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# US wants talks for sake of free, fair polls

Zeya calls on PM, home, law ministers,  
says her country is for deeper  
engagement with Dhaka

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Washington wants dialogue between political parties for a free, fair, and peaceful election, said Uzra Zeya, the visiting under secretary of state for civilian security, democracy, and human rights.

"...You know, we are all for dialogue that we do not have any direct involvement in ...," she said responding to a question on the US stance on the Awami League and BNP being at loggerheads over polls time government and refusing to hold talks.

She said the large political rallies on Wednesday free of serious violence are a good harbinger that Washington would like to see replicated.

Zeya said she heard strong commitment from the prime minister and all the ministers she spoke to supporting free, fair, and peaceful elections.

"The United States as part of our global human rights policy supports free and fair and peaceful elections and we want to do our part as a longtime partner of Bangladesh to help make this possible," she said while speaking at a joint press briefing with Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen at the state guest house Padma after lunch yesterday.

She said the US looks to deepen engagement with Bangladesh over the next 50 years.

Zeya, who was accompanied by US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu and other US officials, was on a four-day visit since July 11. She was to leave early today.

She visited the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar on Wednesday and held meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban, Law Minister Anisul Huq and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan at their ministries yesterday.

She also met civil society members, and Prime Minister's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman Fazlur Rahman over dinner yesterday.

Her visit comes when relations between Dhaka and Washington are somewhat strained because of a recent policy that restricts US visas for "individuals and their immediate family members if they are responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh".

In December 2021, Washington imposed sanctions on Rab and some of its officials and did not invite Bangladesh to Biden's Summit for Democracy in 2021 and 2023.

**STRONG DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

During her meeting with the PM, both spoke about good governance and building strong democratic institutions.

"The United States looks forward to continued collaboration supportive to an inclusive and democratic Bangladesh, in which all the people of Bangladesh can thrive," she said, according to a US embassy statement.

She emphasised on freedom of journalists to report without fear of retaliation or intimidation and the vital role the civil society plays in democracies -- advancing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedoms of expression and association.

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Uzra Zeya, US under secretary for civilian security, democracy, and human rights, calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban. The senior American diplomat discussed elections and Rohingya crisis, among other issues, with the premier yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF US EMBASSY

COUNTERING BNP DEMO

## AL to stay alert, march city streets

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The ruling Awami League will bring out processions on July 18-19 as part of its strategy to counter the BNP's two-day street agitation.

The party yesterday decided to hold what it termed "a march for peace and development".

Besides, leaders and activists of Dhaka north and south AL will be especially vigilant on those days, said sources.

The party's General Secretary Obaidul Quader and Dhaka division AL's Organising Secretary Mirza Azam yesterday held talks with the Dhaka north and south city unit leaders about the programmes.

Since December, the ruling party has been holding programmes to counter the BNP's ongoing movement. It will continue to do so until the national election, slated for January next.

The BNP, at its Wednesday rally, announced marches in all city and district headquarters on July 18-19 to press home its one-point movement for polls under a non-party interim government.

At 3:00pm on July 18, Dhaka south AL leaders and activists will bring out a procession from Institution of Engineers, SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BNP'S ONE-POINT MOVEMENT

## Grassroots wanted it tough, top brass won't rush things

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

After holding a "mammoth" rally on Wednesday, the top BNP leadership is all charged up and ready to take the movement to the next stage to materialise their demand for election under a non-partisan interim administration.

Although there are mixed reactions within the party for chalking out programmes that many have termed "routine", the top leadership believes thousands of party men will continue to show up for the marches as the grassroots have shown their preparedness for tougher programmes in the coming days, said party sources.

"Yesterday's (Wednesday) rally laid a foundation to our movement, which gave a boost to our confidence as we go for tougher programmes in the coming days," Abdul Awal Mintoo, vice chairman of the party, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Despite police attempts to prevent party members from joining the rally, the meeting was peaceful, the gathering huge and the youth participation noticeable. All these went in favour of the party.

The ranks and files of the party were very excited about the announcement of the one-point movement, which was reflected in the huge turnout.

"The meeting was different at least on two counts -- participation of the young people and also the common people," said Mintoo, adding that it indicates the common people are joining the BNP's movement.

If the party can keep the momentum going, more people will take to the streets extending their support for the BNP's cause, party

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## BB begins forex reporting as per IMF manual

Reserves stand at \$23.65  
under new method

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh Bank yesterday began publishing foreign currency reserves as per the International Monetary Fund's BPM6 manual, in a move that will ensure that the country's dollar stockpile is reported accurately.

As per the balance of payments and investment position manual (BPM6), Bangladesh's gross foreign currency reserves stood at \$23.65 billion.

This is enough to meet four months' import bills given the current import trend.

The move to compiling and reporting the country's gross foreign currency reserves as per the BPM6 comes as part of the conditions agreed with the IMF for the \$4.7 billion loan programme.

The government committed to adopting the BPM6, which is followed faithfully by central banks around the world, by June 30.

As per BPM6, gross foreign reserves include gold, cash US dollar, bonds and SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

EU TEAM'S SYLHET VISIT

## Law and order, political situation came up for talks

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

A seven-member Election Exploratory Mission of the European Union visited Sylhet yesterday to discuss with senior officials the overall political and law and order situation in the district.

The mission held separate meetings with the deputy commissioner of Sylhet, the chief executive officer of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC), and the superintendent of Sylhet district police.

During the meeting with Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun, superintendent of Sylhet district police, the EU mission wanted to know whether there is any security threat to a possible EU election observation mission for Bangladesh's general election, said Sheikh Md Saleem, additional SP (crime and operations) of Sylhet district police.

"The SP informed the delegation that the law and order in Sylhet is very good and there is no security risk to the possible EU election observation mission," Saleem added.

Muhammed Badrul Haque, CEO of the city corporation, said the mission enquired about how the Election Commission cooperate with the administration and the police.

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## 'TORTURE BY COPS' Natore court orders SP to sue five policemen

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Natore

A Natore court yesterday ordered the district superintendent of police to file a case against five policemen for torturing three men in custody.

The five cops are Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) of Baraigram Sharif Al Rajib, Officer-in-Charge Md Ujjal Hossain of Lalpur Police Station, sub-inspectors Md Zahid Hasan and Omar Farooq Shimul, and a constable.

Senior Judicial Magistrate of Lalpur Cognisance Court Md Muslim Uddin also ordered the SP to report to the court tomorrow.

Bench assistant of Lalpur Cognisance Court Abdullah Biswas told The Daily Star that in statements given to the court, Md Sohag Hossain, Md Shamim Molla, and SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Shop owners and their employees block Gulshan-1 intersection yesterday after the Dhaka North City Corporation sealed off the adjacent Gulshan Shopping Centre which was declared risky earlier. The demonstration led to huge tailbacks in Gulshan, Banani, and nearby areas. Story on page 2.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Bus kills student, then crushes boy to death while fleeing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A recklessly driven bus yesterday hit a university student and while fleeing the scene of the accident, it got on to a pavement and killed a boy.

The incident happened near Rampura bridge around 4:30pm.

Physically challenged Mehedi Hasan Parvez, 13, who was with her mother, died on the spot while Jahid Hasan, a student of North China Electric Power University, succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 5:30pm.

Mizanur Rahman, a sub-inspector of Hatirjheel Police Station, said a bus of Victor Paribahan first hit the youth on the road and ran over the boy on the pavement around 50 yards away.

"Parvez's mother was asking for alms keeping him lying on the pavement," he added.

Imran Hossain, brother of Jahid, said they were heading towards Police Plaza in Gulshan in Hatirjheel when the bus hit his brother.

Jahid had been taking online classes at the university for two years. He was supposed to go to China in August, he said.

Hailing from Munshiganj, Jahid used to live in Staff Quarters area of the capital.

Sub-inspector Sharmin Akter Eva, of Hatirjheel Police Station, said police seized the bus and detained driver Arif Hossain, 31.

The bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsies.



## Traders take to streets as DNCC shuts risky market

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation yesterday sealed off Gulshan Shopping Centre that was declared risky by the fire service department over two years ago.

Angered by the move, shop owners and their employees blocked adjacent Gulshan-1 intersection and started demonstrating around 12:30pm, demanding reopening of the six-storey market.

This led to gridlock in Gulshan, Banani, Hatirjheel, Badda, Mohakhali, and nearby areas, causing immense suffering to commuters.

Over three hours later, police requested the demonstrators to leave the place. As they did not respond, police used truncheons to disperse them.

The protesters hurled brick chunks at police personnel. At one point, they moved back and the traffic became normal, said police.

Shahidullah, deputy commissioner (Gulshan zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told reporters, “We requested the traders to discuss reopening of the market with the authorities concerned. But they didn’t heed the request and continued the demonstration.

“To keep the traffic moving and reduce public sufferings, the protesters were removed from the street.”

Alamin Hossain, who was travelling to Gulshan from Bangla Motor, said, “I started from Bangla Motor around 1:00pm. When I reached Hatirjheel Kunipara area, I was caught in traffic.”

After getting off from an auto-rickshaw, he walked to Gulshan-1, which took him over an hour.

Didar Hossain, a bus staffer, said his vehicle had been stuck at Gulshan-1 intersection from 11:00am to 3:00pm due to the road blockade.

Meanwhile, traders claimed that DNCC officials on June 8 asked them to leave the market by July 30, stating that the building was at risk of fire. But the DNCC shut down the market before the deadline.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abul Bashar, owner of 30 shops, said, “Where will we go now?”

According to a notice put up at the main gate of Gulshan Shopping Centre, which has 731 shops, the fire service department said its officials inspected the market in 2017 and issued a letter to the market authorities to ensure fire safety.

After visiting the market in June 2021, the fire service department found that no action was taken by the traders in this regard. So, the department declared that the building was at high risk of fire and asked the DNCC to close the market, said the notice.

Rejecting the traders’ claim of closing the market before the deadline, DNCC Zonal Executive Officer Julker Nayen, who sealed off the market, told this newspaper, “DNCC officials visited the market and asked the traders to vacate the market by June 8. However, none of them left. After Eid, the traders sought time until July 30, but the DNCC mayor didn’t consider it.”



This photograph taken on Wednesday shows a high-rise residential building damaged by the remains of a shot-down Russian drone in Kyiv, Ukraine on late Wednesday said it had downed 20 Russian attack drones and two cruise missiles in a third night of strikes on Kyiv and elsewhere in the country.

PHOTO: AFP

## ROOPPUR POWER PLANT Nuclear fuel rods may arrive by Sept

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, *Pabna*

Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) has got permission to import nuclear fuel from Russia and store it for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

Following international guideline, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority (BAERA) gave the permission at a licence-awarding ceremony at Ratnoddweep Resort in Pabna yesterday evening.

BAERA gave BAEC two licences – one for importing nuclear fuel and another for its storage, while another licence for transporting nuclear fuel was awarded to a Russian company.

Science and Technology Minister Yeafesh Osman speaking as the chief guest said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is issuing the guideline and suggestion for implementing the power plant project and that they were following the guideline.

Shawkat Akbar, project director of the plant, said, “This [permission] is another

milestone. Now there is no bar to import nuclear fuel for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant by September this year.”

“BAERA is monitoring each and every step of the progress of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant to ensure IAEA’s guideline,” Satyajit Ghose, chief scientific officer and project director of Nuclear Regulatory Infrastructure development project of BAERA, told The Daily Star.

The plant is being implemented by BAEC with technical and financial support from Russia. The plant has two reactors, each with a 1,200 megawatt power generation capacity.

Commissioning of unit-1 is likely to be next year and unit-2 in 2025.

The plant will get nuclear fuel free from Russia in the first three years, and the first consignment of the fuel is likely to reach the country this year.

The ceremony was chaired by BAERA Chairman Muzammel Haque.



## Nato returns to Cold War ‘schemes’

Says Russia, vows to respond to threats by using ‘all means’

REUTERS

The latest Nato summit showed that the Western alliance was returning to “Cold War schemes,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday, adding that the Kremlin was ready to respond to threats by using “all means.”

The Nato summit in Lithuania ended with the United States and its allies giving Ukraine new security assurances for its defence against Moscow more than 500 days into Russia’s invasion of its neighbour.

The summit was also buoyed by the prospect of Sweden joining the military alliance as its newest member after Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Monday abruptly dropped his prior objections.

The Russian ministry said in a statement late Wednesday: “The results of the Vilnius Summit will be carefully analysed. Taking into account the challenges and threats to Russia’s security and interests that have been identified, we will respond in a timely and appropriate manner, using all means and methods at our disposal.”

## Ex-mayor Sadiq sued over hogging post in club

UNB, Barishal

A case has been filed against former Barishal city corporation mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah over occupying the post of president of the Barishal Club illegally and refusing to quit.

Mofizur Rahman Chowdhury, a member of the club, filed the case in Barishal Senior Assistant Judge Court yesterday, said his lawyer Azad Rahman.

According to the case statement, to be elected as the club president, a member have to have a membership of 10 years. Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah became a member on August 20, 2016, and became the president on March 8, 2019, violating the constitution of the club.

The statement also added that the club owes a huge amount of the cafeteria bill from the former mayor. Besides, he arranged two rooms in the club for the chief executive officer of Barishal City Corporation.

## Indian man held with yaba, liquor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Lalmoinirhat*

Police detained an Indian man and seized 500 yaba pills and 84 bottles of foreign liquor from his possession during a raid at Katlamari village in Ulipur upazila of Kurigram on Wednesday night.

The detainee Saiful Sheikh, 24, is a resident of Har-Singmari district in the Indian state of Meghalaya, said Kurigram Additional Superintendent of Police Ruhul Amin.

A local court yesterday around noon sent Saiful to Kurigram District Jail, the police official added.

A case was lodged against him under the Control of Entry Act, 1952 and Narcotics Control Act with Ulipur Police Station.

## BARAPUKURIA GRAFT CASE Charge framing hearing against Khaleda on Aug 8

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set August 8 for the hearing on charge framing against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and six others in the Barapukuria coal mine corruption case.

Judge Md Akhtaruzzaman of Dhaka’s Special Judge’s Court-2 passed the order after a petition was filed on behalf of Khaleda, seeking an adjournment of the hearing, Adv Masud Ahmed Talukder, one of her lawyers, told The Daily Star.

In the petition, Masud said Khaleda, who is now out of jail after an executive order from the government, is unwell and she was taking treatment at her Gulshan residence. So, the hearing should be adjourned, he said.

Moreover, they were yet to get some important documents seized by the investigating officer during the investigation of the case, he said.

On February 26, 2008, Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station, accusing 16 people, including Khaleda and 10 of her former cabinet colleagues, of taking Tk 159 crore in kickbacks on the Barapukuria coalmine deal awarded to the highest bidder.

## US wants talks for sake of free, fair polls

FROM PAGE 1

She underscored the US desire to deepen its partnership with Bangladesh, in support of their vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific anchored in resilience.

Zeya lauded Hasina for generously hosting more than a million Rohingyas and stressed that other donors should come forward to support the Rohingyas.

On top of the \$2.1 billion that Washington provided for the Rohingyas and the host communities in Bangladesh and the region since August 2017, Zeya announced more than \$74 million in additional funds.

She encouraged Bangladesh to expand livelihood opportunities for the Rohingyas. The US is also maintaining pressure on Myanmar to end the crisis and create the conditions for the eventual voluntary

return of Rohingya to their homeland.

### ON ELECTIONS

Zeya said the US announced the new visa policy to supplement Hasina’s commitment to hold free, fair and neutral elections, according to the PM’s Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim, who briefed reporters.

The PM said the AL always fought for free and fair elections in the country and held free and fair polls. Transparent ballot boxes have been introduced for polls, she told Zeya, reports UNB.

Hasina said it was the BNP who started vote rigging in the country and she recalled “the atrocities, terrorist activities, and arson attacks of the BNP and their allies” during 2013-15 that left 500 people killed.

Law Minister Anisul Huq, after his meeting with Zeya, told the press that the US delegation sought a proper

investigation into the killing of labour leader Shahidul Islam and he assured them of justice for Shahidul. Anisul said Zeya did not bring up the issue of caretaker government but she did talk about free, fair, and violence-free elections.

He told her that amendments to the Digital Security Act would be done in September.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told Zeya that law enforcers would remain under the Election Commission during the polls as per the law and that the law enforcers have been trained and are ready to assist the EC.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen during his meeting with Zeya appraised her of Bangladesh’s achievements in labour safety and the reforms being carried out in the labour sector.

Washington had expressed concerns over the challenges of trade unions and discriminatory laws for the workers inside the EPZs and outside EPZs, as well as poor labour practices and wages.

“We also discussed and exchanged views on civil rights and the upcoming polls, about civilian security including trafficking in persons.”

He requested Zeya to withdraw the sanctions on Rab.

Asked about a China-brokered tripartite initiative for Rohingya repatriation, he said they discussed all options including the tripartite initiative.

“We updated them about the latest situation. They appreciated our concerns and shared some of their thoughts on how to go forward. We will be in touch with them,” Secretary Momen said.

## BB begins forex reporting

FROM PAGE 1

treasury bills, reserve position in the IMF, special drawing rights holdings – which is a form of international money created by the IMF and defined as a weighted average of various convertible currencies – and so on.

The central bank’s previous gross reserves computation factored in other components and subsequently, the number ends up being markedly higher.

“The fact that inflated reserves will no longer be published is a welcome move,” said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank’s Dhaka office.

Inflated reserves create a host of problems for the government, the central bank and the economy.

“At one point, Bangladesh Bank reported reserves of \$48 billion, which caught the attention of a certain section of the private sector. They demanded loans from the reserves thinking the government was sitting on a mountain of dollars.”

Besides, based on the inflated reserve figure, the government decided to give the loan to Sri Lanka, which compelled the Maldives to seek a similar loan.

If the actual reserves were published, the government would not have met such demands or faced such a situation, Hussain said.

Inflated reserves can also create scope for political grandstanding.

“So this IMF methodology is good for all,” Hussain said.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute, echoed the same.

“This is the first step in the right direction. We need to build up our reserves urgently.”

As per the IMF’s conditions for the loan programme, Bangladesh’s net foreign currency reserves need to be \$25.32 billion by September 30 and \$26.81 billion by the end of the year.

For net international reserves

computation, short-term foreign currency drains such as impending import bills and loan repayment are deducted from the gross reserves figure, as per BPM6. This is one of the three mandatory conditions to get the instalments released by the IMF.

Bangladesh failed to meet June’s net reserves floor of \$24.46 billion.

The IMF staff mission will review the progress made in the first half of the year and take a call on whether to release the second tranche of the loan in October.

“We simply have to stop the dollar sales,” said Mansur, also a former economist of the IMF.

## AL to stay alert, march city streets

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh, to Dhanmondi 32.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Dhaka south AL President Abu Ahmed Mannafi said they will hold it to highlight the government’s achievements since 2009.

“We will gather over one lakh people at our procession.”

On July 19, Dhaka north AL will hold a procession, also starting at 3:00pm. There, party leaders and activists will parade from Satrasta intersection of Tejgaon to Mohakhali.

Besides, leaders and activists of 24 thanas and 75 wards under Dhaka south and 26 thanas, 63 wards and one union under Dhaka north will take position at party offices concerned from the morning on both days, and will be on the lookout for anyone trying to create unwanted situations, sources said.

AL Joint General Secretary Bahauddin Nasim told the Daily Star they will occupy the streets till the national election to counter anti-democratic forces.

“We won’t spare anyone and will continue our battle for peace and democracy.”

## Natore court orders SP to sue five policemen

FROM PAGE 1

Md Salam complained that they were tortured to falsely confess that they carjacked a three-wheeler.

Sohag in his statement said he was detained around 8:45pm on July 9 and taken to Lalpur Police Station. OC Ujjal immediately blindfolded him and started beating him up, he said in the statement.

The OC beat him up again on the night of July 11. He was thrashed on the soles of his feet and kicked in the scrotum.

ASP Sharif then told Sohag that if he did not confess before the magistrate, he will have him placed on remand, Biswas said.

Salam told the magistrate that police arrested him from his home on July 9 around 1:00am. When the OC entered the police station, he started slapping Salam. He was thrown to the floor and SI Zahid and SI Omar slammed the leg of a table on his little finger. They pressed down on the table repeatedly. They kept doing this

and beating Salam on the legs.

On July 12 afternoon, SI Omar took a steel pipe and beat up Salam with it from the waist down.

Shamim stated that police picked him up from his home on July 10 around 3:30pm and that he was beaten the whole way to the police station, said Biswas quoting his statement to the magistrate.

He was then taken to Kushtia to pick up another suspect Md Rakibul Islam Rakib. Shamim was beaten again as Rakib’s shop was closed and he could not be found, said Biswas quoting the statements.

The next day around 11:00am, a constable, SI Zahid and SI Omar took him to a section of the police station not covered by CCTV cameras, blindfolded him, and thrashed him with a piece of bamboo.

They tied up his legs, beat him repeatedly on the soles of his feet, and stomped on his chest. The cops threatened to rub chilli powder on his

private parts if he did not confess to the magistrate.

The three and Rakib, who was later arrested, were sent to the court on July 12 and the investigating officer of the case, SI Omar, sought their confessions be recorded.

But instead of confessing, Sohag alleged torture.

The magistrate saw the injuries on their bodies and directed the jail superintendent of Natore and Natore Modern Sadar Hospital’s superintendent to examine the accused and prepare medical reports on the injuries and submit them to the court by 4:00pm yesterday.

The reports on Shamim and Salam mentioned evidence of torture, Biswas said.

The magistrate then told the SP to direct a policeman not under the officers in question to investigate.

Natore SP Md Saifur Rahman, however, told this paper, “When they tried to catch the accused in

the auto-rickshaw robbery case, they began to run away, and fell and hurt themselves.”

He said legal action would be taken only after investigations into the claims.

## Hundreds arrested following Kenya protests

AFP, *Nairobi*

Kenya’s interior ministry yesterday said more than 300 people had been arrested over anti-government protests that left nine dead as the opposition announced fresh demonstrations next week.

There were violent clashes and looting on Wednesday in parts of the East African nation as protesters took to the streets over tax hikes and economic pressures in defiance of a government ban.





## Introduce sewage system across country

**PM tells authorities, inaugurates South Asia's largest STP in Dasherbandi**

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked authorities concerned to introduce water purification and sewage system in all divisional cities, districts, upazilas and union level in phases.

"For this you have to formulate a master plan. And preparing the same model, if we can select the places and start the construction work... we will

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



**A boy fights dengue at Mugda Medical College and Hospital, his hopeful eyes showing his strength. The cannula attached to his hand is a stark reminder of the severity of the situation, but it does not deter him. In a grim trend over the last few days, the number of child dengue patients has shot up in hospitals across the capital. With 1,239 more patients hospitalised with dengue during the 24 hours till yesterday morning, the total number of cases crossed 17,000.**

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## DHAKA-CHATTOGRAM HIGHWAY

# Maintenance to take more time, money

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The road authorities have to spend more resources, including money and time, to keep the Dhaka-Chattoogram Highway operational, thanks to its delayed maintenance works and rutting caused by continuous plying of overloaded vehicles.

Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has sought two more years and Tk 189 crore more for implementing a Tk 793.14 crore project, initiated in 2019 and slated to be completed by June this year, for strengthening the road and keeping it operational, said officials.

The revision, if approved, will take the total project cost to Tk 982 crore and the deadline to June 2025. The proposal is currently pending at the Planning Commission, they added.

This highway is considered the economic lifeline of the country, as over 90 percent of Bangladesh's foreign trade depends on Chattogram Port and the current four lane highway. However, indecision, shortsightedness, and piecemeal measures have plagued the road's upgrade for a long time.

The department had completed a project in 2016 to expand the highway from Cumilla's Daudkandi to Chattogram. Nevertheless, the road developed ruts within the next couple of years due to overload and poor traffic forecast, forcing the authorities to take up the maintenance project.

The Dhaka-Daukandi part of

the highway was expanded under separate projects.

The 2019 project was RHD's first attempt at ensuring performance-based maintenance, meaning that the contractor will repair the road whenever necessary to keep it operational for the next four years. The authorities, however, failed to start the project on time.

The prolonged procedure

Additional money is needed to repair the rutting as the damage was more severe than the department had anticipated during the preparation stage, he mentioned.

"The rutting continues as overloading could not be controlled," he added.

The authorities, for the first time, imposed fines for



FILE PHOTO

of getting approval to import bitumen is what caused the delay, informed Abu Hena Mohammed Tareq Iqbal, the project director.

"It took us about a year to get the approval as the item was not mentioned as an importable product. Also, work was suspended on various occasions, including Eid, further adding to the delays. Nevertheless, 75 percent of the major repairs are already done," he added.

overloading in August 2016. However, protesting transport owners and workers damaged the weighbridges in Manikganj and Chattogram on the first day.

This compelled the authorities to increase the maximum weight limit of goods-laden vehicles in November 2017.

Currently, two of three weighbridges are operational at two points on the highway.

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## YUNUS CASE

# Labour court to record depositions on July 23

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A labour court in Dhaka yesterday set July 23 for recording depositions in a case filed against Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, also chairman of Grameen Telecom, and its three other top officials for violating labour laws.

Sheikh Merina Sultana, chairman of the Third Labour Court of Dhaka, passed the order after defence lawyers for Yunus and three others submitted petitions, seeking an adjournment of the hearing.

Meantime, the complainant yesterday appeared before the labour court to narrate what he knew about the incident, bench assistant Mohammad Nuruzzaman told The Daily Star.

Earlier on June 6, the court exempted Dr Yunus and Ashrafur Hasan, managing director of Grameen Telecom, from their personal appearance, and their lawyers represented them at the court yesterday.

Two others -- Nur Jahan Begum and Mohammad Shahjahan -- also directors of Grameen Telecom, were present at the court.

On June 6, the court framed charges against

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## ARREST OF CITIZENS

# What's the difficulty in informing family members, asks SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police should not have any problem in informing family members following an arrest, said the Supreme Court yesterday.

It also asked the police, magistrates and judges concerned what is the difficulty in conveying the family members about the arrest.

Besides, the law enforcers should not have any objection in making a memorandum of arrest, including taking signatures of arrestees and conveying their families about detention.

All this should be done for the sake of transparency, the SC told the attorney general while hearing a review petition.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told the court that there is no provision of law in making memorandum of arrest after detaining people.

A seven-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique was holding hearing of the review petition filed by the government challenging its 2016 judgement.

It upheld the 2003 High Court verdict against the arbitrary exercise of power by law enforcers using few sections of the CrPC, including section 54.

Section 54 empowers police to arrest anyone on mere suspicion. Under several other sections of the criminal law, arrestees are placed on remand and detained in violation of their fundamental rights to protection of life and liberty, it said.

# BNP unveils 31-point outline to 'rebuild' state

## Canadian high commissioner calls on party leaders

STAR REPORT

A day after announcing its one-point demand, BNP yesterday unveiled a 31-point outline aimed at "reforming" the constitution and state system and ensuring economic emancipation.

Party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul presented the outline at a press conference at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, reports UNB.

"As a responsible political party, we -- through discussions with other parties who are carrying out movements with us -- formulated this outline. On behalf of BNP, I want to present it before the nation," Fakhrul said.

**We're now announcing our 31-point outline, not just for the election and regime change, but for overall qualitative change in the state system and turning the country into a democratic state in the true sense.**



He said they announced the one-point demand from their Wednesday rally for a political changeover. "We're now announcing our 31-point outline, not just for the election or regime change, but for turning the country into a democratic state in the true sense."

He said this outline is "crucial" for the nation, as it contains their party's commitments to bringing positive change to the country.

The BNP leader said Bangladesh was formed with the dream of establishing democracy, equality, human dignity, and social justice through the Liberation War in 1971. "They (people)

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Shajahan Siraj's death anniv today

STAR REPORT

Today is the third death anniversary of Shajahan Siraj, one of the key organisers of the Liberation War in 1971.

On this day in 2020, he passed away in Dhaka, at the age of 77, said a press release.

On the occasion, a three-day programme has been taken up in Dhaka and Kalihati, Tangail. On behalf of Shajahan Siraj Welfare Trust, a wreath will be placed on his grave at Banani graveyard in Dhaka in the morning.

Qurankhwani and a food distribution programme will be held at the orphanages run by Anjuman Mufidul Islam.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

PRAYER TIMING		JULY 14			
Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
4:10	12:30	5:00	6:55	8:17	
JAMAT	4:45	1:15	5:15	7:00	8:45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

## DHAKA-17 BY-POLLS

# Slum dwellers to be a key factor

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

In absence of BNP, the Dhaka 17 by-polls scheduled for July 17, is shaping up to be a two-horse race between the ruling Awami League candidate, Muhammad A Arafat, and independent candidate Ashraful Hossain alias Hero Alom.

However, Alom's presence in the electioneering campaign has been thin.

Meanwhile, Arafat, has been on a hectic campaign trail, meeting with voters and addressing rallies. Besides, candidates of the Jatiya Party and Jaker Party also have a significant presence on the campaigning field.

In addition to the elite population of Gulshan, Banani, and Cantonment, the Dhaka-17 constituency also encompasses several large slums, including the Karail slum, which serves as the largest home for marginalised people in the country.

According to the EC, the total number of voters in the Dhaka-17 constituency is 325,018, with a significant portion being marginalised voters.

The Bhashantek slum is home to nearly 30,000 voters, while Karail and Sattala slums have also over 25,000 voters each.

As per locals, these slum dwellers will

significantly influence the outcome of the upcoming by-polls, and Hero Alom has a solid supporter base in those areas.

Besides, some of them believe that BNP activists might show up on the polling day and vote for Alom to defeat the ruling party candidate.

Talking to The Daily Star, Zahirul Islam, councillor of ward 15, said, "Of the total cast votes (in ward 15 during city polls), over 80 percent votes were cast by the slum dwellers. Generally, they are more enthusiastic about voting than others."

However, Alom's lacklustre campaigning in the slums could cost him votes.

During a visit to the Bhashantek, Karail and Sattala slums yesterday, it was seen that the streets were flooded with posters of Arafat while not a single poster or banner of Hero Alom could be seen.

Locals in the slums said Hero Alom visited their area only once while the supporters of ruling party contender have been campaigning in full swing.

While talking to this newspaper, Hero Alom said his supporters put up some posters but those were allegedly torn by miscreants.

Meanwhile, the supporters of AL

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



**A pedestrian struggles to find his way ahead among illegally-queued bikes on a footpath near the capital's Banglamotor intersection yesterday. This scenario is common in the area as the authorities seldom take measures to address the issue.**

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN







## DSCC opens control room to combat dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka South City Corporation yesterday launched a dedicated central control room as part of its measures to prevent the spread of dengue fever and control the proliferation of Aedes mosquitoes.

DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh inaugurated the control room, emphasising the importance of collective efforts to combat the dengue menace in the city.

Abu Nasher, spokesperson of DSCC, said individuals are encouraged to call the hotline number +8801709900888 to report any sightings of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Environment Olympiad on July 29

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Country's first ever National Environmental Olympiad is going to be held on July 29.

Bangladesh Poribesh Society will organise the event, said the organisation at a press conference held yesterday at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

The university-level Olympiad will take place on July 21. The winners will take part in the national level.

To participate in the event, the students studying at environmental science department of various universities have to complete registration first, said FM Ashrafur Alam, an organiser of Bangladesh Poribesh Society.

## TEESTA CHANNEL IN KURIGRAM

# Over 10,000 families under erosion threat



Geo bags have been placed to prevent water from entering the Teesta channel. Around 10,000 families are at erosion risk in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila. *Inset*, a man sits by the riverbank worried over the rising water level.

PHOTO: STAR

S DILIP ROY

A new Teesta branch in Gatiashyam village of Gharialdanga in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila has become the cause of concerns for locals.

Created in early July by erosion, the new branch is vulnerable to further erosion and the rising water level may damage the Water Development Board's flood control dyke and inundate the Rajarhat-Teesta Highway, which is already at risk of erosion, anytime.

WDB has already deployed geo bags and tubes on a one-km stretch of the channel to block water flowing into the new tributary. However, the measures may be washed away by the rising water level, feared locals.

"The new branch has already risked the lives of over 10,000

families. The branch needs to be sealed off immediately," said Hasan Jihadi, a member of Teesta Bachao Nodi Bachao Sangram Parishad.

Sand from the new channel is accumulating on arable land, riverbanks and the village, said



Abdul Jabbar, a farmer. "It will make the soil unsuitable for any crop cultivation," he said.

Farmer Nurul Haque is also worried as the water is entering villages through the new channel.

"A slight rise in the water level will flood the entire village. Erosion will follow even after the water recedes, and that's what worries us more," he informed.

Abdul Quddus Pramanik, the union chairman, said, "The new channel is not just posing threats to our union but to the whole upazila. Lawmakers, officials from the upazila administration, and WDB authorities have already visited the area. We urged them to take necessary measures soon."

Geo bags were placed to prevent the water from entering the channel upon instruction from the local lawmaker, informed Abdullah Al Mamun, executive engineer of WDB in Kurigram.

"We are monitoring the situation and have appealed for funds to tackle the issue," he added.

## SCRAPPING OF 16TH AMENDMENT

# SC fixes Aug 10 for hearing the review petition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday fixed August 10 for hearing on a five-and-half-year-old review petition challenging its verdict that scrapped the 16th amendment to the constitution which had empowered parliament to remove its judges for incapacity or misconduct.

A seven-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique set the date after Attorney General AM Amin Uddin placed the matter before it.

Contacted, the attorney general told The Daily Star that the review petition had been included in the Appellate Division's cause list long ago.

The apex court yesterday upgraded the list and fixed August 10 for hearing the petition, he added.

The government filed the 908-page review petition with the Appellate Division on December 24, 2017 outlining 94 grounds on which this court may consider the government's prayer for restoring

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Two killed, 4 hurt in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed and four injured in road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Jamalpur, a man was killed and four others were injured in a head-on collision between a sand-laden vehicle locally known as "trolley" and a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in Motherganj upazila.

The accident took place around 2:00pm on Jamalpur-Motherganj regional highway in Bhamari area, said police.

Police said the trolley driver lost his control over the vehicle that led to the accident.

All the victims were on the auto-rickshaw.

The identity of the deceased -- aged around 30 -- could not be known immediately.

Locals told the injured -- Razia Sultana, 40, Bhaiba, 6, CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver Kalam, 45, and Hasan Master, 50 -- to Jamalpur General Hospital, said Mahbulul Haque, officer-in-charge of Motherganj Police Station.

They were later transferred to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said the OC.

Police seized both the vehicles.

In Rangpur, a cyclist was killed after a truck hit him in Gangachara upazila, said police.

Habu Munshi, 55, a farmer from Majhapara village in Gangachara, died on the spot.

The accident happened near Soyabari Bridge while Habu was returning home from Tulshirhat village.

## Determined to hold free, fair polls

President tells outgoing Denmark ambassador

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is determined to hold a free and fair election. For this purpose, the Election Commission will be given all possible support, said President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday.

He made the remarks at a meeting with Denmark Ambassador Winnie Estrup Petersen at Bangabhaban.

President's Press Secretary Md Joynal Abedin briefed journalists afterwards.

The outgoing ambassador expressed her gratitude to the president for providing overall cooperation in fulfilling her duties.

Thanking Denmark for its cooperation on the Rohingya issue, the president hoped that the international community would continue to put pressure on Myanmar for their repatriation.

## Govt sets toll for Karnaphuli tunnel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has fixed toll for the vehicles to use the underwater Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel in Chattogram, which is slated for inauguration in September.

The Bridge Division has issued a circular in this regard yesterday, its Secretary Monjur Hossain confirmed to The Daily Star.

The toll will be applicable on the day the tunnel will be opened to public, read the gazette.

As per the gazette, a car or jeep or pickup van has to pay Tk 200 for crossing the tunnel, while a microbus has to pay Tk 250.

Toll for a bus with 31 seats and below would be Tk 300 while Tk 400 for bus above 32 seats and Tk 500 for bus with three axles. A 5-tonne truck has to pay Tk 400, it added. A truck with 5.01 to 8 tonnes loading capacity will have to pay Tk 500 and truck with 8.01 to 11 tonnes loading capacity Tk 600.

Works for installing vehicle scanner system is expected to be completed by this month, the last major work before the opening, said Monjur.

The 9.1km tunnel, the first of its kind in South Asia, is being built to help develop a modern communication system between Dhaka, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar. It will also be linked to the Asian Highway.

After revisions, the cost of the project rose to Tk 10,690 crore. The deadline for the project was set in December this year.



**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ এর কার্যালয়

সড়ক বিভাগ, খুলনা

টেলিফোন নং-০২-৪৪১১০৮৬৮

মোবাইল নং-০১৭৩০-৭৮২৭৫৬

ই-মেইল: eekhu@rhd.gov.bd

স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.৪৭৫১.৪৩৬.৯৯.০০১.২২.২১০ তারিখ: ১২-০৭-২০২৩খ্রিঃ

**ফেরীঘাট ইজারা কোটেশন আহবান বিজ্ঞপ্তি (৩য় আহবান)**

সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তরের তালিকাভুক্ত ঠিকাদার/ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠান এবং ইজারাদার/ ইজারাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে স্ব স্ব লাইসেন্স-এর ক্ষমতা/অভিজ্ঞতা অনুযায়ী সীলমোহরকৃত খামে বাংলাদেশ ফরম নং-২৯১১-তে কোটেশন আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

০১। ইজারা কোটেশন নং : ০১/ইজারা/কেআরডি/২০২২-২০২৩ (৩য় আহবান)।

০২। ইজারার বিবরণ : ২০২৩-২০২৪, ২০২৪-২০২৫ ও ২০২৫-২০২৬ আর্থিক বছরের জন্য সড়ক বিভাগ, খুলনা-এর অধীন গন্ডামারী-বটিয়াঘাটা-দাকোপ-নলিয়ান ফরেস্ট সড়ক-এর ২৮তম কিঃমিঃ-এর সাথে সংযুক্ত খুলনা জেলার দাকোপ উপজেলার খুটাখালী (বাজুয়া)-মোংলা পোর্ট (বানিয়াশান্তা বাজার) সড়কের পাশে অবস্থিত লাউডোব ফেরীঘাট হতে পারাপারকারী যানবাহনের টোল আদায়ের নিমিত্তে ইজারাদার নিয়োগ।

০৩। ইজারা চুক্তির মেয়াদ : ০৩ (তিন) বছর।

০৪। ইজারা কোটেশনের সিডিউল মূল্য : টাঃ ৫,০০০/- (পাঁচ হাজার টাকা) মাত্র।

০৫। জামানতের টাকার পরিমাণ : ভ্যাট ও আইটিসহ মোট উদ্ধৃত দরের ১০% টাকা মাত্র (ব্যাকে ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার/ম্যানি রিসিট আকারে)।

০৬। ইজারা কোটেশন বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় : ০৬-০৮-২০২৩খ্রিঃ তারিখ- বিকাল ৫.০০ পর্যন্ত।

০৭। মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় ইজারা কোটেশন গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় : ০৭-০৮-২০২৩খ্রিঃ তারিখ- দুপুর ১২:০০ পর্যন্ত।

০৮। ইজারা ডাকে অংশগ্রহণের যোগ্যতা : ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, ভ্যাট ও আয়কর সনদধারী প্রতিষ্ঠান/নাগরিক, সরকারী/ বেসরকারী/ স্বায়ত্তশাসিত সকল প্রতিষ্ঠানের ঠিকাদার।

০৯। যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা কোটেশন ক্রয়ের জন্য পাওয়া যাবে : জেলা প্রশাসক, খুলনা/ পুলিশ সুপার, খুলনা/ নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, বাগেরহাট/সাতক্ষীরা/ খুলনা, উপ-বিভাগীয় প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক উপ-বিভাগ-১/২/১ম সারি কারখানা উপ-বিভাগ, খুলনা।

১০। যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা কোটেশন মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় গ্রহণ করা হবে : (ক) তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক সার্কেল, বয়রা, খুলনা। (খ) জেলা প্রশাসক, খুলনা। (গ) পুলিশ সুপার, খুলনা। (ঘ) নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, খুলনা।

১১। ইজারা কোটেশন খোলার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময় : স্থানঃ নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, খুলনা। তারিখঃ ০৭-০৮-২০২৩খ্রিঃ। সময়ঃ ১:০০ ঘটিকা।

১২। ইজারা কোটেশন আহবানকারী যে কোন সময় কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন কোটেশন/সকল কোটেশন বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

৫/এক/এম/১২.০৭.২০২৩  
মাধুরী সুলতানা  
পরিচিতি নং-৭০০৪২২  
উপ-সহকারী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ  
সড়ক বিভাগ, খুলনা

জিডি-১১১০

মোঃ আনিজ্জামান মাসুদ  
পরিচিতি নং-৬০১৯৫২  
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ  
সড়ক বিভাগ, খুলনা

**Office of the Mirkadim Paurashava**

District: Munshiganj

উন্নয়নের গণতন্ত্র  
শেখ হাসিনার মূলমন্ত্র

Memo No. Mir/Pauro/Eng/10-69/23-24/129 Date: 13/07/2023

**e-Tender Notice (LTM) No. 01/2023-24**

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

SI No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of the work
1	853606	MIR/ENGR/PAURO/23-24/01	Construction of RCC Road from H/O Mr. Mohiuddin to H/O Mr. Ashrafur Islam (Ch. 0.00-64.00m) at Goalgahuni. Ward No-01 under Mirkadim Municipality, Munshiganj.
2	853672	MIR/ENGR/PAURO/23-24/02	Vertical extension of (2nd Floor East Portion) Mirkadim Paurashava Building, Munshiganj.

This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration to the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

**Mohammad Quayum Chowdhury**  
Executive Engineer  
Mirkadim Paurashava  
Munshiganj

GD-1111

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

**Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation**

7-9 Kawan Bazar, Dhaka 1215, Bangladesh

Memo No. 24.03.0000.103.73(4).110.22-95 Date: 13 July, 2023

**Invitation for Bid (IFB) Notice (Re-Tender)**

**International Competitive Bidding (ICB)**

**For Development of Magura Textile Mills Site at Magura, Bangladesh through Public Private Partnership (PPP)**

**Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC)**, under the Ministry of Textiles and Jute, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, intends to establish textile mills and/or textile related linked industries and support facilities at Magura, Bangladesh at the existing site of **Magura Textile Mills Limited** through PPP mode.

BTMC invites interested bidders and/or bidding consortiums to participate in the selection of a Private Partner through International Competitive Bidding (ICB) process for the **"Development of Magura Textile Mill (and/or Textile Related Linked Industries and Support Facilities)** at Magura, Bangladesh through Public Private Partnership" as per the terms and conditions set out in the PPP Contract.

Interested bidders may submit their Bids in response to this IFB notice. Details of the Project, Bid submission process and other requirements have been delineated in the IFB document.

Interested bidders have to purchase the IFB with a non-refundable amount of Bangladeshi Taka **Fifty Thousand (BDT 50,000)** or equivalent amount in other currency in favour of **'Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation'** through Pay Order/Bank Draft and send the scanned copy of money receipt to the designated e-mail ID: [btmc-tm4@pppo.gov.bd](mailto:btmc-tm4@pppo.gov.bd) to register online in order to access all available project related documents and to participate in the bidding process. A pre-bid meeting will be organized at the BTMC conference room, Date & Time for the said meeting will be duly notified to registered bidders through on-line process.

**Bids must be submitted on or before 18 September 2023 Time - 11.30 hours BST at the following address:**

**Project Director**  
**Development of Dost Textile Mills Site**  
(and/or Textile Related Linked Industries and Support Facilities)  
at Feni, through PPP  
Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation  
7-9 Kawan Bazar, Dhaka 1215, Bangladesh

Authority reserves the right to accept, reject and/or re-invite the bids without assigning any reason. whatsoever.

**(Kazi Feroz Hossain)**  
Project Director  
Tel: + 8802 55012735 (Office), Mob: 01781-180656, E-mail: [feroz775@gmail.com](mailto:feroz775@gmail.com)



# Fans began crying after seeing ‘Joyeeta’ in ‘Mercules’

## SABILA NUR





PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

**Sabila Nur’s much-awaited debut web-series, ‘Mercules’ has been praised for its bold content and multi-starrer cast. Everyone has been raving about Sabila’s spectacular performance as Joyeeta, a rather complex and layered character.**

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

**How was the response to ‘Mercules’?**  
The response to *Mercules* has been fantastic. I was a bit nervous as this was my first web-series, but everyone liked the project and praised my acting.

**People have been raving over your performance as Joyeeta. How does that make you feel?**  
I worked hard to get into the skin of my character. *Mercules* focuses on Joyeeta’s journey. My goal was to make my audience feel the same emotions as Joyeeta, while she searches for answers. My greatest joy came when some people connected with Joyeeta and told me they started crying after seeing my performance. This touched my heart.

**Your dance performance with Mamo on ‘Mercules’ song, ‘Tomar Kothar Malay’, went viral on social media.**  
I am really lucky that I could share this incredible performance with Mamo apu. Everybody loved it. I don’t think most fans know I come from a dance background. I came into showbiz through my dance and then slowly transitioned to TV.

**Will we get a second season of ‘Mercules’ anytime soon?**  
As an audience member, I am also eager to find out whether *Mercules* season 2 will come out. The series finale was left open-ended, as we could only hear his voice. However, I will be really happy if I get to see him on-screen next season.

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## NEWS

### Afghan challenge set to intensify

FROM PAGE 12  
Khan alongside Mujeeb Ur Rahman will once again test the Tigers. It will be interesting to see how Shakib and his troops are able to tackle it this time around.

Afghanistan are well ahead of the Tigers in terms of win percentage in the 20-over format. The visitors have won six out of the nine outings so far. For Bangladesh, however, it will be a new beginning.

Of late, the Tigers have shown vast improvements in the shortest format.

Their 3-0 win over the world champions England earlier this year, followed by a series win over Ireland, certainly provided ample confidence to the hosts.

The Sylhet pitch is expected to play a crucial role as head coach Chandika Hathurusingha was seen having a long discussion with head curator Gamini De Silva during the training session yesterday.

It is expected that Bangladesh will go with three pacers – Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman and Hasan Mahmud – in the line-up. However,

left-arm quick Shoriful Islam – who registered his career-best figures in the third ODI – has emerged as a worthy candidate to make it into the playing eleven.

While Shakib and Mehedi Hasan Miraz are expected to look after the spin department, the team management has the luxury to include an extra batter.

Meanwhile, there was light drizzle in Sylhet yesterday and, with rain in today’s forecast as well, the game might see some interruptions.

### City hospitals still grappling

FROM PAGE 12  
The dengue patients are being treated in eight units in the medicine department and three units in the children’s department, Rashid said, adding that since their initial management is going well, the number of deaths in their hospital is only six.

He, however, mentioned that many NSI kits (used for dengue testing) are not showing accurate results immediately. “They show positive two or three days later.”

He suggested that patients facing symptoms – vomiting, nausea, abdominal pain, breathing obstruction, decreased urination and fatigue – go to the hospital.

“Once the warning signs appear, they should go to hospital and consult

a doctor. They shouldn’t consume any medicine apart from paracetamol, but must drink sufficient amounts of fluid as severe dehydration may lead to organ failure.”

Other medication is unnecessary for a dengue patient, he said.

Mohammad Mamun, a resident of Postagola who has been under treatment at Mitford since Wednesday, said he had been suffering from a fever for the past five days.

“I initially took some medicine from a local pharmacy but my condition didn’t improve. When I began experiencing nausea and abdominal pain, I came to the hospital.”

Ratan Islam, 21, who was also admitted to the hospital on

Wednesday, said he contracted dengue from his workplace in Rayerbagh, where anti-mosquito drives are insufficient.

“People in the area also lack awareness regarding Aedes mosquito, and so don’t take necessary steps to keep their houses or yards clean.”

The DGHS on Wednesday announced that the 800-bed DNCC Hospital in Mohakhali will now be a dedicated dengue hospital.

In a public circular issued yesterday, the directorate said, “The hospital has been announced as a dengue dedicated hospital to tackle the pressure of the rising number of patients in Dhaka city.”

Besides, it has also opened a dengue control room in its Dhaka headquarter.

### Law and order, political situation

FROM PAGE 1  
The delegation also asked the CEO if the 46 percent turnout in the recently held SCC polls was satisfactory.

It wanted to know about the accessibility to rural areas in the district, availability of mobile phone networks, and safety of the possible EU election observation mission at its accommodation facilities, Badrul said.

Md Mozibor Rahman, deputy commissioner of Sylhet, said the EU mission sought information on the overall political situation in Sylhet, and also asked him whether there is any possibility of violence in the next parliamentary polls.

“I told them that the last city

corporation election was peaceful. All elections in Sylhet were held peacefully and there is no possibility of violence. There is a peaceful coexistence of all political parties in Sylhet. They are organising their programmes peacefully,” he said.

The EU mission arrived in Bangladesh on July 8 to assess the overall situation surrounding the next general election in Bangladesh, likely to be held in late December this year or early January next year.

The members of the mission are Sebastian Riger-Brown, first secretary (political) of the EU delegation to Bangladesh; Dimitra Ioannou, team leader and also an electoral and political

expert; Ian Miller, security expert; Cristina Alves, legal expert; Christopher Chamagne, logistics expert; Marie-Helene Enderlin, programme manager of election observation missions; and Tanja Nader, attaché and programme manager (governance).

On Wednesday, the mission held meetings with Information Minister Hasan Mahmud and Law Secretary Md Golam Sarwar in Dhaka.

The EU delegation is holding meetings with representatives of the government, civil society and the media, political leaders, and officials of law enforcement agencies.

The team is scheduled to leave Bangladesh on July 23.

### Grassroots wanted

FROM PAGE 1  
sources said.

The rally was held peacefully when delegations from the USA and the European Union are in Bangladesh to keenly observe the political situation ahead of the national elections slated for January next year.

The foreign delegates got a message about the party’s organisational strength and public support for its cause, said party leaders.

Sources said the party was initially

thinking of announcing a blockade-like programme from the rally but went back on that plan as it might send a negative message to the visiting delegates.

“If we go for hartal- or blockade-like programmes right now, the ruling party will get a chance to say that we are opting for violence and it may be counted as an anti-democratic action, which is included in the US’s visa restriction criteria,” said a senior leader requesting

anonymity, adding that they may go for such programmes in the future, when necessary.

As part of the first programme to realise the one-point movement, a two-day countrywide march programme was also announced on Wednesday for July 18 and 19.

On July 18, the road march will be observed in Dhaka from Gabtoli to Jatrabari and on July 19 from Uttara’s Abdullahpur to Bahadur Shah Park in Dhaka.



This handout photograph released by the Spanish Red Cross (Cruz Roja) yesterday shows a migrant boat arriving at Las Galletas beach in the municipality of Arona, on the Canary Island of Tenerife.

PHOTO: AFP



## Protect minorities in Manipur

### EU parliament urges India as Modi visits France

AFP, Strasbourg

The EU parliament yesterday urged India to end violence and protect minorities in the country's northeastern Manipur state, criticising "nationalistic rhetoric" it said was adding to tensions.

It came as Indian PM Narendra Modi began a two-day visit to France, where he will attend the traditional Bastille Day military parade as guest of honour.

MEPs expressed concern over clashes between Manipur's majority Meitei, who are mostly Hindus, and the mainly Christian Kuki tribe in the surrounding hills. The EU parliament said that the violence has "left at least 120 people dead, 50,000 displaced and over 1,700 houses and 250 churches destroyed".



Kosovo opposition lawmakers clash with ruling members in the Kosovo parliament yesterday during a heated debate over measures aimed at defusing tensions in restive Serb enclaves in the north. The melee kicked off as Prime Minister Albin Kurti addressed the house and was doused with water by a rival lawmaker.

PHOTO: AFP

## Will hand over govt to caretaker set-up in August

### Says Pakistan PM

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in an address to the nation yesterday, said the incumbent government would hand over the reins to the caretaker set-up in August.

The premier's address comes a day after Pakistan reached a \$3 billion Standby Agreement with the International Monetary Fund. The cash-starved nation received the first tranche of \$1.2bn earlier yesterday.

PM Shehbaz had made a similar announcement on Wednesday as well, in which declared that the term of his government would end next month.

He, however, did not clear the confusion about whether the coalition partners would go for the normal dissolution of the National Assembly on completion of its term on August 12, or he would advise the president for an early dissolution. At the outset of an address — broadcast on television — yesterday, prime minister recalled that he was given the "sacred responsibility" of running the country and working for its welfare in April last year.

## Top US, Chinese diplomats meet at Asean talks

US State Dept says 'candid discussions' cover both areas of difference and potential cooperation

REUTERS, Jakarta

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held "candid and constructive" talks with top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi yesterday in Indonesia's capital, an official said, the latest in a series of interactions Washington says are aimed at managing competition between the rival superpowers.

Wang is representing China at the Jakarta meetings of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and partner countries after Beijing said Foreign Minister Qin Gang would not attend due to health reasons.

He and Blinken were seen seated across from each other in a meeting room in a hotel in central Jakarta and did not speak to the press, reports Reuters.

The "candid and constructive discussions" covered both areas of difference and potential cooperation, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement.

"The meeting was part of ongoing efforts to maintain open channels of communication to clarify US interests across a wide range of issues and to responsibly manage competition by reducing the risk of misperception and miscalculation," Miller said.

The US top diplomat emphasised the importance of "maintaining peace and stability across the



Taiwan Strait, Miller said.

Blinken also told China's top diplomat that Washington will hold hackers accountable after he raised alleged breaches of US government agencies, a senior US official said.

Blinken met Qin and Wang in Beijing last month, marking the first visit to China by a US secretary of state in five years. It was aimed at easing the intense rivalry between the superpowers, which are also the world's two largest economies.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen visited China earlier this month and climate envoy John Kerry is to visit next week.

Wang, who is the foreign policy chief for the Chinese Communist Party, ranks above Qin, who as the foreign minister is the

## Black women in Americas face 'systemic racism': UN

AFP, United Nations

Black women throughout the Americas — and in particular the United States — face health care mistreatment due to "systemic racism," leading to high death rates during childbirth, the United Nations warned Wednesday.

Maternal mortality among women of African origin is "alarmingly high," both in absolute terms and when compared to non-Black and non-Indigenous women in the region, according to a damning new report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reviewing nine countries in the Americas.

The study drew on data from Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Panama, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, the US and Uruguay.

"Structural racism and sexism are evident in maternal health disparities that exist across income levels..." the report said.

The disparities are sharpest in US, where African American women are three times more likely to die while pregnant or within six weeks of giving birth than the country's non-Hispanic white women.

## 87 bodies found in Sudan mass grave: UN

### Paramilitary force RSF denies any involvement

REUTERS, Geneva

The UN human rights office said yesterday at least 87 people including ethnic Masalit were buried in what it described as a mass grave in Sudan's West Darfur, saying it had credible information that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were responsible.

RSF officials denied any involvement, saying paramilitary group was not a party to conflict in West Darfur.

Ethnically motivated bloodshed has escalated in recent weeks in step with fighting between rival military factions that erupted in April and has brought the country to the brink of civil war. In El Geneina, witnesses and rights groups have reported waves of attacks by the RSF and Arab militias against the non-Arab Masalit people, including shootings at close range.

Local people were forced to dispose of the bodies including those of women and children in a shallow grave in an open area near the city between June 20-21, the UN statement said. Some of the people had died from untreated injuries, it said.

"I condemn in the strongest terms the killing of civilians and hors de combat individuals, and I am further appalled by the callous and disrespectful way the dead, along with their families and communities, were treated," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk in the same statement.

## AI-supercharged neurotech threatens mental privacy: UN

AFP, Paris

The combination of "warp speed" advances in neurotechnology, such as brain implants or scans that can increasingly peek inside minds, and artificial intelligence poses a threat to mental privacy, Unesco warned yesterday. The UN's agency for science and culture has started developing a global "ethical framework" to address human rights concerns posed by neurotechnology, it said at a conference in Paris.

Neurotechnology is a growing field seeking to connect electronic devices to the nervous system, mostly so far to treat neurological disorders and restore movement, communication, vision or hearing. Recently neurotechnology has been supercharged by artificial intelligence algorithms which can process and learn from data in ways never before possible, said Mariagrazia Squicciarini, a Unesco economist specialising in AI. "It's like putting neurotech on steroids," she told AFP.

Gabriela Ramos, Unesco's assistant director-general for social and human sciences, said that this convergence of neurotechnology and AI was "far-reaching and potentially harmful". "We are on a path to a world in which algorithms will enable us to decode people's mental processes and directly manipulate the brain mechanisms underlying their intentions, emotions and decisions," she told the conference.

In May, scientists in the United States revealed they had used brain scans and AI to turn "the gist" of what people were thinking into written words — as long as they had spent long hours inside a large fMRI machine.



Rescue workers transport a visitor from the archaeological site of Acropolis to an ambulance in Athens yesterday, as Greece hits high temperatures. Inset, Hellenic Red Cross workers distribute bottles of water to visitors outside the Acropolis. Greece's national weather service EMY on Monday said a six-day heatwave would grip the country.

PHOTO: AFP

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

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মোবাইল নং-০১৭৩০-৭৮২৭৩৯

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স্মারক নং- ৩৫.০১.৩৮০০.৪৩৪.০১.২৯.১২৯৫.২৩-১৬০৫

তারিখ : ২৮ আশ্বিন ১৪৩০  
১২ জুলাই ২০২৩

“সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে ঠিকাদার তালিকা ভুক্তি/ লাইসেন্স নবায়ন বিজ্ঞপ্তি”

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, সড়ক বিভাগ, জয়পুরহাট কর্তৃক পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ এর আলোকে সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তরের পরিচালন (রাজস্ব) বাজেটের আওতায় সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের মাধ্যমে প্রতিক্ষেত্রে ৫০.০ (পঞ্চাশ) লক্ষ টাকা পর্যন্ত প্রাক্কলিত মূল্যের অভ্যন্তরীণ কার্য (NCT-works) সম্পাদনের লক্ষ্যে ২০২৩-২০২৪ অর্থ বছরের জন্য ঠিকাদার তালিকাভুক্ত/নবায়ন করা হবে। সিপিটিইউ কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফরম অত্র দপ্তর হতে আগামী ২০/০৭/২০২৩ খ্রি: হতে ৩০/০৮/২০২৩ খ্রি: পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে সরবরাহ করা হবে। ১,০০০.০০ (এক হাজার) টাকার অফেরতযোগ্য পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/চালান নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সড়ক বিভাগ, জয়পুরহাট অনুকূলে জমা প্রদান করে অথবা মানি রিসিটের মাধ্যমে ১,০০০.০০ (এক হাজার) টাকা পরিশোধ করে আগ্রহী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান নির্ধারিত আবেদনপত্র (ডকুমেন্ট) সংগ্রহ করতে পারবেন। নির্ধারিত আবেদনপত্র (ডকুমেন্ট) সঠিকভাবে পূরণ পূর্বক প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্রসহ আগামী ৩০ আগস্ট ২০২৩ খ্রিঃ তারিখ বিকাল ৩.০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে অত্র দপ্তরে জমা প্রদান করতে হবে। সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ এর বিধি ৬৩ অনুসরণযোগ্য এবং এ তালিকাভুক্তি করণ দরপত্র আহবান/কাজ প্রদানের নিশ্চয়তা বিধান করে না।

উল্লেখ্য যে, ইতোপূর্বে অত্র দপ্তরের তালিকাভুক্ত ঠিকাদারগণ ২০২৩-২০২৪ অর্থ বছরে লাইসেন্স নবায়ন ফি বাবদ টাকা ২,০০০/- (টাকা দুই হাজার মাত্র) + ১৫% ভ্যাটসহ বিনা জরিমানায় আগামী ৩০/০৮/২০২৩ খ্রিঃ তারিখের মধ্যে অত্র দপ্তরে জমা পূর্বক লাইসেন্স নবায়ন করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

১৫/০৭/২০২৬

(সোম্য তালুকদার)

পরিচিতি নং- ৬০২৩১৬

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী (চ:দা:), সওজ

সড়ক বিভাগ, জয়পুরহাট।



## A detriment to democracy

The rigid positions of AL-BNP will only lengthen the political deadlock

There is little to be hopeful about following the two rallies held by the ruling Awami League and the BNP in Dhaka. Although rallies are not typically where political compromises/concessions are announced, we still expected some hint of a way forward from the present deadlock. Wednesday’s events unfolded under the shadow of visits by the European Union’s election exploratory mission and a changed political dynamic in the wake of the recent US visa policy. While both AL and BNP appeared to allude or respond to these influences, both claiming to enjoy the support of the public, the question is: Do the methods they advocate to achieve the objective of a free and fair election best serve the public?

In a way, the two rallies, held about a kilometre apart but thankfully timed differently, mirrored each other. While the BNP used its event as a launching pad for its one-point movement for the government’s resignation in favour of an election under a non-party interim administration, the AL used its rally to post a resounding response: that there will be no entertaining of such demands. While both stress the importance of free and fair polls, thus giving them a common ground, neither signalled readiness to advance this cause through peaceful means, with the latter even ruling out the possibility of dialogue. If their lack of flexibility on this issue is any indication, we cannot help but be worried about the future.

We must say, however, that as the party in power, for three consecutive terms no less, it is the AL that holds the primary responsibility for leading us out of the stalemate. Even if a solution to the bone of their contention is not imminently expected, the party can at least ensure that it doesn’t escalate tensions by countering every public event of the BNP with one of its own. This as well as other obstructive activities by police and ruling party men have led to unnecessary violence in the past. Anything that hinders constructive political discourse and cooperation must be avoided, and that goes for all other political parties as well.

As things stand now, it is crucial that all parties see the value of dialogue and compromise instead of rigidly pursuing their agendas. In the spirit of democracy, they must work together to ensure elections that truly reflect the will of the people.

## Dhaka needs better sewage treatment

Newly inaugurated STP raises hope but much remains to be done

We are pleased that the Dasherbandi Sewage Treatment Plant was finally opened after the PM inaugurated it on Thursday. Being the largest such plant in South Asia, it has the capacity to treat 20-25 percent of the 2,000 million litres of sewage generated in Dhaka city daily. The issue of untreated sewage polluting our rivers and other water sources has long been a problem for Dhaka. Given its lack of a proper waste management system, the newly launched STP in Aftabnagar comes with the hope that the city will start to become more liveable going forward. However, some concerns about the extent of its effectiveness remain.

Although the plant is supposed to treat sewage coming from a number of areas – including Tejgaon, Badda, Banani, Gulshan (in part), Ramna, Mouchak, Hatirjheel, and Dhanmondi (in part) – it currently has only a 5km trunk sewer line connecting Rampura. Experts and even officials have, in the past, raised concerns about the additional years and funds that would be needed to create the remaining networks. Meanwhile, the existing Pagla sewage treatment plant, which treats around 10 percent of Dhaka’s waste, is being renovated. Additionally, many of the drains in the capital are also broken or clogged. All this suggests that there is still a lot that needs to be done to save our rivers and canals from being contaminated with waste every day.

In this connection, one may also recall how poorly the central effluent treatment plant (CETP) project at the Savar Tannery Industrial Estate has gone. As a recent report by this daily revealed, the contractor that built that facility handed over an incomplete CETP. We sincerely hope that the Dasherbandi STP will fare better than its counterparts. If successfully run, this plant – part of Wasa’s master plan to construct five STPs to treat 100 percent of the sewage generated in Dhaka – can save the city’s water bodies from the incessant pollution and contamination. We, therefore, urge the relevant authorities, especially Dhaka Wasa, to ensure that all areas are properly connected to the sewage treatment plants.

New Message

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# Need for a change in our political culture



### THE THIRD VIEW

Mahfuz Anam  
is the editor and publisher of  
The Daily Star.

MAHFUZ ANAM

We are greatly relieved that no violence occurred in Wednesday’s showdown between our two biggest political parties. What did the showdown prove? That both parties could gather thousands for rallies, that both had mass support, etc. Didn’t we know all that? BNP announced their plan to hold a rally. Immediately after, Awami League had to hold a counter-rally on the same day, and also close to their rival’s venue? Why? It reminded me of two competing schoolboys gesticulating in various ways, trying to prove that their muscles were bigger than each other’s.

Was public convenience thought of when calling for these rallies? Given Dhaka’s paucity of roads and dependency on a few arterial avenues for traffic flow – which on a normal day is extremely challenging, to put it mildly – calling for such rallies on a weekday in the heart of the city is actually calling for shutting down the city centre for a whole day. Did it at all matter to them?

An interesting answer emerged when asked why the two parties didn’t hold these rallies on the weekend, which would have greatly reduced public suffering. BNP leaders said they wanted to show the EU and US visitors how much public support they could garner, thus strengthening their case to the foreigners. So, is AL’s accusation true that BNP’s politics is to attract external attention and goad them to get involved? But why did the AL call for a counter-rally on the same day? Was it also to show our visitors their strength? Are we to conclude, then, that both rallies were for the benefit of the visitors and not for our people? Would it be out of place to speculate that if the US were to suddenly say, “Election is an internal matter of a country,” AL would suddenly stop all their ramblings about foreign interference? So we can further speculate that all of this is a matter of party interest, not national interest.

This is but a flicker of a glimpse of the hypocrisy of our politics. It is all about power. For the party already on the buttered side of the bread, politics is about how to remain there and destroy every legitimate attempt to



COLLAGE: STAR

counter it. As for their rival, politics is only about getting to the other side. It is seldom, if ever, about public interest.

So what did we get from the much-hyped rally and the counter-rally? BNP said, “No election under Hasina” (something that we knew), to which AL countered, “No election but under Hasina” (that also we knew). This reminded me of a cartoon in *Time* or *Newsweek* magazine in the early 1970s, when Kissinger launched his efforts to bring North and South Vietnam to the negotiating table. The cartoon showed the North saying, “We shall never talk to the South,” and the other side saying, “We shall never talk to the North,” and Kissinger saying, “I see that both sides agree on one point.” We also have a similar agreement – no talks with the other side. So where do we go from here?

If we are concluding on the basis of the last 32 years (since the fall of Ershad) of negotiated settlements of our political disputes, the sad and anxiety-triggering answer is: “nowhere.” For AL-BNP’s record of

minister and BNP had the majority in parliament. It was a very encouraging example of a mature negotiation between political rivals in which the treasury bench in the House accepted the proposal of the opposition.

In our view, the reason we can’t negotiate is because we are stuck with fossilised views of some key concepts of political negotiations. For us, to discuss is to show weakness (what is there to discuss? We know who they are and what they represent), to negotiate is to surrender (how can we negotiate? Our position is the perfect one), to accommodate is to give space to those whom we must try to destroy, to acknowledge some good aspects of the opposition is to sow the seeds of self-doubt, etc.

During the last 32 years, except for the two years of army-backed government in 2007-08, we have been ruled either by the AL (nearly 20 years) or the BNP (10 years). Over time, from being political rivals, they became enemies, and mutual destruction became the name of the game. The

Restrictive laws became a convenient weapon that gave oppression a veneer of legal cover. Manipulating elections was an obvious choice, to pull off which one had to empower the police, the bureaucracy, the intelligence agencies, etc – everybody but the people. So now we are in a state where police and the agencies can do anything, and bureaucracy is so powerful that nothing can be done without them.

It is in these circumstances that we are heading for the next general election, and the two main political parties have one agreement – not to talk to the other.

Marcus Aurelius, one of the wisest of Roman emperors (161-180 AD), pleaded with the senate to give autonomy to the captured German prisoners, while the latter wanted to turn them into slaves, said, “Honourable Fathers of Rome, we have changed the world, can’t we change ourselves?” BNP to some extent and AL to a far greater extent have changed Bangladesh. Can’t we expect them to change themselves, even a bit?

## Self-sufficiency in healthcare: The Florida case



ABM Uddin  
is a healthcare consultant at the  
Florida Agency for Health Care  
Administration. Views expressed in  
this article are the author’s own.

ABMUDDIN

Bangladesh can revolutionise health and social care by modelling after “Hope Florida.” In 2021, Florida’s First Lady Casey DeSantis launched the programme to promote self-sufficiency among the citizens. The innovative approach has integrated all social and economic services in the state into one platform, and has since been expanded multiple times. As someone who has led his agency to manage a project under this programme, I strongly suggest that Bangladesh build a similar infrastructure to not just advance healthcare, but also self-sufficiency.

Self-sufficiency starts with social care, which was once thought to be a distinct phenomenon outside of economic and health domains. However, as more data is available, the World Health Organization (WHO) has concluded that social services inherently enhance individual, population, and community health. Recent numerous studies have demonstrated that many health-related issues stem from the lack of adequate social and human services, and that we must treat social services as the precursors to self-sufficiency.

Income inequality is a stubborn issue that deeply hurts health and social care for low-earning individuals. As I have said before in a column published in this daily, the poor in Bangladesh are cornered against the massive wall of income and health

inequity, even though the country continues to make progress in these areas. However, we need a smarter and bolder approach that will achieve results fast. To this end, Bangladesh can better align its resources to address health and wellbeing for all after the Hope Florida example.

First, we must break down silos between healthcare and social care and bring them under one umbrella. According to a recent report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Bangladesh has 114 social protection programmes. These programmes operate mostly in isolation. I recommend that all of these services be integrated under one comprehensive framework. My team and I have learnt one surprising lesson while working on Hope Florida: there are more social programmes than we initially thought, and combining them under one aegis expedites services across socio-economic backgrounds as it streamlines disparate initiatives.

The approach benefits all citizens, especially those dependent on charities and government benefits by allowing them to age in place, i.e. without requiring them to travel to receive assistance. This is particularly beneficial for children, pregnant mothers, at-risk and justice-involved youths, low-income families, older adults, and the disabled – the populations that incur the most health and social services costs. By allowing

them to get care at their places of residence, we can cut transportation costs and healthcare visits while increasing their comfort and wellbeing. We must introduce social programmes in every neighbourhood, especially in areas with the greatest need.

Secondly, we must adopt and innovate digital services to support infrastructure and initiatives. In Florida, all 75 self-sufficiency services are digitally accessible, allowing a wide range of online services. People can electronically submit their applications from home. Unfortunately, even though Bangladesh is pursuing a “Smart Bangladesh” goal by 2041 and has celebrated its accomplishment of the “Digital Bangladesh” mission in 2021, achieving internet sufficiency is still a far cry. It is imperative that the government commits substantial resources to implement the Smart Bangladesh vision, which will accelerate self-sufficiency.

Universally, a culture of social stigma and naming and shaming exists about receiving free or subsidised food or services. By digitising health and human services, we can help remove the sense of guilt in beneficiaries by transitioning them from “asking for help” to a “self-help” environment. When digitised, social services meet people at their places, rather than people meet services in their locations. This approach allows people to find and avail care for themselves in their neighbourhoods, empowering them to pursue self-sufficiency.

Digitisation of services will also promote the efficiency of operations in terms of transparency and gap analysis. Staff at the serving agencies can electronically review information, conduct screening, eligibility, referrals, etc – all without in-person encounters with the clients – saving space and costs, and reducing administrative

overheads. Most importantly, it will allow data collection across the ecosystem, assess outcomes, and bridge gaps, facilitating a more scientific and transparent path towards achieving self-sufficiency.

Lastly, even though it seems banal, educating people on the importance of seeking help when needed is paramount. Domestic violence, loss of housing and transportation, food deprivation, etc cause stress and destroy families. Behavioural and mental health issues can threaten the safety of the patient and their caregivers. Political violence and unsafe neighbourhoods force communities to live in fear, causing long-term psychological and physical repercussions. These episodes must be addressed immediately.

We also need specialised professionals and care navigators to promote 24/7 help and quickly connect people to available services in their neighbourhoods, as applicable. Non-profit organisations, faith-based entities such as mosques and temples, and government agencies are the most resourceful in promoting and staffing round-the-clock call centres. Nurses, social workers, and community volunteers are best suited to assist and refer people to appropriate services. We must develop a culture of outreach and education, as client participation is critical in successfully implementing these endeavours.

To promote self-sufficiency, we must build a connected experience of care that is based on effective policies, high-quality digital services, and outreach and education. Private and public agencies and non-profit organisations must promote a concerted approach to reaching those who need care. We must synergise our efforts, and Hope Florida can be a model.





ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

# Who watches the watchmen?



**Zarif Faiaz**  
is a journalist at the Tech & Startup section of The Daily Star.

ZARIF FAIAZ

On June 27, it took a foreigner to point out that millions of Bangladeshi citizens’ personal information was left exposed on the internet due to a security leak on the website of the Office of the Registrar General, Birth & Death Registration (BDRIS). At least 50 million citizens’ personal data – including full names, birth dates, addresses, parents’ and grandparents’ names, phone numbers, and more – were affected by the security breach.

Viktor Markopoulos, the cybersecurity expert who spotted the leak, tried to contact the Bangladesh government’s e-Government Computer Incident Response Team (BGD e-GOV CIRT) repeatedly but no one responded. It was only after the news was widely circulated in the local media that CIRT acknowledged the breach and took steps to take down the exposed data.

A somewhat similar issue happened when Bangladesh Krishi Bank was hit with ransomware. On July 11, this newspaper reported that the notorious ransomware group ALPHV, also known as BlackCat, hacked into Bangladesh Krishi Bank and stole over 170GB of sensitive personal information, including employees’ names, passport and NID information. ALPHV claimed in their blog that they offered the Bangladesh Krishi Bank authorities a window to negotiate, but no one responded or “was bothered.”

It is one thing to become a direct victim of cyberattacks. But when weak cyber infrastructures leave your data exposed, and when you fail to even acknowledge or spot an attack, let alone fight it, they go on to highlight the extent of carelessness the government shows when handling the citizens’ personal, sensitive information.

As citizens, we entrust the government with our personal information based on the belief and goodwill that the government will keep it safe and not misuse it – nor let it be misused – in any way. But recent events showcase the government’s utter failure in safeguarding citizens’ personal and sensitive data that may easily end up in the wrong hands. Even the meek responses to the cyberattacks showcase how the government

authorities fail to even comprehend the dangers of these security breaches.

That brings us to the burning question: what happens when our data is out there for the world to grab? For starters, your leaked personal data exposes you to the growing dangers of internet fraud and scams. It becomes easy for you to become a victim of identity theft. A hacker – or anyone, actually – can easily steal your entire identity, engage in a scam or fraud under your name, and get away with it. With your sensitive personal information available on a mere Google search, hackers may even gain access to your bank accounts, social media handles, emails, and more.

Hackers often sell your data to other hackers who may have a separate agenda or motivation. These agendas are almost never personal. International groups may gain access to your data – either by hacking directly or buying off of other hackers – and engage in full-scale cyber wars with rival groups or countries. Your data, in those cases, becomes collateral.

ALPHV, for example, declared on July 7 that if Bangladesh Krishi Bank did not meet the ransom demand, they would start extracting funds from the bank. The group even issued a warning to all stakeholders and investors to pull their funds from the bank within seven days of declaring the warning.

These events can cause serious financial loss and can be extremely difficult to fight back against for all sorts of legal issues. In a country like Bangladesh, where frauds and scams like these are not well defined in terms of legal proceedings, recovering your identity or funds can prove to be even more gruelling.

Surely, our safeguards must know about these dangers. The question, then, arises: why did they fail to protect our data? How did even the first responders of cyber threats miss out on these security breaches?

Consider BGD e-GOV CIRT, for example. Its website says, “Bangladesh Government’s e-Government Computer Incident Response Team (BGD e-GOV CIRT), serving as the National CIRT of Bangladesh (N-CERT) with responsibilities including but

not limited to receiving, reviewing, and responding to computer security incidents and activities in the territory of Bangladesh as well as keeping close collaboration with international partners to secure the cyberspace of Bangladesh.” Clearly, CIRT is responsible for preventing these attacks, or at least spotting these security breaches and responding to them. And yet, when a reporter of this newspaper first contacted CIRT about the BDRIS leak, CIRT’s project director claimed they were not aware of any such attacks.

However, somewhat in CIRT’s defence, it did issue a notice on June 27, advising the government, military, and financial institutions to stay alert and implement essential security measures to safeguard against possible cyberattacks. CIRT mentioned that several sectors including banks and critical information infrastructures were at high risk of being targeted by cyberattacks.

The police, too, fail to protect our data. In fact, in at least three of these cases, the police themselves were the victim. On March 15, a group named New World Hacktivists released 84 police log in credentials. Among these, 40 credentials belonged to officers-in-charge of various police stations located in Dhaka. On March 17, a hacker group called the Indian Cyber Force leaked information of about 270,000 Bangladeshi citizens from the Cox’s Bazar police’s server. The Khulna Metropolitan Police were also attacked by Indian hackers on March 28.

The cases go on. Biman Bangladesh airlines, the national flag carrier, was recently attacked by ransomware, although Biman authorities insist that “no data has been stolen.” The Bangladesh Railway website was also a victim of a DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attack in recent times, but reportedly no data was stolen. Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Air Force – all have fallen victim to cyberattacks in one form or another in recent times.

Our government, just like any government around the world, routinely collects sensitive personal data from the citizens for various national purposes. Citizens also willingly give these data to the government, often for essential services, in the goodwill and confidence that the government will not mishandle them. It’s a promise, a trusted bond bound by a social contract.

That promise has not been kept. And when our sentinels betray us, whom do we turn to?

# A brutal colonial legacy that fuels the fires sweeping across France



**Vijay Prashad**  
is an Indian historian, editor, and journalist. He is a writing fellow and chief correspondent at Globetrotter, and an editor of LeftWord Books and the director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.

VIJAY PRASHAD

On July 1, a large crowd gathered inside and around the Ibn Badis Mosque in Nanterre, France, where a 17-year-old boy, Nahel M, was mourned and then later buried. Nahel M, of Algerian and Tunisian heritage, was shot dead by a police officer during a traffic stop. It was clear that the police officer had not acted in self-defence, but had shot the young man in cold blood. A wave of outrage swept through the country, with protests and riots breaking out across France. French President Emmanuel Macron sent out security forces to stem the protests, which inflamed the protesters whose anger at the police is at high levels already. The police’s antipathy was confirmed by the language of the police unions (Alliance Police Nationale and UNSA), who called the protesters “vermin” and “savage hordes” and said that “it’s no longer enough to call for calm; it must be imposed.” This is an act of war by the French police against the French population who come from France’s former colonies.

population of Haiti rose up in a major rebellion in 1791, France – bubbling with its own revolution of 1789 – nonetheless denied the Haitians of their freedom and fought till 1804 to deprive Haiti of its independence. Even after Haiti defeated the French planters, the French state – with the full backing of the United States – forced the Haitian government in 1825 to pay an enormous indemnity of 150 million French francs, which Haiti only paid off in 1947 to Citibank (which bought the debt after 1888).

The reticence of France to allow its own universal pretensions (*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* – the phrase from the revolution that was the centre of the 1958 Constitution of the Third Republic) to be heard in the colonies ran from 1804 in Haiti to the wars against national liberation by the French from Algeria to Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s. So ugly is that history that French students are not taught it in an unvarnished manner. If a French student is asked how many Algerians died due to the brutality of the French regime during

## Debt and the French burden

Just a few days before the murder of Nahel M, President Macron hosted the Paris Summit for a New Global Financial Pact. The idea for this summit originated with Barbados’ Prime Minister Mia Mottley, who suggested that countries that were especially climate-vulnerable – mainly low-lying island states – needed to get easier access to financing to offset the dangers of rising sea waters. Mottley had argued that the cost of mitigation – building sea walls – and the costs of disasters as well as the high cost of borrowing for green energy, made it impossible for countries such as Barbados to protect themselves or to undertake the kind of transition necessary as climate disasters increased. “What is required of us,” Mottley said, “is absolute transformation, and not reform, of our institutions.”

Macron’s summit on the financial pact was as hollow as the promises to reform the French police or France’s colonial attitudes to the African states. Akinwumi Adesina, head of the African Development Bank, said that “Africa alone loses \$7 to \$15 billion a year because of climate change, and that’s going to rise to... almost \$50 billion a year by 2040. So, the world has to meet its commitment, the developed countries, of the \$100 billion” pledge that they have made. Treaty obligations and promises made since at least 2009, Adesina said, have been broken. “I mean, it’s a very



People attend a march in tribute to Nahel, a 17-year-old teenager killed by a French police officer during a traffic stop, in Nanterre, Paris, France, June 29, 2023.

PHOTO: REUTERS

President Macron called the killing of Nahel M “inexplicable,” but this is hardly a credible response. Racism against people of Arab and African descent in France has become almost banal – something that takes place and no longer raises an eyebrow. When France’s Ministry of the Interior released the numbers of racist attacks and killings from 2021, the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) said the situation was “alarming.” Sophie Eliezéon, chief of the inter-ministerial delegation for the fight against racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-LGBT hate (DILCRAH), said, “What is being reported from the ground is the exacerbation of unabashed [behaviour].” The killing of Nahel M, in this context, was absolutely explicable – it was the result of a general social toxicity towards minorities and one that is given expression through the police force. No wonder the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said, “This is a moment for the country to seriously address the deep issues of racism and discrimination in law enforcement.”

## Deep issues of colonialism

France never really came to terms with its colonial heritage or its colonial mindset. French colonisers went to the Americas in the 16th century, and a hundred years later set up a number of plantations in the Caribbean that operated a slave-based economy. At the heart of the French colonial enterprise was the island of Hispaniola, half of which is today’s Haiti, and from where the French Empire derived an enormous volume of its considerable wealth. France’s attitude to its colonies and to their urge for freedom is encapsulated in the story of Haiti. When the Afro-descendant

the liberation war (1954-1962), they would be hard-pressed to come up with the real number, which is over a million; nor would those students know that when 30,000 Algerians marched in Paris on October 17, 1961, the French police killed at least a hundred of them and threw their bodies into the River Seine, while arresting at least 14,000 people. This is an unacknowledged history, and an unacknowledged colonial history confounds the French public who are therefore unprepared for the colonial structures that assert themselves through the police force and through France’s continued colonial adventures.

Over the course of the past six months, the governments of Burkina Faso and Mali have ejected French troops. They have argued that the 2013 French intervention, purportedly against al-Qaeda, in fact intensified the instability in the region, and that France actually consorted with secessionist groups against the national states. A growing feeling of anti-French and anti-Western sentiment runs from these countries in Africa’s Sahel northwards to Algeria and Morocco, where President Macron has been heckled during recent visits. Confidence is growing in the northern Africa region, where people are now quite clear that the French interventions are not for the sake of the African people but are for France’s narrow interests. For instance, the French continue to garrison the town of Arlit, Niger, not for reasons of *Mission Civilisatrice*, but to power the French nuclear reactors; one-third of all lightbulbs in France are powered by the uranium from Arlit. There is a general swell of anti-French feeling in the country’s former colonies, now inflamed by the murder of a boy of Tunisian and Algerian heritage.

small amount of money compared to the scale of the problem, but by not meeting it, it has created a crisis of trust in the developing countries.”

Macron and World Bank President Ajay Banga gave speeches that sounded as if they could have been given over a decade ago. Same language, same tired promises. “Hope and optimism,” said Banga, to an audience that was not feeling hopeful or optimistic. At least Macron put some tangible suggestions on the table, such as a global tax on shipping, on aviation, and on the wealthy to raise \$5 billion for a loss and damage fund. It is unlikely that the corporate sector, which has influence in the International Maritime Organization (who will see about the shipping taxes), will allow increased taxation in this sector.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pointed his finger at the residue of the colonial mindset and the neo-colonial structure when it comes to financing. The International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) are available to ameliorate the negative impact of the permanent debt crisis and to bring much-needed emergency finances to poorer countries. But even here, Guterres said, the European Union – with a total population of 447 million people – received \$160 billion in SDRs, while the continent of Africa – with a total population of 1.2 billion people – received only \$34 billion in SDRs. “A European citizen received on average almost 13 times more than an African citizen,” Guterres pointed out. “All this was done according to the rules. But let’s face it: these rules have become profoundly immoral.” He could have been speaking about the French police code.

**This article was produced by Globetrotter.**

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Hindu hero

5 Whole range

9 Thoroughly disgusted

10 Swift

12 Molecule's makeup

13 Nonsense

14 Rewarded good service

16 Gorilla, for one

17 Crumb carriers

18 Defeated soundly

21 – Vegas

22 Partial

23 Join the big leagues

24 Preceding periods

26 On the – (fleeting)

29 Tiny

30 Japanese sport

31 Fitting

32 Dropped down

34 Binge

37 Unmanned plane

38 Story-telling Dr.

39 Touches down

40 Like an abyss

41 Peepers

DOWN

1 Where images focus

2 Makes one's own

3 Childhood ailment

4 Church area

5 Museum focus

6 Road gunk

7 Heroin, for one

8 Moved speedily

9 Lethal

11 Title paper

15 Needed fixing, as a faucet

19 Rowing needs

20 GI-entertaining grp.

22 Ring event

23 African grazer

24 Muscular-looking, in slang

25 False

26 Tony winner

27 Changes, in a way

28 Methods

29 Physics amount

30 Aerosol output

33 Not busy

35 Language suffix

36 Sixth sense, briefly

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TUESDAY'S ANSWERS

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A P P L E C O N G O

S S E H B O Y I P

S E A G A L V A N S

D R I V E L I N E

A R E A S

L I N E D R I V E

F O N T E A T E R S

A C T A R M E R A

C A R O L I D R I S

E L O P E E D E N S

T E S T S E D G Y



RIGHTS ADVOCACY

# Necessity to reform the Child Marriage Restraint Act

TASNIM MAKSUD

Child marriage is a major issue in Bangladesh, and reforming the Child Marriage Restraint Act is essential to addressing the problems associated with this practice. Bangladesh has Asia's highest rate of child marriage and one of the world's highest rates. Females in Bangladesh marry at a rate of 52 percent before the age of 18, and 18 percent before the age of 15. Child marriage devastates the lives of married girls and their families; it forces girls out of school, traps them in poverty, increases the likelihood of domestic abuse, and raises significant health problems for girls and their unborn children due to early pregnancy.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act of Bangladesh was enacted in 1929 and later amended in 1984, setting the legal age for marriage at 18 years for females and 21 years for males. At present, the main legislation regarding child marriage is the



involve providing adequate resources, training, and support to law enforcement agencies, as well as promoting awareness among communities about the legal consequences and harmful effects of child marriage.

Sixthly, the lack of education is a significant factor contributing to child marriage. Reforming the law should be coupled with efforts to improve access to quality education, specially for girls. Education empowers children with knowledge, skills, and opportunities, enabling them to make informed decisions about their lives and delay marriage.

Seventhly, the Act could include provisions for establishing comprehensive support systems for individuals affected by child marriage. This might involve setting up helplines, counseling services, and safe houses to aid, protection, and rehabilitation for child brides and their families.

Eighthly, the Act could consider imposing stricter penalties for those involved in child marriages, including parents, guardians, and any other parties facilitating such marriages. It could also establish mechanisms to hold individuals accountable for violating the provisions of the Act.

Ninthly, child marriage is deeply rooted in social and cultural norms in Bangladesh. To effectively combat this issue, legal reforms should be accompanied by comprehensive strategies that challenge these norms and promote gender equality, education, and women's empowerment. Engaging with religious leaders, community influencers, and civil society organisations is vital in this regard.

It is important to note that legal reforms alone may not be sufficient to eradicate child marriage entirely. Addressing this complex issue requires a multi-faceted approach involving government commitment, community engagement, awareness campaigns, education, and economic empowerment initiatives.

The Writer is an Official Contributor, Law Desk, The Daily Star.

specific circumstances, which ultimately shows the ways for the parties to child marriage with the court's authorisation. These provisions undermine the intended purpose of the law and provide room for exploitation. Reforming the law can help eliminate or tighten these loopholes.

Secondly, if we look closely at the law, we can see that all the offences are bailable, which ultimately inspires the parties to allow child marriage. When an offence becomes bailable, the accused has the right to seek bail from the court. As a result, it cannot have significant consequences in society for this offence.

Thirdly, this Act, in addition to penal provisions, gives the court the option of imposing a fine on the accused person. Another legal issue that must be addressed concerns the fine and payment of the fine. The fine which is imposed in the Act is so low according to today's socioeconomic situation and sometimes the people are not afraid of this kind of fine. Again, because different legal procedures are involved, realising the fine is extremely difficult and complicated. This ultimately undermines

the fundamental penal provisions.

Fourthly, if we look at the administrative approach of this Act, it has provisions for the formation of administrative committees to raise awareness in society about the negative effects of child marriage. The functions of these committees must be more specific. The government has specialised officers for women and children in various administrative units, though their functions and powers are somewhat limited. As a result, even though they receive information about child marriage, those officers are unable to properly enforce their powers in their jurisdiction. To prevent child marriage, they must rely on the wishes of other administrative units. As a result, if we truly want to prevent child marriage, specialised departments should be entrusted with the task of enforcing this Act. Otherwise, it must rely on administrative units that are overburdened with their own work to enforce this Act.

Fifthly, there could be a focus on improving the implementation and enforcement of the Act. This may

**First and foremost, the current law has several exceptions and loopholes that allow for child marriages in certain circumstances, such as parental consent or special circumstances.**

Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 which replaced the previous Act of 1929. Despite these legal provisions, child marriage remains prevalent due to various social, cultural, and economic factors.

Here are some reasons why the reform of the Child Marriage Restraint Act is necessary in Bangladesh:

First and foremost, the current law has several exceptions and loopholes that allow for child marriages in certain circumstances, such as parental consent or special circumstances. Section 19 of this Act authorises child marriage under

LAW IN-DEPTH

## Consent of existing wife in polygamous marriage: A myth or statutory requirement?



**David Pearl and Werner Menski remark that in view of South Asian social and religious dynamics, the complete interdiction of polygamy remains elusive.**

SURIYA TARANNUM SUSAN

A myth persists among the mainstream population that consent of the existing wife is a mandatory statutory requirement for the remarriage of the husband. Whereas, the concerned legislation Muslim Family Law Ordinance (MFLO), 1961 states otherwise. The legislation does not make the consent of one of the main stakeholders in such marriages, i.e. existing wives – a compulsory prerequisite.

Section 6(1) of the MFLO embodies the basic law on polygamy, which lays down that no man shall contract polygamous marriage without the previous written permission of the Arbitration Council. It also bars registration of a polygamous marriage solemnised without the approval of the Council. Section 6(2) divulges about submission of an application to the Chairman for getting permission. The application shall

contain the reason behind such marriage, and whether the existing wife or wives has/ have granted consent.

The power of granting such permission is a discretionary power of the Council. Section 6(3) embodies that permission will be granted only if the proposed marriage is “necessary and just.” Against the decision of the Council, an appeal in the form of revision shall lie to the concerned Assistant Judge and his decision shall be final. Rule 15 of the Muslim Family Rules, 1961 mentions laying down a concise statement of the grounds on which the new marriage is alleged to be “just and necessary.” Rule 14 sketches out a guideline for gauging the justification of such marriage. Some mentionable factors are fertility, physical infirmity, physical incapability for conjugal relations, insanity, and so on. In contravention to the statutory procedures, any dower whether prompt or deferred needs to be paid immediately to the existing wives. Further criminal sanctions are also mentioned in section 6(5). However, non-compliance with the aforesaid statutory requirements does not impact the validity of marriage.

In *Abul Basher v Nurun Nabi* 39 DLR (1987) 333, a question arose whether the existing wife's consent was a prerequisite for solemnising a second marriage. The court held that the legislative intent of section 6 was to curb the practice of polygamy and to condone it in reasonable scenarios. Section 6(5)(b) penalises polygamous marriage without the previous written approbation of the Arbitration Council but remains silent about the consent of the existing wife. Hence, the legal provisions and judicial precedents make it clear that the consent of the first wife is not a *sine qua non* for the husband to solemnise remarriage.

It is pertinent to mention that the approval of existing wife might expedite the permission granting procedure from the Council. But the nuances behind such consent should be scrutinised. In assessing the consent given by the existing wife, patriarchal connotations should be taken into consideration. Societal forces and dynamics are too overwhelming for most

women in Bangladesh to deter polygamy and many women succumb to the polygamous marriage for the fear of becoming destitute.

Given the narrow ambit of the existing wife's role in such marriages, very few redress exists for women. Nikahnama is a potent weapon in such a situation. Since Shariah allows polygamy, a wife cannot insert stipulations prohibiting her husband from contracting another marriage. Such a stipulation is rendered void and does not fall under the purview of special conditions (clause 17 of Nikahnama). But she can definitely resort to Talaq-e-Tafweez under clause 18. At the time of marriage, the wife can insert a clause that in the event of a remarriage, she can divorce her husband. Delegation of such right may check the imbalance of power in marriage to a little extent. Moreover, Section 2(VIII)(f) the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939 puts forth the remarriage of the husband as a valid ground for the wife to seek divorce.

The High Court Division in *Jesmin Sultana v Mohammad Elias* 17 BLD (1997) 4 recommended the deletion of section 6 and substitution of a section prohibiting polygamy. The Court referred to the Quranic precondition of “to be able to deal justly” among wives for polygamy as incapable of fulfillment in present socio-economic scenario. However, the Appellate Division declared the judgment impugned.

Polygamy has always been an issue of debate between fundamentalists and modernists. The provisions of section 6 is essentially a compromise between both the views. David Pearl and Werner Menski remark that in view of South Asian social and religious dynamics, the complete interdiction of polygamy remains elusive. But it is high time to include the major stakeholders in the picture. It is imperative to make the existing wife a necessary party in the arbitration proceedings. Mere acquiescence of the existing wife in this patriarchal society with deep-rooted stigma of Talaq should not be drawn out as consent.

The Writer is an Official Contributor, Law Desk, The Daily Star.

RIGHTS WATCH

## Protection of diplomats under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations

TARAZI MOHAMMED SHEIKH

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently announced that the ambassadors and high commissioners in Bangladesh representing the United States, United Kingdom, India, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and Japan would no longer receive the previously provided “extra security” measures, which were issued following the 2016 Holey Artisan attack in Dhaka. The Ministry, however, provided the option to hire escorts from the Ansar battalion, should they deem it necessary for their personal protection. This decision has sparked varied reactions, with different groups presenting contrasting perspectives, which may pose risks to Bangladesh's international relationships.

An earlier incident in December 2022, when the US ambassador to Bangladesh encountered security concerns while meeting with families affected by enforced disappearance, severely underscored the significance of ensuring robust security arrangements for diplomats residing in the country. Hence, despite the government's assurances of adequate security measures and the arrangement to hire added security forces, these circumstances surrounding the protection of foreign diplomats stationed in Bangladesh have raised considerable debate about the adherence to diplomatic protocols under international standards and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR), considered the cornerstone for the conduct of diplomatic relations worldwide, designates the foreign ministry of each signatory country, including Bangladesh, as the primary authority responsible for managing diplomatic



PHOTO: ISTOCK

missions within the host nation. It is built upon the fundamental principle of ensuring the inviolability and security of diplomatic missions and their personnel.

Article 22 of the VCDR addresses the protection of diplomatic premises and states that the premises of a diplomatic mission, including the buildings, the land they occupy, and other property, are inviolable. It entrusts the host country with the duty to protect these premises from any intrusion, damage, or disturbance in order to prevent any interference with the mission's peaceful functioning and the diplomats' ability to carry out their duties. Such protection extends not only to the physical integrity of the premises but also to the mission's archives, documents, and correspondence (article 27). Similarly, article 30 provides inviolability and protection of the private residence of a diplomatic agent, which, too, include property, papers, and correspondence.

Article 25 obligates the host state to provide diplomatic officials with complete facilities necessary for the effective performance of their functions. The “functions of the diplomatic mission,” as articulated in article 3, include diplomatic negotiations, representing the sending state's interests, promoting diplomatic dialogue, and other related functions. The receiving state is obligated to assist the mission in accomplishing these functions by offering the necessary resources, support, and security.

Article 26 addresses the freedom of movement and travel of members of diplomatic missions in the host state, with considerations for national security. The provision recognises that the receiving state has a legitimate interest in safeguarding its national security and may need to control access to certain areas to protect sensitive locations, installations, or information. While diplomats should have the necessary mobility to perform their official functions, it is also crucial to respect the host country's security concerns. Similarly, the host state has the responsibility to ensure that any limitations on the freedom of movement imposed for reasons of national security are reasonable, non-discriminatory, and do not unduly hinder the mission's operations.

Article 29 provides inviolability as to any form of arrest or detention in the host country. The host country is responsible to ensure respectful treatment and to take all appropriate steps to prevent any attack on an official's person, freedom, or dignity.

The VCDR further extends the protections and immunities granted to diplomatic agents to their non-national family members, ensuring their security and well being in article 37.

Finally, article 41 highlights the importance of upholding diplomatic protocols, respecting the sovereignty of the host country, and maintaining the integrity and security of diplomatic missions by emphasising the duty of individuals enjoying diplomatic privileges and immunities to respect the laws and regulations of the host country, refraining from interfering in its internal affairs and prohibits the use of diplomatic mission premises in any manner incompatible with the mission's functions.

The Writer is an Official Contributor, Law Desk, The Daily Star.



## Tigresses ‘levelling up’

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women’s cricket team saw their wish to play at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium fulfilled, hosting India for a three-match T20I series at the ‘home of cricket’.

It was the Tigresses’ first appearance in 11 years in Mirpur, and they capped off their long wait with a special victory, winning the third T20I yesterday by four wickets with 10 balls to spare. Despite losing the series 2-1, it was an inspiring win for the Tigresses as they helped Bangladesh beat India for only the third time in 16 T20I meetings in front of family members, cheering them on from the stands.

India lost two wickets early to Sultana Kahtun but a 45-run stand between Jemimah Rodrigues (28 off 26) and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (40 off 41) steadied the ship before Bangladesh skipper Nigar Sultana’s sharp work behind the stumps led to dismissals of both the batters.

Leg-spinner Rabeya Khan worked her magic in the death overs to finish with three for 16 as India managed just 102 for nine in 20 overs.

Unlike losing their way at the death



like in the previous game, Shamima Sultana made the difference at the top with a 42-run knock yesterday.

“I was there in the middle with her and I told her ‘Shamima apu you stay at the crease’. Since she can play the shots, I told her to carry on. I told her that if she plays for a long time, the equation would be easy,” skipper Nigar Sultana Joty said about their 46-run stand.

Despite a solid knock from Shamima, the Tigresses floundered with 18 required in four overs but Nahida Akter and Ritu Moni held their nerves. “The plan was not to hurry and focus on singles,” Nahida told The Daily Star.

Head coach Hashan Tilakratne may have been left a little disappointed for losing the series but said he notices a change. “Yeah, [we] could have sealed series but we are levelling up and that’s important,” he told The Daily Star as the Tigresses now gear up for the upcoming three-match ODI series with more audacity.



Bangladesh Test and T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan and top-order batter Najmul Hossain Shanto enjoy a kickabout yesterday during practice at the Sylhet International Stadium as the Tigers prepare for the two-match T20I series against Afghanistan, starting at the same venue today. Meanwhile, fans queued up in numbers outside the stadium in Sylhet for tickets of today’s game.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Shakib’s sole focus revolves around working as a unit

SPORTS REPORTER FROM SYLHET

Bangladesh desperately needed a change in mindset and body language since Tamim Iqbal’s retirement saga in the middle of the three-match ODI series against Afghanistan which the hosts conceded with a game in hand before managing to avoid a whitewash.

The challenge is even tougher for Shakib Al Hasan and his troops when it comes to the T20I format. Afghanistan are clearly ahead of the Tigers, having won six out of their last nine meetings.

The obvious threat from the two Afghan spinners – Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Ur Rahman — remain on the back of their minds, as evidenced during Bangladesh’s last-minute preparations ahead of the first T20I in Sylhet yesterday.

Four leg-spinners, including Rishad Hossain who is part of the Tigers T20I squad, were seen operating at the Bangladesh nets – indicating the batters had Rashid in mind.

During the pre-match press conference yesterday, Shakib’s strong mental side was

evident. The Bangladesh captain chose not to mention the names of Rashid or Mujeeb but instead asserted that the collective approach from the Tigers can help them to win matches.

“We are not thinking about any specific individual and our team is also not dependent on one batter or bowler. We want to perform as a unit so that we can win matches and this is how we want

T20Is, Rashid picked up 13 wickets in nine games and Mujeeb bagged seven from five in Bangladesh while boasting an economy-rate of just over six.

Apart from the visitors’ spinners, someone like Fazalhaq Farooqi – who also remained instrumental to dismantle the Tigers batting line-up in the ODI series – will once again look to prove his mettle in the shortest format.



things to be,” Shakib told reporters.

“We didn’t discuss or think about any specific player. Whoever will go out to bat or BOWL, I am sure they have worked individually on how to play according to the situation. It is something you can’t say to anyone as it is up to the individual regarding how he can fulfil his responsibility and perform.”

Although Shakib was not willing to single out the key threats, statistics present ominous signs for the Tigers. In

Shakib, however, reinforced his stance to have an open mindset and play as a unit “not think about the opponents”.

“When we have an open mind, it helps to improve our game. So, we should think about that and try to think of improving 10-20 percent each time, and I think that is when the team performs the most.

“We couldn’t perform when we think a lot about the conditions and opponents. I think the less we could do that the better we can perform.”

“We got good practice and also won [the ODI series]. We will play them [Bangladesh] again in the Asia Cup and we know about them. It’s going to be a great contest.”

Afghanistan T20I skipper Rashid Khan

## Litu pleased despite draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh coach Mahbubur Rahman Litu expressed his satisfaction over the performance of his charges despite seeing them concede a stoppage time equaliser against Nepal in their FIFA friendly fixture at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Bangladesh took a 65th-minute lead through skipper Sabina Khatun, but Sabitra Bhandari’s 91st-minute equaliser denied the hosts their second win over the women from the Himalayas in what was Bangladesh’s first match since their historic 3-1 win against the same opposition in the final of the SAFF Women’s Championship in September last year.

Litu, who has been handed the responsibility to guide the team following long-time coach Golam Rabbani Choton’s resignation, felt that the team did reasonably well despite missing a number of key players and coaching staff.

Apart from Choton, BFF’s technical director Paul Smalley and fitness trainer Ivan Razlov were not with the team while key players like Sirat Jahan Swapna and Akhi Khatun had already left the team.

“I was given the responsibility and it was a challenge for me,” Litu said at the post-match press conference. “I’m not giving any excuse but as



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

you know we were missing a number of players while some of them played with injuries. So I believe they played very well.”

Litu handed senior debuts to youngsters like Afeida Khandaker, Matsushima Sumaya and Shaheda Akter Ripa, with the latter beautifully setting up Sabina’s goal, threading a through-pass for the captain from in between a couple of opposition players which Sabina finished off expertly.

The captain should have wrapped up the victory when she ran on to Tohura Khatun’s header 10 minutes later, but the veteran striker wasted too much time on the ball to allow Nepal goalkeeper Anjila Tumbabo Subba to clear the danger. And the team had to pay for that error as Sabitra, who was the top-scorer in

the Indian women’s league this year, scored from a goalmouth melee as Bangladesh endured some nervy moments towards the end.

Litu felt that there might have been some fatigue in play for the Bangladesh players, who were playing their first match in almost 10 months while Nepal had played four matches during this time.

“Had Sabina scored that goal, the game would have been over. It was bad luck for us,” Litu said. “There wasn’t a lack of focus but perhaps a bit of fatigue towards the end. Those who were new will play better if given more chances.”

Litu hoped that Bangladesh can beat Nepal, ranked 39 places above them, in the second and final match of the series, which will take place at the same venue on Sunday.

## Choton watches from the stands

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women’s football team’s former head coach Golam Rabbani Choton watched from the stands as the team drew 1-1 against Nepal in their FIFA friendly fixture in Kamalapur yesterday.

The 54-year-old coach, who recently resigned from his job of a decade and a-half, left the team with some indignation over meddling into his work by others in the football federation. Despite currently being coach of Bangladesh Army women’s team, Choton watched from general gallery, not using the VIP seating arrangements that are reserved for coaches and club officials.

The sight of Choton watching the match didn’t escape Mahbubur Rahman Litu, Choton’s long-time understudy who has been given the responsibility to guide the team for the time.

Speaking after the match about the man who considers these players as his family, Litu said: “I have worked with Choton since 2009. We have a special bonding. I have missed him a lot today. I had even tried to contact him before the match, but I don’t know why he didn’t pick up the phone.”



Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic became the first unseeded player in 60 years to reach the Wimbledon women’s final on Thursday, crushing the title dreams of Ukraine’s Elina Svitolina. Vondrousova reached the final for the first time as she showed there was no room for any gushing sentiment, ending Svitolina’s remarkable run with a 6-3, 6-3 victory in the semifinal.

PHOTO: REUTERS





## DENGUE PATIENTS

# City hospitals still grappling

HELEMUL ALAM

As dengue cases continue to increase across the country, Sir Salimullah Medical College Mitford Hospital, like other city hospitals, is struggling with the mounting pressure of patients for the past week.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), five more dengue patients died and 1,239 were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning. Of them, 67 were admitted to Mitford hospital.

So far, 17,382 dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals, of which 3,365 were in Mugda, 1,134 in Mitford, and 1,259 in DMCH – the three highest dengue admissions in hospitals across the country.

Md Mehedi Hasan, an intern doctor working at Mitford's medicine ward yesterday morning, said the pressure of patients increased especially over the last five days.

"I have admitted six dengue patients at the [medicine] ward just this [yesterday] morning."

Brig Gen Quazi Md Rashid-Un-Nabi, director of the hospital, said they have been handling dengue patients since January when 34 patients were admitted. The number fell to 10 in February but later increased to 14 in March and 16 in April.

It then shot up to 120 in May and went on to 598 in June. On July 5, the number of patients was 30 and increased to 67 on Wednesday.

He added that patients are coming from outside the capital as well.

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## USING NID SERVER

# EC needs to monitor all its partners 24/7

### Suggest experts as precaution against data leak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

IT experts recommended that the Election Commission keep round-the-clock surveillance of all the 171 partners that avail services from the National Identification (NID) server.

In addition, they suggested the EC conduct a vulnerability assessment and penetration test on the server at regular intervals to identify and address cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

The recommendations were made by teachers and IT experts from several universities at a meeting with NID server authorities at the EC office yesterday.

The meeting was held in the wake of the data leak of over five crore citizens – which includes names, birth dates, and NID numbers – from the Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration (BDRIS) website.

"NID authorities must monitor the security – including software and network securities – of its partners 24/7. Their [partners'] database should also be looked through and they should be brought under scrutiny," a meeting source said.

It must also be observed how many times the partners request service from the server to discern any possible abnormalities there, they added.

"The experts gave us suggestions on how to monitor our partners," EC's NID wing Director General AKM Humayun Kabir told reporters after the meeting.

"We took their opinions and suggestions into consideration. We will be talking to the partners to implement them. Then we will sit down with more experts."

## Afghan challenge set to intensify

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the format moving to the shortest one, the challenge for Bangladesh gets even more intense as the home side take on Afghanistan in the first of the two-match T20I series at the picturesque Sylhet International Cricket Stadium today, scheduled to begin at 6pm local time.

Despite a 2-1 series defeat in ODIs, a win in the third game was more than a consolation one for Bangladesh. On and off the field, it gave some much-needed momentum to the wounded Tigers after the retirement saga of Tamim Iqbal had hogged all the limelight.

Under T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan, the hosts looked charged up and were seen enjoying themselves during the training session ahead of the series opener yesterday.

The Afghan spin threat led by skipper Rashid

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**SONGBIRDS OF THE SOUTH ...** A Brahminy starling, locally known as Bamini myna, spotted on a grassland in Rajshahi. Usually seen in pairs or small flocks in open habitats on the plains of the Indian subcontinent, these passerine birds feast on fruits and nectar as well as insects together. However, they aren't as arboreal as other species and prefer foraging mostly on the ground. Interestingly though, their scientific name *Sturnia pagodarum* is believed to be based on their habit of perching on temple pagodas in southern India. Like many mynas, the Brahminy also have a wide range of calls with musical notes that are long and end abruptly. They are also known to mimic the calls of other species. Their most attractive quality, however, is their striking plumage and vividly coloured bill.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD RIDWANUR RAHMAN

# Putin 'already lost the war' in Ukraine

### Biden tells Nordic leaders, vows to protect every inch of Nato territory

AFP, Helsinki

US President Joe Biden said yesterday that Russian President Vladimir Putin has "already lost the war" in Ukraine, with Moscow running short of resources and in economic trouble.

"Putin's already lost the war," Biden told a news conference in Helsinki after talks with Nordic leaders. "There is no possibility of him winning the war in Ukraine."

He expected Ukraine's counter-offensive against the Russian invasion would lead to negotiations to end the war.

Biden said that Ukraine would one day join the Nato military alliance, but that it could not happen while Kyiv is still at war with Moscow.

The US president vowed to protect every inch of Nato territory including Finland. "The United States is committed to Finland, committed to Nato, and those commitments are rock solid."

He also said that Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin should be careful of poisoning following the mercenary group's failed uprising in Russia.

"God only knows what he's likely to do. We're not even sure where he is and what relationship he has. If I were he, I'd be careful what I ate. I'd keep my eye on my menu," Biden said.

Meanwhile, Russia responded to Nato vows of support for Ukraine with air strikes and

nuclear sabre-rattling yesterday.

Moscow's riposte came in the form of its latest aerial assault on Ukraine, with Kyiv saying early yesterday it had destroyed 20 Russian attack drones and two cruise missiles.

At least three people were killed and four people were wounded in the capital, where most of the Iranian-made drones were destroyed, Kyiv's mayor said.

In a sign of its anger at Western backing for Kyiv, Moscow said it would regard F-16 fighter jets sent to Ukraine as a "nuclear" threat because of their capacity to carry atomic bombs.

"Russia cannot ignore the ability of these aircraft to carry nuclear weapons. No amount of assurances will help here," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was quoted as saying by the Russian foreign ministry.

The Netherlands and Denmark are leading a plan to train Ukrainian pilots on using the US-made aircraft as part of an 11-nation coalition, after Washington authorised the move.

Russia has repeatedly engaged in nuclear rhetoric since its February 2022 invasion of its pro-Western neighbour Ukraine.

Ukrainian armed forces have received cluster munitions pledged by the United States to Kyiv to boost its slow-moving counter-offensive against the Russian invasion, a senior army official said yesterday.



**Ritu Moni and Nahida Akter celebrate while completing the winning run to cap off the three-match T20I series against their Indian counterparts with a four-wicket victory at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Although the Tigresses had already conceded the series with defeats in first two games, it was a momentous occasion for Bangladesh as they registered just their third victory over India in 16 T20I meetings. Story on Page 11.**

PHOTO: BCB

## BUSINESS

### Exports to US slide

The slowdown in the global economy stemming from the fallout of Covid-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war sent Bangladesh's exports to the US lower last fiscal year.

Shipment to the largest export destination for the country was down 6.82 per cent at \$9.70 billion in 2022-23. It was \$10.41 billion in 2021-22, according to the Export Promotion Bureau.

Exporters are, however, hopeful that export will make a comeback after a few months thanks to the rebounding US economy.

STORY ON B1

# Thai reformist Pita loses PM vote

REUTERS, Bangkok

Thailand's Pita Limjaroenrat vowed yesterday not to quit in his quest to become prime minister, after suffering defeat in a parliamentary vote fraught by abstentions and no-shows as conservative forces closed ranks to keep him at bay.

The leader of the progressive Move Forward Party, the surprise winners of the May 14 election, was unopposed in the showdown in the bicameral parliament, but fell 51 votes short of the top job after being thwarted by a Senate appointed by the royalist military after a 2014 coup.

Another vote is expected next week, which 42-year-old Pita can contest if nominated again by his eight-party alliance. To win he needs the votes of more than half of parliament's 749 members.

"I accept it but I'm not giving up," he told reporters. "I will not surrender and will use this time to garner more support."

The vote was a critical test of Pita's political clout and a gauge of opposition to his party's anti-establishment agenda, which includes removing the military from politics, dismantling business monopolies and changing a law that prescribes long jail terms for insulting the monarchy.

Move Forward and its alliance partner, Pheu Thai, thrashed conservative pro-military parties in the election, seen widely as a resounding rejection of nearly a decade of government led or backed by the military.

The defeat was the latest blow in a torrid two days for the US-educated Pita, who saw two legal complaints against him gain momentum on the eve of the vote, including a recommendation to disqualify him, prompting hundreds of demonstrators to gather and warn of moves afoot to keep Move Forward from power.

The cases are the latest twist in a two-decade struggle for power fraught with coups, court interventions, party dissolutions and at times violent street protests.

Pita's determination to pursue Move Forward's controversial agenda has put him at odds with a powerful nexus of conservatives and old-money families with influence over democratic institutions, which has loomed large over Thai politics for decades.



Pita Limjaroenrat

# Ancient Egypt artists altered their work

AFP, Paris

From subtly shifting the position of Ramses II's sceptre, to touch-ups on a necklace or headdress, ancient Egyptian artists were more creative than previously thought, according to a study published on Wednesday.

Using new portable imaging and chemical analysis techniques, an international team of scientists took a fresh look at paintings in the Valley of the Kings – a royal burial ground for pharaohs and other ancient Egyptian elites.

Egyptologists have until now considered art in these tombs to be very conventional, adhering to certain rules and using predefined patterns which were transferred onto walls.

However, a small robot moving in front of the painted walls used X-ray, ultraviolet, and infrared vision to "scrutinize" the art in-depth, much like a medical scanner, said Philippe Walter of the French centre for scientific research, CNRS, a co-author of the study published in the PLOS One journal.

On an image of Ramses II, decorating the tomb of the priest Nakhtamon, painted some 1,200 years BCE, the pharaoh is depicted in profile, wearing a necklace and headdress and holding a royal sceptre.

