doubled price, thanks to market linkage. No one can deceive me anymore," added Anjuman.

Anjuman collaborates with other women from her neighbourhood to collect more produce, which she later sells at the market.

"Smaller quantity means smaller profit margins. So I source vegetables from others like me and sell them to retailers for a better price," she mentioned.

During a recent visit, this correspondent had the chance to



Anjuman Ara at her cattle farm in Ukhiya.

PHOTO: STAR

speak with several other women who echoed the same.

**MULTIPLIED INCOME SOURCE AND MARKET LINKAGE**

Through the project, these extremely low-income women have learned to boost income, interact directly with market participants, build networks, and have access to crucial market data.

Josna Akter, who used to be a homemaker about two years ago, had to rely on her husband's income. However, things changed when she was leased 24-katha land and a goat as assets under the programme.

"I have four goats, 35 chickens,

and four pigeons. In addition, I took a loan of Tk 50,000 from Brac to expand our income sources by establishing a shop which my husband manages. Together, we earn around Tk 20,000 per month," said Josna, another beneficiary of the project.

These women face challenges in entering the market because they cannot supply in bulk. Their condition is further exacerbated by instabilities caused by the Rohingya influx, said Upoma Mahub, senior manager, Advocacy of the UPG programme.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## BNP must accept reality on polls-time govt: minister

BSS, *Dhaka*

Information and Broadcasting Minister and Awami League (AL) Joint General Secretary Hasan Mahmud yesterday said BNP was not called for any dialogue.

"A recent statement of BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir gives the impression that we have called them for a dialogue. But they were not called for dialogues," he said, replying to a query of reporters at his official residence on the city's Minto Road.

The minister reaffirmed that there is no scope of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## Police to work under EC during national polls Says IGP

UNB, *Dhaka*

Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun yesterday said police will carry out duties under the Election Commission during the upcoming national election.

He said this while distributing food and clothes among the marginalised people at Police Lines in Wazekhal area of Sunamganj Sadar.

The IGP said they will abide by the directives given by the EC during the election.

"Police have previous experience of performing duty in the elections," he said.

Abdullah said police in accordance with other stakeholders (law enforcing agencies) worked to curb militancy in the country.

"Bangladesh police is a century-old organisation.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## PRAYER TIMING JULY 8

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-10	12-45	5-00	6-55	8-17
JAMAAT 4-45	1-15	5-15	7-00	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## CTG-DOHAZARI ROUTE Passengers suffer as train service suspended for 3yrs

SIFAYET ULLAH, *Ctg*

Muzibul Haque, a government employee and resident of Chandanish upazila in Chattogram, used to commute by train on Chattogram-Dohazari route to his workplace in the port city on a regular basis.

But now, he travels by bus as the train service has been closed by Bangladesh Railway since the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Being a low-paying job holder, the train was the perfect mode of transportation for me as it was less expensive. But now I am forced to travel via road," he said.

Not only Muzibul, but hundreds of other passengers are suffering as two pairs of trains on this route have remained closed for more than three years.

Earlier, two pairs of local trains including freight coaches used to ply the route. But during

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3





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## INDUS WATER DISPUTE

# Hague court rejects India’s objections over arbitration

REUTERS, Amsterdam

The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague rejected on Thursday India’s objections to a Pakistan-initiated procedure over water use in the Indus River basin, reopening a procedure that had been blocked for many years.

India called the arbitration proceeding illegal as a neutral expert was also looking at the issue and the World Bank-brokered treaty prohibits parallel proceedings.

The South Asian neighbours have been arguing over hydroelectric projects on the shared Indus River and its tributaries for decades, with Pakistan complaining that India’s planned hydropower dams in upstream areas will cut flows on the river which feeds 80 percent of its irrigated agriculture.

To resolve the dispute, Pakistan sought resolution through PCA arbitration proceedings in 2016, prompting India to request that the World Bank appoint a neutral expert under the terms of the treaty.



India has boycotted The Hague court proceedings and questioned the competence of the court.

“In a unanimous decision, which is binding on the Parties and without appeal, the Court rejected each of the objections raised by India and determined that the Court is competent to consider and determine the disputes set forth in Pakistan’s Request for Arbitration,” the court said in a statement.

It gave no details on when and how the case will continue, but added that it will address the interpretation and application of the bilateral Indus Water Treaty, notably the provisions on hydro-electric projects, as well as the legal effect of past decisions of dispute resolution bodies under the Treaty.

A spokesperson for India’s foreign ministry, Arindam Bagchi, said India’s “consistent and principled position has been that the constitution of this so-called court of arbitration is in contravention of the clear letter and spirit of the Indus Water Treaty”.



South Korea’s main opposition Democratic Party lawmakers and party members hold placards reading “We oppose the dumping of Fukushima contaminated water into the sea” during a rally against Japan’s plan to release treated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant, at the National Assembly in Seoul yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Sri Lankans jump ship as a bankrupt nation struggles

## People scramble for travel documents to flee their island nation as ‘the situation is not getting better’

AFP, Colombo

The snaking queues for food and fuel that crisscrossed Sri Lanka last year have given way to a different kind of line -- people scrambling for travel documents to flee their bankrupt island.

“What we see as normalcy is a mirage,” customer care executive Gayan Jayewardena, 43, told AFP while queueing at a government office for a passport for his baby daughter.

“The situation is not getting better,” said Jayewardena, whose wife and two older daughters already have their papers.

“When we consider it from the point of our children, it is better to leave. We want to migrate to a country like New Zealand.”

The South Asian nation’s 22 million people suffered desperate shortages of essentials in 2022 after the government ran out of dollars to finance imports, including life-saving medicines.

Months of protests led to the storming of then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s palace on July 9 last year.

His successor Ranil Wickremesinghe

doubled taxes and cut subsidies, two highly unpopular moves.

The new government may have restored supplies, but at sometimes three times the previous price.



Wickremesinghe secured a \$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund in March and expects a recovery next year, but many in the country are not so optimistic.

Software engineer Maduranga, 38, who uses one name, said the high living costs and taxes prompted him to consider migrating to Australia.

“The cost is going high, every day it is going higher, but the salary amount is the same”, Maduranga said. “Companies are not increasing the salaries, so that’s why we are trying to leave.”

At the foreign employment bureau, where Sri Lankans must register before taking up jobs abroad, numbers surged from 122,000 in 2021 to a record 311,000 last year.

For the first five months of this year, the bureau recorded around 122,000 people leaving -- the same as in all of 2021 -- but officials believe many others also left on tourist visas to seek work in the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia.

Last year, the number of people applying for passports more than doubled -- from over 382,500 in 2021, when the economy grew by 3.3 percent, to a record 911,689 passports in 2022, when the economy contracted 7.8 percent.

The trend has continued.

This year through May, 433,000 overseas travel documents have been issued, according to the Immigration and Emigration Department.

## BRAZIL’S AMAZON

# Deforestation drops 34pc in first half of 2023

REUTERS, Sao paulo

Deforestation in Brazil’s Amazon fell 34 percent in the first half of 2023, preliminary government data showed on Thursday, hitting its lowest level in four years as President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva institutes tougher environmental policies. Data produced by Brazil’s national space research agency Inpe indicated that 2,649 square km (1,023 square miles) of rainforest were cleared in the



region in the half year, the lowest for the period since 2019. But that’s an area more than three times the size of New York City, underscoring the challenge Lula faces to eliminate deforestation entirely. “It’s very positive,

but we continue to have very high levels of deforestation,” said Daniel Silva, an analyst at nonprofit WWF Brasil. Lula took office in January promising to end deforestation by 2030, after surging destruction under his predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, who had slashed environmental protection efforts. The former far-right leader had called for more farming and mining on protected lands, saying it would lift the region out of poverty.

## MONSOON FLOODS

# 50 dead in Pakistan in two weeks

AFP, Lahore

At least 50 people, including eight children, have been killed by floods and landslides triggered by monsoon rains that have lashed Pakistan since last month, officials said yesterday. The summer monsoon brings South Asia 70-80 percent of its annual rainfall between June and September every year. It is vital for the livelihoods of millions of farmers and food security in a region of around two billion people -- but it also brings landslides and floods. “Fifty deaths have been reported in different rain-related incidents all over Pakistan since the start of the monsoon on June 25,” a national disaster management official told AFP, adding that 87 people were injured during this period. The majority of the deaths were in eastern Punjab province, and were mainly due to electrocution and building collapses, official data showed. In northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the bodies of eight children were recovered from a landslide in the Shangla district on Thursday, according to the emergency service Rescue 1122’s spokesman Bilal Ahmed Faizi. He said rescuers were still searching for other children trapped in the debris. Officials in Lahore, Pakistan’s second-largest city, said it had received record-breaking rainfall on Wednesday, turning roads into rivers and leaving almost 35 percent without electricity and water this week.

## One of the first Indians

FROM PAGE 12

Nalua in the southern part of Tripura bordering Chattogram division.

“At around 1400 hours, my East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) contact, Havildar Nuruddin came to Sreenagar BOP along with Prof Obaidullah Majumdar, a member of the National Assembly and Dr Amir Hussain, an Awami League leader, and they told us about the terror let loose by the Pakistan army personnel on villagers including women and children and asked for immediate intervention to dislodge them,” Ghosh had stated in an article in BSF’s magazine “Border Men”.

Ghosh recalled that he had gone undercover with the assumed name of Prof Ali and accompanied them to investigate.

“At around 5:00pm in the afternoon, the first group of Mukti Bahini fighters with six EPR boys

under the command of Havildar Nooruddin was formed. They took oath on the spot. Deployed them in groups of three each, on either flank of the northern end of Shubhapur bridge with clear instructions to deny the entry of Pakistani soldiers in the village and water point and also to fire only one round at a time to conserve ammunition and draw fire from Pakistani troops,” Ghosh stated.

Returning to the Sreenagar BOP at around 7:00pm, Ghosh prepared a special report on the situation without mentioning his crossing over the international border.

“Next day [March 27] morning, Lt Col AK Ghose, my commanding officer (CO), visited our BOP and expressed his happiness and thanked me for my special report on the situation. I was hesitant but as a loyal soldier disclosed that I had crossed over to Shubhapur

yesterday. Suddenly the attitude of my CO changed, [he] got angry and shouted at me - how could you dare to cross the international border? You might face court martial. He left in anger. I felt bad, but not sorry for my decision to stand by the ill-fated unarmed innocent civilians across the border,” Ghosh mentioned in the article.

He said that on March 27, a heavy exchange of fire had erupted between the Mukti Bahini and Pakistani soldiers on the Shubhapur bridge. The enemy however ran short of food and ammunition and was in a demoralised state and surrendered to the Mukti Bahini the next morning.

“This was our first victory. We hoisted the flag of Bangladesh over Shubhapur bridge in the presence of a large number of villagers, who shouted slogans like Jai Bangla, Jai Bangabandhu”, he said.

## EU for ‘genuine’ talks among key

FROM PAGE 1

letter by six members of the European Parliament.

The response was sent on July 6, just three days ahead of the start of a six-member EU exploratory mission’s visit to Bangladesh.

The six European Parliament members in their June 12 letter had asked Borrell to contribute to ensuring free, fair, and impartial general elections in Bangladesh, possibly under a polls-time neutral caretaker government.

They also called for ending violation of human rights, release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, and engagement of the government with the BNP and other major political parties to find a sustainable and democratic solution to the ongoing crises.

In his response letter, Borrell said, “Safeguarding the key freedoms, including freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, is essential for democratic processes. Violence, on the other hand, has no place in these processes and should be avoided at all costs.”

He said the EU is closely following

the health situation of former prime minister Khaleda. It is crucial that she has access to the best possible medical treatment, he added.

The high representative said the EU has constant engagement with the Bangladesh government and that it held EU-Bangladesh Joint Commission and the Subgroup on Good Governance and Human Rights in May last year.

He said human rights, democracy and rule of law are integral parts of the EU values and policies. “We, therefore, regularly raise these issues with Bangladesh outside the format of the Joint Commission and its subgroup too.”

Borrell said Bangladesh is a beneficiary of the Everything But Arms (EBA) trade preferences under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) and one of the countries under Enhanced Engagement owing to sustained concerns with respect to labour and human rights.

This year, the EU will issue a report on the implementation of GSP scheme covering 2020-2022, which

will include the progress achieved under the Enhanced Engagement with Bangladesh.

Borrell said the EU has repeatedly underlined that the EBA preferences are conditional on the respect of human rights, including human rights, as reflected in the international convention listed in the GSP regulation. This also goes for any future GSP Plus, should Bangladesh decide to apply.

**EU MISSION DUE TOMORROW**  
EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley earlier told The Daily Star that the six-member EU delegation will hold talks with the government, political parties, Election Commission, security officials, the civil society and the media.

The delegation will decide if it is “feasible, useful and advisable” to deploy a full EU observation mission for the elections, he added.

Based on the report of the exploratory mission, Borrell will decide if the EU will send full election observers to Bangladesh during the next general elections.

The EU didn’t send election observers in 2018.

## World can’t look away

FROM PAGE 12

attacks in Myanmar’s Rakhine state that began in August 2017.

On a visit to the Camps, Karim Khan met with Rohingyas to discuss ICC activities and promised them justice, according to UNB.

At a media briefing in Dhaka yesterday, the ICC chief prosecutor admitted that there was a gap between promises and delivery of justice.

In 2019, judges at the ICC approved a full investigation into alleged crimes against humanity targeting the Muslim-majority Rohingya people, including systematic acts of violence, forced deportation and ethnic and religious persecution.

Those who fled the bloody crackdown have detailed murders, rape, torture and arson, among other atrocities.

The chief prosecutor acknowledged the frustration felt at the speed at which the court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for an alleged scheme to deport Ukrainian children to

Russia. Meanwhile, the Rohingya have been waiting six years and no such action has been taken against the Myanmar military leaders who ordered the attacks.

“The big difference is that we have access to Ukraine, we don’t have access to Myanmar,” Khan said. “My presence here, my presence last year and the team’s almost constant presence here over the last year ... is evidence of the fact they’ve not been forgotten.”

ICC’s Khan said his office was trying to secure additional resources and had appointed a senior lawyer to lead the Myanmar team.

Known as the world’s “court of last resort,” the ICC has a mandate to try genocide, crimes against humanity, crimes of aggression and war crimes. Though 123 countries are parties to the treaty that brought the court into existence, Myanmar is not a state party, but Bangladesh is.

The ICC investigation is running parallel but separate to a genocide case filed by Gambia to the International Court of Justice, and another case

taken up by Argentina’s judiciary investigating alleged war crimes under the principles of “universal justice.”

“I think collectively we’re failing and I think what we’re trying to do in the office that I lead is to move with more focus and to get results by separating truth from fiction,” Khan told in the CNN interview.

But he noted, “The world can’t look away.”

Families in the camps are entirely dependent on aid and have seen their food allowances repeatedly cut, children can’t go to school and young people have few opportunities, Khan said.

“Now families are being given 9 taka (8 cents) a day for a meal. And the cost of a single egg is 12 taka (11 cents). So food should not be taken off the plates of children and diverted elsewhere,” he said.

Last month, the World Food Program was forced to cut food rations for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh after suffering a funding shortfall of \$56 million.

## Tigers focus on levelling series

FROM PAGE 12

“We have a match tomorrow, it is better if we don’t talk about this [Tamim’s retirement] topic anymore. We are still one-nil down in the series. The biggest concern to us is how we can win the series. More importantly, how we can play good cricket tomorrow.”

Liton, who had previously led Bangladesh during the 2-1 ODI series win over India in absence of Tamim last year, added that the Tigers have no option but to move forward without the veteran.

“I think all our teammates are focused only on one thing. Tamim bhai even mentioned ‘team come first’ while leaving. I don’t think there is any point talking about it. Since BCB gave me the responsibility, I will try to give my hundred per cent. We will try to play good cricket and bring

out a positive result,” said Liton.

As the day progressed, however, Tamim’s retirement saga took a U-turn as the 34-year-old decided to withdraw his retirement after meeting the Prime Minister yesterday afternoon.

Although Tamim is set to be on leave and join the Tigers from the Asia Cup, Liton and his troops as the hosts will look to regroup and make a comeback in the series after losing the first ODI quite comprehensively.

Meanwhile, Rony Talukdar was called up as Tamim’s back-up but Naim Sheikh is expected to open the innings with Liton.

On Wednesday, Bangladesh’s batting was lacklustre, devoid of partnerships -- with no positives apart from Towhid Hridoy’s fifty -- as the hosts eventually posted 169 for nine in 43 overs.

“First 10 overs were a bit challenging

in the first ODI, but we handled it well. I don’t have any complaints regarding uneven bounce. Our mistake was that we failed to execute as batters.

“If you look at our dismissals, there were hardly any good deliveries. There will be days when you will get out to scoring deliveries, it was such a day,” Liton further said.

The challenge to tackle the world-class Afghan spinners will remain for Bangladesh, with the likes of Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi expected to test the Tigers yet again.

On the other camp, there could be bad news in store for the visitors as pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi -- Player of the Match in the first ODI pacer who picked up three wickets -- is doubtful for today’s game after he suffered a niggle on Wednesday and had to leave the ground.



PAKISTAN BAILOUT DEAL

# IMF to talk to parties including Imran’s PTI

REUTERS, Karachi

The International Monetary Fund will seek the support of Pakistan’s political parties, including former Prime Minister Imran Khan’s party, for a recently announced \$3 billion bailout programme, as the country prepares for national elections, the lender said yesterday.

The new bailout programme, a nine-month stand-by arrangement, will be taken up for approval by the IMF board on July 12, and replaces a four-year Extended Financing Facility programme, originally signed by Khan’s government in 2019, and which expired last month.

The IMF’s resident representative Esther Perez Ruiz said in a statement that the meetings with political parties were to “seek assurances of their support for the key objectives and policies under a new IMF-supported program ahead of the approaching national elections.”

Pakistan’s national elections are scheduled to be held by early November amidst a charged political atmosphere that has seen Khan, the country’s main opposition leader, in a bruising standoff with the government and the powerful



military.

Khan’s government deviated from agreements under an earlier IMF programme days before he was ousted in a parliamentary vote last year, leading to a delay in the implementation of the programme and increased economic uncertainty.

The new programme will span three governments – the incumbent set up under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose term ends in August, a caretaker administration that will conduct the polls, and then a new government following the elections.

The IMF was set to meet Khan at his house in the eastern city of Lahore yesterday, his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), confirmed.

The meeting is the highest profile engagement for Khan since he was ousted from power less than four years into his five-year term.

Hammad Azhar, a former finance minister under Khan, said in a post on Twitter that the party was being approached by the IMF to “solicit the party’s support” for the new programme and its broad objectives.



A woman reacts as she visits an art installation, symbolising Ukrainian people who were killed, and dedicated to the 500th day of Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in Lviv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CARBON-REDUCTION

# Global maritime sector agrees deal

AFP, London

The International Maritime Organization, overseer of the highly-polluting shipping industry, sealed a landmark deal yesterday to improve its target to cut carbon emissions but green campaigners said it fell far short.

Compared with 2008 levels, the United Nations’ global shipping regulator agreed to cut total annual emissions of greenhouse gases “by at least 20 percent, striving for 30 percent, by 2030” and “by at least 70 percent, striving for 80 percent, by 2040” according to the agreement.

That compared with the prior target for a 50 percent reduction by mid-century from 2008.

The International Maritime Organization described the deal as “historic”, adding that it “remains committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping and, as a matter of urgency, aims to phase them out as soon as possible”.

The IMO said the “carbon intensity” of ships was expected to decline over time with “further improvement of energy efficiency” of new vessels.

Shipping emits roughly the same level of greenhouse gases as aviation, which is aiming for net zero by 2050.

The deal came at the end of a five-day meeting at the IMO’s headquarters in London, attended by representatives from 100 countries.

The gathering of its Marine Environment Protection Commission pitted climate-vulnerable nations – particularly islands in the Pacific – and richer countries against big exporters like China.

# US NOT SEEKING ‘winner-take-all’ competition

Treasury Secretary Yellen tells Chinese Premier Li Qiang, urges market reforms

REUTERS, Beijing

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen yesterday called for market reforms in China and criticized the world’s second-largest economy for its recent tough actions against US companies and new export controls on some critical minerals.

Yellen arrived in Beijing on Thursday to try to repair fractious US-Chinese relations, but made clear in her public remarks that Washington and its Western allies will continue to hit back at what she called China’s “unfair economic practices.”

Despite talk of US-China economic decoupling, recent data show a trade relationship that is fundamentally solid, with two-way trade hitting a record \$690 billion last year.

“We seek healthy economic competition that is not winner-take-all but that, with a fair set of rules, can benefit both countries over time,” Yellen told Chinese Premier Li Qiang in a meeting yesterday that the Treasury said was “candid and constructive.”

Yellen also spoke to the American Chamber of Commerce in China (AmCham) after what a Treasury official called “substantive” talks with former Chinese economy czar Liu He, a close confidante of President Xi Jinping, and outgoing top Chinese central banker Yi Gang.

“Strengthening cooperation is the realistic need and correct choice of China and the United States ... to inject stability and positive energy into China-US relations,” state media reported Li as saying.

Yellen and other US officials are

walking a diplomatic tightrope, trying to repair ties with China after the US military shot down a Chinese government balloon over the United States while continuing to push Beijing to halt practices they view as harmful to US and Western companies.

Yellen said she hoped her visit would spur more regular communication between the two rivals, and said any targeted actions by Washington to protect its national security should not “needlessly” jeopardize the broader relationship.

US officials have downplayed the prospects for any major breakthroughs, while highlighting the importance of more regular communications between the world’s two biggest economies.

China hopes the United States will take “concrete actions” to create a favourable environment for the healthy development of economic and trade ties, its finance ministry said in a statement yesterday.

“No winners emerge from a trade war or from decoupling and ‘breaking chains,’”



the statement added.

Li told Yellen a rainbow that appeared as her plane landed from Washington on Thursday offered hope for the future of US-China ties.

“I think there is more to China-US relations than just wind and rain. We will surely see more rainbows,” he said.

US companies in China hope Yellen’s visit will ensure trade and commercial lanes between the two economies remain open, regardless of the temperature of geopolitical tensions.

AmCham President Michael Hart welcomed Yellen’s “extra firepower” in pressing for changes in China’s policies, and said her visit could pave the way for more exchanges at lower levels between the two sides.

“I think if there was another year of no visits by top US government leaders, the market would get colder,” he added.

The US diplomatic push comes ahead of a possible meeting between President Joe Biden and Xi as soon as September’s Group of 20 Summit in New Delhi or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation gathering scheduled for November in San Francisco.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken traveled to Beijing last month and agreed with Xi that the mutual rivalry should not veer into conflict, and Biden’s climate envoy John Kerry is expected to visit later this month.

Yellen told the US business executives a “stable and constructive relationship” between the two countries would benefit US companies and workers, but Washington also needed to protect its national security interests and human rights.

# ILLEGAL ACTS China hits tech firms with hefty fines

AFP, Beijing

Chinese regulators said yesterday they had fined fintech giant Ant Group almost \$1 billion for “illegal acts” and handed an affiliate of rival Tencent a \$415 million penalty, adding that a long running crackdown on tech firms was drawing to a close.

Ant operates Alipay, the world’s largest digital payments platform, which boasts hundreds of millions of monthly users in China and beyond.

It was one of the most prominent targets of a sweeping crackdown on the country’s tech sector.

“In view of the illegal and irregular acts by Ant Group and its affiliates in previous years... (the companies) have been fined 7.123 billion yuan (US\$984 million),” the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) said.

The penalty “included the confiscation of illegal income”, added the statement, which was also carried by the country’s central bank.



Riot police officers remove a barricade after dispersing supporters of Kenya’s opposition leader Raila Odinga of the Azimio La Umoja (Declaration of Unity) One Kenya Alliance, during an anti-government protest dubbed “Saba Saba (7th of July) People’s March”, in Nairobi, Kenya yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# UN FOOD AID AI robots could deliver parcels from next year

REUTERS, Geneva

AI-powered robotic vehicles could deliver food parcels to conflict and disaster zones by as early as next year in a move aimed to spare the lives of humanitarian workers, a World Food Programme (WFP) official told Reuters. Attacks against aid workers have intensified in recent years amid the highest number of violent conflicts since World War Two, according to the United Nations. WFP, the UN’s food aid agency, alone lost three workers earlier this year in Sudan’s conflict. “Sometimes it’s too dangerous to send in a driver or WFP staff. So using that technology could actually be a step change,” said Bernhard Kowatsch, who heads the WFP’s innovation department. Kowatsch was speaking on the sidelines of a conference organised by the International Telecommunication Union in Geneva to make the case for AI to help reach UN global goals, such as eliminating hunger.

# Stop expelling migrants to desert Watchdog urges Tunisia

AFP, Tunis

Human Rights Watch yesterday urged Tunisia to put an end to what it called the “collective expulsions” of Black African migrants to a desert area near the Libyan border. Hundreds of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa have been left stranded in dire conditions in the south of Tunisia since being driven out of the port city of Sfax in the past week. It comes against a backdrop of violence after the funeral of a 41-year-old Tunisian man who was stabbed to death in Sfax on Monday, in a brawl between Tunisians and migrants. Sfax, the North African country’s second-largest city, is a departure point for many hoping to reach Europe by sea, often the Italian island of Lampedusa about 130 kilometres (80 miles) away. “Tunisian security forces have collectively expelled several hundred Black African migrants and asylum seekers, including children and pregnant women, since July 2, to a remote, militarised buffer zone at the Tunisia-Libya border,” HRW said. “Many reported violence by authorities during arrest or expulsion,” the watchdog said in a statement.

# INDIA TRAIN CRASH Police arrest three railway employees

REUTERS, Mumbai

India’s federal police arrested three railway employees yesterday in connection with a deadly train crash last month that killed 292 people, a person with direct knowledge of the matter said. The arrests were made under Indian penal code sections related to culpable homicide, the source added, requesting anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media. The June 2 crash at Bahanaga Bazar station, in the eastern Indian state of Odisha, also injured more than 1,000 people. It is India’s worst train crash in more than two decades. The accident took place when a passenger train hit a stationary freight train, jumped off the tracks and hit another passenger train coming from the opposite direction. The federal police Central Bureau of Investigation had launched an investigation after registering a case of criminal negligence. Spokespersons for the Indian Railways and the CBI did not immediately respond to Reuters’ requests for comment. Reuters reported earlier this week that workers repairing a rail-road barrier had made faulty connections in the automated signalling system on the network.



## Don't we deserve a safer Dhaka?

We demand answers from our policymakers and regulators

The more things change, the more they remain the same – is there any phrase that captures Dhaka as succinctly? On the one hand, our capital city is growing at an unimaginable pace, with rapid changes to its skyline and outskirts. On the other, the growth remains, as always, unplanned, unmonitored and unsustainable. The new buildings, like the old, are built without permits and in violation of basic fire and safety regulations. Every time a major accident takes place – be it a fire, explosion or building collapse – we may spend a few days, at best weeks, dissecting the city's vulnerabilities, but ultimately nothing ever really changes for the better. Our regulatory bodies as well as our policymakers remain as complacent as ever.

In a recent parliamentary session, State Minister for Housing and Public Works Sharif Ahmed admitted that most of the buildings at the city's nearby Bosila, Hemayetpur and Sugandha Housings have been constructed illegally and without permission from Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk). But the obvious question to which we demand an answer is: how is it that whole housing societies are constructed without Rajuk, whose primary mandate is to ensure compliance with the existing laws and codes, having a clue? Do they not have the capacity to monitor such illegal growth, are they "paid" to keep silent, or do they simply not care? The state minister would have us believe that some "unscrupulous" people might be collecting money from the owners of illegally constructed buildings in the name of Rajuk. Again, the questions are obvious: who are these unscrupulous men, and why has no action been taken against them if they are indeed impersonating Rajuk officials? It is absurd for the authorities to remain so oblivious to such an insidious problem.

There are as many as 54 agencies under 11 ministries to ensure governance in the capital, and yet none of these institutions nor any of their officials have ever been held to account for the countless avoidable disasters in the city. Frankly, we are tired of our policymakers and regulators' refusal to do even the bare minimum to ensure safe and dignified lives of the citizens of this country, whom they are obligated to serve. It is high time such callous negligence was called out, both in parliament and on the streets. The relevant ministries and agencies must come together to devise a comprehensive mechanism to address the illegal and risky growth of the city, and fuse the ticking time bomb that is our beloved capital.

## Stop violent escalation in the West Bank

Is Israel's military misdeeds beyond accountability?

We strongly condemn the Israeli forces escalating the ongoing violence in the occupied West Bank by besieging the Jenin refugee camp in the biggest attack in nearly two decades. As 1,000 troops assaulted the city this week, 12 Palestinians were reportedly killed and hundred others injured. Though the Israeli army has now retreated, Israel's far-right government led by Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the "counterterrorism" attack – which followed the killing of four Israelis by two Palestinian gunmen – was "not a one-off operation," burying the smallest of hopes that the escalation could be a short-lived episode. If anything, the ongoing crisis in the West Bank raises the possibility of a third *intifada*, and lays bare Israel's brazen disinterest in the "two-state" solution.

The latest incursion was an inevitable consequence of surmounting violent clashes prompted, for the most part, by the Israeli military in the name of "self-defence." In May 2022, prominent Palestinian-American Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was shot dead when covering the Israeli raids of Palestinian homes in Jenin. This year, so far, more than 130 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, suggesting that the total death toll may surpass last year's count. Vigilante settler violence has also dramatically increased in the conflict zone, with the Israeli government's policy of annexing the West Bank. And that has only been possible with indifference, and in some cases, shameful support from powerful nations such as the United States.

While Israeli forces stormed the jam-packed refugee camp in Jenin, pushing thousands of Palestinians to abandon their homes, the Biden administration said it supported Israel's right to "defend its people against Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist groups." The European Union and other nations who have engaged in calls for peace have done little to contain Israel's violent occupation. The fear of spiralling violence is now higher than ever before, and to characterise Israel's misuse of its military power as anything but apartheid is politics of convenience. While we condemn Netanyahu's extremist policies, we also condemn complicit enablers of Israel's impunity. With little support globally, Palestinians continue to lose their lives and homes. But if Palestinian lives do indeed matter, then the international community must stand by the two-state solution and hold Israel accountable.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Is everything 'really well' now?

Bangladesh's finance minister said the other day that there was nothing to fear anymore regarding the country's economy, and that all is well now. The minister also dismissed worries about the high rate of inflation, saying this is the case everywhere in the world. But as a middle-class citizen of this city, I am here to say things aren't all well. From commuting to buying groceries – it is an uphill battle every day. Our income has not increased at the rate at which inflation has, and many of us are having to compromise on our lifestyle and daily needs. The authorities should be able to translate their words to reality for this country's citizens.

Arifa Jahan  
Shewrapara, Dhaka

# Why the new budget can't solve our problems



Dr Selim Raihan is professor at the Department of Economics of the University of Dhaka, and executive director at the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem). He can be reached at selim.raihan@gmail.com.

SELIM RAIHAN

As it does every year, the budget for this fiscal year reflects some good initiatives. Duties have been raised for the import of luxury goods, and the individual tax ceiling has also been raised. The social safety net programmes have been expanded by some margins, and allowances have also been raised to some extent. Some new taxes, like the carbon tax, have been imposed. Taxes have been raised for the registration of flats and lands, purchase of a second car, and travel.

The key question, however, remains: to what extent have our current economic challenges been addressed by the new budget? It hasn't done proper justice to answer this question.

There are two major challenges confronting our economy: inflation and the management of macroeconomy. Inflation currently stands at around 10 percent. Such a high inflation rate has been prevailing for over a year. This has had a significant impact on a large section of the population, especially poor and low-income people. But it is still unclear what measures and strategies will be used to combat inflation in the coming days. Also, there are no clear directives as to what should be done to deal with the economic crisis, mismanagement of the financial sector, and revenue collection.

Considering the current situation, some of the ambitious targets of the 2023-24 budget seem to be out of context. The budget aims to reduce inflation from its present level to six percent. This would have been achievable had the government's initiatives and plans so far been successful. Unfortunately, the policymakers neglected to adopt the policies and plans that they ought to have. It is therefore important to demonstrate how there will be a departure from the past unsuccessful actions and how the policymakers will be able to take the right measures in the coming days.

Little action was there where it was needed most to combat inflation. First, in the case of monetary policy, the interest rate was forcibly capped for a very long time, which made no difference in reducing inflation. Second, by adjusting taxes and other fees in the revenue sector, prices of



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

necessities could be lowered. For example, with the rise in fuel prices in the global market, they were also raised locally, though there was another option to keep the fuel prices at a tolerable level by adjusting taxes. The dramatic rise in fuel prices affected almost all sectors of the economy and escalated inflation. Third, in the case of domestic market management, as there were serious allegations of anti-competitive practices, strict measures were not taken against traders involved in price manipulation by creating artificial crises.

Now, there is little to blame the Russia-Ukraine war for inflation. Though prices of essential items have been falling in the international market for over a month, there is no reflection of that in the domestic market. Except for Sri Lanka and Pakistan, Bangladesh performed poorly in containing inflation compared to others in the region, such as India, Vietnam, and Indonesia who, by effectively utilising monetary policy, revenue policy, and domestic market management, have been able to keep their inflation rates at a much more tolerable level.

Another anomaly in the budget is that it anticipates an increase in the private investment share of GDP from

from reality. As the government sets a target of a 7.5 percent GDP growth rate, considering the Incremental Capital Output Ratio (ICOR) of 4.4, this very ambitious target of private investment is set. There is, however, no sign yet in the economy that private investment will increase dramatically soon.

There is yet another contradiction. The budget deficit as a percentage of GDP is set at 5.2 percent. To finance this deficit, a sizable amount of public borrowing from the banking sector is projected. Meanwhile, to finance the dramatic rise in private investment, financing from the banking sector would be the key as the underdeveloped capital market is unable to finance private investment. Therefore, there are concerns that with the current problematic condition, the banking sector is not in a position to finance such huge amounts of funds to both the public and private sectors. There is another problem associated with the government's borrowing from the banking sector. The government would have to turn to the central bank to cover the deficit if it did not borrow such a sizable amount from the commercial banks. The Bangladesh Bank will then have to print that money, which will further escalate the inflationary pressure.

same trends have been maintained this time too. Recovering the learning loss caused by the pandemic remains a big challenge in the education sector. There is hardly anything in the budget as to what steps should be taken to make up for the learning loss. In the case of the health sector, though the allocation was increased during the Covid period, the health ministry could not spend that amount fully. This may be used as an excuse to allocate less funds to this sector. Regrettably, if the efficiency and institutional capacity are not enhanced in the health and education sectors, such a vicious cycle will continue, and the country will never be able to reap the benefits of demographic dividends and achieve large development goals.

How far have the IMF loan conditions been reflected in the budget? There are some reflections, but in most cases, these are not clear. There is a long standing need for reforms in critical economic domains that have been pending for years. Though the government agreed to carry out reforms under the IMF conditionalities, there are no clear directives in the budget as to how these reforms will be carried out systematically.

## Two storms and a nation's birth



Shamsheer M Chowdhury, Bir Bikram, is a former foreign secretary of Bangladesh.

SHAMSHER M CHOWDHURY

*The Vortex: A True Story of History's Deadliest Storm, an Unspeakeable War, and Liberation* (Harper and Collins, 2022), co-authored by American scholars and freelance journalists Scott Carney and Jason Miklian, is a story of two storms: a massive cyclone that struck the southern coastal belt of then East Pakistan in November 1970, killing close to half a million inhabitants and causing massive destruction, and a far more consequential storm that followed four months later, changing the political landscape of South Asia forever. The narrative explicitly underscores how the first cyclone impacted the second. The book is a product of painstaking and meticulous research by the authors. It is a collage of selfless acts of dedicated and patriotic individuals in responding to the Bhola cyclone and to the events surrounding the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

The book reaffirms the fact how a perpetually inebricated Pakistani general and a wily politician from Sindh conspired to deepen the fault lines that existed at Pakistan's very birth and eventually lead the country to its inevitable disintegration. The

end result was the painful birth of Bangladesh, a nation that prides itself in its distinct national identity.

The authors talk in detail about the untiring efforts of individuals like Candy Rohde, her husband Jon, Marty Chen and Runi Khan, among others, in launching the Hatiya Emergency Lifesaving Emergency project, or HELP, and then frantically gathering food, money and clothing, and whatever else, for the survivors of the deadly cyclone in Bhola, and of the extent of death and destruction in Manpura and Hatiya. The criminal callousness of the Pakistani leadership in responding to the catastrophe is first exposed in the book when the group is denied the service of the lone military helicopter in Dhaka to deliver basic relief materials to the victims because "it was for use of Very, Very Important Persons." The life of the ordinary Bangalee meant nothing to them.

The book expands how the depth of anger of the Bangalees at all this found its most graphic manifestation in the general elections that followed, where the Awami League, under its charismatic leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a

thumping majority, securing 162 seats in the 300-member Pakistan Parliament, earning the legitimate right to govern the country. The authors quote Mohammad Hai, a cyclone survivor and subsequently a freedom fighter, who says with his fury and thunder at Pakistan's dismissive response to the deaths and destruction from the cyclone, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman rose from being a mass agitator to a great leader. His historic speech of March 7, 1971 was further affirmation of that.

*The Vortex* details how Candy Rohde did not confine her work to providing relief for the cyclone victims of 1970, but went far beyond for the cause of Bangladesh in 1971. It was she who, through her tireless efforts and perseverance, brought to the attention of the leadership and policymakers in Washington of the brutality unleashed by the Pakistani military all over Bangladesh since the launch of the deadly Operation Searchlight on March 25, 1971. Candy succeeded in getting a bipartisan bill passed in the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June 1971 prohibiting arms supply to Pakistan. Sadly, the bill could not be passed into law despite all the furor raised by Senator Kennedy and others because of the complex nature of legislation in the US Congress.

Carney and Miklian charts how geopolitics, with all its unethical contents, played a major part in the Nixon-Kissinger game plan. For them, the silk road to Beijing ran through Islamabad, and beeing up Pakistan's military was part of that chilling

plan. From pages 272 to 280, the authors catalogue the details of Henry Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing in July 1971, with direct involvement of Yahya Khan, and how the general, who might not have cared much for the dead in southern Bangladesh from the cyclone, but later found it a useful tool to earn enough sympathy from China's leadership to agree to Kissinger's secret visit, a mission that eventually paved the way for normalisation of relations between Washington and Beijing. Thus in 1971, like the Roman Emperor Nero centuries before them, Yahya, Nixon and Kissinger fiddled while Bangladesh burnt.

*The Vortex* is about history in its content, but stylistically different in its form. It is this that makes the book a gripping read. It is a must-read for students of history and for the post-1971 generation of Bangladeshis, not least because of the vivid portrayal of the acts of dedicated individuals who, against all odds, stood by the people of Bangladesh, both on and off the battlefield. In the Afterword, though, the authors underline that their efforts were aimed at citing a historical event to highlight the dangerous effect climate change can cause to fragile societies and flawed political systems. The Bhola cyclone of 1970 had a far-reaching domino effect that ended with the bloody birth of a nation. Carney and Miklian believe that more such climate driven catastrophes in other parts of the planet has the potential to create a surge in climate refugees who would not want to recognise international frontiers. Perhaps it is already happening.



# Beef cheaper than chillies



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

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

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

The way the captain of Bangladesh national men's football team was intended or unintendedly humiliated during the World Cup-winning goalkeeper's short visit to Dhaka made me think of the proverbial three-second memory span of a goldfish. Only a couple of days earlier, Jamal Bhuyan and his men led us to believe that a slot in the final of the SAFF Championship was not impossible. His team won our hearts by playing superbly against Lebanon and Kuwait, and winning convincingly against two regional contenders Maldives and Bhutan. Special cash prizes were announced to tease the team into the final, but Kuwait pipped our national team to end our dream. The return of our booters was rather unceremonious as they failed to replicate what the women's team did last year. The focus shifted to the visit of the Argentine goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez. When Jamal tried to meet the visitor at the airport, there was no one to introduce him. Jamal rued the day saying this was not the way to treat your national team captain. It was an insult to all the professionals who donned green and red to uphold the nation's honour.

And here I was, searching for an answer to the goldfish memory myth. Contrary to the popular saying, this species of fish passed many memory tests with flying colours. In a fish tank, goldfish can adapt to the timing of the food dispenser or even remember the lever that needs to be pressed to release food. So comparing our treatment of the Bangladeshi footballer to that of a goldfish memory would be an anomaly. What was even more wrong was for Jamal to show up at the airport hallway and wait for Emi Dibu like an ordinary fan. Wasn't Jamal signed up for an Argentine club as part of the football diplomacy prompted by the warmth of Bangladeshi supporters for La Albiceleste?

Bangladeshi fans warmed the hearts of the Argentines, who decided to reopen their embassy that was shut down in 1978. There were even talks of the Argentine national team coming to Bangladesh for a friendly match. Instead, all we could get was a 11-

**Martinez gave us a brief respite from the crazy conversations that we were having over green chillies during the Eid holidays. The price per kg of chillies rose over Tk 1,000, which should not exceed the Tk 100 mark by any count. The rainy season has been used as a pretext to snap the market supply and artificially increase the price. In India, which shares our monsoon weather, the price per kg of green chillies is Tk 21. Chillies are now being imported using foreign currency to stabilise the local market and control local traders.**

is political) than professional. This is indeed a missed opportunity to incentivise the Bangladeshi brand of football. Whoever was responsible for Martinez's itinerary focused on gratifying their political patrons at the expense of the taxpayers. Martinez left Dhaka saying, "I am the hawk of Bangladesh," a zesty statement with no real beef.

Martinez gave us a brief respite from the crazy conversations that we were having over green chillies during the Eid holidays. The price per kg of this spicy condiment rose over Tk 1,000, which should not exceed the Tk 100 mark by any count. The rainy season has been used as a pretext to snap the market supply and artificially increase the price. In India, which shares our monsoon weather, the price per kg of green chillies is Tk 21. Tonnes of chillies are now



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Martinez's Dhaka itinerary included a series of private audiences involving high-profile politicians.

hour visit of their Golden Glove-winning player who came for a whirlwind visit to Dhaka before flying to Kolkata, where he received a public reception given to him by one of the oldest football clubs. Martinez took part in a series of interactive events in which he could taste the real fervour of football frenzy in our part of the world. In contrast, Martinez's Dhaka itinerary included a series of private audiences involving high-profile politicians. Decency would have allowed a meeting with our professional booters, particularly the national team that had just fought hard for the country.

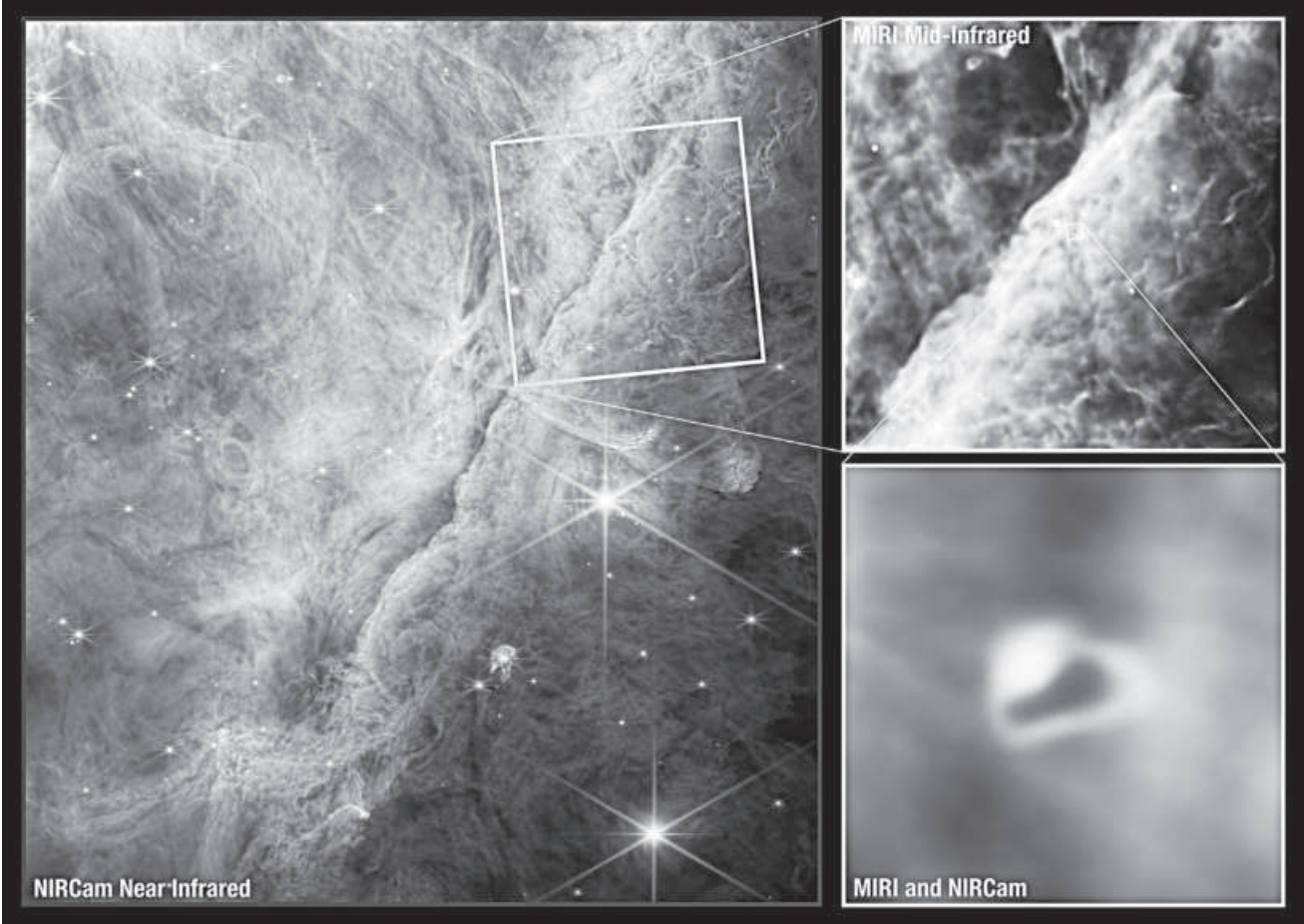
These are little things that make a lot of difference. You cannot always buy success. Players are not corporate employees where an announcement of performance-based increments will encourage them to do better. The recognition has to be spontaneous and genuine. The culture of forgetting the contributions of the real actors is not anything new. Earlier, we saw the coach of the women's team, Golam Rabbani, being phased out of his role. We don't know what conditioned the retirement of our national men's cricket team captain in the middle of a bilateral series only a few months ahead of the World Cup. We can only blame our goldfish memory with a pinch of salt.

Looking at the list of people with whom the Argentine goalkeeper met, it was obvious that the objective of the visit was more personal (or should I say, personal

being imported using foreign currency to stabilise the local market and control the local traders. Our commerce minister, who came under fire from his parliamentary colleagues for his inability to control the syndicate, admitted that taking action against the market manipulators would further destabilise the system. It is better not to rock the syndicate boat (i.e. ahead of the election).

There were endless memes on the absurdity of meat being less expensive than green chillies. Somehow, it symbolises the national failure of setting our priorities right. There is a lack of planning everywhere. Even if there are, they are not for the ordinary people. Surely, some devious brains have planned the manipulation of the kitchen market all along. Despite the country's claim for self-sufficiency in food, we remain heavily import-dependent. It is one thing to import edible oils, but when local agricultural products like potatoes, onions or chillies are imported allegedly to reign in the market syndicate, there is a problem. The efforts of the hardworking Bangladeshis are dismissed. Foreigners get glorified. Middlemen get benefited. And some people share the limelight at the expense of others.

Chillies can be green and red to become a real symbol of our national plights. We can keep the price real without making it a pawn on someone else's chessboard.



The JWST has detected a carbon compound called methyl cation in the Orion Nebula.

SOURCE: NASA

## Answer to the origin of life on Earth may be in a distant star



Dr Quamrul Haider is a professor of physics at Fordham University in New York, U.S.

QUAMRUL HAIDER

The origin of life is the classic chicken-and-egg conundrum, although it is well-known that carbon-based compounds are the main components of all forms of life. For example, out of a host of complex organic compounds, two that are essential for living organisms are uracil and niacin. Made up of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen, uracil is one of the constituents of RNA, which contains the blueprint of life, while niacin (Vitamin B3) controls the cholesterol and triglyceride levels. Hence, scientists working to understand the origin of life on Earth are particularly interested in compounds containing carbon.

Our planet was born about 4.55 billion years ago, but life might have had a difficult time during the first several hundred million years of Earth's history. This was the time of heavy bombardment, when Earth was struck repeatedly by large comets and asteroids. Studies of craters on the Moon suggest that the last major impacts of the heavy bombardment occurred between about 4.2 and 3.9 billion years ago. A few of these bombardments had sufficient energy to wipe out any life that might already have been present on Earth.

So, how did life arise on Earth? The unifying theory through which we understand the history of life on this planet is the theory of evolution, proposed by Charles Darwin. Before the publication of his *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, the widely held view of life was that it arose spontaneously from non-living matter. Darwin essentially debunked such an idea by showing how species develop gradually as a result of environmental pressures. But he made no attempt to explain how life came into being on a once lifeless Earth.

In 1907, Swedish chemist and Nobel Laureate Svante Arrhenius suggested that life on Earth was introduced billions of years ago from outer space, originally in the form of microscopic

spores that float through the cosmos, landing here and there to act as seeds for new biological systems. This idea, called the Panspermia hypothesis, can be traced back to Anaxagoras, the Greek philosopher who lived in the fifth century BC. He claimed that the Universe is made of an infinite number of *spermata*, or seeds, which gave rise to life forms on reaching the Earth.

The idea that life could travel through space to land on Earth once seemed outlandish. After all, it is hard to imagine a more foreboding environment than that of space, with no air, no water, and constant bombardment by dangerous radiation from the stars. However, the presence of a rich array of carbon compounds in comets, asteroids and meteors tells us that the building blocks of life can survive in space, and tests have shown that some microbes can survive in space for years.

Thus, the Panspermia hypothesis may not be an improbable idea. Analysis of Hale-Bopp, the comet that lit up the night sky for the better part of 1995-1997, clearly revealed that the chemicals that evaporated from its nucleus – a ball of ice a few kilometres in diameter – were not just tonnes of water, but a frozen "primordial soup" of many organic materials that are the basic ingredients of life. These materials were also found in Halley's Comet by Giotto, a robotic spacecraft of the European Space Agency, as it flew by and studied its composition in March 1986.

These two comets together with the Comet Hyakutake that made its closest approach to Earth in March 1996 led researchers to conclude that life-forming material may not have been produced on Earth. Instead, they were brought here by heavenly objects when they bombarded the nascent Earth. Indeed, the earliest evidence for life on Earth suggests it was present some 3.83 billion years ago, overlapping with the

bombardment period.

Furthermore, in 2019, scientists detected uracil and niacin in rocks obtained by the Japanese Space Agency's Hayabusa2 spacecraft from Ryugu, a carbon-rich asteroid that was formed in the cloud of gas and dust that created our solar system. This study also supports the hypothesis that pouncing by comets, as well as asteroids and meteorites, seeded our young planet with compounds that paved the way for the first microorganisms.

And now, Nasa's James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) swung into action. In an article published last month in the journal *Nature*, a team of international scientists reports that JWST has detected a carbon compound called methyl cation (CH<sub>3</sub><sup>+</sup>) for the first time in space in a star system, a small red dwarf about one-tenth the size of the Sun, roughly 1,350 light years away in the Orion Nebula. This discovery clearly shows that unlike Hubble or other space-based telescopes, JWST is not only capable of resolving smaller details in galaxies, stars and nebulae, but it can also pick out the signatures of specific molecules with great precision.

Although methyl cation does not react efficiently with hydrogen, the most abundant element in the Universe, it reacts readily with a wide range of other molecules, and therefore initiates the production of more complex carbon-based molecules that make up life as we know it. That is why this molecule, never before seen in space, is believed to be a cornerstone for studying the origin of life on Earth.

Interestingly, while ultraviolet radiation from nearby stars might degrade some organic compounds, researchers think it is also supplying the energy needed for methyl cation to form in the first place, and perhaps played a crucial role in the early stages of the origins of life.

In sum, discovery of methyl cation by JWST in a young star in the Orion Nebula lends credence to the Panspermia hypothesis that heavenly vans, such as comets, transporting tonnes of carbon-rich materials from interstellar space may have been the genesis of life on Earth. However, this does not preclude the hypothesis that we are simply highly evolved primates that progressively turned into modern, upright humans.

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

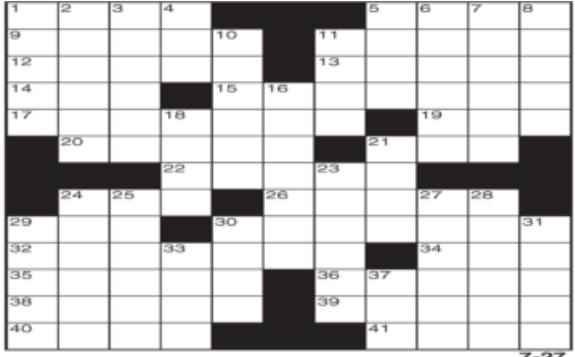
#### ACROSS

- 1 Antlered animal
- 5 Cocoon, for example
- 9 Moon-based
- 11 Labor leader
- 12 Tibia's end
- 13 Skilled
- 14 Soup sphere
- 15 Long steps
- 17 Zebra trademark
- 19 Attempt
- 20 Desert spot
- 21 Happiness
- 22 Bisected
- 24 Paid spots
- 26 Mom's sisters
- 29 Bar cubes
- 30 Tries hard
- 32 Part of a diamond count

#### DOWN

- 34 – Lanka
- 35 France's longest river
- 36 Spud
- 38 Supply with a grant
- 39 Alan Ladd classic
- 40 Freshman, usually
- 41 Son of Zeus
- 1 Some hits
- 2 Choose on the radio
- 3 Turkey's capital
- 4 Guy's friend
- 5 Toenail treatment, for short
- 6 Familiar with

- 7 Like wasp nests
- 8 Pretentious
- 10 Extra shot at the slots
- 11 2006 Pixar film
- 16 Having a will
- 18 Egyptian goddess
- 21 Singer Mitchell
- 23 German sausages
- 24 Play start
- 25 Mock
- 27 Emmy winner, maybe
- 28 Placid
- 29 Key
- 30 Distort
- 31 Begets
- 33 Magnetic metal
- 37 Cry of discovery



### YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

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





# A celebration of Bangla music

Artistes from both sides of the border unite in harmony

Unfortunately, Anupam had to leave the stage without finishing his set. He admittedly wanted to perform more songs for the loving audience.

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

A drenched, excited and patiently waiting crowd welcomed artistes at Hall 4 of the International Convention Centre Bashundhara in the capital, on Thursday eve.

*Magical Night*, a concert organised by Triple Time Communications, opened its gates with the Hatirpool Sessions as soon as the clock struck 5.

Kick-starting the event with *Monohor*, they went on to perform many others, including *Tulonamulok Rodchaya* and *Anondo Dao*, finally taking the crowd by storm with their most cherished *Upo*, beautifully presented.



Taalpatar Shepai



Haatirpool Sessions



Meghdol

PHOTOS: THABIT AL BASHAR

The essence continued as the crowd swayed with Ahmed Hasan Sunny as he performed *Shohorer Duita Gaan*.

Next up was Meghdol. With Shibul Kumar

Shill on the mic, the band presented some of their very best, including *Esho Amar Shohore* and *Na Bola Phul*. They bid farewell, setting high hopes for Taalpatar Shepai, the young band from Kolkata who were next in line.

Singing on top of their voices, the cheering crowd joined the band without complaints as they performed *Chander Shohor*, *Ogochhalo Mon*, *Sonar Kathi* and *Moshader Chumu*, finally leaving the stage in the hands of Anupom Roy.

Claiming the 'showstopper' badge rightfully, the singer and his members played beautifully. Anupam's energy, paired with the innocence and charm of his compositions, teleported the audience to the time when they might have experienced their first love, disappointment, heart-break and so much more.

Singing seven tracks back-to-back – *Ami*

*Aajkal Bhalo Aachi*, *Benche Thakar Gaan*, *Bariye Dao*, *Je Kawta Din*, *Lokkhiti*, and *Bandhu Chol* the band left the stage with *Amake Amar Moto Thakte Dao* and a selfie with their beloved fans to treasure the encounter.

However, he had to leave the stage without finishing the set, owing to time management issues during the show. Anupom admittedly wanted to perform more songs for the loving audience.

The final performer, Arnob, began his set with *Tomar Jonno Nilche Tara*. He surprised everyone when he paid tribute to Moheener Ghoraguli, with the classic *Prithibita Naki Choto Hote Hote*.

The concert was made memorable due to the talent of the performers, despite some issues. After all, the organisers do deserve credit for pulling off such an ambitious concert.

## TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix  
The Witcher



Hoichoi  
Mission HuntDown



Chorki  
Mercules



Amazon Prime  
The Summer I Turned Pretty



## OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Jazz Night  
July 8 | 7 pm  
Satori Meditations



Jazzphonic Raga  
July 9 | 5:30 pm – 11 pm  
Aloki Conention Centre



Bhalobashi Jyotsnay  
July 14 | 4 pm  
Liberation War Museum

## WHAT'S PLAYING

# M-A (Feat. Rushmian)

As the monsoon rain clogs the city's drains, our brains are no exception, and that's what is portrayed in this song. M-A is a bilingual play on words, an adaptation of a fairly western genre by a Bangladeshi band. The song is the first lyrical track their EP Bedroom Transmissions, that chronicles the monologue of a frazzled narrator with their parental figure.

The song starts off mellow with upbeat percussions, in contrast to the rather melancholic wording of the song. Much like a child, the narrator croons about not looking below the surface, at the metaphorical mess that has been swept under the rug.

Orfred's origin story is a bit murky and ridiculous, having started as a parody band which evolved

into something serious some 10 years ago. The band claims itself to be indie-folk at its core, despite venturing into playing indie-rock sometimes. Bedroom Transmissions was made during the pandemic when all the members were stranded from each other, coming together with songs instead.

Their songs are currently available on YouTube and Spotify to stream.



## STYLE STATEMENT

# Rekha

The gorgeous Rekha graced the July/August 2023 cover of Vogue Arabia. Rekha's ethereal demeanor emanated regality, dressed in many lavish costumes by famous fashion designer, Manish Malhotra. The first picture takes us back to an era of grandeur and royal elegance. Rekha wore a vintage brocade jacket embellished with gold embroidery, sequin work, and thread details. The combination radiates sophistication when paired with a classic black turtleneck shirt. A Mughal-inspired headdress decorated with gold zari caps off the outfit, emphasizing Rekha's royal manner even more.



## ‘We are ready for any kind of challenge’

MAZHAR UDDIN *from Chattogram*

The Tamim Iqbal retirement and return saga, which unfolded over the past 48 hours or so, may have been the centre of attention in the country, but may provide an opportunity for Afghanistan to seal the three-match series against a rather distracted hosts in the second ODI at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram today.

Bangladesh lost the first ODI by 17 runs (DLS method) in a rain-affected game that saw the home side's batters fail to tackle the Afghan spin trio of Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi or contend with pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi.

Afghan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi believed his side's morale was high after the win and said they would be looking to cash in on that momentum.

“Playing in Bangladesh against Bangladesh is not easy. But we won the first game so morale is high and everyone in the dressing room is confident and looking forward to the rest of the series. Yes, of course (we want to seal the series tomorrow). Tomorrow is a big chance for us to take the series 2-0. As I said, morale is high. I know they will come hard



In absence of Tamim Iqbal, who has been granted a month-and-a-half's leave following his U-turn from retirement, Rony Talukdar and Naim Sheikh will be up for a battle for the second opening spot. (Bottom) Stand-in captain Liton Das, meanwhile, will have an uphill task of guiding the team in the second ODI against Afghanistan today, with the hosts already 1-0 down in the three-match series.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Tigers move on with eye ON SECOND ODI

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Chattogram*

Soon after arriving for their practice session in the morning, the Bangladesh team appeared to be in good spirits as they warmed-up with a football session. All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was seen telling one of the other players to move, perhaps to initiate better link-up play and the kind of vibrancy that game was played with clearly showed they were enjoying themselves.

The Tigers had lined up Liton Das as captain for the remainder of the Afghanistan series following Tamim Iqbal's shock retirement on Thursday despite leading the team in the first ODI.

Rony Talukdar had been brought into the side as Tamim's replacement while back-up opener Mohammad Naim was in the nets with Nic Pothas, working things out. Both players were working to fill the gaping hole left by Tamim, and neither had an idea of what would transpire in the evening, when Tamim withdrew his international retirement after a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Coach Chandika Hathurusingha had taken both Liton and Shakib to the centre pitches to analyse the surface for the crucial game and make their assessments ahead of the second ODI.

The press conference, which was held amidst the backdrop of Tamim's retirement, was a curious one that saw Liton Das lose his patience with the journalists at one point because they had, without ill-intent, failed to focus on the do-or-die second ODI on Saturday and instead focused on what had the prior day, when Tamim abruptly retired.

“Is this press conference about what is going to happen tomorrow?” he asked. “Or else it's better for Liton Das not to be here. You can call the board president or the coach regarding these issues. I have come here to talk about the game tomorrow,” he strongly stated.

However, Liton was in a reasonably merry mood for most of the press



conference. “Being captain of Bangladesh is something to be proud of. When I captained before, I tried to do my best and win matches for Bangladesh. There is no alternative. I will try to do well,” he said.

Taking over as captain following the chaos that had transpired following the loss to Afghanistan was indeed a hard step

to follow but, when asked if he was feeling any pressure, Liton replied: “No. Chill.”

The BCB president had suggested during a press conference in the early hours of Friday that the team would be impacted by Tamim's retirement just before key events such as Asia Cup and World Cup.

But Liton believed the scenario would have been similar if Tamim, instead of retiring, was out injured.

“No [there won't be negative impact]. He [Tamim] was there in the previous match but won't be there for the next match. Somehow if that wasn't the case and instead, he had an injury, we would have played an alternative. So I don't think any change like that will happen. Things will stay the same.”

The batters had failed in their attempt to put up a resistance despite poor bowling from Afghanistan in the first ODI. The trio of Mujeeb ur Rahman, Rashid Khan and Mohammad Nabi combined for five wickets, which left Bangladesh in disarray.

Liton felt they needed to give less wickets to the spinners. “We made silly mistakes, we will try to reduce them. We know their main strength is their spin attack in the middle overs. The less wickets you lose during that period, the better for us,” he opined.

The Tigers wanted focus back on the game despite the chaos and Tamim eventually withdrawing his retirement. For now, they have found the mojo to move on.

## ‘PM wanted Tamim to play’

RAMIN TALUKDER

Former Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza revealed that it was upon Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's wishes that Bangladesh ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal withdrew his retirement on Friday.

Tamim, who had announced his retirement from all forms of international cricket on Thursday, had a fruitful meeting with the Prime Minister at the Gono Bhaban after which he annulled his retirement. The 34-year-old was accompanied by Mashrafe and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon in this meeting.

Mashrafe said that the Prime Minister bestowed upon him the responsibility of getting Tamim in touch with her for that meeting.

“That, I don't know for sure [whether Tamim would return as captain]. It is up to them [Tamim and Papon] and they will discuss it. The main thing is that the Prime Minister wanted Tamim to play – and for him to play in the [ODI] World Cup [later this year]. That is final and that is what has happened,” Mashrafe told The Daily Star.

The 34-year-old will not, however, feature in the next two ODIs against Afghanistan in Chattogram and is set to take a one and a half month hiatus for rehabilitation to regain complete mental and physical fitness after which he would take the Tigers to the Asia Cup as captain.

“I can decline everyone but not the Prime Minister,” Tamim told the media after coming out of the meeting.

The tentative date for the Asia Cup is from August 31 to September 17.

When asked whether Tamim would be under pressure to deliver after coming back from his break, Mashrafe replied that he believed in the southpaw to overcome the adversity and meet the demands of international cricket.

“This is international cricket. When you're here, you have to play by having the ability to overcome all the pressure. I believe Tamim has that. He will play well. Bangladesh will play well. That is the expectation,” he said.

## Favourites cruise as BPL returns

SPORTS REPORTER

Following a one-month break for the national team's international engagements, Bangladesh Premier League resumed yesterday with all favourites cruising to victories at three different venues.

Bashundhara Kings, who have already ensured their fourth league title, handed a 3-1 defeat to Sheikh Jamal in their penultimate match in Gopalganj, with the three goals coming through Miguel Ferreira, Dorielton Gomes and Robson da Silva while Abu Shaied reimbursed a goal for Sheikh Jamal.

In Cumilla, Malian captain Souleymane Diabate slammed his third hattrick of the league to power Mohammedan to a 6-0 win over Azampur FC.

Sheikh Russel notched a 2-0 win over Fortis FC, with Sunday Udoh and Kenneth Ngwoke scoring in the 33rd and 63rd minutes respectively.

Kings took their tally to 52 points from 19 matches, 26 more than fourth placed Mohammedan and fifth-placed Sheikh Russel, who stayed behind Mohammedan on goal difference. Sheikh Jamal, Fortis and relegated Azampur are in sixth, seventh and 11th places with 21, 20 and five points respectively.

## Phenomenon, Lula weigh in on foreigner debate

AGENCIES

The raging debate in Brazil about whether their famed national team should depend on a foreign manager on a full-time basis for the first time in their history after the appointment of Carlo Ancelotti was announced reached fever pitch on Friday, with two of the nation's most prominent figures sharing differing opinions on the issue.

Ancelotti is set to become the first foreign Brazil manager since Argentine Filpo Nunez, who took charge for one friendly against Uruguay in 1965. The only other foreigners were Uruguay's Ramon Platero and Portugal's Joreca, with the former lasting under a month and the latter serving for four days.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva criticised the Ancelotti's appointment, claiming he would be better off sorting out the Italian national team's problems.

“I admire Ancelotti, but he has never been Italy's national coach,” Lula told TV station SBT on Thursday. “Why does he not resolve Italy's problem, who did not qualify for the 2022 World Cup?” added the 77-year-old.

In the interim, Fluminense coach Fernando Diniz will be in charge of Brazil for their opening 2026 World Cup qualifiers. “I am a fan

of Diniz,” said Lula. “He has the personality, the creativity and it is he who commands the dressing room.”

Earlier in the day, Ronaldo, chimed in with a different opinion.

Speaking on the ‘Mano a mano’ podcast, O Fenomeno relayed Brazil's coaching standards through the lens of Vinicius Jr.

“They didn't prepare Vinicius Jr or improve his technical fundamentals. He didn't know how to control the ball with his left foot! Today, after growing up in Spain, he is the most decisive attacker in world football,” Ronaldo said. “Vini arrived in Europe without tuning. For many years, talents have been left like unpolished diamonds. This is a clear case.

“He has developed a lot, with professional methodology and with the help of great technicians. He has gone from water to wine in two years. And he was playing for Flamengo. They didn't train him properly, they didn't improve his left leg.”

“Today we have ten coaches from abroad in the First Division. They are better prepared than the Brazilians. I know they will criticize me for that, because they will think that I am unpatriotic and that I prefer foreigners, but that is not it. I think we have to hire the best,” he said.



England captain Ben Stokes' latest dashing counter-attack kept his side's Ashes hopes alive in the third Test against Australia at Headingley on Friday. Trailing 2-0 in the best-of-five series, England were in danger of conceding a large first-innings lead but all-rounder Stokes' brilliant 80 took them to 237 all out, a deficit of just 26 runs, despite Australia captain Pat Cummins' fine return of 6-91.

PHOTO: ECB





# River erosion worsens in 8 districts

Many lose homes; farmland, edn institutions devoured in Kurigram, Lalmonirhat

## STAR REPORT

Rivers are rapidly eroding houses, schools and farmlands in Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and several other districts. Many people are losing their homes and belongings in a matter of hours. As flood waters are receding in the two districts, the Brahmaputra, the Teesta, the Dharla, the Dudhkumar and the Gangadhar are eroding the banks in at least 60 places. At least 280 homes, three schools and a college have been washed away in Kurigram while in Lalmonirhat, at least 20 homesteads have disappeared into the rivers over the past week, according to officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB). Besides, vast farmlands and over 500 homesteads are in immediate threat of being wiped out, they added. "My house and three bighas of arable land have been washed away by the Teesta. I am living on the road now, and I have to start over from scratch," said Hajera Bewa, 65, a resident of Bajra village of Ulipur upazila in Kurigram. In Lalmonirhat, 40-year-old Shukcharan Barman said, "Maybe 100 houses and my entire village are gone. But the Dharla is still eroding the banks."

**At least 280 homes, three schools and a college have been washed away in Kurigram while in Lalmonirhat, at least 20 homesteads have disappeared into the rivers over the past week, according to officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB).**

The BWDB said they were putting sandbags on the banks to curb erosion while relief and rehabilitation officers said they were preparing a list of the affected people. In Tangail, locals said the Jamuna washed away over 100 houses in Chituliapara and Patnipara areas of Bhupur. The villagers demonstrated blocking roads for effective measures to stop the erosion. "My house was washed away three days ago. I don't want handouts. I want an embankment that lasts," said Zilkod Hossain, a resident of Chituliapara. Local BWDB official Sazzad Hossain said, "We have already started putting sandbags to prevent erosion. We informed our higher authorities to construct a permanent dam there." In Sirajganj, the Jamuna washed away a major chunk of an embankment in Kazipur upazila early in the morning yesterday. Several government facilities may get eroded unless the sandbags and concrete blocks stop erosion in Kazipur, said locals and government officials. The Surma and the Kushiara are eroding properties in Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj and Habiganj. "We are working on a mega plan for ending river erosion in this region," said Khushi Mohon Sarker, additional chief engineer at BWDB in Sylhet. [Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Tangail, Pabna and Sylhet contributed to this report]



The Jamuna has eroded away a huge chunk of an embankment at Meghai Ghat in Sirajganj's Kazipur upazila. Bangladesh Water Development Board yesterday started dumping sandbags to curb further erosion. Locals are worried that a breach of the embankment will leave many key installations, including the Kazipur Police Station, at risk.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## One of the first Indians to fight 1971 war dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Major (Retd) Parimal Kumar Ghosh, one of the first Indians to fight in the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, died at the age of 84.

He breathed his last in New Delhi on Thursday and was cremated yesterday, said Agomoni Ghosh, daughter of the deceased.

In 1971, Parimal Kumar Ghosh risked court martial by crossing the border to the then East Pakistan and reportedly helped set up the first group of Mukti Bahini.

He was first diagnosed with cancer in 1996 and battled the disease till the end, his daughter said.

Ghosh was born in January 1939.

On March 26, 1971, he was commanding four border outposts (BOP) of BSF at Sreenagar, Amlighat, Samarendraganj, and



SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

# At least 12 killed in two road crashes

Victims include five of a family

## STAR REPORT

At least 12 people died in two road crashes in Jashore and Sylhet yesterday. In Jashore, seven people, including three children, were killed and two others injured when a bus rammed into a three-wheeler yesterday.

The accident took place in the Lebutala area on Jashore-Magura highway.

Police identified six of the deceased victims as Mahima Khatun, 48, her three-year-old twin grandsons Hasan and Hossain, sister Rahima Khatun, 30, and Rahima's daughter Zeba, 6, and auto-rickshaw driver Imran Hosen, 25.

They were from Bagharpara upazila of the district.

Mahima's daughter Sonia, 30, who is the mother of the twins, was brought to the capital in a critical condition. Sonia's daughter Khadija, 4, was also injured.

Police could not name one other deceased victim.

The family was going to Jashore General Hospital to visit an ailing relative on the battery-run three-wheeler when a bus of Royal Paribahan hit it, said Belal Hossain, additional superintendent of police.

"How can I bear the pain of losing them? I did not dare bring my wife to the hospital," Sadaruddin, the 70-year-old father of Mahima and Rahima, told this correspondent at Jashore General Hospital.

In Jhikargachha upazila of the district, local Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader Shakil Khan Saju, 26, died after he crashed his motorcycle into a roadside tree yesterday morning, police said.

He died around 7:00am while his family members were taking him to Dhaka for treatment of his injuries.

In Sylhet's Jaintapur upazila around 10:00pm yesterday, five people were killed and at least seven others seriously injured after a bus rammed into a battery-powered auto-rickshaw.

The incident took place in the Darbast area on Sylhet-Tamabil highway.

Omar Faruk, officer-in-charge of Jaintapur Police Station, said the victims died on the spot.

He added that both the vehicles were going towards Jallong from Sylhet.

[Our correspondents in Benapole and Sylhet contributed to this report.]

**The family was going to Jashore General Hospital to visit an ailing relative on a three-wheeler when a bus hit it.**

# AI takes just 5 hours to design functional computer

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Researchers in China have developed an artificial intelligence tool capable of designing a working computer in under five hours.

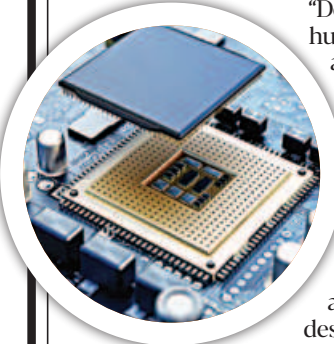
The team of 19 computer scientists from five different institutions made the AI breakthrough after setting out to prove that machines can create computer chips in a similar way to humans. The feat was performed 1,000 times faster than a human team could have achieved it, the researchers claimed, marking a major step towards building self-evolving machines.

"Design activity... distinguishes humanity from other animals and traditional machines, and endowing machines with design abilities at the human level or beyond has been a long-term pursuit," the scientists wrote in a paper detailing their research.

"We present a new AI approach to automatically design a central processing unit (CPU), the brain of a computer, and one of the world's most intricate devices humanity has ever designed."

The project involved the layout of an industrial-scale RISC-V CPU, capable of running the Linux operating system and achieving an accuracy of 99.99 percent in validation tests.

The AI bypassed the manual programming and verification process of the typical design cycle, which the researchers said "consumes more than 60-80 percent of the design time and resources" of human teams.



## Tigers focus on levelling series

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

It was a rather exciting day for Liton Das when he woke up in the morning yesterday as the stand-in captain of the Bangladesh ODI team, a day after regular skipper Tamim Iqbal announced his retirement from international cricket.

As anticipated, Tamim's retirement issue hogged all the attention during the official pre-match press conference at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Liton entertained a few questions regarding Tamim's shock retirement, but tried to revert focus back on his team's immediate objective: keep the series alive by winning the crucial second and penultimate ODI against Afghanistan today.

At one point, however, Liton lost his composure as reporters remained adamant at bringing Tamim's issue back.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Palestinian youths throw stones at passing Israeli armoured vehicles in clashes during an Israeli military raid in the old city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank yesterday. Story on page 2.

PHOTO: AFP

# US to send cluster munitions to Ukraine

REUTERS, Washington

The United States announced yesterday that it would send Ukraine widely-banned cluster munitions as part of a security assistance package, a move Ukraine said would have an "extraordinary psycho-emotional impact" on occupying Russian forces.

Jake Sullivan, US President Joe Biden's national security adviser, laid out the case yesterday for providing cluster munitions to Ukraine ahead of an expected Pentagon announcement.

"We recognise that cluster munitions create a risk of civilian harm from unexploded ordnance," Sullivan told reporters. "This is why we've deferred the decision for as long as we could."

"But there is also a massive risk of civilian harm if Russian troops and tanks roll over Ukrainian positions and take more Ukrainian territory and subjugate more Ukrainian civilians because Ukraine does not have enough artillery," he said.

Cluster munitions are prohibited by more than 100 countries. They typically release large numbers of smaller bomblets that can kill indiscriminately over a wide area and those that fail to explode pose a danger for decades after a conflict ends.

"Ukraine has provided written assurances that it is going to use these in a very careful way" to minimize risks to civilians Sullivan said.

Human rights groups oppose Washington's decision, but the munitions could provide a boost to a Ukrainian counteroffensive to reclaim territory seized by Russian forces since they invaded in February 2022.





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“



We are excited that we have had 10-12 girls who have played in different age groups from here. But the situation was not like this five-seven years ago. In the beginning, our guardians used to tell us not to play. What will you get out of playing?” they used to say. Then after we got better at our game, we got encouragement from everywhere. Now, guardians want their girls to play. Parents can now understand that the girls can do something well by playing football. But still, our girls have to face a lot of harassment in the streets and some other places. Here, we have a lot of people who don’t want the girls to play football. But the honourable Prime Minister has given us such a big stadium for which we thank her. She loves sports and wants us to improve. I hope she will continue to extend her cooperation and help us.

Ruma Akhter, local coach

“



It is still challenging for the girls to come into football. Even if the parents support them, the relatives still object. I’ve never received the support of my relatives fully. The people in the neighbourhood aren’t okay with girls playing sports. Everyone says negative things about us. We have so much success and achievements but still have to listen to taunts and slanders. They never motivate us. We are here only because of our parents. But our coach Milon Miah and the police administration motivate us. The Joint Commissioner of Police, Biplob Kumar Sarkar sir gives us the sports gear and always keeps in touch. He sends us gifts for Eid and is a constant during times of happiness or sorrow.

Innima Khanom Richi, Rangpur District and Divisional team player

## Remote palichara reflects OVERALL REALITY

On the opposite side of the spectrum, supportive locals and administration have helped tip the balance of the scale. As a matter of fact, the success of Palichara girls prompted the government to recently build a stadium there with modern facilities.

MOSTAFA SHABUI

Palichara, a remote village in Rangpur district, is not an unknown name in the local football fraternity ever since it emerged as a breeding ground of female footballers in the country.

Like Mymensingh’s Kalsindur, the girls of this tranquil village -- the likes of Sirat Jahan Swapna, Ishrat Jahan Ratna, and Mishrat Jahan Moushumi -- achieved successes in age-level national tournaments and went on to aid the national side in bringing international accolades.

The crowning achievement for women’s football arrived last year with the maiden SAFF Championship title. However, sudden departures of a few key figures of the SAFF-winning contingent -- of Swapna and the long-serving head coach Golam Rabbani Choton -- had taken all aback.

Why did someone as young as Swapna -- a proven striker approaching the peak years of her career -- would hang up her boots at such a juncture where women’s football in the country was primed to flourish like never before?

Although Swapna said her retirement was down to her “own accord”, it is believed that the national team’s complete lack of action since the SAFF triumph, coupled with salary issue and the uncertainty surrounding a proposed franchise league (WSL), culminated in her making the call.

In an attempt to understand Swapna’s decision, this correspondent visited Palichara last month but failed to unearth anything concrete. However, the interactions with locals and upcoming footballers there gave a good indication about where the problem lies with Bangladesh women’s football despite having achieved huge success of late.

As the budding female footballers of Palichara talked about their role model, their eyes seemingly lit up with a mix of pride and sorrow. Like the rest of the country, Swapna’s retirement decision shocked them to the core but these young girls are still dreaming as big as their predecessors did.

While it cannot be denied that parents are now encouraging their girls to play football, still they face social stigma from their relatives and other residents of the tiny village. Just for choosing to play football, they are still subjected to bullying to this day. Recently a few girls were harassed by local miscreants.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, supportive locals and administration have helped tip the balance of the scale. As a matter of fact, the success of Palichara girls prompted the government to recently build a stadium there with modern facilities -- comprising press box, galleries, dressing room, and dormitory.

the minority when the local residents there proudly utter the names of Swapna, Ratna, Moushumi and others.

“Now everybody encourages their girls to play football, which was not the case ten years back,” said Munsur Ali, a local resident.

Upon witnessing the determination of the budding female footballers and support of a section of locals, it is no wonder that a place like Palichara -- where the majority of the people are farmers and day labourers who remain impoverished -- went on to achieve something extraordinary, in terms of women’s empowerment in sport.

Having said that, are the facilities and



“We got these modern facilities only because of the success of the girls in this area,” Rangpur District Sports Association general secretary, Anwarul Islam, proudly said.

Similarly proud was former Union Parishad member Jahangir Alam, who said, “Women’s football got a new life in this area following our girls’ success in the Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Gold Cup in 2011.”

Nearly 30 girls from different villages in the vicinity regularly visit the stadium to partake in training. It was a refreshing surprise for this correspondent to watch a JFA Under-12 National Women’s Football Championship-23 qualifying final match in such a beautiful stadium.

The miscreants and the bullies seem to be

collective support enough for Palichara’s sustainability? Why does poverty still remain the main enemy of these girls, who have to practice without proper three meals a day?

Local coach Milon Ali informed that a few well-wishers -- notably Biplob Kumar Sarker, joint commissioner of DMP who was Superintendent of Police (SP) of Rangpur District, and Japan expatriate Mamtaj Khan -- have been supporting the girls.

“They are very talented but support from some individuals is not good enough for them to continue their football venture. I firmly believe these girls too have the ability to make the nation proud if they get proper support,” Biplob Kumar Sarker told The Daily Star.

From grassroots to top level, the time has come to address and sort out all possible issues, starting from something as fundamental as financial security. The SAFF Championship has shown that unprecedented success alone cannot ensure growth and its continuity when the infrastructure only exists as a facade.



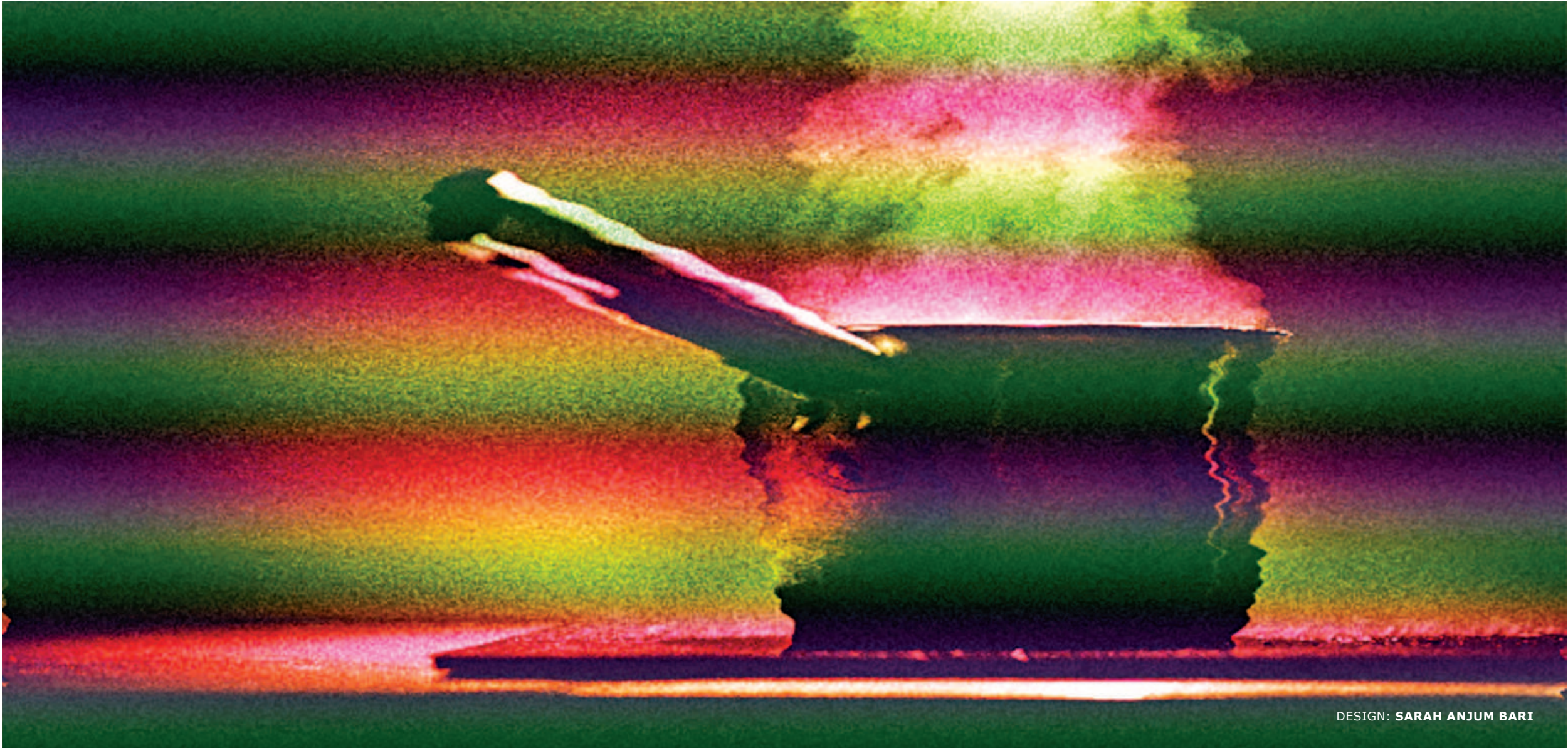
“

I started playing football seven years ago seeing Swapna, and Ratna apu. But in the beginning, my family didn’t want to let me play. The stadium you are seeing today next to the Nayapukur Bazar wasn’t there back then. It was an open field that had a cricket pitch where the boys would play. When we went there, we were the subject of teasing from the boys. When my game improved, the environment started to change but you can’t say that it is good. Still, now, we have to listen to a lot of criticisms. We still have a lot of problems even though we have a modern stadium. The number of calories we burn every day in training is not compensated by our calorie intake because of the lack of food at home. We would be quite benefited if the government arranged some food for us every month. Our fathers are mainly farmers and a few are van drivers and there are some who live on a day-to-day basis. We eat one meal and often have to forget the other meals; we eat whatever comes our way at home. It would’ve been good for us if someone helped us with food. If the government or anyone else supports us, then we can do well in the future. Swapna apu was not only the best striker in Rangpur district but the best in the division. She couldn’t have brought more glory to the country if she would’ve played more. We were proud to have a footballer like her from our village but we don’t know why she left football. Now, it feels bad to see such a good player leave football as we were inspired by her. If they give up so easily, then how can we reach a good place?

Rekha Akhter, Rangpur District and Divisional team player







DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI

FICTION

# An aftertaste

## Trigger Warning: domestic abuse

“The texture of the grains, the sweetness oozing in his mouth, the milk melting on his tongue—it was perfect enough for Altaf Shaheb to not shout at his wife anymore.”

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

“Can’t a man even get payesh and shemai on Eid in this house?” Altaf Shaheb screamed from the drawing room while watching the news, “There used to be so much joy in this house. It used to feel like Eid. But your mother has grown so sluggish now, Saadat! She used to be such a good cook. Our neighbours back in the old neighbourhood were crazy about your mother’s chicken bhuna. But now I can’t even get a plate of payesh the night before Eid.”

Altaf Shaheb’s voice kept on getting louder and louder with each sentence. He could hear his wife taking out the plates and serving the payesh but it was taking longer than Altaf Shaheb’s patience could afford. He couldn’t break character and show remorse now, not after 26 years of marriage. He threw the remote control across the room and against the wall. When Saadat had had enough and left the room, Mr Altaf kept cursing his son and blaming his wife for giving birth to such an abomination who had the audacity of getting up and leaving in the middle of his father’s tantrums.

A hand popped up from the curtains and handed Mr Altaf a bowl of payesh.

“Can you do anything in time these days?” shouted Mr Altaf as he put a spoonful in his mouth.

It was just as delicious as the day she first cooked it. The texture of the grains, the sweetness oozing in his mouth, the milk melting on his tongue—it was perfect enough for Altaf Shaheb to not shout at his wife anymore.

“I’ve invited Zia Shaheb and his family over tomorrow,” he said, “Cook something nice. Especially that chicken bhuna. It should be done by tonight. They’re coming in early tomorrow right from the Eidgah.”

Altaf Shaheb looked at the clock. It was 11:30. It’s probably going to take her the entire night if she starts now. He had his outrage prepared in case his wife even moaned a hint of protest. She didn’t. She hadn’t protested against anything in the past 26 years. Altaf Shaheb thought his wife quietly accepting all his demands would bring him peace but it didn’t. He doesn’t feel heard this way. Through every howl at her, every object thrown against the wall and every insult, Altaf Shaheb knowingly kept pushing his wife, hoping she’d finally break, that he would be able to mould a new person out of the corpse of his wife’s broken soul. He couldn’t. The 18-year-old

young girl with puffy cheeks cried for the first and only time on her wedding day as she lay beside this vile human being. Altaf scolded her and shut her up. His wife hasn’t shed a tear ever since. Not in front of him, at least.

What happened to his wife when Altaf Shaheb wasn’t home was none of his business.

“Maa, can you please cook your special korma?” said Saadat as he walked past the kitchen, “My friends are coming over. They loved your korma the last time.”

The gas level keeps on fluctuating in the morning. She had to start cooking now if she wanted to finish before dawn. She ironed out the panjabis for Saadat and Altaf Shaheb and kept them right where they could find them in the morning. After her husband and son went to bed, she went to the kitchen and closed the door. She took out the marinated chicken and started with the roast. After the egg bhuna, korma, pulao and kabab, it was time for the last item of the night. Her special chicken bhuna. It was the only recipe her mother taught her before she came to this household. As Altaf Shaheb would come home late from the office, with his fury waiting to be unleashed upon his wife, her chicken bhuna would be

the only thing that would calm him down. He would devour every last piece of the curry like a madman and go to sleep. Those were the only nights her cheeks would be left unbruised.

It was 3:45 am. She had to finish before Fazr. The oil from the pan kept splashing across her face and her eye sockets and yet, she wouldn’t blink. The fire was intense enough to burn her hands if they weren’t burnt enough already. Blood dripped from her burnt palms and into the curry.

“That’s the secret, Zubaidah,” her mother had said to her in confidence, “It’s the blood. But don’t let them know. Your father doesn’t and neither should your husband or any of those men. They love the taste of blood as long as they aren’t aware of it.”

“Zubaidah,” she said out loud. It had been years since someone had called her by her name. That night in the kitchen with her mother was the last time she’d ever heard her name.

The curry was almost done. She could recognise it by its colour. She had already lost her taste buds. Rice, curry, vegetables, betel leaf—she couldn’t taste anything. She chewed her tongue off over the years and the last time she could taste anything at all was the poison she took. With a hint of spice,

it was bitter and left a mild yet long-lasting aftertaste. It was still here in her tongue, or whatever was left of it.

The chicken bhuna was done. She placed it on the dining table with the rest of the items. She kept the payesh and shemai right where Altaf Shaheb could find them in the morning before going to the Eidgah. The pulao, roast, korma, egg bhuna and everything else were arranged perfectly on the table. Zubaidah won’t be here in the morning. She won’t be needed as well. She’ll be here after 9 pm when it’ll be time for dinner again.

There were 5 minutes left before Fazr. Zubaidah peeked into Saadat’s room and took a glance at her son’s face. Her beautiful boy. All she ever wanted was for Saadat to ask his mother how she died.

Zubaidah walked out the back door of the house. She walked past the jungle and into the graveyard. Grave number 1089. Zubaidah lay down on her grave and closed her eyes before the first ray of sunlight could touch her skin.

Hasib Ur Rashid Ifti is a writer who is currently studying at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

POETRY

# COG against the machine

STEWIE CHATTERJEE

your pocket has a hole the size of your palm,  
and your palm is etched with the creases  
lining your forehead, a telltale sign  
of what’s ahead being within  
you spend what you make to make what you  
spend,  
and you do it today to do it all over again;  
no motion is perpetual, unless there’s  
motive.  
wax lyrical knowing talk is cheap.  
you feed your vessel, your soul unkempt  
like leathers on a raven’s back; your forehead  
at the altar of barter, your gut at the  
butcher’s —  
no more tears, only infants cry here.

Stewie Chatterjee is a writer and law student based in Dhaka. Find their work @ stiewiechatterjee on Instagram.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

# for my weeping mother

SUNEHRA AMREEN ISLAM

for my weeping mother  
my mother is afternoon moon  
she was born with thorns poking through  
even on days when the sun is hitting her neck  
and the strands of hair itch her tangerine skin  
i hope she knows i know her battles  
the taunting laughs of empty dishes  
the dull bulbs shadowing her room  
the creak of wooden floors and white doors  
the smell of cigar on her balcony  
strong metal taste stuck in her mouth  
her delicate heart blemished  
i hope she knows her war bled into my veins  
and my bones house her bruises  
as a child i moulded into her silent sighs  
my mother  
she was the black paint on X-rays  
an evening stroll  
her heart was a two seater  
unfit for a family so big  
i grew to be a woman mirrored in her shadow  
when she was younger  
in silence i watched her comb her hair  
strawberry perfume running down her wrists  
her tired hands resting on the sun lit dresser  
i hope she knows i’ll drink tea with her as the  
night falls  
and the moonbeams will cackle through the  
windows  
i will love her like a long river  
like the gaze of a migrating bird.

Sunehra Amreen Islam is a contributor.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA





# JUTE MILLS IN DISARRAY

When all 26 jute mills were closed indefinitely in 2020, BJMC sacked more than 70,000 workers overnight on the grounds of recurring financial losses. While the workers are leading miserable lives waiting for their dues, BJMC has retained all facilities for its officers and administrative staff. Due to lack of maintenance, the once-vibrant mill compounds now appear to be haunted places with weeds and vines growing all over. Many workers are spending miserable lives in slums near the jute mills with the hope that someday they will get their jobs back. Experts say the government can revive and modernise the sector by investing Tk 2,000 crore and earn millions in foreign revenue, as the demand for biodegradable fibre is on the rise in the international market. The photos were taken from jute mills around the Khulna region.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN







The lake demands setting up waterfall as tourist attraction or else it will kill all three fishes.

PHOTO: MH MEHEDI

# DHANMONDI LAKE

## insecure as entire Dhanmondi becomes a lake

“Why would I want to spend thousands and go to Ratargul when I’ve got a swamp forest right outside my house?”

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

Thanks to poor drainage systems and infrastructure, residents of the capital no longer need to visit Cox’s Bazar to feel waves of water crashing at their feet. Dhanmondi has been deemed to be the third biggest sea beach in the country next to Cox’s Bazar and Bashundhara RA by its residents. However, Dhanmondi Lake has expressed its misery to the media as the recent water stagnation situation across the city has transformed the entire Dhanmondi into a lake.

“Couples no longer need me for romantic boat rides,” said Dhanmondi Lake, “They’re using boats to get from Satmasjid Road to Lalmatia. Kids are standing

on the islands at crossroads and getting the same view as Rabindra Sarobar. Gone are the days of fuchka and panipuri dates near me! The stagnant water from manholes is unhygienic enough for them. But don’t you forget, the rain’s going to end in a few weeks but the heat wave and global warming is permanent.”

Meanwhile, with the city turning into an ocean, tourist areas are suffering heavy financial losses as citizens are no longer interested in Cox’s Bazar or Kuakata.

“We’re never going to financially recover from this,” said a hotel owner from Cox’s Bazar, “Bashundhara currently has more water than the Bay of Bengal. People have littered the beaches

so much that the beaches actually look like Dhaka. The aesthetics of the biggest sea beach in the world is simply equal to the dirty and water-stagnant dystopia that is Dhanmondi and Bashundhara now.”

Tourists are also cancelling their tour plans to different districts as Dhaka has become the new tourist attraction. “Why would I want to spend thousands and go to Ratargul when I’ve got a swamp forest right outside my house?” said a tourist, crossing the Bay of Bashundhara on his way to the office, “The roads are so uneven, I have to trek my way to the office every morning. Just like itself, I don’t even know what I’m stepping on. There could be a manhole right beneath my feet

and I wouldn’t be able to see it with water up to my waist. The thrill and anticipation make every day a new adventure.”

Adventurer Tandoori Grylls reportedly cancelled his tour to Dhaka for his survival show since his team deemed the adventure in Dhaka in the rainy season to be too dangerous.

“Sure, Tandoori Grylls might’ve been okay eating snakes, raw organs, scorpions and larvae in the deserts of Africa but tap water is where he draws the line,” said his producer. “We understand it’s a survival show but we highly doubt that the people living in that city need any sort of survival tips from us. Every day is a survival show when you’re living in Dhaka.”

# Buff man

## furious that fat-shaming is not allowed, goes back to binge eating

JEAN PAUL SATIRE

Paul O’wan, an Irish Bangladeshi fitness instructor and social media personality, has made headlines with a sudden change in lifestyle. The reason behind it raised even more eyebrows, even though it failed to raise weights.

In an op-ed for *Mard Magazine*, Paul O’wan dove deep into the history of his fitness journey.

“I was bullied as a wee lad, for not being wee at all. I weighed 20 stone when I was not even 20 years in age, and all the lads in the local pub would poke me and curse me. It was no craic,” he wrote.

He wrote further: “It was then that me grandad whooped me with a cane made of boar tusks and made me run up and down the hill in front of the stream that ran outside o’town. ‘Run, ye fat ol’ bugger, run till ye reach them weans who laughed at ye and poked ye and made ye cry,’ he’d scream.”

Life took many turns for O’wan before he found himself in Dhaka, training youngsters to become the best version of themselves and terrorising overweight individuals across town in his terrible Irish-accented Dhakaiya Bangla.

“He’s a bully, and I’ve had to take psychological therapy for the last three months after he fat-shamed me into joining his gym,” said Laltu, a former member of “Get in Shape Ye Fat Sack o’ Potatoes Fitness Centre”.



“I lost 50 kilogrammes after joining Mr. O’wan’s gym, but I also developed three different eating disorders,” said Shiknu, 21, who was a member of “Get in Shape Ye Fat Sack o’ Potatoes Fitness Centre” for six months last year.

With all these allegations of fat shaming and bullying mounting against him, Paul O’wan has now decided he will undo his life’s work and become the opposite of what he’s wanted to be his whole life.

In his op-ed for *Mard Magazine*, he wrote: “If I can’t call fat sacks o’ potatoes fat sacks o’ potatoes, it defeats the whole purpose of fitness and what it means for me to build my body. I feel stressed all the time since I have been getting attacked like this, and the only thing that helps is to eat like there’s a super massive black hole in my belly.”

# 7 tips for mental health while regular people suffer during heavy rain and waterlogging



Help the less fortunate by making them wash your SUV. Even better, start your fund seeking start-up on natural car washes.

PHOTO: DIBAKAR ROY

NUTBOLTU

This week our bosses decided Satireday should do some good instead of making people laugh and reduce stress. We have decided on starting a health column. It may seem random like a red university bus running you down from the wrong side of the road but our jobs depend on it. This week we give tried and tested tips on how to stay safe during monsoon season.

**What is waterlogging and why should you be concerned?**

When city planners stuff their wallets with cash, it prevents rainwater to drain easily through our sewage lines. Result: everything that shouldn’t float on streets, floats. This includes cars, sewage, bacteria and dreams of the women’s football team.

**Seven things you can do to stay safe:**

To avoid coming in contact with waterborne diseases, do not live in Dhanmondi.

Do not use airpods. Those who cannot

afford the lifestyle, keep buying clones and feel depressed when the right earpod goes bad in a month.

We have to go to work. To avoid stepping in sewage filled water, ride in an SUV with quality tinted glass. Some of us have to go to watch a movie.

Regularly check up on the wellbeing of friends and family members on social media. Let them know you are safe while visiting New Zealand. The weather is lovely this time of year.

Make sure your 60-inch smart TV software is updated. Let streaming services drown out the cries of poor people outside.

Practise deep breathing. This is the only time you can step out into your wide balcony and breathe in air that is free from dust.

People need help. Stay off social media and focus elsewhere. Also avoid news channels so that you do not have to hear sad stories of people suffering.

## DISCLAIMER

This is a satirical page and should be considered as such. Any resemblance between the published contents here and actual events or individuals, etc. is purely coincidental. The articles and photos published on this page or the views expressed here are the author's own and do not reflect the editorial policy or view of The Daily Star.

# Chairs Anonymous pledges to ‘bring back the original utility of chairs’

NAZIFA RAIDAH

Some of them screeched as they moved, while others rolled in strides thinking everybody was totally jealous of them (they were) – the annual Chairs Anonymous, a chair-only two-day convention commenced in the capital yesterday.

The convention was held at a city hotel where different kinds of chairs from the country, varying in size, shape, colour, material, prices, and of course disabilities gathered to discuss chair-related agendas.

“All right, all right, all right settle down now, settle down now,” said the chair of the event, Mr Foamed Rolling Executive Chair (goes by Rolly to his friends). A roar of chaos greeted the room as the chairs took their seats.

“Every year,” sighed the executive chair at the other panelists sitting at the table. Frankly, if it were up to them, they’d remove wooden chair options off the earth.

The room was separated based on each chair’s material into three categories, wood-based, cushion-based, plastic, and hybrids. Sticking to tradition, the wooden chairs went first.

“Respected dignitaries, I wish to raise an issue that I believe has affected all of us unanimously and I believe it is finally time we raised our voices ... against the harassment of clothing,” said head wooden chair of Wooden Chairs Anonymous. All of the other chairs started to move in approval.

“For years, we have suffered an existential dilemma, it must come to an end now. I am from Segun bark ancestry. I was made by the finest craftsmen in the country and three generations of humans, varying in age sat on me. I have seen through the transition of time how much things have changed. Now, I am just a corner chair, and all I have are huge piles of clothes on me,” he said, whimpering, “I hope the fleas take me out soon.”

“I don’t even know who I am anymore,” said the head of cushion-based chairs.

“I thought I was built because humans would be comfortable enough to work on me and forget distractions. Now all I see are they’re on their beds, with their foldable tables and I’m just staring at my human with all those clothes on me thinking ‘what are you doing?’ I honestly think we need to put more funding into the ‘Chair-translator-nator’ project immediately,” she said.

Meanwhile, head of the plastics, said, “Um, yeah, this truly sucks and we need to do something about this.” While the comment seemed insufficient, no one really expected input from them anyway.

The hybrids chose not to comment on the matter since they’re the only ones unaffected by the issue.