



P11 'Play till 32 and then do whatever you want to'



P10 IN FOCUS: Bagh Bidhoba



P7 US-China ties on 'surer footing' after talks: Yellen



P5 Kuakata beach: 75,000 trees lost to erosion every year

TACKLING OPPOSITION MOVEMENT

Police looking to revive old cases

AL to continue counter programmes

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

As the BNP and 35 other like-minded parties are set to launch a one-point movement to oust the government, the Police Headquarters is collecting data on all the cases against opposition activists and leaders.

The headquarters is gathering information about those who faced charges of arson, killing of police members, crimes against humanity, and other serious crimes in 2013 and later.

The initiative is aimed at speeding up the pending cases against opposition leaders and activists.

BNP's one-point movement will also be met by ruling Awami League's programmes on the streets, apparently to counteract the effects of BNP's demonstrations.

The AL also decided to hold rallies for students and youths in eight divisional cities in what seems to be an obvious response to BNP's youth rallies.

Beyond these programmes, the ruling party is not much bothered about the opposition's demonstrations, insiders say.

The leadership is focused on reorganising the party and preparing for the national polls slated for January.

Besides, the AL leaders have no doubt that the law enforcers will play their role if the opposition wants to create instability.

On July 12, the BNP will formally announce its one-point movement for resignation of the government and election under a caretaker administration.

Meanwhile, the Jamaat has also been trying to motivate its rank and file. On June 10, it held a rally after a decade in the capital and demanded restoration of the polls-time caretaker government.

The party, which does not have a registration with the Election Commission, held several subsequent programmes including a rally in Dhaka last Friday in protest of the defamation of the holy Quran in Sweden.

Jamaat sources say they will demonstrate in the coming days for release of their party chief Shafiqur Rahman and other leaders from prisons and demand a caretaker government before the election.

At large gatherings that the party hopes to organise in all divisional cities,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



There is hardly any space left at Mugda Medical College Hospital amid the deluge of dengue patients. This photo of people being treated on the floor of the 500-bed facility was taken yesterday afternoon when over 400 dengue patients were admitted there.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

EU team holds talks with foreign envoys in Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A six-member Election Exploratory Mission from the European Union yesterday began its two-week work to assess the overall situation surrounding the next general election in Bangladesh.

The mission, which arrived in Dhaka on Saturday, held meetings with the EU ambassadors and some other Western diplomats, including those from the US and the UK, according to a European ambassador who attended a meeting.

"It was a good meeting. The mission wanted to know about the present situation in Bangladesh surrounding the next election," he said.

The EU mission wanted to hear from all EU envoys in Dhaka and those from Canada, Norway and Switzerland how they see the current domestic political landscape, the envoy of a EU member country told The Daily Star.

"There was a broad consensus around the table to emphasise the importance of them [envoys] recommending the deployment of a full-fledged observer mission later this year, notwithstanding

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Power projects rarely completed on time

Finds IMED research paper

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Most of the projects in the power sector are not completed on time, with some seeing as much as 300 percent cost overruns, said a recent report of the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED).

The delays in project implementation and lack of proper planning and manpower with technical knowledge have made the sector a hugely subsidised one, said the government project monitoring body.

"It would have been possible to reduce the burden (loss and subsidy) if proper feasibility studies were conducted and if there was proper planning to ensure the energy for the power plants before taking on the projects," the research report said.

Subsequently, the report suggested not taking on any power plant projects before ensuring the energy supply.

The report reviewed the progress of 67 ongoing projects of the power division, which is being implemented by the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB), Power Grid Company of Bangladesh, Desco, DPDC, NESCO, WZPDC, NWPGL, Sreda, EGCB,

Power Cell, Rural Electrification Board, RPCL and so on since 2013.

Among the projects, 32 projects are being implemented for six to 10 years, with six of their progress being between 90 percent to 99 percent.

At least 12 projects are implemented for over seven years and four of their progress

WHAT IMED'S RESEARCH FOUND

- Power plant projects don't have any plan of energy supply
- Lack of coordination between the agencies of this sector
- Engineers caught up in clerical work

is less than 30 percent. Of the four projects, two are related to pre-paid meter installations under PDB and DPDC in Dhaka, Mymensingh and Cumilla areas, and two are related to transmission and distribution networks under PGC and DPDC.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

BUSINESS

Tax collection target missed for 11th year

For the 11th consecutive year, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) has missed its tax target in the face of a slowing collection amid economic slowdown.

The NBR logged Tk 325,272 crore in overall receipts in 2022-23, falling short of Tk 44,728 crore from its target for the fiscal year, according to its provisional data.

The receipts also fell short of the target set by the International Monetary Fund as a part of its \$4.7 billion loan for the country.

STORY ON BI

Dengue now in 57 districts

Says health minister, yesterday saw highest number of single-day deaths, hospital admission this season

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dengue has spread to 57 districts, said Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday as the country recorded its highest number of deaths and hospital admissions this year from the mosquito-borne disease.

In the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, six dengue patients died, while 832 new patients were hospitalised, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

With the latest count, the fatalities from the disease rose to 72 and the number of hospitalised patients hit 12,954. And 2,750 patients were undergoing treatment in hospitals as of yesterday morning, with 1,967 of them being in 53 Dhaka hospitals.

On July 4, five people died from the disease and on Saturday, 820 patients were admitted to hospitals.

Of all dengue cases, 60 percent are in Dhaka, Maleque said while talking to journalists at his residence in Manikganj yesterday.

This year, the number of dengue cases is higher than last year, but it is yet to hit its peak as August-September is the prime time for dengue outbreaks.

Last year, 281 people died from the disease and 62,382 others were hospitalised. Hospitalisations from the disease started in May and peaked in October.

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POLLS, RIGHTS Momen writes to 12 members of US Congress

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has written to 12 US Congress members regarding their letters on free and fair elections in Bangladesh and "human rights abuses" by the Bangladesh government.

The Bangladesh ambassador in the US is also trying to get appointments of the Congress members to discuss their letters.

Foreign ministry officials told this to the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry at its meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

In separate letters to the Congress members, the foreign minister has presented various facts dismissing their allegations of human rights abuse issues in Bangladesh.

The ministry informed the parliamentary watchdog that six Congress members of the Democratic Party, including William

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Bangladesh Water Development Board's beautification of the banks of the Bhairab in Jashore has come under criticism for narrowing down the river. Local activists say the river's width has almost halved because of illegal encroachment, land grabbing and projects like this.

LEAK OF CITIZENS' INFO Govt website didn't have minimum security

State minister for ICT says technical flaws led to data breach

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The leak of sensitive personal information of millions of citizens from a government website was due to the weakness of the site, State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak said yesterday.

The data of as many as five crore citizens was exposed online from the Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration (BDRIS) website, this newspaper reported on Saturday.

Palak said, "The portal from which the information was made public did not have minimum security. Despite being warned, the officials of the department concerned did not take it into account. The state has suffered a great loss due to their negligence."

The leaked data, including names, birth dates, and National Identification (NID) numbers, was "easily accessible through a simple Google search".

"We have yet to find evidence that cybercriminals have taken any data. What we found was that there was a technical weakness in the government website. As a result, the information was very easy to see," the minister added.

Palak was speaking at the inauguration of the Bangabandhu International Cyber Security Awareness Award programme at the BCC Auditorium of ICT Tower in the capital's Agargaon yesterday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PM formally invited to attend BRICS Summit

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been formally invited to attend the next BRICS Summit in South Africa.

Bangladesh received the formal invitation from the host but it could not be known immediately whether the prime minister will attend it or not.

Parliamentary Standing Committee Chairman on Foreign Affairs Faruk Khan confirmed it to UNB yesterday.

BRICS leaders are expected to attend the 15th BRICS Summit in South Africa on August 22-24.

The summit will be hosted at the Sandton Convention Centre (SCC) in Johannesburg, Gauteng.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said Bangladesh will welcome a formal BRICS invitation to join the group of five member states — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

BCL leader sent to jail in rape case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A Munshiganj court yesterday sent a Chhatra League leader to jail on rape charges.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Rahima Akhter placed him on a 2-day remand after he was produced before her court.

Sheikh Shakil, the joint general secretary of Ward 2 BCL under Munshiganj municipality, was sent to jail around 4:00pm, said Jamal Uddin, in charge of Munshiganj court police.

Thandar Khairul Hasan, additional superintendent of police (Munshiganj Sadar Circle), said Shakil was arrested around 3:30am in the morning from Hogra Kandi village of Gazaria.

Shakil allegedly raped a girl on the stairs of the old building of Munshiganj General Hospital Tuesday night. The girl had gone to the hospital to visit her ailing mother, according to the case statement.

On Thursday, the victim's mother filed a rape case with the Sadar Police Station, with Shakil as the sole accused.

Dengue now in 57 districts

FROM PAGE 1

But this year, hospitalisations began in April.

"Those who were infected once are at high risk of death if infected the second time. So, we have to be aware of it," he said, adding that the physicians and nurses have adequate training to handle dengue cases.

As of yesterday, Mugda Medical College Hospital had the highest number of dengue patients of 414, followed by Dhaka Medical College Hospital with 221.

The higher dengue prevalence is due to the huge breeding of Aedes mosquitoes for the rain, so it is imperative to take steps that rainwater does not remain stagnant anywhere, Maleque added.

Maleque went on to urge the city corporations and the municipalities to spray mosquito repellents frequently.

Govt website

FROM PAGE 1

Answering questions after the event, he told journalists that the state has suffered a great loss.

Palak however added that there was no scope to avoid responsibility for this incident.

The minister said, "We have announced 29 critical institutions, but the number is increasing step by step. After the cyberattack on Bangladesh Bank in 2016 when \$81 million was stolen, we realised the importance of cyber security. Out of these 29 institutions, the institution which we identified in the list as number 27 fell into such a situation."

Meanwhile, after the exposed data came to the fore, the Election Commission began investigating 171 organisations working with them to verify whether any information has been leaked from their side, said NID Director General (DG) AKM Humayun Kabir yesterday during a press conference at the EC building.

I am bowled over by this cashless Dhaka shopping and restaurant hopping scenario. I realise it is not a new phenomenon and it has been going on for years now but it was not until very recently that I fully understood the gamut of being cashless in this city and still getting on by.

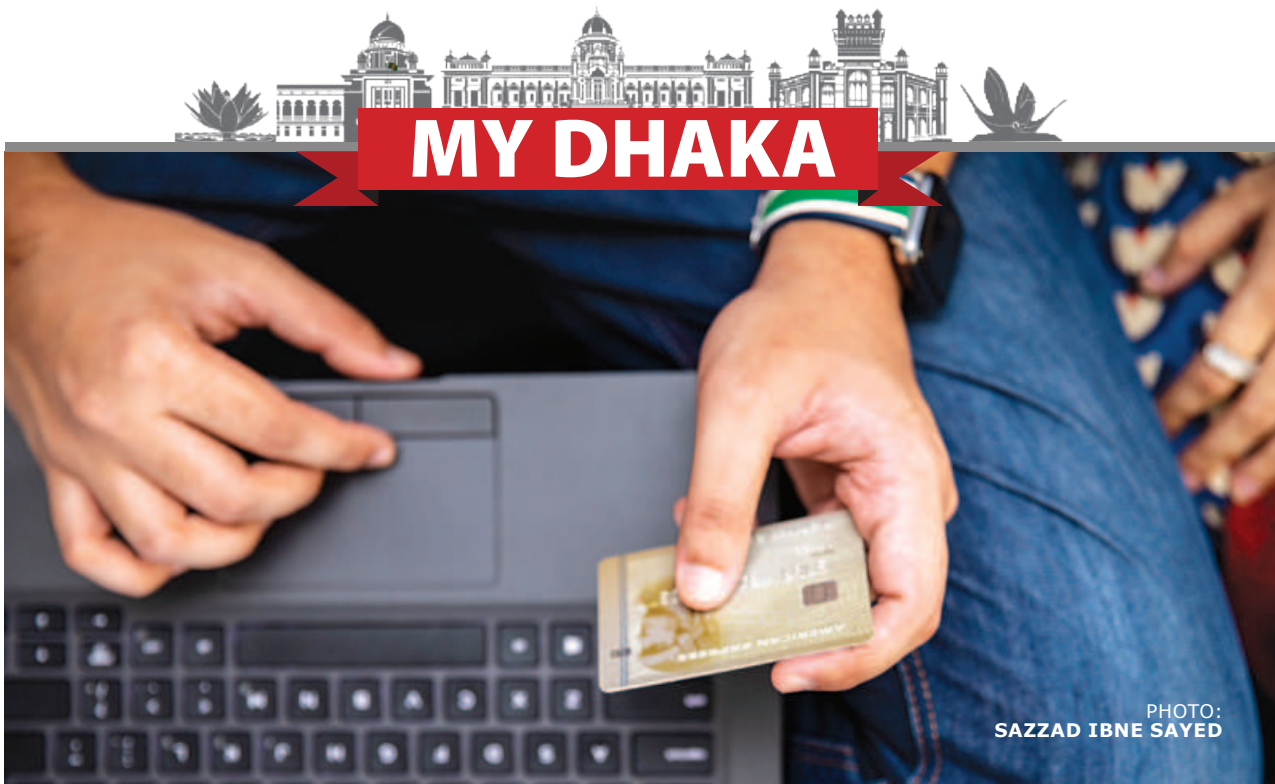


PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

CASHLESS in the capital

RBR

Although familiar with all sorts of big and small financial transactions with bank cards for years, only a few days ago I learned that even without your bank cards at hand you can move around the city without a hassle.

I invited a friend to a bistro and after ordering a meal I realised I left my wallet at home. Forgetfulness at its height! I panicked and called my man Friday, my driver, to see if he has any cash on him. As I said, he is always my saviour in times of distress. He has a strict order to carry cash whenever I go out, just in case I go overboard while shopping and/or get stranded without a wallet.

Well, his contribution that day would not have sufficed but his brilliant rescue plan worked perfectly. He asked for 10 minutes and while I was still eating, he came with the money to pay my bill. I was perplexed: who loaned him the amount? He said, my husband did! They used mobile banking. He sent the money to my driver's account and he took the money out from a



nearby vendor.

I was out of my wits. Such a hassle-free immediate solution from being strapped for money to having cash at hand. This was the first time I realised the pleasure of such Mobile Financial Services (MFS).

For old-timers like me, a digital wallet is a difficult concept to fathom but once you get used to it you know that it is hassle-free and there is a

reduced risk of theft. You will not attract muggers or pick pocketers, there is no physical cash for someone to steal. Moreover, with these MFS you can purchase from all over the city and country.

Traffic is a big damper to going for physical shopping now and thus online shopping facilities and paying through MFS makes life easier. I just bought the latest book of my favourite writer from a bookstore by just browsing and paying by MFS, which was not possible even a few years back.

From buying mango from Rajshahi, to getting rolls of khaadi yards from Cumilla or getting buffalo milk curd from Bhola, you can shop from all corners of the country. This makes the lives of people like me easier.

These mobile cashless transaction platforms have become the backbone of the cashless economy in Bangladesh and the country has witnessed rapid growth in cashless transactions in recent years. MFS platforms are making lives easier and rescuing us from any financial misadventure.

Domestic help found dead in Badda

UNB, Dhaka

A 20-year-old domestic help was found dead at a house at Moynarbag in the city's Badda area early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Sonia, daughter of Zahidul Islam of Najirpur upazila in Pirojpur district.

Mehedi Hasan, sub-inspector of Badda Police Station, said Sonia had been working as domestic help in the home of a nurse named Parveen for the last 8 to 9 months. On Saturday midnight, police received a phone call from the house and recovered the hanging body of Sonia.

Later, it was sent to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The SI said Sonia, a divorcee, had developed an affair with another man but it ended recently.

However, police are investigating to unearth the motive behind the death, he added.

Ex-UP chairman killed in Pabna road mishap

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A former UP chairman was killed yesterday after a bus hit his motorbike at the Ahmedpur area of the Dhaka-Pabna highway in Sujanager upazila of Pabna.

The deceased Md Jalal Sarkar, 50, who hailed from Ahmedpur village, is a former chairman of Ahmedpur union parishad.

Officer-in-charge of Madhpur highway police station Joynal Abedin said Jalal was going to Kashnathpur in the early morning riding his bike. When he reached the highway in the Ahmedpur area, a bus hit his bike leaving him dead on the spot.

The bus could not be identified, the highway OC said. A case was filed with the Madhpur highway police station.

Ex-speaker Jamiruddin relieved in 5 graft cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday relieved former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar from the charges of five graft cases after he refunded the state Tk 27,86,364, which he withdrew for treatment during his tenure.

Judge Prodig Kumar Roy of Dhaka's Special Judge Court-7 passed the order after Jamir's lawyer submitted the payment slips of the banks.

Earlier on March 12, the same court ordered Jamiruddin Sircar to refund the amount by today in line with another order issued by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

On August 25, 2022, the Supreme Court quashed all five cases filed against Jamiruddin on charges of misappropriating Tk 27.86 lakh in the name of treatment abroad, said an official of the court.

The apex court also directed Jamiruddin to refund the money.

Police looking to revive old cases

FROM PAGE 1

the activists also want to protest the rising prices of essentials. Their plan is to hold the first divisional event in Sylhet, and in the second phase, hold programmes in district towns.

While the BNP and these other parties are gearing up for demonstrations, the AL leaders believe that the police headquarters' initiative of reviving the cases against opposition activists across the country will tame the protests.

On July 5, the Police Headquarters sent letters asking superintendents of police in districts for "status updates" on the cases filed since 2013, when the BNP-Jamaat alliance launched an anti-government movement that intensified ahead of the 2014 national election.

The headquarters, in another letter sent in the last week of June, asked

police units to form committees to watch the progress of the legal procedure of these cases.

The units were ordered to complete the investigations of all pending cases and take initiatives so that the trial proceedings can conclude.

The units have been asked to find witnesses in the cases in which no witness testimonies were taken before. They were asked to coordinate with prosecutors so that the depositions are made.

The headquarters told the units to take initiative to restart the trial process for cases that were stayed by the court, and to file appeals in cases in which the accused got acquitted.

Contacted, Joydeb Kumar Bhadra, deputy inspector general (crime management) at the Police Headquarters, said the letters

were sent to monitor major cases of robberies, police killings and sabotage.

Asked if the letters were prompted by the BNP programmes, he said monitoring of important cases is routine work, and politics had nothing to do with it.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif told The Daily Star that BNP's movement was not something to worry about, for the party "has been making such announcements since 2013".

Hanif claimed that BNP has decided to join the election and its one-point movement is just an attempt to motivate the leaders and activists.

The BNP has all along said that it will not participate in the election held under the incumbent administration.

EU team holds talks with foreign envoys in Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1

the current positions of some political forces regarding their participation in the upcoming elections," the diplomat said.

The EU delegation in Dhaka has not provided any schedule of the visiting mission's programmes in the capital.

So far there is no plan for any press briefing, a diplomatic source said, adding that the names of the mission members have also not been made public because the delegation wants to remain fully independent.

The EU mission is scheduled to hold meetings with all stakeholders — government, political parties, Election Commission, security officials, civil society and media.

It will meet the senior officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, home affairs, women and children affairs, Chattogram Hill Tracts affairs, police, and the Human Rights Commission, a government official said.

"They will have to decide if it is feasible, useful and advisable to deploy a full EU observation mission," EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley had told The Daily Star earlier.

The task of this mission will be to assess the scope, planning, budget, logistics and security of the main election observation mission, Mohammad Rafiqul Alam, director general (additional charge) at the public diplomacy wing of the foreign ministry, told reporters at the weekly briefing at the ministry on Thursday.

Based on the assessment report, which would be submitted to the EU High Representative Josep Borrell, the EU will decide whether to send a full fledged Election Observation Mission (EOM) before the next general election, scheduled for December this year or early next year.

Meanwhile, election analysts said assessment of the EU mission is a determining factor in the other

international observers' decisions to come to Bangladesh to observe the polls.

The EU didn't send election observers in 2018.

The ruling Awami League and its archrival BNP are at loggerheads over the polls-time administration. The BNP wants restoration of the caretaker government system, while the AL says the polls will be held under the incumbent government as per the constitution.

Responding to a letter from six members of the European Parliament, EU High Representative Josep Borrell on July 6 said the EU encourages genuine dialogue among the major political parties and participation of all in the next parliamentary polls in Bangladesh.

The government is also under pressure after the US on May 24 announced visa policy saying it will restrict visas for those Bangladeshis who would engage in vote rigging or undermine democratic election process.

The EU mission is scheduled to leave Dhaka on July 23.

US raid in Syria kills IS leader

AFP, Beirut

A US drone strike has killed an Islamic State group leader in Syria after Russian warplanes harassed MQ-9 drones over the war-torn country, the US Central Command said yesterday.

The strike on Friday resulted in the death of Osama al-Muhajer, IS leader in eastern Syria, Centcom said in a statement.

"We have made it clear that we remain committed to the defeat of ISIS throughout the region," Centcom chief General Michael Kurilla was quoted as saying, using another acronym for the IS jihadist group.

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'No one can halt our development'

PM awards fellowships to 48 scholars

AGENCIES

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked scholars to consider local realities when applying education and knowledge gained abroad to implement development plans that are pro-people and sustainable.

"You'll have to know, understand and feel the country first. Some knowledge can be acquired from it. If you implement development plans coordinating between the knowledge acquired from the natural environment and the knowledge obtained from higher education, the development will be sustainable, pro-people," she said.

"Thus, the country can march forward. We will never depend on others' model for ensuring the development of our country... no one can halt our development," he said, reports BSS.

The premier said this while awarding the Prime Minister's Fellowship 2023-24 at a programme at Shapla Hall in her office for pursuing Master's and PhD degrees in the world's reputed universities.

As many as 48 scholars -- 38 master's fellows and 10 PhD fellows -- from different sectors received the fellowship to pursue their higher studies abroad, reports UNB.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handing over the Prime Minister's Fellowship award to a recipient at a programme at Shapla Hall in her office yesterday. As many as 48 scholars -- 38 master's fellows and 10 PhD fellows -- from different sectors received the fellowship to pursue their higher studies abroad.

Ensure free dengue test, treatment

GM Quader urges govt

UNB, Dhaka

The situation of dengue across the country is worsening day by day, so the government and private hospitals should ensure free dengue testing and treatment with government assistance, said Jatiya Party Chairman and Deputy Leader of Opposition GM Quader yesterday.

Besides, action should be taken against those who cannot control the dengue situation due to failure and incoordination. If there is evidence of corruption, action should be taken against them, he added.

In a statement, GM Quader quoted the media as saying that 820 patients were admitted to the hospital with dengue in one day on Saturday. This is the highest in terms of numbers this year.

Official data showed that 67 people died of dengue since July 8. According to the data, 2,502 dengue patients, including 1,773 in the capital, are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.

So far, the DGHS has recorded 12,118 dengue cases and 9,549 recoveries.

GM Quader said there is no effective action from the government to tackle the dengue outbreak. If the dengue situation is not controlled, its consequences will become more dire.

The people are already in dire straits due to rising commodity prices. Therefore free dengue testing and treatment must be ensured, GM Quader emphasised.

PHOTO: PID

Two to die for killing gardener 22 years ago

UNB, Dhaka

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday sentenced two people to death for killing a gardener of a nursery in Cantonment area of the capital in 2001.

The convicts are Mustafizur Rahman alias Liton, owner of the nursery and Anwar Hossain alias Anarul. They were tried in absentia.

Dhaka Speedy Trial Tribunal-2 M Ali Ahmed pronounced the judgement.

One Abu Taher along with Mustafizur Rahman started nursery business after taking a land on lease near Kurmitola. Mustafizur used to oversee recruitment and salary issues of nursery staff.

On September 5, 2001, Mustafizur did not find Abul Hossain, head gardener, in the nursery and came to know that he went to a hospital to see one of his relatives.

On September 7, 2001,

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'What should I do, buy food or pay for chemo?'

Labour leader's murder leaves family in ruins

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Kajli Akhtar, a 32-year-old mother of two, does not know how to manage money required for her next chemotherapy session. Having already undergone two chemotherapy sessions since being diagnosed with uterine cancer in March, she now finds herself unable to afford the life-saving treatment following her husband's murder.

Shahidul Islam, president of Gazipur unit of Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation, was beaten to death on June 25, immediately after attending a meeting to negotiate for workers' arrears at Prince Jacquard Sweater Ltd in Tongi Satish area.

Left without her husband, who was the sole breadwinner for the family, Kajli shared her anguish, stating, "We don't know how we will buy food for tomorrow... I don't see any way to arrange money for the rest of my chemotherapy sessions."

"A day after my husband was

killed, many people came to our house to console us. And that's all. Neither the administration nor anyone from his community came to see how we are surviving," added Kajli, who married Shahidul 21 years ago.

As she faces an uncertain

case with Tongi West Police Station accusing six named (Hanif, Mazharul, 35, Akash, 38, Russell, 32, Ripon, 27, and Sohail, 26) and some five to seven unnamed people.

"Hanif was inside the factory before the time of murder. He is



Shahidul Islam

A day after my husband was killed, many people came to our house to console us. And that's all. Neither the administration nor anyone from his community came to see how we are surviving.

KAJLI AKHTAR
Wife of Shahidul Islam

future, Kajli's elder son, Sadiqul Islam Apu, is preparing for his SSC exams, while her younger son, Ibrahim Khalilullah, is just starting his journey as a first-grader.

A day after the killing, Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation central committee president Kalpana Akhtar filed a murder

case with a goon named Kamrul, who claims to be in charge of the factory, even though he is not an employee," she told reporters.

Police have so far arrested two accused in this case -- Russel and Mazharul.

Describing the day of murder,

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ANTI-MUGGING DRIVE 505 arrested in seven days

8 held over mugging, rest on suspicion, says DMP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 505 people were arrested in 208 cases in the first week of July following DMP's special drive to stop mugging, revealed its media department yesterday.

According to their data, eight of the arrestees were involved in mugging incidents, while 497 people were arrested over suspicion of robbery or mugging.

Tejgaon division filed the highest number of cases (73) and made the most arrests (187) among the eight crime divisions.

Lalbagh division arrested 73 people in 35 cases, while Mirpur division filed 32 cases and arrested 66.

A total of 23 cases were filed and 46 arrests were made by Ramna division while the Uttara division

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

BNP has secret ties with Israeli intelligence

Claims Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP has secret ties with Israel and its intelligence agency.

"The meeting between a representative of the Israeli intelligence agency and a senior BNP leader was exposed to the media. BNP is always involved in such anti-state activities," he said in a statement.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has made a false statement about the use of Israeli technology to hack the phones of opposition leaders.

Such an irresponsible statement, delivered by a political leader, is very shameful, he said.

Recalling Bangladesh's historic relations with Palestine, he said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had invited Yasser Arafat, the then president of Palestine, during the celebration of the silver jubilee of Bangladesh's independence.

Quader said Fakhrul could not present any specific evidence about phone hacking and that is why it is illegal to make sweeping comments on

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



DENGUE DRIVE 23 building owners fined Tk 6.61 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two Dhaka city corporations yesterday fined 23 building owners on the second day of the month-long anti dengue drive.

During the drive, DNCC and DSCC collected a total of Tk 6.61 lakh in fines from 23 cases where mosquito larvae were found in various areas under the city corporations.

DNCC conducted mobile court drives in 10 different areas and collected Tk 6.15 lakh as fines in total. "The campaign will continue throughout the month of July, aiming to create a dengue-free environment for all residents in Dhaka," said DNCC spokesperson Mokbul Hossain.

Meanwhile, DSCC conducted drives in Adarsha Para, Madartek, Agasadek Road, and Dhotpur areas and fined seven building owners Tk 46,000, said DSCC spokesperson Abu Naser.

No dialogue with BNP on polls-time govt: law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday ruled out the possibility of holding dialogue with BNP on the polls-time government, saying that "there is no necessity for holding dialogue on any unreal demand".

"The prime minister has categorically said no dialogue will take place. Election is the only solution and that is why, the election will be held," he said.

He said this while replying to queries from reporters at the inauguration of training programme for the assistant judges at Judicial Administration Training Institute. Replying to another query, the law minister said the Election Commission's power has not been curtailed through bringing amendment to the Representation of People's Order (RPO), rather the people's right to vote has been protected through this amendment.

If the polling of the entire constituency is stopped for a violence or untoward incident in one or few polling centres, it will not be democratic, but will be an interference to the people's right to voting and therefore, the RPO has been amended, he said.

The law minister also said the government has not written any letter for quick disposal of the pending cases against the BNP leaders. "The judiciary is independent. We have not written such a letter. If they can show such a letter, arguments will take place on it."



Postgraduate private trainee doctors continue their countrywide strike, demanding a hike in their monthly stipends to Tk 50,000 from Tk 20,000. Postgraduate trainee physicians are medical school graduates who pursue further specialised training in a specific medical field for 2-5 years to achieve higher degrees. The photo was taken at Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Mozibur Rahman's first death anniversary today

STAR REPORT

Today is the first death anniversary of Mozibur Rahman, father of MA Baki, member of Jatiya Press Club and Dhaka Reporters Unity, said a press release.

On this day in 2022, Mozibur Rahman passed away at his residence in the capital's Moghbazar. He had been paralysed for 10 years.

He was buried at Azimpur graveyard.

Mozibur Rahman left behind his two sons, two daughters, grandchildren, and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

His family requested all to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

OCEAN STUDIES

MoU signed on scientific cooperation

STAR REPORT

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University, Bangladesh (BSMRMU) and CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography, Goa, India (CSIR-NIO) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Scientific Cooperation in Ocean Sciences.

Rear Admiral Mohammad Musa, vice-chancellor of BSMRMU; and Prof Sunil Kumar Singh, director of CSIR-NIO, signed the MoU in India on July 7, said a press release.

The MoU will establish a framework for activities in the area of ocean sciences, which in turn, will contribute to advancement of research and development for the benefit of society at large and the outputs will contribute towards the blue economy mission between both the countries.

বাংলাদেশ কর্মসংস্থান বোর্ডে নিয়মিত কর্মসংস্থান বোর্ডের আওতাধীন, আঞ্চলিক স্তরে কর্মসংস্থান বোর্ডের আওতাধীন বিনিয়োগ, উন্নয়ন, কৃষি ক্ষমতা বৃদ্ধি ও ক্রেডিট কার্ড সহ আর্থিক ব্যাংকিং সেবায় আপনার বিশ্ব সহযোগী।
বিসিবি

A new journey to restore democracy

Fakhrul on one-point demand

UNB, Sylhet

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said their party is going to start a new journey for the restoration of democracy by holding a public rally in Dhaka on Wednesday.

Speaking at a "youth rally" in Sylhet, he said the next national polls must be held under a non-party neutral caretaker government.

"There'll be a rally in Dhaka on July 12 from where a new declaration will come. Through that declaration, a new journey to restore democracy will begin," he said.

In recent weeks, BNP has been talking about the final phase of their movement to topple the government, which will be centred on a single demand: resignation of the AL government.

505 arrested

FROM PAGE 3
filed 10 cases and arrested 51.

Motijheel division arrested 44 people in 15 cases.

The number of cases filed by Wari division was 13 and that of arrests was 27.

Some 11 people in seven cases were arrested by Gulshan division.

The drives were initiated by the law enforcers last week following the death of constable Moniruzzaman Talukder.

He was stabbed by muggers in the capital's Farmgate following Eid holidays while returning from his ancestral home in Sherpur.

Amid chaos, Gono Odhikar

FROM PAGE 5
founding members, including joint conveners Faruk Hasan and Hasan Al Mamun, have announced their intention to boycott the council. Party sources further revealed that three other joint conveners and several member secretaries

are also expected to boycott the council.
NUR FOR PARTY PRESIDENT?
According to party sources, three including Nur are vying for president position, while Rashed Khan, a joint convener of the party, and three others

will compete for the general secretary post.

A total of 216 councillors including 121 members of the central executive committee, conveners and member secretaries of the district committees will vote in the council session to elect the party's new leadership.

What should I do

FROM PAGE 3
Kajli said, "My husband went out of home in the morning. I talked to him around 8:00pm and asked when he would return home."
"My husband replied that he was in some trouble and would be late. Hearing the surrounding noise over the phone, I could sense that he was inside a factory," she said.

"After an hour, one of my husband's colleagues called me over the phone and said he fell sick and was taken to a hospital. Around three hours later, my son went to the Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital and saw my husband's body," she added.

"The factory owner has killed my husband. I want justice," alleged Kajli.

"My future has become uncertain after my father's death. How will I continue

my studies?" asked Apu, Shahidul's firstborn.

Contacted, worker leader Kalpana said their federation will financially assist Shahidul's family.

She expressed dissatisfaction over the role of law enforcers alleging that police are not serious about arresting the criminals.

Officer-in-Charge of Tongi West Police Station Shah Alam denied the allegations and said police have already arrested two of the accused and drives are underway to arrest the rest.

Replying to a question, the OC said the factory owner is not an accused in the case.

"Nevertheless, police are investigating whether there was any involvement of the factory owner with the killing," he said.

Gazipur Industrial Police is now investigating the case, added the OC.

No one can

FROM PAGE 3
Hasina said the government has been able to develop Bangladesh by working accordingly in the last 14 years. "We've been able to bring change in every sector," she said.

The PM asked them to utilise the scope of flourishing their knowledge in the age of science and technology.

Hasina stressed the need for considering the geographic position, climate, mindset of people, their overall condition and natural resources of the country while preparing development plans.

The Prime Minister's Fellowship was introduced in 2018.

Two to die

FROM PAGE 3
Abul Hossain's body was found in a manhole.

Mustafizur and Anwar were arrested in connection with the murder but they went into hiding after securing bail. A case was filed in this connection and police submitted chargesheet against Mustafizur and Anwar on November 11, 2001.

After examining the records and witnesses, Dhaka Speedy Trial Tribunal-2 M Ali Ahmed handed down the punishment.

SC to hear Dr Yunus

FROM PAGE 5
imposing tax on the money gifted by Yunus to his three charitable trusts is legal.

The HC verdict means that Yunus will have to pay around Tk 12 crore as tax on the money he donated to his trusts, Attorney

General AM Amin Uddin told reporters on that day.

He said around Tk 15 crore tax was imposed on the donated money in different years and Prof Yunus has deposited over Tk 3 crore to the office concerned before challenging the decisions.



Universal College Bangladesh (UCB), an exclusive partner of Monash College, Australia in Bangladesh, hosted the Monash College Graduation Convocation 2023 on Saturday. Seventy-six students across the different programmes offered by Monash College graduated at an event held at a city hotel. Kate Sangster, acting deputy high commissioner of the Australian High Commission, joined the event as chief guest. Bob Kundanmal, chairman of STS Group; Zarif Munir, director and member of the board, UCB; and Prof Muhammad Ismail Hossain, dean of Academic Affairs, UCB, attended the event, with the graduating students, other high officials and guests.

75,000 trees lost

FROM PAGE 5
Visiting the Gangamati forest reserves and the beach recently, this correspondent witnessed a heart-wrenching scenario. Thousands of uprooted trees, particularly Kewra plants, were left stranded across a two-km stretch from the beach all the way to the reserves, making it difficult for tourists to navigate.

"About a decade ago, the beach was surrounded by mangrove trees, half of which seem to have disappeared now," said Mezbah Uddin, member secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan's Kalapara regional branch.

While the accumulated saltwater left behind by the tidal surges causes the mangroves to die as they cannot breathe, illegal encroachments for the construction of brick kilns, unplanned soil excavation for embankments, and fish enclosures further plague the reserves, he added.

Vast forest tracts in Kuakata zero-point, Kawar Char, Gangamoti, Jatiya Udyan, Lembur Char, and Khajura are being lost to erosion, informed Shofiqul Islam, forest officer of the division.

The same number of trees that are lost each year are being planted as part of regeneration and planting initiatives, he said.

The forest department has initiated a project named Biodiversity Conservation and Ecotourism Development in collaboration with the Water Development Board and Jica to safeguard the reserves, he added.

BNP has secret ties

FROM PAGE 3
such a sensitive issue without any evidence.

He said Fakhrul's concocted statement is nothing but the continuation of their ongoing propaganda and rumour.

Fakhrul has been involved in conspiratorial activities aiming to influence the country's people and foreigners with false and fabricated information, he added.

Quader said the government agencies are always active to suppress anti-state subversive activities and ensure peace and law and order, while

the government shows respect to all rights of the people as per the country's constitution.

He said AL has established the voting rights of people through a long struggle.

The ruling party came to power with people's mandate and this constitutional and democratic process would continue in the future too, he added.

"We urge BNP leaders to shun their anti-election stance and participate in the upcoming national elections and focus on democratic politics," he said.

Probe graft allegation against

FROM PAGE 5
by BFF's senior vice-president and finance committee chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy.

The HC on May 15 ordered the ACC, Financial Intelligence Unit, Bangladesh Bank,

National Board of Revenue and the Ministry of Youth and Sports to

conduct enquiry into the allegations of corruption, money laundering and embezzlement allegedly raised against the officials concerned of BFF and to

submit the probe reports in four months.

The HC also issued a rule asking the respondents to explain why their inaction to conduct the enquiry into these allegations should not be declared illegal.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ
কমান্ড্যান্ট এর কার্যালয়
ডি.টি.সি.ডি. ট্রেনিং স্কুল, সিআইডি, ঢাকা
উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১	প্যাকেজের নাম	:	চলতি (২০২৩-২০২৪) অর্থ বছরে ফ্রেম-ওয়ার্ক টেন্ডার পদ্ধতিতে ব্যবহার্য দ্রব্যাদি, অন্যান্য মনিহারি মালামাল, স্বাস্থ্য বিধান সামগ্রী ও কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী ও প্রশিক্ষণ উপকরণ (জিআর-১) ক্রয় প্রসঙ্গে।
২	অর্ধে ও উৎস	:	রাজস্ব বাজেট (গভঃ)
৩	ক্রয় পদ্ধতি	:	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র; ফ্রেমওয়ার্ক
৪	দরপত্র নং ও তারিখ	:	ডিটিএস/৩১-২০২৩/১৩৪৭(৮) তাং-০৯/০৭/২০২৩ খ্রি.
৫	দরদাতার যোগ্যতা	:	দরদাতার (ক) হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স ও ভ্যাট সনদপত্র (খ) হালনাগাদ আয়কর সনদপত্র (গ) বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের তফসিলভুক্ত যে কোন বানিজ্যিক ব্যাংক হতে ইস্যুকৃত আর্থিক স্বচ্ছতার সনদপত্র (ঘ) সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ে কমপক্ষে ০২(দুই) বছরের অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র ইত্যাদি থাকতে হবে। কিছিন্নিত শর্তাবলী টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্টে উল্লেখ থাকবে।
৬	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের স্থান ও ঠিকানা	:	ডি.টি.সি.ডি. ট্রেনিং স্কুল, সিআইডি, ঢাকা (২য় তলা)
৭	দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান	:	বিশেষ পুলিশ সুপার, ডি.টি.সি.ডি. ট্রেনিং স্কুল, সিআইডি, ঢাকা ২য় তলায় করিডোরে রক্ষিত দরপত্র বাজে।
৮	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	:	১২/০৭/২০২৩ খ্রি. এর পূর্বে
৯	দরপত্র তফসিল বিক্রয়ের সর্ব শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	:	২৫/০৭/২০২৩ খ্রি. অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত
১০	দরপত্র জমা দেওয়ার তারিখ ও সময়	:	২৬/০৭/২০২৩ খ্রি. বেলা ১২.০০ ঘটিকা
১১	দরপত্র খোলার সময় ও তারিখ	:	২৬/০৭/২০২৩ খ্রি. বেলা ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা
১২	প্যাকেজের সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ	:	কিছিন্নিত বিবরণ সিডিউলে উল্লেখ আছে

ক্রমিক নং	প্যাকেজের নাম	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য	টেন্ডার জামানত (ফেরতযোগ্য)	ফ্রেমওয়ার্ক চুক্তির মেয়াদকাল
১।	ব্যবহার্য সামগ্রী	৭৫০/-	৫০,০০০/-	২০২৩-২০২৪ অর্থ বছর পর্যন্ত
২।	অন্যান্য মনিহারি মালামাল	৫০০/-	২০,০০০/-	ঐ
৩।	স্বাস্থ্য বিধান সামগ্রী	৫০০/-	২০,০০০/-	ঐ
৪।	কম্পিউটার সামগ্রী	৫০০/-	২০,০০০/-	ঐ
৫।	প্রশিক্ষণ উপকরণ	৭৫০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	ঐ

১৩. নিয়মাবলী :

- টেন্ডার জামানত বাবদ ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার কমান্ড্যান্ট, ডি.টি.সি.ডি. ট্রেনিং স্কুল, সিআইডি, ঢাকার অনুকূলে জমা দিতে হবে।
- উক্ত টেন্ডারটি আইটেম-বাই-আইটেম অনুসারে মূল্যায়ন করা হবে।
- একক মূল্যের ভিত্তিতে চুক্তি সম্পাদন করা হবে; ক্রমকারীর চাহিদা মোতাবেক যে কোন সংখ্যক মালামাল সরবরাহ করতে হবে।
- কোন কারণে দরপত্র জমা দেওয়ার তারিখ ও সময় বা খোলার সময় সরকারি ছুটি থাকলে পরবর্তী কর্মদিবসে দরপত্র জমা দিতে হবে এবং ঐ দিনই পূর্ব নির্ধারিত সময়ে খোলা হবে।
- কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

হাসিব আজিজ
(হাসিব আজিজ)
বিপি নং-৭১৯৫১০৪৮৭৯
কমান্ড্যান্ট
ডি.টি.সি.ডি. ট্রেনিং স্কুল
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, সিআইডি, ঢাকা
ফোনঃ ২২২২২৯৮৭৪
Email: comdtscid@police.gov.bd

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District: Manikganj
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No: 46.02.5600.000.190.001.23-2720

Date: 06/07/2023

Invitation for Tender (works)
e-Tender Notice No.01/2023-2024 (OTM)

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

SL No.	Tender ID & Package No	Name of Works	Tender Proposal Document last selling & Submission Date and Time
1	850375 GDP-IV/MAN/DOWL/WR-17	Improvement of Daulatpur-Mandarta Via Shampur Road By BC at (Ch: 2510-3285m) Road ID No-356103008 under Upazila: Daulatpur, District: Manikganj	
2	850382 GDP-IV/MAN/HORI/WR-22	Improvement of Basantapur Bazar- Patgram Bazar road by HBB.(Ch: 00-1000m) Road ID NO-356284049 Upazila: Harirampur, District: Manikganj	
3	850383 GDP-IV/MAN/HORI/WR-23	Improvement of Patgram Bazar - Selimpur Bazar road by HBB (Ch: 00-1000m) Road ID No-356284042 Upazila: Harirampur, District: Manikganj	02 August-2023 16:00
4	850395 GDP-3/MA-61	Construction of 48.0m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Dhaka Aricha National Highway Bathoimuri Bazar via Baniajuri UP Road at Ch.875 m. Under Upazila: Ghior, District: Manikganj Road ID No. 356223011	03 August-2023
5	852116 LGED/MAN/VRRP/OL/22-23/W-28	Rehabilitation of Dakhin Ulail Bazar (Ainal Mistri House) - Birajpur Hasmot Master house via Birajpur GPS Road from Ch: 00m-1280m (Road ID :356784056) under upazila Shibhalaya, District: Manikganj (2 nd Call)	26 July-2023 16:00
6	852121 LGED/MAN/VRRP/OL/22-23/W-29	Rehabilitation of Saight Ghor Teata Bacet Mosque Road from Ch: 00m-600m (Road ID: 356784064) under Upazila Shibhalaya, District: Manikganj (2 nd Call)	27 July-2023 16:00

These are online Tender's where only e-Tender's will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branch. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Faizool Huq)
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GD-1090

GD-1089

**TAX ON DONATION
 SC to hear
 Dr Yunus'
 petitions
 on Jul 17**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday fixed July 17 for hearing three petitions filed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus challenging a High Court verdict that justified the decision of imposing tax on the money gifted by him to his three charitable trusts.

Chamber judge of the SC's Appellate Division Justice M Enayetur Rahim sent the leave to appeal petitions to its full bench for their hearing.

On May 31, the HC delivered the verdict saying that the decision of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

**Amid chaos,
 Gono Odhikar
 Parishad holds
 council today**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Odhikar Parishad is set to hold its first-ever council today, although it faces a boycott from a faction loyal to its founding convener Reza Kibria.

Despite the division, Nurul Haque Nur, the member secretary of the party, remains steadfast in his commitment to conducting the council as scheduled, expressing confidence that approximately 90 percent of the councilors will participate.

Nur believes that this council would serve as a resurgence for the platform. However, several key

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

KUAKATA BEACH

**75,000 TREES LOST
 to erosion every year**

MD ABBAS, back from Kuakata

There was a time when coconut, palm, tamarisk, and mangrove trees swayed with the winds on Kuakata Beach. Their tall trunks guarded the shore-dwellers against the wrath of natural calamities.

However, the current state of the National Park, a government-declared forest reserve along this coastal belt since 2005, only brings dismay to tourists and locals.

About 2,000 hectares of forest land on the 18-km beach have been washed away in the last 13 years. The coconut orchards have completely disappeared, while only one-third of the tamarisk and palm trees continue to breathe in the reserves.

Most of these trees have fallen prey to erosion, a common phenomenon by the Bay, alarmingly increasing risks for the locals of this disaster-prone area.

According to Patuakhali forest department sources, to make Kuakata more attractive to tourists, the department created a tamarisk garden adjacent to the beach in the

financial year 2007-08. The garden stretches across 10,000 hectares of land along the shoreline.

Since 2010, 2,166 acres of fresh land have been turned into reserves. In 2019, another 60 hectares were converted

into tamarisk gardens, while acacia were planted on another 25 hectares along the shore in Gangamati area.

The following year, 85 more hectares were converted into reserves, planting different species of plants suitable for the region.

Meanwhile, erosion and tidal surges annually obliterate at least 50 hectares of forest reserves. In the last five years, such disasters have claimed approximately 250 hectares of the reserves as the aforementioned calamities frequently hit the shore during the stipulated period, informed Mahipur range officials.

Over 100 acres of forestland are washed away every year, uprooting nearly 75,000 trees of different species, especially Kewra, according to forest department sources.

The panoramic beach, once running 18 kilometres, has shrunk significantly due to continuous erosion, making it difficult for tourists to enjoy walks during high tides. The beach and the forest will disappear if immediate steps are not taken to address this issue, said Asaduzzaman Miraj, a local.

"Deploying geo bags and blocks can help prevent erosion. The risks can be further reduced by planting more trees, as they would guard the shores naturally," he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

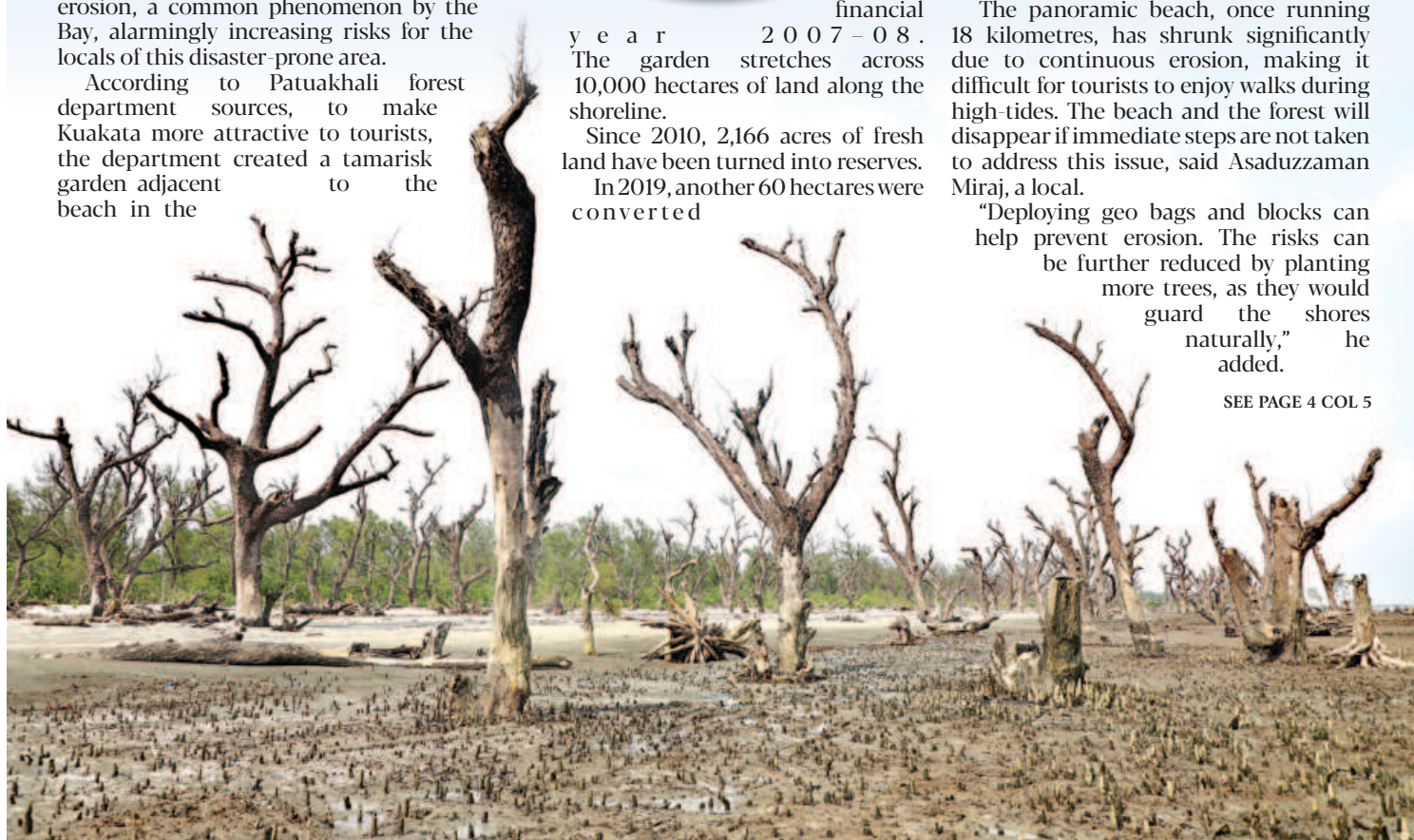


PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



PHOTO: COLLECTED

**Bhutan king
 makes a pit
 stop in Dhaka**

UNB, Dhaka

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck made a brief stopover in Dhaka yesterday.

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud received the king at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

The Bhutanese king stayed for nearly one hour and they exchanged pleasantries.

He started from Bhutanese capital and came to Dhaka before his next destination — Bangkok.

**LANDSLIDE RISK AT HILLS
 Over 300 structures
 dismantled in Ctg**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chattogram District Administration yesterday knocked down more than 300 risky structures at the hills in the city's Akbor Shah area, in compliance with a court order.

The drive was conducted in cooperation with the Department of Environment and law enforcers.

Touhidul Islam, senior assistant commissioner of the district administration, told The Daily Star that they dismantled the illegal structures near Beltolighona area.

Earlier on Thursday, Chattogram District Administration demolished over 500 makeshift structures in the area.

On August 1, 2022, Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh filed a writ petition with the High Court regarding the illegal structures.

In the same month, the HC ordered the authorities concerned to remove those establishments from the hills.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

About 2,000 hectares of forest land on the 18-km beach have been washed away in the last 13 years. The coconut orchards have completely disappeared, while only one-third of the tamarisk and palm trees continue to breathe in the reserves.

DESCO POWER IS YOURS ISO 9001:2015 Certified

Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd. (DESCO)
 House # 22/B, FaruqueSarani, Nikunja # 2, Dhaka-1229, Bangladesh
 Tel. No: +88 02 8900110-11, 8900820-23, Fax No. +88 02 8900100
 E-mail: plt@desco.gov.bd, Web: www.desco.gov.bd

Invitation for International Tender

1 Ministry/Division	Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources		
2 Agency	Dhaka Electric Supply Company Limited (DESCO)		
2 Procuring Entity Name	Procurement, Inspection & Testing Division, DESCO		
3 Procuring Entity District	Dhaka		
4 Invitation for	International competitive tender for Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Station Based Fully Automatic Meter Testing Bench		
5 Tender No.	ICT- 30/2023		
6 Invitation Ref No.	27.24.0000.021.07.030.23.784		
7 Date	09/07/2023		

KEY INFORMATION

8 Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (One Stage Two Envelope)		
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FUNDING INFORMATION

9 Budget and Source of Funds	DESCO's own fund		
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PARTICULAR INFORMATION

10 Tender Name	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Station Based Fully Automatic Meter Testing Bench		
11 Tender Selling Date, Closing & Opening Date and Time	Last Selling Date August 28, 2023 4.00 PM	Closing Date & Time August 29, 2023 12.00 Noon	Opening Date & Time August 29, 2023 12.30 PM
12 Name & Address of the office for selling Tender Document, receiving & opening tender	Selling Office of Deputy General Manager (Accounts), DESCO House # 22/B (6 th floor), Faruque Sarani, Nikunja # 2, Dhaka-1229.	Receiving Office of the Superintending Engineer (P,I&T), DESCO Address: Plot # 22/B, Faruque Sarani, Nikunja # 2, Dhaka-1229	Opening Office of the Superintending Engineer (P,I&T), DESCO House # 22/B (1 st floor), Faruque Sarani, Nikunja # 2, Dhaka-1229.

INFORMATION FOR TENDERER

13 Eligibility of Tenderer	No. of lots under this tender is: 01 (One). All qualification criteria have been mentioned in Section 2: Tender Data Sheet of the Tender Document.		
14 Description of Goods & related Service	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Station Based Fully Automatic Meter Testing Bench. Details are described in Section 6: Schedule of Requirements and Section 7: Technical Specifications		
15 Price of Tender Document	US\$ 115.00 (USD One Hundred Fifteen) (incl. VAT) or BDT 12,500/- (Taka Twelve Thousand Five Hundred) only (incl. VAT) payable in the form of Pay Order/Bank draft from any scheduled bank in Bangladesh in favor of 'Dhaka Electric Supply Company Limited (DESCO)'. The amount of the Tender Security shall be Tk. 35,00,000.00 (Taka Thirty Five Lakh) Only or US\$ 32,500 (Thirty Two Thousand Five Hundred US Dollar) in the form of an irrevocable Bank Guarantee issued by any scheduled bank of Bangladesh or by any internationally reputable bank in favour of 'Dhaka Electric Supply Company Limited'. But in case of internationally reputable bank, the Bank Guarantee should be endorsed by its any correspondent bank located in Bangladesh. The tender security in the form like SWIFT copy or any other way is not acceptable.		

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

17 Name of Official inviting the Tender	Engr. Mohammad Kamruzzaman		
18 Designation of Official inviting the Tender	Superintending Engineer (Procurement, Inspection & Testing)		
19 Contact details of Official inviting the Tender	Interested firms may obtain further information from the office of the under signed during normal office hours (09:00 AM to 04:00 PM). Office of the SE (Procurement, Inspection & Testing), DESCO. Address: 22/B (1 st floor), FaruqueSarani, Nikunja # 02, Khilkhet, Dhaka-1229. E-mail: plt@desco.gov.bd		
20 The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all tender(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever.			

N.B. The Tender Document is published on DESCO's website. Copy of tender document purchase receipt is mandatory during Tender submission.

Engr. Mohammad Kamruzzaman
 Superintending Engineer (P, I & T), DESCO

**GOVT FUND
 Probe graft
 allegation
 against BFF
 officials: SC**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court directive that asked the agencies concerned to conduct enquiry into corruption allegations regarding government funds against some officials of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF).

The Appellate Division of the SC also affirmed its chamber judge's order that on June 25 issued status quo on a part of the HC directive which directed them to probe the allegations regarding FIFA fund.

The apex court asked the HC to dispose of the rule issued over this matter in three weeks, Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

A full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed the order after hearing a petition filed

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

PRAYER TIMING
 JULY 10

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

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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Enjoyed 'Mayaa' with Srijit: Mithila

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Rafiath Rashid Mithila, a well-known face in the local industry, has finally made her Indian film debut. Her film *Mayaa* was released in Kolkata last Friday. Directed by Raajhorshee Dey, *Mayaa* has been released across 28 halls in Kolkata.

She spoke to The Daily Star on the phone, recounting her experience so far.

Your film has just been released in Kolkata, how are you feeling?

I feel great, this is my first film in Kolkata. I have grown very fond of the story of *Mayaa*.

How has the response been so far?

It has been good. The film has been released in other cities of West Bengal apart from Kolkata. Some of shows have been running houseful, that is very fulfilling to know.

You had attended screenings as well, how was the audience's reaction to the film?

The viewers didn't recognise me initially, with a few asking "Are you Maya?". That is a big deal to me as I did indeed portray the role in different get-ups.

Did your partner join you in watching the film?

I watched the film with Srijit. He is not only my husband but an exceptional director as well. To be complimented by him on my acting and performance was a big achievement.



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

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NEWS

Uzbekistan holds vote set to cement president's rule

AFP, Tashkent

Uzbekistan was holding a presidential election yesterday that is set to hand incumbent Shavkat Mirziyoyev a third term as head of the gas-rich Central Asian state.

The 65-year-old Mirziyoyev has promised to open up his country, a tightly controlled former Soviet republic, to foreign investment and tourism.

He served as prime minister under his hardline predecessor Islam Karimov before winning his first term in 2016 and getting re-elected in 2021.

A constitutional referendum this year paved the way for him to serve two more presidential terms and increased the mandate from five years to seven, meaning he could stay in power until 2037.

"I hope the next president will be Shavkat (Mirziyoyev). I am expecting him to increase the fight against corruption and to notice the ecological problems we have," said Nodira Khidoyatova, a 57-year-old company director, after casting her ballot.

4 schemes to be on offer

FROM PAGE 12

later, said finance ministry officials. The government is considering rolling out the UPS on a limited scale in the next couple of months. The full-fledged operation will take some time, they said.

The schemes will be operated through apps. For smoother operations, over 100 tech experts will be recruited by the authority.

To operate the Samata scheme, the government will require a list of poor people. On the other hand, decisions are needed to be taken on whether Progati and Surokha will be made compulsory for private organisations, said officials.

The authority will hold talks with different chambers and associations in this regard. After that, it will be finalised and incorporated into the rules.

The dividend rollover mechanism is also incorporated into the rules. The accumulated fund will be invested in the market like in treasury bonds.

The dividend will be set upon the profit of the respective year and reinvested in the following year.

There will be a 14-digit unique number linked to the national ID number.

The government has already formed a two-member National Pension Authority (NPA) to execute the UPS formulated to provide pension services for the common people.

Kabirul Ezdani Khan, the additional secretary of the finance division, has been made the executive chairman of the NPA and Golam Mostofa, another additional secretary of the division, has been made the executive member.

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

Secretaries of different ministries, the Bangladesh Bank governor, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission chairman and the presidents of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce & Industries, Bangladesh Employers Federation and Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry will be its members.

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

BRICS summit to be 'physical' despite Putin warrant: S Africa

AFP, Johannesburg

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said yesterday that next month's BRICS summit, which Vladimir Putin has been invited to, will be held in-person despite an arrest warrant on the Russian leader.

"The BRICS summit is going ahead and we are finalising our discussions on the format," Ramaphosa told journalists on the sidelines of a conference by the ruling ANC, adding it will be a "physical" meeting.

He did not say if Putin -- who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) over accusations that Russia unlawfully deported Ukrainian children -- would attend or not.

The admin sees

FROM PAGE 12

of Jashore, and Prime Minister's Office Director Ehtasham Reza as the DC of Kushtia.

Besides, public administration Deputy Secretary Rafiqul Islam has been made the DC of Barguna, Economic Relations Division Deputy Secretary Debi Chanda is appointed as the DC of Habiganj, Additional Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Khalid Hossain as

the DC of Bagerhat, Narayanganj City Corporation Chief Executive Officer Shahidul Islam as the DC of Barishal, Deputy Secretary of Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs Muhammad Nizam Uddin Ahmed as the DC of Bhola, Local Government Division Deputy Secretary Shahed Parvez as the DC of Netrakona and Power Division Deputy Secretary Sheikh Russel Hossain as DC of Sylhet.

Record 91 hajj pilgrims die

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh (HAAB).

Hajj pilgrims who die in Saudi Arabia are usually buried in Saudi Arabia, HAAB President M Shahadat Hossain Taslim told The Daily Star.

This year the holy hajj was observed on July 28.

According to the religious affairs ministry, 122884 people went to

Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj this year.

The first return flight arrived at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on July 2. The last return flight is scheduled to arrive on August 2.

A total of 29,004 hajj pilgrims returned to the country as of July 8 by 76 flights of Biman, Saudia and Flynas.

Momen writes to 12 members of US Congress

FROM PAGE 1

R Keating and James P McGovern, on June 8 wrote to US President Joe Biden on different issues concerning Bangladesh.

On May 25, six Congress members from the Republican Party, including Scott Perry and Barry More, wrote another letter to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken regarding Bangladesh's internal issues, the ministry informed the parliamentary body in a written statement.

The ministry officials said it was not noticed in the past that Congress

members from the Republican Party showed such interest in Bangladesh-related issues.

The ministry said neither of the two letters were written to the Bangladesh embassy or the Bangladesh government.

The Bangladesh embassy in America communicated with the offices of the Congress members for confirming about the authenticity of their letters.

The embassy officials have already met several times the officials of the Congress members' offices and

cleared Bangladesh's stance on their letters, the foreign ministry informed the JS watchdog.

They also talked to several officials of the US Department of State and the White House, including Michele J Sison, Rashad Hussain and Donald Lu, and told them that the allegations made by the 12 Congress members were based on false and wrong information.

Awami League lawmaker Faruk Khan presided over the standing committee meeting.



Members of the 'Chennai Manipuri community' hold a peace demonstration to protest in solidarity with the people of India's northeastern state of Manipur amid ethnic violence, in Chennai, India yesterday.

ETHNIC VIOLENCE Schools reopen in Manipur

Attendance very low on the first day

NDTV ONLINE After remaining shut for over a couple of months because of violence, schools reopened across Manipur yesterday.

Though attendance in most institutes was extremely low on the first day, students and guardians welcomed the state government's decision to restart classes.

Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Monday announced to reopen schools for classes 1 to 8 from July 5. Most students with whom PTI interacted were very happy to get back to school.

Class 1 student Linthoi said, "I am very happy. After a two-month wait, I will be able to meet my friends and teachers." She said the shutting down of schools had made her life boring.



University student activists take part in a demonstration in Maharagama, a suburb of Colombo, Sri Lanka yesterday, demanding the release of some of their colleagues in police custody and to mark the first year anniversary of the toppling of former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

12 dead in north India rain fury Delhi downpour highest in 40 years

NDTV ONLINE

At least 12 people have died in the past two days as heavy rain pounded several parts of north India. The weather office has predicted more showers over the next couple of days.



The Indian Metrological Department (IMD) has predicted heavy to extremely heavy rain for Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

The IMD said a western disturbance prevailed over northern India, leading to an intense spell of rain on Saturday, including Delhi which experienced the season's first heavy rain.

Waterlogging led to traffic jams in several parts of the national capital. The city recorded 153 mm of rainfall in 24 hours, highest in single day in July since 1982.

Heavy rain continued in Delhi and its adjoining areas yesterday as well. Several parts of Gurugram also experienced waterlogging and power outages.

A 58 year old woman was killed in Delhi when the ceiling of her flat came crashing down on her, while four people died in rain-related incidents in Rajasthan.

A woman and her six-year-old daughter were killed in UP's Muzaffarnagar early yesterday morning after their house collapsed due to heavy rain.

Syria revokes BBC's media accreditation

Accuses the British broadcaster of spreading 'fake news'

AFP, Damascus

Syria on Saturday announced it was cancelling the BBC's accreditation over what it called "misleading reports", a rare move against an international media outlet in the war-torn country.

"Due to the broadcaster's failure to adhere to professional standards and its insistence on providing biased and misleading reports", the information ministry has decided to "cancel the accreditation" of the BBC's "correspondent and cameraman", it said in a statement.

Accreditation of the BBC Radio correspondent in Syria was also revoked, the ministry added.

A spokesperson for the British broadcaster, without directly commenting on the Syrian move, said that "BBC News Arabic provides impartial independent journalism" and speaks "to people across the political spectrum to establish facts".

The information ministry said since Syria's war broke out in 2011, the BBC has "from time to time provided subjective and fake information and reports about the reality" in the country.

US-China ties on 'surer footing' after talks

Says US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, expects more communication at staff level

REUTERS, Beijing

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said 10 hours of meetings with senior Chinese officials in recent days were "direct" and "productive", helping stabilise the superpowers' often rocky relationship as her four-day Beijing trip ended.

Before departing China yesterday, Yellen said the United States and China remained at odds on a number of issues but expressed confidence that her visit had advanced efforts to put the relationship on "surer footing".

"The US and China have significant disagreements," Yellen told a press conference at the US embassy in Beijing, citing Washington's concerns about what she called "unfair economic practices" and recent punitive actions against US firms.

"But President (Joe) Biden and I do not see the relationship between the US and China through the frame of great power conflict. We believe that the world is big enough for both of our countries to thrive."

With US-China relations at a low over national security issues, including Taiwan, US export bans on advanced technologies and China's state-led industrial policies, Washington has been trying to repair ties between the world's two biggest economies.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Beijing last month, the first trip by the top US diplomat in Biden's presidency. Climate

envoy John Kerry is expected to visit this month.

The US diplomatic push comes ahead of a possible meeting between Biden and President Xi Jinping at September's Group of 20 summit in New Delhi or a Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation gathering scheduled for November in San Francisco.

Yellen said her visit aimed to establish and deepen ties with China's new economic team, reduce



the risk of misunderstanding and pave the way for cooperation in areas such as climate change and debt distress.

"I do think we've made some progress and I think we can have a healthy economic relationship that benefits both of us and the world," she said, adding that she expected more regular communications at the staff level.

Briefing reporters after the visit, a senior Treasury official said the trip as expected did not result in specific policy breakthroughs, but was "very successful" in terms

of "re-establishing contact" and building relationships.

She said Chinese officials raised concerns about an expected US executive order restricting outbound investment, but she assured them any such measure would be narrow in scope and enacted in a transparent way, through a rule-making process that would allow public input.

Yellen said she told Chinese officials they could raise concerns about US actions, so that Washington could explain, and "possibly in some situations, respond to unintended consequences of our actions if they're not carefully targeted."

Yellen met with officials including Premier Li Qiang and People's Bank of China Deputy Governor Pan Gongsheng, whom she referred to as the head of the central bank, appearing to confirm his expected promotion.

She also met US companies doing business in China, climate finance experts and women economists.

In her meetings with officials, she urged more cooperation between the sides on economic and climate issues while criticising what she called "punitive actions" against US companies in China.

She reiterated that Washington was not seeking to decouple from China's economy, as doing so would be "disastrous for both countries and destabilising for the world."

FUKUSHIMA PLANT North Korea slams IAEA for water approval

AFP, Seoul

North Korea yesterday slammed the UN nuclear watchdog for approving Japan's plan to discharge treated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant.

The International Atomic Energy Agency approved Tokyo's plan to release treated water from the tsunami-hit nuclear plant into the sea over the next few decades.

The plan has raised concerns in neighbouring countries, prompting China to ban some food imports and sparking protests in South Korea.

The release of the treated water will have a "fatal adverse impact on the human lives and security and ecological environment," an official from Pyongyang's environmental protection ministry said in a statement.

"What matters is the unreasonable behaviour of IAEA actively patronizing and facilitating Japan's projected discharge of nuclear-polluted water, which is unimaginable," the statement added.

Some 1.33 million cubic metres of water used for cooling have accumulated at the nuclear plant, where several reactors went into meltdown after the 2011 tsunami overwhelmed cooling systems.

EXPLICIT PHOTOS CLAIMS BBC suspends male presenter

AGENCIES

The BBC yesterday suspended a prominent male presenter over allegations that he paid a teenager for sexually explicit images, as the corporation struggles to contain a rapidly escalating crisis. It has been alleged that the unnamed BBC star gave £35,000 over three years to a young person who used the money to fund their crack cocaine habit. The young person, who was allegedly just 17 years old when they began talking to the presenter, is said to have given the BBC presenter sexually explicit images and performances. The BBC said yesterday: "The BBC takes any allegations seriously and we have robust internal processes in place to proactively deal with such allegations..."

Thailand's PM frontrunner rallies supporters

AFP, Bangkok



Thailand's progressive frontrunner for prime minister yesterday told supporters he would "not step back" ahead of a parliamentary vote this week that will determine if he will lead the country. Pita Limjaroenrat's pro-democracy Move Forward Party (MFP) netted the most seats at the May 14 election but there are no guarantees it will be able to form government or that he will become the premier. MFP's eight-party coalition has a total of 312 lower house seats but remains short of the 376 votes needed across both houses of parliament to endorse Pita for the top job.

Amazon basin countries race to save rainforest

AFP, Leticia

With the effects of climate change mounting, Amazon basin countries met in Colombia for a summit Saturday to strategize on how to save the world's biggest rainforest.

"To sustain the Amazon, according to science, we need to keep 80 percent of its forests standing and not manage to go beyond 20 percent deforestation, and unfortunately we are already at 17," said Colombian Environment Minister Susana Muhamad.

"Losing the Amazon, reaching the point of no return, has irreversible consequences for global climate change," she warned at the meeting attended by representatives from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela.

Rainforests are often called the "lungs of the Earth," soaking up planet-warming carbon dioxide and expelling life-giving oxygen.

Their protection is crucial in the battle to combat climate change.

In a bit of rare good news, deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon fell by one-third in the first six months of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's administration compared to the same period last year, the government said last week.

Lula's leftist government also has pledged to seize half of all land deforested illegally in areas designated as having special environmental protection, set aside three million hectares (7.4 million acres) of protected land by 2027, and strengthen Brazil's network for environmental monitoring.



Police arrest a Sikh protestor during a demonstration for the independence of Khalistan in front of the Indian Consulate in Toronto, Canada on Saturday. Earlier this week, the US condemned vandalism at the Indian consulate in San Francisco after Indian news agency ANI reported that Sikh separatists had tried to set fire to the offices.

PHOTO: AFP

Reporter for Mexican newspaper found slain

AFP, Mexico City

A regional correspondent for leading Mexican newspaper La Jornada was found slain on Saturday, shortly after he went missing in the western state of Nayarit, prosecutors said.

Luis Martin Sanchez Iniguez is one of three active or former journalists to have been abducted in the state in recent days, the prosecutors' office said in a statement, adding to Mexico's surging attacks on the press that are often linked to the country's powerful drug cartels.

His body turned up in a village near Tepic "with signs of violence" and two cardboard messages pinned to his chest.

The statement did not indicate the content of the scrawled cardboard messages left on Sanchez's body by his abductors, a common tactic used by organized crime in Mexico to sow terror.

Lax cybersecurity a threat for us all

Why are government sites so vulnerable to cyberattacks?

We're alarmed by the recent surge in cyberattacks and data breaches targeting government sites in Bangladesh. The latest to expose our woefully lax data security procedures is a leak of personal data of 50 million people from the Office of the Registrar General, Birth & Death Registration (BDRIS). That's a massive number by any measure. While an investigation is underway to get to the bottom of the breach, the nature of the information disclosed - including birth dates and NID numbers - sends an ominous signal about its potential consequence should those fall in the wrong hands.

On Monday, the state minister for post, telecommunications and information technology acknowledged the incident - about two weeks after it was discovered by a researcher from a South Africa-based cybersecurity firm - calling it a "great loss" for the state. He said the website in question was "fragile" and didn't have "minimum security". And despite being warned, responsible officials were negligent in following up on the threat intelligence, he added. We cannot say that we're surprised by this rather frank admission. In fact, one can say that the picture he drew of the "technical weaknesses" of one government website is not limited to it alone. It is a reality that the digital infrastructure of most public offices apparently shares.

The last few months have seen an alarming rise in data breaches and cyberattacks exploiting what we can only imagine to be such technical weaknesses. Our report on the latest development details a number of incidents, many apparently orchestrated by India-linked hackers, and the threat level of public websites. In March, for example, hackers demanded \$5 million in ransom from Biman Bangladesh while holding 100 gigabytes of data hostage. As the government was unable to retrieve the data in time, a vast amount of financial, human resource, training and satellite communications information was leaked. Unfortunately, despite the heightened cyber threat facing government, military, financial and educational institutions, we seem still unprepared to rise to the challenge.

This must change. The BDRIS data breach is a wake-up call to the authorities to strengthen our cybersecurity. The repercussions of sensitive data being breached are far-reaching, as those can be exploited for malicious purposes. To mitigate the risk of future breaches, the government must adopt a multi-pronged approach to cybersecurity, investing in advanced threat detection systems and undertaking regular security audits of government websites/servers.

Poor quality control hurting projects

Authorities must ensure quality, prevent irregularities in construction projects

Hardly a week after the construction of a road in Faridpur's Sadar upazila, parts of it reportedly collapsed. This was the subject of a report published by this daily on Sunday. Such incidents, unfortunately, are getting too frequent for them to be considered "isolated", thus revealing a pattern of mismanagement and lax quality control in the development projects undertaken by the government. In the Faridpur case, cracks were seen in at least eight locations along the 800-metre portion of the road in question, which was completed on June 21. The total budget for the two-kilometre road project is over Tk 2.17 crore, which means that nearly 40 percent of the fund has been wasted on a shoddy construction work.

Is it any surprise that the collapse is being linked to the use of low-quality construction materials and lax monitoring by the relevant authorities? As usual, when asked, they sought to shirk their responsibility by blaming heavy rainfall and sandy soil underneath the road for its damage. One cannot help but wonder why these very predictable factors were not taken into consideration before or during the construction.

The Faridpur incident reminds us of a bridge in Tangail, built at a cost of Tk 54 lakh, which had tilted even before it could be inaugurated and was then left in that state for five years. Or think about when, in March last year, a road in Kishoreganj was found damaged just a week after its construction. This trend of shoddy construction shines a bright light on our current development policy which is often marked by poor planning, rampant corruption, lack of monitoring and accountability. We have frequently raised our concerns in this regard in the past.

We urge the LGED authorities in Faridpur to immediately undertake repairs to make the road operational and ensure that the responsible contractor is brought to book. Such questionable practices undermine the purpose of development and rather increase public suffering. Quality control is a vital part of any construction project, and must be treated as such by all stakeholders.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

When will we start caring for the environment?

It has been reported that the forest department is planning to fell at least 1,246 trees for widening the Habiganj Shayestaganj regional highway. Already, 200 trees have been cut down. Locals have protested the move for the past few months, but to no avail. It is preposterous that older, mature trees are being felled without much care. The Habiganj Shayestaganj highway was once a beautiful drive, lined with trees and vast fields and haors on both sides. However, now it is interspersed with large-scale, ugly industries that threaten the natural ecosystem. Trees are one way to combat the ill-effects of rapid industrialisation, yet the authorities don't seem bothered. When will they really start to care?

Farid Ahmed
Habiganj

Why tie up EC's hands further?



THE STREET VIEW
Mohammad Al Masum Molla
is chief reporter at The Daily Star.

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

In Bangladesh, whether it is the Awami League or the BNP, the incumbent always vouches for the neutrality and independence of the Election Commission. On the other hand, whichever party is in the opposition camp, for its part, fervently maintains that the commission is nothing more than a puppet installed by the incumbent and completely subservient to the ruling regime. The people, i.e. the voters, have always tried to sift through the rhetoric to discern just how neutral the commission will be, come election day.

This issue has recently come to the fore following the amendment of the Representation of the People Order (RPO), which stipulates the powers the election office holds. This latest amendment, which was passed in parliament last week, curtailed the EC's authority to react to election-rigging, violence or irregularities. The law now stipulates that the commission can only suspend elections at specific polling centres where irregularities take place, and not in the entire constituency (as had happened during Gaibandha 5 by polls last year). Furthermore, the commission can suspend elections only on polling day. But an election is not an issue of one day - it's a process spanning days and weeks, sometimes months. And its sanctity could be deemed to have been endangered at any time during the course of that process.

The provision empowering the EC to halt or suspend elections was included during the Shamsul Huda-led commission, and two elections - 2014 and 2018 - were conducted under this provision. There were no explanations as to why such a sudden change of that provision was necessary. Although the opposition lawmakers protested and questioned how the incumbent EC would conduct an impartial election if it was not given the power to suspend polls, when the bill was passed, Law Minister Anisul Huq said suspending polls in an entire constituency over disturbances in some polling stations



An election is not an issue of one day - it's a process spanning days and weeks, sometimes months. FILE PHOTO: STAR

was "undemocratic," and that's why this amendment had been made. The law minister reasoned that each constituency usually has 100-150 polling centres. The EC's power of suspending polling at all centres is not democratic if violence and/or irregularities are reported at only a few centres. "It would impede people's right to vote because no violence or irregularities were reported at the rest of the polling centres," he said. But does that justify the curbing of EC's power?

The move comes at a critical juncture when the demand for holding a free and fair election in Bangladesh is getting louder at home and abroad, with the next parliamentary polls just a few months away. With the commission's authority to react in the face of irregularities being restricted, the participating parties are also deprived

of means to seek remedy if and when a situation arises. For instance, if a candidate is forced to stay away from the constituency or barred from submitting the nomination form, should there not be a system of remedy? What would happen if voters are terrorised before the polling day, which stops them from venturing out to vote?

As for a single incident affecting

Many political commentators believe that the government curtailed the EC's authority to prevent any recurrence of the Gaibandha-5 by-election.

Civil society organisation Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (SHUJAN), in a statement, said the EC was yet to gain the trust of all political parties and organisations, and the amendment to the RPO would further

the entire constituency, there are dozens of such examples when a single instance of violence engulfed the entire constituency and even spilled over to other areas spreading fear and panic. In all this, Gono Forum MP Mokabbir Khan's comment rings true. He said in parliament, "Laws are enacted in the country for the benefit of some individuals, groups and the government."

Coming back to the Gaibandha-5 by-polls, the incumbent Election Commission stopped the by-polls in October, saying the situation had gotten "out of control" due to widespread irregularities. The EC was lauded for such a brave and rare move, while many ruling party leaders criticised it. But when it came to punishing the alleged officials, the EC remained toothless and ineffective.

undermine its confidence and make it a powerless institution to conduct fair elections.

This sort of a move is nothing new for the incumbent government. The Huda Commission in 2008 had also introduced the provision of a "No" vote in the election if the voters did not feel confident about any of the candidates. A total of 0.55 percent votes cast in the ninth parliamentary election were "No," and the highest percentage was found in the Rangamati constituency (9.66 percent). But the ruling Awami League cancelled that provision before the 10th parliamentary election held in 2014, most likely to prevent potential embarrassment. It appears the incumbents are becoming apprehensive of an increasing number of scenarios that might embarrass them in the upcoming election.

Unleashing Bangladesh's energy potential through policy change

Dr Md Firoz Khan is associate professor of environmental science and management at North South University (NSU), former visiting professor at China University of Mining and Technology, and former assistant professor at the University of Malaya in Malaysia. Mahfuza Parvin Nusrat is studying environmental science and management at NSU.

DR MD FIROZ KHAN and MAHFUZA PARVIN NUSRAT

Residents of major cities in Bangladesh find themselves gasping for clean air, their lives hanging in the balance. The air we breathe has become a silent assassin. The US-based Health Effects Institute (HEI) has estimated that in 2019 alone, poor air quality in Bangladesh led to approximately 173,500 deaths. This public health emergency requires immediate attention and a drastic shift in our energy policy for the next 50 years. The current energy policy bears significant responsibility for air pollution, global warming, urban heat, public health issues, and the strain on healthcare budgets. It is imperative to break free from an unsustainable energy policy and embrace the potential of renewable energy sources.

The energy sector, which contributes a substantial portion of global CO2 emissions, is responsible for 40 percent of Bangladesh's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This alarming statistic calls for an urgent reduction in emissions from our energy system. While we understand the importance of economic growth for the 170 million people in our country, we must question the costs associated with achieving this growth.

Over the decades, Bangladesh has made significant progress in increasing its power generation capacity, reaching

26,700MW in 2023 compared to 4,942MW in 2009, as stated by the finance ministry. However, our heavy reliance on coal, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and liquid fuel-based power generation using conventional quick rental technology raises significant concerns about the sustainability of our energy sector. There is a probable link between poor air quality, urban heat, and the current energy policy, which also hinders our ability to fulfil our commitment to reducing GHG emissions to limit global warming to 1.5°C by 2050.

According to the Power Division, a mere 0.38 percent of the country's electricity production came from renewable sources in the 2021-22 fiscal year. This disproportionate dependence on fossil fuels places an economic burden on us and raises concerns about our long-term energy security. The increasing need to import fossil fuels to meet our growing electricity demand further exacerbates the issues related to poor air quality, urban heat islands, climate change, and the additional healthcare costs associated with protecting public health.

Regrettably, the 2022-23 budget failed to prioritise renewable energy sources for energy security. Instead, it allocated a negligible portion of energy, approximately 894MW, generated from renewable resources. The focus was primarily on increasing fuel capacity, oil refinery storage, coal production, and gas collection. This approach disregards the immense potential of alternative sources, particularly hydroelectric, wind, and solar energy, which could offer sustainable and economically viable solutions.

As a tropical country, Bangladesh should seize the opportunity to harness renewable energy. Our neighbouring countries have already taken advantage of their geographic positions to utilise these promising options, which may also hold tremendous potential for us. Additionally, our long coastline and the winds during the monsoon season make wind energy a viable option worth exploring. The mountainous regions in our country could serve as potential hydroelectric resources. None of these options are expensive; instead, they are free, clean, and the most sustainable choices. When we utilise renewable resources for power generation, there are no air pollution or climate change issues.

We must also consider other renewable energy sources, such as municipal waste and biomass. By promoting initiatives that convert waste into energy and utilising agricultural biomass, we can address our energy needs sustainably and contribute to effective waste management practices. Our municipal solid waste is indiscriminately dumped in open sites, causing water, soil, and air pollution. A study published in 2023 by Saint Louis University highlights Dhaka as a hotspot for methane gas due to poor waste management. Since municipal solid waste contains a significant amount of carbon, this resource has immense potential for energy generation.

It is disheartening that Bangladesh has set a meagre target of 4,100MW of electricity generation using renewable energy by 2030. This indicates a continued inclination towards fossil fuel imports, despite our tremendous potential for alternative sources. We should aim higher and envision

a future where our energy policy is driven by renewable resources, setting an example for global climate change mitigation. The success of the California state government, which secures 100 percent of its power grid energy from renewable energy sources, and Saudi Arabia's exploration of possible renewable energy sources serve as inspirations for our own journey.

According to a study by Gulagi et al. (2020), transitioning to renewable energy has challenges, such as land availability. However, with efficient planning, a mere 10 percent of our land area can accommodate a substantial ground-mounted solar PV installation. Innovative solutions such as rooftop solar systems, small-scale solar with batteries, and floating solar systems can further overcome the limitations we face. It is crucial to recognise that our energy sector plays a pivotal role in our overall development. Prioritising renewable energy over poor operational practices, inefficient technologies, and inadequate maintenance is essential to address and alleviate our challenges. Embracing renewable energy is not a luxury, but a necessity for securing a prosperous future for Bangladesh.

In conclusion, the time for change is pressing. We urgently require a visionary and long-term energy policy that places renewable sources at its core. By fostering a sustainable economy with zero carbon emissions, Bangladesh can become a global leader in climate change mitigation while simultaneously improving the air quality and public health in our major cities. Let us seize this opportunity and take the necessary steps toward a brighter and greener future.

'Aggression from govt, private bodies a huge challenge for us'

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh talks about the current state of playground and parks, tree felling for development purposes, and the importance of public opinion in designing projects.

Beautiful Dhaka – with playgrounds, greenery and parks – was one of your five electoral pledges. However, we have been observing a distressing trend of key public parks, such as Osmani Udyan and Panthakunja Park, remaining off limits to the public due to never-ending construction work. Why this long delay in ensuring people's access to parks?

In my election manifesto, I categorically mentioned that we want to bring back ward-based playgrounds. Even if we can find just a small piece of land, we'll turn it into a playground for children. For instance, in Sutrapur, under Ward 42, which is a densely populated area in Old Dhaka, a small piece of land of the DSCC was leased in the name of establishing a car park and market. But they were essentially occupying the land for years, even after a case had been filed with the High Court. I recovered the land from encroachers, disposed of the case, and made the land accessible for children. In Alamganj, under Ward 46, we recovered a piece of PWD land – which had been encroached upon from every side and turned into a warehouse of sorts – from the encroachers and erected a fence around the playground.

As for the parks you mentioned, they are being constructed under megaprojects, but it is sad that for various reasons, the work has been delayed. Just after I took over as mayor, I visited Osmani Udyan thrice and tried to fast-track its completion. But unfortunately, the contractor violated the terms and conditions of our contract, and we had to cancel it. Now, we are going for implementation based on the original design. But three years of my tenure have already passed. Appointing new contractors after doing due diligence is a lengthy process.

Our project at Panthakunja had to be suspended due to the construction plan of the elevated expressway. Many unnecessary infrastructures had been planned in the earlier designs of the expressway, so we had to ask them to revise the designs to showcase the natural beauty instead. But, again, we had to cancel the contract and we will have to invite a fresh tender for it. We are hoping to resume the work of both parks this year and complete them within a short time.

You are saying that you have taken many initiatives to ensure parks and playgrounds in every ward, but we have seen some government organisations occupying and constructing housing projects on some of these playgrounds. In Azampur, for instance, three playgrounds were gobbled up to construct high-rise buildings. According to the Detailed Area Plan, 25 wards of DSCC are still without any playgrounds.

Aggression is a huge challenge for us – aggression from land grabbers, private organisations, and government bodies too. You will be surprised to hear that in Ward 11, Rab was going to build an office occupying a DSCC playground. The agreement had been signed just before I took over office. I told them that they cannot take over a playground.

But we are also taking proactive steps. We have spoken to the deputy commissioner and asked him to identify government land, particularly in 18 new DSCC wards, so that we can build sufficient playgrounds in a planned manner. We are constructing the Dhupkhola playground. We have opened Golapbag playground and Sadeque Hossain Khoka playground for the public. So, we are doing our work at a time of tremendous aggression.

In Dhanmondi, why have most of the public playgrounds been leased out to private clubs, barring access to the public? Dhanmondi Lake has been leased out to various businesses, most of whom are violating their lease by not doing due maintenance of the parks. Are you concerned about it?

The playgrounds we are constructing or renovating will remain open for all round the clock. But we are also seeing that some of the playgrounds, particularly in posh areas, are being run by different academies. The Dhanmondi Sheikh Jamal playground is operated by Sheikh Jamal Club, and it was leased out to them before my time. The Abahani field, too, has been under the Abahani Club for a long time – since the 70s, in fact. But the Abahani field is still open to the people, as far as I know. The construction work that is going on now is on the land that belongs to Abahani to expand their facilities.

In many cases, parks and playgrounds were reduced in size when renovated under megaprojects as part of their design – it was done by urban planners themselves. Under these projects, new structures were introduced to be run commercially to ensure the maintenance of the parks. The design of Dhanmondi Lake was prepared in 1996, after the Awami League government came to power. And we still have the same infrastructures that were initially in the master plan – nothing new has been added. Those who took the lease before ran those establishments but did not pay the DSCC for 14 years. I cancelled those leases and gave out new ones, maintaining the same conditions.

People in Dhaka have limited places to visit, and everyone wants to visit Dhanmondi Lake. So even

though people complain to me all the time that there are too many people there, we can't really help it. However, we want to keep all the parks, *udyan* and public places under the DSCC closed for one day of the week for due maintenance and cleaning.

We have formed a committee to maintain these parks, playgrounds and public places. Earlier, everything would be done based on a given project, which meant that as soon as the project ended, there was no one to ensure its maintenance. City corporations also did not focus on maintenance work. As we have the financial capacity now, we are prioritising this issue. We have appointed an arboriculturalist, caretakers and new gardeners to maintain the greenery and aesthetics of the spaces. We are building our capacity.

There have been widespread protests and criticisms about the tree felling on Satmasjid Road. Although urban planners and environmentalists have said the development work could have been done without harming the trees, you have insisted that the action was inevitable.

People can make a lot of generalised comments. We also have our own experts and urban planners, and we have designed the projects based on their recommendations. We do not want to fell trees unless it is absolutely necessary. Even then, if some trees have to be cut for development purposes, we make sure to plant three times as many trees. You have seen how many plants we have already planted on Road 27. Basically, we want to replace big trees with smaller flower plants in the medians, which increase the aesthetics and are also easier to maintain.

Shundor Dhaka is one of our electoral pledges. We have planted over 300,000 plants, but unfortunately, no one listens when you beat your own drum.

As a city mayor, how important is public opinion to you? Is there any mechanism in place to inform the public and engage them in consultations before major decisions are made about development work?

We give utmost importance to public opinion. Every time we undertake a project, our consultants and directors are supposed to visit the locality and engage with community members, and design the projects based on their concerns and recommendations. It's not as if a project is designed from a mayor's office! Unfortunately, I have found that a lot of our external consultants didn't actually make the field visits before designing the projects –

they did so from the comforts of their offices, on their laptops. As a result, many of those designs were flawed and completely devoid of the grassroots reality. However, we have begun the process of consulting the public.

There are many projects where we have taken the perspective of the local communities into consideration before finalising the details. Sometimes, when we tell the experts that we want an aesthetic and beautiful space, they come back to us with elaborate designs where there are costly structures with only a few trees here and there. But then we hear from the communities that they do not want such obstructions – they want open, unrestricted green space. And we definitely prioritise people's concerns.

So, you are saying that when there is a protest from a given community about one of DSCC's projects, you revert your decision based on people's demands?

Yes, there are many such examples. But you also have to see where the resistance is coming from. When I went to excavate the Buriganga, land grabbers naturally resisted. You can't pay heed to their resistance. We went to the field, we inspected CS, RS, SA blueprints, RA blueprints, field survey blueprints, GIS maps, etc before we went for implementation. If someone comes and says their grandfather left them land in the middle of the river, I can't accept that. Of course, I have to take a stern stance then.

In the last one-and-a-half decades, Tk 115 crore was spent on setting up modern traffic signal lights, but people did not get any benefit from it. Now, the DSCC is going to set up AI technology at 54 spots to modernise traffic signals. Experts think this kind of technology is not viable for Dhaka city where the volume of traffic is huge. What do you think?

I am also concerned about the project's success. We are going to implement this work in two phases. In the first phase, we need some infrastructural development, such as expanding roads, balancing the lanes and ensuring pedestrian-friendly footpaths. There are some other roads which are not of the same width throughout, meaning some parts are narrower than others, which create traffic congestion. In the second phase, synchronised traffic signals will be introduced, which was not done earlier.

We will definitely do a pilot project before going for synchronisation. Besides, the remote control that was given to the police previously was not synchronised, and they could control the signals manually through the remote. After a while, they just returned to their old system of using sticks. We will set up a central control room through which to control the entire signalling system. If we become successful, then Dhaka will get a modern traffic movement system after a long time.



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

Erosion of values in our universities



Dr Pranab Kumar Panday is a professor of public administration at the University of Rajshahi.

PRANAB KUMAR PANDAY

University teachers used to be held in high regard by everyone in our society even just a few decades ago. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman considered university teachers to be the conscience of the nation. However, university teaching as a profession has been losing its glory by the day. One could, of course, dispute my assertion. Having stayed in the profession for 25 years, I can say that the public no longer treats university teachers with the same level of respect that they did 20 years ago. The problem now is understanding why teachers at universities are becoming less respected. Do any of them display signs of moral decline? If yes, why did it occur?

Many faculty members at higher educational institutions around Bangladesh have lost their moral compass. Regarding the decline of moral standards in the academic world, academic dishonesty ranks high among the most pressing problems. Numerous teachers at different universities have persisted in engaging in unethical practices like plagiarism, fabrication of research findings, and discrimination based on favouritism. Through the media, we become aware of such developments every now and then. These actions undermine academic honesty and lower standards in the classroom. It's promising that universities nationwide have begun acting against these dishonest educators.

Another issue is the exploitation of power dynamics. Some of Bangladesh's faculty members use their positions of power to discriminate against students or fellow faculty members based on gender, ethnicity, religion or political ideology. This kind of conduct is counterproductive to establishing a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students. Some faculty members' desire to wield power and maintain ties with the establishment make them ignore their primary role as teachers; they are on the lookout for opportunities to use their official status for their benefit. There are, of course, always

exceptions.

Concerns have also been raised about some faculty members' perceived lack of professionalism in Bangladesh. Some educators are lackadaisical about their jobs, either because they don't show up to class, or because they don't spend enough time with their students, or because they don't interact with them positively and encouragingly. The trust that students and the general public place in the education system is impacted by this lack of professionalism.

There are additional contributors to the decline of moral values among Bangladeshi faculty members. These include a lack of accountability, a culture of impunity, and inadequate training and support. It has been argued that a decline in ethical values is also caused by broader social and economic factors, such as poverty, inequality, and political instability, which impact some university faculty members.

Reforms at the institutional level are necessary to address the deterioration of ethical standards among faculty members. This includes bolstering accountability and transparency systems and encouraging a culture of professionalism and integrity among faculty and students at all levels of education. Broader social and economic reforms that prioritise social justice, equality, and good governance can also increase teachers' and the general public's confidence in universities.

University faculty members' declining moral standards threaten the credibility and quality of higher education. University administration, policymakers, civil society organisations, and the general public must all work together to solve this problem. The academic system in Bangladesh can contribute to the country's social and economic development and uphold the highest ethical standards if a culture of professionalism, accountability, and integrity is fostered within it.

The Bangladesh government has taken several steps to improve the standard of higher education in the country. For instance,

the government has focused on revamping the University Grants Commission (UGC) so that it can better steer universities towards the goal of improving their quality. With support from the World Bank, the government launched the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project in 2009, intending to enhance the quality of higher education in the country by investing in new facilities, better support for teachers, more research, and more effective pedagogy.

The Accreditation Council, now that it has been established, will evaluate universities' quality according to a set of criteria, such as academic standards, research capacity, faculty qualifications, and infrastructure. Recently, the government has increased funding for scientific and technological research. To foster innovation and research across disciplines, the Ministry of Science and Technology has established several research centres and institutes.

The government has actively sought opportunities for academic institutions to work with their counterparts in other countries. Universities worldwide have formed alliances with one another to share resources and facilitate academic and scientific collaboration.

Bangladesh's higher education system will significantly benefit from the government's efforts to improve university standards. These actions will lead to enhanced facilities, expanded research, better preparation of teachers, and revised curricula. However, there is a need to alter the way educators think. If this doesn't happen, these efforts won't improve universities. The government should focus on recruiting prominent scholars and educators in the highest positions who can promote openness and accountability on campus. No education reform will succeed in the long run unless we also work to increase teachers' professionalism.

Therefore, there is still much to do to guarantee that all universities in Bangladesh are apace with academic standards on a global scale. The nation's higher education system faces challenges that can only be overcome with continued collaboration between the government and universities. Furthermore, the government should think about lessening the impact of politics on academic institutions. University professors who dabble in politics not only lower their professional standing, but also impede progress towards better education for all citizens.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

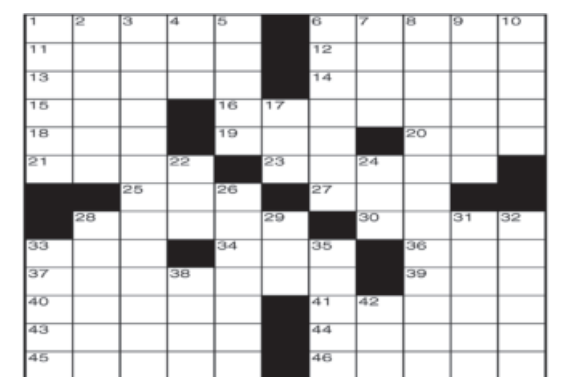
ACROSS

- 1 Simple fellow
- 6 Circus worker
- 11 Silly
- 12 In the know
- 13 Shrinks back
- 14 Hands over
- 15 Wee bit
- 16 Cut in three
- 18 Peyton's brother
- 19 Use pews
- 20 "– a girl!"
- 21 Monthly bill
- 23 Secluded spots
- 25 Fly catcher
- 27 Supporter's vote
- 28 Jazz blowers
- 30 Give off
- 33 Letter after upsilong

DOWN

- 1 Lisa, to Bart
- 2 Get some air
- 3 Attendant to a queen
- 4 Binary digit
- 5 High homes
- 6 Without being said
- 7 Really impresses

- 8 Whoopi Goldberg/Ted Danson movie
- 9 Puts up
- 10 Takes a breather
- 17 Outfit
- 22 Cowboy nickname
- 24 Shoebox letters
- 26 Chides
- 28 Out of the sun
- 29 Brief time
- 31 Pressed
- 32 Home runs, slangily
- 33 Lion group
- 35 Leg bone
- 38 Token of love
- 42 Saloon supply



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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Sonamoni during an interview with the author.

PHOTO CREDIT: MD RAHAT RAJA



Sonamoni working at Munshiganj Bazar, Shyamnagar Upajila, Stakhira.

PHOTO CREDIT: MD RAIHAN RAJU

BAGH BIDHOBBA

Birth of Evil: The Sacrificial Survival of a Tiger-Widow in the Sundarbans Delta



ILLUSTRATION: MANAN MORSHED

sustain their livelihood, despite the constant threat of tiger attacks. In the small village of Jelepara, it is rare to find a family that haven't experienced injuries, losses, or fatalities among their kin, relatives, or neighbors due to these tiger encounters. Despite the high risk to their lives, thousands of people venture into the Sundarbans every day in the coastal regions just to survive.

Among them was Charan Sardar, Sonamoni's husband, who embarked on a 15 day trip into the forest with a group of fishermen after obtaining a permit from the forest department in 1973. The first 14 days passed uneventfully, but on the final day, as they were returning home, Charan Sardar stopped to gather firewood for their household. It was then that a nearby fishing boat passed by, and he asked them to relay a message to Sonamoni: "We will be home by noon, so tell her to cook rice."

Upon receiving the message, Sonamoni prepared the food and anxiously awaited her husband's arrival. However, on that unfortunate Sunday, news spread rapidly through Jelepara. A tiger had attacked Charan Sardar and dragged him deep into the dense vegetation. The villagers immediately organized a rescue mission in an attempt to recover his body from the tiger's clutches. Unfortunately, the efforts were in vain as the river tides had washed away any trace of his whereabouts.

Sonamoni faced immense hardships following the tragic loss of her husband to a tiger attack. In her own words, she shared, "Upon hearing the news, I felt a moment of faintness and couldn't believe it. I had lost my husband, and it felt like I had lost everything in life. I was only 14 years old at that time. Right after

leading to strained relationships and frequent arguments over various daily issues. Sonamoni shared, "Even my brothers and their wives began accusing me, claiming that the tiger attacked my husband because of me. Whenever any discomfort arose within the family, they would blame me for having eaten my husband and even threatened that I would devour them and their children. I had no place in my in-laws' home, nor did I have any shelter in my parents' house. In moments of despair, I would lament, 'Oh Bhagoban' (god), it would have been better if the tiger had devoured me.'"

Amidst those challenging circumstances, one of her distant fathers-in-law came forward to provide assistance and help them secure a shelter where they could survive and protect Sonamoni's child. Her mother-in-law welcomed Sonamoni back. "After returning to my in-laws' house, some relatives convinced me that we have another unmarried son. If you marry him, you will be able to survive and provide a better life for your child," Sonamoni recounted.

With limited options, Sonamoni reluctantly agreed to this marriage proposal. Thus, she married her brother-in-law, who happened to be the younger sibling of her deceased husband. It felt as though she had lost a family in the ebbing tide and had now found solace in the surging waves. However, just as the tidal waves bring extremely saline water that renders the coastal area's health and soil infertile, the second chapter of Sonamoni's life was marred by the unforgiving nature of societal prejudices. The villagers were unwilling to accept her as she was branded "Swami-Kheko" and considered a source of bad luck for the larger community. Consequently, Sonamoni and her husband, Bhaban

became symbolic of foreboding and ill omen for the larger society. Due to being associated with social evil, she lost all avenues of social connections, even with her own relatives.

However, a couple of years later, that forceful imposition of "Ekghore" life had been withdrawn over successive fierce conflicts between Sonamoni and larger Bagdi Samaj. As a consequence, Sonamoni had to arrange social gatherings twice and serve food to the villagers to erase the "Ekghore" status and for the social recognition as decided by the leaders of her Samaj. Despite the challenges they faced, Sonamoni and her second husband had three more children. As her elder son grew up, he and her husband began fishing together in the jungle to sustain their livelihood. They relied on catching fish and crabs for survival, though they struggled to attain financial stability. The hardships of life continued to follow them.

In an attempt to alleviate their difficult circumstances, Bhaban Sardar purchased a Pata Jal (a type of fishing net) from a nearby market. He processed the net by applying gum derived from velvet apple, which enhanced its durability and made it easier to set up along the long riverbanks. With a pass permit obtained from the forest department, he joined a group of fishermen for a fishing expedition. Utilizing the Pata Jal, they had a successful catch during the trip and anticipated returning home soon.

However, tragedy struck once again. While they were preparing to pack up the net and other belongings, a tiger suddenly pounced on Bhaban Sardar, injuring his shoulder and other parts of his body. Despite their best efforts, his colleagues were unable to rescue him, and his body could not be recovered. Once again, Sonamoni experienced the loss of her second husband, mirroring the circumstances of her first husband's demise.

After this incident, the villagers had no doubts in labeling Sonamoni as a source of bad luck for the Bonojibis. Consequently, her mother-in-law confined her within the house, forbidding her from going outside. The belief was that her presence would bring misfortune to the Bonojibis, and the risk of a tiger attack would increase if she was sighted during their forest expeditions.

Sonamoni shared her heartbreaking story, saying, "My mother-in-law had lost two of her sons, and I had lost two husbands. After those tragic incidents, she became convinced that I was Swami Kheko, and she forcibly restrained me and later expelled me from the house. I attempted to find work to sustain myself, but people continuously rejected me. I resorted to collecting rice gruel (Water Fan) from door to door, sometimes cooking "Shaluk" (water lilies) and "Khuder Bhat" (broken spare rice). Life had become stagnant, devoid of any progress.

In desperation, I started working as a cleaner in various establishments in Munshiganj bazaar. I worked in tea stalls, hotels, grocery shops, rice storerooms, and decorator shops. I took on any kind of work that came my way. It was through these endeavors that I managed to provide for and raise my three children. I even saved enough to arrange their marriages."

When I asked her about the reasons behind the accusations of being a husband-eating evil, Sonamoni explained, "Listen carefully. When my husband would leave home and venture into the jungle for resources, I was expected to adhere to certain practices. I was not allowed to apply vermilion on my forehead, tie up or part my hair, or even oil and comb my hair. I couldn't wash our clothes or do any sewing. Cooking during the day, frying chilies, or even disposing of ashes from the oven was prohibited. I was not permitted to entertain relatives or neighbors by offering them good food. Brooming and mopping the house, as well as casually

going to the market, were also forbidden. There were many sets of practices, known as 'Bachok', that were expected of women whose husbands went into the jungle."

These "Bachok" practices hold esoteric explanations. It is believed that by following these practices, the forest expeditions of their husbands are secured, acting as safeguards and bringing well-being, protecting them from tiger attacks. On the other hand, the Bonojibis themselves have to adhere to additional "Bachok" practices.

Sonamoni continued, "My husband also had his own set of 'Bachok' when entering the jungle and working there. For instance, he was not supposed to enter the jungle on Fridays as it was considered a sacred place, and his body had to remain sacred. They had various mantras (formulas) to recite in the jungle. They had to use leaves for toilet purposes and were not allowed to eat crabs. Since the jungle is considered the sacred place of Bonbibi, nobody was allowed to harm anything within its boundaries. Every member of the group had to follow the guidance of the Guniin/Fakir (spiritual leaders). They had more 'Bachok' than us."

Sonamoni further explained, "You see, my parental home was far from the jungle, and fishing was not a common activity there. Hence, I was unaware of these 'Bachok' practices. After getting married and coming here, I did my best to follow these practices whenever my husband went into the jungle, although sometimes I couldn't adhere to all of them due to urgent matters. But people would curse me as if I were the sole reason for the tiger attacks, even though my husband followed his own 'Bachok' as well."

The practices of "Bachok" in the Sundarbans, stemming from the belief in Bonbibi, are often viewed as cultural stigmas and superstitions by various stakeholders in the region, including some environmental activists, conservation movements, tourist agencies, NGOs, media outlets, researchers, and the forest department. They portray these practices as exacerbating the suffering of "tiger widows," and Sonamoni's experiences align with this narrative. However, focusing solely on superstitions as the source of suffering overlooks the broader context and intertwined reasons behind the social exile, economic deprivation, violence, and discrimination faced by these widows. It also disregards the larger social, economic, and power dynamics that influence the fishermen community in the Sundarbans.

We also need to address questions regarding the sources of decision-making power within the Samaj (community) beyond customary laws and state apparatus, and how it functions as a social norm. For example, the mechanism that defines Sonamoni's transition from human to evil, and later from evil to human, demonstrates the cyclical nature of categorizing humans within the anthropological machine of her community. This process creates a dichotomy between humanity and others, leading to the justification of practices such as slavery and genocide. It also allows for the acceptance of violence against those defined as the "other," stripping them of their human status. In the case of Sonamoni, she was forced to endure a life of social exile imposed by the Bagdi Samaj, following acts of social performance through dispositional rather than simply stigmatizing her belief in Bonbibi. Therefore, without delving into the constitutive functions and sources of authoritative power within the Bonojibis' Samaj, any understanding of the beliefs and practices regarding Bagh Bidhoba would be incomplete.

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Focusing solely on superstitions as the source of suffering overlooks the broader context and intertwined reasons behind the social exile, economic deprivation, violence, and discrimination faced by these widows. It also disregards the larger social, economic, and power dynamics that influence the fishermen community in the Sundarbans.

MD RAIHAN RAJU

Sonamoni! No prefix, no suffix, that is her name. It signifies the golden pearl of the eye. However, the irony lies in the fact that this golden pearl became an outcast in society, as the locals cursed her as "Swami Kheko," meaning a husband eater. It was common to label women as "Swami Kheko" when they lost their husbands to tiger attacks in Sundarbans. Unfortunately, such identifying remarks still persist to some extent in that area. Recently, several NGOs have stepped forward with development projects under the name "Bagh Bidhoba" (tiger widows) to assist these vulnerable individuals. Consequently, "Bagh Bidhoba" has now become a popular category used to identify these women.

Sonamoni couldn't recall her date of birth, but she roughly estimated her age based on a significant event. "I got married at the age of 12, before the 'Golagulir Bachar' (the year of bombardment in 1971)." Her married life began with Charan Sardar, who belonged to the Bagdi community, a subgroup within the broader Hinduism fold, and was a successor of the fishermen in the coastal basin of Sundarbans.

The majority of fishermen and the Bagdi community lacked land for cultivation, which compelled them to venture into the water-bound Sundarbans to catch fish, crabs, wax, honey, wood, fruits, and other resources to sustain themselves. Moreover, they didn't have proper housing. From my observations, I discovered that they managed to live in cramped huts in the "Charland" of Chuna River, located at the edge of Sundarbans. This settlement is known as Jelepara, adjacent to the Munshiganj bazaar of Stakhira range Sundarbans. They have resided in this area for generations, sometimes following hereditary lineage and other times shifting their profession to fishing and crab collection in the marshy forest for an extended period.

The landless Bagdi community finds themselves trapped within the intricate network of watery forests in order to



Inside a than of Bonbibi, the guardian spirit of the Sundarbans.

PHOTO CREDIT: MD RAIHAN RAJU

this shocking moment, my mother-in-law blamed me, saying that her son had to die because of me. I was branded as 'Opoya' (evil), 'Olokki' (inauspicious), and 'Oshoti' (cuckold). Consequently, they started calling me 'Swami Kheko' (husband eater). These curses pushed me to the brink of suicide, but I couldn't take such a step because I had a seven-month-old child to care for. I silently endured every curse for the sake of that baby."

Following that traumatic incident, Sonamoni's brothers stepped forward to support her. She temporarily found refuge within her brothers' family. As time passed, her brothers took it upon themselves to find a suitable groom for her. However, due to the stigma attached to being labeled a "husband eater," no one was willing to accept her. Additionally, Sonamoni herself had no desire to remarry, as she wanted to focus on raising her son without the potential pain and deprivation that could come from a stepfather.

As days turned into months and months into years, Sonamoni became an additional burden for her family,

Sardar, were subjected to social exile or "Ekghore" by the villagers.

Sonamoni became a dreaded symbol of "bad luck," and her family had to adapt to a life of ostracization within the village. She explained, "We were prohibited from participating in any social or religious ceremonies. If someone was getting married, a few days before the ceremony, someone from that household would come and ask me not to step outside. They believed that my presence would bring misfortune to the newly weds. I was not allowed to attend any Puja (religious ritual) because they believed that my presence would render the Puja Mandap impure and displease the gods and goddesses. Even my innocent son's presence was not accepted at any social festivals or gatherings; he would cry and we would have to return home."

Sonamoni also shared that she would hide whenever the Bonojibis (local people who ventured into the forest for resources) went into the forest. They believed that if she was spotted during the initial stages of the forest expedition, it would attract tiger attacks towards the Bonojibis. Sonamoni and her family

SPORT

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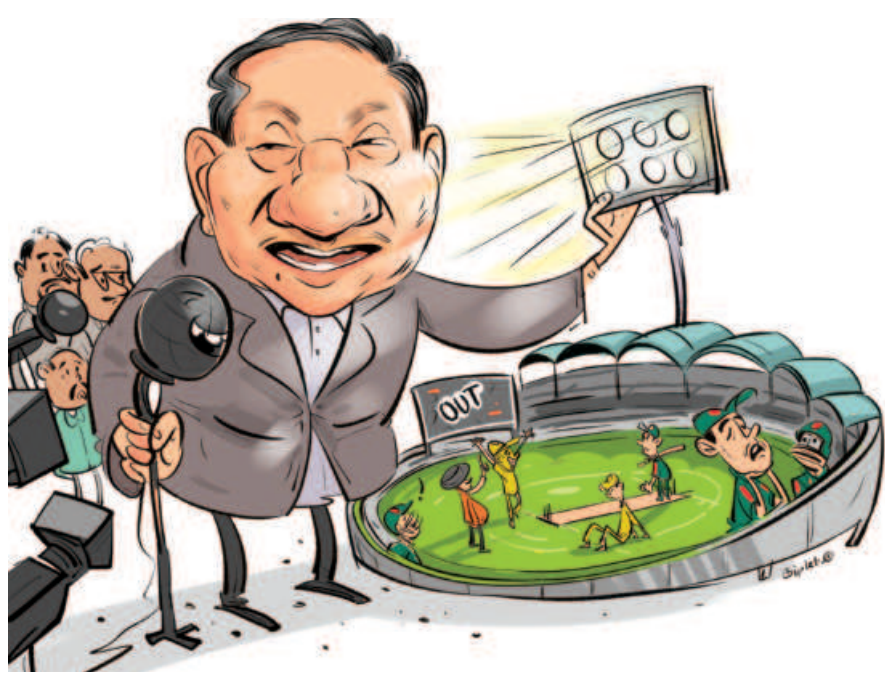
More than just CRICKETING REASONS?

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from *Chattogram*

Bangladesh slumped to a 142-run defeat against Afghanistan in the second and penultimate ODI on Saturday to lose their first-ever ODI series against the visitors. The Tigers have enjoyed a healthy record at home and the series defeat was only their third at home since 2016. The question that most comes to mind is whether the defeat had more to do with non-cricketing reasons than cricketing ones.

"Please stick to cricket. Don't step outside of cricket. When players coming up in the future do well, write about it. When they play badly, write about that too and criticise them; that is all good. We all know that sometimes we overstep our boundaries," was a message from ODI skipper Tamim Iqbal towards the media during his retirement announcement on Thursday, July 6 – a decision he would withdraw on July 7. As a cricket reporter however, watching Bangladesh perform on July 8, it was difficult to just "stick to cricket".

Of course, there were cricketing reasons. The bowlers were not able to create pressure and keep a batter at one end for long. Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran had a field day rotating the strike; punishing loose balls which were aplenty. The Afghan spinners were a handful and it was once again portrayed that trying to read them, after the delivery had already landed, was a difficult task and the Tigers had a torrid time.



But beyond that, the larger picture and the reasons for that performance were beyond just cricket. The body language of the players, lacking in concrete ideas or execution of plans, were all on view. As if they had turned subpar in a matter of days.

Before every series there used to be some noise that used to distract players but for a few months or so, from the T20 World Cup to head coach Chandika

Hathursingha's arrival and beyond, things had stayed relatively quiet. Barring the usual Shakib Al Hasan controversy, which usually stays as an individual's issue separate from the whole team, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had not given fuel to fire and the Tigers enjoyed a serene time.

In an interview, the BCB president then brought along fresh controversy to the public eye regarding Shakib and

Tamim's rift and division within the team. The can of worms did not open further due to subsequent quiet from the board president. He had also said back in February that it would be hard for the head coach to find him this time around in the Sri Lankan's second stint.

Despite that, when Tamim inadvertently talked about his fitness ahead of the first ODI in Chattogram on July 4, the BCB president brought up more information in another interview. He reiterated that Hathursingha was not happy with Tamim's revelation. The ensuing chaos then came to a head when Tamim took the decision to retire from international cricket, followed by his withdrawal the next day.

These problems surface from the team management's, and in extension, the board's inability to solve the team's issues internally. While the media's task is to report on inconsistencies, as the governing body of Bangladesh cricket, BCB's officials need more nuance to handle the team's own environment. It should not be about giving the media half-truth or no information but about its own handling of the situation.

Now a complete quiet has come up. The board officials have been asked to not comment to the media as if the very air should stand still. Thus, opinions regarding what happened to the team are also being kept close to the pocket. As far as analysis should go, there is more than just cricket arching over the current passage of play.

Ispahani-Prothom Alo inter-uni football from July 14

SPORTS REPORTER

The Ispahani-Prothom Alo Inter University Football Tournament will kick off on July 14 in Chattogram, informed organisers at a press briefing at a hotel in the capital yesterday.

The tournament will feature 33 universities – both public and private – at preliminary level, which will be held in Chattogram, Cumilla and Dhaka. The final round will be held at the Daffodil International University campus in Dhaka with eight teams while the final match will be held on July 29.

All the matches will be of 70-minute duration with a 10-minute recess. The teams will have a 20-member squad each.

The champion team will receive Tk five lacs while the runners-up team will get Tk three lacs, informed organisers at the press briefing.

The press briefing was conducted by Prothom Alo's head of sports, Utpal Shuvro, while the newspaper's editor Matur Rahman, former national team coach Golam Sarwar Tipu, former national footballer Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunu, Daffodil University's vice chancellor Dr Lutfor Rahman, Ispahani Group director Zahida Ispahani and the company's general manager Omar Hannan also spoke on the occasion.

Bangladesh Football Federation's referees' committee chief Azad Rahman conducted the draw ceremony for the tournament.

Golam Sarwar Tipu will lead a 19 member tournament committee while Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chunu will lead the technical committee.

Ebadot out of Afghanistan series

SPORTS REPORTER

Ebadot Hossain has been ruled out of the third and final ODI as well as the T20 series against Afghanistan after suffering a knee injury during the second match on Saturday, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) confirmed on Saturday.

The pacer fell over after feeling his knee during his run-up while bowling his final over and later limped off the ground along with the physio.

The team physio Muzadded Alpha Sany revealed that the injury was not a major one and he expects the pacer to recover in two weeks' time, meaning Ebadot would miss both the T20Is.

"The MRI suggests that this is not a major injury. We expect him to recover in about two weeks' time. He will remain with the team as he does his rehab," he said.

The first T20I of the two-match series is scheduled for July 14, while the second game will take place on July 16. Both matches will take place in Sylhet.

'Play till 32 and then do whatever you want to'

SPORTS REPORTER

Praising the performance of both the young and the experienced footballers in the just-concluded SAFF Championship, Bangladesh Football Federation's president Kazi Salahuddin urged everyone to stay disciplined in the next three to four months in a bid to overcome the first round hurdle of World Cup Qualifiers in October.

Bangladesh put on an improved show in the regional football championship to reach the semifinals for the first time in 14 years, but another uphill task awaits them in the form of World Cup Qualifiers. The men in red and green will face a higher-ranked opponent from among nine teams: Indonesia, Chinese Taipei, Maldives, Yemen, Afghanistan, Singapore, Myanmar, Nepal, Cambodia – in home-and-away basis matches, scheduled for October 12 and 17.

Recalling the experience of the 2016 defeat against lowly Bhutan during the same stage of World Cup Qualifiers, in the same month of October, Salahuddin reminded the players of the consequence if Bangladesh fail to overcome the first round hurdle.

"I have a small message to all of you for which is why I have called you here," Salahuddin told players at a programme to hand over a promised Tk 50 lac bonus at the BFF house yesterday.

"In October, we have matches of World Cup and Asian Cup [Qualifiers]. If we lose the matches, we will be out for the next three

years. We need to win the matches so that our calendar in next three years remains packed. This is very important [for us]," said the BFF boss.

"For the next three to four months, I want absolute determination from you. Your football career is small, so you have to be absolutely disciplined; no late night, no alcohol and training is a must," Salahuddin



said. "You can get all those things when you are 32 or 33 and when there will be nothing to do or nothing to play for. You can do everything."

Citing examples of Cristiano Ronaldo and basketball legend Michael Jordan, Salahuddin said, "No player is born with talent. Every player may have talent, but he has to work

hard. [Sheikh] Morsalin, [Faisal Ahmed] Fahim, Isa [Faisal] – you have a lot of time and now it is time for training and training. Play till 32 and then do anything you want to do."

The BFF boss praised other players as well including some seniors.

"[Anisur Rahman] Zico has become the best goalkeeper of the tournament and we take a lot of pride in that. There were some new players of whom left-back Isa played magnificently; the two central defenders – Tapu (Barman) and Tariq (Kazi) too. Tariq had wonderful tournament even though he made a mistake, which may happen in football but he covered up for it later.

"Senior Sohel Rana and Sohel Rana of Abahani did wonderfully well. And the younger players like Fahim, Morsalin and Ridoy are the future of Bangladesh football. I am pleased with their performance. We have a superstar in Rakib. He is now the best forward of Bangladesh," praised the legendary footballer.

"If you [Rakib] train properly and maintain discipline and take care of yourself, you can be the best player of South Asia of all time. You have the talent and speed; what you need to improve upon is the position sense, and you can talk to the coach about it," said the former Bangladesh international.

"This is time for you to do your job and I hope you will be very serious about it. If you do your job properly and play well, money will fly in," the BFF boss concluded.


SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana Joty expressed her disappointment over her team's poor batting performance following a seven-wicket defeat against India in the opening T20I of the three-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh failed to put up a fighting total against their formidable opponents as lack of batting firepower resulted in the Tigresses managing only 114 runs for five wickets in full quota of 20 overs. Joty was not ready to make inexperience as an excuse behind the batting failures despite the hosts having fielded a lot of new players.

"What I think was a case of lack of intent. When you play wearing a national jersey, you are experienced," said Joty.

The Bangladesh skipper also urged her players to work individually. "When a player gets a start, she should carry her innings; why would she get out after 25 runs? We have to think about our shot-selection and play according to the situation's demand," she added.

In the match, Smriti Mandhana (38) and captain Harmanpreet Kaur (54 not out) stitched a 70-run partnership for the third wicket after an early hiccup as the visitors cruised past Bangladesh's meagre total with 22 deliveries to spare.

The second T20I will take place at the same venue on July 11.

'Three games of unbelievable cricket'



Mark Wood and Chris Woakes have their arms raised in joy as England celebrate a much-needed victory in the third Ashes Test against Australia by three wickets at Headingley yesterday to stay alive in the five-match series, trailing 2-1 with the next match scheduled to start on July 19 at Old Trafford. [Inset] Although Harry Brook could not stay till the end, it was his 75 that had kept the hosts alive earlier on the fourth day.

PHOTO: REUTERS

AGENCIES

England beat Australia by three wickets in a nail-biting third Test at Headingley on Sunday to keep the five-match Ashes series alive.

Harry Brook and Chris Woakes shared a crucial partnership of 59 that took England to the brink of victory before Brook fell for 75 to Mitchell Starc (578). The recalled duo of Woakes (32 not out) and Mark Wood (16 not out) then saw England home with more than a day to spare to cut Australia's series lead to 2-1.

Wood, who was adjudged the player-of-the-match for his seven wickets and 40 runs in the match, revealed that it got nery for him before he got in the middle with the bat to see his side through in the second innings.

"Definitely, delighted to be here, especially as man of the match. Great win for us and it keeps the series alive. I was not good in that dressing room. The lads will tell you, sweaty palms all the way. But it's a lot easier out in the middle. To go up against some of the best fast bowlers in the world, it's the first time I've got England over the line with the bat so I'm delighted," he said after the match.

"Stokesy was very clear about my role, bowl short, sharp spells and give it everything I've got," he added.

England skipper Ben Stokes credited the

memories England have at Headingley and said that the 10-day break would help his side recover and come back with full steam.

"I think it will be great for both teams, it's 2-1 and the next game is vital, so we want to be fresh and ready. Three games of unbelievable cricket, so the break will do quite a few bodies the world of good. Sensational, we love coming here and playing cricket. This place has memories that people will always remember and we love playing here," Stokes said.

While Wood rejoiced at his chance to make an impact, Australia skipper Pat Cummins rued his side's inability to make use of positions of strength.

"There's a few moments that went back and forth. Day one we lost six for 20-odd, yesterday the sun was out and we missed an opportunity. Few key moments. Seems like a series where each sessions swings in one team's favour and then the other," he said.

The series continues with the fourth Test at Old Trafford starting on July 19, with Australia now having two games in which to seal their first Ashes campaign triumph in England in 22 years.

England are bidding to become just the second team to win a Test series from 2-0 down after the 1936/37 Australia side, inspired by batting great Don Bradman, that recovered from that deficit to win the Ashes 3-2.



FARIDPUR-MAGURA RAIL LINK

Poor monitoring to blame for slow pace

IMED report blasts BR

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

After observing the slow pace of a project under which rail tracks are being laid on a 19km stretch between Faridpur and Magura, a report prepared by a government body has accused the railway authorities of serious lacking in their monitoring.

The revised deadline for the project is June 2024, but it has seen around 40 percent progress so far, indicating that there is little chance it would be completed on schedule.

The long delay in land acquisition is also hindering the implementation of the Tk 1,202.49 crore project, the report said.

The in-depth monitoring report of the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) recommended preparing a time-bound action plan and ensuring proper monitoring and reinforcement.

The project authorities said the contractors have slowed down the work over their unmet demand for adjusting the price of construction materials following the sharp hike in the global market.

Project Director Ashadul Haque told The Daily Star yesterday that they have already written to the authorities concerned to solve the issue.

In May 2018, the government approved the project for constructing a rail line from Faridpur's Madhukhali to Magura even before carrying out a feasibility study.

The project was supposed to be completed within April 2022. But its physical work started in June last year, as the authorities had to finish a feasibility study and a detailed design before beginning the physical work.



Pedestrians, especially school-goers, are facing difficulties crossing the Jahangir Gate area as construction materials for installing sewerage pipes have been left on the pavement. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Record 91 hajj pilgrims die this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A record 91 Bangladeshi hajj pilgrims died so far in Saudi Arabia this year.

Of the deceased, 22 are female and 69 are male, according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The ministry's hajj bulletin released on July 8 revealed that 75 hajj pilgrims died in Makkah, five in Medina, seven in Mina, two in Arafat, and one each in Jeddah and Muzdalifah.

This year's hajj has been observed amid intense heat.

Thirty-two hajj pilgrims died within a week since July 3. On June 29, 7 hajj pilgrims died due to heat stroke, according to media reports.

This is the highest number of Bangladeshi who died in Saudi Arabia during the holy hajj, according to the Hajj Agencies Association of

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The revised deadline for the project is June 2024 but it has seen around 40 percent progress so far, indicating that there is little chance it would be completed on schedule.

Later, the project deadline was extended to June 2024.

Bangladesh Railway appointed two China-Bangladesh joint venture companies as contractors.

The project saw a 41.37 percent progress till this June, which is only a 3.85 percent rise from June last year, shows BR's monthly progress report.

IMED, which published the report recently, also said 20 meetings of Project Implementation Committee (PIC) and Project Steering Committee (PSC) were supposed to be held in the last five years, but only six were held.

"There is a weakness on the part of Bangladesh Railway and the Railways Ministry in project monitoring," reads the report.

"PIC, PSC, Bangladesh Railway and the Railways Ministry should have taken the cost management issues seriously," it added.

Asked about the matter, PD Ashadul admitted that the project could not make the expected progress.

He said following the decision of the PSC, they wrote to Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) seeking its opinion regarding contractors' demand to adjust material prices, but the CPTU has not responded yet.

The IMED report said 112 acres of land would have to be acquired in Magura for laying an 11km rail line there, but the land acquisition work saw no major progress there.

BR sources said the project authorities have handed over Tk 155 crore and Tk 40.21 crore to Magura and Faridpur district administrations for land acquisition.

However, it was later discovered that Magura actually required Tk 114 crore, while Faridpur needed Tk 80 crore.

As a result, Magura needs to send back Tk 40.22 crore to the Faridpur district administration.

The mismatch in fund allocation is also causing a delay in land acquisition.

Asked about IMED's allegation of poor monitoring, the PD said the organisation might mean the delay in settling the contractors' price adjustment claim, but it is not possible to solve the problem by the railways authorities alone.

Several government agencies are involved and it will take time, he added.

UNIVERSAL PENSION

4 schemes to be on offer

Finance ministry prepares draft rule

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The finance ministry has prepared a draft rule for the Universal Pension Scheme (UPS) delineating four separate schemes for both local and non-resident Bangladeshis.

The schemes – Probas, Progoti, Surokkha and Samata – can be availed by everyone except government employees.

There will be different ceilings in the Probas scheme, which is for non-resident Bangladeshis. The instalments can be paid in dollars.

The Progoti scheme is for private sector employees and will be similar to the provident fund. Employees will pay a certain percentage of their basic salaries towards the scheme and their employers would be putting in the same amount.

The Surokkha scheme was designed for those in the informal sector. There will be different instalment ceilings. The instalment amount will not be dependent on basic salaries.

Samata scheme is for the poor, with the government bearing half the instalment amount.

The detailed mechanisms of the schemes will be defined elaborately by separate rules

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Sudan faces 'full-scale civil war'

UN warns as air raid kills 22 civilians, injures dozens

AFP, Wad Madani

Conflict-torn Sudan is on the brink of a "full-scale civil war" that could destabilise the entire region, the United Nations warned yesterday, after an air strike on a residential area killed around two dozen civilians.

The Ministry of Health reported "22 dead and a large number of wounded among the civilians" from what it described as an air strike Saturday on Khartoum's sister city Omdurman, in the district of Dar al Salam, which means "House of Peace" in Arabic.

After nearly three months of war between Sudan's rival generals, the air strike is the latest incident to provoke outrage.

Around 3,000 people have been killed in the conflict, survivors have reported a wave of sexual violence and witnesses have spoken of ethnically targeted killings. There has been widespread looting, and the UN warned of possible crimes against humanity in the Darfur region.

A video posted by the health ministry on Facebook showed apparently dismembered bodies lying partly covered on the ground after the air strike. Several women were among the victims.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), fighting the regular army, claimed that the "air strikes" killed 31.

Residents contacted by AFP also confirmed an air strike but yesterday, the armed forces released a statement "clarifying that the air

force did not deal with any hostile targets in Omdurman yesterday [Saturday]."

Since the war began, paramilitaries have established bases in residential areas, and they have been accused of forcing civilians from their homes.

Witnesses reported more air strikes near the presidential palace in central Khartoum yesterday, as well as machine gun clashes and artillery fire in the city's south.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday condemned the air strike in Omdurman, which he said "reportedly killed at least 22 people" and wounded dozens, his deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq said in a statement.

Guterres "remains deeply concerned that the ongoing war between the armed forces has pushed Sudan to the brink of a full-scale civil war, potentially destabilising the entire region", Haq said.

Sudan, in northeast Africa, borders other impoverished countries which have a history of unrest.

Nearly three million people have been uprooted by Sudan's fighting, among them almost 700,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries, according to the International Organization for Migration.

The UN and African blocs have warned of an "ethnic dimension" to the conflict in the western region of Darfur, where the United States, Norway and Britain have blamed the RSF and allied militia for most of the widespread violations.

Around 3,000 people have been killed in the conflict so far.

Ancient society's 'Ivory Man' was an 'Ivory Lady'

AFP, Paris

The "Ivory Man", whose remains were found in an opulent tomb in Spain in 2008, is believed to have been the most powerful and influential person of his ancient society nearly 5,000 years ago.

There's just one problem: the remains are of a woman, scientists have revealed. They have renamed her the "Ivory Lady".

Human remains are one of the only ways to understand the balance of power between the genders in ancient societies.

But it is often difficult to determine whether poorly preserved skeletons are those of men or women.

At a vast archaeological site at Valencina, near the southwestern Spanish city of Seville, several large and sophisticated tombs have been unearthed. They date back to 2,900–2,650 BC, in a period known as the Copper Age.

Mass burials were the norm for this ancient Iberian society but in 2008 archaeologists discovered a tomb containing just one person.

A standard physical examination at the time determined the person was a male between 17 and 25 years old, according to a study published in the journal Scientific Reports on Thursday.

Lavish artefacts were found at the person's side. They included a large ceramic plate which showed chemical traces of wine and cannabis, a complete elephant tusk and many objects made of ivory – earning the person the nickname the "Ivory Man".

They included a large ceramic plate which showed chemical traces of wine and cannabis, a complete elephant tusk and many objects made of ivory – earning the person the nickname the "Ivory Man".



Vehicles damaged in crashes have been left on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Narayanganj's Kanchpur even though there is a designated spot near Kanchpur Highway Police Station to keep those. Occupations of road space in this manner disrupt traffic. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

The admin sees another reshuffle

10 districts get new DCs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government appointed new deputy commissioners to 10 districts yesterday, just three days after appointing nine new DCs and transferring one.

The public administration ministry issued a gazette notification in this regard yesterday.

The move is considered significant as the DCs will act as returning officers during the next general election, likely to be held in late December this year or early January next year.

Of the 10 newly appointed DCs, five are from the 27th batch of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS). They were recruited during the tenure of the Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government. They got appointments in 2009 when the Awami League was in power, officials said.

Two of the new DCs are from the 25th BCS batch and three from the 24th BCS batch.

Law minister's Private Secretary Nur Kutubul Alam has been made the DC of Patuakhali, the private secretary to state minister for shipping, Abraul Hasan Mojumder, has been posted as the DC

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