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## DENGUE OUTBREAK Deadlier than ever

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

With the city hospitals struggling to accommodate a growing number of dengue patients, deaths from the viral fever are increasing at a higher rate compared to the previous years.

Experts and doctors have attributed this year's rising death rate to late hospitalisation and second-time infection of the mosquito-borne virus.

Hospital sources say almost two-thirds of the total dengue patients this year are male. However, among the dead, the number of females is higher than the males.

In the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, only one dengue patient died in Dhaka while at least 896 were hospitalised. With this, a total of 156 people died this year. Of them, 89 are female and 67 male, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

On the other hand, of the total 28,443 dengue patients this year, 18,056 are men and 10,387 women.

In 2019, the country saw the highest number of dengue cases -- 101,354, with a death rate of 0.17 percent. The death rate is highest this year -- 0.54 percent.

"When number of patients increases, deaths also increase. Second-time dengue infection with two different

YEAR	CASES	DEATHS	DEATH RATE
2019	1,01,354	179	0.17%
2020	1,405	7	0.49%
2021	28,429	105	0.36%
2022	62,362	281	0.45%
2023	28,443	156	0.54%

TILL 21 JULY



To cope with the rising number of patients getting admitted with dengue fever, the authorities at the Mugda General Hospital have set up beds in the corridor on the ninth floor to turn it into a makeshift male dengue ward, which was at capacity yesterday morning. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Hilsa production growth rate declining

Catching jatka, use of banned nets largely to blame: experts

YEAR-ON-YEAR HILSA PRODUCTION, GROWTH RATE		
YEAR	PRODUCTION (TONNE)	GROWTH RATE (IN %)
2021-22	5,66,593	0.24
2020-21	5,65,183	2.68
2019-20	5,50,428	3.30
2018-19	5,32,795	3.01
2017-18	5,17,189	4.18

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Despite an upward trend in the overall catch, year-on-year growth rate of hilsa production has been declining in recent years. The reasons include illegal netting of brood and jatka hilsa, widespread use of banned gillnet and the impact of climate change such as erratic rainfalls.

In 2021, the country lost more than 58,000 tonnes of mature hilsa due to illegal jatka netting alone. On the other hand, use of gillnet at river estuaries acts as the

biggest impediment for brood hilsa to come from sea and lay eggs in rivers, according to Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI).

To increase fish production, the government bans netting of hilsa and other endangered fish species twice a year. The first ban of the year lasts two months from March 1 to protect the fries to grow. The second ban starts on October 1 and lasts 22 days so that brood hilsa and other fish species can lay eggs.

Besides, the gillnet, a small-mesh net made of monofilament synthetic nylon fiber that is highly

effective in catching large numbers of fish, is banned in the country since 2001 to stop indiscriminate fishing and killing of aquatic species.

However, during the ban, a section of fishermen continues to catch hilsa using gillnet taking advantage of lax monitoring by law enforcers, contributing to the dwindling growth of the very popular fish in this part of the world.

**GROWTH TARGET FAILS**  
Bangladesh is the biggest producer of hilsa in the world. But the recent

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## High price of coarse rice hurting the poor

Fish, vegetables now also dearer

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The rising prices of essential commodities are making life increasingly difficult for people, especially those from low- to middle-income groups.

Compared to last month, retail prices of coarse rice have risen by Tk 3-5 per kg, while fine rice prices remain unchanged at Tk 60-80 per kg.

Meanwhile, there is no sign of a drop in vegetable prices and within a week, fish prices have shot up by Tk 10 to Tk 100 per kg, this correspondent reports after visiting several kitchen markets in the capital.

Kamal Hossain, of Mokbul Rice Agency in Mirpur, said the wholesale price of coarse rice has increased by Tk 3-5 per kg. "The wholesale price of coarse rice is now Tk 42-46 per kg, up from Tk 40-44 last month."

"There is now a shortage of coarse rice in the market as it is off-season," he said, adding that coarse rice was sold at Tk 48-52 per kg at the retail market.

Monir Hossain Jony, a proprietor of Rony Rice Agency in Karwan Bazar, said rice comes in 50kg jute-made sacks, the cost of which remains hidden in the total price of rice.

"We always get less than 50kg in each sack from the wholesaler. To offset the deficit, we increase the price by Tk 1-2 per kg of rice," he said.

An official of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) told the correspondent that there is a shortage in the supply of coarse rice.

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## AL's 'peace and development' rallies to go on in August

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Since the national election is only months away, the ruling Awami League has decided to keep holding "Peace and Development" rallies throughout August.

The party usually refrains from holding large programmes in August, the month of mourning.

It has also asked its leaders to intensify activities at the grassroots.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader issued the instructions to the party leaders during a secretary-level meeting at the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday.

Quader asked the leaders to publicise government's achievements alongside holding mourning day programmes.

The special extended meeting on July 30 between AL President Sheikh Hasina and leaders and elected representatives down to the thana level were also discussed.

Quader told the meeting that a rally of Rangpur division AL would be held on August 2.

Before the meeting, Quader spoke to journalists where he alleged that the BNP has started violence and killings across the country following the announcement of their one-point demand.

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**PLYING PRECARIOUSLY ...** Despite highways being off-limits to three-wheelers, one such vehicle, locally known as a "Tom Tom", carries bunches of jute sticks on the Dhaka-Barishal highway yesterday, violating traffic laws. The vehicle is so overloaded that the driver has difficulty seeing rear traffic. The photo was taken in the Batajor area of Barishal's Gournadi upazila.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## YOUTH RALLY BNP to urge raising voices against govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After holding youth rallies in five cities, the BNP's front and associate bodies will have their final youth rally in Dhaka at the Suhrawardy Udyan today.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Jubo Dal, and Swechchhasebak Dal leaders said that at the rally, they would urge the youth to raise their voices for the BNP's one-point demand -- election under a non-partisan interim administration.

The three bodies have asked leaders and activists across the country to join the rally in Dhaka, said the leaders, adding that many have already reached the capital.

"Our movement is getting momentum as it is disciplined and non-violent in nature. The movement will gather more pace in the coming days as more people will join our programmes," said Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, standing committee member of the party.

The youth rally is scheduled to start at 2:00pm. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir is expected to address the rally.

Sources said several youths will speak at the rally, including an unemployed youth, a youth from the family of an

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## DENGUE OUTBREAK BNP blames govt, declares 3-point programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Blaming the ruling party for its failure to tackle the dengue outbreak, the BNP has announced a three-point programme to prevent the disease from spreading further.

The programme will begin in Dhaka with a campaign to raise awareness among city dwellers about Aedes mosquitoes and their breeding grounds in every ward of Dhaka city.

BNP leaders Tabith Awal and Ishraque Hossain, both of whom contested the last mayoral elections in Dhaka North and South, announced the programme from a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan Office yesterday.

According to them, the party will set up an online blood donating platform through which "any willing donor, including the BNP activists who are willing to donate blood, can contact people who need blood using the website."

Thirdly, mosquito nets will be given away to people in low-income areas of the city so that they can protect themselves from mosquitoes.

If we can make the people aware enough without scaring them, it will go a long way in fighting Aedes mosquitoes, said Tabith, adding that the awareness-raising activities will be conducted through social media campaign and direct public awareness programmes.

The seasonal dengue has now become a year-round menace due to the continuous negligence of the two Dhaka city corporations.

"The city has turned into a sanctuary for Aedes mosquitoes. The city of possibilities, with all its citizens full of life, is now in constant fear of death from mosquito bites," Tabith observed.

Blaming the rise of dengue on a lack of a coordinated, effective and long-term plan for containing dengue, the BNP leader also said if the number of cases continues to increase at the current rate during the rainy season, dengue can very quickly become an epidemic.

"However, as representatives of the people and as activists of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party BNP, we believe it is our duty to always stand by the people with different initiatives," Tabith said.

The leaders also demanded that the two city corporations take "some effective initiatives" to save Dhaka dwellers from dengue. Among the initiatives, they put special emphasis on the following:

"The city corporation and the government must take responsibility for treating dengue patients. They must provide free medical care to dengue patients in dedicated and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



A view shows barley and damaged truck where a grain warehouse was destroyed by a Russian missile strike at a compound of an agricultural company in the village of Pavlivka, in Odesa region, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### END OF BLACK SEA GRAIN DEAL

# Many may die: UN

Russia hits Ukraine's grain for 4th day, holds live fire exercise at sea

REUTERS, Kyiv

The spike in grain prices in the days since Russia quit a deal allowing the safe Black Sea export of Ukraine grain "potentially threatens hunger and worse for millions of people," the United Nations' aid chief told the Security Council yesterday.

Russia quit the Black Sea grain deal on Monday, saying that demands to improve its own food and fertilizer exports had not been met and complaining that not enough Ukrainian grain had reached poor countries.

US wheat futures in Chicago rose over six percent this week and had their biggest daily gain on Wednesday since Russia invaded Ukraine, but pared some of those gains on Friday in part due to hopes Russia may resume talks on the deal.

"Higher prices will be most acutely felt by families in developing countries," Martin Griffiths told the 15-member body, adding that currently some 362 million people in 69 countries were in need of humanitarian aid.

"Some will go hungry, some will starve, many may die as a result of these decisions," he said.

The deal was brokered a year ago by

the United Nations and Turkey to combat a global food crisis worsened by Russia's February 2022 invasion. Ukraine and Russia are leading grain exporters.

The UN argued that the Black Sea deal had benefited poorer countries by helping lower food prices more than 23 percent globally. The UN World Food Programme also shipped some 725,000 metric tons

**"Some will go hungry, some will starve, many may die as a result of these decisions," the United Nations' aid chief said.**

of Ukraine grain to aid operations in Afghanistan, Djibouti Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

But Mikhail Khan, a macroeconomist who Russia asked to brief the Security Council, said the poorest countries had received just three percent of the grain.

"The qualitative assessment of the impact of the grain deal in terms of provisions of Ukrainian grain to global markets is essentially not very significant," he said.

Russia pounded Ukrainian food export facilities for a fourth day in a row on Friday and practiced seizing ships in the

Black Sea. Moscow has described the port attacks as revenge for a Ukrainian strike on Russia's bridge to Crimea on Monday.

"The new wave of attacks on Ukrainian ports risks having far-reaching impacts on global food security, in particular, in developing countries," UN political affairs chief Rosemary DiCarlo told the Security Council.

Russia has said it would now view any ships traveling to Ukraine's Black Sea ports as possibly carrying military cargoes. Kyiv responded by announcing similar measures against vessels bound for Russia or Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory.

DiCarlo said those threats were "unacceptable."

"Any risk of conflict spillover as a result of a military incident in the Black Sea – whether intentional or by accident – must be avoided at all costs, as this could result in potentially catastrophic consequences to us all," she said.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan hopes to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin next month and said those talks could lead to restoration of the Black Sea grain deal, calling on Western countries to consider Russia's demands, Turkish broadcasters reported yesterday.

## Netrakona-4 by-polls: Sajjadul gets AL ticket

STAFF REPORTER

Former senior secretary at the Prime Minister's Office Sajjadul Hasan has got the Awami League nomination for the by-election in Netrakona-4.

The party yesterday picked its candidate for the by-polls at a meeting of its Parliamentary Nomination Board held at Gono Bhaban with party President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

"Sajjadul Hasan has been unanimously nominated by the Awami League at our party's nomination board meeting," AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader told the media following the meeting.

Sajjadul Hasan is a member of the information and research affairs sub-committee of the Awami League central committee. His father late Akhlakul Hossain Ahmed was a companion of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The by-polls for the Netrokona-4 parliamentary seat, which fell vacant following the death of its previous incumbent, Rebecca Momin, is set to be held on September 2.

## Two girls drown in the Padma

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Two girls drowned in the Padma river in Sadar upazila of Chapainawabganj yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Reshma Khatun, 7, daughter of Rehshan Ali of Sonaptri village in Sadar upazila and Moslema Khatun, 15, daughter of Gumani Haque of Katapara village in the same upazila, reports our local correspondent, quoting fire service officials and locals.

Fariduddin, station officer of Chapainawabganj Fire Station, said Moslema and Reshma went missing while bathing in the Padma river at Malbagdanga village around 11:30am. Later, locals recovered Reshma's body around 12:00pm.

On information, a team of divers from the Fire Service and Civil Defence recovered the body of Moslema from the river around 4:00pm, said the official.

## Two siblings die from electrocution in Kurigram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Two siblings have died by electrocution at Phulbari upazila in Kurigram.

The accident took place at Sonaikazi village of Shimulbari union in Phulbari upazila at around 8:00pm on Thursday night.

The deceased – Tofayel Hossain Babu (11) and Seba Khatun (4) – are children of Sakimuddin of Sonaikazi village.

Family members said that the two were electrocuted by touching the auto-rickshaw charger at home. When they were brought to the Phulbari Hospital, the doctor on duty declared them dead.

Phulbari police station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Pranakrishna Debnath confirmed the incident and said that an unnatural death case has been filed in the police station in this regard.

## AL's peace

FROM PAGE 1

He said, "The BNP's only demand is Sheikh Hasina's resignation which is contradictory to the constitution. We cannot go against the constitution. We will conduct our elections according to the constitution."

"Awami League leaders and activists are being killed. And the BNP is habitually misleading the nation with baseless information," Quader said.

"The BNP is trying to attract the attention of foreigners by staging isolated incidents. It is hatching conspiracies to foil the election."

Regarding the attack on Hero Alom during the Dhaka-17 by-election, Quader said, "So far 10 people have been arrested in connection with the incident. The government has taken action."

AL presidium members Matia Chowdhury, Kazi Zafar Ullah, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Md Qamrul Islam, Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim, organizing secretaries Afzal Hossain and Abu Saeed Al Mahmud Swapan and Science and Technology Affairs Secretary Md Abdus Sabur joined the meeting among others.

## BNP to urge

FROM PAGE 1

enforced disappearance victim, and one who had been fired from a government job.

"The city will be the city of youths as tens of thousands will take part in the rally," Sultan Salahuddin Tuku, president of Jubo Dal, told journalists after visiting the venue.

He said over 4.70 crore people are young voters and they were deprived of their right to vote.

"Young and meritorious people are not getting jobs. If the administration is run by the party loyal men, then the administration will surely collapse. We took to the streets to establish the rights of the youth," Tuku said.

On June 2, three BNP associate bodies announced youth rallies in Chattogram, Bogura, Khulna, Barishal, Sylhet, and Dhaka to drum up the support of the young generation for the BNP's movement.

## Missing son returned home after 21 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A Bangladeshi national was returned from India through Banglabandha land port in Panchagarh yesterday, 21 years after he went missing.

Matiur Rahman, 36, of Akhanagar-Debiduba village in Thakurgaon's Sadar upazila, went missing in 2002 while he was 15 years old, reports our Thakurgaon correspondent quoting Matiur's father Sahidul Islam.

After failing to find him, they filed a general diary with Thakurgaon Police Station in this regard.

Indian immigration police formally handed Matiur over to Banglabandha Immigration police yesterday afternoon, said Khairul Islam, assistant sub-inspector of Banglabandha police.

Indian social worker Nitish Sharma said Matiur was rescued by Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation in India in a disoriented state from a road in Karjat area of India's Maharashtra in June, 2019 and brought him to its custody.

Matiur was diagnosed as a patient of schizophrenia, said Nitish.

Later, the foundation identified the boy through Noakhali Gandhi



Matiur's parents hug him on his return to the country at Banglabandha yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Ashram Trust in Bangladesh and started the procedure of his return.

What happened to Matiur before that and how he ended up in India remain a mystery.

Nitish Sharma further said she and Dr Swarali K Kondwilkar, a physician of the foundation, will stay at Matiur's house for 2/3 days for observation.

Matiur's mother Morjina Begum, expressing her gratitude, said she

always believed her son will return to her one day.

Saifun Nahar, younger sister of the youth, said her brother went missing when she was in class four and he was in class nine.

"After about two decades we got him back. I can't describe how joyous a day today is for us, our family. We are grateful to all who helped in his homecoming," added Nahar.

around 450 medicine beds, of which they have kept four wards dedicated for the dengue patients. They are also treating dengue patients at the general wards due to the huge number of patients.

He said they have prepared a guideline with three categories: A, B and C. The patients who are infected with dengue but stable and have no complications belong to group A. They send them back home and the rest belonging to the other two categories are admitted to the hospital, Nazmul said.

## High price of coarse rice

FROM PAGE 1

Since there is high demand for fine rice, millers polish coarse rice which creates a shortage in the supply, he said preferring to remain anonymous.

**FISH AND VEGETABLE**

There is no respite from the rising prices of fish and vegetables either.

Jitendra Das, a fish trader of Karwan Bazar, said the prices of fish usually rise during the rainy season when ponds in many places get flooded. This creates a shortage in the supply of farmed fish, which has a huge demand for low and middle-income people.

Fariduddin, a metal scrap trader in Karwan Bazar, said he earned Tk 500-600 per day.

"It's becoming increasingly difficult for me to cover my family expenses," he said while buying a Pangas fish.

Yesterday Pangas was sold at Tk 200-220 per kg and Tilapia at Tk

200-280 per kg. While, just a month ago, the same fish was at least Tk 50 cheaper per kg.

The price of however ilish dropped by Tk 100-150 to Tk 1,300-1,400 per kg.

Meanwhile, the price of vegetables has risen by Tk 5-10 per kg.

Traders said many low-lying fields went underwater because of heavy rains and as a result, the price of vegetables shot up.

In a week, the price of a spinach bundle increased by Tk 10-40.

Though the prices of potatoes and onions have decreased in the wholesale market by Tk 2 and Tk 6 per kg, it does not have any impact on the retail market.

A kg of potato is sold at Tk 40 and onion at Tk 70-80 in the retail market.

The price of lentils, oil, sugar, soap and flour however dropped slightly in the retail market.

## PM calls for end to war in Ukraine

FROM PAGE 1

destabilising effect on the world," she said.

The premier made this call while addressing a meeting of the Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG) on Food, Energy and Finance through a videoconference from Gono Bhaban, her official residence.

Hasina said the war is not only destroying many lives in the conflict zone, but also is wreaking havoc on people across the globe.

She said conflict is raging on despite the need for an early solution. "In fact, newer sophisticated armaments of war are being introduced every day there bringing yet more destruction and causing severe adverse effects on people's lives all over the world," she said.

The premier said poverty and inequalities continue to sharply rise, and the debt burden for the poorer countries is swelling.

"These and other shocks have driven up the prices of food, energy, and other commodities across the world, causing delays in the progress

of Sustainable Development Goals," she said.

"During this time of growing instability, international cooperation is clearly vital to the vulnerable among the global community to build resilience against future shocks," she added.

The PM said factors that affect food price and access, such as export restrictions, stockpiling and supply chain distortions, must be addressed. On climate issue, the PM demanded concrete progress on the "Loss and Damage Fund. Also, developing countries should not be affected by the proposed carbon levy in the shipping sector, she added.

The GCRG was set up by the UNSG in March 2022 to address urgent and critical global issues pertaining to interlinked crises in food security, energy, and finance and to coordinate a global response. The GCRG is overseen by the Champions Group comprising the head of state or the head of government of Bangladesh, Barbados, Denmark, Germany, Indonesia and Senegal.



# A ‘missing’ building and Tk 19cr investment

Despite paying DSCC, 281 people yet to get their allotted shops

MD ABBAS

Rafiqul Islam of Old Dhaka has been working at a machinery shop for several years, saving his earnings to accumulate Tk 5 lakh over a decade.

With his hard-earned savings, Rafiqul booked a shop at the MA Aziz Market Complex, an under-construction five-storey building owned by the Dhaka South City Corporation.

Expecting to receive his shop in 2019, Rafiqul and 280 others now find themselves in a distressing situation, as they are yet to receive any concrete information from the DSCC regarding the long awaited delivery date.

What’s worse is that the building where he booked the shop remains incomplete and abandoned. He wants to know the whereabouts of the Tk 19 crore he claims have been invested by potential shop owners like him.

“I invested to buy a shop, thinking about the future of my son and daughter. Former mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon completed his term, and the new mayor took office, but the construction of the market remains unfinished,” Rafiqul told The Daily Star.

Sakina Rahman, who invested Tk 7

lakh in three installments to the DSCC in hopes for a shop to call her own, echoed the same.

When these individuals contact the relevant department to enquire about the progress of the construction and the anticipated delivery of their shops, the response they receive is consistently vague, often they are simply told, “soon.”

According to the DSCC engineering department, the construction of the building on 38.64 katha land at the Chankharpul intersection, was estimated to cost Tk 32 crore, with construction initially set to be completed by October 2019. The deadline was later extended to November 2020. The contractors halted the construction after completing only the basement, and the building has since been left abandoned.

Prior to the commencement of the building’s construction, interested individuals were asked to apply for shops through a newspaper notice.

Among the applicants, 281 people were allocated shops, each of whom deposited Tk 3 lakh to the DSCC fund. An additional Tk 2 lakh was given in a subsequent installment. The price of each shop in this market ranges from Tk 10 to 13 lakh.

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**UNFINISHED DREAMS...** The MA Aziz Market Complex remains frozen in time. Once envisioned as a DSCC market to be set up within 2019, all that has been completed is a mere basement which is now repurposed as a garage for rickshaws and vans. Meanwhile, investors are left in limbo, waiting for their promised shops. *Inset*, the abandoned site now hosts a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which is particularly concerning when the city is grappling with a dengue outbreak.

PHOTO: STAR

GONO ODHIKAR

Nur, Rashed

sued over

‘vandalism’ at

party office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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Gono Odhikar Parishad president Nurul Haque Nur, general secretary Muhammad Rashed Khan and other leaders and activists of their faction have been sued on the charge of vandalism and forceful entry into its Paltan office.

Col (ret’d) Mia Moshuazzaman, owner of a building that houses the office, former joint convener of the party and a supporter of its another faction led by Reza Kibria, filed the case with Paltan Police Station on Thursday night, said Officer-in-Charge Salahuddin Mia.

Nur and Rashed were among 17 named and around 75 unnamed accused in the case.

Earlier in the day, Nur and his followers stormed into the office, said the OC.

Police cordoned off the Gono Odhikar Parishad office at Pritom-Zaman Tower in Paltan.

The law enforcers have been deployed in front of the building since Thursday night as the party office has been locked.

Sub-inspector Akram Hossain said they were on duty on the third, fourth and fifth floors and in

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COPYRIGHT ACT 2023

# A law to protect intellectual rights

ASIFUR RAHMAN and  
SUKANTA HALDER

Aiming to safeguard intellectual property rights, the government is going to increase the punishment for violating copyrights, with more specific definitions and the inclusion of some new provisions.

The new bill of Copyright Act 2023 will replace the existing Copyright Act 2000, which has now been placed to get the nod of the president.

According to the act, copyright ownership in cases of the creator’s demise, will be passed to their rightful heir – a crucial addition absent in the previous legislation.

The bill classifies copyrights into two distinct categories: one for literature, drama, songs, and arts, which endure throughout the creator’s lifetime and extend for 60 years after their passing.

The other category, encompassing film, sound recordings, photography, digital content, and more, will maintain copyright protection for 60 years from the initial date of publication.

These amendments aim to strike a balance between incentivising creativity and encouraging innovation within the intellectual property realm.

The new act imposes a maximum prison sentence of four years for most violations. However, violations pertaining to film and folk culture will carry a stiffer

- ➡ New bill to replace existing Copyright Act 2000
- ➡ Copyright ownership in cases of creator’s demise will be passed to rightful heir
- ➡ Bill classifies copyrights into 2 categories: one for literature, drama, songs, and arts, which endure throughout creator’s lifetime and extend for 60yrs after their passing



- ➡ Other category, encompassing film, sound recordings, photography, digital content, and more, will maintain copyright protection for 60 years from initial date of publication
- ➡ New act imposes maximum sentence of 4yrs for violations
- ➡ Violations pertaining to film, folk culture will carry stiffer punishment of 5yrs

punishment of five years.

Notably, the inclusion of folk culture in the copyright act is a significant development that comes after much debate, sparked by a copyright dispute involving the Mymensingh Geetika song, “Sarбата Mangal Radhe,” and the Sherpur-based folk band Shorolpur.

The band claimed the song was their original track after

Meher Afroz Shaon and Chanchal Chowdhury covered it on a commercial platform in 2020. The band had taken the copyright of the song in 2018. However, in January 2022, the copyright office cancelled the copyright of the band.

The new act introduces an entire chapter dedicated to Securing Rights of Folk-knowledge and

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No scope to bring back caretaker govt  
Says law minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Brahmanbaria

.....

The caretaker government system will not be reintroduced in the country and the Election Commission will hold the next parliamentary election under the present government, said Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday.

He said this while addressing a meeting of Kharera union unit of Awami League in Kasba upazila of Brahmanbaria.

The law minister said BNP Jamaat has been trying to turn Bangladesh into a “failed state”.

They don’t want to contest in the polls but expect somebody will again put them in power through backdoor, the minister added.

Bangladesh will turn into a state of anarchy if BNP Jamaat come to the power again, he said.

He said history says they are the killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. They formulated law so that trial over the Bangabandhu killing does not take place.

Not only this, they appointed the killers to

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‘Will retaliate if attacked’

JL leaders, activists warn BNP at Dhaka rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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Pointing towards BNP, Jubo League leaders yesterday said they are ready to give a fitting reply to those who will try to obstruct the development march of the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Leaders of the ruling party’s youth front made the remarks while speaking at a rally, held on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital, protesting the killing of its activist in Narail’s Kalia upazila.

“The BNP Jamaat is a terrorist force... as long as they do politics in the country, they will continue to foil its peace,” Mainul Hossain Khan Nikhil, general secretary of Jubo League, said at the rally.

“We will not engage into conflict; we will deal

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

False cases can’t stop our movement  
BNP leaders tell Ctg rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

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The government is trying to foil BNP’s movement by suing party leaders and activists with false cases, said the party’s port city unit leaders and activists at a rally yesterday.

“But it could not stop our movement... we will not rest until this government is overthrown,” said BNP city unit convener Shahadat Hossain.

Shahadat said this while speaking at a protest rally held in front of the BNP Chattogram city unit office in Kazir Dewri area.

The event was held protesting the attack on BNP party office allegedly by Awami League and BCL activists on Wednesday.

Shahadat alleged that the administration is arresting BNP leaders and activists in accordance

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DHAKA ORPHANAGE SOCIETY

# Home for Hindu orphans

DIPAN NANDY

The Dhaka Orphanage Society (Hindu), located in a narrow Farashganj road, is facing numerous challenges that have drawn attention to its neglected state.

There’s an illegal truck parking right in front of its main gate, and the surrounding area is strewn with garbage.

Despite these unfavourable conditions, the Dhaka Orphanage Society (Hindu) remains as the only shelter for Hindu orphans in Dhaka, providing a safe haven for children without guardians.

During a recent visit, it was observed that both the interior and exterior of the building have deteriorated over time. Additionally, local traders have been indiscriminately dumping waste around the premises.

**HISTORY OF ORPHANAGE SOCIETY**

This is one of the oldest orphanages in Dhaka and was established to cater to orphaned Hindu children and teenagers. In 1908, the orphanage home was founded on 60 percent of a three-acre land granted by the



PHOTO: STAR

government on Orphanage Road, adjacent to Bakshibazar.

Rani Rashmoni provided significant support to the institution in 1936-37 while its later patrons included Manik Ghosh, Utpal Roy, Swadesh Debnath, Binoy Ghosh, Kalidas Baidya, and Sudhanshu Shekhar Halder.

Due to communal riots, the orphanage was relocated to the Farshganj residence of local landlord Gokul Chandra Sen in 1950. In 1962, the institution was

registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare under the Hindu Act (238/1962 Ordinance-1961).

Rani Mitra joined as the female caretaker in 1965.

During the Liberation War, the orphanage home suffered looting of its documents. However, after independence, it was reopened under the initiative of Rani Mitra.

In the 1980s, a five-story building was constructed with a grant from the Norway-Bangladesh Association. Until

1990, the organisation received grants from the World Food Program.

Currently, the orphanage accommodates a total of 89 orphans – 62 girls and 27 boys. The facility employs six teachers. The authority provides three meals a day, including vegetarian meals in the morning and evening, meat on Fridays, eggs on Mondays, and fish on other days for lunch. The children are also provided with new clothes during festivals and school uniforms, said Kalipada Saha, the superintendent of the orphanage home.

Fifteen-year-old Karen Kha Tripura, who has been residing in the orphanage for over nine years, said, “It’s a great opportunity for children like us to live in a caring atmosphere.”

Kalipada Saha said, “We work tirelessly for the children living here. We require nearly Tk 40 lakh annually, which is contributed by the government, donors, and society members. However, more funds are needed to improve our services.”

About the condition of the building, he said, “We are working on it.”

**This is one of the oldest orphanages in Dhaka and was established to cater to orphaned Hindu children and teenagers. In 1908, the orphanage home was founded on 60 percent of a three-acre land granted by the government on Orphanage Road, adjacent to Bakshibazar. The orphanage was relocated to the Farshganj residence of local landlord Gokul Chandra Sen in 1950. In 1962, the institution was registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare under the Hindu Act (238/1962 Ordinance-1961).**

**BANGLADESH ADVANCING DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH THROUGH ENERGY (BADGE)**

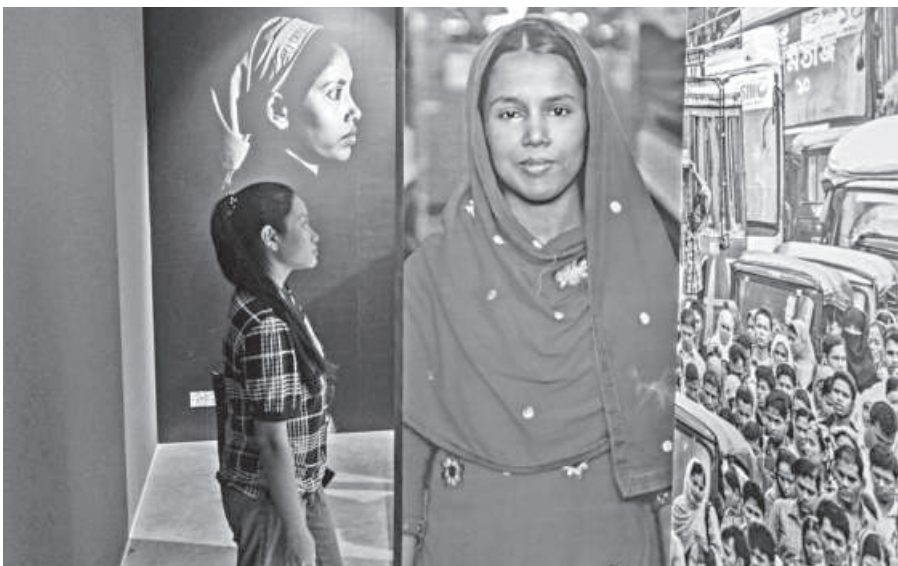
**Request for Technical and Financial Proposals (RFP) from eligible Bidders**

The Bangladesh Advancing Development and Growth through Energy (BADGE) is a five-year project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and implemented by Tetra Tech. BADGE aims to support sustainable livelihoods based on renewable and clean solar energy for the local inhabitants in Ukhiya and Teknaf, Cox’s Bazar. These areas, also known as “host communities,” have been impacted by hosting the Rohingya population. Tetra Tech is requesting for proposals (RFP) from eligible bidders who can supply and install solar energy-powered home systems, fish dryer chambers, irrigation pumps, and electric vehicle charging stations. Prospective bidders should have relevant experience in implementing renewable energy-based equipment and services, including supply, installation, and maintenance. Details are provided in the Scope of Works (SOW) as outlined in the RFP. For more information, please visit the Tender/EOI section of [www.bdjobs.com](http://www.bdjobs.com).

**অভিজ্ঞ প্রতিষ্ঠানের কাছ থেকে দরপত্র আহ্বান**

বাংলাদেশ আন্তর্জাতিক ডেভেলপমেন্ট অ্যান্ড গ্রোথ থ্রু এনার্জি (BADGE) একটি প্রজেক্ট যা ইউনাইটেড স্টেটস এজেন্সি ফর ইন্টারন্যাশনাল ডেভেলপমেন্ট (ইউএসএআইডি)-এর অর্থায়নে এবং টেট্রা টেক (Tetra Tech) এর বাস্তবায়নে পরিচালিত। BADGE কক্সবাজারের উখিয়া এবং টেকনাফের স্থানীয় বাসিন্দাদের, যারা “হোস্ট কমিউনিটি” হিসেবে পরিচিত (রোহিঙ্গা ক্যাম্প/কমিউনিটি বাসীত), তাদের জীবন যাত্রার মান উন্নয়নের এবং টেকসই জীবিকা নির্বাহের জন্য বিভিন্ন সহযোগিতা যেমন, সৌর বিদ্যুৎ চালিত হোম সিস্টেম, ফিশ ড্রায়ার চেম্বার, সেচ পাম্প, এবং বৈদ্যুতিক পান্ডির চার্জিং স্টেশন স্থাপন করতে অগ্রহী। এ উদ্দেশ্যে Tetra Tech উপরে উল্লিখিত সরঞ্জামসমূহ সরবরাহ, স্থাপন এবং রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ পরিষেবা বাস্তবায়নের কাজের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন দরদাতা প্রতিষ্ঠানের কাছ থেকে দরপত্র/প্রস্তাব জমা দেয়ার জন্য আহ্বান করছে (RFP)। আরো বিস্তারিত জানার জন্য, অনুগ্রহ করে [www.bdjobs.com](http://www.bdjobs.com) এর টেন্ডার/ইউআই (TENDER/EOI) বিভাগে দেখুন।





**LOOKING BACK AT THE DECADE-OLD TRAGEDY... “Ten Years After Rana Plaza”, an immersive exhibition by photo journalist Ismail Ferdous, kicked off at the capital’s Drik Gallery yesterday. The exhibition marks the ten years of the incident, through the interdisciplinary works of the photographer, who had been capturing the tragedy since 2013. The layout of the exhibition had been done by architect Farhana Nazim Chowdhury, along with collaborations with visual artists like Ata Mojlish. The exhibition is comprised of both interactive and poster art, leading the visitors through a winding road, through the victims and their family’s eyes. In collaboration with the Bangladesh Center for Workers’ Solidarity, the exhibition is partially funded by the 21st Century International Women’s Garment Workers Union Heritage Fund. The open-for-all exhibition will run till July 29, from 3:00pm to 8:00pm.**

PHOTO: ARSHADUL HAQUE ROCKY

## False cases

FROM PAGE 3

to a “master plan” of the ruling party ahead of the upcoming national elections.

“AL leaders and activists vandalised the BNP office in the presence of police, but the administration has not taken any action in this regard,” alleged Abul Hashem Bakkar, member secretary of the BNP Chattogram city unit.

Earlier, two cases were registered naming 15 BNP and its associate wing members and 600 unnamed persons in connection with vandalising the election camp of the AL candidate for Ctg-10 by-polls in Lalkhan Bazar on Wednesday night.

## Will retaliate

FROM PAGE 3

with them politically. But the Jubo League knows how to give a fitting reply if we are attacked,” said acting president of JL’s Dhaka city (south) unit Mainuddin Rana.

From the rally, the leaders also said they will show their organisational strength in a grand rally to be held on Monday.

After the rally, the JL leaders and activists brought out a procession in front of the AL headquarters in the capital’s Gulistan.

## US delegation visit

FROM PAGE 5

BNP is demanding caretaker government system which only exists in Pakistan, he mentioned.

“My question is that why they (BNP) only follow Pakistan. Mirza Fakhrul (BNP secretary general) a few days ago said Pakistan (period) was better. So, it is natural that they would follow Pakistan,” Hasan said.

Reply to a question about visit of delegations of the European Union (EU) and the US, the minister said the EU delegation came at the invitation of the Election Commission.

They held talks with the commission, ruling party

and opposition party and others and their visit was very much a positive one, he said.

About the visit of the US under-secretary and high-level officials, Hasan said Bangladesh has very good multidimensional relations with the US. “They are our development partner. In light with that, their visit was to further strengthen the ties,” he said.

The minister said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave shelter to over 12 lakh Rohingya people. The US delegation visited the Rohingya camps, he said. “Their visit also strengthened our ties,” he said.

During a recent visit to the site, it was found that only the basement roof had been completed. However, the abandoned site has now become an ideal mosquito breeding ground. Besides, the basement was being used as a garage for rickshaws and vans.

Omar Bin Abdal Aziz, son of late Awami League leader MA Aziz after whom the market was named, was given the responsibility of overseeing the property as a local councillor.

Contacted, he said, “I have asked a man to look after the place. He will be replaced once a newly-appointed construction firm resumes the construction work.”

**WHY THE DELAY?** Sources at the DSCC engineering department said, the Builders Engineering Associates Limited, the contractor

company responsible for the construction of the building, had close ties with Jubo League leader GK Shamim, a top contractor of government projects. Shamim was arrested during an anti-casino operation. After his arrest, the building construction came to a halt, they added.

It took two years to cancel the contractor’s contract, appoint a magistrate to assess the completed work’s cost, impose fines for breaching the agreement, and issue a new contract.

In April of last year, the authorities published a fresh advertisement to select new contractors. DSCC Revenue Officer Md Anisur Rahman said the engineering department is responsible for the building’s construction.

He said once the work is finished, it will be handed over to the property department, which will then allocate the shops to the designated individuals.

Wishing anonymity, the engineering department officials told The Daily Star that a new work order was given to a company after completing the tender procedures.

The Builders Engineering Associates Limited was fined for not completing the works in time, they said, adding that they are hopeful to resume the construction within the next month.

## A ‘missing’ building

FROM PAGE 3

These individuals have continued to make further installments for four consecutive terms.

Despite the lack of progress in the building’s construction, the DSCC revenue department has continued to accept installments from the affected individuals.

Approximately Tk 19 crore has been collected in the fund, with some individuals paying in two installments and others in three.

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## Beijing

FROM PAGE 5

in Urumqi, capital of northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, on Thursday evening.

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## DENGUE OUTBREAK

# DSCC distributes leaflets at mosques to raise awareness

UNB, Dhaka

In order to increase the awareness of prevention of dengue disease and control of Aedes mosquito, leaflets were distributed at the mosques under the Dhaka South City Corporation yesterday.

Besides, a discussion was held about what to do to prevent dengue, according to a press release.

The councillors of various wards of the corporation and the officials of the health department participated in this discussion and leaflet distribution programme, added the release.

The objective of this initiative is to educate the public about preventive measures against dengue and promote community engagement in combating the disease.

Earlier on July 13, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) opened a central control room to check dengue disease and Aedes mosquito under its area. DSCC Mayor Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh inaugurated the control room at Shitalakkhya Hall of the Nagar Bhavan.

## A law to protect

FROM PAGE 3

Folk culture, ensuring that the government will trace the origin of such cultural activities.

“To use those commercially, one would need to take the government’s permission and sign contracts with the origin communities about the usage conditions and tenure,” says the new act.

A part of the income, which will be settled by the contracts, will be spent in the cultural development of these communities.

The new act has incorporated the copyrights of ICT related products, activities, database, design by digital tools.

Using film scenes or sound recordings on any digital and social media platforms without permission will also be considered as copyright violation.

In the new law, dress designing, graphics, artistic images or any design using digital platforms have been included as an art form.

The copyright office will perform specific tasks including issuing copyright registration and certifying, licensing of translation, stopping import of illegal copies of any intellectual products, conservation of folk culture, advising the government about copyrights and providing incentives to the original artists.

Besides, the government will appoint additional copyright registrars. A clause has been incorporated in the act saying that the board for

the copyright office will be able to retain or cancel the orders of the registrar.

Barrister Aneek R Haque, advocate, Supreme Court, said there are a number of things that were not in the law before, which have been included.

For example, a separate chapter has been added to protect the rights of folk culture, and new clauses have been proposed to prevent piracy, he said.

**The new act has incorporated the copyrights of ICT related products, activities, database, design by digital tools.**

However, the copyright board has been given new powers that they did not have before, he added.

Noted Bangladeshi filmmaker Gias Uddin Selim said, “If any person intentionally violates or helps to violate the copyright of a film, they can be punished now.”

Farid Ahmed, proprietor of Somoy Prokashon, said if any publisher violates any condition of the agreement signed with the creator of a literary work, a fine of Tk 5 lakh will be imposed.

However, in the case of publication, the penalty amount has become much higher, he added.

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**RFP Ref. No.: LRPS-BAN-2023-9184214**

**Request for Proposal (RFP): For documentation of the implementation processes of critical nutrition services delivering under Health and Gender Support Project (HGSP).**

UNICEF Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a strong record and credibility of providing the above-required service. To receive the detailed scope of work and procedure to submit the bid response, please email to [supplybangladesh@unicef.org](mailto:supplybangladesh@unicef.org)

The deadline to submit the proposal is **Sunday, 13 August 2023; Time: 11:00 Hrs.**

**Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.**

[www.unicef.org/bangladesh](http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh)

**unicef** for every child

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**RESPONSIBILITIES**  
Reporting to the Pro Vice-Chancellor, the Dean will lead and administer the School. The Dean will be expected to continue to contribute to the overall vision and strategies of the School in research, training, education and advocacy and ensure quality outputs.

**Specific responsibilities include:**

- Leading the School to enhance its reputation for impact in Global Health
- Leading by example in securing large, globally competitive grants and conducting exemplary high-impact research and producing scholarly publications
- Providing leadership to promote effective management of large, globally competitive grants
- Encouraging high-quality and inter-disciplinary scholarship among faculty, often through direct mentoring
- Ensuring that management systems in the School are in place for effective utilization of physical, fiscal and personnel resources of the School

**QUALIFICATIONS**  
The position requires candidates to have

- An earned doctorate from a prestigious university, with a minimum of two decades of experience in Global Health
- Considerable previous management and leadership experience in an academic department, research institution or other organization
- Substantial research background and expertise, with experience writing and being awarded globally competitive grants and managing projects
- Outstanding track record of publications, and experience mentoring junior colleagues
- Considerable experience of international networks and partnerships in Asia and beyond
- Familiarity with context of Asia, Africa and other regions

**APPLICATION PROCEDURE**  
Applications should include the following documents:

- A cover letter
- A curriculum vitae
- A statement of achievements addressing requirements stated above
- Three references

Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled. Prospective candidates are encouraged to submit applications by email to: [deanrecruitment@bracu.ac.bd](mailto:deanrecruitment@bracu.ac.bd)

Questions about the position and application process should be directed to: [recruitment@bracu.ac.bd](mailto:recruitment@bracu.ac.bd)



# Paper pens that can also grow into plants!

A Jashore woman's contribution in reducing plastic waste

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Have you ever wondered where the plastic pen goes after you are done using them? After disappearing from our sight, the single-use plastic pens usually end up in landfills, eventually accumulating into a vast pile of plastic waste.

But what if you can use pens, without polluting the environment. Moreover, all these used pens can be germinated into trees.

Sounds too good to be true, right? That's exactly what Nasima Akhtar, a mother of two, from Jashore's Lonpara Office area has been doing.

Rather than letting discarded plastic pens contribute to pollution, Nasima has discovered a way to give these writing instruments a new lease on life.



**Faced with limited alternatives, she came up with the innovative idea to create an eco-friendly ballpoint pen made of paper. In 2007, she started selling these pens, which she aptly named "Shuvo Eco-Friendly Pen" after her youngest child, Shuvo.**



Kabya Rahman, a student of Sammiloni Secondary School, said they are not only drawn to the smooth writing experience but also motivated to use more eco friendly products.

Masud Ahmed Sanju, president of Environment and Biodiversity in Jhenidah, lauded Nasima's innovation. He said the pen's composition of natural fibers ensures it contains no harmful materials.

Nasima said she plans to expand the business to provide jobs to local women. She needs a paper cutter machine and a colour printer to ensure maximum supply.

"I can make 200-250 pens every day. These pens are non biodegradable and hence very environment friendly," she said. "But I want to expand my business. If I can get support from the government, I will be able to do so and also support women in my area," she told this correspondent.

## NASIMA'S JOURNEY

Despite facing poverty that forced her to drop out of school at an early age, Nasima's talent and determination remained unscathed.

In 1992, she married a BGB personnel who retired in 2000, and then ventured into a fish enclosure business. But within six months, he incurred substantial losses, plunging the family into financial hardship.

With a son and a daughter to care for, Nasima found herself at a crossroads. Faced with limited alternatives, she came up with the innovative idea to create an eco-friendly ballpoint pen made of paper. In 2007, she started selling these pens, which she aptly named "Shuvo Eco-Friendly Pen" after her youngest child, Shuvo.

At first, Nasima hesitated to market her pen on a larger scale, fearing that customers might not show interest. However, with the support and encouragement from her children, she started mid-scale marketing of her eco-friendly products in 2017.

Today, she sells approximately 4,000 pieces of the pens in bulk to various institutions and organisations every week. Additionally, she sells over 2,000 pens through local Jashore stationery shops. She invests Tk 4/5 to make one pen, and sells them at Tk 7/8 on wholesale.

Habibur Rahman, her neighbour and a retired teacher, said, "My students use these pens and put it under soil after use. A flower or vegetables sprout from it later."

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO



First, Nasima collects an ink nip and an A-4 size paper. Cutting a long strip from the paper, she applies glue and rolls it tightly around the ink tube, creating a pen-like appearance. Buried at the bottom of each pen, is a vegetable, fruit or flower seeds. Once the pen serves its writing purpose, one can just bury it in a mud pot or under the soil and the seeds grow into plants.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

The waste is being dumped over a 100-metre stretch of the Sonadanga-Mujgunni highway, starting from the Directorate of Health Engineering office entrance. The road, which was renovated just a couple of months ago spending Tk 50 crore, is less than 200 yards away from the Khulna Medical College Hospital.

## A foul-smelling nuisance

Roadside waste irks Khulna residents

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The Sonadanga-Mujgunni highway has been transformed into a dumping ground, thanks to indiscriminate dumping of waste beside it by the Khulna City Corporation.

The highway, which was renovated just a couple of months ago spending Tk 50 crore, is less than 200 yards away from the Khulna Medical College Hospital.

According to locals, the road is one of the busiest in the area. Around 230 clinics, diagnostic centres, over 50 drug stores, and offices, including Indian visa centre, forest department office, and Khulna Nursing Institute, are located near the spot where garbage is being dumped.

The waste is being dumped over a 100-metre stretch, starting from the Directorate of Health Engineering office entrance.

Before the road was renovated, the KCC workers used to collect household waste from nearby areas and dump it in a brick-made dustbin, informed Mahafuzur Rahman, resident of the city's ward-16.

"The dustbin had to be dismantled during the roadwork. So, the waste is being dumped beside the newly renovated road. Patients, their relatives, students, and locals who use this road have to walk past piles of rotting garbage," he added.

Shahin Sheikh, a tea stall owner, said, "People choose to walk away from my shop due to the unbearable

stench coming from the garbage. The authorities don't even clean the spot regularly."

This correspondent, during a recent visit to the spot, saw numerous locals walking past the trash heaps with their hands covering their noses. Various stray animals were seen feeding off the trash. Speeding vehicles, dragging the waste with their wheels, further added to the menace.

**The road is one of the busiest in the area. Around 230 clinics, diagnostic centres, over 50 drug stores, and offices, including Indian visa centre, forest department office, and Khulna Nursing Institute, are located near the spot where garbage is being dumped.**

"How can someone dump waste near the largest hospital in the division? Vehicles from the northern districts use this road. This also creates an obstruction for them," said Shariful Islam Salim, secretary of Khulna Sammilita Sanskulture Jote.

Yasir Masum, a student at Children's Voice School, said, "We find it very difficult to walk through this road. The situation worsens when it rains."

Hassan Iftikhar Chalu, councillor of ward-16, informed of plans to

construct a Secondary Transfer Station (STS) in the area. "However, the garbage does make the environment unhealthy," he added.

Rabiul Hasan, director of Khulna Medical College Hospital, patients from 10 districts of the division come to this hospital for treatment. "More than 1,500 patients are regularly admitted to the 500-bed hospital. At the same time, about 2,500 patients receive outdoor treatment here every day," he added.

"However, patients and their relatives are facing problems due to this garbage being dumped in such a close proximity to the hospital. We are struggling to keep the hospital clean and free. Many patients are at risk of infection due to this. The authorities should stop this menace immediately," he told this correspondent yesterday.

There is no STS within a km as the corporation did not find any land nearby to set up one, informed Anisur Rahman, KCC conservancy officer.

Earlier, the authorities tried to establish one in PTI More, Zilla School, Boyra, and Nirala Mor. However, the plan only remained in discussions as they did not find any land.

"We try to collect the trash from time to time and even bleach the spot. However, locals also throw garbage here, which worsens the problem. The problem will only be solved when we find land to build a STS in the area," he added.

## Four killed, six hurt in road crashes

STAR REPORT

Four people were killed and six injured in road accidents in three districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Jamalpur, a youth was killed and another injured as a covered van and an auto-rickshaw collided head-on on Bakshiganj-Raumari highway in Bakshiganj Bazar area.

Shamim Mia, son of Pukka Mia from East Chankanda area in Srivardi upazila, died on the spot, said police.

The injured -- Rakibul Hasan, 23, -- was admitted to Bakshiganj Upazila Health Complex.

The covered van was coming from Bakshiganj market area and the auto-rickshaw was going to Dhanua Kamalpur, said Bakshiganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shohel Rana.

The body was recovered and handed over to the family without autopsy.

In another incident, a man was killed after a truck ran him over at Jamalpur Bakshiganj road in Islampur Bazar.

Akram Ali from Gotail village in Islampur upazila died instantly, said police.

The accident occurred around noon while he was crossing the road, said Islampur Police Station OC Mazedur Rahman.

In Narayanganj, a motorcyclist was killed and three persons were injured as the motorbike collided with a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in Bandar upazila.

The deceased was identified as Md Rimon, 26, while the injured are Rimon's friends Arjid, 25, and Md Sayed, 27, and auto-rickshaw driver Tofazzal, 55.

The deceased's family members said Rimon along with his two friends was going to Mograpara area in Sonargaon upazila from Bandar on a motorcycle.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

PRAYER TIMING  
JULY 22



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

## Beijing for stronger people to people relations with Dhaka

UNB, Xinjiang

China has laid emphasis on stronger people to people relations between Dhaka and Beijing to help learn from each other and move forward together towards common development and prosperity.

To help understand each other better and foster deeper friendship between the two sides, the Chinese government has invited a ten-member media delegation which arrived in Xinjiang on Thursday evening.

"Journalists play a vital role to tell the truth to world," an official there told UNB.

The media delegation members from Bangladesh visited Xinjiang Museum, Located

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## US delegation visit strengthened our ties: info minister

BSS, Kurigram

Information Minister and Awami League Joint General Secretary Hasan Mahmud yesterday said parliamentary election will be held as per the constitution of the country and the current government will perform duties of polls-time government.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will discharge duties of the premier during the polls. There is no chance to go beyond the constitution," he told journalists at Circuit House in Kurigram before addressing the extended meeting of district unit of AL as the chief guest.

In India, the UK, Australia, Japan, France and Germany and other democratic countries, existing government perform duties of polls-time government and in the US, existing president doesn't resign before elections, he referred.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

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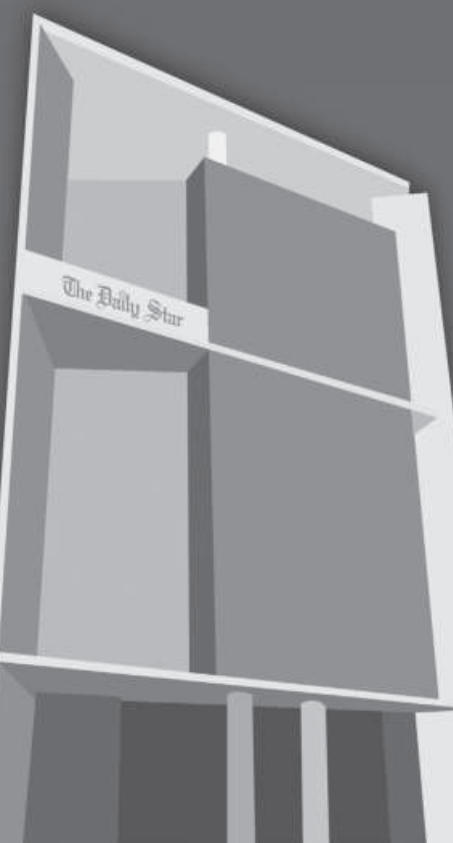
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July likely to be warmest month on record  
Says Nasa climate expert

AFP, Washington

July 2023 will probably be the world's hottest month in "hundreds, if not thousands, of years," top Nasa climatologist Gavin Schmidt said Thursday.

This month has already seen daily records shattered according to tools run by the European Union and the University of Maine, which combine ground and satellite data into models to generate preliminary estimates.

Though they differ slightly from one another, the trend of extreme heat is unmistakable and will likely be reflected in the more robust monthly reports issued later by US agencies, said Schmidt in a Nasa briefing with reporters.

"We are seeing unprecedented changes all over the world -- the heat waves that we're seeing in the US in Europe and in China are demolishing records, left, right and center," he added.

What's more, the effects cannot be attributed solely to the El Nino weather pattern, which "has really only just emerged."

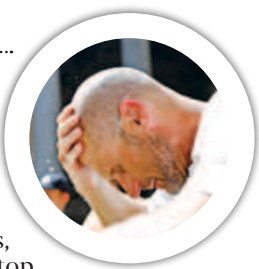
Though El Nino is playing a small role, "what we're seeing is the overall warmth, pretty much everywhere, particularly in the oceans. We've been seeing record-breaking sea surface temperatures, even outside of the tropics, for many months now.

"And we will anticipate that is going to continue, and the reason why we think that's going to continue, is because we continue to put greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere."

What is happening right now is increasing the chances that 2023 will be the hottest year on record, which Schmidt currently assigned a "50-50 chance" based on his calculations, though he said other scientists had placed it as high as 80 percent.

"But we anticipate that 2024 will be an even warmer year, because we're going to be starting off with that El Nino event that's building now, and that will peak towards the end of this year."

Schmidt's warnings come as the world has been buffeted by fires and dire health warnings in the past week, in addition to broken temperature records.



Women burn the house of one of the men accused of parading two women naked in front of a mob during ongoing ethnic violence in India's northeastern Manipur state, at Wangjing Awang Leika village of Thoubal District some 26 Km from Manipur's capital Imphal yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

ENERGY, POWER, PORT PROJECTS

India, Sri Lanka agree to boost ties

REUTERS, New Delhi

India and Sri Lanka said yesterday that they had agreed to improve economic ties by increasing cooperation in renewable energy and studying the feasibility of building an oil pipeline and a land bridge between the two countries.

New Delhi will also help develop a port and an economic hub at Trincomalee, a city on Sri Lanka's northeastern coast.

The announcements were made by the leaders of the two countries as Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe held talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi last morning.

India's support of nearly USD four billion between January and July last year was critical for Sri Lanka after it almost ran out of dollars and sank into a financial crisis that left it struggling to fund essential imports including fuel and medicine.

Modi said yesterday that the two leaders "adopted a vision document for our Economic Partnership" to strengthen maritime, air, energy and people-to-people connectivity, to accelerate mutual cooperation in tourism, power, trade, higher education, and skill development.

Modi also said the two sides would work quickly to connect their electricity grids and study the feasibility of building a petroleum pipeline and a land bridge between the countries, which are about 50 km (31 miles) apart at one point.



The projects to connect the power grids through undersea cables and the oil pipeline are expected to cost around USD four billion in total, according to officials on both sides. Few details were released on the agreements on renewables.

Wickremesinghe said that "constructing a multi-product petroleum pipeline from the southern part of India to Sri Lanka will ensure an affordable and reliable supply of energy to Sri Lanka."

The two countries also will soon restart

negotiations on a more expansive trade deal known as the Economic and Technological Cooperation Agreement.

Wickremesinghe also said that he had updated Modi about the reform measures being taken by his government to resolve the island's financial crisis, and expressed appreciation for the support provided by India for the "most challenging period in modern history".

Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt last May and India is part of a common platform established with Japan and other Paris Club members to help the island restructure its debt.

India remains a key creditor to the island with \$1.9 billion in outstanding debt.

While New Delhi has traditionally had strong ties with its southern neighbour, the small island nation has become a jousting ground between India and China due to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean.

The two-day visit to New Delhi is Wickremesinghe's first since he took over as the president a year ago after his predecessor was forced out of office following widespread protests against the economic crisis.

MANIPUR SEXUAL ASSAULT  
Suspects' homes on ablaze

AFP, New Delhi

Furious women set fire to the houses of two Indian men accused of parading two women naked in a state where months of ethnic clashes have left at least 120 dead, images showed yesterday.

A clip went viral Wednesday showing two women reported to be from the Kuki tribal group walking naked along a street while being jeered at and harassed by a mob reportedly from the Meitei community.

Violence erupted in the northeastern state of Manipur between the mainly Christian Kuki and the predominantly Hindu Meitei in May over job quotas and land rights, and intermittent clashes have continued since.

The emergence of footage of the women's humiliation -- which happened in May -- triggered outrage across the country, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying it had "shamed India".

Seven killed in Bhutan floods

REUTERS, Kathmandu

At least seven people were killed and 16 others missing in Bhutan after flash floods and landslides triggered by heavy rains washed away a section of a small hydroelectric plant on Thursday, local media reported.

Rescue and search teams have rushed to the area, authorities said. Prime Minister Lotay Tshering has arrived at the site and is taking stock of the situation and guiding rescue and search operation, his office said.

A section of the 32 MW Yungichhu Hydro Power Project in a remote area in the east of the country was washed away, but the main part was not hit, the Bhutanese newspaper said in a Twitter post without elaborating.

State broadcaster BBS said seven bodies have been recovered so far and another 16 were missing. Five of the seven killed have been identified, authorities said without giving details.

DRUG WAR PROBE

Philippines 'done talking' with ICC

AFP, Manila

The Philippines will no longer deal with the International Criminal Court, President Ferdinand Marcos said yesterday, after The Hague-based tribunal rejected Manila's appeal to stop a probe into a deadly drug war.

Thousands of people have been killed in the anti-narcotics campaign started by former president Rodrigo Duterte in 2016 and continued under Marcos.

"We're done talking with the ICC," Marcos told reporters during a visit to the southern island of Mindanao, according to an official transcript.

"The alleged crimes are here in the Philippines, the victims are Filipino, so why go to The Hague? It should be here," he said.

Tigresses aim

FROM PAGE 12

pull off a win in the series opener despite posting 152 runs. A lack of application from the batters was yet again exposed in the following match, where Bangladesh were bundled out for 120 in reply to India's 228 for eight.

Fargana Hoque Pinky remained the only Bangladesh batter to make an impression in the two games. Apart from her, there were hardly any contributions from the batters.

The team management, however, is hoping for a strong comeback and see the batters rectify their mistakes from the previous games. If Bangladesh are able to win the series, it will surely be a turning point for women's cricket in the country.

Bowling, on the hand, has been the strength for Bangladesh. Pacer Marufa Akter, who picked up four wickets in the first game, along with Sanjida Akter, Rabeya Khan, Sultana Khatun and others offer a lot of variety for the hosts.

All things considered, given how Harmanpreet Kaur and company, comprising the likes of Jemimah Rodrigues and vice-captain Smrity Mandhana, have brilliantly showcased their talents in recent times, the Tigresses will have to play at full potential to stun the visitors in today's high-stakes encounter.

BNP blames govt

FROM PAGE 2

quality hospitals. The city corporation must also provide financial assistance to low-income dengue patients.

"The government should provide free dengue testing at all government hospitals. They should also subsidize dengue testing at private hospitals to be affordable for everyone."

As for long-term measures, the leaders said, among other initiatives, the government must come up with "an effective mosquito control action plan ... in coordination with experts."

Jubo League man killed

FROM PAGE 12

Rubel sustained severe wounds on his head, arms, back, and legs.

Family members took him to Islami Bank Hospital in Kakrail. From there, he was rushed to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedics Rehabilitation where doctors declared him dead.

The body was later sent to the morgue of Dhaka Medical College for autopsy and in the afternoon the body was handed over to the family after post-mortem.

The victim's wife in the case statement mentioned that Rubel's killing was planned.

She said Rubel had a rivalry with many as he was involved with Chhatra League and was a candidate for the post of Jubo League's ward 12

They'll get passports

FROM PAGE 12

receive national identity cards later.

A seven-member delegation led by Abdullah visited Saudi Arabia from May 5 to May 10 to resolve the problem.

This correspondent contacted Divisional Commissioner of Rangpur Habibur Rahman and Additional Director General of Department of Immigration and Passports Selina Banu who were delegation members, but they refused to comment.

Armed man tries

FROM PAGE 12

of different agencies like BSF and others. He wanted to meet the Chief Minister. This is a serious issue. We are trying to find out what was his actual purpose," Goyal said.

The vehicle was also seized. The man was talking incoherently, he added.

The incident happened hours before the Trinamool Congress chief was scheduled to leave her Kalighat residence to reach the 'Martyr's Day' rally venue in the central part of the city.

unit.

Besides, he had enmity with many others over different cases, reads the case statement.

Rubel's brother in law Mamun Ahmed Siddique said the killing was political.

Hayatul Islam Khan, deputy commissioner of Motijheel division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told reporters after visiting the spot that after analysing CCTV footage it seemed that it was a planned murder.

"We have made good progress in the investigation which I do not want to reveal right now for the sake of investigation," he said.

He also assured that in a short time, they will be able to arrest the criminals involved with the killing.

Foreigners

FROM PAGE 12

the Panchayet election in India's West Bengal but they start screaming about any petty incident here in Bangladesh," he said, adding that the remarks of the foreigners are tantamount to interference into Bangladesh's internal affairs which is not supported by the Geneva Convention.

"We hope that those activist diplomats do not interfere in our internal affairs in future," the foreign minister said.

"Our police never obstruct any demonstration... When BNP damages public and private properties, it becomes the police's responsibility to protect those [assets]. It's the duty of the government. Have you seen how police torture in England? And Amnesty International now speaks! You have seen how police kill by strangling in America. Our police are very tolerant. One or two cases could be different. But they follow the rules," Momen said

He asked the country's newsmen not to care too much about foreigners and instead to find out what police did in their countries.

Hilsa production growth rate declining

FROM PAGE 1

declining trend in year-on-year growth rate and the scarcity of hilsa even in June-July this year, when there should have been plenty of it, has raised some eyebrows.

The Department of Fisheries (DoF) took up a Tk 246 crore "Hilsa Development and Management Project" in 2019 to increase hilsa production.

Taking the 2018-19 fiscal year as the base, when hilsa production was 5.33 lakh tonnes, the DoF aimed to increase the annual production to 6.2 lakh tonnes, or by 16 percent in four years.

However, in three years it has achieved a 6.34 percent growth, which is less than half the target.

The year-on-year growth rate was 3.3 percent in FY 2019-20 and 2.68 percent in 2020-21. The growth rate slid further to a negligible 0.25 percent in 2021-22. The DoF is yet to release the FY 2022-23 data.

A senior scientific officer of BFRI said that in 2021 around 58,800 tonnes of hilsa was destroyed due to illegal catching of jatka.

"Assuming the unit price at Tk 1,000 per kg, the country lost around Tk 5,880 crore," he said

The BFRI found the figure after a survey at 10 landing stations, including Mahipur and Khepupara of Patuakhali, Patharghata of Barguna, and Monpura and Daulatkhan of Bhola.

He noted that brood hilsa trying to enter rivers from sea to lay eggs also find it hard to escape the 3,000 to 4,000-feet long gillnet that fishermen lay one after another, leaving a gap of 100-200 yards.

"Such obstacles prevent many brood hilsa from ever getting a chance to lay eggs in their lifecycle. And it is one of the main reasons behind low catch of big hilsa in the river," Alam said.

He also blamed less rainfall and navigability problems for the low

catch.

LAX MONITORING

People involved with hilsa business pointed fingers at a section of law enforcers. They said no government measures would be fruitful as long as the protectors keep working like predators.

"In exchange for bribes, some dishonest police officers allow fishermen to use gillnets and catch fish during the ban period," said Manik Mia Dewan, general secretary of Bangladesh Awami Matsyajibi League's unit in Chandpur, one of the largest hilsa hubs.

A fisherman in Chandpur, employed as a guard against illegal fishing during bans, alleged that river police collect Tk 30,000 to Tk 50,000 from each boat to catch fish during the ban.

"River police also take bribes to allow fisherman to use banned gillnet round the year," said the guard who has been fishing for over 20 years.

Moksed, another fisherman-cum-guard in Patuakhali, said some unscrupulous fishermen use gillnet to catch jatka and other small fish in small rivers and canals from late afternoon till dawn to avoid arrest.

"I prepared two boats in the last two years and incurred a loss of about Tk 6-7 lakh. This year, I have prepared only one boat to avoid further loss," said Manik, a fisherman since 1982.

Preferring to be unnamed, a senior upazila fisheries officer of Chandpur said they were aware of the illegal activities.

"It is often discussed in the district coordination meetings. We're told that actions are taken against the persons responsible. But it continues nevertheless," he said.

Tofazzel Hossain, Assistant Superintendent of Police of River Police of Chandpur, said they take departmental actions whenever they receive allegations against their

officers.

ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS SCHEME

To protect brood hilsa and jatka during the ban periods, the DoF created alternative employment opportunities for 30,000 affected fishermen families and distributed 10,000 authorised nets across the country.

Some fishermen are appointed as guards for a monthly pay of Tk 10,000 to monitor illegal fishing and inform local fisheries offices. They also motivate fellow fishermen not to catch fish during the ban period.

Others got cows to raise and remain productive during the ban period to make up for their loss.

Zia Haider Chaudhury, Project Director of the Hilsa Development and Management Project, admitted their slow progress, but attributed it to slow release of funds.

"We would be able to spend 50 percent of the budget by the end of the project tenure. We're looking to extend the project tenure by one year," he said.

Business as usual

FROM PAGE 12

the Australian retailers and Bangladeshi manufacturers which are contributing to diversify the industry and product range in Australia.

Ayres added that labour rights, trade union and sustainability are important factors for Australian businesses and the government to engage with foreign partners.

He expressed interest to explore ways to take forward the Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement signed in 2021 between Bangladesh and Australia to the next level.

An 11-member delegation, led by BGMFA President Faruque, is visiting Australia and held the Bangladesh Apparel Summit in Melbourne with the support of the High Commission on 18 July.



From Santiniketan to  
**SHONDHATARA**  
Sunidhi Nayak opens up



**“**

**I am an overthinker, which is why I couldn't release any album for two years. I value audience feedback; if they like it, that's fantastic. If they don't, that's fine too.”**

**RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA**

Growing up in Santiniketan, Sunidhi had a passion for Hindustani classical music. However, destiny pushed her towards Rabindra Sangeet, and her love for classical music took a back seat. Then **Shondhatara** came along and changed her life—her voice and cracking chemistry with Arnob captivated the audience.

The gorgeous singer dropped by The Daily Star to discuss **Shondhatara** over a cup of coffee and much more.

**What's the story behind 'Shondhatara'?** From an early time, I have learned Raag Yaman **Main Waari Waari Janugi** from my guruji. In 2019, I decide to record this song with the help of my friend in Goa. I was trying really hard to release this song. However, I couldn't figure out how I could make the Bandish accessible to normal audiences. We came up with a decision to translate the song from Hindi to Bangla. Thankfully, Arnob came up with a pop song, **Bela Haray**, which was added to my song. We decided to pitch

the final song to Coke Studio and they loved it.

**How did you come up with the idea to translate the song?** The song was already recorded in Hindi and the whole arrangement was done by Adit Rahman. However, Coke Studio Bangla insisted that we do the Bandish in Bangla. Then, Sumon bhai, who works with Bangla kheyal, told one of his students, Bibhash to translate the song. I told Bibhash that it's a very traditional Bandish and thus using colloquial words won't give the same flavour. He did a wonderful job with the translation.

**Your chemistry with Arnob was quite evident in 'Shondhatara'** Our chemistry was reflected through our set design. As you can see, there are two separate rooms: mine is organised and has a floral theme, whereas Arnob's room is disorganised and only has a light and a guitar. I enjoy Rabindra Sangeet and classical music, but I also enjoy constructing reels, but Arnob,



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

who prefers pop music, does not enjoy dancing or making reels. Arnob admitted during our Facebook live that he had to dance in order to compete with me, because I performed so well.

**While some liked 'Shondhatara', others weren't quite pleased with it.** I am an overthinker, which is why I couldn't release any album for two years. I value audience feedback; if they like it, that's

fantastic. If they don't, that's fine too.

**On social media, many have accused Arnob of only working with his close friends. What's your take on this?** Arnob is a huge artiste, who is always looking for new talent. I have always suggested that he work with other artistes. When our song was released, many people called it a product of 'nepotism', but I don't take that to heart, as people will continue to say such things whether we collaborate or not.

**When can we expect your next album?** I've already recorded five songs for my album, but I'm still waiting for the music video to officially release the album. I am hoping that I will be able to release it within two months.

**Will you be debuting in a web-series soon?** My father was a theatre artiste and I used to go watch stage plays with him. I have received 2-3 offers for projects. I liked one of them, so if it is finalised, I will surely inform everyone.

**OUT AND ABOUT IN  
DHAKA**




**Big Rock Eid Fest**  
July 27 | 2 pm – 10 pm  
ICCB



**Dhaka Groove**  
July 27 | 4 pm  
ICCB



**Haat Bariye Dao**  
July 22 | 7:30 pm  
Studio Theater Hall, Bangladesh  
Shilpakala Academy



TV TALKIES

**‘Ooku: The Inner Chambers’**

Released this month on Netflix, **Ooku: The Inner Chambers** is an Eisner nominated manga adaption from Studio Deen, written by Fumi Yoshinaga. This anime illustrates a gender-bent take of the historical Japanese practice of keeping concubines, where men serve the female **Shogun** instead.


The beautifully illustrated anime is a near-perfect adaptation, that unveils the inner workings of the men's **Ooku**, the historical term

for female quarters.


What makes the anime interesting is not the depiction of a world where women hold the power, rather a world that is still shaped by men. The series puts the responsibilities that a man faces, on the female character's shoulder. The portrayal of gender and power in the Edo period, unravels in a beautiful web of vibrancy in the series, laying testament to Yoshinaga's colourful and deep understanding of human dynamics.

**TRENDY STREAMS**


**Netflix**  
Kohrra




**Hoichoi**  
Abar Bibaho Obhijaan




**Hulu**  
Night Train



**Amazon Prime**  
Los Iniciados



**Disney+ Hotstar**  
The Trial



**STYLE STATEMENT**

**JONATHAN BAILEY**

In a fashionable rendezvous at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships 2023, **Bridgerton** star Jonathan Bailey stole the spotlight with his impeccable style.

The British actor, known for his dashing on-screen persona, made heads turn as he graced the event in a sophisticated, beige suit from Ralph Lauren. Bailey's sartorial choice exuded classic elegance, perfectly in sync with the grandeur of the prestigious tennis tournament.

The Ralph Lauren suit, tailored to perfection, accentuated Bailey's dapper silhouette. His attention to detail was evident, as he completed the look with a pair of sleek black sunglasses, that added a touch of mystery to his overall appearance.

Jonathan Bailey was spotted with singer Ariana Grande while watching Wimbledon 2023 men's final. The duo will be starring together in the upcoming **Wicked** movie, and the two of them seem to have developed a close friendship.





## Can our crops survive erratic weather?

### Take urgent stock of the impact of El Nino on cash crops

Like the rest of the world, Bangladesh is feeling the heat of extreme weather patterns, with meteorologists predicting lower rainfall and warmer temperatures as a result of El Nino in the region in the coming days. Heatwaves, which frequented the country in May and June, are likely to continue throughout the summer – and beyond. Meanwhile, rainfall has fallen 67 percent below the normal level, as per the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, raising serious concerns about crop production, food security and the fate of our farmers.

According to a report by this daily, heatwaves have impacted the cultivation of Aus crop and summer vegetables, including green chilli. The shortfall of rain will also affect the retting of jute, a cash crop. Rising temperatures and infrequent rain have resulted in prolonged droughts, reducing availability of water for irrigation and severely hampering crop production. Farmers state that their cost of Aus production has increased by 25 percent, and that croplands are drying out even after irrigation. Moreover, heat stress poses a direct threat to crops, especially heat-sensitive varieties. Production of chillies, for instance, has been gravely affected by the erratic temperatures. According to our correspondent, chilli growers in Bogura and Gaibandha districts would usually get 50-80 maunds of green chilli from one bigha of land, but this year, they are getting roughly seven to eight maunds per bigha. How are farmers supposed to survive if their cash crop fails them?

Given that countries from which we import food items are also reeling from similar erratic weather, we must now seriously confront the very real threat of food insecurity, particularly since we are navigating an already volatile international market held hostage by the Russia-Ukraine war. India, which accounts for 40 percent of world rice export, has already banned export of rice to other countries, including Bangladesh, fearing a production fall following a late start to seasonal monsoon rains. Our government must take urgent stock of the situation and take effective measures to ensure there is no disruption in the supply of essential food items in the coming days. Equally important is to ease farmers' concerns and sufferings at this time of great uncertainty by providing them with technical and financial support.

We also need to conduct reliable research on how El Nino and climate change will impact crop cycles in the future, and come up with heat-resistant varieties that can survive and thrive in erratic weather. As the world tumbles further down the hole of climate change, there can be no alternative to building our own capacities to sustain our crops and ensure food sovereignty for our population.

## Taxpayers' money isn't for squandering

### Poor planning and wasteful execution of projects must be stopped

The news of an escalator footbridge in Chattogram city being left inoperative for three years hardly comes as a surprise. According to a report in this daily, the Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) installed the escalator footbridge, the first of its kind in the port city, to aid the patients of Chittagong Diabetic General Hospital nearby. The footbridge, built at the cost of Tk 3.9 crore, was opened to the public in January 2020, but was shut down in less than two months when the country went into a lockdown at the onset of the Covid pandemic. Lockdowns came and went, but the escalator footbridge was never revived. When enquired about it, the CCC chief engineer said it was not financially viable due to high electricity consumption.

Did this fact not occur to anyone at the CCC when they were planning the project? Surely, those who greenlighted this project thoroughly considered its financial, technical, and environmental feasibility before deciding to invest taxpayers' money into building such a grandiose infrastructure? But it seems they did not. Furthermore, seeing as running the escalators is too expensive for the city, we don't understand why, in these three years, the authorities did not remodel the footbridge so that people could use it, rather than leaving it to rot.

Over the past several years, stories of such wasteful projects have become all too common. Whether it's huge hospital buildings that are built and then left without use for years, or roads that crack and collapse shortly after being built, or newly built bridges that tilt even before people get to use it, or excessive delays in projects – poorly planned and executed infrastructural projects are bleeding out hard-earned taxpayers' money. And this keeps happening because those who design and implement these projects always get away scot-free after every mishap, given the lack of good governance in this country. This gross mismanagement must stop immediately. We urge the government to take effective steps to stem this waste, and make an example out of those who are squandering public money with their negligent, corrupt activities.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Alternative exam system for ill, late attendees

Students appearing in SSC, HSC and various other public exams are facing a difficult situation. If a student appears at the exam centre after it has started, they are not allowed to sit in the exam. Such a rule does not take into consideration the unpredictable situations on our roads, where no matter how early you start for your destination, you still run the risk of being late. Also, what if a student falls sick? It is time for the education ministry to seriously consider introducing an alternative examination system for the students who are unable to attend the exams on time.

Md Maruf Hassan Bhuiyan  
Feni

# Why is Gazprom drilling gas wells instead of Bapex?



Kallol Mustafa is an engineer and writer who focuses on power, energy, environment and development economics.

KALLOL MUSTAFA

The expertise and competence of Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (Bapex) in onshore gas exploration and drilling is well-established. The state-owned company has been successful in completing all the work necessary for onshore gas exploration and production, such as collection of geological and geophysical data, basin review, geochemical analysis, well drilling, workover, etc. Its success rate in gas exploration is quite high – globally, gas is found in one well against five wells, but Bapex has found gas in one well by drilling less than two wells.

Why, then, is the work of drilling gas wells on onshore sites being given to a foreign company like Gazprom, despite Bapex's proven capabilities in exploring onshore gas reserves with much less cost?

Gazprom, Russia's state-owned energy company, was first awarded the job of drilling onshore gas wells in Bangladesh in 2012. The company was tasked with drilling 10 wells in a fast-track solution to the gas crisis in the country, with the relevant officials saying Bapex did not have the capacity to work on several wells at a time. Gazprom was given the job at a higher cost than what Bapex would require, without tender, under the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010 that indemnified the officials concerned against prosecution for making such decisions. Eleven years have passed since then, and Gazprom has drilled a total of 20 wells. Now, the company has been engaged to drill five more gas wells without tender, based on the same "logic" that Bapex does not have the sufficient capacity.

This raises the inevitable question: what have the authorities done in all these years to increase Bapex's capacity?

Considering Gazprom's track record in Bangladesh, there is no way to justify giving it more work over Bapex. First, Gazprom's drilling costs are much higher than Bapex's. While Bapex spent a maximum of Tk 80 crore on a well, Gazprom took more than Tk 180 crore. Second, Gazprom performs tasks mainly through third parties: for example, Gazprom engaged Eriell Oilfield Services for drilling at a lower cost and skimmed



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

the rest of the money as commission. If any drilling consultant needs to be hired in Bangladesh, Bapex can do it too. It is not clear why a third party like Gazprom needs to be engaged to hire another third party.

Third, Gazprom's work is technically flawed: five of the 10 wells that Gazprom drilled in the first phase stopped producing gas shortly afterwards. Bapex later had to drill those five wells again to resume gas production, which cost an additional Tk 52 crore for each well.

Given these bad experiences, is it justified to engage Gazprom again? Is Bapex's lack of capacity an acceptable reason now, 11 years after Gazprom was first hired? Why has Bapex's capacity – i.e. number of drilling rigs and manpower – not been enhanced?

The biggest crisis in Bapex is the funding required for gas exploration. Since its establishment as a separate company, its financial aspects such as funding sources, fixed costs, exploration and drilling costs, etc have all been left to uncertainty. Bapex's work has become extremely slow as it has to go through long bureaucratic processes to get the necessary funds from the government for every project. Since 2012, Bapex has received some allocations for gas exploration from the Gas Development Fund (GDF)

formed with customers' money, but the amount was not enough to enhance the existing capacity, so it has been able to do some exploration work only on a limited scale. Bapex's last exploratory drilling rig was purchased in 2012; since then, there has been no government funding for Bapex projects. As a result, while neighbouring India's state-owned

invested on increasing Bapex's capacity, a huge amount of foreign exchange could have been saved. Case in point: Bapex discovered 723 billion cubic feet of gas reserves in 2022, with an investment of Tk 812 crore after the gas crisis intensified, which would have cost Tk 96,000-100,000 crore in foreign exchange if imported in the form of LNG.

company ONGC has 150 drilling rigs for gas exploration, Bapex has only six, of which two are dysfunctional and two can only be used for old well renovation, i.e. workover. So, in reality, Bapex has only two functional drilling rigs for gas exploration with which it can drill a maximum of three exploratory wells per year.

But in line with the country's gas crisis and the increase in gas demand, if there were regular investments to buy new drilling rigs and hire skilled manpower, would Bapex have the capacity crisis it has now? Even if proper initiatives were taken since Gazprom was given the first job in 2012, Bapex's capacity could have been enhanced. But no such initiative was taken on time; rather, the GDF funds were spent on LNG imports, and the finance ministry also took Tk 3,000 crore from the GDF as additional money from Petrobangla's bank account.

In 2012, drilling rigs cost Tk 250 crore apiece. Now, a rig costs Tk 350-400 crore. Though the government has not invested a few hundred crores over the last 11 years to buy new drilling rigs, it has spent Tk 85,000 crore to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) in just four years, between FY2018-19 and FY2021-22. If even a small part of this was regularly

Citing lack of capital and technical expertise, a number of onshore gas blocks were handed over to foreign companies through production-sharing contracts (PSC) in the 1990s. As a result, a significant portion of the country's onshore gas is currently coming from wells operated by a foreign company. With Bapex's expertise in onshore gas exploration and examples of operating at significantly cheaper costs than foreign companies, it is difficult to establish the rationale for a new PSC with another foreign company. That is why foreign companies are now being given work through service contracts, where the ownership of the gas wells is with Bapex, but foreign companies like Gazprom can earn huge profits by drilling the wells at a higher cost. And it seems Bapex is being kept weak intentionally to justify this.

Not taking appropriate steps to solve a problem, even after knowing the cause of and the solution to that problem, indicates that some groups with vested interest are keen on taking advantage of that problem. Spending huge sums of money on drilling gas wells by Gazprom or importing LNG without investing in Bapex's capacity enhancement is an example of such opportunism.

## Fuchsia feminism in a Barbiecore world

Tasnim Odrika is a biochemist by day and a writer by night. She can be reached at odrika02@gmail.com.

TASNIM ODRIKA

When I saw the promotional poster for the new Barbie movie, my first thought was to dig out all my old Barbies. I learnt that they had all been thrown away – I only managed to find one doll. This one was never thrown away because I actually never played with it. This one did not have blonde hair or white skin. Instead, it had black hair and dark skin. I recalled how I had kept this doll away because the younger me thought it was not an original Barbie doll. Barbie dolls were blonde and white, according to me.

Although Barbie was an enormous part of my childhood, my adolescent self drifted apart from it significantly. None of the cool girls I watched on TV wore Malibu pink or liked dolls. Adopting so-called masculine hobbies was considered cool instead. But it was more than that. Barbie seemed misogynistic through my growing understanding of feminism, rudimentary as it was. Barbie only cared about fashion and dressing up. Barbie lived in a bright pink house. Now, I adored pink and had a genuine interest in fashion. But pink was negatively associated with being "girly," and society told me that aspiring for a career was feminist, not dressing up. So I gave up on both Barbie and pink.

Fast forward to recent times, my screen became splattered in pink from the Valentino Fall 2022 collection. Celebrities of all gender conformations adorned themselves with hot pink and fuchsia. At the same

time, Barbie is once more the talk of the town. Every time I get on a social media platform, I am bombarded with campaigns from various brands that are now selling Barbie-themed clothing and accessories. This aesthetic of maximalist dressing and ultra-feminine clothing is now known as Barbiecore online. Femininity no longer has the same negative connotation.

So, how did Barbie undergo this remarkable transformation: from being criticised as a symbol of perpetuating unrealistic beauty standards and misogyny, to embracing inclusivity and evolving into a celebrated feminist icon for girls today?

If we go back to the start, Ruth Handler, co-founder of Mattel, was inspired by her daughter's love of paper dolls to create an adult-figured doll. This was back in 1959. At the time, most children's dolls were representations of infants. Handler's idea was groundbreaking as it challenged the traditional view of what a doll should be. With infant dolls, play was confined to girls assuming a nurturing figure. This changed with Barbie. A Barbie doll could be anything, and these dolls had careers ranging from that of astronauts to politicians to fashionistas.

From an external perspective, the concept appears to be feminist. But one look at the doll's general appearance tells a different story. Just like my younger self believed that Barbie was supposed to look a certain way, kids who grow up playing with Barbie but don't grow up looking like her (which is almost all girls) end up with body image issues. They end up questioning why they do not look a certain way.

This void was also bridged with

Mattel's website now boasting 35 different skin tones, 97 different hairstyles, and nine different body types (and counting) for Barbie dolls. With this transformation of the brand's image, it's a seemingly happy ending and the end of the era of "not

**Pink has long been associated with femininity, often used to stereotype and pigeonhole women. However, with the hype surrounding the Barbie movie, there is now a massive resurgence of "pink fashion," a trend that is largely led by the younger generation who are unafraid to embrace their girly side.**

like other girls," because being "girly" and wearing pink is now celebrated.

The colour pink has long been associated with femininity, and it has often been used to stereotype and pigeonhole women. However, with the hype surrounding the Barbie movie, there is now a massive resurgence of "pink fashion," a trend that is largely led by the younger generation, who are unafraid to embrace their girly side. This growing movement of reclaiming pink and "girliness" as a way to express personal style and empowerment is definitely a positive development for a world that has forever looked down

on anything even remotely associated with femininity.

At the same time, Mattel's stock price has also increased by 15 percent in the past month, according to a recent Yahoo Finance report. The other companies banking on this hype, with their respective Barbie collections, are companies that are possibly not even paying their workers liveable wages.

So, did Barbie really undergo a massive transformation? Or has she just been repackaged to promote maximalism – another way to exploit consumers? I found myself asking these questions again. Capitalism has a long history of appropriating and commodifying social movements. Naturally, feminism is no exception. After all, the brands benefiting from "pink-washing" are not upholding feminist values.

When I go on any social media platform, I notice two things. First, the deluge of ads (perhaps because I am the exact target audience) consisting of every possible Barbie-themed thing you can imagine – from hairbrushes to furniture for your very own Dreamhouse. Second, an increase in the number of people who are confident in being their "girliest" self. Even the most masculine-presenting person seems interested in catching the new hot-pink-filled Barbie movie in theatres. This stands in stark contrast to how movies primarily targeting women were perceived by the general public even a decade ago.

Hence, for just an infinitesimal moment, I would like to rejoice in the acceptance and embracing of femininity before I go back to wondering who truly is capitalising off this trend and the consequences of this maximalist culture.





VISUAL: STAR

# Hero Alom’s realpolitik



BLOWIN’ IN THE WIND

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

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Just last week, I was telling my students to “learn why the world wags and what wags it.” The excerpt comes from *The Once and Future King*, TH White’s retelling of the Arthurian saga of a young boy’s transformation into a king under the guidance of magician mentor Merlyn. “Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn,” I quoted White to explain the multifaceted aspects of literary studies at a time when technology and trade have usurped every other branch of knowledge, including creativity. In a world that has lost its innocence, our reading of the world cannot remain innocent. When you see a dog wagging its tail, do not assume the dog is happy or angry; find out who is pampering or threatening that dog. The world has many such wag-the-dog moments. I train my students not to accept presented facts at face value.

We question why MP candidate Ashraful Hossain Alom, better known as Hero Alom, was beaten just before polls closed. The attack on Alom exposes a lot of internal demons troubling our institutional system and society as a whole. This is especially worrying because the government had assured all watchdogs that they would deliver a free and fair election. Months before the national election, the by-election to Dhaka-17 constituency had no real significance. It was more or less a test run for the Election Commission and a warm-up match for the incumbent government. With the main opponents in the tent, Alom can at best be characterised as a bowler you invite for net practice. However, Alom’s rival did not treat him lightly. He was, after all, running as a proxy candidate for the Opposition Parties.

The other reason why Alom became a minefield for his rivals involves the location of the constituency. The political masters who have allowed the income gap to increase over the last 50 years are getting a taste of their own medicine. The so-called tri-state posh area of Dhaka is also home to slum dwellers, who form the support service sector for the upper middle class and

the elite class. With his characteristic defiance and desire, Alom became the voice of the voiceless. He was not afraid to challenge the high and mighty, as he had nothing to lose. As someone who turned from a hawkler-of-snacks-turned-CD-salesman to a TikTok sensation, he used his position to craftily expose the societal gap.

The allergic reaction to Alom is symptomatic of a culture that deems him a foreign particle in their sociopolitical body. Alom has the ability to stir up controversy by getting under his opponents’ skin. In 2017, *The Indian Express* ran a story on him when he photoshopped an image to claim that Shahrukh Khan was his biggest fan. He tweeted, “Saarukh Khan fan of me – 100% Hero Alom Bogra.....Hear, Saarukh is taking selfie with me.....love you Saarukh my fan.”

When the Indian media started trolling Alom for such “audacity,” our police officers roughed him up to “teach” him the meaning of hero. Later, in an attempt to mock the cultural elites, he sang Tagore’s song out of tune. When he decided to vote in two elections in his hometown of Bogura, he continued his battle with the windmill. But for him or his puppeteers, running in an election in a diplomatic zone is arguably the best course of action.

Soon after he and his supporters were escorted out of the polling centre at Banani Bidyaniketan School on polling day, he was attacked by a group of unruly men. The attackers wanted to send one message: Alom was not welcome to join the privy council of politics taken over by high-profile businessmen, bureaucrats, ex-servicemen, and civil society. Gone are the days when a party worker would rise up from the ranks to defend human rights or denounce social injustices. The political bandwagon is now filled with men and women with the benefits of being close to the power circuits. There are some token figures from the grassroots in parliament, all wearing party jerseys.

Hero Alom does not fit the bill. But he served his purpose nonetheless.

Alom confirmed that he would not participate in any more elections under this government, echoing others who are already in the streets. There was a tweet from the UN in his support. The State government had a press briefing reiterating their vigilance.

Alom’s explanation of why the West is supporting him is far more intelligent than the slur “mogger mulluk” (state of anarchy) that someone in authority used. What wags the Western media is their stated policy of promoting diplomacy as an export item. The country in question had to defend the benefits package it provides to us. Their Congress needs to be aware that the benefits are flowing to nations that support their policies.

Our response should therefore go beyond the oft-cited Vienna Convention. We need to remind our guests that there are some house rules if you want to stay and operate in our country. The realpolitik lies in the way you point out the obvious.

Do you remember the scene from the movie *300* where the Persian envoy offers the Spartan King Leonidas the chance to appease Emperor Xerxes in exchange for a sign of submission? Leonidas throws the messenger into the well as a response, ignoring his last words, “This is blasphemy! This is madness.” “Madness? This is Spartaaa....!” an angry Leonidas retorts.

Diplomacy is all about avoiding such madness and anger. But the theatricality of Alom unpacked another bout of madness (not without reasons). Now that the attackers have been nabbed, the government is feeling the pinch. The damage is deep-seated. We have pursued a version of democracy that doesn’t like dissent. We have grown in stature without addressing some of our foundational weaknesses. A Unicef report from 2022 tells us that only 34 percent of our third-graders achieve the desired literacy skills, while 18 percent attain numeracy skills. Yet, we have a near perfect graduation rate in SSC and HSC exams. We live in a society with inflated figures. Hero Alom can become larger than life because the large majority of his followers are driven by passion and sensation, not reason and education. Conversely, rational and educated ones do not have the sanity to accommodate the voices of dissent and adopt a healthy democracy. In the process, we create a state of anarchy that allows our guests to complain about our dirty laundry in public. And here we ask: why is the laundry dirty to begin with?

# World hunger and the war in Ukraine



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

VIJAY PRASHAD

On July 17, Dmitry Peskov, spokesperson for Russia’s President Vladimir Putin, announced, “The Black Sea agreements are no longer in effect.” This was a blunt statement to suspend the Black Sea Grain Initiative that emerged out of intense negotiations in the hours after Russian forces entered Ukraine in February 2022. The initiative went into effect on July 22, 2022, after Russian and Ukrainian officials signed it in Istanbul in the presence of United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Türkiye’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Guterres called the initiative a “beacon of hope” for two reasons. First, it is remarkable to have an agreement of this kind between belligerents in an ongoing war. Second, Russia and Ukraine are major producers of wheat, barley, maize, rapeseed and rapeseed oil, sunflower seeds and sunflower oil, as well as nitrogen, potassic, and phosphorus fertiliser, accounting for 12 percent of calories traded. Disruption of supply from Russia and Ukraine, it was felt by a range of international organisations, would have a catastrophic impact on world food markets and on hunger. As Western – largely US, UK, and European – sanctions increased against Russia, the feasibility of the deal began to diminish. It was suspended several times during the past year. In March 2023, Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova, in response to the sanctions against Russian agriculture, said, “[The main] parameters provided for in the [grain] deal do not work.”

**Financialisation leads to hunger**

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said his country regretted Russia’s “continued weaponisation

of the Black Sea Grain Initiative is indeed regrettable, but it is not the leading cause of hunger in the world. The leading cause – as even the European Economic and Social Committee agrees – is financial speculation in food markets.

**It is likely that the Black Sea Grain Initiative will restart within the month. Earlier suspensions have not lasted longer than a few weeks. But this time, it is not clear if the West will give Russia any relief on its ability to export its own agricultural products. Certainly, the suspension will impact millions who struggle with endemic hunger. Billions of others who are hungry because of financial speculation in food markets are not impacted directly by these developments.**

**Why did Russia suspend the initiative?**

To monitor the Black Sea Grain Initiative, the UN set up a Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) in Istanbul. It is staffed by representatives from Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the UN. On several occasions, the JCC had to deal with tensions between Russia and Ukraine over the shipments, such as when Ukraine attacked Russia’s Black Sea Fleet – some of whose vessels carried the grain – in Sevastopol, Crimea, in October 2022. Tensions remained over the initiative as Western sanctions against Russia tightened, making it difficult for Russia to export its own agricultural products into the world market.

Russia put three requirements on the table before the UN regarding its own agricultural system. First,

spare parts, and Russian ships are not able to buy insurance or enter many foreign ports. Despite the “carve-outs” in Western sanctions for agriculture, sanctions on firms and individuals have debilitated Russia’s agricultural sector.

To counter Western sanctions, Russia placed restrictions on the export of fertilisers and agricultural products. These restrictions included the ban on the export of certain goods (such as temporary bans of wheat exports to the Eurasian Economic Union), the increase of licensing requirements (including for compound fertilisers, requirements set in place before the war), and the increase of export taxes. These Russian moves come alongside strategic direct sales to countries, such as India, which will re-export to other countries.

In late July, St Petersburg will host the Second Russia-Africa



Vessels are seen as they await inspection under the Black Sea Grain Initiative, brokered by the UN and Türkiye, in the southern anchorage of the Bosphorus in Istanbul, Turkey on December 11, 2022.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

of food” since this “harms millions of vulnerable people around the world.” Indeed, the timing of the suspension could not be worse. A UN report titled “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023” shows that 1 in 10 people in the world struggles with hunger, and that 3.1 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet. But the report itself makes an interesting point: that the war in Ukraine has driven 23 million people into hunger, a number that pales in comparison to the other drivers of hunger, such as the impact of commercialised food markets and the Covid pandemic. A 2011 report from World Development Movement (now known as Global Justice Now) showed that “financial speculators now dominate the [food] market, holding over 60 percent of some markets compared to 12 percent 15 years ago.”

The situation has since worsened. Dr Sophie van Huellen, who studies financial speculation in food markets, pointed out in late 2022 that while there are indeed food shortages, “the current food crisis is a price crisis, rather than a supply crisis.” The end of

the Russian government asked that the Russian Agricultural Bank, the premier credit and trade bank for Russian agriculture, be reconnected to the SWIFT system, from which it had been cut off by the European Union’s sixth package of sanctions in June 2022. A Turkish banker told TASS that there is the possibility that the EU could “issue a general licence to the Russian Agricultural Bank” and that the bank “has the opportunity to use JP Morgan to conduct transactions in US dollars” as long as the exporters being paid for were part of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Second, from the first discussions about the grain initiative, Moscow put on the table its export of ammonia fertiliser from Russia, both through the port of Odessa and of supplies held in Latvia and the Netherlands. A central part of the debate has been the reopening of the Togliatti-Odessa pipeline, the world’s longest ammonia pipeline. In July 2022, the UN and Russia signed an agreement that would facilitate the sale of Russian ammonia on the world market. The UN chief went to the Security

Economic and Humanitarian Forum, where these topics will surely be front and centre. Ahead of the summit, President Putin called South Africa’s Cyril Ramaphosa to inform him about the problems faced by Russia in exporting its food and fertilisers to the African continent. “The deal’s main goal,” he said of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, was “to supply grain to countries in need, including those on the African continent, has not been implemented.”

It is likely that the Black Sea Grain Initiative will restart within the month. Earlier suspensions have not lasted longer than a few weeks. But this time, it is not clear if the West will give Russia any relief on its ability to export its own agricultural products. Certainly, the suspension will impact millions of people around the world who struggle with endemic hunger. Billions of others who are hungry because of financial speculation in food markets are not impacted directly by these developments.

**This article was produced by Globetrotter.**

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Out of style

6 Root spot

10 Light-footed

11 West Indies native

13 Copy

14 Make amends

15 Salt Lake City player

16 Hockey great

17 Bobby

18 Tennis need

19 Vehicle in a procession

22 Last letter, in London

23 Spur on

24 Decrees

27 Less fettered

28 Writer Rice

29 Garden visitor

30 Item of

extreme inclusion

35 Summer in Paris

36 Strange

37 Opposite of oui

38 Remove suds from

40 Gladden

42 More reasonable

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YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

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F O C A L R I N S E  
T E A S E D A T E D  
S L A T E R O S



At first many people negatively commented about me being in this profession. Many male coaches couldn't take that, a woman becoming a club head coach. I believe in quality. If I have it then I know I can prove that I can train up the players.

MIRONA KHATUN  
Bangladesh's first female coach at club level



Bangladesh coach Dalia Akter and her charges celebrated with the trophy after beating India in the final of the youth section of Bangabandhu IHF Challenge Trophy at the Shaheed M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium last May. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

# A rising trend of women in coaching

The biggest challenge is a cultural one where a male-dominated mindset will try to pose hurdles for women in every step.

With more and more success of women in different sporting disciplines in recent times, there has been a considerable amount of transition from athletes to coaches from among former female athletes in recent times than ever before. While there used to be a few instances of successful athletes making the transition in the past, those were mostly confined to athletics and swimming. But with time, as Bangladesh has seen a larger number of women actively pursuing other sports such as shooting, weightlifting, archery, handball, kabaddi, football, cricket, etc, there has also been a noticeable

rise in successful female sports persons making the transition to the coach's position. Whether they will be able to make as much mark as coaches as they did during their playing careers is another issue, but the interest among women to disseminate the knowledge and expertise they had gathered over the years signifies a change of guard in local sporting culture to some extent. Those who are coming to the coaching profession are apparently well aware of the challenges they will face. The biggest challenge is a cultural one where a male-dominated mindset will try to pose

hurdles for women in every step. But as we have seen in other spheres of the society – from politics to local government, from corporate to civil service – the shift is well and truly in motion. In general, coaches, especially the local ones, are paid poorly in most sporting disciplines in our country and mostly remain devoid of higher coaching education and training, resulting in a lack of expertise which often prompts federations to look for foreign coaches. That is true for both men and women, but should be addressed if we are to develop our sports because the athletes who

turn coaches in our country will know the culture and the personnel better than any foreign coach and will have easier communication with their proteges. Hence, there is no reason not to be hopeful that women should not be able to boss a male-dominated sector and motivate their protégés after having themselves excelled during their sporting career. It may take a little time in grooming top female coaches in the current context, but provided they get good salary packages and are ensured proper development paths, the wait should be worth it.

## Shila in pursuit of fulfilment

Mahfuza Khatun Shila is the country's first and only female swimmer to win a gold medal in the South Asian Games. Shila, currently an employee of Bangladesh Navy, won two gold medals in 2016 SA Games while setting a record in 50m breaststroke. After calling time in 2021, the 33-year-old prepared herself for the coaching profession before getting appointed as the assistant coach of Bangladesh swimming team for the upcoming Asian Games. In an interview with Anisur Rahman of The Daily Star, Shila expressed her thoughts on coaching, present condition and scope of swimming here. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): What made you decide to venture into coaching?  
Mahfuza Khatun Shila (MKS): Every athlete dreams of playing for the national team. I realized mine by representing the nation and delivering something at international level. There was another childhood dream: to involve myself in coaching, given I could prepare myself for this profession. Although I completed a master's degree in journalism and had different opportunities to work outside sports, I always wanted to remain involved in swimming following my playing career.

DS: How prepared are you as a coach?  
MKS: I had a coaching offer two years ago but I did not accept it because I was not ready. My employer, Bangladesh Navy, helped me a lot to prepare as a coach by giving me the responsibility of the Navy women's swimming team. I also underwent a coaching course at BKSP before FINA (International Swimming Federation) sanctioned some courses, including Assistant Coach Level-I. I recently also completed an advanced course on assistant coaching, and I intend to go through more courses. I think I'm now prepared to work with the swimmers.

DS: Before you arrived as coach, former swimmers like Laila Noor, Tania, Mahmuda left the profession, having cited discrimination or from not being assigned. What is the situation now?  
MKS: I don't know about the past. The reality is, a different environment exists at different sports federations, BOA or NSC. However, the scope of work for women has been increasing with different federations appointing female coaches. There was no woman coach in swimming here until I arrived. To be honest, I am working comfortably without facing any problems.

DS: Will the recent influx of former national female athletes from different disciplines taking up coaching professions help improve the standard of the country's sports?  
MKS: I think two to three factors are most important in coaching. I took up coaching after performing at top level, so I think I have maximum experience that will help me to analyse the problems, thus benefiting the swimmers easily because I went through those situations during my playing career.

Besides, this time around, most players of the national teams are educated and they keep themselves updated via the internet. So, if a former national player can utilize their experience with continuous research in coaching, consequently the standard of the country's sports will certainly improve. Looking at other sub-continent nations, you will see the former players are taking up coaching roles.

DS: What do you wish to deliver as a coach?  
MKS: As a swimmer, I succeeded in the South Asian Games and I want my students to surpass me by winning gold medals in the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games. If it happens, then all my efforts will be worth it. I am constantly studying aspects of coaching, which is not an easy task as people typically think of it.

DS: But can you dream big with a small group of female swimmers?  
MKS: The female swimmer previously had less chances to train at the national camps, so I requested general secretary BM Saif bhai to provide more female swimmers in the camp. Of the 25 swimmers for the Asian Games camp, 12 are female swimmers of whom junior swimmers' average height is 5.4 inches. They all have qualities a swimmer needs to possess, and are quick learners, so I am hopeful about them.

DS: Coaching or training, which is harder based on your nearly one-month experience in national camp?  
MKS: These are two different things and bring different challenges. If you want to compare, training is harder than coaching because a swimmer always toils hard to achieve a target. On the other hand, coaches' work is more on the intellectual and mental side than physical because they keep an eye on every individual swimmer and prepare training schedules for each individual, based on merits and lackings.

DS: How is your husband Shahjahan Ali Rony, also a SA Games gold-winner, assisting you?  
MKS: I'm getting hundred per cent help from him, and he is my mentor too. Having been in the coaching profession since 2016, he has acquired a vast knowledge on it. He understands me from just seeing my face, and advises me accordingly. He even made me understand the language of coaching. So, you can say that Rony makes my job easy.



## ‘I aspire to groom better shooters than myself’

Shooter Sharmin Akter emerged champion from the open group of boys and girls in the Inter-Club Shooting Championship in 2000 when she was a sixth grader. The BKSP student then shone in the Islamabad SA Games in 2004, bagging gold in the 10m air-rifle, before winning a silver in the next edition of the SA Games in 2006 in Sri Lanka. Sharmin was on a roll in domestic competitions after that, becoming champion a total of five times in the national and inter-club shooting championships. After calling time on her long 22-year playing career following the 2021 Bangladesh Games completion, the 34-year-old former shooter stepped into coaching and started working as one of the three assistant coaches to the national shooting team's Iranian head coach Zaer Rezaei. In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman, Sharmin talked about different aspects of the sport. The excerpts from the interview are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): What inspired you to take up the coaching profession?  
Sharmin Akter (SA): In shooting, we mainly depend on foreign coaches, especially for the national team. Of course, foreign coaches are good, but there is a dearth of local coaches in the sport. That's why I decided to take up coaching as a profession so that I can share my vast experience with budding shooters. And my desire is to groom better shooters than myself so that they can also hoist the national flag the way I did on foreign soil.

DS: How does the experience of your playing career help you in coaching?  
SA: I had a 22-year-long career as a professional shooter and then joined coaching soon after my retirement, unlike other aspiring shooter-turn coaches. Besides, I also have vast knowledge working under different foreign coaches during my playing career, so I can use that experience and knowledge in coaching. I am also learning from the current national team's foreign coach, Mohammad Zaer Rezaei.  
DS: What benefits are there for current shooters if they are coached by a former shooter?



SA: There are many. For example, there are a lot of reasons behind a bad shot rather than a single issue. As I went through this situation during my playing career, I believe I can easily find out the underlying problems at first sight better than the coaches who do not have a playing background.  
DS: How prepared are you for the coaching profession?  
SA: I am hundred percent prepared but there are some things in coaching such as getting introduced to the shooters, the manner of interacting and approaching them, and many other formal things which I still need to learn, even though I know about all of these a

little as a former player. I completed a coaching course conducted by the federation [Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation] but I want to complete internationally recognised courses. I was offered jobs in different sectors but to be honest, I can't think of much other than shooting and I want to continue as a shooting coach.  
DS: How are the financial benefits of coaching in Bangladesh?  
SA: To be honest, the salary of coaches in all disciplines is really lower than other professions in Bangladesh. That's why most male athletes rarely take up coaching as a profession after their retirement as they have to run their

families. I think the range of salary for coaches in all disciplines should be increased.  
DS: The female shooters, especially in 10m air-rifle events, are clearly ahead of their male teammates. How do you see this progress of female shooters in Bangladesh?  
SA: I think the current bunch of female shooters are improving fast under Iranian coach Rezaei. However, the same cannot be said of the male shooters. I believe female shooters are close to winning medals in big events but they still need to improve in the coming days.  
DS: Bangladesh has not seen success in shooting for a long time, barring a few sporadic achievements. What reasons do you think are behind it?  
SA: We got minimal facilities in the past in shooting. Here, a shooter uses a rifle for 10 to 15 years, but the shooters overseas change rifles after one or two years. We also use shooting jackets for five to 10 years. To be honest, that was the best case scenario for us and we tried our best to deliver. But now, the range, instruments, and other benefits in Bangladesh have developed along with a good coach appointed for the national side.



## Bangladesh A throw game away

SPORTS REPORTER

In a shocking turn of events, Bangladesh A cracked under pressure and eventually lost by 51 runs in the semifinal against India A to exit the ACC Emerging Asia Cup at the R.Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

The outcome, however, set a clash between archrivals India and Pakistan in the final of the tournament, scheduled for July 23 in Colombo.

Chasing a modest 212-run target, Bangladesh imploded despite a solid start by the openers, who added 70 inside 12 overs. But Bangladesh suffered a horrible collapse in the middle to be eventually bundled out for 160 in 40.2 overs.

The batting line up started to crumble since Mohammad Naim departed after scoring 38 off 40 deliveries, striking six fours. Tanzid Hasan followed suit soon as he departed to Nishant Sindhu after scoring 51 off 56 balls.

Bangladesh lost their last nine wickets in the span of 17 overs, while adding just 66.



When the situation required a calm approach, Bangladesh A, consisting of six players who represented the senior side in the past, were unable to keep their composure against an inexperienced Indian side with all uncapped cricketers.

Skipper Saif Hassan went for a big shot and was dismissed on 22 off 24 balls while Soumya Sarkar was caught at slip, scoring just five as the Bangladesh batters started to panic.

"I think we were in the game and I think just a bit of batting collapse in the middle order [took the game away]. Everything was going according to the plan and it was a good total for us [to chase] and we had a great start. But in the end we collapsed," Saif said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

"The plan was to remain positive but we should have given value to our wickets and I think we played some rash shots. We could have minimised our mistakes. If we could have taken some time, it would have been better but we lost the game there," Saif added.

Earlier, electing to bowl, Bangladesh came up with a collective approach to bundle out India for a modest 211 runs in 49.1 overs.

India A skipper Yash Dhull scored an 85-ball 66 to take his side's total beyond the 200-run mark after a struggling start.

Aitana Bonmati celebrates scoring the second goal as Spain issued a warning on Friday, beginning their Women's World Cup campaign in scintillating fashion by beating Costa Rica 3-0 in their Group C opener on Friday at Wellington Regional Stadium. The Spaniards, one of the tournament favourites, fired a total of 46 shots against opponents who spent nearly the entire game defending.

PHOTO: AFP



Vice captain Nahida Akter, Sobhana Mostary, Sanjida Akter, and Murshida Khatun were upbeat during practice yesterday as Bangladesh women's cricket team look to clinch their maiden ODI series win over India with a win in the final game of the three-match series in Mirpur today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Mindset to bat longer key for history-seeking Tigresses

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh bowlers have made their presence felt in this ODI series against India but the visitors, with Harmanpreet Kaur, Jemimah Rodrigues among others, have shown their experience when the game was in balance in the second fixture to level the series.

Coming into the series deciding third ODI, the onus would be on the Bangladesh batters to bring forth their knowledge of the conditions, which could prove decisive. Having to deal with injuries to key batters would also be a headache for the home side at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur today.

Slow and low tracks have offered quite a bit of turn for the spinners and while India batters have struggled in these conditions, their Bangladeshi counterparts did not capitalise.

Fargana Hoque and Ritu Moni looked in control with a 68-run stand but lost their way in the second ODI, triggering a batting collapse.

Head coach Hasahan Tillakaratne was well aware of the batting collapse, saying that the mental aspect for batting for a longer time was still lacking. Fargana lost her wicket while batting to the situation and the team management have focused on those situations.

"Yes, it [batting collapse] is a big concern. Most difficult thing is to get in and once you get a good start you don't throw your wicket away. Biggest concern is eating up lots of dot balls. Also, in the Powerplay we are very much behind with the rate, so we have had few discussions.

**We played them [Bangladesh] in the Asia Cup in Sylhet last year. From that to now, they have grown, the bowling aspect for sure. But I would say their fielding efforts have also been amazing. On these sorts of wickets, their bowling attack is definitely good. Marufa [Akter] has a very different action and due to her action, she is quicker than we feel. So, her ball definitely skids a little more than what we expect from her release point.**



India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana

I am sure they will come up with some good performance tomorrow," Hashan was hopeful.

The home side need the top-order to click unless they want the lower-middle order to once again deal with a crisis. Murshida Khatun played some scintillating shots at the top but was unable to put a high price to her wicket, something Hashan pinpointed.

"She [Murshida] got a good start and she threw away the wicket. That is where we need to work with them, we need to be a little patient with them.

"They are technically sound but the mindset is not prepared to play long innings. Also, the fitness is a little below-par, so we are working with them right now," he added.

Skipper Nigar Sultana and batter Shorna Akter are still struggling with

fitness, with the latter unable to play any of the ODIs so far this series. Fahima Khatun, who came to the press conference yesterday, said their discussions have been around putting up a healthy score. Marufa Akter has been a standout pacer, rattling India in the first game while leg-spinner Rabeya Khatun has been consistent.

India's Smriti Mandhana was effusive in praise of Marufa.

"So, her ball definitely skids a little more than what we expect from her release point. Definitely, a very good cricketer, I would say. I had a small chat with her after the [first] match. Just congratulating her and saying that her efforts have really inspired all of us as well," Smriti said.

The Tigresses will know that their strength lies in bowling and another bowling performance like the first ODI may well lead to another historic win.

## Abahani close trophyless season with win

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani ended the 2022-23 season with a 1-0 win against Azampur FC in their final Bangladesh Premier League game at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

However, Abahani, the country's most successful outfit in football, ended the season trophyless – the fifth time since the introduction of the professional football league in 2007 that Abahani failed to win a trophy in top-flight competition.

Nabib Newaj Jibon scored the decisive goal in the 70th minute yesterday to help the Sky Blues finish second in the BPL table with 40 points from 20 matches.

Since the inception of Kings in 2018, six-time professional league champions Abahani have won three domestic titles. Abahani beat Kings in the Federation Cup in 2018 before clinching the Federation Cup and the Independence Cup last season. Abahani lost the Federation Cup final this season against archrivals Mohammedan while they exited from the semifinal in the Independence Cup.

Interestingly, the points gap in BPL between Abahani and Kings only increased in recent times.

## Mbappe-PSG saga to stretch

AGENCIES

It is likely that Paris Saint-Germain will do everything in their power to convince French superstar Kylian Mbappe stay at the club beyond the 2023-24 season and also avoid the worst-case scenario where he gets to leave PSG as a free agent.

According to Defensa Central, the reigning French champions have offered Mbappe a contract worth an unprecedented one billion euros, one that would keep the 24-year-old for a further 10 years. However, it was revealed earlier this week that Mbappe seeks to sit idle on his existing contract, set to terminate at the end of next season, in order to induce a move this transfer window.

Spanish giants Real Madrid remain the likely destination for Mbappe, while there have been rumours of Manchester United and Arsenal being interested in roping the hot-shot striker.

With Lionel Messi gone and Mbappe departure on the cards, more bad news could be in store for PSG since, as per Guardian, midfielder Marco Verratti is on Liverpool's radar.



Jonny Bairstow raises his bat to the crowd after a quickfire 99 not out that helped England amass 592 in their first innings and ensure a 275-run lead on the third day of their must-win fourth Ashes Test against Australia at Old Trafford on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

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Foreigners' comments on internal issues unwarranted  
Says Momen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the foreigners' comments about our country's internal issues are unwarranted and tantamount to interference in our home affairs.

"Our media gives them undue importance which they [foreigners] enjoy. This gives them a feeling that they are the kings of this country and that's why they make comments about everything," he said while talking to reporters after attending a function at Shilpakala Academy in Sylhet.

He said he never saw the United Nations and other diplomats issuing any statement when people get killed in other countries.

"No country made any remark despite the death of around 40 people centring

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



Cattle farmers bring in fodder by a boat to feed buffaloes as grazing land nearby has gone under floodwater in Sylhet's Gowainghat. The photo was taken in Haripur area yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

One more held over attack on Hero Alom

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Banani police have arrested another man in connection with the attack on Dhaka-17 by-polls independent candidate Ashraf Alom alias Hero Alom on July 17.

Talukder Masud, president of a faction of Karwan Bazar Pick-up Driver Owners Association, was arrested at Old Dhaka on Thursday, Mostafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sources claimed that Masud is a Sramik League activist.

Law enforcers have so far arrested 10 people in connection with the attack.

A day after the assault at the Banani Bidyaniketan School and College polling centre, Sujon Rahman Shuvo, Hero Alom's personal assistant, filed a case with Banani Police Station accusing at least 20 unnamed persons.

The complainant brought charges of beating up Hero Alom with an intent to kill.

ROHINGYAS IN KSA

They'll have passports renewed: home boss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A large number of Rohingyas who went to Saudi Arabia decades ago with Bangladeshi passports will have their passports renewed.

The government decided following request from the Saudi authorities.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said, "We are renewing their passports under the condition that they will be staying in the Middle Eastern country and do their work and business there as Bangladeshi citizens."

"Saudi Arabia requested Bangladesh to renew passports of those Rohingyas and assured that if we renew their passports, they will continue to live in that country," he told The Daily Star.

Saudi Arabia took those Rohingyas in around 30 to 40 years ago, but the country did not give them citizenship, Asaduzzaman said.

Asked about the number of such passports, he said it would be huge.

In November last year, Saudi Arabia's Deputy Interior Minister Nasser bin Abdul Aziz Al Dawood visited Dhaka and in a meeting with Asaduzzaman, he raised the issue of issuing passports to those Rohingyas.

Since then, the Saudi authorities kept insisting.

A committee, led by Abdullah Al Masud Chowdhury, secretary of the home ministry's

Security Service Division, has been formed to resolve the issue.

The minutes of the committee's meeting held on March 22 said an obligation was created for Bangladesh after a joint meeting minutes were signed between Bangladesh and the Saudi Authorities regarding issuing 69,000 passports.

According to the meeting papers, several lakh Rohingyas entered Bangladesh between 70s and 90s. Under an agreement inked in 1992 between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar, many of the Rohingyas were repatriated to Myanmar.

However, many Rohingyas living in Bangladesh refugee camps illegally went to Saudi Arabia with handwritten passports. Besides, Rohingyas, who went to Saudi Arabia with special cards of the Saudi government in 50s, never got passports. They later managed handwritten Bangladesh passports, the papers added.

According to the Saudi authorities, 69,000 Rohingyas have such passports.

The committee in its meeting suggested keeping secret code numbers, storing special registration numbers and biometrics in the renewed passports so that they can easily be recognised as Rohingyas.

The meeting also proposed special serial numbers for the passports and mentioning them as Myanmar nationals or stateless so that the Rohingyas cannot

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Armed man tries to enter Mamata's home



NDTV ONLINE

A man was arrested yesterday with arms in his car for allegedly trying to enter West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Kalighat residence.

The man wearing a black coat and tie identified as Noor Alam was arrested after he tried to drive a car with a "Police" sticker to Banerjee's residence on Harish Chatterjee Street, Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal said.

Mamata was at her home when the incident took place.

"The man was carrying arms, one khukri, ganja and several identity cards

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Jubo League man killed in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of armed assailants early yesterday hacked a Jubo League leader to death in the capital's Shahjahanpur area.

Oliullah Rubel, 36, was a candidate for the general secretary post of Jubo League's Ward 12 unit under Shahjahanpur Thana.

He came under attack when returning home after work, family members said.

Rubel was ambushed by four to five assailants wielding machetes around 15 yards from his home on Joardar Lane at 12:40am, said witnesses and police.

He had been living there with his wife and daughter for the last two years.

Rubel, also a former office secretary of Shahjahanpur Thana unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League, was in the business of providing internet service and supplying water in the locality.

Police collected CCTV footage of the incident which show two assailants chasing already wounded Rubel on the street.

After the assailants left the place stabbing him indiscriminately, Rubel managed to reach home and collapsed right before it.

He also made a call to his wife Tanjina Dewan and screamed for help, Tanjina mentioned in the case statement she filed over her husband's murder with Shahjahanpur Police Station yesterday.



Rubel

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Business as usual assured by Australia

Its minister says Bangladesh will enjoy duty-free access after graduation from LDC

BSS, Dhaka

Australian Assistant Trade Minister Senator Tim Ayres yesterday said Bangladesh's products will continue to get duty-free, quota-free access to its market.

"Graduation from LDC status would not make any changes to existing duty-free, quota-free access of Bangladesh's products to Australian market," he said in a meeting with Bangladesh High Commissioner to Australia M Allama Siddiki at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Office in Sydney.

Faruque Hassan, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), was present there, said a press release.

During the meeting, Siddiki appreciated Australia's growing interest in Bangladesh and highlighted opportunities in goods such as cotton, wool, LNG and minerals and services such as Fintech, ITES and education and skill development for further bilateral trade and investment.

He also invited a business delegation led by Ayres to Bangladesh to explore the opportunities in bilateral trade and investment.

Faruque spoke of the reforms that took place in the RMG sector over the years.

Ayres referred to Bangladesh as Australia's important partner and expressed keenness to enhance bilateral economic engagement.

He acknowledged progress made in the apparel sector of Bangladesh and strong business relations between

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Early humans used woodwork skills to make hunting weapons: study



INDEPENDENT ONLINE

A 300,000-year-old hunting weapon has shed new light on early humans as woodworking masters, researchers have said.

The double-pointed wooden stick was produced by Middle Pleistocene humans using sophisticated techniques and was likely used for throwing during hunts, experts suggest.

Analysis of the stick, found in Schöningen in Germany three decades ago, shows it was scraped, seasoned and sanded before being used to kill animals.

According to researchers, the findings indicate early humans' woodworking techniques were more developed and sophisticated than previously understood.



People of Rajpur village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila are taking a corrugated-iron-sheet roof of a house to safety yesterday as erosion by the Teesta worsens. Many who have become homeless have taken shelter on roads and dykes.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Tigresses aim to stun India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh women's team will be eyeing to clinch their maiden ODI-series victory against a strong India side as the two sides face each other in the third and final match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

The match, scheduled to begin at 9.30 am, will be telecast live on the official YouTube page of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

Despite having lost the three-match T20I series, the hosts won the third fixture and Nigar Sultana Joty and her troops went on to build on the momentum by winning the first ODI by 40 runs, via DLS, to stun the visitors.

The formidable Indian team, however, bounced back in the second ODI with an emphatic 108-run win to level the series.

Batting remained the main area of concern for the hosts in the series. The Tigresses were able to

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1





(L) In many parts of the beel, various companies have already started filling up the wetland with sand to build various infrastructures as part of their housing projects. (M) Home to various wildlife, the Arial Beel is under threat as real estate agencies are now eyeing to replace this pristine wetland with concrete structures. (R) Many real estates have put up their signboards on what once was an arable land inside the beel. They are also enticing farmers with high prices for the land.

PHOTO: STAR

# Arial beel under threat

Real estate companies planning to build ‘concrete jungle’ in the heart of wetland



**It was never my intention to sell my land, but the realtor kept on offering high prices, which proved too much to resist.**

ALAL UDDIN  
a farmer from Arial Beel

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Over a decade ago, the spirit of rebellion echoed through the air in Arial Beel as residents united against the government's plan to construct an airport on their ancestral lands.

The community stood resolute, refusing to surrender their precious territory. The protests that ensued led to clashes with law enforcement, resulting in the loss of a policeman's life and hundreds wounded.

But against all odds, their uncompromising determination paid off, and the government was forced to abandon its airport project.

However, times have changed, and a new threat now looms over the beel (a large lake-like wetland).

The very farmers who once fiercely clung to their lands are now finding themselves enticed by the offers of real estate companies. Tempted by the promise of higher prices, they are now parting with their ancestral properties, unknowingly

cannot stop or change or attempt to change the direction of the flow of water by constructing structure or developing land or extracting sand or mud in any water bodies, without the permission of competent authority, as per Bangladesh Water Act 2013.

As the Arial Beel continues to be encroached upon, its very existence is being threatened, and the once thriving ecosystem is gradually giving way to concrete jungles.

The exact extent of Arial Beel's loss remains unknown, with neither the residents nor the government officials possessing accurate data.

“It was never my intention to sell my land, but the realtor kept on offering high prices, which proved too much to resist,” said Alal Uddin, a farmer from Arial Beel. Many others echoed similar sentiments.

In a recent study conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, published in June 2023, it was revealed that the rate of wetland filling has increased significantly

encroached upon an approximately 75,000 square metres of once fertile land in Kewatkhali village.

The company has constructed a two-storey building to facilitate its land filling activities in the wetland.

Under the “Padma Eco-City” project, Pushpodhara Properties plans to build various infrastructures on 300 katha land, aiming to create a natural forest covering 32 acres, along with several other facilities, including a lake, within a larger area

number, creating a false impression of government approval. “Even a registered company cannot start a project without obtaining permission for that specific venture,”

Contacted two weeks ago, DoE's Munshiganj deputy director Mizanur Rahman, admitted to not knowing the current status of Arial Beel, but promised to look into the matter.

Two weeks later, he informed the newspaper that no company named Pushpodhara had sought

year. This consistent decline each year raises serious concerns about the ecosystem's health, said Samir Kumar Basak, a senior upazila fisheries officer.

**WHY VILLAGERS SELLING LAND NOW?**

The villagers have now become willing participants in selling their land to real estate developers, enticed by the surge in land prices following the inauguration of the Padma Bridge.

Over the past year, the value of land near the road in Arial Beel has nearly doubled, soaring from Tk 3.36 lakh to around Tk 6.61 lakh per katha.

Similarly, the land's value within the area has risen from Tk 60,000 to Tk 1.12 lakh per katha, attracting realtors and investors to the region.

Jalal Uddin, a former participant in the anti-airport movement, said he initially joined the protests in 2011 out of fear of losing his farmland without proper compensation.

However, he sold his land around five months ago after a real estate company's representative offered him a substantial amount.

Sumon Hossain, another villager who was part of the movement, also sold 200 katha of land, along with a pond, in Kewatkhali village for Tk 3.2 lakh per katha.

He cited losses in crop cultivation and fish farming over the past two years as the reasons for his decision, along with the attractive offer from a real estate company.

Shahjahan Badal, convener of Arial Beel Rakkha Committee and leader of the movement, said “Villagers are interested in selling their land as real estate companies offer a higher price. No one missed this chance.”

**EXPERTS RING ALARM**

The consequences of this unchecked real estate expansion in a wetland like Arial Beel are dire, leading to the loss of precious biodiversity, warns environmentalists.

One of the key roles wetlands like Arial Beel play is in flood mitigation. Their natural water storage capacity allows them to absorb excess water during heavy rainfall or storms, reducing the risk of flooding in nearby areas, they said.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, underscored the significance of Arial Beel as a national asset.

She criticised the government agencies for their failure to protect the wetland and called upon the district administration and other relevant authorities to take immediate action to safeguard Arial Beel from further degradation.

**In a recent study conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, published in June 2023, it was revealed that the rate of wetland filling has increased significantly over the past eight years. According to the study, 0.44 square kilometers of wetlands have been filled between 2015 and 2023.**



of 150 acres, said one of their officials seeking anonymity.

However, such actions have been carried out in violation of the Natural Water Reservoir Conservation Act 2000, the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995, and the Bangladesh Water Act 2013.

The Department of Environment (DoE), entrusted with safeguarding wetlands, appears to be unaware of the ongoing situation at Arial Beel.

It is also noteworthy that the company lacks environmental clearance from the DoE, which is mandatory for such projects.

In addition, as per Section 5 of the Real Estate Development and Management Act-2010, it is obligatory for every real estate developer to obtain registration from the National Housing Authority (NHA) to conduct their business.

**WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY?**

According to NHA officials, the company's (Pushpodhara) registration had expired in 2020, rendering its current operations illegal.

Gias Uddin Chowdory, superintending engineer (current charge) of Planning, Design, and Special Project Wing at NHA, said, “The procedure is to register the company's name and then obtain separate permission for the project. However, this company's registration expired over three years ago, and they haven't received any approval for the ongoing project.”

Gias Uddin said the company was misleading people by using its expired registration

permission from the DoE.

Contacted, Pushpodhara Properties Ltd's managing director Syed Alinur Islam claimed that the company obtained permission from the NHA for their project.

Additionally, they asserted having approvals from both the DoE and the district administration.

However, when approached for documentation to verify these claims, Alinur Islam remained unresponsive, even after multiple attempts to contact him via mobile phone.

**DECREASING FISH POPULATION**

Over 14,000 hectares of the beel's land are utilised for paddy cultivation, and it boasts around 500 ponds, as reported by the Department of Bangladesh Haor and Wetlands Development (DBHWD).

The beel has been grappling with environmental pollution, extensive encroachment on its resources, and a significant loss of biodiversity.

A study conducted by the DBHWD in September 2020 highlighted the plight of various fish, plant, and animal species, facing risk of extinction due to these challenges.

The obstruction of water entry into the wetland has led to a decline in land fertility, resulting in a reduction in fish production, as corroborated by DBHWD's assessment.

The statistics from the Srinagar upazila fisheries office paint a grim picture of the declining fish production in Arial Beel.

Fish production dropped from 39.65 tonnes in the 2020-2021 fiscal year to 37.92 tonnes in the 2021-2022 fiscal

becoming pawns in a sinister game of environmental degradation.

Arial Beel, one of the largest wetlands located in Munshiganj, is facing an invasion by illegal real estate developers. These business entities have acquired portions of the wetland, filling them up with sand and strategically placing signboards to attract potential buyers for residential development.

The Natural Water Reservoir Conservation Act 2000 forbids the filling of any government-recognised reservoir under any circumstances. Also, any individual or organisation

over the past eight years.

According to the study, 0.44 square kilometers of wetlands have been filled between 2015 and 2023.

Visiting seven Arial Beel villages in Srinagar of Munshiganj – Hasara, Kewatkhali, Gaidighat, Baroikhali, Srinagar, Rairkhal, and Alampur – this correspondent found that numerous unregistered real estate companies have installed dozens of hoardings in croplands.

One such prominent player, “Pushpodhara Properties Ltd” has





FICTION

Them two dogs



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

The city had no flowers to give it colour. In the rain, everything turned grey, and it had been that way for the past week now.

RAIAN ABEDIN

I am asked where I am headed. The expression in the lady’s eyes suggests this is not the first time I was asked the question. I stand there, wondering if the pits around her eyes—white as the sun—are caused by the likes of me, and I tell her where I’m headed. She hands me the ticket printed on cheap, rough paper. There’s a wind from far away, threatening to blow away the small paper in my hand, but I hold tight. The gust beats against my shirt, and my face feels caked with red sand. I am reminded of some time in the middle of a wet summer a decade ago.

Outside, rain had left the grey concrete land crying. I was busy peering at a man pulling a rickshaw in water that climbed up to his knees and then some. Against the dreary concrete,

the colours of the rickshaw were too bright—almost an aberration. I stared, enamoured, not paying attention to the commotion inside my house. The screams and the scuffling and thumping of feet on the cold floor did not mean much to me until I heard it approach me, accompanied by my father’s panting.

“Get these medicines for your mother, her stomach is in pain again”, he yelled out to me in a way that left me cold. I could tell his anger was not directed at me, but a paralysis struck me as he handed me a slip of paper with a list of medicines that carried in shiny ink names too complex for me to pronounce. The pharmacist will know, he told me, and I noticed his sunken eyes. They were not like that when the world still looked bright to me.

I rushed to my mother to get a

glance at her face and was greeted with contortions and agonised wails. My stomach churned, but before I could allow my head to come up with something meaningful to say I felt a hand, cold like iron, grab my neck and shove me out of the house.

In the rain, I rushed outside. Something felt heavy at the very tip of my throat, but I ignored the sobs. The paper was getting wet, so I balled up my fist to ensure its safety, and stepped into the waist-high water.

The city had no flowers to give it colour. In the rain, everything turned grey, and it had been that way for the past week now. The buildings formed clusters of spikes that stood up straight like a hand reaching for the sky. Everyone shut themselves inside as the streets flooded and kept flooding, almost like some divine being was

angry. He must have been angry at me for staring outside all the time.

In the water, my legs felt cold, and every step I took was slow and lumbering. The gusts beat endlessly against my fragile body, and my legs felt caked with mud. I made my way to the nearest pharmacy, after nearly slipping on something slimy underneath my foot and dropping the paper that may save my mother, and found two dogs huddled against each other under its signpost. I stared at them for the longest time. One was clearly older than the other. Maybe one was a mother?

I had no time to think about that, the medicine took priority. I knew that. But I did not want to disturb them, nor could I stop staring at them, calm in the middle of so much. So in an effort to tiptoe around them, I pressed my foot lightly on the marble on the inside of

the store and slipped and slammed my face right on the cold marble floor.

I groaned, not as much in pain as disappointed at seeing the two dogs scuttle away as if they felt no longer welcome.

I am on the inter-city train now, headed towards a destination of encroaching frigidity that reminds me again and again of that cold day. I was able to save my mother, then. The medication did their trick. But I did not see those two dogs ever again.

This long metal snake takes me where I need to be in no time, but I don’t get to look around and find calm animals sleeping in my short journey. Something has changed over the years since I left this city and my mother in search of a way to discard my grief, and the only time I ever thought of home was when I saw a dog.

I enter the hospital and take the elevator to the fifth floor. I am clenching my teeth, holding my chest together, daring not to take the cold smell in. I expect an outburst, I expect all the blame to fall on me. Yet what I am greeted with are tears and cold embraces from those whose faces I can barely recognise. They say she can’t breathe on her own anymore, a voice enters my ears, and the words are uttered through a funnel of monotone. Or maybe it’s just me, I look around and the faces and the figures begin to resemble the silhouettes of the grey monoliths that drape the city. I panic, but I slowly head inside the Care Unit where I am greeted by a doctor who has heavy eyes steered away from emotion. He tells me all I need to know but there’s nothing new there. I look at him, silently asking if he thought I was to blame. His eyes give nothing away and I know that it wouldn’t have mattered either way. I tell him it’s time. I do not look at what remained of my mother in fear of having her soul place the blame on me. A silence looms, and in the periphery I almost do not recognise her drained face.

Outside, it’s red. Dust and sunlight mix together, becoming one. I sit at the hospital doors and see a dog drinking from a muddy pothole. It looks up at me as I sit down, then marches away into a hole between two buildings, almost repulsed by my presence.

Raian Abedin is a writer and a poet with a passion for capturing in words the many lives people lead, and the bizarreness hidden in everyone’s normality.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

POETRY

Women’s revolution

NOORA SHAMSI BAHAR

The theocracy is crumbling in its seat  
43 years now, the people shall no longer just bleat  
Like a pregnancy that lasts for 42 weeks at most  
Before a new life is pushed out through its host  
The old order must be rolled up and with it its extremes  
To give way to the new, despite long-standing Supremes  
Zan, zendegi, azadi—we chant  
Escape from generational or communal trauma we can’t  
Skulls smashed with batons, chests



rammed with bullets  
Tears run in rivulets  
The blood of short-lived lives of children on the land  
Of the Ayatollahs that forbid the sight of a female hair strand  
Stop, we want the right to life and liberty  
Your draconian laws have lost validity  
The fire in the hearts shan’t fizzle out  
Do not mistake it for just a transient bout  
Fear is absent, risks abundant, united we strive  
Cyrus’s standards we shall revive

Noora Shamsi Bahar is a senior lecturer at the Department of English and Modern Languages, North South University, and a published researcher and translator.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

POETRY

Ode to an ariel dancer

DILRUBA Z. ARA

Inflight, I burn, short of breath, dreaming of you,  
The sensation - within me, ripples as a circle all over.  
Along the windowpane, unfolds a carpet of clouds,  
And, there you appear dancing on a band of silver.  
You are the dancer and the dance at once,  
the creator and the creation - a seamless fusion of arts.  
You keep dancing, my celestial dancer.  
Clouds in heaven bow and billow around your feet,  
and you- glide through, oblivious to their ethereal presence.  
Bewitched, I watch, lost in rapture’s snare,  
And all things I knew, I knew nothing like this.  
For, to this artistry of you, fair dancer, nothing compares.

Dilruba Z. Ara is a graduate of Gothenburg University, Sweden and the author of the novel A List of Offences and Blame. Ara has translated Selected Stories of Shahed Ali into English, A List of Offences into Swedish and some of Sweden’s Pippi Longstocking stories into Bangla.





# A PIGEON LOVERS' PARADISE

If you are a bird lover, the pigeon market in Nayabati of Khulna's Khalishpur is the place for you. Every Friday, thousands of bird lovers from across the country gather in this informal marketplace to buy and sell a variety of pigeons -- Siraji, Lakha, Soya Chandan, King, Golden Sweet, Jacobin, Homer, House Pager, Kotabal and many more. Vendors sit in rows on both sides of a road near the Nayabati Gol Chatter and sell pigeons and other birds in cages. They say the price of a bird can go up to Tk 1 lakh depending on the breed. Different breeds of pets-- rabbits, guinea pigs, cats, dogs, fish, turtles and other animals -- are also available here. In addition, one can find all kinds of pet items including cages, feed, and aquariums here. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN





# Rags-to-riches actor to start making arthouse films to win over tri-state residents

“If they want sophisticated cinema, they’ll get it. I’ll do away with saving the damsel in distress; get ready to see a deconstruction of why the damsel has chosen this path of distress due to the socioeconomic pressures in society.”

CLASSIST CORRESPONDENT

Gone are the days of sending five gangsters flying with one kick, said film actor Sayam Chowdhury, popular among the tasteless poor.

From now on, Sayam will only be making arthouse films, catering to the refined palate of Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara residents.

“If they want sophisticated cinema, they’ll get it. I’ll do away with saving the damsel in distress; get ready to see a deconstruction of why the damsel has chosen this path of distress due to the socioeconomic pressures in society,” he said.

After making his film debut with Mar Chokka in 2017, Sayam witnessed overwhelming fame, thanks to people who can’t afford to live in the tri-state.

According to surveys, these uncouth residents only want to see the hero beat up bad guys and get the girl, not some vague ending that forces viewers to gaslight themselves into thinking how thought-provoking it was and say “that’s cinema”.

Sayam has already contacted A24, the American company specialising in pretentious indie films. “I’ve proposed making an ‘eat-the-rich’ movie incorporating my journey of using my mountain of raunchy music videos to tackle Gulshan elites.”

The company is yet to respond.

Asked why he took this decision, he said, “I now want to be part of the country’s self-congratulatory inner circle of intellectuals and money-launderers. While my Korail slum supporters have my back, they’re just pebbles in front of a rich kid speeding in Banani. So, I have abandoned them for what they are – roadkill.”

His movies will no longer hit theatres; they will only go to niche film festivals that give very specific awards, like “Best Cinematography in Baridhara”, he added.

Meanwhile, tri-state residents denounced classism and celebrated the diversity of culture in Bangladesh, on record. They said they don’t want Sayam to change for anyone, and that would be a true victory.

Off the record, they said, “Eww”.



PHOTO: YANA HURSKA

This person is standing in front of a house, that has art displayed on it. Arthouse.

## Actor-politician Alan: Man of Courage, beaten for filming films

POLITICAL REPORTER NUT BOLTU

Politics is a difficult subject to master mostly because it is not offered as a Master's degree subject ... you know, the kind of real politics that end up with two ministers on a talk show slapping each other. Or members of parliament in office kick boxing each other. Or political aspirants fighting each other at voting centres.

Last week we saw actor turned politician Alan: Man of Courage visit a voting centre to support his constituency and kiss some bald babies’ heads for good luck. It did not turn out very well mostly because babies often throw up. Alan: Man of Courage is known for his unorthodox publicity campaigns which include TikTok and filming films.

He was seen posing with many of his fans trying to promote his TikTok video about friendship. At one point some youth, mostly Generation Alpha (born after 2010), asked him to politely GTFO (our dictionary says it means Grow The Fruits Organically). They told him they do not want films in their voting centre.

“We don’t like people filming around. He can go film himself,” said an irate young junior associate enforcer of the party.

Some say the Gen Alpha people thought Alan: Man of Courage was a fake because what the heck are films? Gen Alpha were born too late to know the term “films”. They assume it is another F word, which it frankly is. An altercation broke out. They beat the actor-politician severely, driving him out of the centre. It is unclear what the main issue was.

We contacted Alan: Man of Courage for a comment. When asked how he felt right now, he responded in a gruff tone, “I’m Batman.”

When asked to clarify further, he told us he is vengeance. Is he no longer Man of Courage? Or is he Man of Concussion?

Some netizens took to the worldwide internet web services to voice their opinions from a safe distance.

“Why are we so worried about an actor?” stated new Threads user Sinseer Bayezid.

“They did good, mm’kay. Donald Trump, Arnold Be Back and Ronald Reagan were actors who became politicians. We don’t want more. What if people like Alan: Man of Courage are given a chance? What if they do something with that chance? I’m not easy for that,” stated a fearful Farhana Kairen.

It turns out no one is sure what they are doing and no one knows why we are afraid. But we must fight what we are afraid of, especially if what we fear is small and can be pummelled to submission.



Representational image of a feeling. PHOTO: HONG SHANGU

## Accusing Threads of copying Twitter, Elon Musk threatens to block thoroughfares



Elon Musk seen here watching the number of Threads users going up.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

“If he cannot make something original, why doesn’t he just leave this country and go to China?” Elon Musk said in acute rage while alleging that Mark Zuckerberg copied his Twitter to make Threads.

Threads has been threatening Elon Musk since it was launched by Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Meta, the organisation that over the years has eased online relationships and given birth to numerous social media influencers.

Unfortunately for Musk, neither his accusation nor his tears could thwart Threads’ growth at an unprecedented rate, believed to have crossed 100 million users within a week.

With so many things going around in Elon Musk’s mind, he finally launched a direct threat to the nation just like Kim Jong Un does to the USA. “If he doesn’t stop, I will bring my people [Twitter users] by bus, truck, jeep from different corners of the world and block the roads to bring justice.”

Such an idea did not come to Musk abruptly; rather, brother, it was well planned and thought out. Musk is a good observer who has surely been observing circumstances, mostly the rallies that block public roads unjustly to ensure proper justice.

**Unfortunately for Musk, neither his accusation nor his tears could thwart Threads’ growth at an unprecedented rate, believed to have crossed 100 million users within a week.**

“To bring justice, you need public attention and no one will bother to give their precious attention to your demand unless you block their vehicles and make them victims of the very popular yet unbearable traffic jam.”

Confronting Elon Musk, our Satireday correspondent asked him why he chose Chapasthan despite being a US citizen, he said, “Well, as I said earlier, the roads of New York or Washington DC will bring you money, but the roads of Chapasthan will bring you justice.”

Despite all the controversies and war of words, Chapasthani Threads users seemed unbothered and even uninterested about what was going on. Just after signing up in Treads, some started to sell sarees, some shared their broken stories that were shared on Facebook 100 times previously and some were claiming to have been facing problems as they were desperately seeking ways to send messages to unknown girls.

However, our correspondent did not forget to take the opinion of Mark Zuckerberg, an alleged alien operated by some unknown AI models. When asked what he thought about Elon Musk’s move, he said, “Let him block the road. My people [Facebook & Instagram users] are ready to entertain them with bamboo in hands and helmets on heads.”

## Poor man tries to pull himself up by his bootstraps, boots fall apart

JEAN PAUL SATIRE

Intriguing events unravelled last Tuesday, as Azib-o-Garib, Minister for Poverty, visited a slum in the capital’s Dogargaon area.

While speaking to an elderly destitute man about his sufferings, the minister suggested the man pull himself up by his bootstraps, as the society and government can only do so much to protect poor people from starvation.

But as the poor old man, who said his name was Badshah Miya, bent down and tried to pull on the straps of the ancient looking pair of boots he was wearing, the boots disintegrated in his hands.

The seams fell apart and the brittle old leather cracked. In fact, the old man’s foot seemed to go through the boots as the sole collapsed under his dirty feet and the rest of the boots came away with his hands.

A roll of laughter spread throughout the throng of press and bystanders present at the scene, as the minister tried to hide his embarrassment.

Badshah Miya, however, was left seething.

“I have had this pair of boots since 1978. In fact, this is my only pair of footwear. I would never have pulled on my bootstraps unless the minister told me to, but now I have no shoes. The minister said he’ll pay for a new pair of shoes for me, but what about the emotional price of losing an old pair of boots?” he said.

The minister blamed the opposition for delivering low quality boots to poor people.

**The seams fell apart and the brittle old leather cracked. In fact, the old man’s foot seemed to go through the boots as the sole collapsed under his dirty feet and the rest of the boots came away with his hands.**

“This was a concerted effort by the opposition to embarrass the current government. I have spoken to Badshah Miya and he has told me this boot was given to him by opposition activists,” the minister said. However, Badshah Miya denies this.

The minister then shared a plan to mitigate this situation.

“I’m personally used to wearing Dr. Martens or Timberlands at the very least, so I didn’t expect poor people’s boots to be so weak in structure. This only goes on to show how much we still have to do to elevate the unfortunate in our society. We have planned to purchase a million pairs of boots from Doc Martens and distribute them among the poor. A team of 98 observers from the ministry and my family will travel to England to visit Dr. Martens factories and to make sure the boots are up to the mark in terms of quality,” he informed the press.

It is expected that a budget that could build at least 139 primary schools will be allocated at the cabinet meeting next week to fast-track this project.



PHOTO: OZIEL GOMEZ

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