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**From bird to X**



**Tamim under observation**



**Serving a party is against the oath of BPSC**



**Will continue presidential campaign if sentenced**



A shot of the BNP's grand rally in front of its Nayapaltn headquarters yesterday afternoon. The party announced that it would hold sit-ins at all entries to Dhaka today to press for its one-point demand for resignation of the government and polls under a non-party interim government.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Thousands of Jubo League, Chhatra League and Swetchhasebak League leaders and activists join "peace rally" at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram in the capital. The Awami League and its affiliates later announced they would not hold any rally in the capital today, adhering to police measures.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## BNP to press on with Dhaka sit-ins today

Says after DMP decision not to allow any demos at Dhaka's entry points; Fakhrul asks govt to quit at mammoth rally in Nayapaltn

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and MD ABBAS

From its mammoth rally in the capital's Nayapaltn, BNP yesterday announced sit-ins for today at all the major entry points to Dhaka as part of the party's larger movement to force the government to hold the upcoming national election under a non-party government.

In a late-night development, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police said they will not allow any such programmes, but BNP sources said they will go ahead with their planned sit-ins.

The sit-ins will be staged from 11:00am to 4:00pm at nine points.

Dhaka north city unit of BNP will hold sit-ins in front of Uttara BNS Centre and Gabtoli's SA Khalek Bus Station. Dhaka south city unit will stage those in front of Nayabazar BNP office and in front of Dania College on Chattogram Road at Jatrabari.

The party will also stage sit-ins at Sonir Akhra, Mukti Sarani, Gabtoli and Yousuf Super Market at Nayabazar.

"Our programme [today's sit-ins] will be completely peaceful and is our constitutional right. We expect that the administration will carry out its constitutional duty to allow us to hold our

programmes peacefully. I request the administration and the government again to extend their cooperation," Fakhrul told the rally joined by tens of thousands of party activists from across the country.

Yesterday's rally was scheduled to begin at 2:00pm, but the venue was packed with BNP leaders and activists by 9:30am as thousands of party supporters thronged Nayapaltn and its adjacent areas since Thursday night.

Roads and alleys stretching from Fakirapul to Kakrail Mosque were crowded with BNP activists, halting traffic in the area. By noon, the ever-expanding rally crowd spilled over onto nearby roads and streets and spaces up to Shantinagar.

They chanted various anti-government slogans, as they carried banners, lestoons, placards, and portraits of the party's top leaders.

"Go back Hasina, step down Hasina," one placard read.

"We and 36 political parties, and even those who are not with us, have agreed that there will be no election under the Awami League government. This government must resign, and parliament must be dissolved. The election must be conducted under

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**"A new Election Commission has to be formed, and the election must be held under that commission. The aim of our one-point movement is the resignation of the current Awami League government."**

## Won't allow any party to stage sit-ins, rallies

Announces DMP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Neither the ruling Awami League nor the BNP will be allowed to hold events at the entries to the capital today.

Shortly after Dhaka Metropolitan Police made the announcement, top BNP leaders held a meeting online and decided to hold the sit-ins anyway.

BNP's like-minded political parties will also hold their sit-ins at the entry points.

DMP Commissioner Khandker Golam Faruq in a statement late last night said the permission was not given because of intelligence reports of public suffering and possible deterioration of law and order at the events.

The ruling AL, on the other hand, said it would not hold its "peace rallies" at entrances to the capital, and its leaders and activists would be at their party offices at every ward instead, said sources.

The DMP commissioner earlier said the BNP neither informed nor took permission from the DMP for the sit-in programmes.

Contacted last night, he said the people would not allow traffic disruption at the entries to the capital.

"We work for the people. We will take steps..."

Not all the entries to the capital city are within the DMP jurisdiction.

BNP's sit-ins are supposed to be held at the entry points of Dhaka from 11:00am to 4:00pm today.

## AL won't hold rallies, but will stay alert

Decides after DMP measures; no use browbeating AL, says Quader at affiliates' rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Adhering to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's decision not to allow any party to hold sit-ins or rallies today, Awami League and its affiliates will not hold their "peace rallies" at the entry points to the capital today.

But leaders and activists of Dhaka city AL (north and south units) will take position at their respective unit offices in every ward from the morning today and remain alert, said sources.

Earlier last night, Dhaka city AL units said they would hold "peace rallies" at five entry points to the capital today to counter BNP's sit-ins. This decision came hours after the BNP announced its programmes at the entrances to Dhaka city from 11:00am to 4:00pm today.

The ruling party has been holding such counter programmes since BNP's Dhaka divisional rally in December last year.

However, after the DMP refused to give the parties permission to hold rallies today, Dhaka City unit AL leaders cancelled their rallies.

Although BNP yesterday announced the decision to stage sit-ins today, the ruling camp did not mention any programmes from its rally at the south gate of the Baitul Mukarram national

mosque. Addressing the rally organised by three of the ruling party affiliates, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader came down heavily on BNP and warned that they would block

**After the DMP refused to give the parties permission to hold rallies today, the Dhaka City unit AL leaders cancelled their rallies.**

BNP's path if the opposition party stirred any trouble.

"I've heard you [BNP] will block the roads. You will take position at the entrances to Dhaka. We will block your paths. There's no use browbeating us. Our roots are very deep in this soil."

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said BNP has appointed lobbyists.

"They wrote letters to the United Nations and the US ambassador through some lobbyists. They have

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## SSC & EQUIVALENT EXAMS

### Pass rate hits 13-year low

Officials say poor show in particular boards and subjects to blame

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The success rate in this year's SSC and equivalent exams has hit a 13-year low mainly due to poor performances in mathematics and bad results in Sylhet board due to floods in that region, officials said.

According to the results published yesterday, the pass rate dropped by 7.16 percent from last year's. The numbers of GPA 5s in the nine general education boards have also dropped.

As a reason for this year's poor show, board officials said students needed to take exams with a curtailed syllabus on 12 papers, but with full marks.

Last year, they had to sit for nine papers, also with shortened syllabuses, but with fewer marks to get. There were also more optional questions, they added.

Meanwhile, girls have once again outperformed boys in terms of both pass rate and achieving a grade point average of five.

The number of institutions with a 100 percent pass rate was 2,354 – down by 621 from last year's 2,975, while the number of institutions with a zero percent pass rate was 48, which was 50 last year.

SSC RESULTS BOARD-WISE PASS RATE AND GPA-5		
BOARD	PASS RATE	GPA-5
Dhaka	77.75	46,303
Rajshahi	87.89	26,877
Cumilla	78.42	11,623
Jashore	86.17	20,617
Chattogram	78.29	11,450
Barishal	90.18	6,311
Sylhet	76.06	5,452
Dinajpur	76.87	11,410
Mymensingh	85.49	13,177
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80.94</b>	<b>159,220</b>

After receiving the results from the board authorities yesterday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina congratulated the students who passed and urged others to be attentive to their studies.

To the parents, she advised, "Don't compare your children to other children. Instead, let them develop their skills according to their own merit."

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With a big smile, an SSC examinee treats her rickshaw-puller with sweets on her way back home from her school after the result of this year's SSC and its equivalent exams was published yesterday. The photo was taken in Barishal city's Nazirpool area.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Final exams at schools to be wrapped up by Nov

Says Dipu Moni

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All primary and secondary schools throughout the country should complete final exams by November keeping the next general election in mind so that students do not face any problems, Education Minister Dipu Moni has said.

"We want to complete all exams of the secondary schools, including evaluation of students of classes 6-7, by November

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## HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star office will remain closed today on the occasion of Ashura. There will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow. However, our digital version will serve the readers 24/7.



## Holy Ashura today

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain Ibn Ali (RA), a grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), will be observed across the country today with due religious solemnity.

The day is a public holiday. Today is the 10th day of the month of Muharram in Hijri calendar 1445.

It is regarded as the day of Karbala, a "mourning and heartbreaking event", which has special religious significance for the Muslim community across the globe.

Muslims across the world recall the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA) along with his family members and 72 followers, who embraced martyrdom in 680 AD in the desert of Karbala on the banks of the Euphrates river in Iraq while fighting for truth and justice against the Yazid forces.

On the eve of the holy Ashura, President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday issued separate messages, paying deep respect to Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA) and other martyrs of Karbala.

Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private TV channels will air special programmes while newspapers and online news portals will publish supplements highlighting the significance of the day.

## 23 DMP CONDITIONS

### Both parties broke many

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police permitted the opposition BNP and three affiliate bodies of Awami League to hold rallies in the capital yesterday on 23 conditions.

However, both parties violated many of those conditions.

BNP held a grand rally at its Nayapaltan headquarters while three AL affiliates – Jubo League, Chhatra League and Swachchhasebak League – organised a "peace rally" near the south gate of Baitul Mukarram.

According to a DMP condition, the AL affiliates were asked to confine their gatherings within Mahanagar Natya Mancha, Sergeant Ahad Police Box, Fulbaria crossing and Mukangan in the area. However, this condition was breached.

Meanwhile, BNP was told to confine its rally between the Police Hospital and Nightingale intersection in Nayapaltan, but gatherings of the party activists were noticed way outside the permitted area.

Furthermore, both AL and

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People watch the wildfire on the island Ciovo, from Seget Gornji, Croatia.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## More work needed to ensure space for civil society

Says visiting EU special representative Gilmore

UNB, Dhaka

Noting that the election is Bangladesh's political business, European Union's Special Representative for Human Rights Eamon Gilmore has expressed hope that the forthcoming national election will be free, fair and free of violence.

"So, our expectation will be that the elections will be without violence, and that they will be free and fair," he told UNB in an exclusive interview before leaving Dhaka last night.

Gilmore said he is not going to offer a political opinion on how the election will be organised but when they think about elections, they do not think of just about what happens on polling day. "We also think about the environment coming into the election. That's what the exploratory mission was looking at."

He said most elections in most democracies and countries in the world take place without violence. "The conduct of politics is about democratic engagement. It's about people making their case, peacefully, democratically, respectfully, and then voters making their decisions."

Gilmore said they have just had an

exploratory mission here over the last number of weeks and they did not get into a great deal of detail on it because they are waiting for the report of the exploratory mission on which a decision will be made whether or not to deploy an election observation.

He thinks that the country has more work to do on ensuring that there is more space for civil society organisations.

"We also talked about the Digital Security Act, and the concerns that we've been expressing for some time about how that act is being used to silence and to limit press freedom to work and civil society actors."

He said it was confirmed to them that the government intends to amend the DSA and the legislation to do so will be considered by the government in the near future.

"We hope that it will make a significant difference...so we will see what amendments will be produced," Gilmore added.

He said the broader space for political debate and political engagement has been shrinking. "So I'm glad that DSA is

intended to amend. We have to wait and see the details of that. But it's encouraging [that DSA will be amended]."

On the labour rights, Gilmore said they need to see some improvement in that area over time. "And I did make the point in the meetings that I had with the government that the whole environment around labour rights and around trade preferences is changing."

"That is what we are seeing, and it is one of the big changes that I've seen, I would say globally over the last four years," he added.

Gilmore mentioned that economic actors are becoming more significant and in the human rights area, consumers are becoming more aware of where a product is coming from, the conditions of which is made, whether or not workers are paid a fair wage, whether or not there is a fair price being paid for the particles when they are manufactured.

"But also investors are becoming more conscious about the word they are investing," he said.

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## Security guard murdered in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Criminals slit the throat of a night guard in Biral upazila of Dinajpur early yesterday.

Jonaku Chandra Roy, 60, son of late Bishu Ram Roy of Razarampur village, was a security guard at Bhadrabazar in the upazila.

Quoting locals, police said locals found Jonaku's body in a pool of blood early yesterday and informed police.

Police recovered the body and sent it to M Abdur Rahim Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

After visiting the scene, Zinnah Al Mamun, additional SP of Dinajpur Sadar Circle, said police were yet to know the motive behind the killing and that the investigation was going on.

## College student's body recovered, murder suspect held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The body of college student Hridiya Kabiraj, 22, was recovered from a canal yesterday, 21 days after he went missing in Patuakhali's Bauphal upazila.

Police also recovered his motorbike from another canal around 11:30am.

The body was sent to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Hridiya, son of Harendra Kabiraj of Daspara village of Bauphal and a fourth year student of Nabarun Survey College, left home around midnight on July 7 after getting a phone call from one Zafar Khan.

His father filed a general diary on July 9. Police arrested Zafar and he confessed to killing of Hridiya during interrogation.

## BGB hands over detained BSF member

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Border Guard Bangladesh handed over a member of Indian Border Security Force early yesterday, hours after he was detained along Bhurungamari border in Kurigram for entering Bangladesh illegally.

Shri Sanu Kumar Jetop, a member of BSF Battalion-31, was handed over to the BSF authorities around 12:15am yesterday after a BGB-BSF company commander level flag meeting, said Lt Col Abdul Mottakim, commanding officer of BGB Battalion-22 in Kurigram.

Around 10:00pm on Thursday, locals caught the BSF member from near Sonahat border of Bhurungamari upazila and handed him over to the BGB, said Lt Col Mottakim.

## BNP to press on with Dhaka sit-ins today

FROM PAGE 1

a non-partisan, neutral government," Fakhrul said, speaking as chief guest.

"A new Election Commission has to be formed, and the election must be held under that Commission. The aim of our one-point movement is the resignation of the current Awami League government," he said.

According to him, people have lost confidence in the election system, so there is no point in holding the election under the AL, which has been in power since 2009.

BNP acting chairperson Tarique Rahman, also elder son of BNP chief Khaleida Zia, delivered a 7:40-minute audio message from London, where he is living since 2008.

Tarique has been convicted in a number of cases in Bangladesh, including on corruption charges. The Daily Star is not publishing any of his statements as there is a High Court ban on printing or airing his speeches since 2015.

Jointly moderated by Abdus Salam, convener of Dhaka South unit BNP and Aman Ullah Aman, convener of Dhaka north unit BNP, the rally was also addressed by BNP standing committee members

Abdul Moeen Khan, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Nazrul Islam Khan, Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, Vice chairmen Abdullah Al Noman, Barrister Shahjahan Omar Bir Uttam, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Barkatullah Bulu, AKM Zahidul Islam, Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Advocate Ahmed Azam Khan, Nital Roy Chowdhury, and BNP Central Organising Secretary Shama Obaid and Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal President Afroza Abbas.

Many senior leaders during their speech asked the party rank and file to take an oath not to leave the streets until their demands are met.

The stage was set up on nine trucks with the red carpets rolled out to the stage, and loudspeakers were installed at and around the venue. Two separate stages were set up for cultural activists and journalists. Pro-BNP cultural organisations performed music to keep the crowds charged up till 12:00pm.

Alleging that the government has politicised the judiciary and administration, Fakhrul said the incumbent government is conspiring to hold elections similar to those in

2014 and 2018 but the people of the country will not accept it anymore.

"Not only the people of the country, but the foreign friends also want a free and fair election in Bangladesh," he said.

He alleged that several thousands of their party activists have been arrested over the last two days, and urged police and admin officials not to carry out any illegal order from the "illegal regime" and not to stand against the people.

"We know that you people want betterment of the country. So, follow the rule of law and stop arresting and harassing [BNP men]," he said.

Portraying a gloomy picture of the country's economy, the economics professor-turned-politician, alleged that the ruling party indulged in massive corruption in the name of mega projects.

"Are you tired? You are the youth. You have to fight. The young people have to sacrifice at the crisis moment of the country," he told the rally, which was joined by a significant number of young men and women.

Apart from BNP, 36 like-minded political parties and alliances held separate rallies in different city areas

## AL won't hold rallies, but will stay alert

FROM PAGE 1

smuggled thousands of crores of taka out of the country."

Organised by Jubo League, Chhatra League and Swachchhasebak League, the rally started at around 2:30pm with Jubo League activists' cultural performances.

Leaders and activists of the AL affiliates, wearing colourful attires, started thronging the venue after 12:00pm. Within hours, the venue was full to the brim.

The crowd spilled out on the streets around the Secretariat, National Press Club, Shikkha Bhaban, Curzon Hall, Nagar Bhaban, Bangabandhu Avenue, Fulbaria, Purana Paltan and Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Speaking at the rally, AL Presidium

member Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya said, "It was a rehearsal for us. The real movement is yet to come."

AL Joint General Secretary Mahubul Alam Hanif said BNP wants to come to power through the "backdoor".

"BNP holds meetings with foreigners before every rally they organise. Why do they do it? They want to come to power through the backdoor. We will not let anyone do so. We don't want another 1/11," he added.

AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim said the AL's peace rally would continue till the next national election.

Addressing BNP, he said, "To those who want to kill democracy and start a dictatorship, those who want to seize power in crooked ways, we want

to say that we have united to fight against your anarchy, misdeeds and destructive politics."

**1 KILLED IN FACTIONAL CLASH**  
A man was stabbed to death and at least four others were injured after one faction of an AL affiliate allegedly attacked another in the capital's Gulistan while returning from the rally, witnesses said.

The identity of the deceased, aged about 25, could not be known immediately.

The injured are Zubair Hossain, Ariful Islam, Mukasher, and Noman Hossain Roni, a Jubo League activist from Keraniganj.

Saikat Hasan Biplob, who claimed himself to be a joint convener of Keraniganj Model Thana Jubo League,

to press home the one-point demand.

Many leaders and activists of the party alleged that they had to undergo "unreasonable" security checks by law enforcement agencies at the entry points of the capital since Thursday night, which continued till Friday noon.

Delwar Hossain, a BNP supporter, said police searched him and several others at Shonir Akhra on their way to the rally from Narayanganj.

"Police arrested five of our party men who were on a microbus," he said.

BNP activist Absar Munna travelled all the way from Barishal to attend the rally.

"I came to Dhaka two days ago, fearing obstruction on the way from police and ruling party members," he told The Daily Star at the rally.

Speaking at the rally, BNP Standing Committee Member Mirza Abbas said the government used its law enforcement agencies to arrest their men who had taken shelter at hotels and the houses of their relatives during their stay in Dhaka to join their grand rally.

"What have you achieved by arresting our people? Will you be able to stop our movement?" he asked.

said they are supporters of Keraniganj Upazila Parishad Chairman Shaheen Ahmed and that they joined the rally at south gate of Baitul Mukarram national mosque.

During the programme, a scuffle broke out between them and supporters of local Awami League lawmaker Quamrul Islam. "On our way back home, the rival groups attacked us and started stabbing our men indiscriminately near Golap Shah Mazar, leaving five people injured," he said.

One of the injured, Zubair Hossain, however, is a school student. He said he had come to Gulistan to get a new cover for his mobile phone set. But he was caught in the middle of the fight, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

## Smooth for AL men

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League slogans and holding pro-Awami League banners were not stopped at the check points.

At least 353 people arrested overnight were brought to Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court. Of them 284 were shown on papers as arrested in 52 cases filed with different police stations in the city, while 69 others under sections 54, 55 and 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Nure Azam Babu, president of Sariakandi upazila BNP in Bogura, said he and over 150 other BNP supporters had to "sneak into the capital".

To avoid getting arrested on the

way, the activists divided into several small groups and started boarding buses, trains and trucks on Wednesday morning.

"My bus was checked in Boghura and in the capital's Gabtoli. I lied about the reason why I was travelling," he said, adding that two members of his team named Shyamol Mahmud and Russel Iqbal were arrested at a hotel in the Fakirapool area.

Murad Kadir, secretary of Taranagar union BNP in Keraniganj, said he and 11 other BNP activists came to Dhaka in three auto-rickshaws. They were stopped by police around 10:00am.

"All of us told different stories about where we were going," he added.

## Final exams at schools

FROM PAGE 1

30 as the next general election is likely to be held in late December or early January next year," the minister said.

She was addressing a press conference on the results of this year's SSC and equivalent exams at International Mother Language Institute in the capital's Segunbagicha yesterday.

Keeping in mind the students' trouble during electioneering, the government has already cancelled the two-week summer vacation, and that would be adjusted with the winter vacation in December, Dipu Moni added.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal on Thursday said that the schedule for the 12th parliamentary polls may be unveiled in the last week of October.

"If we don't announce the schedule in October, we will have to do it in November since there is an obligation to holding the election within 90 days," he said.

According to the constitution, the national election must be held within 90 days before the five-year term of a parliament expires.

The 11th parliament had begun its first sitting on January 30, 2019.

## Deploy

FROM PAGE 12

ambassador to ask the UN to prevent any member of Rab from being deployed in peacekeeping missions until their human rights records are investigated.

They said that the prevention should be temporary until a full and transparent investigation is done.

"The particularly egregious alleged abuses by paramilitary Rab also include torture, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings, demanding immediate condemnation," said the letter by the 14 legislators.

It was signed by Bob Good, Scott Perry, Anna Paulina-Luna, Josh Brecheen, Ralph Norman, Andrew Clyde, Eli Crane, Cory Mills, Paul A Gosar, Doug LaMalfa, Ronny L Jackson, Randy Weber, Brian Babin and Glenn Grothman on July 27.

Good tweeted, "The people of Bangladesh deserve free and fair elections. I sent a letter to the US ambassador to the UN with 13 of my colleagues, expressing concern over violence by the Bangladeshi government against peaceful demonstrators."

His office verified the authenticity of the letter to The Daily Star yesterday.

## MADRASA BOARD Pass rate, GPA-5 lowest in 5 years

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The pass rate in this year's Dakhil examinations under the Madrasa Education Board is 74.70 percent, which is the lowest in the past five years.

This year, around 2.12 lakh out of 2.85 lakh examinees passed the Dakhil exam. Of them, the number of girls is higher, at 77.02 percent, while 72.29 percent are boys.

According to inter-education board documents, the pass rate under this board was 82.22 percent last year and 93.22 percent in 2021.

The lowest pass rate in this exam is 70.89 percent, which was recorded in 2018.

Not only did the pass rate decrease this year, but there was also a significant decline in the number of students achieving GPA 5, with only 6,213 students achieving the feat, also the

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**OF LAUGHTER AND RELIEF..** Friends share a moment of joy together, grinning ear-to-ear upon achieving the coveted GPA-5 in SSC examinations. Their hard work and dedication had paid off, as the achievement marked a proud milestone in their academic journey. This photo was taken in Rajuk Uttara Model School and College yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## DHAKA BOARD Math, English drag results down

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The pass rate for students under Dhaka board in this year's SSC examinations was 77.55 percent, lowest in the last 13 years.

The reason behind such decline is the low pass rate of humanities students, and poor results in English and mathematics by many students across all disciplines, analysis of the published results show.

According to the education board's data, 4,16,426 students took the exams under Dhaka board.

Among the 15 districts under the board, Faridpur witnessed the lowest pass rate (64.07 percent) while Dhaka city saw the highest (87.43 percent). The rates were 64.69 percent in Shariatpur and 65.45 percent in Manikganj.

Pass rate for science students was 93.42 percent, while that of students in humanities and business studies were 63.54 percent and 80.37 percent respectively.

Number of examinees with the highest grade point average also decreased this year compared to last year, as only 11.12 percent (46,303) of the examinees scored GPA 5.

Dhaka Education Board Chairman Tapan Kumar Sarkar said students did not perform well in mathematics, which led to the overall poor grades.

Besides, students had to sit for exams in all subjects this time. This might also be the reason behind the poor grades, he added.

Around 80.56 percent of Dhaka board students passed in mathematics, and 90.83 percent of them passed in English exams. The numbers are lowest among the nine general boards, said board officials.

Rajshahi board students had the highest pass rates in

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## BNP leader dies after falling ill on way to rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Narayanganj BNP leader died after falling ill on his way to the party's rally at the capital's Nayapaltan yesterday afternoon.

The deceased, identified as 62-year-old Mahmudur Rahman, was a member of the convening committee of Narayanganj city unit BNP. He along with leaders and activists from the district came to Dhaka to attend the rally.

As they were marching to Nayapaltan venue around 12:45pm, Mahmudur fell ill at Dainik Bangla intersection.

He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead around 1:15pm, the deceased's elder brother Masud Rana told reporters at the hospital.

Mahmudur had been suffering from heart diseases for long, he said.

**PRAYER TIMING**  
JULY 29

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-20	12-45	5-00	6-50	8-15
JAMAAT 4-55	1-15	5-15	6-55	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## STREET CHILDREN Forgotten amid dengue outbreak

AHMAD ISTIAK

Sakib, an 11-year-old homeless child in Dhaka's Farmgate area, calls the sidewalks his home. Begging for food and money for his grandmother, he sleeps adjacent to Ananda cinema hall every night.

Like around 20 other street children this correspondent talked to, Sakib remains unaware of dengue fever. With no access to mosquito nets, they spend nights on sidewalks, railway platforms or the Sadarghat launch terminal.

Finding shelter under a polythene sheet or in a slum is their best case scenario.

Sakib recalls feeling feverish recently but recovered without medical aid. "For street children like us, treatment is not an option," he said.

According to public health experts, street children, particularly those who are involved in waste collection and management, are extremely vulnerable to dengue infection.

Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director, Disease Control, Directorate General of Health Services, told The Daily Star, "The places where street children spend most of their time have been designated as dengue hotspots. Naturally, these children have comparatively low immunity. They are also not aware of the infection."

"These children cannot even



**With no access to mosquito nets, many street children spend nights on sidewalks and footbridges in the capital, exposing themselves to dengue.**

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

realise when they have been infected by the virus," he added.

Prof Iffat Ara Shamsad, head of the paediatric department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said, "Dengue infection can be most dangerous for children. Again, street children are more vulnerable as they are unaware of this disease. We can see that many are being infected without showing any symptoms. They (street children) often do not care about the mild fever that they are suffering from."

"They are taken to the hospital only when their condition

deteriorates to a dangerous degree," added Iffat.

There is no comprehensive data about the number of street children in Dhaka. However, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics conducted a survey in 2022 with the help of Unicef titled "Survey on Street Children, 2022", where it has been estimated that the number of street children might be over one million.

According to that survey, 48.5 percent of all the street children of the country live in Dhaka division. Besides, 41 percent live in the city

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## WB approves \$300m to improve gas distribution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

World Bank has approved US\$ 300 million to help Bangladesh improve the efficiency of gas distribution and usage through pre-paid metering systems for residential and industrial consumers. The initiative will also help reduce methane emissions along the natural gas value chain.

The Gas Sector Efficiency Improvement and Carbon Abatement Project will address natural gas leakage and losses along the gas transmission and distribution network, reduce wastage from residential and industrial users, and strengthen network monitoring capabilities according to the global lender's press release issued on Thursday.

The initiative will install over 1.2 million prepaid gas meters -- 1.1 million will be deployed in Dhaka, covering 54 percent of residential customers of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited, and 128,000 in Rajshahi division covering the entire residential customer base of Pashchimanchal Gas Company Limited (PGCL), the release added.

A pilot project, involving 50 smart meters for larger

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## People have confidence in the judiciary

Says PM, inaugurates  
'Smriti Chironjib'  
memorial at SC

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said people have confidence of getting justice due to her government's initiatives for the overall development of the judiciary.

She said this while inaugurating "Smriti Chironjib" memorial monument on the Supreme Court premises as the chief guest. The event was organised by the apex court commemorating the golden jubilee of its founding.

The memorial monument was built to preserve the place from where Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered a speech after inaugurating the journey of the country's apex court on December 18, 1972.

The names of 69 lawyers martyred during the country's Liberation War are inscribed in the monument.

The premier said the apex court has already digitised its activities and keeping the cause lists, verdicts and case details online through which one can easily know the current situation of his or her case even while staying abroad.

She said her government has set a target to transform Bangladesh into a smart country by 2041. As part of the move, she said, they have taken measures to turn the legal system into a smart judiciary.

She said her government has set up virtual courts that help decrease the huge backlog of the cases.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



**Clockwise from right,** Dhaka transformed into a city of rallies yesterday. Prior to that, law enforcers set up checkpoints at the capital's entry points on Thursday night, which remained in place till the afternoon. The three associate bodies of the ruling Awami League held a "peace rally" near the south gate of Baitul Mukarram. BNP organised its "grand rally" at Nayapaltan around the same time.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, RASHED SHUMON, AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Sushanti Barua no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sushanti Barua, 95, mother of journalist and Jatiya Press Club member Khokon Barua, is no more.

She died at her residence in Chattogram's Raujan on Wednesday.

Her funeral ceremony was held at her family crematorium on Thursday.

She left behind three sons, a daughter and a host of admirers to mourn her death.

## Debate competition for medical students starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day event titled "Unimed Unihealth 8th NDF BD ShSMC National Medical Debate & Cultural Festival '23" started yesterday at the capital's Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College (ShSMC) by the National Debate Federation Bangladesh (NDF BD) and ShSMC.

Around 150 people from 68 medical colleges around the country attended the festival.

During the opening ceremony, Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, Directorate General of Health Services, said, "The art and education of debate are both beneficial. It supports one's reasoning and encourages rational speech to establish right behaviour."

"From all parts of Bangladesh, medical students and teachers have traveled to this debate competition. These young people will be able to overcome any obstacles in their professional and personal lives as a result of the unity and knowledge that will be created here," he added.

AKM Shoab, chairman, NDF BD, asserted, "Since medical students are the future doctors, debate among medical colleges is significant. They must interact and converse with members of every society. So, it is essential that they possess flexibility as well as creativity..."

After the inauguration ceremony and opening speeches, debate teams were formed, and quiz, song, recitation, and music video competitions were held. Following this session, young debating participants took part in the cultural event when the medical students performed.

## TQM expert Prof Noriaki Kano arrives tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Noriaki Kano, an expert on Total Quality Management (TQM), will arrive in Dhaka tomorrow on a three-day visit.

During his visit, he will attend launching ceremony of "Kano-BSTQM Quality Award" at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel at 6:00pm on the same day. Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi is expected to attend the programme as the chief guest.

Bangladesh Society for Total Quality Management, a voluntary organisation, has invited him to visit Bangladesh from July 30 to August 1.

During the visit, he will be delivering speeches on "TQM" at various events. He will be the chief guest in the 26th National Annual Quality Convention at 9:00am on July 31.

Dr Kano is the professor emeritus of the Tokyo University of Science. He is the founder chairman of the Asian Network of Quality.



More than 100 bridges constructed over various canals in Barguna remain dilapidated due to a lack of maintenance. As a result, locals, especially workers and students, continue to suffer.

PHOTO: STAR

# 147 Barguna bridges lie unrepaired

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

As many as 147 iron bridges out of 200 have been unusable in Barguna for a long time due to a lack of maintenance and repair, causing immense suffering to thousands of locals.

More than 200 such bridges were constructed over canals in the district under "Light vehicles transport project" of Local Government Engineering Department in 1997-98 fiscal year, LGED sources said.

But 147 of those bridges have become dilapidated as those have not been taken care of since their construction. Among the damaged bridges, 28 are in Sadar, 18 in Betagi, 42 in Bamna, 7 in Taltali, 22 in Amtali and 30 in Patharghata upazilas.

Cyclones like Sidr, Aila, Mahasen, Bulbul, Yas and Ampan caused damage to the bridges. Besides, various parts of those bridges were stolen. Parts of many

of these bridges have collapsed and locals use those with great risk.

In 2018, the bridge over Subandhi canal collapsed near Locha Government Primary School in Amtali. It has been unusable since then.

Dulal Mia, a local resident, said, "Although this bridge collapsed several years ago, no steps were taken to repair it."

Although students and pedestrians use it at risk, the vehicular movement has totally been stopped.

Similarly, the bridge over Chawra canal in Amtali broke down in June, 2021.

Another bridge in

Mahishdanga village of Amtali has caved in and stayed in this state for two years. The residents walked on the bridges with risk.

Sumon Mallik from the area said at least 20,000 people of 10 villages – including students of eight educational institutions – are suffering due to the bridge collapse.

To minimise the suffering, locals have made a makeshift bamboo bridge at that place; but it has become fragile now.

Asaduzzaman Mallik, chairman of Haldia Union Parishad in Amtali, said, "In my area, five bridges have been broken. People cannot move through those."

Locals' suffering will not end

until the bridges are rebuilt, he said.

Moreover, the iron bridge near Haldia Bazar has cracked.

Saidul Pada, a local trader of the market, said thousands of people cross this bridge every day. At present, it is impassable and may collapse at any time.

In Sadar upazila, an iron bridge has been damaged for two years.

Nazrul Islam, a resident of Bibakhattar area in the upazila, said a portion of the bridge has broken in the middle. However, hundreds of auto-rickshaws and motorcycles are still plying this bridge every day due to lack of an alternative path, he said.

Contacted, Supriya Mukherjee, executive engineer of LGED in Barguna, said, "Initiatives have been taken to rebuild these bridges. I have spoken to senior officials about the issue several times. I hope, tenders for these bridges may be offered by the end of this year."



## Youth crushed under wheels of train in port city

UNB, Ctg

An unidentified youth was crushed under the wheels of a train in Dewanhat area of the port city yesterday.

Salauddin Khan Noman, sub-inspector of Chattogram Railway Police Station, said locals spotted the body on the Dhaka-Chattogram rail track after a train crossed the area in the morning.

Police recovered and sent the body to Chattogram Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy, he said, adding that they were trying to find out the identity of the deceased.

## Dhaka air quality 'moderate'

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka's air quality was in the "moderate" zone yesterday. With an air quality index score of 66 at 9:06am, the capital ranked 25th on the list of cities worldwide with the worst air quality.

An AQI between 50 and 100 is considered "moderate" and acceptable. An AQI between 101 and 200 is considered "unhealthy" and AQI between 201 and 300 is "poor" while a reading of 301 to 400 is considered "hazardous".

In Bangladesh, the AQI is based on five criteria pollutants – Particulate Matter (PM10 and PM2.5), NO2, CO, SO2 and Ozone.

Dhaka has long been grappling with air pollution issues. Its air quality usually turns unhealthy in winter and improves during the monsoon.

## Forgotten amid

FROM PAGE 3

corporation areas. The survey stated that 20.9 percent of these children are involved in waste collection activities.

Dr Fazlul Haque, chairman of Pathashishu Kallyan Trust, told The Daily Star, "Many street children have been suffering silently from dengue. However, we do not know about their sufferings as they are not being diagnosed."

"We have already taken steps to increase awareness among the street children who are living in Mohakhali bus terminal, Karwan Bazar and in several congested parts of Dhaka and outside the city as well. Our mobile teams are providing free dengue tests and medicine to street children. We need concerted efforts from all quarters to overcome this challenge," he added.

When asked about what

the government should do to tackle the situation, Prof Be-Nazir said, "We have a severe lack of reliable data. This is a serious obstacle to fight the spread of dengue virus (among street children)."

"The government should establish medical centres in every ward of both the city corporations to provide free dengue tests and primary treatment. They will also be able to refer serious patients to the designated hospitals," he added.

"The city corporations, health ministry, municipalities and agencies concerned have to act as one body to fight this disease. Citizens should also cooperate with the government bodies," he added.

(Translated by Md Shahnawaz Khan Chandan)

## Illegal dams disrupt

FROM PAGE 5

Al Amin Khan, one of the fish farmers, said, "We are cultivating fish in a part of the canal. Many others are doing the same. If they relinquish their possession over it, we will also unblock the canal."

Other fish farmers, who are illegally using the canal, declined to comment.

Patuakhali Sadar Upazila Agricultural Extension Officer Mostafizur Rahman said, "I raised this matter in the monthly upazila development and

coordination meeting last month."

"The UNO asked me to investigate the matter and inform him about it. I have already visited the area and found the allegations to be true," he added.

He said measures will be taken in this regard, subject to his discussions with the upazila nirbahi officer.

Contacted, Patuakhali Sadar UNO Saifur Rahman said blocking a flowing canal is a crime. All illegal dams on the canal will be removed soon, he assured.

## People have confidence

FROM PAGE 3

Hasina said they have introduced legal aid assistances for the poor and insolvent litigants in all courts across the country to ensure justice for all.

Since assuming office, her government has been working tirelessly to ensure justice for all, she continued.

The premier also thanked the judiciary for the verdict declaring the 15th amendment to the constitution illegal that stopped grabbing state power illegally and smoothened the path of democracy.

The PM said they will establish a law university in Bangladesh aimed at ensuring world class education for law graduates.

Hasina hoped that justice, democratic, socio-economic and cultural rights will be prevailing in the country in days to come.

At the event, Hasina laid foundation of the

SC's "Record Bhaban". She also unveiled the cover of a publication of the SC, "Amader Bicharaloy".

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Chief Justice Hasan Fozz Siddique and Law Minister Anisul Huq spoke on the occasion.

Justice Obaidul Hassan gave the address of welcome.

## Math, English

FROM PAGE 3

English (96.82 percent), while Jashore board examinees had the highest pass rates in mathematics (98.89 percent). According to the Dhaka board, it had a pass rate of 90.03 percent in 2022 and 93.15 percent in 2021. Both exams were held with a shortened syllabus due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The board's pass rates from 2011 to 2020 are 84.65, 85.96, 87.31, 93.95, 88.65, 88.67, 86.39, 81.48, 79.62, and 82.34 percent respectively.



Three men collect Aman paddy seedlings in Karapur area of Barishal Sadar. They said they make around Tk 600 every day for the work, which begins at 7:00am and ends with the setting of the sun. The seedlings are usually planted during monsoon and later transferred to other arable lands. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## WB approves \$300m

FROM PAGE 3

industrial users, will also be rolled out to demonstrate the viability of smart meters to better monitor and manage gas use in the industrial sector.

The project will also install a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition and Geographic Information System on PGCL's network

to improve gas flow monitoring and help reduce methane leaks. Overall, it will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emission and better monitor gas networks to help identify and repair methane leaks.

"Improving energy efficiency will be crucial for Bangladesh to achieve its 2021 Nationally Determined Contributions

commitment of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030," said Abdoulaye Seck, World Bank country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

Sameh I Mobarek, World Bank senior energy specialist and team leader for project, noted that Bangladesh's biggest source of greenhouse gas emission comes from the oil and gas sector.

## Pass rate, GPA-5

FROM PAGE 3

lowest number in the past five years. Furthermore, it also falls short by more than half compared to last year's 15,457 students.

In 2021, there were 14,313 students who achieved GPA 5; 7,516 in 2020, and 6,287 in 2019.

Additionally, despite a little dip compared to last year, the technical board's 86.35 percent pass rate nevertheless outperformed

that of general and madrasa students.

The pass rate in the general education board this year is 80.94 percent.

As many as 1.05 lakh vocational students passed out of 1.22 lakh students this year, while 18,145 students earned GPA 5.

Meanwhile, 375 students appeared for SSC from abroad in eight foreign exam centres this year, of which 320 have passed.

INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY

# Tiger footage spurs hope for big cat population

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

The number of Bengal tigers in the Sundarbans have increased in the last five years, according to forest department officials.

However, they are yet to figure out the numbers.



As per the officials, they came up with the observation following a four-month long camera trapping study covering 2,600 kilometres in the west zone of the forest.

"We are scrutinising the images obtained through camera trapping. We will be



FILE PHOTO

able to round off to numbers after completing the analysis," said Abu Naser Mohsin Hossain, divisional forest officer of Sundarban West Forest Division.

Around 1,300 cameras were set up at different spots in the zone for the survey during January to April this year, said officials.

Of the total, tiger images were captured by around 55 percent of the installed cameras. The assumption was based on this observation, informed a

study-team member, wishing anonymity.

"Images of tigers, including those of mothers and cubs, were recorded on cameras. Now, we will analyse their stripes and movements to calculate the numbers. But we assume that the number of tigers have increased since the last census that was conducted in 2018," he added.

There were 114 tigers in the Sundarbans in Bangladesh, according to the last survey conducted in 2018.

The forest department conducted the new study to update information in this regard.

"The camera trapping is very helpful if one looks to study tiger and other animal behaviours," said Mihir Kumar, conservator of forest in Khulna circle.

In the second phase of the study, the department will begin a similar study at the Eastern Forest Division of the Sundarbans. The study will commence in November this year.

CHATTOGRAM-10

## Campaigning ends, by-polls tomorrow

STAR REPORT

With the by-polls for Chattoagram-10 (Double Mooring, Pahartoli, Halishahar) scheduled to take place tomorrow, the electoral campaign ended yesterday midnight.



Public holiday has been declared in the constituency on the voting day.

"The voting will take place through 1,261 polling booths in 156 centres. Starting from 8:00am, it will go on till 4:00pm through Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)," reports BSS citing returning officer and Chattoagram Regional Polling Officer Mohammad Hasanuzzaman.

"We have kept a total of 2,110 EVMs for the voting," he added.

A total of 4,106 police personnel will be on duty tomorrow, while eight executive magistrates and two judicial magistrates will be on the field from today till August 1 to avoid any untoward incidents, he said.

Although four candidates are contesting from different political parties, only the Awami League candidate campaigned in full swing.

Md Mohiuddin Bachchu, Shamsul Alam, Dipak Kumar Pali and Rashid Miah are contesting in the polls from Awami League, Jatiya Party, Trinamool BNP and Ganamukti Jote respectively.

According to locals, as BNP is not participating in the election, the AL candidate is in a comfort zone.

The parliament secretariat on June 4 declared Chattoagram-10 constituency vacant following the demise of AL lawmaker Afsarul Amin.

## Illegal dams disrupt farming

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Patuakhali*

Eight illegal dams, built for fish cultivation, have caused waterlogging in 500 acres of agricultural land in the Patuakhali Sadar upazila. As a result, Aman cultivation in the area has been disrupted.

A year ago, Al Amin Khan, Hanif Khan and Halim Khan, along with some other locals, blocked the one-kilometre-long canal which flows between West Hetalia and South Birajla villages of the Madarbania Union, and began their fishing operation.

Local farmers have sought immediate intervention from the upazila administration to remove these illegal dams.

Abdul Khalek Akon, a local farmer, said previously, water was being removed from the agricultural land of the area through the connecting canal. Now, due to the waterlogging, uncertainty has arisen over the Aman cultivation in the area.

"I made a written application to the Patuakhali Sadar UNO a month back, requesting to remove these



PHOTO: STAR

dams. But so far, there has been no solution," he added.

Md Farooq Biswas, another farmer from the village, said, "Due to the illegal fishing in the canal, our agricultural land gets submerged during the monsoons. If the water doesn't recede, we will not be able to cultivate Aman in the land."

Another farmer, Abdul Mannan Biswas, said action should be taken against those who cultivate fish by making dams in a flowing canal.

A local housewife in the area

noted that the canal water had become polluted due to the illegal fishing activities, which had stopped the flow of water. Now, the water can no longer be used for domestic purposes.

While visiting the area recently, this correspondent noticed that an area of the canal was blocked and made into a pond for fish cultivation. In another spot, some people have filled a part of the canal and built a cattle shed.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

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## EMISSION REDUCTION No consensus in G20 climate talks

REUTERS, Chennai

Climate talks between representatives of the Group of 20 countries (G20) failed to reach a consensus on emission reduction and mitigation targets, an official said.

Developed countries in the group demanded mitigation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2025 to limit global warming to around 1.5°C, and a reduction of absolute GHG emissions by 43 percent by 2030.

Both demands were opposed by developing countries, the official, who did not want to be named, said.

The EU's Environment Commissioner criticised the outcome of the meeting in the Indian city of Chennai, which he said showed G20 countries were "nowhere" on their commitments to address climate change.



A caravan wades past a string of buoys, being constructed to deter migrants crossings through the Rio Grande river, as they look for an opening in the concertina wire to enter into Eagle Pass, Texas, US n Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Junta kills 3 Myanmar students

AFP, Bangkok

At least three Myanmar students were killed in an early morning military raid in the country's northwest, a student union said yesterday.

The All Burma Federation of Student Unions said in a Facebook post that the students had been killed in a raid on an office where activists stayed in the Sagaing region's Budalin township.

A local villager who declined to be named due to fear of reprisals said the three student activists, aged late teens to early 20s, had died from stab wounds.

"They stabbed knives into their chests. They cut out their tongues," the villager told AFP, adding that at least five houses had been burnt down in the incident and an unknown number of people arrested.

## 'End Ukraine war'

African leaders press Putin; Moscow intercepted missile targeting Russian city; Qatari PM pledges USD 100 million to Ukraine

REUTERS, Moscow

African leaders pressed Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday to move ahead with their peace plan to end the Ukraine war and to renew a deal on the export of Ukrainian grain that Moscow tore up last week.

While not directly critical of Russia, their interventions on the second day of a summit with Putin were more concerted and forceful than those that African countries have voiced until now.

Meanwhile, Russia yesterday said it intercepted a Ukrainian missile, with debris falling on the southwestern Russian city of Taganrog, near the border with Ukraine, injuring more than a dozen people.

Qatar will provide Ukraine with USD 100 million in humanitarian aid to support health, education and demining, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said after talks with the Gulf state's prime

minister.

Qatar yesterday announced that Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, who also serves as foreign minister, was visiting Ukraine.



"This money will be channelled for reconstruction in the health and education sectors, humanitarian de-mining, and other important social and humanitarian projects," Shmyhal told a joint briefing.

During the second day of

Russia-Africa summit, African Union Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat told Putin and African leaders in St Petersburg that "this war must end. And it can only end on the basis of justice and reason."

"The disruptions of energy and grain supplies must end immediately. The grain deal must be extended for the benefit of all the peoples of the world, Africans in particular."

Reuters reported in June that the African plan floats a series of possible steps to defuse the conflict including a Russian troop pull-back, removal of Russian tactical nuclear weapons from Belarus, suspension of an International Criminal Court arrest warrant against Putin, and sanctions relief.

Putin gave it a polite but cool reception when African leaders presented it to him last month. On Friday he said Moscow respected the proposal and was carefully studying it.

## MANIPUR SEXUAL ASSAULT

Case handed over to CBI

INDEPENDENT ONLINE

India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will probe the sexual assault of women whose video of being paraded naked sent shockwaves across the country.

Home minister Amit Shah on Thursday announced that CBI will take over the probe from the local police in the northeastern state of Manipur.

The video of two women from the minority Kuki community being paraded naked and assaulted by a mob of men triggered outrage in India and drew international condemnation, prompting authorities to finally take action after two months.

Police have arrested seven people, including a juvenile, in connection with the case so far.

## NIGER COUP

# Head of president guard declares himself leader

AFP, Niamey

Niger's putschists named an army general as the new leader of the unstable jihadist-hit nation yesterday and warned against any foreign military intervention.

General Abdourahmane Tchiani, head of the Presidential Guard since 2011, appeared on state television saying he was the "president of the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland".

The general presented the coup as a response to "the degradation of the security situation" linked to jihadist bloodshed.

A statement followed from the putschists on TV which warned of "the consequences that will flow from any foreign military intervention".

"Certain dignitaries .. are in thinking of confrontation" which "will end in nothing but the massacre of the Nigerian population and chaos," they claimed.

On the third day since President Mohamed Bazoum was detained, former colonial master France demanded the restoration of the democratically elected government saying it "does not recognise" the putschists, and calling Bazoum "sole president".

The coup has prompted mounting international concern, and yesterday Kenyan President William Ruto called the army takeover "a serious setback" for Africa.

"The aspirations of the people of Niger for constitutional democracy were subverted by an unconstitutional change of government," he said in a video message.

The European Union threatened to cut aid to Niamey.

## US PRESIDENTIAL POLLS

# Trump vows to continue campaign if sentenced Faces fresh charges

AFP, Washington



Former US president Donald Trump said yesterday he would not end his run for the White House if he were convicted and sentenced in any of the criminal investigations mounting against him.

The 77-year-old Republican frontrunner was asked about his reaction to the federal and state charges he faces as he bids for a second term in 2024, a day after federal prosecutors added three felony counts to the indictment against him over his handling of classified documents.

Asked by right wing radio host John Fredericks if being sentenced would stop his campaign, he quickly responded: "Not at all. There's nothing in the Constitution to say that it could."

Trump said previous presidents including Barack Obama and George W Bush "took documents... Nobody has ever gone through this. This is crazy," he added, mischaracterizing the law and a previous civil dispute over presidential documents to argue that he had done nothing wrong.

## Israel judicial reform 'minor correction'

Says Netanyahu

AFP, Washington

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday minimised his hard-right government's judicial reform package in interviews with US media, calling it a "minor correction" while dismissing international and domestic criticism.

"It's described as the end of Israeli democracy -- I think that's silly and when the dust settles, everybody will see it," Netanyahu told ABC.

## Both parties

FROM PAGE 2

BNP were asked to check the rally participants with metal detectors before they entered the venue, but no such activity took place at either gathering.

Also, no fire safety systems, a requirement by the DMP, were visible at the rallies.

Though loudspeakers were allowed in the specified rally areas, they were also seen being used outside as well by both parties.

Meanwhile, neither camp followed the timeframe imposed by the DMP.

Both AL and BNP were told to begin their programmes at 2:00pm and end them by 5:00pm. However, both rallies ended around 6:30pm.

Adding to those, both parties were asked to assemble not before two hours prior to the programmes, but leaders and activists of both parties began gathering at their respective venues well before noon.

They were also directed not to create obstacles for vehicular movement on main roads, but traffic was stagnant in many areas of the capital for several hours due to both rallies.

## Don't compare

FROM PAGE 12

intelligence will be enhanced in the era of the 4th industrial revolution. "So, we'll have to attain the skills ..."

The PM congratulated the students who succeeded in this year's SSC and its equivalent examinations. She, however, urged those who couldn't succeed not to be upset, rather take better preparations for the next time to get a good result.

Education Minister Dipu Moni handed over the combined result statistics of the SSC and its equivalent examinations to the prime minister.

Later, the chairmen of 11 education boards -- nine general, one madrasa and one technical -- handed over the result statistics of their respective boards to the premier.

Hasina then published the results, which is available at the respective educational institutions and online.

Some 20,78,216 students -- 10,24,980 boys and 10,53,246 girls -- under the 11 education boards appeared for this year's SSC and its equivalent examinations. The theoretical tests were held on April 30 to May 23.

## Infrastructure improves

FROM PAGE 12

"On the other hand, thousands of unskilled and untrained drivers are on the roads while other road users are not well aware of traffic rules."

As many as 564,739 vehicles still have fitness checks due for clearance as of April 30, shows BRTA data.

Hadiuzzaman said that "the unholy nexus among the political and influential groups for their own benefits" is to blame for the persisting anarchy in the road and transport sector.

"The problem is political and thus strong political decisions can solve the problem, otherwise the situation will not change and our roads will never be safe."

Saidur Rahman, executive director of the Road Safety Foundation, an NGO, said the government had taken several initiatives following the 2018 movement, but those could not be implemented due to some vested interests.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, he blamed the resistance from transport associations to the road transport act not being fully implemented.

"Yet, the prerequisite for ensuring road safety is the full and proper use of the act."

He added that the authorities concerned are focused more on

constructing roads as foreign funds are involved. "Bringing discipline on the roads is not a priority for them."

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity said the Awami League, in its 2018 election manifesto following the road safety movement, had pledged to ensure safe roads.

"But as it [the ruling party] failed to keep its pledge, 39,522 people lost their lives in 28,299 road crashes over the last five years," it said yesterday.

Contacted, ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of the road transport and highways divisions, refuted the allegations of failing to ensure road safety and said they were constructing separate lanes on around 700km of roads for slow-moving vehicles in this regard.

He said the number of vehicles has increased but conditions of the roads have improved compared to 2018.

"All these things have to be taken into consideration before concluding whether road crashes have increased or not."

He added that many stakeholders opposed their initiatives to control the speed limits of bikes and three-wheelers in a bid to reduce the number of road accidents.

"Everyone has to play their role here. A social movement has to be waged in this regard," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

## More work needed

FROM PAGE 2

"This is something that I think businesses need to be aware of that the game is changing on how working conditions and labour rights are being seen," Gilmore said.

He said Bangladesh has had considerable experience now of working the scheme of trade preferences. "Those trade preferences are conditional. I think we have seen progress. I think what we have to be looking towards now is their [relevant conventions] implementation."

Gilmore said there is a monitoring mission that will be coming in September to discuss relevant trade and labour issues.

Asked about using human rights as tools to gain politically, he said, "We see human rights are universal. They belong to people, they belong to people everywhere, doesn't matter what the political composition of a government or deeper political system in a country. These are rights that belong to individual people everywhere."

Gilmore said the human rights tools are established to ensure that people can enjoy those rights equally. "And that's what we support. And across the work to the European Union, we work to an action plan, which has been agreed by our 27 member states. And that action plan is rolled out across the countries around the world for the European Union as delegations."

The EU special representative also held meetings with Law Minister Anisul Haq, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam and discussed the "centrality of human rights" to the EU-Bangladesh relationship.

Gilmore also spent time in the Rohingya camps during his five-day visit to Bangladesh with a wide-ranging agenda.

## Four more die

FROM PAGE 12

According to the DGHS data, a total of 6,766 people in the 21-25 age group were hospitalised with dengue infection as of yesterday. Of them, 24 died.

During the same period, a total of 5,959 people in the 26-30 age group were hospitalised. Of them, 22 died.

## Pass rate hits 13-year low

FROM PAGE 1

She also emphasised the need to further improve the quality of education and take measures so that the children of the country can keep up with the rest of the world.

13-YEAR LOW

Unveiling the results at a press conference in the capital, Education Minister Dipu Moni said 16,33,919 students sat for the SSC exams this year, from April 30 to May 28, after a two-month delay.

The delay, she said, was due to the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, along with floods in Sylhet and other regions.

Around 81 percent of the examinees passed this year -- lower than last year's 88.10. Board officials said this year's pass rate was the lowest since 2010, when it was 78.19.

The number of students with GPA-5 was 1,59,220 -- 75,543 less than last year's.

Taking into account the Dakhl exams under the madrasa board and SSC vocational tests under the technical board, the combined pass rate was 80.39 percent -- a drop from last year's 87.44.

Meanwhile, 1,83,578 students under those boards combined got GPA-5 -- 86,024 less than last year's 2,69,602.

Mymensingh education board Chairman Professor Gazi Hasan Kamal said poor performances in Sylhet and Dhaka boards dragged the entire pass rate down.

Sylhet had the lowest pass rate -- 78.82 percent -- among all general boards.

Prof Tapan Kumar Sarker, chairman of the Dhaka education board and chief of the Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee, said the pass rate came down as students were tested on a higher number of subjects than last year.

Dipu Moni reiterated that last year's pass rate was higher due to a lower number of subjects. "This

year's pass rate is similar to those of the normal times in the pre-Covid period."

Prof Tapan and Sylhet Board's exam controller Arun Chandra Paul also blamed poor performances in mathematics as another reason for the success rate to fall this year.

"The pass rate was also low among humanities students as their number, compared to students of other disciplines, is higher," Arun said.

Inter-education board results show 71.72 percent of humanities students passed the exams, while the percentage of science students was 94 and of business students was 82.

This year, Dhaka board's pass rate too hit a 13-year low at 77.55 percent, officials said.

Under it, 63.54 percent of humanities students passed. While 80.56 percent of the students sitting for mathematics were able to clear the hurdle -- the lowest among all general boards.

On the other hand, the Barishal board had a 90.18 pass rate -- the highest among all boards, while Dhaka topped in terms of GPA-5 achievers.

## GIRLS LEAD AGAIN

For the seventh year in a row, girl students had a higher pass rate compared to their male counterparts, while they had a higher number of GPA-5s for the sixth consecutive year.

This year, 82.39 percent girls passed the exams, while the boys' success rate was 79.34 percent. On the other hand, 88,245 girls achieved GPA-5 -- 17,270 higher than the number of boys.

At the press conference, Dipu Moni said they will try to hold the SSC and equivalent examinations in the first week of February from next year, like before.

She also called upon all political parties to refrain from holding any programmes during pre-scheduled exam routines, so as to not hamper the education of children.

DHAKA'S BURGEONING CONCERT INDUSTRY

# Organisers scramble to find THEIR NICHE

**Two contrasting scenarios took place in Dhaka over the past two days as fans forked over upwards of Tk 4000 for a concert by Indian Star Ritviz on Thursday, while ICCB's concert with bands like Aurthohin, Warfaze and AvoidRafa on Friday, got cancelled due to political programmes and the organisers' fear for safety.**

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

While the sheer number of recent concerts give rise to the notion that it is a highly profitable business, organisers have to be very careful to curate their shows according to the own niche that they establish, to reach the correct crowd. Rudan Al Amin, CEO and Founder of *Dhaka Broadcast*, is a relatively young entrepreneur who prides on giving audiences highly streamlined and smooth concert experience.

"We started in 2022, and tried to bring in The Local Train for a concert in Dhaka. Unfortunately, they had to cancel, but we stuck to our guns and tried to give people the best that we could," he told The Daily Star. Dhaka Broadcast went on to host many successful events including Karnival's solo show, the Mixtape series and ones featuring international artistes like Ritviz and Taalpatar Shepai.

On being asked if their ticket prices are out of reach for the average concert enthusiast, Rudan said that it is the cost of bringing in an international artist, added to the no-stone-unturned approach to the sound and lights that drive the prices up. "Its not like we are making huge profits from the shows that we are doing. In 60 percent of these shows, we could just break even, while we could see marginal profit in the rest. It is a huge gamble when we are investing upwards of Tk 30-40 lakhs for a show."

*Triple Time Communications* have made quite the impact after hosting concerts with Indian stars Anuv Jain and Anupam Roy. While they were criticised for mismanagement in the former show, they put forth a much better effort in their last concert that featured Arnob, Meghdol, Hatirpool Sessions, Taalpatar Shepai, alongside Anupom Roy himself. Nabil Ahmed, the CEO of Triple Time Communications told The Daily Star that while it can cost more than Tk 70 lakhs to organise and market a big concert, the ventures have overall been profitable for them. "We got some great responses for the concerts that we have organised thus far," said Nabil, who wants to continue to bring



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



Anupam Roy performs at a Dhaka concert.

PHOTO: THABIT AL BASHAR

international artistes, while simultaneously promoting local ones. "You'll notice that even though we highlighted Anupam Roy, Arnob was the headliner of the show, as he performed last. In no way do we want to imply that our local acts are any less than ones from abroad."

*SkyTracker Limited* has been one of the most well known and consistent show organisers in recent memory, with their series *Dhaka Rock Fest* being a landmark series every winter. However, according to their CEO, Doza Alan, they will not organise any concert this year. "There are simply too many concerts going on, the market is oversaturated," he told The Daily Star. "We have been in this industry for years, so it saddens me when I see people talking negatively about concerts and mismanagement," said Doza, who says that the most common scenario for his concerts are break-evens or marginal profits.

"Fatigue will set in, if people keep seeing the same bands doing the same sets in all shows," he says, insisting that newer bands also have to be given a chance. "I am looking to do more shows outside Dhaka, as the capital is now seeing shows on a random basis," he concluded.

Fresh off *Summercon 2023*, one of the most ambitious 3-day events in recent memory, Mediaquest co-founder Tariqul Sumon shared his experience with The Daily Star. "I participated in a Comicon in Bangkok in 2016, and had been nurturing the idea of hosting a 3-day pop-culture event with bands ever since then, this was my dream project." Even though the event received positive reviews for its management, the event momentarily fell into disarray as some hooligans started an incident, throwing rocks and other paraphernalia

towards the venue. Despite that, 30 bands performed in the event throughout three days, without much of a hiccup.

"I feel like it was a deliberate attempt by an organised group of miscreants to thwart the concert there," said Sumon. The incident was a catalyst behind ICCB itself temporarily suspending all concerts, putting the entire Dhaka music scene in a limbo. Thankfully, the authorities seem to have backed away from the decision. "It was a huge undertaking, the event cost around 70-75 Lakhs, and we had sponsors back out at the last minute." Despite the challenges, the organisers were able to build a brand that they could take into the future. "We will continue Summercon, taking into account the lessons that we have learned from this."

*24/7 Communications* have taken a different approach to a show, as they plan to feature young stars Xeler, Muza and Dameer as the leads for *Dhaka Groove*. "It is definitely a risk featuring such young talents, but if you notice carefully, these artists have a huge following internationally as well as locally, on streaming sites such as Spotify. Our target group is very young, and I feel like they will appreciate this lineup," said Kazi Naihaur Rahman, CEO, 24/7 Communications. The concert, which has since been postponed, will also feature a big surprise, according to the organisers.

In a city where most youth are confined to social circle jerks of restaurants and malls; these concerts are much-needed injections of life. Whilst there is a risk of fatigue and overuse, as it is with any industry, it is important that organisers persevere and stick to what makes them unique. Moreover, the need-of-the-hour dictates that they also find alternative venues all over Dhaka to make sure it isn't an entire day's investment for an individual to attend one.

TRENDY STREAMS

**Netflix**  
The Pope's Exorcist



**Chorki**  
Patalghor



**Hoichoi**  
Dugdugi



**Hulu**  
The Jewel Thief



**Amazon Prime**  
Good Omens: season 2



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



**Armeen Musa live at AFD**  
August 4 | 7 pm  
Alliance Française de Dhaka



**Dhaka Theater celebrates 50 years**  
July 29 | 5 pm  
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



**Bhogoban Paliye Giyeche**  
July 31- 1 August | 9 pm  
Experimental Theater Hall, Bangladesh Shilpokala Academy

WHAT'S ON THE GRAM?

**Ramzan Miah**



The South Asian Ken doll, Ramzan Miah posted this photo to reflect on his *Barbie* journey. Seated atop a director's chair with Barbie printed across the back, the actor-model can be seen in a black robe and sleek glasses, resting after a shot. The scenery around him unfolds the set of *Barbie*, like all the other chairs surrounding the venue. Ramzan was also present at the Bangladeshi premiere of the film, taking part in the pink-hued festivities with a plethora of other celebrities.



TV TALKIES

# THE BEAR

This FX drama chronicles the story of Carmy, a fine-dining chef who travels to Chicago to run his family's restaurant that passes to him after his brother's untimely death. The series starts off in the middle of it all, the dinner rush, the adrenaline and the reluctance Carmy (Jeremy Allen White) faces from an entourage that refuses to accept him as a chef.



Much like life, *The Bear* looks at the dysfunctional parts of running a kitchen and blending into a new workspace, how difficult it might be if your work morals stem from different places. The morals also act as mirrors of old and new traditions, while Carmy's are shaped by his oppressive and abusive boss, his co-workers rely on a more loyalty-based motive. *The Bear* is a fast-paced look into an industry that is usually sugar coated for the masses, and a look at how people from different backgrounds come together to make something work.

WHAT'S PLAYING

## Ritviz- Aas Paas

On Thursday, Indian artiste Ritviz performed at Aloki in Gulshan and has the Dhaka dwellers still humming his songs. *Aas Paas* is from his album *Mimmi*, which was co-written by his mother. The song starts off in familiar tempos of the 70s to 80s, and speaks about how even when he is far, he is somewhere close by. The almost 2-minute song is not a lengthy serenade but does do its best to tug at a few heartstrings, seeing how it belongs to an album that is personal and self-reflective.



The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

## How can a road crumble in just three years?

Khulna-Satkhira highway fiasco serves as a wake-up call for development authorities

The state of Bangladesh's construction projects is once again under the spotlight after news has emerged of the deplorable condition of the Khulna-Satkhira regional highway. According to a report by this daily, this 64km road, after being renovated in 2020, has all but crumbled within a mere three years, leaving us with yet another example of poor planning and lax quality control in the government's infrastructure endeavours.

Reportedly, the renovation project – taken up by the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in 2018 – involved a budget of Tk 160 crore as well as a plan to widen the road from 18 to 36 feet, with the inclusion of culverts, drainage systems, and strategically placed bus stops. All this was meant to boost connectivity and economic progress in the region. The project, completed in June 2020, was among the 100 roads and highways inaugurated by the prime minister the following year. However, three years on, it now lies dilapidated, riddled with potholes, and with patches of rutted bitumen strewn particularly in the 33km stretch of the road in Khulna. This, according to local residents and drivers, has led to a surge in accidents, putting innocent lives at risk.

The question is: how can a road, reopened with so much fanfare and promise, fall into disrepair within just three years? The obvious suspect – as locals were quick to point out – is the use of substandard materials during its construction. We have seen this happen in case of so many other projects – roads, bridges, culverts – as well. In fact, it was only yesterday that we commented on the woeful state of two newly constructed bridges in Lalmonirhat that had also suffered from poor planning and workmanship. In case of the Khulna-Satkhira highway, the RHD tried to shift the blame to heavy vehicles, especially overloaded stone-laden trucks coming from the Bhomra Land Port. This is nothing but an attempt to deflect responsibility. While excessive traffic and overloading can undoubtedly contribute to road wear and tear, it cannot be the sole reason for its rapid deterioration. The construction of any road should be robust enough to withstand expected traffic for a considerable time.

This points to a serious lack of oversight and quality control measures, which is why we are not much convinced by the Khulna RHD executive engineer's assurance about the planned upgradation of the regional highway into a national one. We cannot be trapped into an endless cycle of costly upgradation/renovation projects that promise so much but deliver so little. Evidently, what we are dealing with is a systemic problem. And it needs to be dealt with systemically. We urge the government to conduct a thorough review of all ongoing and completed construction projects to ensure that they meet the highest quality standards, and to protect them from premature damage. There must be accountability in all such projects.

## Gender-biased sex selection must end

A national guideline is a good first step

It is truly distressing that despite the grandiloquent promises of women's empowerment in Bangladesh, we are still a long way from ensuring their safety, much less their full potential. A woman's fight for survival in this patriarchal world is so ruthless that it starts from the womb, with an overwhelming majority of families still preferring sons over daughters – and some going to extreme lengths to terminate the pregnancy when they find out they are going to have a girl child. As new technologies that can identify the sex of a foetus at early stages of pregnancy become more easily available, the risk of gender-biased sex selection also increases, according to experts.

Given the depressing reality, we welcome the formulation of a national guideline for the prevention of gender-biased sex selection, which aims to create awareness about preventing the misuse of prenatal diagnosis procedures and tests for determining the sex of the foetus at any time of the pregnancy, as well as the abuse of infertility treatment for sex selection. The guideline was adopted as per a High Court directive in 2020, which also prohibited medical professionals from divulging the sex of a foetus during prenatal procedures.

Unfortunately, despite the court order, families can still easily access the information in many medical establishments across the country. Thus, it is imperative that key stakeholders, such as medical staff, are engaged and sensitised about the ethical, social and demographic implications of sex selection, which the guideline proposes to do.

A study conducted by the University of Dhaka with support from UNFPA found that both men and women preferred sons over daughters, but that women were more likely to want sons than men. This may be because in many families, particularly in rural areas, women are still blamed when they give birth to daughters and are valued less for their failure to provide a male heir. Experts suggest that even the knowledge that they are carrying girls can at times lead mothers to suffer from depression and fail to provide adequate care and nutrition to their foetuses during pregnancy. All these suggest that a lot more needs to be done to establish gender equality in the country. There must be renewed focus on challenging entrenched patriarchal norms that still undervalue women to such an enormous extent that their very birth is considered a curse.

# Serving a party is against the oath of BPSC



Kamal Ahmed is an independent journalist. His Twitter handle is @ahmedkai

KAMAL AHMED

Finding a member of a constitutional body in a sub-committee of the ruling party may not seem something innocuous. But naming Prof Delwar Hossain, who is a member of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC), as a member of Bangladesh Awami League's international affairs sub-committee has stoked quite a controversy. According to the media, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader approved the 56-member sub-committee for 2022-25 on July 24.

It is the second instance in less than two and a half years in which a constitutional office holder has been included in the ruling party's organisational structure. Previously, the Awami League included Attorney General AM Amin Uddin in its sub-committee on information and research affairs on February 18, 2021. But the party dropped the attorney general from the sub-committee merely a few days later amid criticism, which is why Prof Delwar Hossain's appointment as a party functionary is quite puzzling. Does it mean that the ruling party no longer thinks that keeping constitutional offices free from its clutches is necessary?

**People with multiple commitments and working for the better future of the country and society do need appreciation and encouragement. But there are quite a few offices in which the holder has to confine themselves within their remit and sacrifice many other things, including not-for-profit work.**

In a way, Delwar Hossain's constitutional position is more restrictive than that of the attorney general, though the latter's office appears higher in order in the constitution. The constitution doesn't impose any bar on the person holding the office of the attorney general from being eligible for future

appointments in services of the republic.

But as far as the office of the members of the BPSC is concerned, the constitution unambiguously debar the person from any such service. Article 139(4) stipulates: On ceasing to hold office, a member of a public service commission shall not be eligible for further employment in the service of the Republic, but, subject to the provisions of Clause (1), (a) a chairman so ceasing shall be eligible for re-appointment for one further term; and (b) a member (other than the chairman) so ceasing shall be eligible for re-appointment for one further term as chairman of a public service commission.

This specific and stricter disqualification for any future service of the republic can have only one purpose, which is to ensure one's neutrality and restraint from responding to any kind of enticement. In this case, at least, the framers of our constitution did realise the gravity of the question of conflict of interest. It has also been reflected in the prescribed oath of office for

the members of BPSC in the third schedule of the constitution. The last line in the sacred oath says, "And that I will not allow my personal interest to influence my official conduct or my official decisions." Arguably, belonging to a party forum brings in some degree of political commitment to the party, which is bound to influence someone's judgement.

appointing him to a very important constitutional position. This practice of political appointments has been going on for successive governments, but has now reached an unprecedented level, which has led to a widely held perception that all state institutions have been fully captured by the party in power. Delwar's failure to recuse himself from the activities of



Prof Delwar Hossain, second from left, gets sworn in as a member of Bangladesh Public Service Commission on February 7, 2022.

FILE PHOTO: BSS

Delwar, a former chairman of the Department of International Relations at Dhaka University, told the media that he did not apply for the party position, but was made one of the expert members of the committee anyway. However, AL International Affairs Secretary Shammi Ahmed told a local daily that Delwar had been informed of his inclusion and gave his consent. If the professor is to be believed, then the Awami League stands accused of forming an expert committee by not only ignoring the constitution, but also imposing a responsibility upon someone without even checking whether he is willing or not. No one is doubting Delwar's scholarly abilities and contribution to the country's foreign policy area, but it is hard to believe that the ruling party, which could find 55 other willing experts, would have been crippled without him.

Prof Delwar Ahmed has been well-known in the academic circle and beyond as an ardent supporter of the Awami League, and understandably it was one of the prerequisites of a political government to consider

Awami League gives further credence to such a perception.

People with multiple commitments and working for the better future of the country and society do need appreciation and encouragement. But there are quite a few offices in which the holder has to confine themselves within their remit and sacrifice many other things, including not-for-profit work. That's why we see Supreme Court judges or election commissioners disassociate themselves from non government organisations, be it research-oriented or charity.

The BPSC members, too, get and enjoy equal status, job protection and privileges for a purpose, which is to make them neutral and independent both in essence and appearance. If writing newspaper columns, appearing on talk shows and chairing a think tank remain someone's preference, then wouldn't it have been better for them to not take the responsibility of a constitutional office? How can serving a particular party's interest be termed as not against the oath of office of the BPSC?

## The five Bangalee love languages



Syeda Samara Mortada, a feminist activist, is co-founder of Bonhishikha, a feminist organisation working to unlearn gender and create a platform for the youth to share their gender-based experiences.

SYEDA SAMARA MORTADA

Most of us have probably heard of the five love languages by Gary Chapman – words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, gifts, and touch – the different ways of expressing love and how it varies from person to person. In retrospect, it may also vary from culture to culture, and I recently came to realise what the different Bangalee love languages are, and how we Bangalees demonstrate love to our close ones in contrast to the globally affirmed love languages we have all come to learn. So, without further ado, presenting to you, the Bangalee love languages!

The first one would most definitely be "Bhaat khabi" ("Want to have rice")? Every child has heard this from their parents at some point in their lives – when their parent has yelled at them, called them names, and maybe also said, "Tor moton ekta shontan thakar cheye na thaka bhalo" ("It is better to not have a child than to have one like you"). That burst of anger, when it ultimately settles down, is usually met with a "Bhaat Khabi?" One has to understand the emotion of *bhaat* and what its essence is to a Bangalee. *Bhaat* is, for the lack of a better word, unabashed love. And while the



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

quantity and quality of *bhaat* may differ from household to household, *bhaat* is a must-have at least once a day, if not more, in every Bangalee family's meal plan. Now, *bhaat* may be accompanied by meat, *daal*, salad, the works, but when you want to make a peace offering, you offer *bhaat*. While this love language is usually between a parent and a child, it could very well translate to romantic relationships. I am still trying to analyse what those different nuances could look like.

Now, imagine if it is June/July. Summer time, which equals mango time. The love language, as one would presume, would also differ from season to season, and so very quickly *bhaat* can be replaced by *aam* (mango), and thus become "Aam khabi?" ("Want to eat mango?"). When parents are even more deeply guilty for a specific

I invite you to continue reading, dear readers.

Since I have up until now only delved into romantic forms of relationships, let us get into the deep, the dark – the love language of couples. The first and foremost in this case would be "Pic pathao" ("Send me a photo"). And while the content of the photo may vary from couple to couple, or what time of the day it is, or the relationship between two individuals, saying "I love you" is best replaced by "Pic pathao." And the rarer the photo is, the deeper one's love can be felt.

Another one of my favourites would be getting the bill for something that your partner has purchased. It could be clothes, it could be groceries, it could be the bill at a restaurant. As soon as the receipt arrives, if you take out your wallet from your front pocket/bag, and take out those fresh Tk 500 notes, and say "I got this," this shows love is like love unknown. Welcome, dear readers, to the world of adult loving.

Last but not the least, the most intense and selfless act of showing love would be when you share your social media passwords with your partner. When your partner knows your Facebook and email passwords, it means that you have nothing to hide, and that you would go to the end of the world for the other person and be faithful for ever after. Now remember, these practices might not be approved by global lovers, but to us Bangalees, well, we just hit differently. So, the next time you do not want to say those three words to your partner, try one of the above and make 'em feel loved. Good luck!





VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

## The snowball effect of academic crimes



SHAMSAD MORTUZA

### BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

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

I am trying to decode the symbolism of a murder that occurred 17 years ago. In February 2006, a professor of Rajshahi University was killed after he detected plagiarism and piracy in 10 of the 11 research papers submitted by his junior colleague as part of his promotion application. Prof Syed Taher Ahmed would have "turned-him-in." The applicant realised that his career would end if he allowed his senior colleague to reveal the academic forgery. Mia Muhammad Mohiuddin, an associate professor in Taher's department, reacted the only way he could - resorting to violence. Emboldened by his political connections, thanks to his minister brother-in-law, he hired men to end Taher's life. The body was dumped into the septic tank in the victim's house. Two days later, the putrid smell of the missing professor's decaying body filled the air and brought the crime to the public's attention.

In a rare show of dexterity and courage, in less than two months, police charged six people, including Mohiuddin, his brother, the Rajshahi University unit president of Islami Chhatra Shibir at the time, and a university staff member. A judgment announced on May 22, 2008 acquitted two charge sheeted accused. But the trial dragged on, and bail was given to one main accused. Prof Ahmed's daughter, Shegufta Tabassum Ahmed, who had just started studying law as an undergraduate student when her father was murdered, resolved to seek justice. Ironically, it was her father who had convinced her to become a lawyer. He assured her that she wouldn't need to practise law in a courtroom. She could use her expertise in teaching or consulting. But as fate would have it, this young lawyer would have to move mountains to guarantee justice for her wronged father. The powerful lobby behind the murderers kept delaying the trial process to deny justice for Shegufta's family.

But Shegufta's persistence paid off. A six-member bench of

the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Hasan Fozz Siddique, delivered the last verdict in the case on September 15 last year. The death sentences against two convicts were upheld, while the other two received life sentences. Two prisoners on death row were hanged on Thursday, 17 years after the murder. The soul of a dead father can now rest in peace. Rajshahi University can feel slightly relieved at the execution of the perpetrators of a heinous crime.

The saga, if I may use the genre to describe the event, has many layers. At a family level, a daughter rose to the occasion to pursue justice. A dead father, quite ominously, initiated her in an academic discipline that would secure justice for him in this earthly world. At an academic level, it goes on to show how an act of academic dishonesty keeps on snowballing. They say that lies breed lies. Here, crimes breed crimes.

A university teacher used pirated and plagiarised materials to claim authorship and climb up to the level of an associate professor. For the last rung of his academic ladder, he had to face Prof Taher Ahmed. In a Ludo game, Taher would have appeared like the big snake before you reached your goal. Mohiuddin's animal instinct came out. In the words of the judge who wrote the verdict, he "annihilated Dr Taher from this world presuming that if Professor Taher lived, the chance of his getting promotion would be zero." At a political level, the case showed much muscle-flexing as it both charged and acquitted a high-profile student leader. For justice to be delivered, the powerful bodies needed to be in cosmic alignment. Even the convicts knew that. According to jail witnesses, the prisoners on death row asked to say their prayers one last time after solace was offered to them by an Imam.

As an academic, what worries me is the exponential unfolding of a simple instance of academic dishonesty. The seed of violence was hiding the kernel of a criminal mind that felt it was his right to pursue

wrong. The murder took place before this hullabaloo that we have over artificial intelligence acting as both perpetrator and police of a crime. The open-access ChatGPT is the e-genie that can write stuff for you at your command. Then again, there are other e-genies that can catch the theft. Whether we like it or not, machines will make our lives easier. And civilisation will always be comforted by the ease offered by technology. Nobody remembers number tables anymore, because our phones have an in-built calculator. You don't need to memorise your mother's phone number, because you can always speed-dial or give a voice command. How will this overreliance on someone else's efforts or memory affect us? The lure of presenting someone else's work as your own is as strong as ever. We are all being sucked into a logic of ease. They will soon dump anyone who gets in their way into the hole that man has dug.

The challenge is how to use this forgery in an ethical manner. Yes, you heard it right: how do you become creative in hiding the traces of your stealing and validate AI-driven research as your own? That is where the new focus of pedagogy is being shifted. Earlier this month, the University of Kentucky formed a new committee to look at the impact of artificial intelligence and tools like ChatGPT on higher education and to recommend effective uses of AI.

Perhaps, both Taher and Mohiuddin would have been alive if technology had been there to protect them from academic sacrilege. Seriously, though, we can blame the machine as much as we like, but it has become an integral part of our existence. Surely, without technology, the crime would not have been unearthed with such speed. It was humans who committed the crime. It was humans who felt wronged that a promotion would not happen because of a man, and therefore he deserved to die. His life was wasted and disposed of like filth. But from the dirty filth, the truth appeared. The victim's flesh and blood appeared in court and demanded justice in the name of the law. The convicts, convinced of their cold calculation, cold-bloodedly killed a man who would not deviate from telling the truth. The murder case of Prof Taher Ahmed reminds us of the human conundrum that often loses its way in the name of truth and falsehood. Technology is just a conduit through which this truth and falsity must pass!

## How hot is too hot for the human body?



Dr Quamrul Haider is a professor of physics at Fordham University in New York, U.S.

QUAMRUL HAIDER

In the months of April through July this year, skyrocketing temperatures have already broken records in many parts of the world. Thus, when the summer of 2023 ends, it will perhaps be the hottest in recorded human history, but it may also turn out to be the coolest we will ever enjoy again. That is because in the years ahead, a warming planet will make this summer feel comparatively cool and pleasant.

Unprecedented temperatures are being recorded at Death Valley in California, where the mercury in July has already reached 53 degrees Celsius. The valley holds the world record for the hottest air temperature

humans, WBT is 35 degrees Celsius, according to a study published in the journal *Science Advances* in 2020.

Like most warm-blooded mammals, we cool ourselves by converting sweat into water vapour around a constant body temperature of 37 degrees. This temperature maintains a constant balance between heat loss and heat gain.

The WBT will be high if there is more moisture in the air. A high WBT will hamper our body's ability to sweat and cool itself down to maintain its core temperature. As a consequence, the body will overheat, forcing blood to rush to our skin to try to release heat, thereby causing damage to the

Valley and India. During heatwaves that engulfed Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in June, humidity was 53 percent, resulting in a WBT of 36 degrees Celsius, which is higher than the upper limit of human adaptability to heat and humidity. On the other hand, average humidity at Death Valley is around 15 percent. Therefore, when the ambient temperature is 53 degrees, WBT is a tolerable 29 degrees. Hence, the big difference in the number of deaths.

As for Dhaka, with an average July temperature of 33 degrees Celsius and 75 percent humidity, WBT is 29.2 degrees. Because WBT is low enough for the people to sweat profusely, there are seldom any heat-related deaths in Dhaka. However, that does not necessarily mean that life will be comfortable during heatwaves.

Humans are amazingly adaptable creatures, but there are limits to their adaptability. We can save ourselves from ferocious cyclones by moving to designated shelters. We



People gather at an electronics shop to purchase rechargeable battery-powered fans during a countrywide heatwave amid power cuts in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on June 6, 2023.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

- 56.7 degrees Celsius on July 10, 1913 at Furnace Creek, headquarters of the Death Valley National Park.

Braving the sweltering heat, tourists are nevertheless flocking to Death Valley in droves to experience extreme weather for themselves. And yet, there has been only one death in the park: a 71-year-old man collapsed and died on July 18 as temperatures reached 49.4 degrees.

On the other side of the globe, close to 100 people are reported to have died over a period of several days in June from heat-related illness due to a searing heatwave that swept across two of India's most populous states: Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The deaths happened when temperatures soared to 45 degrees Celsius.

Despite only one death at Death Valley, why did so many people die in India where the temperature was eight degrees less than that in the valley? This raises the question: how hot is too hot for the human body? What determines how much of the punishing heat our body can take and still survive?

The answer lies in the wet-bulb temperature (WBT), which is not the same as the ambient air temperature. Measured by a thermometer wrapped in a water-soaked cloth, WBT takes into account both heat and humidity. It is the lowest temperature to which an object can cool down when moisture evaporates from it. For

internal organs. Moreover, the body will become hypothermic (different from hypothermia, which happens when our body's temperature drops to dangerously low levels), leading to symptoms such as nausea, weakness, dizziness and dehydration, a rapid pulse, a change in mental state, fainting, coma and eventually death.

If the humidity is low but the temperature is high, or vice versa, WBT probably will not be near our body's tipping point. For example, if the temperature is 40 degrees and humidity is 20 percent, WBT is only 32 degrees, whereas when both the humidity and the temperature are very high, WBT can go up towards dangerous levels. Once WBT exceeds 35 degrees, it will be difficult to survive for an extended period of time. This is especially true for people who work outside, and those with underlying health issues.

Although survival becomes difficult at high WBT, lower temperatures can also be deadly. Studies show that the lower limit of our body's temperature is 28 degrees Celsius. Below that, the body expends more energy to maintain its core temperature. One of the ways it does this is by shivering, when our muscles involuntarily contract to produce heat. While the lower range has been established, the upper limit is still uncertain.

Now, back to fatalities at Death

can build elevated homes - *machas* - in areas inundated by devastating floods or by rising sea levels. But a blazing heatwave is a different beast. Unlike the rich who can keep themselves cool in the comfort of their air-conditioned homes and offices, or go on a long holiday to cooler haunts, adapting to sizzling temperatures for the homeless and poor folks, particularly those who have to work outside for a living and do not have the luxury of air conditioners or even fans in their hovels, is different than adapting to cyclones and floods.

As global temperatures rise, air will become warmer, and hence will be able to hold more moisture. That, in turn, will increase humidity and cause WBT to go up. They will be very high, last for weeks and months, as we are witnessing now, and blanket large areas. Consequently, heat-related deaths will rise, even in moderate summer temperatures.

According to Nasa, WBT in many regions, including South and Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, Eastern China and Brazil, are likely to exceed the optimum value of 35 degrees Celsius by 2050. So, if we really want to save ourselves from being roasted by oppressive heatwaves, the simplest and sanest way is to force our government to stop burning fossil fuels without further delay.

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- |                                |                    |                       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>                  | 26 Cuban coin      | 5 Different           |
| 1 Takes the wrong way          | 27 Copy fixer      | 6 Spot                |
| 7 Did garden work              | 29 St.             | 7 Nun's wear          |
| 11 Steamed snack               | Petersburg's river | 8 Just for fun        |
| 12 "Frozen" princess           | 33 Twin of myth    | 9 Ticks off           |
| 13 Reluctant                   | 34 Writer's work   | 10 Cut a rug          |
| 14 Loft setting                | 35 Persia, today   | 16 Haas of "Witness"  |
| 15 Head out                    | 36 Hidden          | 18 Earthy color       |
| 16 Pastel shade                | 37 Overdue         | 20 Trade shows        |
| 17 Sea eagle                   | 38 Pay back        | 22 Not state or local |
| 18 Power problem               | 39 Winter glider   | 23 Bring to life      |
| 19 Bottle part                 | 40 Swift fish      | 24 Persuaded          |
| 21 Spectrum color              |                    | 25 Dangers            |
| 22 Hairdos with a raised ridge |                    | 28 Ready to play      |
| 25 Stock holder                |                    | 30 Bit of history     |
|                                |                    | 31 Brink              |
|                                |                    | 32 Modify             |
|                                |                    | 34 Bright star        |
|                                |                    | 36 Bounder            |

### DOWN

- 1 Hackneyed  
2 Show uncertainty  
3 Clarifying words  
4 Upstart



### YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



### BEETLE BAILEY



### BY MORT WALKER



### BABY BLUES



### BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



## Tamim under observation

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh ODI captain Tamim Iqbal consulted a spine specialist in London and was administered a few injections as he remains currently under observation.

The 34-year-old on Tuesday underwent an MRI scan, and, as part of the process, Tamim underwent an invasive pain management procedure Thursday, confirmed the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) through a press release on Friday.

"Tamim consulted a spine specialist for his ongoing back pain and underwent invasive pain management procedure yesterday [Thursday]. He will be under observation for the next two days and will be reassessed to determine the outcome of the procedure," BCB's senior physician Dr Debashis Chowdhury, who has accompanied the player to the UK, was quoted as saying in the press release.

Tamim reached London last Monday for his treatment of a back injury which the cricketer first noticed in November last year ahead of the series against India.

According to sources, the player is still not considering surgery as an option and will continue through pain management for now. Keeping in mind the two upcoming major events – the Asia Cup and the ODI World Cup – Tamim, however, will be given the option to carry on with the pain management procedure or go under the knife, with the latter requiring a longer time to recover.

It will ultimately be the player's call as Tamim will have to decide the path he wants to take.

## Yorkshire punished over racism

AFP, London

Yorkshire County Cricket Club were slapped with a huge 48-point deduction in the English County Championship on Friday after admitting four charges related to the Azeem Rafiq racism scandal.

The independent Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) also fined the club £400,000 (\$514,000), £300,000 of which is suspended for two years.

The points penalty sends Yorkshire to the bottom of Division Two of the County Championship.

Pakistan-born bowler Rafiq, 32, went public with allegations of racism and bullying in September 2020, related to his two spells at the English county.

"We are accountable for these issues," the Yorkshire board said in a statement.



Lauren James scored a wonder strike in her first Women's World Cup start to lead England to a 1-0 Group D victory over Denmark on Friday, all but guaranteeing the European champions a spot in the knockout stage. James sped past one defender and then curled in a rocket from 22 yards out in the sixth minute that goalkeeper Lene Christensen had little chance of stopping at Sydney Football Stadium.

PHOTO: AFP

## Friendly matches against Afghanistan in Sylhet?

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team are likely to play two FIFA friendly matches against Afghanistan at home in September even though two more teams – Myanmar and Nepal – are also in Bangladesh Football Federation's consideration. There might be a trimming of the list of probable oppositions during a meeting of national teams' committee (NTC) today.

As part of the national team's preparation for October's first round of World Cup Qualifiers against Maldives, the National Teams Committee is committed to provide an ideal platform of preparation by arranging two friendly matches in September's 4-12 window.

The national team will begin their preparation for the Qualifiers on August 20, soon after the international engagements of Bashundhara Kings and Abahani in the middle of August, leaving the charges of Javier Cabrera for the two friendly matches with two weeks' preparation.

"We have not decided on the opposition yet. We have a meeting tomorrow and it is not that we will take the final call there. We have been discussing with Afghanistan, Nepal, Myanmar and a few other countries for the friendly matches but have not confirmed them yet," NTC chairman Kazi Nabil Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday.

With Afghanistan having expressed willingness to visit Bangladesh, the likelihood of playing the former SAFF



country is more than the other teams. Nabil said, "There is a possibility to play [against Afghanistan] but we will take the final decision after discussing the matter with the head coach [Cabrera], which is what we always do."

The game's local governing body is trying to arrange two matches even though the NTC initially wanted to host a tri-nation tournament in September.

"Our target is to hold two matches. The committee was initially considering whether we can host a tri-nation tournament but most of the teams wanted to play two matches, so the initial thought was dropped and we are planning to hold two matches at home," informed NTC member Satyajit Das Rupu.

Nabil also informed that they are looking forward to holding the matches in Sylhet as Sylhet District Stadium is currently the only available venue that is recognised to host international football matches for senior men's football.

"We are thinking of the hosting the matches at the existing venue – Sylhet District Stadium," Nabil said. "Bangabandhu National Stadium is not currently available and we don't even have any information about the venue. However, we may enquire about it."

Sylhet District Stadium is currently hosting an inter-university football tournament, which was scheduled to end yesterday. Abahani are supposed to take over the ground ahead of their AFC Cup match against Club Eagles on August 16.

"It is important to have seating arrangement at a venue to host international matches, but the BNS is currently going through renovation work. FIFA won't allow holding matches without chair-seating arrangement," Rupu said. "The ground at Sylhet is not a bad one as an inspection was made there on July 26. After the completion of the inter-university tournament, the ground will be prepared for the August 16 match."

## BFF to look into women's Satkhira participation

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahfuza Akhter Kiron, chairperson of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) women's wing, said that she would look into the participation of eight women's team players in a local football tournament in Satkhira.

The Warrior Sports Academy Championship 2023, organised by Warrior Sports Academy and assisted by Satkhira District Football Association, got underway today with eight teams – four female and four male – participating in the three-day tournament, which will end on Sunday.

Maria Manda, Matsushima Sumaya, Shamsunnahar Sr, Shamsunnar Jr, Tahura Khatun, Rupna Chakma, Marzia and Masura Parveen – all national team players – are participating in the women's tournament upon invitation from the national team captain Sabina Khatun, who is also an organiser of the tournament.

"All the players of the national team are on vacation and we don't have any idea about what they are doing now. As they are part of the national camp, they need permission to play in such tournaments, but they did not. Once they return to the camp, we will look into the matter," Kiron told The Daily Star.

The national camp for upcoming Asian Games is scheduled to get underway on August 1 and all the players are scheduled to report on July 31. The players were given vacation after two FIFA friendly matches against Nepal recently. Assistant coach Mahabubur Rahman Litu informed that he only knows that some players including Maria and Shamsunnahar Sr were supposed to travel to Satkhira upon Sabina's invitation.

## Mahrez joins Al-Ahli

AFP, London

Manchester City forward Riyad Mahrez has joined Saudi side Al-Ahli, the two clubs announced on Friday, becoming the latest big-name player to be lured to the cash-rich league in the Gulf state.

The 32-year-old Algerian winger joined Pep Guardiola's team in 2018 from Leicester, winning 11 major trophies at the club.

"The wait is over: Riyad is real," the Saudi Pro League club said in a social media post.

City agreed a fee understood to be worth up to £30 million (\$38.6 million) with Al-Ahli last week. "To play for City has been an honour," Mahrez said.



Karim Benzema's journey with Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad was off to a very good start after he scored a brilliant goal on Thursday in his debut game. The former Real Madrid star took his team to victory against Esperance Sportive de Tunis (ES Tunis) with a score of 2-1 as part of the King Salman Club Cup games.

PHOTO: AFP

## India to continue experimenting

AGENCIES

India made it clear in the first ODI against West Indies in Bridgetown on Thursday that they would take the three-match ODI series as a way to test their middle-order ahead of the ODI World Cup later this year.

India, who won the preceding two Test series 1-0, will look to seal the ODI series at the same venue on Saturday.

Left-arm spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja masterminded the rout of an abject West Indies team as India romped to a five-wicket victory with more than 27 overs to spare in the first game.

In what was clearly a bit of an audition for younger batting aspirants ahead of the World Cup, champion batter Virat Kohli did not feature while captain Rohit Sharma only appeared at the fall of the fifth wicket, that too after India lost three quick wickets at the end in their chase of a modest 114-run target.

Following the win, Rohit said that the team wanted to give the rest of the batters, particularly those who were not part of the Test team, some time in the middle which is why he and Kohli chose to not play in their regular positions. According to the Indian skipper, they will 'keep trying those

things' whenever possible in the series.

"We wanted to give game time to the ODI guys who have come in, we will keep trying those things whenever possible. To restrict them to 115, we knew we could try these guys and give them a go. I don't think they'll get many chances like this," Rohit said.

While India are expected to make adjustments in the batting line-up today, their bowling looks sorted at the moment. Kuldeep Yadav was phenomenal in the first ODI, picking up four wickets and the player-of-the-match award for his efforts while Ravindra Jadeja picked up three. The spinners will once again be key in their game today and it will be interesting if the team management brings up Yuzvendra Chahal in the mix as he can prove to be deadly.

When it comes to West Indies, there is a lot of room for improvement at the moment. Their batting unit once again failed to deliver and nothing seems going in their favour. Gudakesh Motie tried to create some sort of impact but the batters didn't give him enough runs to defend. They lack a bit of motivation as well and hence, the team management will have to step up in order to bring some momentum back.



England pacer Stuart Broad celebrates the dismissal of Australia's Travis Head on the second day of the fifth Ashes Test at The Oval in London yesterday. Broad took two wickets as England fought back in the match, reducing the visitors to 186 for seven at Tea with the hosts leading by 97 runs.

PHOTO: AFP

**Congratulations to Nigar Sultana Joty and her team for showing such strong character. They've performed when it mattered. They have shown that they have the nerve to deal with the most difficult of situations. They didn't give up when everyone else did.**



**Nazmul Abedeen Fahim**  
a revered figure in the sporting fraternity



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## A stride in the right direction

**"I think we have taken a respectable step forward after this series. There were many who didn't know us, apart from one or two players. At least those people now recognise who Nahida, Pinky or Marufa are. So, I think this is an achievement since the people of Bangladesh now know who plays in the women's team," said Joty.**

**KHALID HOSSAIN**

Since acquiring the ODI status and stepping into the international scene in 2011, Bangladesh women's team had their crowning achievement with the 2018 Asia Cup victory. To still be the only team to break India's monopoly in the prestigious continental event remains a monumental feat, also considering that the men's team are yet to taste such success. Although Bangladesh women found stable ground, they were found wanting in the subsequent three T20 World Cups. Their maiden appearance at the ODI World Cup last year, however, brought a sense of renewed promise. A win against Pakistan and two closely contested affairs over two big guns – West Indies and South Africa – allowed the Tigresses to make their presence felt at the global stage. However, with the Asia Cup triumph far in the past, the women cricketers longed to come up with a breakthrough performance. The recently concluded white ball series

against India at home presented a glorious opportunity for the Tigresses to prove a point or two in front of their fans. Across three T20Is and as many ODIs, there were a lot of boxes ticked in Bangladesh women's favour; ones that have the necessary advertising ingredients to rally up the cricket-crazy fans who rarely fail to show up in numbers whenever the men's team play an international match. In their first-ever home series, the Tigresses showed they can fight neck and neck with India, who were not meant to be intimidated by the playing conditions here. Surpassing expectations of a one-off victory indicated the women in red and green have come of age. Overall, Bangladesh's spirited performance, their attitude in victory and

defeat was in stark contrast to how India captain, Harmanpreet Kaur, tainted the spirit of the game with her antics in the final fixture that culminated in a thrilling tie. The icing on the cake for Bangladesh arrived with stellar individual displays. In pacer Marufa Akter, whose pumping action complements her inspirational backstory, the country has found another superstar in the making. A clip of her boundary-saving effort in the field had gone viral, and a brilliantly executed inswinger to bowl out India opener, Priya Punia, in the second ODI had captured the imagination of audiences. Moreover, the country's leading international run-scorer, Fargana Haque Pinky, entered the record books by being the first Bangladeshi woman to score an ODI century. Marufa and Pinky – who alongside spinner Nahida Akter broke into the top 20's in ICC rankings in their respective fields – had therefore made the impact needed to break some inertia of fan-following and media coverage. The Bangladesh captain aptly expressed the key

takeaway from the series. "I think we have taken a respectable step forward after this series. There were many who didn't know us, apart from one or two players. At least those people now recognise who Nahida, Pinky or Marufa are. So, I think this is an achievement since the people of Bangladesh now know who plays in the women's team," said Nigar Sultana Joty. The cricketers have played their cards to the best of their abilities and for the Tigresses, irrespective of whatever outcomes may be in store in the foreseeable future, the stage is set for their next phase of evolution. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) can be presumed to be well aware of the to-dos in this regard: for starters, ensuring that the domestic circuit runs on at the highest possible level. As the global women's sport continues its successful march to a much-increased viewership and wage structure in place, it remains to be seen how long it takes before the cricketers see the gender pay gap eliminated and get to entertain a full house. In reality, however, the latter is a precursor to the former.

## 'Got the exposure we always craved'

After leading her side to a historic achievement against a strong India in their recent white-ball series at home, Bangladesh women's cricket team skipper Nigar Sultana Joty spoke to Mazhar Uddin of *The Daily Star*, sharing her plans, the areas Bangladesh need to improve, and how the women's cricket in the country could move forward. Here are the excerpts from the interview:

**DS:** As a captain, what was your message to the girls before the series?  
**NSJ:** I told them that we don't get enough opportunity to play in Mirpur and that fans do not find much interest to watch the games when we play in Sylhet or Chattogram. But when we played in Mirpur, we got the exposure which we always craved. As we also play for Bangladesh, not getting the usual focus and attention feels bad.  
**DS:** Did you notice any change in attitude from the Indian players after ODI victory?  
**NSJ:** I felt their mindset was different as they are a big side with a good domestic structure. So, I think they did not expect that we could play better cricket against them. I felt that they could not really accept the outcome which is the reason behind the drama that had unfolded in the end [instigated by India captain Harmanpreet Kaur].  
**DS:** Where do you want to see this team from here?



**NSJ:** Since the women cricketers do not get any individual sponsors and endorsements, it's the board that supports us financially. So, when the board says they will do more for us, it actually motivates us immensely. I think we have taken the right step forward but I feel we still have a long way to go. I think if we can minimise a few of our flaws, we can get better. So, my goal is to remain in the present and follow the process.

**DS:** Tell us about young pacer Marufa Akter.  
**NSJ:** When Marufa first came to the national team, I had the belief that she would do something for Bangladesh. She has that spark in her and I have followed her right from the beginning, and she got the guts. I think she will not only become a big asset for Bangladesh but also one of the best bowlers in world cricket.  
**DS:** Do you have any suggestions to improve the domestic cricket of Bangladesh?  
**NSJ:** I think we need more matches in the domestic circuit and also we need a T20 tournament. We have already requested the board about this and maybe you have already heard that the board is planning to introduce the women's [Bangladesh Premier League] BPL. If we have the BPL, our doors for the other franchise leagues will also open. I had the experience of playing abroad and it helps us to communicate with the players from across the world and gain experience. The more competitive matches we play, the more it will help us play well in international cricket.  
**DS:** Your message to the girls who aspire to be professional cricketers and also their families?  
**NSJ:** I think the struggle that girls had to go through to play cricket has somewhat ended, and the success against India will only have a bigger impact. The way we are heading, I think we are making things easier for the next generation who will gain more flexibility. I would like to welcome those who are willing to take cricket as a profession. I think women's cricket in Bangladesh is in a very good state as you can get financially benefited and it is also safe. The first thing a girl or their family thinks is whether it's safe or not and I can say it's a very safe and respectable place for the girls.

**STATISTICS**

**Bangladesh women's record in ODIs:**

Played	Won	Lost	Tied	No Result
57	15	36	1	5

**Bangladesh women's record in T20Is:**

Played	Won	Lost	Tied	No Result
102	39	63	0	0

**HUNDREDS FOR BANGLADESH WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL CRICKET:**

Name	Format	Runs	Balls	Opposition	Date
Nigar Sultana	T20I	113*	65	Maldives	5 Dec, 2019
Fargana Haque	T20I	110*	53	Maldives	5 Dec, 2019
Fargana Haque	ODI	107	160	India	22 July, 2023



Marufa Akter has emerged as the new sensation in Bangladesh women's cricket team. The youngster from Nilphamari was instrumental behind the Tigresses' maiden ODI win against India, picking up four wickets in the opening match of the three-match series recently. The 18-year-old pacer then held her nerve to defend three runs in the final over in the final ODI as Bangladesh tied the game and drew the series 1-1. Marufa spoke in detail to *The Daily Star's* Mazhar Uddin, opening up about her bowling, life, future plans among many other topics during an exclusive interview, the excerpts of which are as follows:

## From being taunted to being admired

**DS:** Did you set any target for yourself before the series against India?  
**MA:** It was always my dream to play at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, and before the start of the series I said to myself that if I got the opportunity I would give my best. I actually didn't see the names or faces of the opposition players. I tried to maintain my line and length and all went well.  
**DS:** How did it feel playing in front of a family member?  
**MA:** It was probably one of the best moments of my life, especially when you get to see your brother watching you play from the stands, that too after travelling a long way [from Nilphamari].  
**DS:** What is the reaction in your hometown?  
**MA:** To be honest there are not many girls in my village who would want to be a cricketer as most of those of my age have got married already.  
**DS:** Let's hear about your bowling.  
**MA:** When I started off, it was all natural. Maybe it was not at the best

of shapes but as things progressed, I started to work on various aspects of my bowling. My coaches helped me a lot and day by day my pace has increased while the line and length have improved. I also had the urge to reach the top and followed the instructions of my coaches.  
**DS:** You took four wickets in Bangladesh's first ODI win against India. Tell us about that game.  
**MA:** I was eager to contribute to my team's success. I was backed by my captain [Nigar Sultana] Joty apu as she always encouraged me by saying that I am the best bowler in the team. She also told me to just maintain my line and length as she felt the opposition won't be able to play me properly. I felt the same too. I bowled according to the line and length and it worked.  
**DS:** What did you think when you had three runs to defend in the final over in the third ODI?  
**MA:** Joty apu told me to keep belief in yourself. When they got two runs off the first two balls, I felt that I shouldn't get nervous, instead the

batters should get nervous.  
**DS:** Who do you follow as a bowler?  
**MA:** I follow Hardik Pandya. In Bangladesh, I follow Mustafizur Rahman bhai. Many say that I am the female Mustafizur (smiles).  
**DS:** Where do you want to see yourself in future?  
**MA:** My target is to play in IPL, Big Bash, CPL, etc. Hope that I can perform for Bangladesh and give my best.  
**DS:** What would be your message to young girls who want to play cricket?  
**MA:** There will be hurdles from family and society. The desire must come from within yourself, and if you have the urge to become something, you have to work hard for it. I faced a lot of hurdles in my life but I was able to overcome those. People used to taunt me when I started playing since I was the only girl from my area playing cricket. But now when I go to my village, people come to see me and it feels good. People now tell my mother that they never imagined that her daughter would reach the top.





## DENGUE OUTBREAK Four more die, 1,503 hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four dengue patients died while 1,503 were hospitalised in the last 24 hours until 8:00am today, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

One of the deceased was a woman, aged 60, from Barguna district. The others -- aged 18, 58 and 60 -- were all from Dhaka.

This data, however, does not contain any updates on deaths or hospital admissions from Mugda Medical College Hospital and 24 other private hospitals in Dhaka.

With this, the number of deaths from the mosquito-borne disease this year rose to 229 and the number of hospital admissions to 44,205.

Of them, a total of 35,300 have recovered from the viral fever and 8,676 are undergoing treatment at different hospitals across the country.

The age distribution of dengue patients showed that people in the 21-25 age group were the worst affected, followed by the 26-30 group.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Attendants of child dengue patients at Dhaka Shishu Hospital put up mosquito nets to sleep in the parking area of the healthcare facility, as there is a lack of space for them inside. Many of them have come from distant corners of the country and are scared of catching the viral disease themselves. The photo was taken around 5:00am yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Don't compare your children with others: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked guardians not to compare any child with others, rather let them gather skill as per their merit.

She also told them to be more sincere towards education of their children. "I request you to pay attention to where your children go and what they do."

The PM made the comments while addressing the results publishing ceremony of this year's Secondary School Certificate and equivalent examinations at the Gono Bhaban.

Hasina stressed the need for improving the quality of education further to keep pace with the world.

She said Bangladeshi children are brilliant and they are performing outstandingly in different universities and colleges across the world.

The PM said Bangladesh has already earned acclamation for its educational programmes.

She asked all to work together to groom the children with education, skills, thoughts and knowledge to build a manpower equipped with modern technological knowledge and skills for the era of 4th industrial revolution.

She said the use of technology, computer and artificial

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



## ROAD TO RALLIES Smooth for AL activists, bumpy for BNP ones

STAR REPORT

BNP supporters had to go through police check points one after another before they could make it to their rally in the capital's Nayapalton yesterday.

From Thursday evening to yesterday afternoon, police stopped vehicles entering the city and asked people why they were going there.

Police in uniform and plainclothes even checked people's phones to see their political affiliations and detained those who turned out to be BNP supporters.

BNP activists who came to the rally from different districts said they had to lie to the police about the purpose of their visit to the city.

Police detained at least 68 people at several check points in Savar and 30 in Gazipur. Munshiganj Jubo Dal General Secretary Masud Rana 50-60 others were detained at the entrance to Dhaka.

People suffered as there was a scarcity of public transport in the capital and the adjacent cities.

At Chashara intersection of Narayanganj yesterday morning, Amirul Islam said, "My wife and I must visit a doctor at the Institute of Child and Mother Health in Dhaka's Matuail. But we have not seen a bus in half an hour. Now we may have to hire an autorickshaw for a lot of money."

Police set up multiple check points in Abdullahpur, Amin Bazar, Gabtoli, Basila, Savar, Keraniganj, Kanchpur, Signboard, Mouchak, Tarabo, Bhulta, Pagla, Chandra, Singair, and on Dhaka-Tangail and Dhaka-Mymensingh highways.

Boat services across the Buriganga in Keraniganj remained suspended from dawn to dusk.

At Amin Bazar, our Savar correspondent saw that buses and trucks full of people chanting pro-Awami

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## ROAD SAFETY MOVEMENT 2018

# Infrastructure improves, safety worsens

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Though the country's road infrastructure saw much progress over the last decade, some of the major elements that could ensure road safety remain largely ignored, leaving roads still as anarchic and unsafe as ever before, experts and campaigners said.

They added that the main obstacle to bringing discipline on the roads is an "unholy nexus among the political and influential groups that allow the anarchy to persist for years for their own benefits".

As a result, too many people are still killed on the roads every day.

Against this backdrop, friends and families will observe today the death anniversary of Dia Khanam Mim and Abdul Karim Rajib, students of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment College.

In 2018, the two students were killed after being run over by a speeding bus, which was racing with another, in the capital's Kurmitola, sparking an unprecedented movement across the country for safe roads.

Speaking to this correspondent yesterday, Dia's father Jahangir Fakir said, "The situation hasn't changed much since then [2018]. We want the number of road crashes to come down significantly."

The protests were able to provoke the authorities to take some actions.

In the face of demonstrations, the Road

Transport Act 2018 was hastily passed in parliament and had clauses to ensure stringent punishments for traffic law violators, while the Prime Minister's Office issued 17 directives with regard to road safety.

The following year, a high-powered taskforce, headed by the home minister, was formed to curb road crashes and deaths.

However, relevant data shows that the



situation has instead deteriorated.

According to media reports collected by Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, a passenger welfare platform, around 9,951 people were killed in 6,749 road crashes last year, while 7,221 were killed in 5,514 crashes in 2018.

Transport expert Prof Hadiuzzaman said the government has made major infrastructural progress in the transport sector and many roads have been

expanded to four lanes.

"But there is no improvement in terms of reducing road crashes and deaths. The indiscipline on roads persists more than ever before," Hadiuzzaman, also acting director of Accident Research Institute at Buet, told this newspaper yesterday.

The government has turned 717.75kms of roads into four or more lanes so far, and several projects are being implemented to expand 673.46kms of roads to four or more lanes, according to the Road Transport and Highways Division.

Hadiuzzaman added that the government's focus was only on improving the infrastructure but the elements required for road safety were largely ignored.

He said there are "five pillars" for reducing road crashes -- safe roads; safe vehicles; safe users, including drivers, passengers and pedestrians; traffic management and post-accident management.

"Though we would not be able to fully curb road crashes, we needed to gradually ensure safe vehicles, safe drivers and improve traffic management. But we didn't."

There are thousands of unfit and illegal vehicles on the roads and the fitness clearances given by Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) remain questionable, he said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

## Deploy UN peacekeepers for Bangladesh elections 14 members of US Congress urge UN

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fourteen US congressmen and women have written to the US ambassador to the United Nations, urging the UN to arrange for peacekeeping forces in Bangladesh during the elections "to prevent intimidation, harassment or assault of voters".

The UN should participate in supervising and conducting free and fair elections in Bangladesh, said the letter.

Dated July 27, the letter was addressed to Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US ambassador to UN.

It also stated that the UN should immediately suspend Bangladesh's membership on the human rights council until an investigation is done on the government's alleged crimes against journalists and political opponents.

"Over the past 6-8 months, thousands of peaceful and courageous protesters have demonstrated in support of free and fair elections. These demonstrations have often been met with violence, teargas and brutal assault by the police, other state actors..." read the letter.

The letter also urged the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

## Ancient Roman cargo ship found on bottom of Mediterranean

REUTERS, Rome

The wreck of an ancient Roman cargo ship from more than 2,000 years ago has been found off the coast near Rome, the arts squad of Italy's Carabinieri police said yesterday.

The ship was located off the port of Civitavecchia, about 80 kilometres (50 miles) north-west of the Italian capital, on a sandy seabed at a depth of about 160 metres (525 ft), a statement said.

The vessel, estimated to be more than 20 metres long and dating from the 1st or 2nd century BC, was carrying hundreds of amphorae -- a type of ancient Roman jar -- that were mostly found intact.

"The exceptional discovery is an important example of the shipwreck of a Roman ship facing the perils of the sea in an attempt to reach the coast, and bears witness to old maritime trading routes," the Carabinieri said.



The narrow stream in the distance is all there is left of the Chengri river in Rangamati's Naniarchar. Poor rainfall upstream has almost completely dried up the river, a key water source for the Kaptai Lake. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## No room for violence in democracy Says US state dept

UNB, Dhaka

Ahead of political rallies of the ruling and opposition parties in Dhaka yesterday, the US reiterated that political violence has no place in a democracy and that the US favors no political party in Bangladesh.

"I will reiterate that political violence has no place in a democracy, and in the United States, we favor no political party," Principal Deputy Spokesperson at the US Department of State Vedant Patel said in a regular media briefing in Washington on July 27.

He said they support Bangladesh's goal of holding free, fair, and peaceful elections.

Patel said they have also emphasised the importance of the United States and Bangladesh working together to achieve this goal.

"We certainly continue to believe that this endeavor has no space or room for political violence," he said.



Many have to walk miles under the scorching sun to access water. This photo was taken in Nachole upazila of Chapainawabganj recently.

PHOTO: STAR

# HIGH BARIND running out of water

New study paints a grim picture of groundwater depletion in the region

**At least 87 unions, which account for 40.65 percent of the total 214 unions in the region, were classified as falling into the two most critical categories of very high and high water stress areas. Water stress occurs its demand exceeds the available amount during a certain period or when poor quality restricts its use. It is often caused due to groundwater depletion.**

ANWAR ALI

Due to decades of excessive water extraction, over 40 percent of unions in the high Barind region are facing severe groundwater depletion.

The situation is worsening due to climate change and the affected regions are expanding, leaving little access to water for drinking and irrigation, says a recent study conducted by the Institute of Water Modelling (IWM) on behalf of the Water Resources Planning Organisation (WARPO).

Covering three districts – Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Naogaon – the study, titled “Hydrological investigation and modelling of the state of surface and groundwater resources in the high Barind region”, began in 2018 and was approved by WARPO last month.

The final report, financed jointly by the government and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), is expected to be published in early August, said Md Rezaul Maksud Jahedi, director general of WARPO.

To address this critical situation, the study recommends using alternative surface water sources and promoting the combined use of groundwater and surface water in the affected areas.

The high Barind region, already considered a hotspot in the Delta Plan 2100, must take immediate action to preserve its water

average depth had increased beyond 15 metres.

By 2021, the average depth reached 18 metres across a wider area, and in specific spots like Gomostapur of Chapainawabganj, it even reached up to 46.87 metres.

Mentionable, the increase in depth signifies groundwater depletion.

The study also highlights that less rainfall and increased evaporation caused by climate change has contributed to reduction of groundwater recharge.

#### IDENTIFYING WATER STRESS AREAS

The study conducted a comprehensive assessment of the aquifers (sediment saturated with groundwater. Groundwater enters an aquifer as precipitation seeps through the soil. It can move through the aquifer and resurface through springs and well) in the high Barind region, evaluating actual recharge and safe yield levels to determine water stress conditions across 25 upazilas.

Groundwater recharge is a hydrologic process, where water moves downward from surface water to groundwater. Recharge is the primary method through which water enters an aquifer.

Alarmingly, at least 87 unions, which account for 40.65 percent of the total 214 unions in the region, were identified as falling into the two most critical categories of very high and high water stress areas.

#### BARIND AT A GLANCE

Total area 2,91,087 hectares (Rajshahi, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj)  
High Barind 1,66,942 hectares  
Plain Barind 1,24,145 hectares  
Total deep tube-well 8,500 BMDA, 56,000 Private  
Total rice production 33.98 lakh tonnes

#### REASONS BEHIND WATER SCARCITY

Excessive water extraction  
Climate change  
Demand exceeding available amount  
Insufficient aquifer recharge

#### RECOMMENDATION

Finding alternative sources  
Combined use of ground, surface water  
Preserving resources  
Identifying stress areas



resources, said Prof Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan, a key expert involved in reviewing the study.

“It’s important to manage the depleting resources promptly, as the livelihoods of people in Barind area heavily depend on groundwater,” he added.

According to the study’s findings, back in 1985 and 1990, the groundwater table depth in the region was around eight metres in most areas, with some spots reaching up to 21 metres in Gomostapur and Tanore upazilas.

However, due to excessive extraction for various purposes like drinking, irrigation, pisciculture, and industries, by 2010, the

Water stress occurs when its demand exceeds the available amount during a certain period or when poor quality restricts its use. It is often caused due to groundwater depletion.

These unions experienced a concerning pattern where water levels declined from the previous monsoon to the next, indicating insufficient aquifer recharge. Among the hardest-hit areas were the entire Porsha and Nachol upazilas, where groundwater depletion was most severe.

The same category of very high water stress areas also includes additional 37 unions in nine upazilas, such as Godagari, Tanore, Gomostapur, Niamatpur, and Sapahar, also

fell into the category of very high water stress areas.

Another 40 unions were identified as high water stress areas while 65 unions were identified as moderate ones, where the water resources are under considerable pressure.

On a somewhat positive note, the region does have 28 unions classified under low water stress and 34 under very low water stress categories, where the water crisis has not yet reached critical levels.

#### AQUIFER ZONES

The study reveals that the region mainly consists of single or double aquifers, except for a few outer areas that have multiple aquifers.

Surprisingly, at Tetulia, Chaor, and Ganguria unions under Porsha and Sapahar upazilas, no aquifers were found at a drilling depth of 445 metres.

In Badhair union of Tanore, Nachol, parts of Chapainawabganj Sadar, and Gomastapur upazilas, there exists only one thin aquifer, ranging from six to 16 metres in thickness at a depth of 426 metres, serving as the sole water source.

The study highlights that some groundwater samples show elevated levels of bicarbonate, iron, and manganese beyond permissible standards, with arsenic contamination limited to Ranihatani union.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

To address these issues promptly, the study proposes excavation of surface water reservoirs and emphasises the re-excavation of existing beels and ponds.

Additionally, the report recommends promoting crop diversification as an alternative to water-intensive Boro crops in the areas most affected by water stress.

Finally, the study advises implementing artificial recharge of groundwater to replenish and maintain the aquifers in the region.

## ‘Our struggle for water is never-ending’

ANWAR ALI

Bidyut Kumar Mondol, a farmer from Kamardha village in Naogaon’s Porsha upazila, finds himself grappling with a challenging predicament. He had prepared 23 bighas of land for cultivating Aman paddy, but his dreams have been thwarted by a relentless lack of water.

As the sun scorches the land, and the last two weeks have passed without a drop of rain, Bidyut’s Aman lands and seed-beds are withering away.

He has only been able to plant paddy on 4.5 bighas, despite the fact that the monsoon is halfway over, leaving most of his intended area dry and desolate.

“I’m done if it doesn’t rain in the next two weeks of Ashar,” he says, the weight of uncertainty is evident in his voice.

Porsha upazila, like much of its surroundings, heavily relies on rainfall for sustenance, while both surface and groundwater remain scarce resources.

“In the absence of rainwater, we depend on groundwater for irrigation. But even the groundwater is reducing,” Bidyut added.

“I can understand that by noticing the increase in irrigation hours and reducing flow of water,” he explained.

According to Md Kajimuddin, assistant engineer of Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA), the designated 283 deep tube-wells help irrigate only 9,252 hectares out of the vast 22,286 hectares of cultivable land in the upazila.

The officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension have also confirmed this information.

With Bidyut’s distress reflecting the broader struggles faced by farmers in the region, a looming question remains – will the skies open up in time to save their hopes and harvests?

#### FARMERS’ STRUGGLES IN NUMBERS

A 2013 study of Institute of Water Modelling (IWM) suggested the upazila was not suitable for pumping out groundwater due to depletion.

Besides, a recent study of Water Resources Planning Organisation (WARPO) and IWM shows, Chaor, Tetulia and Ganguria unions of the upazila have no suitable aquifer.

“Extracting groundwater is costly in major parts of the Chaor union,” said Nurul Huda, a member of the union parishad.

“We have to dig more than 400 feet to get water. Per hour irrigation costs farmers Tk 150, while farmers in low areas pay Tk 110,” he said.

According to Motiur Rahman, a farmer from Boldahar village in Chaor union, a submersible pump costs Tk 10 lakh to instal when Tk 3 lakh is enough for places having access to groundwater.

“Moreover, these pumps barely allow us to cultivate 40 bighas of land,” he added.

Rahman brings water from one such pump, 3,000 feet (280.84 feet less than a kilometre) away from his village to cultivate Aman on his 16 bighas of land.

Echoing him, Satish Orao, another farmer of the same village said, “Our struggles for water are never-ending... it’s a struggle for life.”

“Last year, at least ponds and canals had water due to rainfall, but this year, the water bodies are yet to be filled up. A submersible pump that supplies drinking water for some 35 families in my village is also near to becoming empty,” he said.

The government installed over 3,000 submersible pumps at villages for drinking water, but the crisis for irrigation water remains, said UP Chairman Sadekul Islam.

Farmers of Porsha and Saahar upazilas converted most of their paddy lands to mango orchards due to lack of water while others cultivate wheat and mustard, said local agriculture officer Sanjay Kumar Sarker.

Mango farming mostly depends on rain water while some farmers dig ponds near their orchards to preserve groundwater and rainwater for irrigation, said Qudrat E Khoda Md Naser, a development activist.

CREATIVE NONFICTION

# On a romantic NIGHT OF SELF



DESIGN: AMREETA LETHE

**My quiet affective registers are that of resilience, and to not give up or give in. This unfamiliar version of me wants to create space, not just to wiggle, but to dance in a romantic night of self.**

LABIB MAHMUD

It has been more than a few weeks since I arrived in London for my Master's, and I still miss my friends, family, and acquaintances back home. Amidst the buzzing London crowd, I feel a sense of detachment followed by a yearning. It is difficult to comprehend such yearning, for it is not something material, physical, or can be touched; rather, it is for a space, a little room to wiggle in order to accomplish the slightest sense of belonging. I scour the internet in search of it, and encounter upon a show taking place in Brick Lane, the famous street in the east end of London where the Bangladeshi diaspora has seemed to claim space, or more appropriately, shall I say, is in a process of claiming space that is the continuing negotiation of what we were and what we are becoming.

The band playing is Lokkhi Terra, an Afrobeat-Cuban-Bangladeshi group, and they are playing at a Jazz Café called the 91 Living Room. Lokkhi Terra infuses Bangladeshi folk with Cuban rumba and Afrobeat, mixed with funk and Indian Classical—an apt embodiment of the multicultural

that London takes great pride in. On my way to the gig, I saw the sign 'Brick Lane' screwed to a red brick wall similar to those council flats, and below it another sign but written in Bangla. I felt drawn towards the Bangla letters, and felt a reverberation that circulated around me, tied me in a knot, and kept lightly tugging at me towards the sign. Even though in the slightest, I did feel something, and like Sara Ahmed says "In such affective economies, emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments." It's as if these intensities preceded my emotions and aligned me to a space that felt like my own, and then I did—even though for a glimpse—felt a sense of belonging.

At 91 Living Room I ordered a pint and asked for halal food. I got the chicken as that was the only halal option available. Halal; something I never had to worry about, and took for granted, as I did for my space. The first song they performed was *Bhromor Koiyo Giya*—a Bangla song about the Hindu God Krishna and his beloved Radha. This was not my first time listening to this song, but definitely my first time hearing it with

the sounds of Saxophone, in contrast to a bamboo flute, and in a Cuban Rumba musical composition. I thought to myself, "This right here perfectly embodies my current state of being. A Bangladeshi amidst Western bodies, constantly interacting even in silence, through gaze, and gesture."

Granted, I understood the Bangla words to this song. But what about everyone else not familiar with Bangla? They swayed, and listened with attention, and intent. An intent to connect, to understand, and to make space for something foreign, and not comprehensible in its totality. "Media, Multiculturalism, and the Politics of Listening" is a paper by Tanja Dreher where he insists on the muting of the inner voice, in order to listen, and allow an openness to the other. The article comprises three vignettes, and one of them about a reading of the Sufi Poet Rumi at Sydney Writers' Festival. Other than in English, the readings comprised of Farsi, Turkish and Arabic, and yet, there existed active listening. Dreher says "The performance struck me as

an exercise in the politics of listening—in quiet and in contemplation and in patience and witnessing and respect and listening itself as a contribution to a beautiful and moving experience." As if in an undeliberate reincarnation, the audience in 91 Living Room availed themselves to the politics of listening. Instead of asking us, and by us, I mean every marginalised subject to "speak up", they took the responsibility upon their shoulders to listen. I could sway to the tunes of Lokkhi Terra now, as I felt a weight lift off my back.

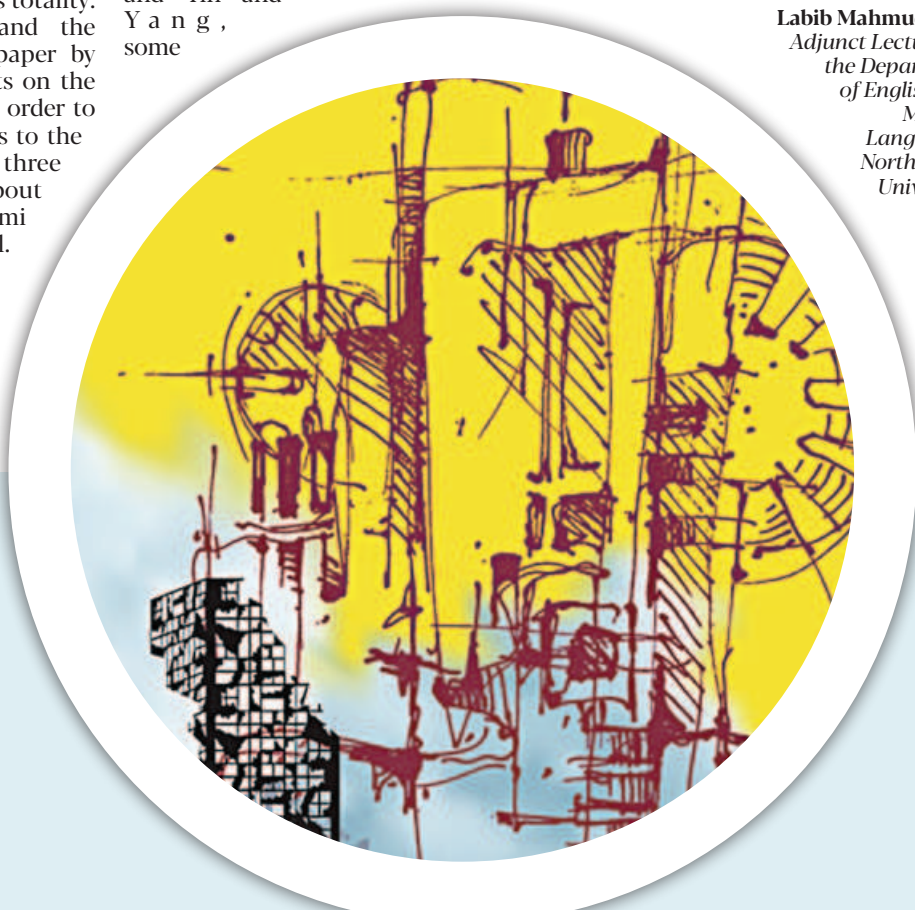
Like Black and White, and Yin and Yang, some

from the audience left with refusal in their faces and gestures. They picked up their iPhones, Mastercards, purses, and left as if staying longer would mean letting go a part of themselves. I smelt fear dispersing, like a dog in perplexity. Sara Ahmed conceptualises this fear as "The fear of passivity that is tied to the fear of emotionality, in which weakness is defined in terms of a tendency to be shaped by others." They feared softness, like a child in Freudian imagination fears castration. Their castration was not of the phallus, but a castration of their "whiteness".

At the end of the show, I picked up my iPhone, and took a selfie to send to my friends back home. I looked at it twice, as I could not recognise my own reflection. I am alone, and I am wearing a puffer, and a scarf. There are white bodies mingling in the background, while this unfamiliar version of me stares back at me. I try to listen to this version of me. Listening entails sound, and from the visual I jump ships to the aural. I clear my throat as if that would help me to listen better, to engage with the sonic frequencies of the image. It is quiet but not mute, as Tina Campt would say "Quiet is a modality that surrounds and infuses sound with impact and affect, which creates the possibility for it to register as meaningful." My quiet affective registers are that of resilience, and to not give up or give in. This unfamiliar version of me wants to create space, not just to wiggle, but to dance in a romantic night of self. I will go to university, attend lectures, eat free Hare Krishna lunch, make humane connections, and create space within the constraints of everyday life. And to borrow from *Listening to Images* (2017), "...both quiet and the quotidian are mobilised as everyday practices of refusal."

I was on my way home, a little light-headed from the pints, but with a sense of belonging. From the Brick Lane sign written in Bangla, to *Bhromor Koiyo Giya*, and to have been really listened to, I carved out a little space for myself. It's small, and I still have to sit in a squat, but I shall continue living, clearing my throat, and humming, until I can dance!

Labib Mahmud is an Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of English and Modern Languages, North South University.



POETRY

# Ruins & RENAISSANCE

MALIHA TRIBHU

The hurt remained beneath my skin like an unwritten revelation—never acknowledged, never tended to;

The hurt build itself into an empire of grief,

Etched in parts of my mind, disguising as fragmented memories,

And it collapsed like a house of cards upon the existence of absurd realities settling in.

The hurt—now stands as a ruin, amid the chaos;

Right in the center of myself (a city I built myself, bustling with crowds, unnamed acquaintances, strangers sharing quiet sunsets, and I greet them all here, amid the mess of myself.)

This city; the evident part of my existence grows and then grows apart,

It thrives into kaleidoscopic spring blossoms,

It again subsides, surrendering to sudden uprisings—the tyrant has fallen,



ILLUSTRATION: MALISHA SYEDA

The city knows its ruins (and it knows the essence of renaissance somewhere amid deserted alleyways painted upon the walls in graffiti.)

The city remembers—the hurt, and the wounds that came with it.

The city remembers the ones who visited this very ground and left.

Yet, it carries on marching with the fleeting seconds—building, growing, adapting, accepting.

This city that I built for myself, that I hid myself underneath—remembers everything;

And it curates the remains of the damages done—carefully amid art galleries and unvisited museums.

I tend to visit them at times, but never lingering for long;

For the city must go on,

At the pace of its endless revolutions—thriving and striving.

Maliha Tribhu is a writer, and is currently doing her undergraduate studies at the University of Dhaka, majoring in Marketing.



## Juicy, flavourful pineapples of Madhupur flood markets

Pineapples grown in orchards of Madhupur upazila are known for their flavour and sweetness. Farmers say yield is good this year, but the price is not. A large pineapple sells for Tk 30 to Tk 35, which is about half of last year's price. According to sellers in the kitchen markets, there is not enough demand for all the pineapples that the farmers have grown.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL



# FROM BIRD TO X

## Bangladeshi boy sues Twitter for appropriating his love story

**“Twitter has run out of ideas and that’s why they are now using people’s personal issues, even to rebrand their logo,” one of the experts said wishing anonymity as he recently dropped his CV for a vacancy at Twitter.**

MAHIBUB ALAM MUNNA

Who would have thought that the introduction of Twitter’s new logo, from blue bird to X, would trigger a Bangladeshi boy and give birth to a new controversy?

Calling himself Broken Neimar, the boy claimed that Twitter mocked his incomplete love story by replacing the bird with X.

“I used to call my ex-girlfriend Pakhi. Although Pakhi became my ex, that doesn’t mean Twitter has the right to taunt someone’s personal issue,” Broken Neimar raged.

Twitter has been playing with people since Elon Musk bought it at a price higher than many countries’ foreign currency reserves. Experts believe that Twitter shouldn’t have ridiculed someone’s love story. Some other experts even anticipate that Elon Musk might have been spying on Bangladeshis’ social media activities.

“Twitter has run out of ideas and that’s why they are now using people’s personal issues, even to rebrand their logo,” one of the experts said wishing anonymity as he recently dropped his CV for a vacancy at Twitter.

“Had Twitter paid the boy some royalty, I wouldn’t have to be here to make this comment,” another expert said while searching for Barbie and Oppenheimer on some pirated sites.

Broken Neimar, who firmly believes that Twitter actually appropriated his love-story, has finally sued the company, asking them either to change it to something else or to bring his lost girlfriend back to him.

“If they didn’t change it to ex, I mean X, it wouldn’t remind me of my Pakhi and I wouldn’t have to bother to sue a huge company like Twitter,” Broken Neimar added.

When this Satireday correspondent

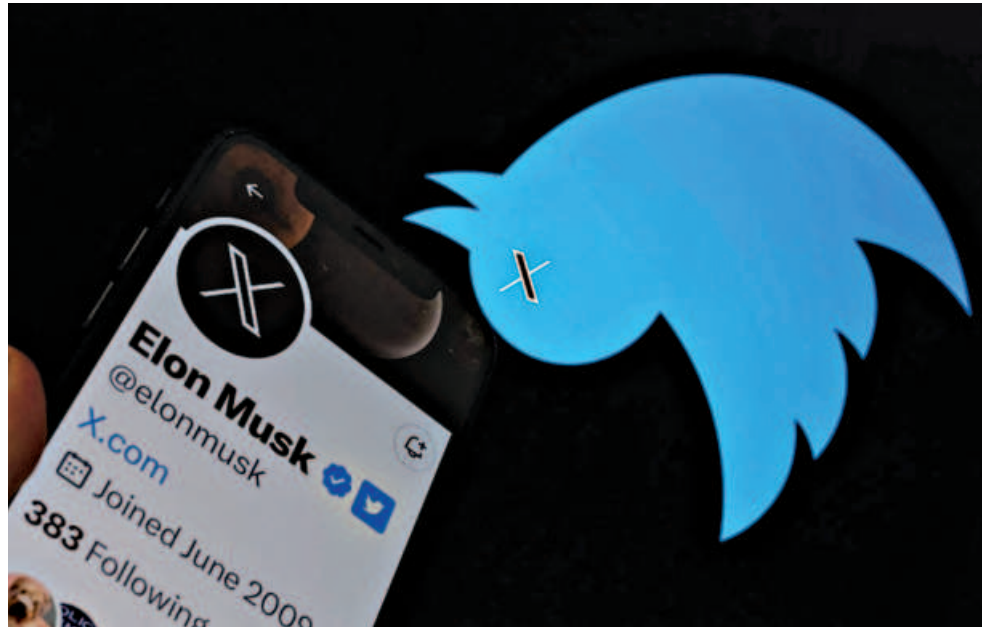


PHOTO: AFP

asked how he was so sure about Twitter’s appropriation, he said, “Firstly, just after a couple of days of my break-up with my beloved Pakhi, Twitter decided to change their Pakhi. Secondly, they rebranded with a letter we actually use to address our former loves. If these two incontestable evidences don’t prove my allegation, I don’t know what can!”

The boy doesn’t believe that it could be a coincidence. News of the incident reached the farthest corners of the world. People are wondering why someone like Musk would make fun of someone, that too from Bangladesh.

“When he is supposed to be finding a way to outplay Zuckerberg’s Threads, he is playing

with children’s emotions,” a self-proclaimed veteran of such issues said on an informal talk show, held in a tea-stall.

Our Satireday correspondent was determined to take Elon Musk’s opinion as he was the ultimate decision maker of Twitter. When contacted through Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, Elon Musk refused to talk and asked our correspondent to reach him through proper channels. Our correspondent then contacted him through Twitter and asked whether he really appropriated a Bangladeshi boy’s love story.

“First answer me this: Why did he call his ex by my previous logo. I’ll sue him. Let that sink in.”



PHOTO: NATHAN CIMA

WHEN READERS WRITE

## Aliens to follow mosquitoes’ example to finally start winning in movies

SHAFIQ R BHUIYAN

Aliens who have been shown in movies invading the United S of A, have now set their eyes on one of the world’s most mosquito infested countries, dubbed “Mini Singapore”.

The aliens have signed an agreement with the Mosquitos of Mini Singapore (MoMS), the official group of these giant creatures in the tiny but filthy rich country.

This deal will allow them to learn about resilience, technique, and ultra-development in order to deal with one of history’s most destructive species: humans.

According to posts from various sources, the revolutionary transformation that mosquitoes, particularly of the Aedis variety, have undergone in Mini Singapore has mesmerised the aliens.

“We have always been defeated in Hollywood movies,” stated Donald Alien, chief of the Unified Foundation of Outsiders (UFO). “We were sad. Human film-makers have always been unfair and kicked us out. But the Aedis mosquitoes have worked MARVELously. We are seeing a new ray of hope.”

“Mini Singapore has deployed all the techniques they learned from their public-tax sponsored ‘Annual Leisure US of A Tours’, but to no avail,” he added. “We’re on cloud nine right now, and we are sure we can exact our vengeance on Hollywood.”

“We are always the butt of jokes, pokes and butt-kicking in the movies. It always starts out well ... humans are at a disadvantage, we are strong. But then they always find a way to beat us and kill us. But here, in Mini Singing, we are seeing that it has started out bad for humans with the mosquitoes, and then gotten worse. We are sure we can find some realist director to buy into this idea.”

Meanwhile, the mayor of Mini Singapore City, Rudi Gulmari, who is the country’s chief “Man in Black” in the fight against mosquitoes, has lost all confidence in the battle. He descended the city’s manholes but was unable to reach a deal with the Aedis. Whenever he sees the media, he sobs. The Aedis, who have become stronger, sharper, and dirtier (they now lay eggs in filthy water), have destroyed his daydreams of being re-elected.

When this reporter attempted to speak with a MoMS representative, they refused. They are now the aliens’ companions and will no longer listen to humans. While confronted by this reporter, one of their mosquitoes pointed out, “Talk to my trunk,” and flew away to bite another human being.

**This deal will allow them to learn about resilience, technique, and ultra-development in order to deal with one of history’s most destructive species: humans.**

## Sick of receiving bribes, man starts eating money when offered

AFIZAN HADIAR

Lobhi Chaibeshi Takai (Japanese on his mother’s side), was getting increasingly anxious as days went by. It had almost been eight years since he gave joined civil services as a VAT officer. People warned him about the obscene amounts of money he’d receive, but no one gave him an exact picture of how aggressive it gets.

When Lobhi first started his career, he wondered when the money would start pouring in. He joined at a Tk 12,000 salary and there was no way he could start a family with that. Where was all that money people kept talking about?

One fine day he starts seeing his contemporaries receiving special envelopes at odd hours of the day without making any eye contact. A little later, he would see them smiling ear to ear and then they’d proceed to sign on a piece of paper and take a nap.

“See the trick here Lobhi is that you have to play hard to get. Our jobs are simplistic, but you can never let the average citizen dare to think that way,” said Telbahadur, a close colleague of Lobhi during a random lunch break.

“First, they come to you with some file, or some license that they need for their store. So, you have to make sure you have a bunch of empty files lying around in stacks so that they know you can’t give them any special treatment.”

“Then people will end up offering bribes on their own to get the job done on time!” “Precisely, Lobhi. Plus, you have it in your name, it shouldn’t be hard for you,” said Telbahadur, making Lobhi blush.

And so the next few years went by without any worry for money. In his almost eight-year career, Lobhi purchased four

flats, two brand new cars (he can’t bear to look at reconditioned ones), a six bigha piece of land in North Rice. He set up a separate fund account for his son and wife, bought shares of multiple companies.

But with time, Lobhi got tired of how easy it had gotten to get money. Before he could even pull his hack, people would just take money out of their pockets even without a second’s haste. The game had gotten way too easy. The thrill was gone.

**But with time, he got tired of how easy it had gotten to get money. Before he could even pull his hack, people would just take money out of their pockets even without a second’s haste.**

And to top it off, although he was rich, he had to act like a meagre government servant who had a below average salary, and he hated people thinking he was poor.

Last Tuesday, Lobhi went for a drive at a store since they had been using a fake license. As soon as he went near the shopkeeper to talk to him, the shopkeeper smiled and took large notes out of his register.

“ARE YOU %\$#^\$&@ KIDDING ME?!” exclaimed Lobhi. He snatched the money out of the shopkeeper’s hand and shoved it in his mouth.

Gulping down the last few bits of money, a raging Lobhi said, “Its good for digestion.”



PHOTO: MATHIEU STERN



## Bangladeshi marketing execs unhappy as Barbie’s viral marketing actually cost money

BY NUTBOLU

“Viral content should be a breeze. Just post something, give it a Facebook boost, and boom, it goes viral,” explained a perplexed Rashedul Jeeyam, the GM of Tubs Standard Media and Communications.

“Sure, we charged our clients for it, but no one said we actually had to do something meaningful with that money, right? I mean, I used it for the down payment on my new Toyota Harrier.”

Last week, many marketing executives and brand managers were taken aback by the success of Hollywood’s latest movie, Barbie. The curious thing is, nobody really knows what the movie is about, except that it’s all about pink—no, not the singer or the Aerosmith song; just the color.

In hindsight, though, Aerosmith could have plugged in the song for a quick revival, just like Kate Bush’s “Running Up The Hill” in Stranger Things.

The shock factor here is that the marketing campaign for the movie cost a whopping \$150 million, while the actual production cost was lower. The buzz around it is incredible. Men in Dhaka are suddenly finding pink shirts they did not know they had bought at a discount years ago.

**“Everyone used to think viral marketing was like shordikashi, or even more simple like a well-choreographed flash mob that just happens.”**

An editor from a lifestyle magazine even had her horse painted pink to join the trend. Two restaurants are now offering pink Thai soup as a special, and they can’t keep up with the orders. It’s incredible how a simple child’s doll with hundreds of accessories has captured the collective imagination of the entire world.

But how did they manage to influence the world with just a doll? The answer was surprisingly straightforward: “Money, lots of it. There’s a science to it. It involves presenting relatable issues packaged in nostalgia to the masses,” explained marketing intern Keisha Kottler.

Keisha was the mastermind behind creating scarcity of pink hair dye in tri-state areas, tapping into sensitive teens’ emotions, making them feel left out and desperate to connect with the Barbie color theme even more.

This news hit the Bangladeshi marketers hard. The concept of making something go viral suddenly seemed complex and challenging.

“Everyone used to think viral marketing was like shordikashi, or even more simple like a well-choreographed flash mob that just happens,” lamented a rueful Reuzina Akhter from Shorisha Creative Agency.

Digital marketing is still in its infancy here. Only last month they held a workshop/conference over how big a logo should be in a paid content. No consensus was arrived at because no one could finalise the size of the sponsor logos on the event banner.

We spoke to Asif from Rank Motors about how this would impact their heavily digital-driven marketing strategies.

“Clients will now demand real viral marketing, not just a simple social media post boost. We used to post about our new products without revealing the prices. If people asked, we’d tell them to inbox us. It kept our online interactions up, and our bosses were happy because they don’t understand metrics any better than we do. But now, Barbie is making people think, and that’s not good,” he warned.

Batman stated that he was an early adopter of the trend, as far back in the 1970s. “I took a risk and got a little radioactive, but then it made my suit go pink. Cool, no?”

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