

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 Hogla 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

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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

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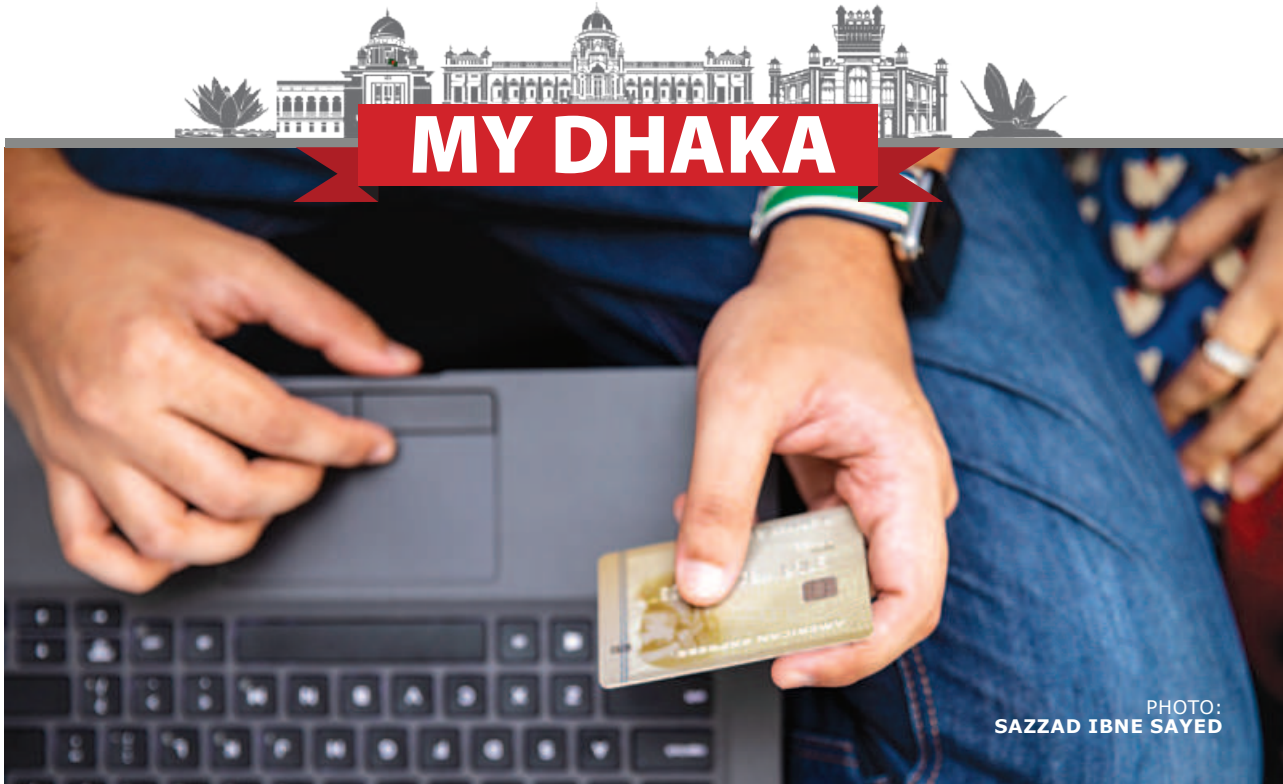
Answering questions after the event, he told journalists that the state has suffered a great loss.

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.



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.

Police looking to revive old cases

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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

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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.

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 Sujanagar 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 Joyнал 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 Prodip 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.