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MEETINGS WITH EU TEAM AL, BNP stick to stances on polls-time govt

STAR REPORT

Both the ruling Awami League and opposition BNP stuck to their guns over the form of the polls-time government during their meetings with the visiting European Union delegation yesterday.

At its meeting with the EU delegation at the party chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office, the BNP made it clear that no acceptable election is possible under the incumbent government, which has been in power since 2009.

The AL on the other hand took a firm stance that a free and fair election is possible only under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The main opposition in parliament Jatiya Party, which sat with the EU delegation later in the day, stressed the need for talks to resolve the political crisis just a few months before the national election expected in late 2023 or early 2024.

The six-member European Union Election Exploratory Mission came to Dhaka on July 9 to assess the election environment. The Mission is expected to end on July 23, and the delegation, led by Chelleri Riccardo, will prepare a report on the outcome of its visit. The report will form the basis for the EU to determine whether it will send a team to observe the national election.

Yesterday's series of meetings with political parties came just two days after a high-level US delegation wrapped up its visit. During a joint press conference with Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen at a state guest house on Thursday, US Under Secretary Uzra Zeya told journalists the US supports free and fair elections and is "all for dialogues".

Yesterday, the EU delegation held its first meeting with the BNP when its leaders made it clear that it was impossible to join elections under this government, reports UNB.

"We've told them that there's no question of going to elections under this regime, it is not possible. There are so many reasons behind it," BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told reporters after the meeting that began at 9:00am.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Left, ships are moored at a jetty on the Shitalakkhya in Kanchpur of Narayanganj. The authorities set up the jetty for loading and unloading of factory products and raw materials. With this initiative, the authorities have protected the river bank from grabbers. Encroachment was evident in the photo, right, published in The Daily Star on November 7, 2012.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



the BUSINESS

Clients of two insurers unsure about claim settlement
Many clients of Homeland Life Insurance Company and Fareast Islami Life Insurance are uncertain about whether they will get back their insured amount owing to a lack of liquidity at the insurers.
Currently, Homeland is not settling claims involving Tk 79 crore, while Fareast owed Tk 4,559 crore to policy-holders in 2022.

STORY ON B1

DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT Mired in corruption

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Corruption seems to be a constant at the Department of Youth Development.

An investigation at the department has recently found an embezzlement of Tk 13.96 crore in what is the seventh such incident at the department in two years.

The probe committee by the youth and sports ministry and the DYD early this year found 10 officials and employees of the department and the accounts office in Zakiganj, Sylhet, were involved in the racket.

DYD Deputy Director Ali Ashraf illegally allocated the fund to a skills training programme for the youth in Zakiganj in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 fiscal years even though the programme ended in November 2019, according to findings by the three-member committee headed by Deputy Secretary Fazle Elahi.

Ashraf and the others then withdrew the money and misappropriated it, reads the

probe report submitted to the secretary of the youth and sports ministry on January 4 this year.

The committee named the nine others as DYD Deputy Director Farhat Noor, Assistant Director Fazlul Haque, upazila youth development officers (UYDO) Azharul Kabir and Abul Kalam Azad, Accountant Nurul Amin, office assistants Babul Patwary and Jashim Uddin, Accounts Officer Kamal Hossain, and Auditor Iqbal Munshi.

Another probe committee formed by the DYD to look into the same incident found that from November 2019 to June 2022, Tk 16.14 crore was misappropriated from the programme.

The fund for the NSP (National Service Programme) was approved by DYD Director General Azharul Islam Khan.

Contacted, Azharul said on May 31 that there were proposals for approval of such funds for Zakiganj and several other upazilas, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Govt is always there for you

PM tells businesspeople;
FBCCI leaders say they want
Hasina in power again

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the businesspeople to develop new products and find new export markets utilising their innovative ideas.

"The government is always there for you," she said.

The premier was addressing the opening ceremony of the "Business Conference

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

POLITICAL STABILITY PREREQUISITE FOR 'SMART BANGLADESH' - BI



The Dharla has washed away a section of a road in Gorokmandal BDR Bazar area of Kurigram's Phulbari upazila, cutting road communications between six villages and the upazila town. Parts of five upazilas in the district have already been affected by flooding due to onrush of water from upstream and heavy rain. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Get tested for dengue at first sign of fever

Doctors say; advise not
taking unprescribed
antibiotics, painkillers

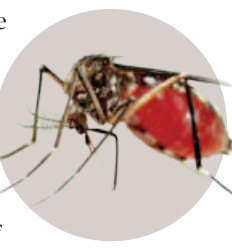
MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Amidst the ongoing dengue outbreak, medical professionals have recommended individuals to promptly get tested upon the earliest onset of fever.

Patients with fever should get tested immediately irrespective of whether there are symptoms associated with dengue, including body ache.

While bed rest and nourishment through the consumption of liquids is urgent, doctors suggest refraining from taking painkillers or antibiotics. However, they recommend only paracetamol as primary medication.

"Currently, it is crucial for everyone



SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

She didn't know it was his last call

Says mother of migrant killed
in Saudi factory fire, 8 other
Bangladeshis among the dead

STAR REPORT

Like every week, after Juma prayers, Mohammad Obaidul made a video call to his mother Rahela Begum in Bangladesh from Al Hofuf, about 350 kilometres from the Saudi capital Riyadh. Little did she know that that would be the last time she would be speaking to her son.

Obaidul was killed -- along with eight other Bangladeshis and one Indian citizen -- later that day in a devastating fire at the furniture factory where he worked.

"My son wanted to return to the country and get married in a few months. All those dreams are now shattered," said Rahela yesterday, holding a picture of her son.

Youngest among 11 siblings, Obidaul, 34, from Chandpur village of Natore's Naldanga upazila, went to Saudi Arabia in 2019 to bring solvency to his family.

He worked in a Saudi company before shifting to the furniture factory a few months later.

One of his cousins Yadul, who is working in a factory in Dammam, informed the family of the fire at Obaidul's factory. The family tried to communicate with Obaidul all night but they could not get through. Yadul informed them of Obaidul's death early yesterday.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

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Tony Fernandes

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Sister Concerns

Adani hands over Godda plant to Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani yesterday called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka to “handover the Godda power plant” following the full load commencement of power supply to Bangladesh.

“Honoured to have met Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina on full load commencement and handover of the 1,600 MW Ultra Super Critical Godda Power Plant. I salute the dedicated teams from India and Bangladesh who braved Covid to commission the plant in a record time of three and-a-half years,” he tweeted after the meeting.

Adani left Dhaka after the meeting, which took place around 11 am, The Daily Star has learnt from power ministry officials informed on the matter. He flew in his chartered flight earlier in the day to meet with Hasina.

On July 12, Adani Power Jharkhand, a wholly owned subsidiary of Adani Power Ltd, completed the dependable capacity test for the Godda plant.

The test was conducted over the stipulated period of six hours to evaluate the simultaneous functioning of both units of the plant after they began supplying electricity.

On June 26, the Adani power plant, located in India’s Godda and dedicated to supplying electricity to Bangladesh, started commercial production in full swing.

Earlier, on April 6, the power plant had started to supply power from the first unit.

Bangladesh is purchasing electricity through a 105km long dedicated 400kV transmission line from the Godda plant under a 25-year contract signed in November 2017.

HECKLING SHAMIM OSMAN IN NY

Ex-JCD leader’s home attacked

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Chhatra League leaders and activists yesterday attacked and vandalised the home of a former local Chhatra Dal leader in Noakhali’s Sonaimuri upazila over “harassing” Narayanganj-4 Awami League lawmaker Shamim Osman in New York.

Locals said former Chhatra Dal leader Badal Mirza, 36, who hails from Amki village in Sonaimuri, left Bangladesh eight-10 years ago for the US.

Some 10-15 BCL men vandalised Badal’s home in Sonaimuri around 10:00am yesterday and exploded a few crude bombs. A video of the attack was making the rounds on social media, they added.

Badal and several other people had an altercation with lawmaker Shamim on Little Bangladesh Road in

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



In blatant disregard for safety, traders have set up makeshift shops along the rail line in the capital’s Khilgaon. Many of them have also built shanties there to make room for their families. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FLOODS IN THE NORTH

Cries for help getting louder

STAR REPORT

The flood affected people in the north are struggling with limited to no access to food, water, and shelter.

Around 2.5 lakh people have been marooned in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Rangpur, according to the local administration and representatives.

The flood situation may begin improving today in some places, said officials of the Bangladesh Water Development Board. “The flood situation in the low-lying areas of Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat may improve in the next 24 hours, while it may remain unchanged in the low-lying areas of Kurigram,” said the weather bulletin of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre at 9:00am yesterday.

Although government officials concerned said they were distributing relief materials, flood victims said the aid supply was inadequate.

In Lalmonirhat, the Teesta was flowing 20cm above the danger level at Dalia point at 6:00am yesterday.

Rafiqul Islam, 63, a resident of Char Falimari village in Sadar upazila, along with five members of his family had to shift to a flood shelter on Thursday after their house was submerged.

“Since then, we’ve been only having dry food. We’ve not had a cooked meal in the

last three days,” he said.

“The tube wells in the area have gone underwater. We are facing an acute crisis of drinking water,” said Mohasin Islam, 62, of Dakshin Balapara village of Aditmari upazila.

Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Ullah said the distribution of relief materials among the flood-affected was ongoing.

In Kurigram, the Dharla River was flowing 22cm above the danger level at Dharla Bridge Point at 6:00am yesterday.

“I along with my family have been living on the road in a makeshift tent. We don’t have the facility to cook here. We don’t even have enough money to buy dry food here,” said Apiar Rahman, 48, a day labourer from Char Gorokamandal village in Phulbari upazila.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Abdul Hai Sarkar said his office has enough stock of dry food, drinking water, and cash aid to provide relief assistance to the victims, adding that, the distribution of relief items was underway.

In Rangpur, the Teesta River was flowing 0.7cm above the danger level at Kaunia Point at around 6:00pm yesterday.

Many flood victims said they were yet to receive a sufficient amount of relief assistance.

Abdullah Al Hadi, chairman of Laxmitari union in Gangachara upazila,

said, “Around 5,000 people have been marooned in our union. As of now, we’ve been able to send aid to around 1,000 people. We can’t help more people as they’re stranded in remote areas that are currently hard to reach.”

Soleman Ali, of the upazila’s Purba Ischi, said, “All the tube wells in our area are now underwater. Now, we have to collect drinking water from a tube well that is a few kilometres away.”

Contacted, Gangachara UNO Nahid Tamanna said all measures were taken to provide necessary relief assistance to the flood-affected.

In Nilphamari, the Teesta River was flowing 12cm above the danger mark at Dowani Point at 6:00am yesterday.

Nur Islam, of the Uttar Kharibari area in Dimla upazila, said, “I along with my family took shelter on a dyke on Thursday after my house was washed away. We had brought some dry food with us like roti [bread], chira [flat rice], and muri [puffed rice], which all ran out by Friday. We have not had food since.”

Contacted, Dimla UNO Belayet Hossain said “We’ve already started distributing dry food among the affected people. We will soon beef up the relief distribution.”

[Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur, and Nilphamari contributed to the report.]

Fisherman found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Police recovered the dead body of a fisherman from a fishing boat in Nizampur village of Patuakhali’s Kalapara upazila yesterday.

The deceased Md Khalil, 40, of Kawar Char village of Dhulasar union.

Mohipur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ferdous Alam Khan said “The body has been sent to Patuakhali Medical College’s morgue for autopsy. But whether it was murder or suicide will be known after getting the autopsy report.”

An unnatural death case was filed in this connection, he added.

Sources said Khalil went fishing with his small wooden boat in the Mohipur canal on Friday evening.

Locals found his body on his fishing boat and informed to police who recovered the body.

Jamaat barred from holding rally in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Jamaat-e-Islami was barred by police to organise the rally pressing their ten-point demand scheduled yesterday afternoon on the ground of possible deterioration of law and order.

Now the organization wants to organise the rally on July 21 at the same ground -- Sylhet Registrar’s Office -- with the permission of the Police.

Being agitated with the decision, Jamaat organised a press conference yesterday afternoon at the organization’s office in the city’s Bandarbazar area.

In the press conference, Jamaat’s Ameer of Sylhet city unit Muhammad Fakhru Islam said that the police on Friday night denied permission verbally without showing any reason.

Contacted, Md Elias Sharif, commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said, “After Jamaat’s application for permission, we waited for the intelligence report and the report suspected a possible deterioration of the law and order. Based on the report, we denied permission. If they apply again, we will follow the same procedure before granting permission.”

2 children drown in Dhaka, Jamalpur

STAR REPORT

Two children died from drowning in Dhaka and Jamalpur yesterday.

In Dhaka, a schoolboy drowned while bathing with friends in a pond in Bangshal area in the afternoon.

Twelve-year-old Eshan Nandi was a seventh-grader at Pogose Laboratory School. After playing with his friends at a playground in Bangshal, Eshan went to the pond to take a bath around 1:30pm. Soon after getting into the water, the schoolboy, who did not know how to swim, drowned, said his uncle Pijus Karmakar.

In Jamalpur, a three-year-old girl drowned in floodwater in Bilerpar village under Sadhurpara union in Bakshiganj upazila.

Nusrat, daughter of Liton Miah, of the village, suddenly disappeared while playing in the yard at home in the morning, reports our district correspondent quoting Sohela Rana, officer-in-charge of Bakshiganj Police Station.

After two hours, locals recovered her body from a nearby canal next to her house.

Mired in corruption

FROM PAGE 1

and he approved the one for Zakiganj by mistake.

Departmental proceedings have been launched against the DYD officials and employees, he said, adding that the sports ministry had written to the finance ministry, requesting that legal action be taken against Accounts Officer Kamal and Auditor Iqbal.

The Anti-Corruption Commission started investigating the matter after the DYD filed a general diary with Zakiganj Police Station early this year.

Zakiganj Upazila Youth Development Officer Kabir returned Tk 1 crore to the government exchequer during the departmental investigation.

CORRUPTION IS REWARDED

In five separate investigations last year, the DYD found that five assistant upazila youth development officers (AUYDO) misappropriated over Tk 26 lakh meant to provide youths with loans.

The investigations found that AUYDOs Anwarul Kabir misappropriated Tk 17.04 lakh, Golam Faruq Tk 2.38 lakh, Ainul Islam Bhuiyan Tk 1.47 lakh, Dipak Kumar Mondol Tk 3.80 lakh and Rafiqul Islam Sheikh Tk 1.62 lakh.

During the departmental proceedings that followed, all of them

admitted that they had committed financial crimes. But the DYD only lowered their salaries and decided to recover the embezzled money from their pension benefits, according to documents.

Except Anwarul, all of them were given the current charge of upazila youth development officer (UYDO) in November 2021. Some of them got the blessing even after multiple departmental cases punished them.

In May last year, a ministry probe found that this was done ignoring the ministry directive of picking the most competent, honest, and experienced officers.

The probe report said large sums might have changed hands when this was done.

Requesting anonymity, several DYD officials said had the corrupt individuals been terminated in line with the Government Employee (discipline and appeal) Rules 2018, such incidents might have not occurred.

Mokhlesur Rahman, a deputy director of the DYD at the time, picked 70 officers, including the four corrupt ones, to give the charge of UYDO from a list of 1,175 AUYDOs. The 70 officers chosen by Mokhlesur were near the bottom of the list which means they were less eligible than those at the top.

The probe committee found several suspicious transactions at the bank account of the wife of one of the 70 officers. The committee also found the screenshot of a message in which an AUYDO asked a colleague to send money to the account.

An Administrative Tribunal in Dhaka in a judgement on July 25 last year said the order giving the 70 AUYDOs bigger roles was illegal.

The parliamentary standing committee on youth and sports ministry in different meetings also ordered cancelling the order.

But the DYD has yet to cancel it because there was bribery behind the order, DYD officials said.

Meanwhile, the public service commission approved a list of 118 AUYDOs prepared for promotion to UYDO. The decision of promotion is pending with State Minister for Youth and Sports Zahid Ahsan Russel since March 6.

Mokhlesur told a probe committee that he only executed the directives of the director (administration) and the DG of DYD.

Asked about the matter, DYD Director General Azahrul did not give a direct answer and said it is not possible for him to see the details in all the files that are usually placed before him.

The order giving them bigger roles

has not been cancelled because a court stayed the judgement. But, DYD officers said the authorities could cancel the “current charge” order as the judgement was stayed nine months after the tribunal verdict.

The probe committee also recommended further inquiry into the suspected financial transactions and a separate investigation committee to find out the roles of higher authorities. None of these have been done yet.

Majbah Uddin, who was the secretary of the ministry at the time, framed charges against Mokhlesur, but in December last year he acquitted Mokhlesur.

Contacted, Mejbah Uddin said he acquitted Mokhlesur because the allegation of financial corruption was “not proved”.

Asked why he did not form committees to investigate whether there was a shady financial transaction and the roles of DYD director and DG, he said, “I will talk to the current secretary about forming the committees.”

Mokhlesur was transferred to Narsingdi as a deputy director following the allegations. But a number of his colleagues in Narsingdi say he often remains absent and spends the time at the head office.

Mokhlesur, however, maintains that he attends office regularly.

Hasina’s leadership.

The business leaders highlighted the development activities, especially the mega projects implemented by the incumbent government. They observed that this changed the socioeconomic situation in Bangladesh in the last 14 and a half years, which is unprecedented.

Earlier, Hasina unveiled the report on the outcome of Bangladesh Business Summit 2023.

Govt is always there for you

FROM PAGE 1

on Building Smart Bangladesh” at the capital’s Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), the country’s apex trade body, hosted the three-day event focusing on the private sector’s role in building Smart Bangladesh.

The business leaders said Hasina’s leadership is needed also in future for the country’s economic development

and progress.

Hasina said the Awami League never judges businesspeople by their political affiliation.

“Political affiliation of the businesspeople is not important to us. We always think about the welfare of the people of the country.”

She said the government gives opportunities to all irrespective of the political affiliations.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi and Prime Minister’s Private Industry

and Investment Affairs Adviser Salman F Rahman were present, among others.

FBCCI President Md Jashim Uddin delivered the welcome speech.

Foreign investors, top corporates, sector-based associations, top business leaders, and general body members from chambers and associations of the FBCCI joined the conference.

Speaking at the event, business leaders expressed their trust in

AL, BNP stick to stances on polls-time govt

FROM PAGE 1

Khosru said they informed the EU delegation that the people will not be able to cast their votes and elect their representatives through an election under the current regime.

“These things are as clear as the daylight. Everyone knows these.

“There’s also no democratic environment here ... There is no level-playing field in Bangladesh, where people have no democratic, constitutional, and political rights. So, a proper atmosphere has to be created first and then the question of dialogue will come.”

The BNP leader said they discussed all the issues, including BNP’s position on the election, their demands, and the current political situation with the EU delegation.

The EU delegation met the AL leaders at a Banani hotel at 12:00pm, where the ruling party told them that holding a free, fair and peaceful election is possible under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina without making any changes to the current structure of the government.

“The European Union wants free, fair and peaceful elections in Bangladesh and we have told them that this is also the commitment of the Awami League,” AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said, briefing reporters after the meeting.

“The delegation did not discuss the issue of dialogue. The delegation did not even talk about caretaker government or dissolution of parliament,” said Quader, adding that the EU wanted the election to be held in accordance with the constitution, sovereignty and legal system of Bangladesh.

“Like other countries around the world, Bangladesh will form a polls-time government under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina. There is no question of dissolving parliament

or resignation of the government or forming a caretaker government,” he said.

During its meeting, the Jatiya Party told the EU delegation that JP and the country’s people want a free, fair, and neutral election.

“The Awami League and BNP both placed their one-point demand. BNP wants the government to resign while Awami League wants the election to be held under Sheikh Hasina. Our one-point demand is a fair election,” party Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnur told reporters after its meeting at a party leader’s house in Gulshan.

The JP also told the EU team that the Election Commission and the government need to play the biggest role for holding a credible election.

Chunnur said JP thinks the current political problem can be resolved through talks and the government should initiate the dialogue.

Jamaat-e-Islami stressed the need for a level-playing field during its meeting with the EU team at the office of the European Union.

“We told them [EU] if the election is held under a neutral non-partisan government, then it is welcome, and if the election is held under this government, then it would not be appropriate for the delegates to come [to observe the election],” he said.

Amar Bangladesh Party, which was founded in 2020 with a group of reformists and activists of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (AB Party), also met the EU delegation yesterday. They told them that free, fair, and credible election is not possible without a non-partisan election-time government.

In a statement on the meeting, the party demanded restoration of the caretaker system to ensure a free, fair, participatory, and acceptable elections.

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STAR REPORT

Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique yesterday said people are the owners of the state and they must be ensured services.

Justice seekers should not have to roam the corridors of the courts for years. Cases have to be disposed of quickly so that litigants can get justice without any hassle, he said.

The chief justice was speaking at the inaugural of "Nyay Kunju" – a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PHOTO: PID

While exchanging pleasantries with patients and their relatives, as well as the doctors, nurses, and employees at the national eye hospital, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday met 11-year-old Rabbi, who works at the hospital's canteen. Moved by his struggles, the premier decided to take responsibility of Rabbi's educational expenses and gave necessary instructions to the officials concerned in this regard.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

It's mostly
Arafat out
campaigningBy-polls to Dhaka-17
tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The electioneering deadline for the by-polls to Dhaka-17 constituency ended yesterday morning with Awami League Muhammad Arafat and his supporters campaigning at full throttle.

The by-polls is scheduled to be held tomorrow.

The supporters of Arafat, conducted electioneering at Bhashantek, Sattala slums, cantonment and Banani areas throughout the day on Friday.

"We have received good responses from the voters during our campaigns," Abul Hosen, an AL activist, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Ever since the candidates were allocated symbols on June 26, the ruling party's candidate and his supporters have been on a hectic campaign trail.

Besides, candidates of other political parties – including Jatiya Party, Jaker Party and Trinamool

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A trailblazer, mentor and visionary

Speakers tell memorial event on Rokia Afzal Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pioneering businesswoman Rokia Afzal Rahman believed in financial independence, alongside excelling in education, for women empowerment and dedicated her life to this cause, speakers said at a commemorative programme yesterday.

They said she was "fearless" in facing challenges that would come in her way to establish her own businesses which ultimately aimed at helping numerous rural women for economic empowerment.

Her life and spirit was remembered at the programme "Remembering Rokia Afzal Rahman: The Fearless Spirit", hosted by her family, at Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel in the capital.

Rokia passed away at the Mt Elizabeth Novena Hospital in Singapore on April 5 at the age of 82.

She undertook various initiatives in different sectors including media, insurance, real estate, and financial institute, leaving a lasting legacy.

She was the chairperson of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of The Daily Star, and a director of Mediastar Limited, the

owning company of Prothom Alo.

In 2001, she became an adviser to the now abolished caretaker government.

Describing her pioneering role, Mueyed Chowdhury, her colleague in the 2001 caretaker government, in a video message said if one looks

In the caretaker government, Rokia was responsible for the ministries of social welfare and women and children affairs. Being a person from the fields, she wanted to do something in these sectors, he said.

In the video message, Debapriya

By providing micro-credit loans to rural women, Rokia Afzal Rahman not only helped generate employment but also instilled a fundamental humane value among them.

DEBAPRIYA BHATTACHARYA
Distinguished fellow of CPD

Rokia Afzal Rahman was an icon of courage as her presence and company would generate strength among women entrepreneurs in overcoming challenges.

MONJULIKA CHAKMA
Woman entrepreneur

at her life they could see in her generation, she ventured in areas which very few people would dare to explore.

Mueyed said he never heard of her being tired. "I always saw her bubbling with enthusiasm and energy," he said.

Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue, said by providing micro-credit loans to rural women, Rokia Afzal Rahman not only helped generate employment but also instilled a fundamental humane value among them.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Dialogue a
must for free
and fair pollsSays Dr Kamal
Hossain, urges
govt to sit with all
political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday urged the government to sit in a dialogue with all political parties immediately to make the upcoming parliamentary elections free, fair and participatory.

Though it's the constitutional right to cast vote, the country's people have had to fight to establish their basic rights, he said.

"People want to form a government through a democratic process by exercising their constitutional rights in a peaceful environment," Dr Kamal said while presiding over the central committee meeting of Gonoforum at its office at the capital's Purana Paltan.



SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Dhaka, New York
direct flight likely
to resume this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The much-awaited Dhaka-New York direct flight is likely to resume this year, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman said yesterday.

The CAAB chief said this at the "ATJFB Dialogue" organised by the Aviation and Tourism Journalists Forum of Bangladesh (ATJFB) at the HSIA.

ATJFB President Tanzim Anwar moderated the programme.

About the resumption of the Dhaka-New York flight, Mafidur said, "We wanted to resume the flight by October. However, Biman hasn't got permission (from the US) for flight operation."

Mafidur Rahman said the overall process was delayed as Biman Bangladesh Airlines did not apply on time. "We have informed Biman about it. They applied late. Besides, the process has also been delayed due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. However, we are hopeful to launch New York flights this year," he added.

Resuming direct flights on the route is a major pledge of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the government has been trying for years to resume flights on this route.

Biman had operated the New York flight

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

The process has also been delayed due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. However, we are hopeful to launch New York flights this year.

M MAFIDUR RAHMAN
CAAB chairman

Cartoonist
MA Kuddus
passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cartoonist MA Kuddus, senior vice president of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ), died at his home in Dhaka's Shaheenbagh area yesterday.

He was 53.

Kuddus breathed his last in his sleep, said DUJ President Sohail Haider Chowdhury.

He was a cartoonist of Bangla daily Sangbad. Before that, he served in different newspapers, including the daily Ittefaq.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at Jatiya Press Club

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

STIPEND HIKE

Postgraduate physicians stage sit-in at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding a hike in their monthly stipends to Tk 50,000 from Tk 20,000, postgraduate private trainee doctors staged a sit-in on the Dhaka Medical College Hospital premises yesterday.

Representatives of the Post Graduate Private Trainee Doctors Association said they will stage another sit-in on Shahbag intersection today to press home their demands.

They have also demanded a monthly payment of their stipends instead of the current half-yearly payment system.

"Last week, we enforced work stoppage programme for three days. But we did not get any response to our demands," Dr Zahir Hossain, president of the association, told The Daily Star.

He said around 8,500 post-graduate private trainee doctors serve in different public medical colleges and health institutes countrywide.

"Our fellow doctors from different parts of the country will also attend the event," Dr Zahir said.

Postgraduate trainee physicians are medical school graduates who pursue further specialised training in a specific medical field for 2-5 years to achieve higher degrees.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Two-year-old Junayed and 10-month-old Ayesha play with their grandmother in the capital's Mudga Medical College and Hospital as their parents prepare for their discharge. The siblings, residents of Madartek area, were hospitalised after both of them were diagnosed with dengue. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Seventh death anniversary of MA Mannan

CITY DESK

Today is the seventh death anniversary of Dr MA Mannan, a neurologist and former Awami League lawmaker of Katiadi-Pakundia constituency in Kishoreganj.



A language movement veteran and Liberation War organiser, Dr Mannan died of old-age complications at a Dhaka hospital in 2016, said a press release.

Born on December 2, 1932, he joined Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (formerly known as Institute of Postgraduate Medicine and Research) in 1969 and initiated treatment for neurological disorders for the first time.

Founder of Neurology Foundation and Epilepsy Association of Bangladesh, Prof Mannan was awarded Ekushey Padak in 2015 for his contributions to the medical sector and social services.

He founded Dr Abdul Mannan Women's College in Kishoreganj and several educational and social institutions. He was the member and president of Bangladesh Medical & Dental Council for 12 years. On the occasion of his death anniversary, a dua and milad mahfil will be held at Masjid E Bakkatil Mubarak Mosque after Asr prayers in Dhaka's Kalabagan. Besides, prayers will be held at his constituency.

PM takes over

FROM PAGE 3
“I want to go back to my mother in Chandpur. I want to resume my studies,” Rabbi told Hasina.

The prime minister was visibly emotional when she heard Rabbi's story. She took over the responsibility of his educational expenses and gave necessary instructions to officials concerned to take action in this regard and implement it properly.

A trailblazer, mentor

FROM PAGE 3

A greater sense of humanity could be found in the aspects of her activities in empowering the country's women, he said.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said there are many aspects of women's rights but Rokia Afzal Rahman focused on women as an entrepreneur.

“She believed very strongly that economic independence of women at whatever stage of society they were in was fundamental to their rights,” he said.

So, she went into the entrepreneurship area and taught rural and middle-class women how to do business. She inspired them and created the institution MIDAS Financing Limited to give them loan and credit, he said.

In a sense, she was very focused on the fact that

women's empowerment in terms of business and financial independence was her forte, he added.

Mahfuz Anam also said he was privileged to run The Daily Star during the over two decades tenure of Rokia as the chair of its owning company Mediaworld Ltd.

Woman entrepreneur Monjulika Chakma said Rokia Afzal Rahman was an icon of courage as her presence and company would generate strength among women entrepreneurs like her in overcoming challenges.

Rokia's eldest daughter Erum Marium said her mother would always see strength in people.

Recalling the departure of her father Azimur Rahman, Erum said her father died in 2001, the same year when her mother became an adviser to the caretaker

government.

“My father's death had shattered her... but that could not crush her and her sense of responsibility as the head of the family. She faced the situation with courage and hope,” she added.

In his brief speech, Rokia's only son Imran Faiz Rahman thanked guests and well-wishers for attending the memorial programme.

Mahbubur Rahman, president of International Chamber of Commerce – ICC Bangladesh, in the video message, said Rokia Afzal Rahman started agro-based cold storage in the country in the 1980s. At that time, no other woman was involved in such business, he said.

Mahbubur said Rokia's politeness made her special while her kindness and ability to embrace people made her popular.

Dialogue a must

FROM PAGE 3

Dr Kamal said the main goals of the Liberation War were to establish democracy, justice and human rights, and to build a society free of exploitation.

“But the conflicts and disbelief between the political parties is endangering the achievements of the Liberation War. The country is in a deep crisis due to the government's repression. As

It's mostly

FROM PAGE 3

BNP -- also carried out campaigns.

While the AL nominated candidate conducted campaigns in the elite areas namely Banani, Gulshan and cantonment, others focused on slum areas.

Meanwhile, Hero Alom, who is being considered a strong opponent by the voters and other candidates, have been lacklustre in terms of campaigning.

Talking to The Daily Star, Hero Alom said, “A few of my posters were put up in the slum areas and Banani but the Awami League men tore those down. Also, my campaign was barred by the ruling party activists in Banani and Kachukhet areas,” he claimed.

The constituency became vacant following the demise of MP Akbar Hossain Pathan, popularly known as Farooq, on May 15.

One-year expulsion is not enough

FROM PAGE 5

lodge a written complaint with the university administration alleging that Chhatra League leader Sanjida, activist Tabassum Islam and several others tortured her on the night of February 12 for staying at the Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall without their “permission”.

In her complaint, she said they tortured her from 11:00pm until 3:30am. She also demanded punishment for those involved.

The incident came to light after the victim left the hall and disclosed the matter to her seniors and her family members.

Two probe bodies, formed by the Islamic University authorities to look into the matter, submitted their reports on February 26.

The hall administration expelled the accused on February 27.

On March 5, the university authorities suspended Antora and four of her associates from the university as well as removed Shamsul Alam, the provost of Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall, from his post following a High Court order.

The university administration also allotted a seat for Phulpori at any room in any hall of her own choice so that she can resume her classes and academic activities, following the court order.

3 BCL ACTIVISTS

SUSPENDED

The university authorities yesterday suspended three BCL activists for their alleged involvement in vandalising equipment of the medical centre on the campus.

The suspended students are: Rezwan Siddiqi Kabbo, a student of law department under 2018-19 academic session; and Atik Arman

and Salman Ohin under 2021-22 academic session of the same department.

Prof Azad said the VC issued the suspension order against the three for violating the university's rules and regulations.

A three-member probe committee was also formed to look into the matter and further action would be taken against them after getting reports from the probe body, he added.

On Monday night, Kabbo along with Atik and Salman went to the medical centre with chest pain.

Later, he asked duty doctor Wahidur Rahman Milton for an ambulance to go to Kushtia General Hospital for better treatment. Kabbo with his associates started “vandalising equipment including chairs, table and land phone” in the medical centre as there was a delay in calling the ambulance.

DNCC fines own

FROM PAGE 5

The city corporation conducted mobile court drives in 10 different areas.

DNCC spokesperson Mokbul Hossain said the campaign will continue throughout July.

DSCC, on the other hand, carried out drives in two areas and fined two building owners Tk 15,000 each, said DSCC spokesperson Abu Naser.

A muddy menace

FROM PAGE 5

incomplete, further hindering the road's usability.

Rahima Begum, a garment factory worker in Nama Genda area, said crossing the road even by foot during the rainy season becomes impossible due to the knee-deep mud and waterlogging.

The contractor responsible for the road development project left abruptly three years ago during the pandemic, leaving the work incomplete.

Consequently, both workers and residents were left with no other option but to endure the inconveniences, informed Abdul Mia, a rickshaw

puller from Sadhapur. **THE CONTRACT DETAILS** According to LGED in Dhaka, a project with eight packages was undertaken under the Second City Region Development Project (CRDB-II) to transform the entire stretch of the aforementioned earthen road into a reinforced cement concrete one, construct drains to mitigate waterlogging, and build a girder bridge.

The Tk 47.61 crore project started on November 2, 2019, following a contract signed on October 27, that year, with Modern Structures Ltd, a construction firm.

Originally scheduled for completion by March 12, 2021, the work could

not be finished on time, resulting in an extension until November 30, 2022.

However, the contractor expressed their inability to complete the remaining tasks after only 55 percent of the work had been completed by November 6, which resulted in the contract being cancelled on January 1 of this year.

Subsequently, on January 17, the contractor filed a case against the executive engineer of LGED in Dhaka, seeking the return of the security money.

A court dismissed the case on March 13.

Masudur Rahman Mallick, senior assistant engineer of LGED in Dhaka, said the security

money, around Tk 4.76 crore, will not be returned to the contractor as they breached the contract.

“An estimate paper was sent to the project director for completing remaining road work on May 30. The new tender will hopefully be called this month. The work will restart very soon,” he said.

Contacted, Rashed Khan, chairman of the construction firm, said the work could not be completed on time due to a hike in the price of construction materials. He did not elaborate further.

Cartoonist

FROM PAGE 3

after Zohr prayers.

Hailing from Rajbari district, Kuddus completed his MFA degree from Dhaka University.

Press Club president Farida Yasmin, general secretary Shyamal Dutta, BFUJ president Omar Faruq and DUJ president Sohail Haider, among others, expressed deep shock at his death.

Dhaka, New York

FROM PAGE 3

between 1993 and 2006 before suspending it due to losses.

The US Federal Aviation Authority placed CAAB in Category 2 after finding irregularities in its operational activities in an investigation in 2006.

Such categorisation placed additional restrictions on Bangladesh's airlines flying to the US, including the resumption of the sole direct route between the nations.

বাংলাদেশ কর্মার ব্যাকে লিমিটেড সকল প্রকার আমানত, আকর্ষণীয় স্বীকৃত জামানতবিহীন বিনিয়োগ, উদ্যোক্তা, কৃষি স্বপ্ন সুবিধা ও ক্রেডিট কার্ড সহ আধুনিক ব্যাংকিং সেবায় আপনার বিশ্ব সহযোগী।
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২১ বর্ষের চতুর্থ সংখ্যা
প্রকাশিত হয়েছে
স্টলে খোঁজ নিন/গ্রাহক হোন
প্রতি কপি ১০০ টাকা
বার্ষিক চাঁদা (সডাক) ৩০০ টাকা
এজেন্সী ও পুরাতন সংখ্যার
জন্য যোগাযোগ করুন
সম্পাদকীয় যোগাযোগ
উচ্চতর গবেষণা কেন্দ্র
কক্ষ ২০৪ (টিএসসি সংলগ্ন)
ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ঢাকা-১০০০
ফোন : ০১৮১৭-০৫৭৭৮০
০১৬২০-২৩৫৬৬১

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TENDER NOTICE
Tender No. NSU/22-23-T15
North South University is inviting sealed offer from bona fide/ reputed organization/ distributors/ business partners/ agents for supplying Cisco switch, photocopier, desktop computer, mvp, digital screen for North South University as described in the tender schedule.
Detail of the items mentioned below:
Lot: 1- Cisco switch
Lot: 2,3- Photocopier
Lot: 4,5- Desktop computer
Lot: 6,7- Multimedia video projector and screen
Lot: 8- Digital screen
Interested bidders may collect schedule of tender from Southeast Bank Ltd. Bashundhara Branch, Dhaka from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on all working days till **August 8, 2023** by paying non-refundable amount of Taka 1,000.00 (One Thousand) in cash for each schedule.
The bidders must submit **earnest money @ 2.5%** of the quoted price in the form of Pay Order issued from any scheduled bank drawn in favor of North South University along with their offer. The sealed offer must be submitted on **August 9, 2023** by 2.15 p.m. at the office of the undersigned. The offers will be opened at 2:30 p.m. on the same day. Representatives of the participating bidders may remain present at the time of opening the bids. NSU authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason.
Director, Internal Affairs
NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Bashundhara, Dhaka-1229
Phone : +88-02-55668200, Ext. 1204, Fax: +88-02-55668202
E-mail to: procurement@northsouth.edu, www.northsouth.edu

PRICE SENSITIVE INFORMATION

This is for information of all concerned that the Board of Directors of Trust Bank Limited in its 347 (08/2023) meeting held on 15 July 2023 commencing from 02.00 p.m. has adopted, among others, **Un-Audited Financial Statements for 2nd quarter (Q-2) ended on 30 June 2023.** The Board of Directors also disclosed the following:

Financial Results [Amount in BDT]:

Particulars	Consolidated				Solo			
	Jan 01 to June 30, 2023	Jan 01 to June 30, 2022	April 01 to June 30, 2023	April 01 to June 30, 2022	Jan 01 to June 30, 2023	Jan 01 to June 30, 2022	April 01 to June 30, 2023	April 01 to June 30, 2022
Profit before Tax	2,935,523,537	3,744,115,903	1,955,751,206	1,798,598,200	3,021,881,802	3,741,973,988	2,006,248,937	1,831,559,321
Net Profit after Taxation	1,336,989,994	1,572,129,790	1,106,919,382	727,928,013	1,412,591,946	1,612,041,212	1,156,293,622	726,115,017
Earnings Per Share (EPS)	1.77	2.15	1.42	0.94	1.81	2.07	1.49	0.93
Net Operating Cash Flow Per Share (NOCFPS)	35.75	20.20	37.26	19.95	33.60	18.90	37.39	20.23

Financial Position [Amount in BDT]:

Particulars	Consolidated		Solo	
	30-June-23	30-June-22	30-June-23	30-June-22
Net Assets Value (NAV)	21,457,882,464	20,176,300,190	21,071,253,791	19,714,862,997
Net Assets Value (NAV) Per Share	27.57	25.92	27.07	25.33

Note: The details of the Un-Audited Financial Statements for the 2nd Quarter ended on 30 June 2023 will be available in the website of the Bank at: www.tblbd.com.

Dated: Dhaka
15 July 2023

By order of the Board of Directors
Sd/-
Md. Mizanur Rahman, FCS
Company Secretary

Trust Bank



Local ship workers suffer as the jetty on the banks of the Bhairab in Khulna remains damaged for a while now. Built around 60 years ago, numerous ships docked on this jetty to load and unload goods. However, only a few now turn their course towards it, as no repair work has been done in years to preserve the place. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

One-year expulsion is not enough

Says Phulpori after Islamic University expels five including BCL leader for torturing her

UNB, Kushtia

The Islamic University authorities in Kushtia yesterday expelled five of its female students, including a leader of the university unit of Chhatra League, for a year over their involvement in the torture of fresher Phulpori Khatun on the campus.

The expelled students are Sanjida Chowdhury Antora, vice-president of the university unit BCL and a student of statistics department, and four activists Halima Akhtar Urmī of fine arts, Ishrat Jahan Mim of law, and Tabassum Islam and Mawabia Jahan of finance and banking.

Phulpori, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the university's decision.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday evening, she said, "The way they tortured me physically and emotionally, this one-year suspension is not enough. I am not satisfied, rather I'm worried. They may end up coming to the university after a year and seek revenge on me. I don't think I got justice. I want them to be expelled for good."

The decision was taken at a meeting of the university's student disciplinary committee in the morning with Vice-

Chancellor Prof Shaikh Abdus Salam in the chair.

IU pro-VC Prof M Mahbubur Rahman, treasurer Prof M Alamgir Hossain Bhuiya, proctor Prof M Shahadat Hossain Azad, acting registrar HM Ali Hasan, among others, were present in the meeting.



The way they tortured me physically and emotionally, this one-year suspension is not enough. I am not satisfied, rather I'm worried. They may end up coming to the university after a year and seek revenge on me. I don't think I got justice. I want them to be expelled for good.

PHULPORI KHATUN

Prof Azad said the university authorities expelled Antora and four of her associates for a year as per the university act.

Phulpori, a first-year student of finance and banking, on February 14

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Jamaat now wants to hold rally in Ctg

Seeks CMP permission for July 22

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

After bringing out a procession in Dhaka, Jamaat-e-Islami has now sought permission from Chattogram Metropolitan Police to rally on the port city's Laldighi ground on July 22.

Sources said the organisation took the decision yesterday to motivate its leaders and activists ahead of the upcoming national election.

Backed by Jamaat, a 12-member team of lawyers of Chattogram District Bar Association submitted an application at CMP Dampara Police Lines.

Earlier, Chattogram Jamaat tried to hold a rally on February 25 this year but police did not allow them.

According to the application, Jamaat will hold a rally to press home their 10-point demand -- including immediate release of their arrested leaders and lowering the price of essential items.

Chattogram Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Azm Obaidullah said, "Our programme will be held from 2:30pm to 6:00pm on July 22, if the authority allows us. We held a rally peacefully in Dhaka after 10 years. We hope this administration would allow us to do so at Laldighi."

Although Jamaat has sought permission to hold programmes, pro-Jamaat student organisation, Chhatra Shibir, had brought out processions in the port city in last one year. Police filed several cases against them.

The government on different occasions alleged that Jamaat, whose registration was scrapped by the Election Commission, is engaged in subversive activities.

Manjur Morshed, deputy commissioner of the Special Branch of CMP, said, "We have received an application from Jamaat. After collecting information and data, we will take a decision."

GENDA-SADHAPUR ROAD IN SAVAR

A muddy menace

Locals suffer as works remain incomplete for over 3 years

AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH, Savar

Sukumar Chakma, a senior official at Union Pharmaceuticals Limited in Savar's Sadhapur, regularly faces obstacles in his daily commute due to an incomplete road project.

The development work on the Genda-Sadhapur road, initiated four years ago, remains unfinished, forcing Sukumar to take a time-consuming alternative route to reach the factory.

The deteriorated condition of the road has severely impacted the ability of people to travel through it, creating inconvenience and delays.

Talking to this newspaper, Sukumar said there are two routes from his residence to the factory, the aforementioned one and the Sadhapur-Boliarpur road.

"Taking the Genda-Sadhapur road is convenient for me, but it has become completely unfit for movement. Thus, I am compelled to take the Sadhapur-Boliarpur road, which is also in poor condition," he said.

The cost of bringing products to his factory has increased due to these road

conditions, he added.

Genda-Sadhapur road serves as a crucial bypass, connecting Genda to Boliarpur along the Dhaka-Aricha highway. With approximately 20 industries located alongside this road, it caters to the daily transportation needs of workers and thousands of locals, residing in at least 10 villages.

Due to the negligent actions of the construction firm involved in the road work project, a major portion of the road has remained unfit for travel for the past three years.

A recent inspection of the road revealed the presence of numerous potholes throughout its stretch from Genda to Sadhapur. Furthermore, the Namagenda section of the road has become a muddy menace, posing a significant challenge for commuters.

The construction firm initiated the drain works in the Nama Genda area, but the work was left unfinished, deteriorating the road's already poor condition.

Additionally, the construction of a girder bridge in the Sadhapur area remains

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



PHOTO: STAR

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AEDES LARVAE DNCC fines own building Tk 4 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation yesterday fined one of its own under-construction buildings Tk 4 lakh for finding Aedes larvae on the premises.

DNCC fined two contractors Tk 2 lakh each during a drive at its housing project site in Gabtoli. The contractors are Mark Builders and Maisha Construction.

Executive Magistrate Mahmud Hasan led the drive.

Besides, Banga Builders, a contractor responsible for the construction of a building for government employees on Darus Salam Road, was also fined Tk 2 lakh over similar reasons.

On the seventh day of the DNCC's month-long special mosquito eradication drive, a total of Tk 9.85 lakh was collected in 14 cases after finding Aedes larvae.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

PRAYER
TIMING
JULY 16



Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-15	12-45	5-00	6-55	8-17
JAMAAT 4-50	1-15	5-15	7-00	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Ten more lives lost on roads

STAR REPORT

Amid the government's failure to stop reckless driving, operation of unfit vehicles, jaywalking, and inadequate implementation of law, 10 people were killed and 16 injured in six accidents across the country yesterday.

In Bogura, at least three persons were killed and another was injured in a collision between a pick-up and a truck in Adamdighi upazila.

The deceased were identified as Md Rafiqul Islam of Masterpara of Naogaon's Sapahar upazila; Dadan Mia, 46, of Dhaka's Kamrangirchar upazila, and Md Mostak Ali, 45, of Naogaon Sadar upazila, said Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Adamdighi Police Station.

Injured Md Saiful Islam, 22, of Dhaka's Kamrangirchar area, is receiving treatment at the Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman College hospital.

OC Rezaul said, "A truck was pulling a broken-down truck with a rope towards Naogaon. At around 3:30am, a Naogaon bound pick up from Bogura hit the broken-down truck from behind. Two people of the pick-up died on the spot due to the collision."

Police and fire service personnel rescued the two injured and sent them to Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital. One of them died while undergoing treatment, said Sub-inspector Dulal Hossain of Bogura medical outpost.

In Barishal, three people were killed and three injured as a bus rammed a vehicle locally called "trolley" on Dhaka-Barishal highway in Bimanbandar area



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The battered pickup after the accident. At least three persons were killed in a collision between the pick-up and a truck in Bogura early yesterday.

in the afternoon, UNB reports.

The deceased are Emdadul Haque, 38, from Kashipur union; Nadeem Howlader, 12, son of Md Sentu Howlader from Rahmatpur Badamtala area; and Sinbad from the same area.

Identities of the injured could not be known immediately.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Chattogram City Corporation
Nagar Bhaban, Tigerpass, Chattogram
www.ccc.gov.bd

শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গাম শহরের উন্নতি

Date: 13/07/2023

Memo No. 46.11.1600.002.14(C-19).01.36

e-Tender Notice- LGCRRP/CCC/2023-2024/01

This is an 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 in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fee for downloading the e-Tender document of following packages from the National e-GP System Portal has to be posted online through any registered bank branches up to the time given below:

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tender ID	Tender document last selling date and time	Tender closing & opening date and time
1	LGCRRP/Chattogram/2022-23/W-10	i) Development of Footpath at Nur Ahmed Road (East side) at 21 No. Jamal Khan Ward. Total Length=375.00m & ii) Development of Footpath at Momin Road and Jamal Khan Road at 21 No. Jamal Khan Ward. Total Length=533.00m	853471	10-Aug-2023 13:00	10-Aug-2023 15:00
2	LGCRRP/Chattogram/2022-23/W-11	Development of Footpath in S.S. Khaled Road (Ispahani Mor to Sursen Road Mor) at 15 No. Bagmoniram Ward. Total Length=1509.00m	853482	10-Aug-2023 13:00	10-Aug-2023 15:00
3	LGCRRP/Chattogram/2022-23/W-12	Beautification work of Hakim Ali Road in front Ward Office, Baluar Dighi Par, CNB Road (311+455=766m) beside Didar Market, Teri Bazar Road (128m) at 20 No. Dewan Bazar Ward (Footpath).	853483	10-Aug-2023 13:00	10-Aug-2023 15:00
4	LGCRRP/Chattogram/2022-23/W-13	Construction of Boundary/Retaining wall of Graveyard of Kajir Dewri 1 No. Goli at 15 No. Bagmoniram ward.	853484	10-Aug-2023 13:00	10-Aug-2023 15:00
5	LGCRRP/Chattogram/2022-23/W-14	i) Development of Footpath of Momin Road (Cheragi Pahar Mor to Laldighi Mor Ch. 00-350m) at 32 No. Anderkilla Ward & ii) Development of Footpath of Shorwardi Road at 32 No. Anderkilla Ward (Ch 00-150m).	853485	10-Aug-2023 13:00	10-Aug-2023 15:00

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

CCC/PRD-16/23-24
Size: 7" x 4 Col
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WGA WRITER’S STRIKE

What is happening in Hollywood?

Industry in shambles as protests cripple production

Around April, a whopping 97% of WGA members voted to go on strike by May if AMPTP did not meet their agreements, which represents major film and TV industries in Hollywood.

MALIHA MASHIAT

Behind the glitz and the glamour of upcoming film promotions, the writers who are responsible for creating your favourite shows in Hollywood, are on strike. Dubbed '2023 Writers Guild of America strike', it has now been joined by The Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA), as actors also joined in on the ongoing Hollywood labour dispute.

A major key point of the dispute, according to Writers Guild America (WGA), Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) has skimmed the writer's residuals from streaming, compared to 10 years ago.

Another motion of the strike was against the notion of Artificial Intelligent (AI) takeover. The writers want ChatGPT to be only used as a helpful tool in research or structuring scripts,



PHOTOS: REUTERS

rather than an alternative of human resource.

Around April, a whopping 97% of WGA members voted to go on strike by May if AMPTP did not meet their agreements, which represents major film and TV industries in Hollywood. AMPTP engaged in lengthy talks on behalf of the major studios and streaming platforms, but failed to reach a deal before deadline.

During the strike, WGA has proposed actions that they cannot perform that includes- 'writing, revising, pitching, or discussing future projects with companies that are members of the AMPTP.' That entails that these members of the union will not be working with major studios like, Amazon Studios, Netflix, MGM, Apple, NBC Universal, Paramount, Sony Pictures and so on. The repercussions that Hollywood will be facing by not paying writers their dues is already underway.

So far, major studios have pushed back many of their projects due to the lack of writers. The next season of *House of The Dragon* was supposed to drop by next year, but looking at the unforeseeable future of its scripting status, the show's release might be pushed back to 2025. Not only TV shows, but films, podcasts have also been affected by the strike, ones which fall under the guild or

are largely overseen by it. Other projects with completed scripts, have either been postponed or cancelled due to the union's use of 'picket lines' to cause disruption.

Actors have also joined in on the action of demands, as SAG-AFTRA members joined in the picketing in May. A significant number of actors joined in, with Drew Barrymore retracting from hosting the **2023 MTV Movie and TV Awards** in support of strike. Pedro Pascal, Ethan Hawke, Snoop Dogg, Sean Penn and many more have also shown their support through leaving shows, publishing statements or pre-recorded messages and more.

The most recent development so far is, by having actors join in on the strike, they will not appear in films, or even promotions during the stoppage. Many major productions like *Avatar* will be affected and postponed indefinitely. How long will the strike last? According to actor Brian Cox, "until the end of the year".

With the stars of *Oppenheimer* walking off the red carpet and Christopher Nolan saying he will not make films during the strike, the future of filming in Hollywood has truly come to a standstill. If projects get pushed back months and then years, there will be dissonance with the audiences, creating a further uncertain environment in the field of scripting.



‘Classical Music and Dance Fest’ concludes at BSA

'Classical Music and Dance' fest which officially kicked off at the National Music and Dance Centre of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on July 14, finally concluded yesterday.

The festival was inaugurated by BSA director Liaquat Ali Lucky, who announced that they are going to arrange the festival in a bigger scale in 2024, at the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

The first day of the program began with an Odissi performance by Nitto Chondo. Mondira Chowdhury then performed a spellbinding Kathak dance. Rezwan Ali Lavlu and Kaniz Husna Ahmed provided classical music. And the final performance was a Bharatnatyam.

Chanchal Chowdhury to star in Indian web series



Noted actor Chanchal Chowdhury will soon be donning his new avatar 'Debu Pandit' in director Kamaleswar Mukherjee's upcoming web-series, titled *Ganadevta*. The series is based on renowned writer Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay's novel of the same name.

The *Karagar* star will be seen sharing the screen with Arunima Ghosh, who dons the role of Durga in the series.

Speaking about the series, the director shared, "Though the script is yet to be finalised, a lot of work has progressed. The plan is to start shooting by September-October. It would be impossible to portray the character without an actor like Chanchal"

NEWS

Tigers eye Afghan series win

FROM PAGE 12

happens," Shoriful, who hit the winning runs on Friday to seal a two-wicket victory, said.

According to the 22-year-old, the Tigers will once again look to pick up early wickets.

"Definitely it becomes easy to win a game if the bowlers can get rid of the top order. We have been able to do that in the last few games. I hope that the pacers and spinners can do that in the long run," he said.

Afghanistan, meanwhile, will be desperate to save the series and finish their tour on a high.

The passionate Sylhet crowd is expected to arrive in numbers to support the Tigers like the first T20I.

Japanese firm

FROM PAGE 12

Biman as it earns around Tk 1,500 crore yearly.

Amid widespread dissatisfaction over poor luggage-handling services, CAAB decided to outsource the job to a company that can deliver international standard services and serve passengers in the best possible way.

The construction work of the third terminal is about 77 percent completed, and its partial opening is expected to be in October.

The terminal building is already visible. At the moment, the interior designing and installations of various equipment are going on in the building.

The terminal, the construction of which began in 2019, is expected to be fully functional by 2024.

The construction will cost Tk 21,399 crore, with 70 percent of the funding coming from the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

The three-storey and 2.30 lakh square-metre terminal building will be built by Japan's Mitsubishi and Fujita, and Korea's Samsung.

Around two crore passengers will be able to use the HSLA every year following the construction of the third terminal.

She didn’t know it was his last call

FROM PAGE 1

The other deceased are Md Rubel Hossain, Mohammad Sajedul Islam, Arif and Md Firoz Ali Sardar from Rajshahi; Ramjan and Barek Sardar from Naogaon; Md Zubayet Dhali from Madaripur; and Saiful Islam of Dhaka, according to a press release of the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh.

The fire occurred at the factory on Friday at around 4:00pm local time, according to Fakhrul Islam, the first secretary of the Bangladesh embassy's press wing. "The cause of the fire could not be known immediately."

Bangladeshi workers Biplab Hossain and Md Jewel Hossain were rescued from the scene and admitted to the burn unit of King Fahd Hospital, the official said, adding that the bodies were kept at the hospital morgue.

Biplab and Jewel told the embassy representative that 14 Bangladeshi workers were working in the factory under the management of an Indian citizen.

Unseeded Vondrousova

FROM PAGE 12

title and the first African woman to lift one of the four major trophies. But she was well below her best.

"This is the most painful loss of my career," the crowd favourite said as she fought back tears.

With the Centre Court roof shut because of the threat of rain showers, crowd-favourite Jabeur initially looked comfortable as she won the opening two games of the final.

But world number 42 Vondrousova, playing a canny game full of slow slices and clever angles, settled down and began to draw errors from her opponent.

Jabeur responded again to lead 4-2 but then seemed consumed by nerves as mistakes flowed from her racket and she dropped five successive games to lose the opening set

Vondrousova, sporting tattoos on her arms, led 1-0 and 40-0 in the second set and appeared to be

The workers were sleeping in the upper accommodation of the factory following lunch after Friday prayers.

They suddenly heard screams "fire, fire" from below and they both tried to get down by the stairs.

The entrance was shrouded in darkness with black smoke. They somehow managed to get out of danger, according to the press release.

But their other colleagues died of suffocation. Three workers were not injured as they were outside the factory at the time of the incident, the release added.

The Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh said that they were closely monitoring the situation and a team from the embassy was present at the spot.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Mohammad Javed Patwary expressed deep shock over the incident.

Steps will be taken to send the bodies back to Bangladesh immediately after all legal procedures.

[Our Natore correspondent also contributed to the report.]

marching to victory but Jabeur suddenly loosened her shoulders and found her range.

It looked as though Jabeur was getting on top as she won three games in a row, but Vondrousova never panicked.

Showing great court craft and subtle changes of pace she got back to 3-3 and as Jabeur's errors returned she broke serve at 4-4 to stand one game away from the title.

Reaching 40-0, she squandered her first match point with a double fault but put away a volley to claim the title at the second time of asking, appearing in disbelief.

Vondrousova, the first player to reach two Grand Slam finals as a non-seed having contested the 2019 French Open decider, became the fourth Czech-born player to win the title in the professional era after Martina Navratilova, Jana Novotna and Petra Kvitova.

OBGYNs to go

FROM PAGE 12

hospitals today.

In the press release, the OGSB said the decision was taken at a meeting at the office of the president of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, yesterday.

Contacted, Mostafa said, "It is their [OGSB] decision, not ours [BMA]. But we have requested everyone concerned to release the two as they were assisting the surgeon. They should not be held responsible for the deaths."

4 children

FROM PAGE 12

from them.

Dr Abdullah Shahriar, head of the pediatric cardiology department at the NICVD, performed the PAN procedure on the fourth child.

"This is undoubtedly a big leap towards making treatment for poor children with congenital heart defects accessible in our country," Dr Abdullah Shahriar told The Daily Star.

The Chinese team will come again after six months to train Bangladeshi doctors further, he said.

Earlier in the morning, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the NICVD and the Fu Wai Yunnan Cardiovascular Hospital in China.

NICVD Director Prof Mir Jamal Uddin; Duo Lin, chief of the International Cooperation Office at the Fu Wai Yunnan Cardiovascular Hospital; Dr Mohammad Ataul Huq, professor of the pediatric cardiology at the NICVD; and Dr Nazmun Ummay Zakia, associate professor of the pediatric cardiology at the NICVD, among others, attended the event.

Ex-JCD leader's

FROM PAGE 2

New York's Jackson Heights on July 12. A video clip of that incident went viral on social media.

Sonaimuri upazila BCL President Arif Hossain denied the allegation of the student body's involvement in the attack. He, however, said BCL men went in front of Badal's home and demanded his punishment.

Sonaimuri Police Station OC Ziaul Haque said police visited Badal's home after the incident but "didn't find any evidence" of attack.

Get tested for dengue at first sign of fever

FROM PAGE 1

to get tested for dengue as soon as the fever sets in," Dr Forhad Uddin Hasan Chowdhury Maruf, Medicine and Infectious Disease Specialist at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, told The Daily Star.

The dengue test is now cheaper, he said. On Wednesday, the health directorate announced that patients can get dengue tests at Tk 50 instead of Tk 100 in all public hospitals across the country.

If tested positive for dengue, the patient should only take paracetamol but not other painkillers or any antibiotic, he advised, adding that painkillers may be fatal for dengue patients at times.

In Bangladesh, dengue cases start rising from June and peak in November each year. However, the cases started rising a month earlier this year.

Since January this year, a total of 19,454 patients have been hospitalised with dengue infection, including 100 yesterday. Of them, 1,623 have died, including seven yesterday.

Different studies show that most people who are infected with dengue will have mild or no symptoms.

"But for those who do, the most common symptoms are high fever, headache, body ache, nausea and rash. Most will also get better in one-two weeks," Dr Masum said.

According to the WHO, if symptoms occur, they usually begin 4-10 days after infection and last for two-seven days.

Individuals who are infected for the second time are at greater risk of severe dengue.

"There are seven signs of severe dengue infection which often exhibit after the fever has gone away. These can arise between the third and the seventh day from the onset of fever. In such cases, patients must be admitted to the hospital immediately," Dr Masum said.

According to Dr Masum, the seven symptoms of severe dengue are: intolerable abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, breathing difficulty, bleeding gums or nose, slurred speech, declining blood

pressure and severe fatigue which leaves a patient unable to even walk or stand up.

Additionally, blood in vomit or stool, extreme thirst, and pale and cold skin constitute some other symptoms of severe dengue infection, according to the WHO.

"Often, most importance is given to platelet levels in the blood. But this is not that vital. Rather, declining blood pressure is the most critical symptom of severe dengue," Dr Masum said.

He said, "If there is no fever for two days (48 hours) after the fever dissipates, the danger is gone."

According to Dr Saif Ullah Munshi, a professor of virology at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMU), the four-five days following the patient's report of "no fever" are crucial.

"This is because patients may go into shock (or may develop severe symptoms) at any time during this period. So taking caution is crucial at this time," Prof Saif Ullah Munshi told The Daily Star.

According to different studies, the mortality rate among the patients with severe symptoms is one percent if treated. If not treated, the mortality rate is five percent.

BNP finally

FROM PAGE 12

The BNP has been demanding the next elections under a non-partisan caretaker government. The IAB, on the other hand, demands holding the election under a "national government".

The IAB chief in his speech yesterday called upon the people of all professions, including the government officials, to refrain from following any unjust instructions of the government.

"The country is ours; the election is also ours. So, the people of the country will decide how the election will be held. Foreign interference is not desirable. The country and the elections shall not be run on the prescription of foreigners," Rezaul said.

22 killed in South Korea rain, flood

AFP, Seoul

At least 22 people have died and 14 are missing after heavy rain caused flooding and landslides in South Korea, said officials yesterday, with thousands more ordered to evacuate their homes.

South Korea is at the peak of its summer monsoon season and there has been heavy rainfall for the last three days, triggering widespread flooding and landslides, and causing a major dam to overflow.

The majority of the casualties -- including 16 dead and nine missing -- were from North Gyeongsang province, largely due to massive landslides in the mountainous area that engulfed houses with people inside.

In the most severely affected areas, "entire houses were swept away whole", one emergency responder told the Yonhap News Agency.



Saint-Kitts-and-Nevis-flagged bulker TK Majestic, carrying grain under the UN's Black Sea Grain Initiative, waits in the southern anchorage of the Bosphorus in Istanbul, Turkey yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

South Korea to 'expand scale' of aid to Ukraine

President Yoon says in surprise visit to Kyiv

AFP, KYIV, Moscow

South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol pledged yesterday to "expand the scale" of his country's humanitarian and non-lethal military assistance to Ukraine, in his first visit to the war-torn country.

The world's ninth-largest arms exporter, South Korea has a long-standing policy to not supply lethal weapons to active conflict zones.

Seoul "will expand the scale of supplies from last year, when we provided materials such as helmets and bullet-proof vests", Yoon said.

Yoon added that humanitarian aid would be increased to \$150 million in 2023, from \$100 million last year.

He made the announcement at a joint press conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

"Thank you for the meaningful talks. Thank you for your strong support," Zelensky said at the joint briefing.

Belarus said Friday that instructors from the Russian mercenary force Wagner were training its troops, following weeks of uncertainty about the future of the group after its failed mutiny in Russia.

The Belarusian defence ministry appeared to confirm Friday that at least some Wagner fighters had arrived.

"Near Asipovichy, units of territorial defence troops are undergoing training," the defence ministry said in a statement.

CROSSBORDER ATTACKS

Pak army threatens response

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's army said on Friday it was seriously concerned that militants had found safe havens in neighbouring Afghanistan and threatened to take an "effective response" two days after 12 of its soldiers died in two attacks.

Nine soldiers died after Islamist fighters stormed an army base in Pakistan's southern Balochistan province, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, and three more were killed in an exchange of fire in the area on Wednesday.

The army has "serious concerns on the safe havens and liberty of action available to TTP in Afghanistan," it said, referring to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan militant umbrella group.

"Such attacks are intolerable and would elicit effective response from the security forces of Pakistan," it said, without spelling out who it might target with its response.

"The involvement of Afghan nationals in acts of terrorism in Pakistan is another important concern that needs to be addressed," it added.

The foreign ministry of Afghanistan's Taliban administration did not respond.

Record heatwaves sweep the world

REUTERS, Rome

Record heat is forecast around the world from the United States, where tens of millions are battling dangerously high temperatures, to Europe and Japan, in the latest example of the threat from global warming.

Italy faces weekend predictions of historic highs with the health ministry issuing a red alert for 16 cities including Rome, Bologna and Florence.

The meteo centre warned Italians to prepare for "the most intense heatwave of the summer and also one of the most intense of all time".

The thermometer is likely to hit 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in Rome by Monday and even 43C on Tuesday, smashing the record 40.5C set in August 2007.

The islands of Sicily and Sardinia could wilt under temperatures as high as 48C, the European Space Agency warned -- "potentially the hottest temperatures ever recorded in Europe".

Greece is also roasting.

"Parts of the country could see highs as much as 44C on Saturday," according to the national weather service EMY. The central city of Thebes sweated under 44.2C on Friday.

The Acropolis, Athens's top tourist attraction, closed for a second day straight yesterday during the hottest hours with 41C expected, as did several parks in the capital.

Regions of France, Germany, Spain and Poland are also baking in searing temperatures.

Parts of eastern Japan are also expected to reach 38 to 39C today and tomorrow, with the meteorological agency warning temperatures could hit previous records.

Meanwhile the northern city of Akita saw more rain in half a day than is typical for the whole month of July, Japan's national broadcaster NHK reported. The downpours also triggered at least one landslide, forcing 9,000 people to evacuate their homes.

Torrential rains described by the meteorological agency as the "heaviest rain ever experienced" have also hit southern Japan in recent weeks, leaving at

least 11 people dead.

Relentless monsoon rains have reportedly killed at least 90 people in northern India, after burning heat.

The Yamuna river running through the New Delhi has reached a record high of 208.66 metres, more than a metre over the flood top set in 1978, threatening low-lying neighbourhoods in the megacity of more than 20 million people.

Major flooding and landslides are common during India's monsoons, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity.

Americans are watching as a powerful heatwave has stretches from California to Texas, with its peak expected this weekend.

In Arizona, one of the hardest-hit states, residents face a daily endurance marathon against the sun.

State capital Phoenix was to record its 15th straight day above 109F (43C) on Friday, according to the National Weather Services.

Authorities have been sounding the alarm, advising people to avoid outdoor activities in the daytime and to be wary of dehydration.

The Las Vegas weather service warned that assuming high temperatures naturally come with the area's desert climate was "a DANGEROUS mindset! This heatwave is NOT typical desert heat".

"Now the most intense period is beginning," it added, as the weekend arrived with record highs threatening on Sunday.

California's Death Valley, one of the hottest places on Earth, is also likely to register new peaks today, with the mercury possibly rising to 130F (54C).

Southern California is fighting numerous wildfires, including one in Riverside County that has burned over 3,000 acres (1,214 hectares) and prompted evacuation orders.

Morocco may be used to hot weather, but it was slated for above-average temperatures this weekend with highs of 47C in some provinces -- more typical of August than July -- sparking concerns for water shortages, the meteorological service said.

Water-scarce Jordan was forced to dump 214 tonnes of water on a wildfire that broke out in the Ajloun forest in the north amid a heatwave, the army said.

Meet 'halfway' on border issue

China's top diplomat calls on India

AFP, Beijing

China's top diplomat urged India to focus on "common interests" and meet China "halfway" to defuse border tensions between Asia's most populous neighbours, the Chinese foreign ministry said yesterday.

"China and India's common interests clearly outweigh their differences," Wang Yi told Indian foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, when the two met Friday on the sidelines of Southeast Asian talks in Jakarta, the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement.

"The two sides should support each other, rather than... suspect each other," Wang added.

"It is hoped that the Indian side will meet China halfway and find a solution to the border issue that is acceptable to both sides," Wang said.

The two countries have agreed to hold the next round of military commander-level talks on the border issue "as soon as possible", the ministry statement said.

Despite frosty relations, China is India's second-largest trade partner.

In 2020, India sought to limit investments from China.

40 DAYS IN AMAZON

4 indigenous kids leave hospital

AFP, Bogota

Four Indigenous children who survived 40 days in the Colombian Amazon have been released from a military hospital after a monthlong stay, authorities said Friday, adding that the siblings were doing "very well."

Lesly (13), Soleiny (9), Tien Noriel (5) and baby Cristin (1) were the only survivors after the small plane they were flying in crashed in the jungle.

The four were discharged on Thursday night, said the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, which will temporarily take custody of the children.

"They have recovered... weight, they are actually very well," institute director Astrid Caceres said.

THAI PM RACE

Pita to withdraw if loses next vote

AFP, Bangkok



The liberal frontrunner to become Thailand's next prime minister said yesterday he would withdraw his candidacy if parliament did not endorse him next week, after military-appointed lawmakers foiled his first attempt.

The Harvard-educated millionaire's campaign to lead the next government was knocked back Thursday by senators in parliament who consider his pledge to reform strict royal defamation laws a red line.

The legislature holds its second ballot for a new prime minister on Wednesday, and Pita said he would support a candidate from coalition partner Pheu Thai if he again failed to win the needed votes.

Sudan mediation to resume in Saudi

War enters 4th month

AFP, Wad Madani

Sudanese army representatives have returned to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia for talks with their paramilitary foes, a government source said yesterday as the war between rival generals entered its fourth month.

"A delegation of the armed forces has returned to Jeddah to resume negotiations with Rapid Support Forces (RSF) rebels," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to media.

The RSF has made no comment on returning to the talks in Jeddah, which Saudi and US mediators adjourned last month after a series of repeatedly violated ceasefires.

On April 15, a power struggle between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, burst into all-out war, claiming at least 3,000 lives and displacing more than three million people.

The delegation in Saudi Arabia signals a return to diplomatic efforts by the army, after it boycotted talks last week in Ethiopia hosted by east African regional bloc IGAD.

Khartoum's foreign ministry had objected to Kenyan President William Ruto's leadership of the IGAD quartet, accusing Nairobi of siding with the RSF.

Before the Jeddah talks were suspended, US mediators had grown increasingly frustrated with both sides' reluctance to work towards a sustained truce.



Monsoon clouds loom over the overflowing river Yamuna, in New Delhi, India yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NKOREA THREAT

SKorea seeks China's 'constructive role'

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea's Foreign Minister Park Jin on Friday called on China to play a "constructive role" in curbing North Korea's threats, after Pyongyang launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) this week.

The remarks were made during a meeting with Chinese top diplomat Wang Yi on the sidelines of ASEAN meeting in Jakarta, where Park "strongly denounced" North Korea's ICBM launch.

It is a common interest of Seoul and Beijing for North Korea to stop provocations and return to dialogue, his office said.

"Minister Park ... stressed that it was more important than ever for the Chinese side to play a constructive role for the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula," Seoul's foreign ministry said.

Time to raise the bar in labour migration

Bangladesh must prioritise sending skilled labour overseas

Bangladesh has been at once a steady beneficiary and an unwitting victim of its labour migration boom over the last 40 years. While remittances sent by migrant workers have been a key pillar of its economy, its inability to change with time – as evidenced by the continued reliance on unskilled or low-skilled labour – has led to stagnation in inward remittances. For example, during the just-finished fiscal year 2022-23, the country witnessed a surge in overseas employment, reaching a six-year high with over 1.1 million workers venturing abroad. But it saw only a marginal increase in terms of remittances earned compared to the previous year.

The reason for this is not a mystery. Data from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) show that the rate of skilled workers sent abroad reached a record low of 22.22 percent in 2022. The rest of the workforce has been composed of unskilled and low-skilled workers. It is because of this reality that Bangladesh is still seen as a primarily unskilled workforce provider. Unskilled labour means not only lower salaries – and thus a lower revenue for us – but also higher vulnerability to economic shocks, violation of labour rights, abuse and exploitations.

Looking at other countries like the Philippines, China, India, and Pakistan, one can see that the per capita average monthly income of their migrants is significantly higher than that of our migrants, mostly due to the higher proportion of skilled workers in their labour force. Bangladesh can achieve similar economic benefits if it strategically promotes and sends more skilled labour abroad. The question is, why isn't it? A major challenge is the lack of a robust system to create and promote skilled manpower. There are not enough vocational and technical training programmes to equip our workforce with necessary competencies. Experts also point to the reluctance of workers themselves to acquire skills, the weaknesses of the national education policy, and importantly, the lack of a proper government policy.

True, there is still a demand for unskilled labour, particularly in the Middle East, but what has worked before may not work as well going forward, due to the global drive for knowledge-based economy. We must then prepare our workforce accordingly. For that, coordinated efforts from all stakeholders including the government, educational authorities, and manpower recruiters are essential. The next phase of our labour migration project must focus on sending skilled labour.

Two polar opposite examples for nature

Authorities must protect our forests and hills at any cost

Two stories coming out on Saturday have left us quite baffled. One is the announcement of the country's first-ever "urban forest" in the Purbachal Residential Area, which in a city that has lost most of its greenery is like a breath of fresh air. The other story is about influential people cutting a hill in Chattogram's Lohagara upazila to build houses – in blatant disregard for environmental regulations. How do you reconcile such totally contrasting cases? The latter example, unfortunately, is the norm, while the former, an exception.

In the case of the razed hill, the Department of Environment (DoE) has confirmed that the individuals responsible did not obtain permission when they started their construction work. It is strange that despite stringent laws prohibiting such acts, they continue to occur on a regular basis. But can the DoE just absolve itself by saying the culprits did not take any permission? How can they get permission for an unlawful activity? That an official has said they would take action if they "find evidence" of hill cutting is befuddling indeed.

Chattogram city has already lost around 120 hills over the past four decades, which has had devastating consequences for both humans and wildlife. It is ironic that Bangladesh is praised internationally for its disaster management plans and for leading negotiations on climate change, but what is it doing on the home front? We have ministries, departments, laws and local administrations – all responsible to protect the environment. Yet, on the ground, it seems the power of influentials override all such responsibilities. The result is that acres and acres of forestland and hills are being destroyed across the country under various pretexts.

We commend the Purbachal project, of course, and appreciate that it will be designated as a "special biodiversity conservation area", giving it additional protection. But our appreciation is dimmed by the knowledge that in Chattogram such commitment to preserving our hills and trees is absent. The government must stop sending such mixed signals, and prevent destructions of our natural resources at any cost.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Prevent child mortality

Child mortality rate in Bangladesh has increased unexpectedly, setting us back in our journey to achieving SDGs. Although recent studies have not analysed the reasons behind this increase, the leading causes of child mortality have been found to be jaundice, diarrhoea, malnutrition, acute respiratory infections, and drowning. What are our policymakers doing to address this situation? They must adopt a comprehensive approach to address the reported causes of child deaths in the country. Take the issue of child mortality seriously and call for the introduction of necessary facilities in child healthcare. The government should also conduct region-wise awareness campaigns to promote health and safety for children.

Md Maruf Hassan Bhuiyan, Feni

Understanding the regional income dynamics in Bangladesh

Dr Syed Abul Basher
is professor of economics at East West University (EWU), Bangladesh.

Dr Francesca Di Iorio
is professor of statistics and economics at the University of Naples Federico II, Italy.

SYED ABUL BASHER and FRANCESCA DI IORIO

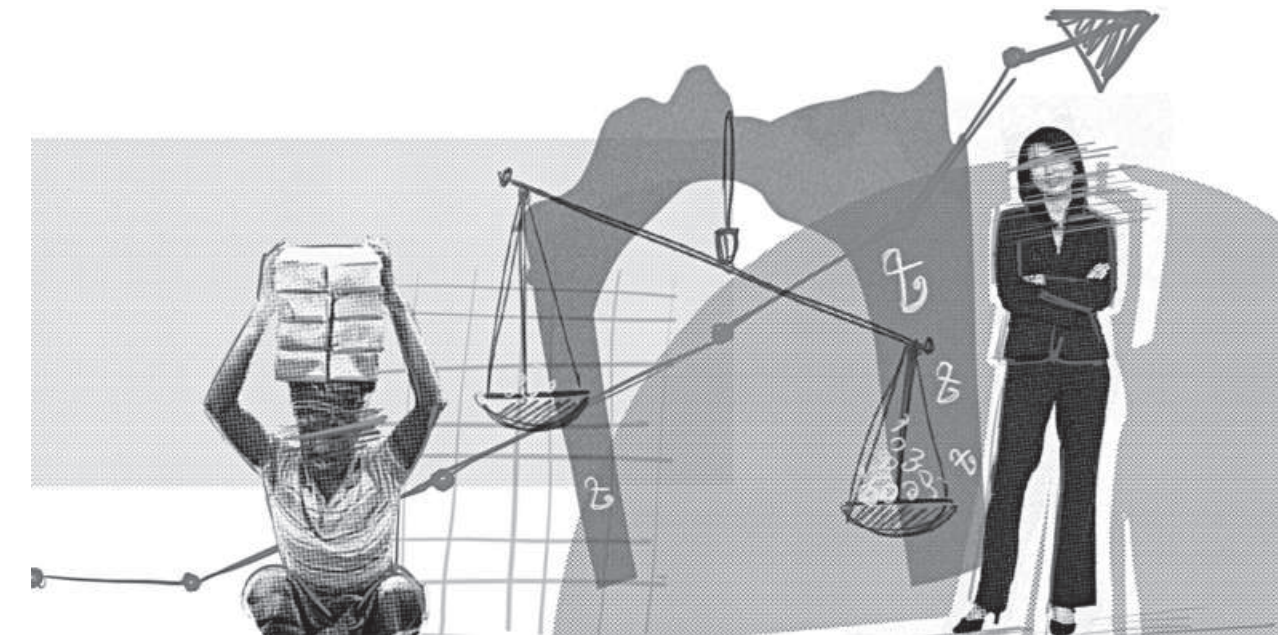
Despite impressive gains in various development indicators compared to other developing countries, individual regions within Bangladesh are not faring as well as the country as a whole. Before delving into the details, allow us to provide some background.

After gaining independence in 1971, Bangladesh outperformed many other developing countries in two distinct ways. First, within a remarkably short period, the fertility rate plummeted from 6.9 in 1971 to 3.1 in 2001. In other words, within a single generation, Bangladesh managed to halve its fertility rate, a feat that took English-speaking and northwestern European countries over 100 years to achieve. We owe this impressive achievement to the efforts of NGOs, donor countries, and the government, accomplished within a constrained financial environment. The only other country to demonstrate a comparable rate of reduction was Japan, but it must be noted that Japan was in significantly better financial and physical conditions than post-war Bangladesh.

Second, despite Bangladesh's lower per capita income compared to India and Pakistan post-independence, it has achieved better social development outcomes in education, health, demographic factors, and gender equality since 1980. An essay published by *The Economist* in 2012 showed that Bangladesh outperformed India and Pakistan in every development indicator. The development literature has dubbed this unexpected combination of higher social development and lower income level as the "Bangladesh conundrum" or "development surprise." Recently, one of us asked our students to update this development narrative with more recent data. We found that between 2011 and 2021, Bangladesh's per capita income exceeded that of Pakistan, and Bangladesh still outperforms India and Pakistan in most development indicators.

So there is no doubt that the country as a whole has shown remarkable progress in development within a short period of time, despite many unique challenges post-independence. However, overall progress can conceal significant details regarding regional variations in development. A question thus arises: have the gains in development outcomes been distributed equally across all regions of the country?

Renowned economist Arthur Lewis famously stated that "development



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

must be inequalitarian because it does not start in every part of the economy at the same time." Has this been the case for Bangladesh as well?

In a new research paper, we tackle this question for the 64 districts using per capita income data for years 2000 and 2016-17. Since district-level income data is not published in Bangladesh, we circumvent this limitation by constructing income data from household income and expenditure surveys published by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). Gauging district-level income from household incomes is not straightforward, and a great deal of care in econometrics must be applied.

Before sharing the results we found, it's important to understand the concept of income convergence. Convergence is a mathematical property, but it's widely used in economics to illustrate whether the income gap among two or more countries is converging (narrowing down) or diverging (widening) over time.

Our results reveal that, contrary to what is predicted by the neoclassical models of economic growth, poorer districts are not growing rapidly enough to eliminate their income gap with the richer districts. The speed of convergence is exceedingly slow, at only 0.4 percent, suggesting that it would take about 170 years to eliminate half of the income gap between the poorer and richer districts in Bangladesh. This result is disappointing, as one would expect poorer regions to grow quickly

meaning the time it takes to halve the initial income gap – amounts to roughly 35 years, or just over a generation.

Geographical proximity does not necessarily facilitate income convergence between poorer and richer districts in Bangladesh. This surprising finding can be explained in light of the concentration of economic activities in just two districts: Dhaka and Chattogram. Without the presence of appropriate economic conditions, policies, and institutional frameworks, the benefits of geographical proximity are not uniformly realised across all districts of Bangladesh.

Recognising the considerable challenge for a poorer district like Gaibandha to eliminate the income gap with a district like Dhaka, we also examined whether poorer, middle income, and richer districts are converging among themselves. This concept is known as "club convergence" in the economic growth literature. To our great surprise, the results were once again extremely disappointing. There was no evidence of income convergence even among the different income tiers within Bangladesh. We also employed two machine-learning routines to endogenously determine income convergence among different income groups across the country. However, we failed to find any evidence of income convergence among the districts of Bangladesh.

The finding of no income convergence in Bangladesh is surprising, as a unique

possibility could be that household incomes are measured with substantial errors, which in turn, complicates the task of detecting convergence. Additionally, it is possible that regional income dynamics in Bangladesh are characterised by persistent income inequality and the existence of multiple stable income levels – a situation referred to as "multiple equilibria" in economic terms. Regardless, the persistent income disparity among the districts in Bangladesh is a matter of grave concern. Further research is needed to understand the missing link between development gains and income divergence.

The unequivocal rejection of conditional convergence in income reinforces Arthur Lewis' notion that the process of economic development has been uneven among the districts of Bangladesh. In terms of policy implications, our results suggest that large-scale policy interventions may be required to invigorate the more impoverished regions of the country in the face of escalating economic disparity. Furthermore, while small-scale interventions such as microfinance are not the ultimate solution to persistent disparity, recent research emphasises that education remains the most effective pathway out of poverty and disparity in Bangladesh. To paraphrase Confucius, for the sake of 10 years' benefit, we must reinforce our social support, and for the sake of a hundred years' benefit, we must educate children.

Threads is much bigger than you may think



Hamid Yasir
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HAMID YASIR

If you have not heard of Threads by now, you are either missing out on the new corporate replacement for one of the most active userbases in the world of social media, or you are just being cautious enough to stay away from the massive web of dopamine and oxytocin-manipulating social media products. Threads is a relatively new social media app launched by Meta, the company that owns Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, that allows users to share interactive posts with a select group of friends and has an algorithm-managed public feed. It is designed to be more intimate and private than other social media platforms of its kind, with a focus on real-time communication between close friends.

It may appear to merely be another shot at creating a Twitter-killer microblogging platform by Meta, but Threads stands for something much bigger.

Hear me out: Threads is not the "new big idea," nor is it a basic Twitter clone. Fediverse has made a sustainable approach towards decentralisation with its suite of programmes for a while now. Meta's plan to use ActivityPub to expose Threads' userbase to the fediverse is what makes this new initiative stand out. This approach would inject the fediverse with a new bubble of millions of people who would



VISUAL: REUTERS

have otherwise never understood the idea of a federated network.

Fediverse is a network of decentralised social media platforms that are linked together. This means that each platform is independent and has its own rules and members, but users can still interact with each other across different platforms. It is like a bunch of smaller social media communities that are connected to form a larger network. Its approach to decentralisation is meant to ensure that users are not beholden to a single platform or corporation. This means that even if one platform goes down or changes its policies, users can easily

switch to another one without losing their data or connections.

Meta's plan to connect Threads to the fediverse marks a notable step towards decentralisation in social media. By utilising the ActivityPub protocol, which has already gained traction through platforms like Mastodon, Threads will join a movement that aims to empower

users and provide an alternative to the dominant web of siloed platforms. Decentralisation ensures that the power dynamics shift away from a few large entities, putting users back in control of their data and fostering a more open and transparent digital environment. It may not be Meta's intention to lose their grip on so much data, but the approach will open up a door for concerned users to stay away from Meta products, yet access the massive userbase of the platform.

The potential for interoperability with Mastodon and other ActivityPub-powered platforms will allow Threads users to communicate and connect

across different networks, regardless of the specific platform they choose. This break from the isolated nature of social media can foster a sense of inclusivity and broaden our social circles beyond the confines of a single platform.

Another critical aspect to consider is the potential for Threads to spur innovation and competition in the social media landscape. The emergence of a massive decentralised social web will encourage diversity and new players to enter the arena. This healthy competition can drive platforms to offer better, less exploitative services, as users gain the freedom to switch providers without abandoning their social connections. By embracing interoperability and promoting user choice, Threads may pave the way for a more dynamic and user-centric social media ecosystem.

What does all this mean for Bangladeshi users? Threads and fediverse integration may help expose more people in the country to the concept of decentralised social media. This could be particularly beneficial for those who are concerned about privacy and data security, as decentralised platforms give users more control over their data. Fediverse's decentralised structure may help reduce the power dynamics that exist within social media groups, which could be beneficial for anyone facing issues with censorship and control.

While Threads may seem like a mere addition to the microblogging landscape, its adoption of ActivityPub and its possible alignment with the players of decentralisation, privacy, and interoperability make it a catalyst for change. Its potential to disrupt the status quo and create a more equitable and democratic online space is significant, and should not be underestimated.



An independent agricultural price commission can help check the locally-generated factors causing price hikes in our domestic market.

FILE PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

We need an agricultural price commission to regulate prices

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FIRDOUSI NAHER

“Child mortality rate rises” – this headline in this newspaper caught my eye last month, and I read the news report with a sense of dismay. The data came from the Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics (BSVS) 2022, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). The first question that crossed my mind after reading the report was: are we facing a setback to the phenomenal progress made in reducing child mortality rates in the country since the 1970s? The report shows that different indicators of child mortality have registered marked increases since 2021. In the span of just one year, under-five mortality has gone up by almost 11 percent while post-neonatal mortality rate (mortality between one month and less than a year of age) has increased by more than 13 percent. The causes are reported to be morbidities (such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, acute respiratory infection, etc), malnutrition, and drowning.

Earlier this year, the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) 2022 found that the under-five child mortality rate had reduced from 43 to 31 per thousand between 2017 and 2022. Although the under-five mortality rates in 2022 are identical in the two reports, the SVS report provides the most recent development, while the BDHS provides a five-year change.

That these results have much to do with the lack of access to quality health services is well-understood. But let's focus on another factor – one that relates to malnutrition. What we eat primarily depends on what we can afford. Affordability, in turn, is a function of incomes and prices. Prices, of both food and non-food items, have been spiralling in Bangladesh, as in many other parts of the world. The BBS-computed food inflation in the last month of FY23 stood at 9.73 percent, while average inflation in the year was a 12-year high, at 9.02 percent. In May, general inflation was close to double digits (9.94 percent). Not just the poor, everyone in society is now feeling the pinch of escalating prices.

The reason for these persistent price hikes has been largely attributed to the disruptions in supply chains caused by the pandemic and further aggravated by the Russia-Ukraine war. As witnessed earlier this year, global and regional prices have dropped. But in Bangladesh, prices continue to remain high, given the depreciation of the taka against the US dollar, and the constrained foreign exchange reserves.

The current situation that has led to rising inflation is an unusual one, much beyond our control. But a look at the pre-pandemic scenario will reveal that food prices

in Bangladesh have been rising faster than non-food prices for more than a decade. In particular, prices of nutrient-dense foods have been escalating much faster than those of energy-dense foods, primarily rice. A 2019 World Bank study found that, relative to staples, the prices of nutritious foods such as pulses, meat, fish, eggs, milk, fruits, and vegetables were much higher in Bangladesh than in India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Given the high costs of a nutritious diet, people have been unable to afford a diversified food basket. Thus, although many people may not be hungry as such, they still remain deprived of quality food. Such scarcity of food is bound to have a negative impact on children's normal growth and development. The consequences of this on our human capital development, which defines our demographic dividend, can be damaging.

The FY2023-24 budget is the concrete manifestation of the government's choice of policies to deal with the issues it faces. But while ambitious in certain sectors, the budget seems to engage little in addressing food inflation, apart from the increased support for marginalised people, subsidised food distribution among low-income groups, and a scale-up of subsidy spending. These measures are temporary relief efforts, some of which often exact substantial time and energy costs on the recipients. One entity that is currently mandated to keep prices of essentials stable is the Price Monitoring and Forecasting Cell under the commerce ministry. Several other bodies such as the Department of Agricultural Marketing and the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection also have price control as a direct or indirect responsibility. We even have a Competition Commission. But, as is evident, these institutional mechanisms are yet to live up to their mandates.

Temporary relief measures must be backed by meaningful long-term initiatives that will put a check on the unaccounted-for rises in essential food prices. Unaccounted, because we have been privy to many reports that point to a rise in prices well beyond cost-push inflation. Predominant factors include cartelisation, “greedflation” (price rises dictated by higher profit margins) and a lack of enforcement of existing rules and regulations. Between May 2022 and March 2023, soybean oil prices registered a 29 percent fall in the international market, but in the local market, the fall was less than 10 percent. Broiler chicken prices went up by almost 70 percent in 45 days, when the production cost did not register any significant change. Onion prices, despite going down by 25 percent in the global market, continued to rise in Bangladesh under the pretext of a shortfall in supply. In early June, when the government

allowed onion imports, onion prices fell by Tk 10-15 in the local market the next day. Interestingly, data from the ministries of commerce and agriculture showed that domestic onion production is 36 percent more than the demand.

While there is little we can do about unforeseen occurrences beyond our control, there is much we can do to check the locally-generated factors causing price hikes. A meaningful step towards this could be setting up an agricultural price commission. Such a body, through its critical role of maintaining a stable price environment, would look into the interests of producers, consumers and the overall economy. In India, for instance, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices has been operating since 1965 to ensure a remunerative and stable price environment for 23 agricultural commodities.

Given the vagaries of nature, the agriculture sector is inherently volatile with no guarantee for the quantum of produce, even with the uptake of best available technologies. When prices escalate, the sad and unfair part is that the farmers who grow the food do not benefit from the high amounts coughed up by the helpless consumers, often resigned to the machinations of middlemen. The disincentivising effect of this on the vulnerable farmers is obvious and with recurring losses, farmers may be forced to abandon commercial crop production and produce only for subsistence. Such an artificially induced phenomenon, coupled with the omnipresent external threat of climate change, would be destructive for our society and economy.

An independent agricultural price commission, entrusted with the responsibility of recommending viable prices for all commodities under its mandate, is something the government must seriously consider. This technical body would be able to adopt a scientific approach to provide its recommendations by considering a comprehensive set of factors in the domestic market as well as in the international market, keeping in mind the consequences on both producers and consumers.

The suggestion to set up a price commission is not new. In the past, we have heard from experts, including policymakers, about the need to set up an independent price commission. Never has the need for a price regulatory body been so direly felt than now. The enormity of such an exercise is well-understood, and one could hope that the government can successfully undertake this endeavour. It would help to bear in mind that setting up an agricultural price commission is essential for a 52-year-old, largely agrarian country on the brink of LDC graduation. Even if the latest budget did not touch upon this, some of the extensive work needed for this must start now.

What could be behind Yellen's dovish gesture in Beijing?



Dr Sayeed Ahmed is a consulting engineer and the CEO of Bayside Analytix, a technology-focused strategy and management consulting organisation.

SAYEED AHMED

Deng Xiaoping, a geopolitical genius and the architect of China's rise in the 1980s, once said, “The Middle East has oil. China has rare earth metals.” Beijing has just reminded the world what that means in geopolitics by imposing export restrictions on germanium and gallium effective from August 1, sending shockwaves all over. Germanium is essential for high-speed computer chips, plastics, military applications such as night-vision devices, and satellite imagery sensors. Gallium is a crucial material for radio frequency chips for mobile phones, satellite communication, and other semiconductors. Rare earth elements, including these two, are indispensable for today's high-end economies and advanced military machinery. Any supply shortage may seriously jeopardise the production of electric vehicles, missiles, fighter jets, and super-fast AI chips.

Beijing holds 40 percent of the global rare earth reserve, but

In August 2020, Washington imposed sanctions on Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam and 10 other officials for “undermining its autonomy and restricting the freedom of expression of the citizens.” It extended the sanctions to 14 vice-chairpersons of China's National People's Congress in December.

In November of the same year, Trump prohibited all US institutional and retail investors from investing in or buying from Chinese companies that the Department of Defense listed as “Communist Chinese military companies.”

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered further sanctions against several businesses in China, such as Sinno Electronic for supplying Russian military networks, and most recently against Spacety China for providing satellite imagery to the Wagner Group. The Biden administration doubled the sanctions in October 2022, cutting

planned meeting with Dalai Lama only by cancelling its annual summit with the EU. Since it has taken active steps to control rare earth materials export, has it decided to deal with Washington's sanctions head-on? If so, what might be its ramifications for the ongoing geopolitical rivalry?

Weaponising control over rare earth materials may strengthen China's geopolitical position and increase its leverage over other countries. By manipulating the supply, China could exert pressure on nations heavily reliant on these minerals, using them as bargaining chips in negotiations or diplomatic disputes.

This is, however, unlikely to change the balance of power in international relations or any shifts in alliances and geopolitical strategies. Countries would reduce their dependence on China by fostering domestic production, exploring alternative sources, and strengthening international cooperation. But that may be a challenge.

One thing is certain: the sanctions war will only intensify as China has threatened more retaliatory measures against US export controls unless Washington follows a more reconciliatory path, which Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen appears to have shown. She told Chinese Premier Li Qiang that the US wanted



Is Yellen's dovish tone a genuine gesture following China's latest restrictions, or is she only the 'good cop' in this strategic negotiation game?

PHOTO: REUTERS

produces 70 percent of the raw supply. In the technically complex and environmentally hazardous downstream processing, it has near total control – 90 percent. With over 94 and 83 percent grip on germanium and gallium, respectively, the recent restriction is only a warning shot, and stricter regulations may follow, as *The Wall Street Journal* puts it. This is understandably a retaliatory measure in response to the sanctions Washington and its allies imposed on their technological, economic, and strategic rival – Chin, an emerging and assertive power.

Let's revisit the recent events that led Beijing to take a path of confrontation.

It began in 2018 with the Trump administration banning US agencies from using any systems, equipment, and services from Huawei, a Chinese telecommunications giant. It also cajoled the allies into dropping Huawei from their 5G networks. In July 2020, it sanctioned specific Chinese officials and their immediate families for gross human rights violations in Xinjiang,

China off from semiconductor chips made worldwide with US equipment.

In December, Washington imposed further sanctions on Chinese nationals and 10 entities in response to human rights abuses connected to “illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.”

In January 2023, the Netherlands' ASML stopped sales of crucial equipment to China's chipmakers under pressure from the US. Washington proposed to withhold even more Dutch equipment from specific Chinese fabrication plants.

Beijing's first formal retaliatory measure came in February this year, when it added Lockheed Martin Corporation and Raytheon Missiles & Defense to its Unreliable Entity List. Geopolitical changes and increasingly restrictive measures from Washington and its allies since 2018 have led Beijing to develop its own sanction policy tools on a priority basis. Before that, Chinese actions appeared more like expressions of displeasure.

In 2009, China responded to then French President Nicolas Sarkozy's

healthy economic competition, not a “winner-take-all” fight, with China. Just before her, Secretary of State Antony Blinken flew to Beijing and discussed Taiwan and Ukraine without consensus. Blinken proposed direct communication between the two militaries, but received no positive response. A day after Blinken's meeting with Xi, Biden called the president a dictator, pouring cold water on any possibility of warming up on the other side.

Beijing, the emerging power, will naturally gain from a peaceful relationship with Washington. But that path won't be easy for Washington to follow for fear of losing control. However, the alternative way of conflict is more destructive, and there will be no winners – a message China wants Yellen to convey to Washington.

Is Yellen's dovish tone a genuine gesture following China's latest restrictions, or is she only the “good cop” in this strategic negotiation game? A “From Washington with Love” message just seems way too friendly.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Humbled

7 Noah count?

11 Fight

12 Columbus setting

13 Iron's target

14 Like some cheese

15 Rodeo rope

17 Stare stupidly

20 Ranch animal

23 Tough wood

24 Door-opening phrase

26 Runner on snow

27 Rival

28 Top pitcher

29 Watches another's dog,

say

31 Was a pioneer

32 Cuss

33 Pub brews

34 Wild laughter

37 Traveling

39 Put in a box

43 Magnet end

44 Hot

45 Sinuous fish

46 Like lords

DOWN

1 Jackson 5 hit

2 Soap unit

3 Put away

4 Celery serving

5 “Frozen” queen

6 Some bucks

7 Soup choice

8 Tire type

9 Well output

10 Lawn material

16 Archipelago makeup

17 Shocked sounds

18 Crooked

19 British government

21 Game host

22 Oboe parts

24 Burning

25 Building site

30 Be agreeable

33 Fancy neckwear

35 High home

36 Opposed

37 Clumsy one

38 Misery

40 Completely

41 View

42 Put a stop to

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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Scabies outbreak strikes Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, demanding urgent response

Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has issued an urgent call for action as an outbreak of scabies, a highly contagious skin disease, ravages the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district. With an estimated 40 percent of the overcrowded camps affected, immediate and comprehensive measures are needed to bring the outbreak under control.

While scabies is easily treatable, if left untreated, it can cause severe physical and mental suffering. MSF emphasises that addressing the unsanitary conditions that have led to the outbreak is crucial, as simply distributing drugs will not prevent reinfections.

MSF teams have observed a dramatic increase in the number of scabies patients in recent years. Between January and May 2023 alone, they treated nearly 70,000 patients for scabies, almost double the number during the same period in 2022. The situation has overwhelmed the capacity of the healthcare facilities, leaving many patients untreated.

MSF conducted a study in the Rohingya refugee camps last year that revealed alarming water and sanitation conditions. Proper sanitation is lacking, and water availability is insufficient, with some areas only receiving water for two hours a day. Moreover, there has been a degradation in maintenance, leading to fewer functioning latrines. These conditions, coupled with the misconception of groundwater depletion, have resulted in reduced soap rations and inadequate hygiene practises.

MSF sees the 40 percent positive rate for scabies as a warning sign that the health and sanitation response in the camps is failing, posing a threat to the well-being of the Rohingya people and the local community.

Immediate action is imperative to control the scabies outbreak, improve water and sanitation conditions, and ensure that refugees have access to adequate healthcare services and support.



DR NUR-A-SAFRINA RAHMAN

Dengue is a viral disease that is mostly spread by the bites of sick Aedes mosquitoes, especially *Aedes aegypti*. Mosquitoes get the dengue virus when they feed on people who already have it in their blood.

Scientists have made a surprising discovery: people can pass diseases to mosquitoes even before they show signs, and this can happen for up to two days after the fever goes away. This important discovery sheds new light on how people and mosquitoes interact with each other and has big effects on how to stop and control diseases.

Experts have found several things that make it more likely for serious dengue to happen. Some of these factors are having had dengue before, moving to a city, living in an uncontrolled city, having a lot of people in a small area, not storing water well, and the effects of climate change.

Signs and symptoms:

Dengue fever has many signs, such as a high fever that comes on quickly, severe headaches, pain behind the eyes, pain in the joints and muscles.

Other common signs are tiredness, sickness, vomiting, a rash on the skin, light bleeding, and symptoms that are similar to the flu.

Most cases of dengue are mild and usually go away in 1 to 2 weeks. But it is important to remember that a small number of these cases could get worse and turn into severe dengue, which has a number of scary signs. Among these symptoms are severe stomach pain, constant vomiting, bleeding from the gums or nose, extreme tiredness, restlessness, pale skin.

Investigation:

In order to find a quick way to tell if someone has dengue, doctors have

turned to blood tests as an effective way to find the virus or antibodies.

When a patient comes in with a fever within the first week after it started, they should have an IgM test and a NSIAg test for the detection of dengue virus.

At the end of the illness, at least four days after the fever started, testing for IgM antibodies can help detect the illness.

On the other hand, IgG antibody testing alone with a single blood sample is not enough

ibuprofen should be avoided because they can increase the chance of bleeding.

One of the important issues in the treatment of dengue is the maintenance of body fluid. Although most cases can be handled at home, patients should pay attention to it once the condition is not improved by caring at home. Patients should immediately seek care at the hospitals.

Prevention:

Dengue protection has become a very important issue, and people are taking steps to protect themselves from getting the disease by avoiding mosquito bites. People are told to take a number of safety steps to protect themselves from mosquitoes. Some of these are using mosquito repellents, wearing long-sleeved clothes, keeping your windows and doors screened, and getting rid of places where mosquitoes might be able to breed, like places where water pools.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the Dengvaxia vaccine to prevent dengue in people aged 9 to 16 who have already had the disease in the United States. But Dengvaxia is still not available to the general public as a way to protect against initial infections in most of the countries of the world. There are still studies going on to find more potential candidates for a dengue vaccine.

Dengue fever continues to be a big public health problem around the world, especially in tropical and warm areas. In the fight against dengue, early diagnosis, supportive care, and successful mosquito control have become important pillars for keeping the disease under control and reducing its effects.

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to make a diagnosis. This is because IgG antibodies can be found in a person for the rest of their lives after they have been infected with the dengue virus.

Treatment:

Dengue does not have a targeted antiviral treatment or way to stop it at the moment, which is important to know for treatment and avoidance. The main goal of medical treatment is to treat the patient's symptoms and give them the care they need. Pain relievers that contain acetaminophen are suggested, while aspirin and

HAVE A NICE DAY

The inhuman power

DR RUBARUL MURSHED



Albert Einstein said, "Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity, and I am not sure about the universe."

When the talk of the world is artificial intelligence (AI), a group of western industry leaders recently warned that the AI technology they were building might one day pose an existential threat to humanity and should be considered a societal risk on a par with pandemics and nuclear wars. AI is a human-created skill that implants intelligence in machines that think like humans. This is capable of taking major decisions without human inference.

As humans, we are emotional creatures. Emotions influence us to choose our friends and partners, to stay with them, and to share good and bad days. Emotional intelligence is an impulse that binds and manages the power of human emotions or feelings. Researchers agree that AI cannot have its own emotions, but it can mimic them. In fact, when we talk about AI, all that comes to mind is machine learning, robotics, and networks. It is more focused on big data and analytics, while emotional intelligence is concerned with human relationships and interactions. While machines can replicate and perform tasks perfectly, they lack consciousness and the emotional qualities that make a humanoid kind. Besides this, experts also expressed worries that raised governance concerns.

Some studies argue that geopolitical and economic competition are the main drivers for AI developers, while moral concerns take a back seat. Some scholars believe the negative effects of AI include unemployment, biases, and dangers to privacy. AI could harm the physical and mental health of millions via the social determinants of health through the control and manipulation of people.

While the world feels heavy with thousands of man-made problems and more than three-fourths of the world's population is still struggling for a decent life, as Elon Musk's AI rightly said, it is not "necessary for anything we are doing". Musk, an early backer of the AI startup, explained superintelligence as a double-edged sword. The world needs to make sure that everyone—and not just people who are well-off—pays back from artificial intelligence.

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NCD Alliance
Advocacy Priorities
for the 2023 High-
Level Meeting on
Universal Health
Coverage (UHC)

Global advocates unite to accelerate action on non-communicable diseases and universal health coverage

STAR HEALTH DESK

Advocates from NCD alliances from around the world to gather in New York and call for Heads of State and Government to demonstrate leadership at the High-level Meeting of the United Nations to advance NCD care and Universal Health Coverage.

Representatives from various countries are gathering in New York to address the urgent need for action on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC). The goal of this meeting is to discuss and coordinate strategies that will accelerate progress in the prevention and care of NCDs while ensuring that UHC remains people-centred.

Advocates attending the meeting include individuals with lived experiences of NCDs. These advocates will share their knowledge and experiences from their respective countries, contributing to the collective efforts to address NCDs and promote UHC.

The discussions taking place during this meeting are crucial to maximising the upcoming United Nations High-Level Meeting on UHC, scheduled for September 21, 2023. The advocates emphasise the importance of meeting the needs of people living with NCDs.

In the lead-up to the High-Level Meeting, the NCD Alliance will run a series of events and activities as part of the Global Week for Action campaign, focusing on the theme of "Care." This campaign aims to send a clear message to governments, donors, international agencies, and the private sector: *the time for caring is now*.

By coming together and advocating for the prevention and care of NCDs and promoting UHC, these global alliances hope to make a significant impact on improving health outcomes and ensuring that everyone, regardless of their health condition, has access to quality healthcare.



Narayana Health's uro-oncology expert shares knowledge on the use of robotics in prostate cancer with Bangladeshi doctors



STAR HEALTH REPORT

Narayana Health (NH), one of India's leading healthcare groups, partnered with Oncology Present & Future Bangladesh to host a successful seminar on the "Use of robotics in prostate cancer" in Dhaka recently, says a press release. Over 100 doctors and industry experts attended the event, which aimed to provide insights into the latest developments in robotic surgery for prostate cancer and benefit Bangladeshi patients.

The seminar is expected to have a wide-ranging impact on Bangladesh's healthcare expertise. By empowering local doctors and enhancing their knowledge of advanced robotic procedures, it will enable early referrals to advanced centres, leading to improved clinical outcomes.

The use of robotics in prostate cancer treatment, particularly robotic-assisted radical prostatectomy (RARP), was discussed. Robotic technology offers benefits such as enhanced precision, shorter recovery times, and improved outcomes compared to traditional methods.

Bangladesh faces a rising number of cancer cases, with prostate cancer being the fourth most commonly diagnosed cancer globally. Early detection is crucial for successful treatment, but unfortunately, most cases in Bangladesh are detected at advanced stages, resulting in high fatality rates.

Narayana Health remains committed to advancing cancer treatment, including prostate cancer, and driving innovation in healthcare.

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UROLOGY

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Joty believes Bangladesh are favourites

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's team skipper Nigar Sultana Joty deemed her side as favourites going into the first of the three-match ODI series against India, starting at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur today.

Joty's troops won the third and final T20I against the visitors on Thursday after pushing them to the brink in the second. But the skipper believes that despite the win only being a consolation for the Tigresses in their 2-1 series loss, it created a positive environment within the team as they brace to take on a familiar foe in India.

"I think Bangladesh are favourites because we won the last match [third T20I]. I keep us ahead regardless of the change in formats," Joty told the reporters in the pre-match press conference yesterday.

Bangladesh have lost all five previous encounters in the 50-over format against India but the Tigresses still remain upbeat as Joty asserted: "We are playing at home. The team is feeling positive. The energy levels have been boosted." Joty also insisted that Bangladesh batted better than India in the final two T20Is.

Messi's expected Miami unveiling on Monday

AGENCIES

World Cup winner Lionel Messi is expected to be presented as an Inter Miami player during Sunday's event named 'The Unveil' by the Major League Soccer side.

Although they didn't mention Messi by name, Inter Miami announced "a major unveiling event" for Sunday evening at their home stadium, the DRV Pink Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The event is scheduled on Monday 06:00 am in Bangladesh.

The Argentine is already in Florida and was spotted doing some casual grocery shopping at a supermarket in Miami on Thursday. He has also been reported to have avoided crashing with another vehicle while driving in Fort Lauderdale on Friday. Fortunately, nobody was hurt.

Messi's latest venture will see him follow in the footsteps of such players as Pele, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard.

Miami owner Jorge Mas told reporters that Messi will make his club debut on July 21 in their first Leagues Cup match against Liga MX side Cruz Azul. Messi is also expected to be reunited with two of his former Barcelona teammates in the US as the club is also expected to introduce Spanish stars Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba to the team.



Having secured a win in the first T20I to lead the two-match series 1-0 against Afghanistan, Bangladesh players enjoyed a day off the field on Saturday. With no practice scheduled for the day, skipper Shakib Al Hasan was pictured outside the team hotel while [bottom] pacer Shoriful Islam went sightseeing yesterday. However, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and other Afghan players trained as usual, hoping to bounce back in the final T20I at the Sylhet International Stadium today. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED/COLLECTED

Festive Sylhet embraces RELAXED TIGERS

MAZHAR UDDIN *from Sylhet*

Around hundred people, including men, women and children, were seen waiting yesterday outside the Grand Sylhet hotel located near the airport road, where Bangladesh cricket team had checked in for the ongoing T20I series against Afghanistan.

Similar scenes were also witnessed inside the hotel premises as forty to fifty had been patiently waiting for a lifetime opportunity to snap a selfie with their heroes.

Around 3pm, pacer Shoriful Islam -- who hit the winning runs for the Tigers as they clinched a dramatic two-wicket win over Afghanistan in the first T20I on Friday -- returned to the team hotel with his wife after a trip to Ratargul swamp forest, 26 km from the Sylhet city.

Shoriful and teammates enjoyed a well-deserved day off, without official training or any media activity, yesterday.

Half hour later, skipper Shakib Al Hasan, dressed in a white t-shirt, black trouser, and a cap, was seen heading out from the lobby. The star cricketer hopped in to a van and went out for a brief outing.

The mood in the Tigers camp was relaxed at the team hotel. On the other hand, a contrasting atmosphere pervaded among the visitors as Rashid Khan and his troops spent time training at the Sylhet International Cricket stadium, focused on avoiding a series loss today.

The crowd outside the hotel were unable to get a chance to see their beloved cricketers up close, but the craze and buzz

in the northeastern region of the country remains at its peak; especially following a brilliant show from the home side.

The current T20I series has been the talk of the town in Sylhet, where Bangladesh registered their first win in the shortest format after three outings here so far.



Meanwhile, there were long queues outside the ticket booth of the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium (SICS) yesterday. The fans are again expected to flock in numbers to support the Tigers in the second T20I today.

The atmosphere at the SICS was no short of electrifying on Friday. Around a twenty-thousand capacity crowd witnessed the

game at the picturesque venue, while at least more than a thousand without tickets had hovered along the stadium's periphery.

Since the Tigers do not get to play international cricket that often in Sylhet, the locals have voiced their demand of seeing more matches getting staged here in future.

With a high demand for tickets and the subsequent overwhelming situations during matches, the authorities have to prepare to constantly stay on their toes to maintain a huge crowd outside the venue.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board director and chairman of the women's wing department, Shafiul Alam Chowdhury Nadel, urged to have more matches in Sylhet in order to bring commonality among the hyper-enthusiastic fans in Sylhet.

"Since we don't get the opportunity to host more matches, the craze among the supporters skyrockets whenever there is a series in Sylhet. The capacity of the stadium is for around twenty-thousand spectators, and we distribute tickets up to eighteen-and-half thousand," said Nadel.

"Since we also have the grass bank, we try to release around two-thousand tickets for the security purpose.

"Considering the structure of the stadium premises, if you notice, there are so many open spaces from which the spectators who don't purchase tickets try to get in illegally. We are trying to stop them and also want more matches in order to bring some stability among the fans when it comes to their craze for cricket."

Women's chance to beat Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER

After conceding a late goal to be held to a 1-1 draw in the first match, Bangladesh women's football team will have the opportunity to rectify mistakes and win the two-match series against Nepal in the second and final match at the Birshershtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur today, the action kicking off at 5:30pm.

Bangladesh were close to inflicting a second defeat on Nepal in their first match since the historic SAFF Women's Championship final win on Thursday, only for Sabitra Bhandari's stoppage time goal canceling out Sabina Khatun's opener.

But the women in red and green have regrouped and prepared to prove taste victory under new head coach Mahbubur Rahman Litu following the resignation of Golam Rabbani Choton.

"We are hoping that the mistakes won't be repeated in the next match. We are working on keeping the defence compact till the end. Everyone will give their best," Litu told media on Saturday.

"There will not be any major changes in gameplan from us. We will try to beat them with the same plan and will have to conserve the lead if we can take it," the coach said, adding that there are no major fitness issues in the team.

Paul Smalley's resignation accepted

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation's technical and strategic director Paul Smalley tendered his resignation yesterday, bringing an end his second stint two years into the three-year contract.

The 56-year-old British coach told media that he could not come to a negotiation with his employers over working conditions and other demands.

"I have had discussions with the BFF president over the last month-and-a-half where I wanted some changes in BFF's operations, especially regarding manpower in some departments. He had asked for time from me to execute those things, but since those issues have not yet been resolved, I have decided to resign," Smalley told reporters yesterday.

It was widely believed that he could not come to agreement with the BFF over his demanded increase in salary and benefits. However, Smalley refuted such suggestion, saying that financial issues played no part to play in his decision to resign.

"We accept resignations because we do not try to compromise when someone wants to leave," BFF president Kazi Salahuddin told reporters.

Muktijoddha relegated

SPORTS REPORTER

Muktijoddha Sangsad were relegated from the top-tier of professional football league for the first time following a 2-1 defeat against Chittagong Abahani in their penultimate match of the Bangladesh Premier League in Gopalganj yesterday.

The two-time league runners-up in the professional era which began in 2007, Muktijoddha managed just 15 points from 19 games, four points less than Rahmatganj, who ensured top-tier stay with a goalless draw against Sheikh Russel in the day's other match.

The freedom fighters' club, which won two Dhaka Premier League titles, one National Championship and three Federation Cup titles prior to the professional era, will join Azapur FC in Bangladesh Championship League next season.



Marketa Vondrousova became the first unseeded woman to win Wimbledon in the Open era as the Czech swept to a shock 6-4, 6-4 victory over Tunisia's Ons Jabeur in Saturday's final, stretching further the latter's wait to become the first Arab and African player to win a Grand Slam title. PHOTO: AFP

DJOKOVIC MEETS ALCARAZ in 'the ultimate showdown'

AFP, London

Novak Djokovic says the "world of sport" will be watching when he faces Carlos Alcaraz in a Wimbledon final where history and a generational shift are at stake.

Djokovic is attempting to equal Roger Federer's record of eight titles at the All England Club and match Margaret Court's all-time mark of 24 Grand Slam crowns.

Having already pocketed the Australian Open and French Open in 2023, victory on Sunday will put the 36-year-old just one major away from completing the first men's calendar Grand Slam since 1969.

"It's the ultimate showdown," said Djokovic, who will be playing in a record 35th Grand Slam final.

"Everything comes down to one match. All eyes of the tennis and sports world will be directed on this Sunday's Wimbledon final. It's probably the most watched tennis match globally."

At 20, Alcaraz is Djokovic's junior by 16 years.

When Djokovic captured the first of his 23 majors at the 2008 Australian

Open, the Spaniard was still three months shy of his fifth birthday.

Djokovic can become Wimbledon's oldest champion while Alcaraz is bidding to be its third youngest after Boris Becker and Bjorn Borg.

"Obviously have more experience. It



can help a little bit in some important moments, beginning the match, managing the nerves, managing the occasion, circumstances," said Djokovic.

"But it's not going to be the deciding factor really. Whoever, on a given day, is in a better state, mentally

and physically, will be the winner."

Djokovic won the mind games when the pair clashed in the French Open semifinals in June.

Alcaraz suffered body cramping, a physical ailment brought on, he freely admitted, just by the sight of Djokovic



on the other side of the net.

The memory of his Paris collapse is still raw for Alcaraz who plans a series of mental exercises to counter the tension on Sunday.

"I'll try to forget that I'm going to play a final against Novak," he said.

Sunday will be Alcaraz's first

Wimbledon final in just his fourth grass-court event.

Djokovic has won 34 successive matches at the tournament and has not been beaten on Centre Court since losing the 2013 final to Andy Murray.

"He's in great shape," Djokovic said of Alcaraz. "He's very motivated. He's young. He's hungry. I'm hungry, too, so let's have a feast."

Their progress to the final has been similar.

Both have only lost two sets. They have spent virtually the same amount of time on court.

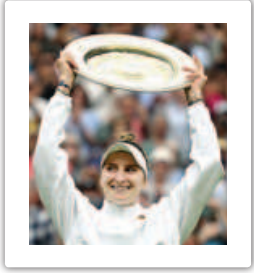
"This is going to be the best moment of my life," said Alcaraz who aims to become the third Spanish men's champion after Manuel Santana in 1966 and Rafael Nadal, who won the title in 2008 and 2010.

"Playing a final here in Wimbledon is something that I dreamt about when I started playing tennis."

"It's even better playing against Novak. It's going to be a really emotional moment for me. For Novak is one more day, one more moment," added Alcaraz who described Djokovic as a "legend" of tennis.



Unseeded Vondrousova wins maiden Wimbledon



REUTERS, London

Czech Marketa Vondrousova stunned Tunisia's Ons Jabeur 6-4, 6-4 on Saturday to become the first unseeded player in the professional era to win the Wimbledon women's singles title.

The 24-year-old left-hander, who a year ago needed wrist surgery, proved too steady the error-strewn Jabeur who ended up as runner-up for the second successive year.

Jabeur was bidding to become the first Arab player to win a Grand Slam

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Family members of Rokia Afzal Rahman at an event commemorating the pioneering businesswoman at Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel in the capital yesterday. She dedicated her life to the cause of women empowerment and financial independence, the speakers told the event. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Japanese firm will run HSI 3rd terminal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Japanese company will be appointed to operate the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, and the job will include ground and cargo handling, said the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) yesterday.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Maifur Rahman said this at a dialogue organised by Aviation and Tourism Journalists Forum of Bangladesh (ATJFB). The event, held at the HSI, was moderated by ATJFB President Tanzim Anwar.

Though the Japanese company will be in charge of terminal operations, the administration, security, immigration and customs services will be provided by officials and employees of government agencies, CAAB officials told this correspondent after the dialogue.

CAAB recently appointed Japanese consulting firm Nippon Koei to determine how an operating company would run the terminal, how profits and expenditures would be shared, and who would be responsible for what, sources said.

Several domestic and foreign companies have shown interest in operating the third terminal.

The government in January approved in principle that the third terminal would be operated and maintained under a public-private partnership.

Currently, Biman does the ground and cargo handling in all eight airports of the country.

Ground handling is a major source of income for SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

4 children get new lease on life

Chinese doctors perform minimally invasive procedures to fix their heart defects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of Chinese physicians yesterday successfully performed minimally invasive procedures to correct the congenital heart defects in four children at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and Hospital in Dhaka.



This was the first time this procedure was performed in Bangladesh, using an echocardiogram machine.

Practiced in more than 30 countries, the procedure, known as PAN, is an interventional therapy guided by ultrasound instead of X-ray, according to the World Health Organization.

Due to its lower reliance on complicated medical devices, the PAN procedure has gained popularity in underdeveloped countries that are medically underserved, according to medical experts.

Dr Xiangbin Pan, the Chief cardiac Surgeon of the Fu Wai Yunnan Cardiovascular Hospital, led the procedure on three children. Two other physicians from China assisted him while doctors of the pediatric cardiology department at the NICVD received hands-on training

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Prices of chilli, packaged sugar shoot up again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prices of green chilli and packaged sugar rose significantly in the last two days, allegedly due to a shortage of supply.

According to various market traders, the hike in prices took place as there was a lack of imported green chillies on Friday, while there was a three-week-long scarcity of packaged sugar.

Visiting some markets in Karwan Bazar, Shewrapara and Kazipara, The Daily Star found that green chilli was being sold for Tk 360-400 per kg, whereas it was Tk 220-280 in the same markets just two days ago.

Anisur Rahman, a trader in Karwan Bazar kitchen market, said he has been selling chillies at Tk 300 per kg, whereas on Thursday, he sold them for Tk 220. He added that the temporary price hike resulted from a supply shortage.

Motiuur Rahman, a vendor at East Kazipara market, expressed his dissatisfaction with the frequent price fluctuations, which often led to altercations with customers.

"Sometimes we have to stop selling green chilli to avoid arguments with consumers."

Saiful Islam, a hotelier, said the fluctuating price of chilli made it difficult for him to keep a fixed budget for this expense. "I used to spend Tk 100 on this. Now, it has shot up to Tk 300 and beyond!"

Also, both consumers and traders alleged that the packaged sugar prices were hiked by Tk 15.

While they would cost Tk 125 per 1kg packet before Eid-ul-Azha, it now costs Tk 140.

Businesspeople alleged a shortage of supply before Eid. However, supplies finally arrived three weeks later but with a hiked price.

Md Gofran Hossain, a trader at Karwan Bazar, said there was a high demand for packaged sugar, but they were unable to sell it for almost three weeks due to the lack of supply.

"When we finally received supplies from two companies on Thursday and Friday, the price increased by Tk 15."

Tigers eye Afghan series win

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Bangladesh will be looking to clinch their maiden bilateral T20I series victory over Afghanistan when the two sides clash in the second and final match at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium today, scheduled to start at 6 pm.

The confidence of the Tigers is high after the home side bounced back from consecutive ODI losses to win the third ODI and the first T20I.

Courtesy of the young guns from the Under-19 World Cup-winning team – Towhid Hridoy, Shamim Hossain and Shoriful Islam – Bangladesh went across the finish line in the first T20I.

"To be honest, ranking doesn't matter nowadays, especially in T20s since it's a game of 120 balls. You never know when the momentum of the game swings. Afghanistan are above us in the [T20I] rankings but we will go out to fight and try to fight neck and neck and see what

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

BNP finally gets IAB backing

RASHIDUL HASAN

Both the ruling Awami League and the BNP have been trying to get the Islami Andolon Bangladesh as an ally, but the Islamist party yesterday threw its weight behind BNP's demand for resignation of the government before the national election.

Addressing a rally at the Baitul Mukarram masjid, IAB chief Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim said his party would support the peaceful demonstrations of the BNP.

The IAB organised the rally demanding the resignation of the chief election commissioner, dissolution of the Election Commission, dissolution of parliament, and a free and fair election under the "national government".

Both the AL and the BNP have been trying to get at least one religion-based party as an electoral ally.

Due to its performance in the recent elections, the IAB, founded by "Charmonair Pir" Fazlul Karim, has become a decisive factor in politics.

The party started its journey in Barishal in 1987. It emerged as the fourth most popular political party in the last general election.

Then in the last Dhaka city mayoral polls, it was the third most popular political party, beating the main opposition, Jatiya Party.

According to IAB insiders, the party usually maintains a neutral position when it comes to siding with the AL or the BNP. People often view it as a party that is more likely to lean towards the AL.

But the party's stance changed after its Barishal mayor nominee Syed Faizul Karim was attacked on election day, they added.

The party later boycotted the city corporation elections.

Although the IAB announced support for BNP's movement, there is a difference regarding demands of the BNP and the IAB.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

The sun's activity is peaking sooner than expected

CNN ONLINE



As the sun nears the peak of its current solar cycle, our star is growing increasingly active. And that peak may be occurring sooner than predicted, according to scientists.

Every 11 years or so, the sun experiences periods of low and high solar activity, which is associated with the amount of sunspots on its surface. These dark regions, some of which can reach the size of Earth or larger, are driven by the sun's strong and constantly shifting magnetic fields.

Over the course of a solar cycle, the sun will transition from a calm to an intense and active period. During the peak of activity, called solar maximum, the sun's magnetic poles flip. Then, the sun will grow quiet again during a solar minimum.

Initially, peak activity was forecast to begin in July 2025. Now, experts believe the cyclical peak is more likely to take place in mid- to late 2024.

The current solar cycle, known as Solar Cycle 25, has been full of activity, more so than expected. Scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Space Weather Prediction Center in Boulder, Colorado, have already tracked more sunspots than those counted at the peak of the previous cycle.



A toddler covers her nose and the nose of her guardian because of the stench from garbage, including medical waste, dumped on Outer Bypass Road near Khulna Medical College Hospital. Road users do not only suffer from the repugnant smell, traffic also has to slow down as the large heap of spoiled food items and throwaway plastic goods occupies nearly half the road.

PHOTO: KM HABIBUR RAHMAN

BOTCHED C-SECTION OBGYNs to go on 2-day strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gynaecologists and obstetricians will go on a two-day strike from tomorrow across the country protesting the arrest of doctors over the deaths of two patients following a botched C-section.

Demanding their release, the physicians will abstain from work at all private chambers, diagnostic centres and hospitals, the Obstetrical and Gynaecologists Society of Bangladesh (OGSB) said in a press release yesterday.

Dr Shahzadi Mustarshida Sultana and Dr Muna Shaha were arrested on June 15 over an alleged "mistake" that led to the deaths of a newborn and the mother, Mahbuba Rahman Akhi, 25, following a C-section at the capital's Central Hospital on June 10.

The OGSB will also form human chains at all medical colleges and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4