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Liverpool, not Barca, started playing high-pressing



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Deforestation in Amazon fell 66pc in July



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Mango exports increase to 2,700 tonnes



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Erosion hits Marine Drive

POWER SECTOR SUBSIDY Low revenue collection limits disbursement

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

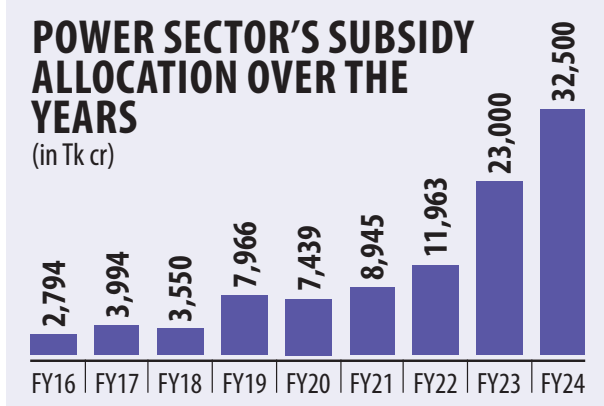
Though the government has allocated a large amount of subsidy to the power sector, it is unable to disburse the amount as per demand due to narrow fiscal space.

Since May, the power division has demanded Tk 20,900 crore from its subsidy allocation to settle dues for the period of July-November 2022.

The finance division has been able to release less than one-fifth of the sum: in June, Tk 2,800 crore was made available and in July, only Tk 1,200 crore, according to officials informed with the proceedings.

The finance ministry officials said that they are unable to pay the amount sought by the power division due to low revenue collection in July. Revenue collection is typically slow in the first quarter of a fiscal year.

"So it is tough to disburse huge amounts of money to one ministry. We need to think about all the ministries — they all have demand. Disbursement will increase when the collection picks up later in the fiscal year," said one of the finance ministry officials on the condition of anonymity to speak candidly on the issue.



Earlier, the power division's subsidy demand used to be Tk 700-800 crore a month. Since last fiscal year, it is in the neighbourhood of Tk 4,000 crore thanks to capacity charges and the Ukraine war-induced fuel price shock, finance ministry officials said.

"This is a burden for the government," said one of the finance ministry officials.

Were the revenue collection more buoyant, the finance ministry would have been able to make the funds available.

Last fiscal year, the National Board of Revenue collected Tk 325,272 crore, falling short of the target by Tk 44,728 crore. In the first nine months of the fiscal year, non-NBR tax collection was Tk 6,014 crore, which is just one-third of the year's target.

In the absence of expected revenue collection, the government makes do with its fund requirements by borrowing from the banking system and issuing national savings certificates.

It cannot borrow from commercial banks as those are facing a liquidity crunch of their own.

And given the elevated inflation level, the government has changed tack this fiscal year and is not borrowing from the central bank. As of July 18, the government did not borrow from the central bank but returned Tk 7,000 crore, shows data from the Bangladesh Bank.

This raises the question of how the subsidy demand for December last year would be met, which is more than Tk 4,000 crore.

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Relatives try to comfort a woman as she leans over the body of her eight-year-old grandson Ayat at the Mugda Medical College Hospital yesterday. Ayat died of dengue and his mother, also infected with the disease, is in the ICU of the hospital. His father recovered from dengue only a few days ago. The family lives in Khilgaon Taltala area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SPL AL MEET TOMORROW Focus on unity, resolving feuds ahead of polls

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, at the party's special extended meeting tomorrow, is likely to instruct her party leaders to make full preparations for the polls, leaving behind internal feuds.

She will also ask them to strengthen their presence on the streets to thwart the BNP's movement, said party insiders.

She will deliver a clear message to her party colleagues that the AL will not bow down to any pressure under any circumstances and will not move away from the path of election.

Sources say the ruling party chief will also assure them that the next general election will be held in time and in accordance with the constitutional provisions.

Around 5,000 party leaders and elected public representatives from the AL are expected to take part in the meeting at the Gono Bhaban.

Before every national election, the AL organises such meetings to give guidelines to the party leaders. The

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DENGUE OUTBREAK Shishu Hospital having to turn away patients

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Three-year-old Omar Faruk was having seizures when his father Enamul Haque brought him to Bangladesh Shishu Hospital around 2:30pm yesterday.

But after one and a half hours, the authorities told the desperate father to immediately take the baby somewhere else because there was no room at the hospital.

"I don't know what I will do now," Enamul told The Daily Star on the hospital premises.

The hospital has been overwhelmed for days by the influx of severely ill children with dengue, and doctors have been forced to turn away patients who require immediate attention.

Another father named Salauddin arrived at the facility in the afternoon with his 11-year-old Nusrat Jahan, who had problems in her urinary tract.

After he was turned away by the hospital staff, Salauddin, a garment factory worker from Tongi, said he was also turned away from Shaheed

Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital and the National Institute of Kidney Diseases and Urology earlier in the day.

Salauddin added that he could not afford to take his daughter to any private hospital.

Different other hospitals in the capital have been at capacity due to the deluge of dengue patients for weeks.

A paediatrician at the Shishu hospital said, "We are handling too many dengue patients. We have over 100 dengue patients now, and this leaves less room for other patients."

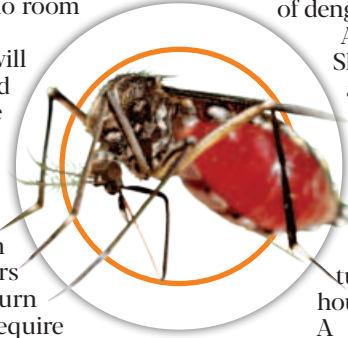
The doctor added that over 20 patients were turned away in just eight hours yesterday.

A government employee, requesting anonymity, said five days ago, he failed to get his seriously ill son admitted to the Shishu Hospital.

Shishu Hospital Director Prof Mohammad Jahangir Alam says there are 681 beds at the hospital. "We are trying our best to accommodate the patients."

Jahangir acknowledged that in some

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AL can't stop BNP's movement even with force Fakhrul tells protest rally

MD ABBAS

The ruling Awami League uses force to remain in power yet it cannot suppress the BNP's one-point movement by filing cases and carrying out attacks against its activists, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told a rally yesterday afternoon.

"The Awami League has to resign. The movement cannot be suppressed by sentencing or filing cases against BNP activists. This government will be brought down through a strong movement," he said while addressing the rally in front of the party's Nayapaltan headquarters in the capital.

The rally was organised in protest against the conviction and sentencing of BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman and his wife Zubaida Rahman.

Earlier on August 2, Judge Md Asaduzzaman of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court sentenced Tarique to nine years and his wife Zubaida Rahman to three years in prison in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission in 2007.

Terming the verdict "prescribed," the BNP announced the nationwide protest

PHOTO ON PAGE 12 SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

What looks like an image from a war-torn nation is actually the remains of a Dhaka North City Corporation market in Gabtoli area of the capital. The Roads and Highways Department had partially demolished the structures over a month ago but did not clear the debris. The photo was taken last week.

Cyberattack alert for August 15

Govt asks banks, financial institutions to take precautionary measures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT) yesterday issued an alert to Bangladeshi banks, financial institutions and other organisations over possible cyber-attacks on August 15.

The alert was issued in response to a declaration made by some religious and ideologically motivated underground hacker groups on July 31 that they would launch a storm of cyber attacks against Bangladesh cyberspace on that day.

The alert is aimed at warning critical information infrastructures (CII), banks and financial institutions, health care and all government and private organisations of the possible cyber-attacks that may disrupt IT operations and businesses.

All organisations have been advised to be on alert for small to medium-scale cyber-attacks originating from the "hacktivist" groups, and to take the precautions to protect their infrastructures, according to a statement by CIRT.

CIRT reviews and responds to computer security incidents and activities. According to the statement, a hacker group on August 1 claimed to have carried out a cyber-attack on a payment gateway in Bangladesh and law enforcement and banking organisations. On July 3, a hacker group claimed a DDoS attack on Bangladeshi transportation service for one hour, making the website unavailable for the period.

On June 27, a hacker group defaced the website of a Bangladeshi government college and shared a web archive supporting their claims. On

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Erosion hits Marine Drive

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, Cox's Bazar

Heavy rains and high tide during the full moon are causing erosion to Cox's Bazar sea beach, Cox's Bazar-Teknaf Marine Drive, and in Matarbari of Maheshkhali, according to public representatives and government officials.

Among those three places, the erosion in some parts of the Marine Drive has taken a grave turn from Thursday, affecting at least 10 points in Teknaf, they added.

Around half of the 50-metre wide Marine Drive in west Mundardail area was washed away on Thursday morning after geo tubes protecting the road were torn apart by strong waves, Amir Hossain, a local resident, told The Daily Star.

Due to influence of full moon during high tide, waves become stronger than usual, causing erosion at Baharchhara ghat, Mundardail, Hadurchhara and West Mundardail areas on the Marine Drive, said Kamruzzaman, upazila nirbahi officer of Teknaf.

The engineering corps of Bangladesh Army is working to prevent erosion, he told this correspondent yesterday afternoon.

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The erosion in some parts of the Marine Drive has taken a grave turn from Thursday, affecting at least 10 points in Teknaf. Around half of the 50-metre wide Marine Drive in west Mundardail area was washed away after geo tubes for protecting the road were torn apart by strong waves. PHOTO: STAR



Of friendship lost in time...

An expatriate's quest to reconnect with old friends

SUSHANTA GHOSH

"Want to connect with my old friends", read the title of a newspaper advertisement.

"Alauddin of Pabna, Nurul Islam of Cumilla's Talpukur, Abbas of Rajshahi, Monir of Noakhali, Sucharita of Barishal, Rehena of Tangail and Hannan of Pabna were my dear friends. We were all employed in Libya. My phone number is given below. If any of you recognise me, please reach out," the advert added.

Haji Abdul Majid, 76, recently came to Bangladesh from Australia solely with the goal to rekindle the friendship he once held dear. Memories of his friends echoed in the corners of his soul as he yearned to reunite with them, whom he had befriended while toiling together in a distant land -- Libya.

They made memories of a lifetime together. Now, separated by time and circumstances, Majid sought to bridge the gap and reconnect with the friends who had once been like family to him.

However, he bids farewell to Bangladesh today with a void in his heart. Despite his efforts, the advertisements he published on two national newspapers have yielded no response.

"But I'll return again. I'm not giving up on my friends so easily," he added.

Earlier, The Daily Star met with him in person at his residence in Barishal's Banglabazar area, where he shared stories about his long lost friends.

Born on February 10, 1947, in Kathipara village of Jhalakathi's Nalchiti, Majid completed his primary education at Shatapika Primary School in Nalchiti, higher education at Nalchiti Merchant Institute and college education at Govt BM College.

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Every time my phone rings, I feel a surge of hope, believing that it might be one of my friends who saw the advertisement. However, this optimism is often followed by disappointment when the calls do not turn out to be from them.

ABDUL MAJID



SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO

Mango exports increase to 2,700 tonnes

Says agriculture ministry



YEAR	TONNES
2017-18	232
2018-19	310
2019-20	283
2020-21	1,632
2021-22	1,757
2022-23	2,700

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 2,700 tonnes of mangoes have been exported as of this year, which is one thousand tonnes higher compared to last year.

The export was 1,757 tonnes in the last fiscal year.

This year, mangoes were exported to 34 countries while the number was 28 last year, according to a press release issued by the Ministry of Agriculture.

The major export destinations and quantities include 1,256 tonnes to the United Kingdom, 296 tonnes to Italy, 260 tonnes to Saudi Arabia, 137 tonnes to the United Arab Emirates, 111 tonnes to Qatar, 55 tonnes to Singapore, 14 tonnes to Switzerland, 70 tonnes to Germany, 85 tonnes to France, 65 tonnes to Sweden, 218 tonnes to Kuwait, and 40 tonnes to Canada.

Annually, the country produces about 25 lakh tonnes of mangoes, but the export volume has been much less than the production in previous years.

In 2017-18, only 232 tonnes were exported, followed by 310 tonnes in 2018-19, 283 tonnes in 2019-20, 1,632

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Man detained with 2,400 yaba pills at Dhaka airport

UNB, Dhaka

Airport Armed Police Battalion (APBn) and DNC detained a man with 2,400 yaba pills at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

The arrestee is Drub Das, 25, a resident of Teknaf in Cox's Bazar.

The accused was arrested in the parking lot in front of Terminal 1 of the airport in the morning, said police.

Based on a tip-off, a joint operation team of Airport APBn and DNC was sent to the terminal, Airport APBn Additional Superintendent of Police Mohammad Ziaul Haque told journalists at a briefing.

At around 11:00am, sensing the presence of the police, Drub tried to flee the spot.

He was detained by the team, the official told journalists.

During the primary interrogation, he denied carrying any kind of drugs, he added.

However, Drub admitted that he had yaba pills in his possession after he was brought to the Airport Armed Police Battalion office for detailed interrogation, said the police official.

The market value of the recovered yaba pills is Tk 7.20 lakh, according to Additional SP Ziaul.

Preparations are on to register a case against the accused with the Airport Police Station, he further said.

DEADLY JHALAKATHI CRASH Probe blames bus driver

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

An investigation committee of Jhalakathi district administration has found clear evidence of the driver's negligence in connection with the death of 17 people when a passenger bus fell into a pond on July 22.

Muhammad Mamun Shibli, additional district magistrate of Jhalakathi who led the five-member investigation committee, said the investigation report was submitted to the deputy commissioner on August 1.

The investigation found bus driver Mohan Khan was turning to the passengers behind and talking to them and also received calls on his mobile phone while driving, the report revealed.

Also, Mohan had a driving license for light vehicles but not for a heavy vehicle like bus, according to the report.

The bus owner was also found running the vehicle in unfit condition with only motive to earn higher revenue without adhering to passengers' safety.



The Roads and Highways Department also lacks sufficient resources to maintain regional highways properly. The number of deaths has gone up as land owners are digging ponds beside roads after changing the land category, it added.

"In this regard, we have recommended that the permission of the authorities should be taken for digging ponds on roadside. Also, all these places should be strongly fenced," Shibli added.

Jhalakathi Sadar Police Station OC Md Nasiruddin said the bus driver and his helper were arrested over the incident. Efforts are on to arrest other accused, he added.

Tk 5,617cr project fails to prevent waterlogging

Low lying areas, even mayor's residence get inundated in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Every monsoon, Chattogram residents brace themselves for the annual ordeal of ankle-to-knee-deep water flooding the low-lying areas following rainfall.

Sometimes, water even reaches waist length. Ironically, even the ground floor and yard of the current mayor's residence succumbed to the same waterlogging issue he vowed to solve during his tenure, exposing the failure of his mandate and washing away the tall claims of monsoon preparedness.

The situation has been no different this year, as the port city witnessed hours of waterlogging

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Once again all the low-lying areas of the port city got inundated following heavy spells of rainfall between Thursday night and yesterday morning, further exacerbating the plight of its long-suffering dwellers. Inset, the ground floor of the mayor's residence, "Mayor Haban," in Bahaddarhat area also got submerged. PHOTO: STAR



Three killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Three people -- including a journalist -- died in separate road accidents in Gazipur yesterday morning.

In Konabari on the Dhaka-Tangail highway, two died and eight were injured as their microbus, heading for a trip to Nikli Haor, hit a lorry and hit a road divider.

The deceased were identified as Shah Alam and Jewel Rana.

The accident took place around 8:00am when some friends from Kashimpur were heading towards Nikli Haor in Kishoreganj, said KM Ashraf Uddin, officer-in-charge of Konabari Police Station.

The driver of the microbus lost control over the steering after one of its tyres burst. The vehicle then hit a lorry and ploughed into the divider, leaving nine passengers and the driver injured, he said.

They were rushed to hospitals, where two of the passengers died. The rest are receiving treatment at a hospital, said Assistant Sub-Inspector Swapan, duty officer of the police station.

Meanwhile, a local journalist was killed after a dump truck hit his motorcycle as he was heading to his village home at Kapasia upazila from Gazipur city around 10:00am.

The deceased, identified as Monjur Hossain Milon, 50, was the editor of local newspaper "Gazipur Darpon," said Kapasia Police Station OC HM Lutful Kabir.

BNP 'deadlier than dengue'

Says info minister

UNB, Dhaka

BNP in some cases is deadlier than dengue, said Information Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday.

Mahmud, also Awami League joint general secretary, said Aedes mosquitoes bite people while BNP burns people and vehicles. "Both of them must be stopped to," he said.

The minister was speaking at the chief guest at Bangladesh Krishak League's mosquito eradication and awareness programme at Khamarbari roundabout in the capital in the morning.

"BNP never does politics for the people," he said.

"BNP never stood by people amid dengue outbreak or flood-disaster... even during coronavirus they did not help people. They have only taken part in photo sessions..." he alleged.

"And their top leaders do not allow anyone from the party to hold any election, even if they stand for the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



The railway track from Balasighat to Trimohani Bazar in Gaibandha lies abandoned since 2015, with weeds and plants sprouting all over it. Besides, 629 farmers who gave up their lands for this track still await the promised compensation. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Resign, pave way for free, fair polls

CPB asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Claiming that a free and fair election is not possible unless it is held under a non partisan caretaker government, leaders of the Communist Party of Bangladesh yesterday demanded resignation of the incumbent government and dissolution of the parliament.

They made the remarks while addressing a rally organised by the Dhaka city (south) unit of the CPB at Purana Paltan.

Speakers at the rally said the government snatched away the democratic rights to protest. Fascist misrule has been imposed on the people by destroying the constitutional institutions, they alleged.

"They [the govt] have snatched people's right to vote and established a so-called constitutional dictatorship. To stay in power for life, the ruling government wants to conduct the next elections in a one-sided, unopposed, voter-less manner like in the past," they further alleged.

The speakers announced to wage a tougher movement, demanding a non-partisan government during the polls to hold the next national elections in a participatory, free and fair manner. Advisor of the CPB central committee Manzurul Ahsan Khan, CPB President Mohammad Shah Alam, General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince, former president Muzahidul Islam Selim addressed the rally.

Speakers announced to wage a tougher movement, demanding a non-partisan government during the polls to hold the next national elections in a participatory, free and fair manner.

Cop 'shoots himself to death' in Panchagarh

UNB, Panchagarh

A constable died early yesterday hours after he shot himself with his rifle in front of Sonali Bank police box in Panchagarh town, said a police official quoting his colleagues.

The deceased was identified as Firoz Ahmed, 27, of Dinajpur's Nawabganj.

Firoz joined the Panchagarh Sonali Bank guard duty on July 31, said Panchagarh Sadar Police Station OC Abdul Latif Mia.

"On Thursday night, he shot himself with his rifle while on duty at the main branch of Panchagarh Sonali Bank in the district. Following the incident, other colleagues took him to Panchagarh Modern Sadar Hospital where duty doctor Dr Mirza Saidul Islam declared him dead," he said.

Firoz's body will be handed over to the family after autopsy, said OC Latif.

According to police sources, Firoz was talking to his wife Upoma on mobile phone. At one point, he got agitated and shot himself in the neck.

Dr Mirza Saidul Islam said his colleagues rushed him to the hospital around 2:30am on the day. He died on the way, he added.

Two bodies recovered in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

Police recovered two bodies in the capital yesterday.

Shahbagh Police Station Sub-Inspector Md Faruk Hossain found an unidentified man on the road in front of the new building of Dhaka Medical College Hospital at 10:50am and took him to the emergency department at DMCH where a duty doctor declared him dead.

Meanwhile, Paltan Police Station SI Manjurul Islam found another body on the footpath in front of Baitul Khair Building in Purana Paltan around 8:30am.

Duty doctor at DMCH declared him dead, he added.

The deceased was identified as Sunil Roy, son of Arun Roy, from Cumilla.



PRAYER TIMING
AUGUST 5
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:20 12:45 5:00 6:47 8:15
JAMAAT 4:55 1:15 5:15 5:50 8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Tracks abandoned, promises unkept

Rail line lies unused for 8yrs, 629 farmers yet to get back acquired land, compensation

MOSTAFA SHABUJ

A rail line lies abandoned, where weeds now sprawl. But, behind the eerie landscape lies a deeper narrative – one of farmers' tears, broken promises and bygone days.

WHEN FERRIES USED TO CARRY TRAIN PASSENGERS

Once upon a time, the Jamuna served as a passage for railway ferries, shuttling train passengers across its waters.

The Tistamukh Bahadurabad route, initiated by the British government in 1938, witnessed ferries so vast that three train wagons could comfortably fit inside them.

Positioned on one side of the river was the Tistamukh Ghat in Gaibandha's Fulchhari Upazila, while the Bahadurabad Ghat in Jamalpur's Dewanganj Upazila lay on the other.

What's worse is the farmers who gave up their lands for the construction of the railway line have been left to bear the burden of broken promises. The railway authorities have ceased compensating them for the last 13 years, they alleged.

In 1990, the route transitioned from the Tistamukh Ghat to the Balashi Ghat in the same upazila. To facilitate rail communication in tandem with these railway ferries, the government temporarily requisitioned over 145 acres of land in 1996-97, offering compensation to the 629 farmers of Fulchhari upazila.

This land was utilised to construct a nine-kilometre rail link road from Balasighat to Trimohani Bazar.

According to the agreement, Bangladesh



Railway was obligated to compensate the farmers as long as the track remained operational, promising to return the land to them once the rail track was inactive.

However, the inauguration of the Jamuna Bridge in 1998 offered an alternate, more preferred means of transportation, rendering the ferry journey challenging, time-consuming, and uncertain due to navigability issues in the river.

Consequently, passenger ferry services ceased entirely in 2005, making the nine-km rail route redundant.

In 2015, even ferries carrying goods-laden wagons to the rail line halted entirely due to navigability challenges, resulting in a complete suspension of all types of train communication.

'WHERE IS OUR COMPESATION?'

In a recent visit, the correspondent observed that the tracks lie dormant, engulfed by encroaching houses, weeds, and makeshift mud-roads. Public properties have suffered

extensive damage, with stolen stones and severed tracks becoming a common sight, yet indifference prevails, and the situation remains unaddressed.

What's worse is the farmers who gave up their lands for the construction of the railway line have been left to bear the burden of broken promises. The railway authorities have ceased compensating them for the last 13 years, they alleged.

Many farmers, like 67-year-old Sadekur Rahman from Kanchipara village have given up 53 decimals of their agricultural land without adequate compensation.

Despite receiving some payments initially, they have been deprived of any further financial assistance since 2010, leaving them with unresolved complexities, they added.

Momena Akhter, Sadekur's wife, said, "After receiving around Tk. 92,000 during the railway line construction, we were promised continuous compensation. However, for the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Teacher shortage bogs down academic activities

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A total 33 out of 44 posts of teachers and 17 out of 26 employee posts are remaining vacant for an extended period at Moulvibazar Government Technical School and College, hampering the institution's academic and administrative activities.

Currently, only 11 teachers and a limited number of employees are shouldering the responsibilities. The post of principal is also vacant at present, according to the authorities. A chief instructor of Automobile Department is currently serving as acting principal of the institution.

The institution, established in 1965, is now struggling to conduct classes and manage administrative activities promptly amid the acute shortage of teachers and staff. The few available teachers are working tirelessly to maintain the teaching programme.

However, their efforts alone are not sufficient to provide quality education and proper support to the students.

At present 597 students are studying at the institution from sixth to 12th grade, according to sources. The institution teaches technical subjects alongside general curriculum, while offering different short-term courses as well.



Short-term courses include four months of housekeeping which has two months of academic classes. For the remaining two months, the students did hands on training in different hotels and motels. Apart from this, there is a four-month motor driving course, three-month and six-month computer office application courses for professional licences.

The vacant technical teaching positions at

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Locals unite to save century-old playground

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Residents of a remote village in Habiganj have united to save their historic playground from the possession of influential individuals who are claiming ownership of the field.

The efforts come at a time when large open playgrounds in different parts of the country are getting confiscated either by real estate companies, large corporations, or the government in the name of urbanisation.

Bazlur Rahman, Ranjit Sutradhar, and Piyush Sutradhar, all residents of the village, have claimed ownership of around 3.37 acres of the 5.37-acre playground in Rampur village of Habiganj Sadar upazila, said locals.

While Bazlur said that he owns 1.3 acres of land on that ground per the records,

Ranjit and Piyush, who are also members of Teghoria Union Parishad, claimed that the entire ground was registered in their ancestors' names, Ashwini Mohan and Rupkini Mohan Sutradhar.

However, according to the village residents and the local UP, the entire 5.37 acres of the playground are under the jurisdiction of the village panchayat.

They claimed that even though the land was earlier recorded as Ashwini and Rupkini's, the field management committee filed a case with a court against the record in 1972, and the verdict came in the committee's favour, making the current claims of Bazlur and others illegal.

Tofazzal Sohel, a local and waterkeeper of Khowai river, alleged that the ones attempting to seize the field were using fraudulent documents.

Since the court's verdict, locals have been holding various sporting activities.

Former UP member Dayamoy Sutradhar said the villagers are determined to protect the field for the youth.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Children and youths engaged in a game of football at their beloved playground, amid the uncertainty surrounding its ownership. Three influential persons have claimed the field, although locals say the playground is under the jurisdiction of village panchayat. Inset, The villagers and representatives from Bapa have joined hands to save the playground. The photos were taken from Rampur village in Habiganj recently.

PHOTO: STAR

INSIDE Saba's world

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

With dance being her first love, Sohana Saba gradually molded her inner artiste into different forms of arts—modelling, anchoring and prominently acting.

The *Ayna* famed actor is expecting a couple of projects—*Oshombhob* and *Maniker Lal Kakra*, to be released soon. She dropped by The Daily Star for some coffee. Meanwhile, following the recent trend, she dolled up as Barbie in an exclusive photoshoot.

'Oshombhob' is one of your upcoming films. Tell us a bit about this project.

My favourite Aruna di (Aruna Biswas) is the director of the film. I am playing the role of a girl who is very ordinary, yet faces lots of hurdles during her journey. The narrative is different from what we usually get to watch these days. It is a family drama.

Since the beginning of your acting career in 2006 with Kabori Sarwar's 'Ayna', your presence on-screen has been sporadic. Why is that?

When I was shooting for *Ayna* in 2004, I had promised my papa that I would do just one film. Usually, my mother used to accompany me during the shoots at BFDC.

We had 8 days of shoot at BFDC, and during those 8 days, I was offered 22 films. I politely rejected all of them, except for Morshedul Islam's *Khelaghor*. After *Ayna*, this film will remain a remarkable one in my career.

Apart from acting, do you have any other career plans?

I want to focus more on acting, and explore various characters. Acting is something I truly love. Other than that, I have a plan to open a Yoga school in September.

How many times did you fall in love?

Not many times, but most of my lovers were like Devdas, and those experiences were horrible.

When are you getting married?

Honestly, I am afraid of men and getting into a relationship. Sometimes I wonder if there is really someone made for me whom I can completely rely on.

If I get someone as such, I will marry him right away!

On social media, people tend to spread hatred and post negative comments. How do you react to that?

My page is regulated by admins. They control the comment panel, and keep blocking inappropriate comments.

However, I am not much

bothered by these naysayers' remarks.

I want to focus on my work, as at the end of the day, it is my work that will speak for myself.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI WORSHED

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Needle, Thread and a Splash of Water

August 11-14 | 5-9 pm
Alliance Française de Dhaka



Prachyanat's 'The Petrified Place'

August 10-11 | 7-9 pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Comedy Grill | Stand Up Dhaka

August-6 | 8:15 pm
Grilled, Dhanmondi

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix Hidden Strike



Hoichoi Nikhoj



Hulu Only Murders in the Building season 3



Amazon Prime The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart



Disney+ Star Wars: Ahsoka



A step forward for Bangladesh's

STAND-UP COMEDY

MAKHZUM KHAN SHADID

On July 20, 2023, Amin Hannan Chowdhury released standup comedy special, *One Night Stand*, on the OTT platform Chorki. With a unique blend of observational comedy and narrative storytelling, Amin captivated audiences, delivering a well-crafted performance that left them in stitches.

One Night Stand showcases Amin's unorthodox comedic style, skillfully intertwining relatable insights with engaging narratives. He takes the audience on a hilarious journey through his childhood, his newfound influencer status, and the ups and downs of life as a comedian in Bangladesh.

What sets Amin apart is his ability to cater to a wide range of audiences. He avoids strawman-ing any premise and instead presents a slightly dumbed-down version of himself, making the weaker propositions of certain ideas all the more hilarious.

Amin's core jokes revolve around observing incongruities in society, but what makes them truly shine is how he delivers them in first person, making the exaggeration feel believable and relatable.



The directorial team has done an excellent job editing the show to make it appealing to a broader range of audiences. While there are a few distracting moments when the camera gets blurred, and

sometimes it's challenging to hear the interaction with the audience, these instances make you wonder why everyone is laughing at Amin's response.

However, one can't help but be amazed by how quickly Amin comes up with witty responses, and fortunately, these minor issues don't put an impact on the viewer's overall experience. Director Rafsan Sabab ensured that viewers didn't miss out in any context of these moments, allowing us to feel like a part of the live audience.

Additionally, the special concludes with a Q&A session, where Amin Hannan Chowdhury and Ahmed Ashik answer questions. The presence of notable influencers in the audience added to the show's allure, leaving us eagerly anticipating more of Amin's crowd work in future performances. Whether you're a comedy enthusiast or just in need of a good laugh, *One Night Stand* is a must-watch for any Bengali-speaking stand-up enthusiast.

STYLE STATEMENT

Deepika Padukone

In a series of photos posted to her Instagram, Deepika Padukone mesmerised in a white chiffon saree with beads and bow motif. The actress was posed against an emerald coloured backdrop, that set off the similarly hued gems dangling from her ear. They were further accentuated by her pulled back hairstyle and embellished halter neck blouse, the ensemble pulled together with sensual red lips.



WHAT'S PLAYING

MATT MALTESE

As The World Caves In

For us Bengalis, rain has always been synonymous with melancholy, a feeling that is carried in Matt's voice as he croons about the world coming to an end in *As the World caves In*. Despite being released six years ago, the song has still held its relevance in the indie niche community, for its powerful vocals and percussions that beat with the heart.

Matt Maltese is a British singer-songwriter who specialises in chamber pop, a musical sub-genre that mixes rock with the wistful harmonies of orchestral music. Matt also emulates elements of indie-pop and lounge pop from the 1960s, giving his vocals the hollowed out feel of baritones of that era.



The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Endless wait for Teesta water

When can we expect a concrete water-sharing agreement with India?

The recommendation from an Indian parliamentary committee to its government on addressing the Teesta water-sharing issue, emphasising the need to "initiate meaningful dialogue with Bangladesh on a regular basis," has been hailed as a positive development in this long-standing concern between our two nations. While this may be a step in the right direction, we have every reason to be cautiously optimistic, as the carrot of a Teesta water-sharing agreement has been dangled in front of us for well over a decade now.

The issue has remained unresolved despite the ever-growing urgency for an agreement, propelled forward by reckless hydropower development and irrigation projects in the upper Teesta and the very real impacts of climate change. Regardless, Indian media reports suggest that the West Bengal government has acquired 1,000 acres to dig two new canals and divert even more water from the river to irrigate farms in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts. While Dhaka has issued a note verbale to Delhi seeking information regarding this, they are yet to receive a response.

In the meantime, it is ordinary farmers living in the river basins who are continuing to suffer the consequences, especially in the dry season. Earlier this year, this paper reported on how farmers living in char areas in Lalmonirhat were left with almost no water to irrigate their croplands due to the Teesta Barrage. This has also put the natural biodiversity and ecosystem of the area at risk.

In today's changing world, where climate experts fear many of the world's freshwater sources are being drained faster than they can be replenished, there is no opportunity for countries to put such water-sharing concerns on the back burner. The delay on the Teesta water-sharing agreement has been attributed to a continued impasse between the central government in Delhi and the government of West Bengal, where Chief Minister Mamata Bannerjee's last minute objection famously derailed talks on water-sharing in 2011, and almost no progress has been made since then. However, it is not fair that Bangladesh should continue to be the victim of the increasingly partisan domestic politics in India, especially since for so long, we have played a positive role in being a friendly.

We hope that this latest development will usher in a new era of diplomatic ties between India and Bangladesh, but the truth is that our hopes have been dashed for many years. How much longer will we have to wait?

Assaulted for playing football

What do such attacks say about women's status in Bangladesh?

A time when the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 is receiving more attention than it ever has, with major brands tapping into the heightened audience engagement and data suggesting two billion people across the world will have watched the live matches by the end of it, one might argue that we are living in a golden era of women's football.

The success of the Bangladesh team in the 2022 SAFF Women's Championship show that our women have not failed to keep up with the rising tide either. Even a few years ago, it would have been unimaginable to think that the city would come to a standstill because of crowds flocking to the streets to show their support for female footballers who have represented the country.

However, recent events seem to suggest these changes are skin deep. On July 29, at least four female members of the under-17 Khulna divisional football team were attacked by a group of people for playing football at Tentultala village of Khulna's Batiaghata upazila. Of them, one was severely injured and is still receiving treatment at hospital.

It is extremely worrying that, even in this day and age, women can be subjected to physical assault for something as simple as wearing sports attire and playing. Equally worrying is the fact that even after such an assault, the girls are still vulnerable and living in fear: one of the victims reported that the attackers are now threatening them with acid attacks and false cases unless the case against them is withdrawn.

This one incident is a microcosm of the violence that women and girls face in Bangladesh everyday for the simplest of actions. While on one hand we boast about women's role in the country's development, on the other, gender-based violence continues unabated. Too often, these cases are ignored: by communities, law enforcement agencies, and the justice system. What sort of message does that send to perpetrators? What does it say about the rights and status of women in our society?

We demand that the perpetrators of this attack are immediately brought to justice. The authorities must demonstrate their ability to protect women, in public and private spaces, from violence and abuse. We cannot claim to be a progressive and developing country if our women are not able to exercise even their most basic freedoms.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Stop forest grabbing

Despite repeated requests from environmentalists and ordinary people, the concerned ministries have turned a blind eye to the encroachers and influential people who are continuously cutting down trees and hills. As time passes, more of our hills and forests are being cleared up. We urge the authorities to stop wasting any more time and take rigorous action against the grabbers. They must not forget that it their responsibility to provide us with a clean and green environment.

Fardin
A resident of Dhaka

THE MINIMUM WAGE QUESTION

Owner's profit versus worker's survival



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

KALLOL MUSTAFA

In a recent interview with BBC Bangla, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier de Schutter, said, "The minimum wage in the readymade garment sector is Tk 8,000 per month, which is probably one-third of what would allow a worker in this industry to make a decent living and to support his or her family. Unfortunately, when the unions demand higher wages, the response given to them is that if the wages are not kept low, the big buyers will move to other countries, will cancel their orders, and the competitiveness of Bangladesh in global markets will be threatened. I do not think that the development of a country can be premised on keeping workers in poverty."

As indicated by Schutter, BGMEA President Faruque Hassan has indeed said that if the wages of workers in the garment sector are increased, there will be no buyers for the garments made in Bangladesh. The factories will be closed and the workers will not have jobs altogether.

When garment owners think they may face losses due to the price increase of raw materials or machineries, they either increase the price of their products or decrease the cost of production by increasing productivity. So, while a factory owner readily pays a higher price for all kinds of raw materials and machineries, excuses are only presented when it comes to paying a fair price for the labour purchased from workers.

Such statements by garment owners is nothing new. Whenever the demand for wage increase is raised, they retort that if the wages are increased, their competitiveness will decrease, many of them will have to close shop, and



In response to the demands of garment workers and unions, a new RMG wage board was formed in April this year.

PHOTO: TASLIMA AKHTER

as a result, thousands of workers will become unemployed and so on. Some may remember that the same spectre of factory closure was evoked during the wage hike from around Tk 900 to Tk 1,662 in 2006, to Tk 3,000 in 2010, to Tk 5,300 in 2013, and finally to Tk 8,000 in 2018. Did the garment sector really face damages after increasing workers' wages?

The debate over wage increase has risen at a time when the majority of people in the country are suffering due to skyrocketing commodity prices and a massive increase in the costs of living. Notably, as the taka has depreciated by 25.58 percent against the US dollar in the last one year, the garment exporters are now getting Tk 107.5 per dollar instead of Tk 86.45. As a result of taka devaluation, the pressure of inflation is on the workers, but the share of this additional income of the garment exporters is not reaching them.

In response to the demands of garment workers and unions, a new RMG wage board was formed in April this year. Garment workers are demanding that the minimum wage be increased from Tk 8,000 to Tk 25,000. In such a situation, what should be in consideration when revising the

prices of other raw materials increase? When the prices of, say, yarn, dyes, fuel, or machinery increase, do they tell suppliers that they will not pay the increased price because, if they do, they will not be able to survive in the competitive market? Certainly not. This is not how the market works.

When garment owners think they may face losses due to the price increase of raw materials or machineries, they either increase the price of their products or decrease the cost of production by increasing productivity. So, while a factory owner readily pays a higher price for all kinds of raw materials and machineries, excuses are only presented when it comes to paying a fair price for the labour purchased from workers.

Like other commodities, the price of labour depends on the cost of production. How is the production cost of labour determined? It is calculated as the cost of keeping the worker well and of developing them as a worker. Now, if a labourer is not paid the minimum wages necessary for them to procure adequate amounts of food, clothing, shelter, proper education, health care, entertainment, etc, then the workers will have to reproduce

labour power with less input, for which the worker and his/her family will suffer from malnutrition, their vitality will diminish, their health may deteriorate, and both the worker and their family will become worn out.

Given this background, what is the current condition of working people in Bangladesh? Are the wages they are paid enough for them to live a humane life and reproduce labour properly? According to research by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem), garment workers earn less than half what they need to fulfil the basic needs of food, housing, and healthcare. On average, a worker earned Tk 9,984 per month in the April-June quarter of 2022, while their living wage – the money required to be able to afford a decent standard of living – ranged from Tk 19,200 to Tk 26,000 depending on the areas they resided in. This translates to a gap of 51 to 60 percent between the workers' actual income and their minimum need.

The question may arise as to how workers' families are surviving. The answer is: they are living a barely minimum life by eating less, sleeping in unhealthy and crowded rooms, and suffering from diseases and malnutrition. It is not possible for the workers' families to avail essential materials to live healthy lives, as the wage is much lower than what is necessary. A study by the Bangladesh Garment Sramik Samhati showed that the workers can never afford good quality rice, vegetables, fish, or meat. As the prices of all protein-rich foods were hiked, workers depended more on carbohydrates to meet their calorie requirements. But due to the recent increase in the prices of flour and rice, they now have to reduce their intake of carbohydrates as well.

In a market economy, working people have nothing but their labour to sell. Under the market dynamics of demand and supply, and the collective power of factory owners, workers are often forced to sell their labour at a price lower than the cost of production, just to be able to survive. This may be profitable for the industry owners in the short term. But in the long run, it is not sustainable for either the owners or the overall economy. Rather, if the workers are paid a living wage, their purchasing power will increase and, as a result, the internal market of the country will develop and the economy will grow sustainably.

I cannot but agree with Olivier de Schutter in advocating a new form of development for Bangladesh: one driven by domestic demand rather than exploitative export opportunities. And for this, there is no alternative to fixing a living wage for the working people of the country.

Rhythms of change: Digital platforms elevating Bangladeshi music



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TASLIM AHMED

In a world driven by technology and connectivity, the music industry has undergone a seismic shift with the rise of digital platforms. Bangladesh, renowned for its vibrant musical heritage, has not been immune to this digital revolution. As digital musical platforms gain prominence, they are playing a transformative role in elevating Bangladeshi music to new heights – bridging the gap between artists and audiences, and shaping the future of the country's musical landscape.

Bangladesh's musical heritage is a tapestry woven with diverse threads of tradition, culture, and emotion. Over the years, certain genres and regional musical forms faced challenges in gaining recognition in the mainstream. However, the emergence of digital musical platforms have breathed new life into these invaluable musical treasures. By curating and presenting traditional folk, classical, and regional music, these platforms are rekindling a sense of pride and appreciation for Bangladesh's rich cultural legacy.

Through digital archives and carefully curated playlists, the younger generation can now explore and cherish the timeless melodies that define the essence of their nation.

Historically, independent musicians in Bangladesh faced daunting obstacles in breaking into the mainstream music industry. The emergence of digital media has heralded a sort of democratisation of the music scene, giving independent artists unprecedented platforms to showcase their talents. These platforms enable artists to release their music to a global audience without the constraints of traditional record labels. As a result, musicians from various backgrounds and genres are finding their voices heard, resonating with music enthusiasts worldwide. This democratisation of music has not only transformed the careers of artists but has also enriched the diversity of music available to audiences.

The interconnected nature of digital platforms has fostered a culture of artistic collaboration and genre fusion. As artists from different musical

backgrounds converge on these platforms, they find opportunities to blend traditional Bangladeshi music with contemporary elements, giving rise to fresh and innovative sounds. The fusion of diverse musical styles captivates audiences within the country and garners international recognition. These musical collaborations serve as a testament to the universality of music and its ability to transcend cultural boundaries.

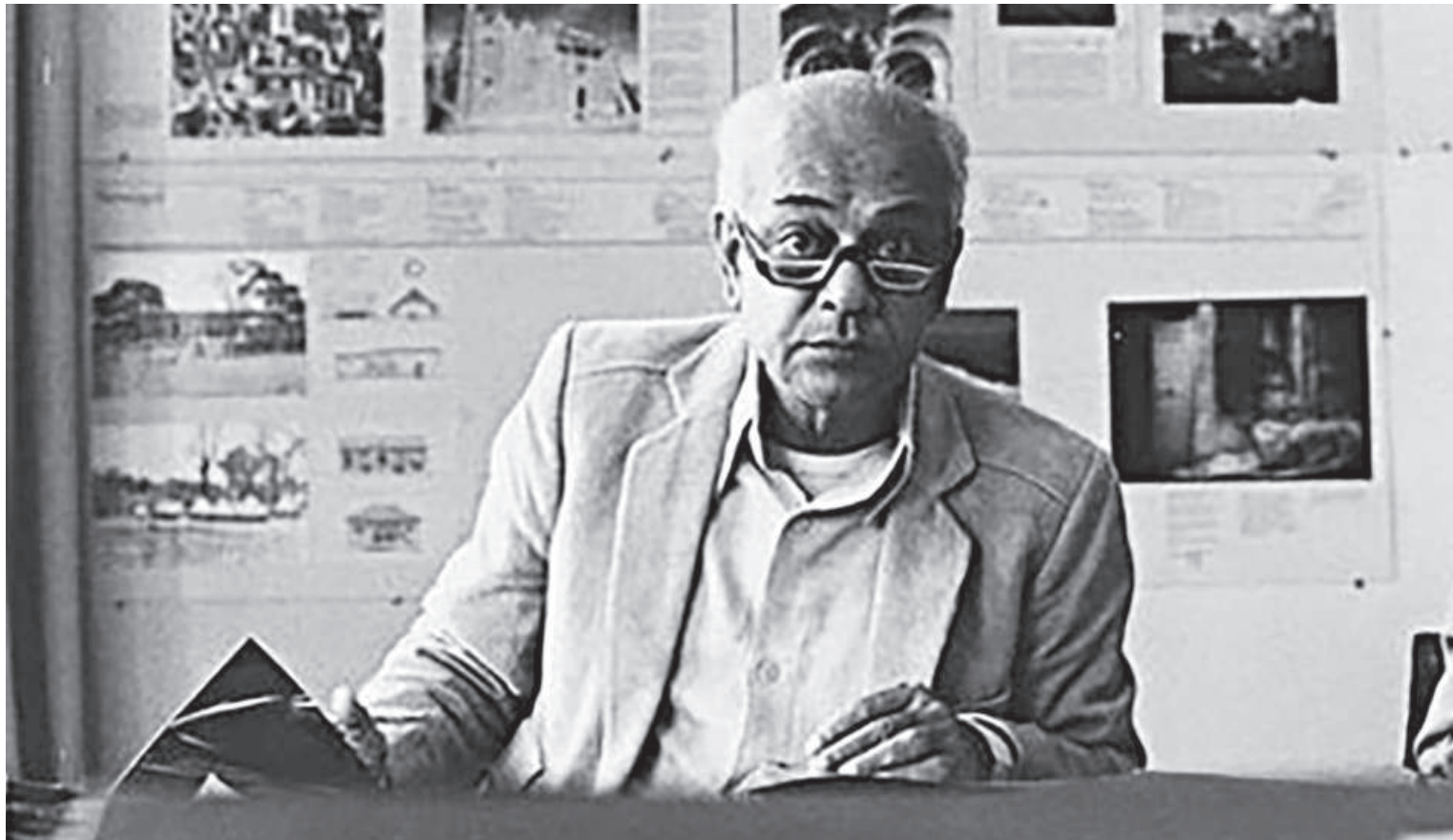
Digital musical platforms have become potent tools of cultural diplomacy, projecting Bangladeshi music onto the global stage. Previously, geographical barriers limited the reach of Bangladeshi musicians beyond the country's borders. Today, thanks to the accessibility of digital platforms, local artists find themselves embraced by international audiences. Bangladeshi music is now celebrated as an ambassador of the nation's cultural heritage, promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. This global recognition fosters pride among Bangladeshi artists and strengthens the nation's position on the global cultural map.

Digital musical platforms have emerged as valuable resources for aspiring musicians and enthusiasts seeking to deepen their understanding of music. These platforms empower individuals to hone their musical skills and learn from experienced professionals through online tutorials, workshops, and educational content. For young artists and students, digital

platforms provide a wealth of learning opportunities that were previously difficult to access. This democratisation of knowledge is nurturing a new generation of talented musicians, ensuring the continuity of Bangladesh's musical heritage.

Despite the positive impact of digital musical platforms, challenges still persist. Ensuring fair compensation for artists in an age of digital piracy and streaming remains a pressing concern. Copyright infringement issues demand robust solutions to protect the intellectual property of musicians. Additionally, addressing the digital divide in Bangladesh is essential to ensure equitable access to these platforms, and empower artists from all corners of the country.

The digital era has opened unique opportunities for Bangladeshi music to thrive and resonate with audiences worldwide. Digital musical platforms are serving as catalysts for change, preserving cultural heritage, empowering independent artists, fostering artistic collaborations, and elevating Bangladeshi music to a global audience. As we embrace this digital transformation, let us recognise the immense potential of these platforms to shape the future of music in Bangladesh positively. By supporting the growth of digital musical ecosystems, nurturing young talents, and championing local artists – we can collectively ensure that Bangladeshi music continues to enchant and inspire generations to come.



As the Master Juror in the first Aga Khan Award, Geneva (1980).

PHOTO: MUZHARUL ISLAM FOUNDATION

MUZHARUL ISLAM'S BIRTH CENTENARY

Forging a Bengali identity through modernist architecture



THE GRUDGING URBANIST

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ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

After completing his Bachelor of Architecture degree at the University of Oregon, Eugene, in June 1952, the 29-year-old Muzharul Islam (1923-2012) returned home to find a postcolonial Pakistan embroiled in acrimonious politics of national identity. The fragility of the pan-Islamic polity that sought to consolidate the impossible geography of Pakistan was evident. The religion-based, two-nation partition of the Indian Subcontinent into India and Pakistan was designed to create two separate domains for Hindus and Muslims, respectively. Yet, Muslim Pakistan was already in trouble soon after the 1947 Partition. The newly minted country's two regions – East and West Pakistan, separated by almost 1,000 miles of Indian territory – were themselves on a collision course because of their asymmetric power relationship, different languages, and, most of all, conflicted attitudes regarding how their divergent ethnicities and Islamic nationalism intersected. The country's political power was centred on West Pakistan. This lopsided power structure was further exacerbated by an ideological difference. The ruling elites of West Pakistan embraced a brand of political Islam that would not only work as an ideological buffer against the perceived threat of Hindu-majority India but also unify the different ethnic groups of Pakistan with an overarching Islamist spirit. Such a state policy alienated many secular-minded Bengali leaders, intellectuals, and professionals. They were drawn more to a mediating relationship between a humanist Bengali tradition and faith than to Pakistan's geostrategic patronage of Islamic nationalism.

In February 1952, less than a year before Muzharul Islam arrived home from the United States, the police opened fire on agitated East Pakistanis who were protesting on the streets of Dhaka. The people of East Pakistan demanded the right to speak their language Bangla, not Urdu – the language of the ruling elite in West Pakistan and proposed as the national language of Pakistan to consolidate the fragile state. Several Bengalis, including students, killed during the political demonstration on February 21, 1952, in Dhaka, were lionised as martyrs of the Language Movement in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

The turbulent politics that Muzharul Islam found himself thrust into influenced his worldview, as well as his fledgling professional career. He interpreted the prevailing political conditions in his homeland as a fateful conflict between the secular humanist ethos of Bengal and an alien Islamist identity imposed on the Bengalis by the Urdu-speaking ruling class in West Pakistan. The young architect began his design career in the midst of bitterly divided notions of national origin and destiny. It was not surprising that his architectural work would reflect this political debate. Many secular-minded Bengalis felt the need to articulate their national identity on ethno-cultural grounds, rather than on a supra-religious foundation championed by West Pakistani power-wielders. Muzharul Islam's Institute of Fine Arts (1953-55) at Shahbagh, Dhaka, embodied these beliefs.

The meagre literature on South Asian modern architecture generally identifies

the Faculty of Fine Arts as the harbinger of Bengali modernism – a sort of Bengali Villa Savoye, synthesising a modern architectural vocabulary with climate-responsive and site-conscious design programmes. However, what has not been examined in this iconic building is how Islam's work also provides an intriguing cultural foil against which his architectural experiments with modernist aesthetics could be viewed as part of his inquiries into the ongoing politics of Bengali nationalist activism.

While the Franco-Swiss architect Le Corbusier's influence on the Institute of Fine Arts is palpable, Islam's iconoclastic building sought to achieve two distinctive goals.

First, the building introduced the



Muzharul Islam's Institute of Fine Arts introduced the aesthetic tenets of modern architecture to East Pakistan.

PHOTO: ASIF SALMAN

aesthetic tenets of modern architecture to East Pakistan. For many, its design signalled a radical break from the country's prevailing architectural language for civic buildings – built either in an architectural hybrid of Mughal and British colonial traditions, popularly known as Indo-Saracenic, or as utilitarian corridor-and-room building boxes, delivered by the provincial government's Department of Communications, Buildings, and Irrigation (CBI). The Faculty of Fine Arts could not be a more unambiguous departure from, say, the colonial-era Curzon Hall (1904-1908) at Dhaka University, within walking distance of Islam's building, or the Holy Family Hospital (1953; now Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College Hospital).

Second, the Institute of Fine Arts' modernist minimalism – rejecting all ornamental references to Mughal and Indo-Saracenic architecture – was a conscious

critique of political Islam that became a state apparatus for fashioning a particular religion-based image of postcolonial Pakistan. By abstracting his design through a modernist visual expression, Muzharul Islam sought to purge architecture of what he viewed as the political blemishes of instrumental religion. However, to see his modernism as a Western import or an aesthetic remedy for a local challenge would be to reduce both modernism and ongoing Bengali identity politics into isolated instances of parochial simplicity. The faculty's modernism hinges on Muzharul Islam's dual commitment to a secular Bengali character and universal humanity – a post-nationalist worldview rooted in the enlightenment ideals of the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) – as well as his own education in both the East and West. In a Tagorian disposition, Islam refused to see any ideological conflict between Bengali mythos and modern notions of progress and universality.

I, however, dismisses any overarching idea that during the post-Partition ideological battle of identity politics that engulfed Pakistan, neither politics nor architectural

Trump's third indictment shows America's real national security threat



Ramisa Rob is a journalist at The Daily Star.

RAMISA ROB

Donald Trump continues to make history in the most embarrassing sense of the phrase. Last Tuesday, the former President was indicted for the third time in recent months. Never before in the history of the United States has an ex-President running for re-election been criminally charged this many times. And never before has such an awful candidate also had a real chance of becoming President again. The past two indictments have far from dented Trump's support – he still remains the front-runner in the Republican primaries. Not only that, new polling shows that Trump remains competitive in a race with President Joe Biden.

But the latest indictment, unsealed by special counsel Jack Smith, is the gravest of all. More so, it is the most important indictment ever to protect American democracy against anyone. The indictment charges Trump's attempt to subvert the will of voters – and drive the nation to the brink of a coup – as the biggest attack on the “bedrock” of America's basic principles. Whether it will impact Trump's MAGA voter base remains uncertain because let's not fool ourselves here. Trump's track record is as bad as it gets: three times indicted, twice

major city in the United States.” Clark had responded, “That's why there's an Insurrection Act.” The Insurrection Act authorises the President to bring out military troops to quell civil unrest; the fact that the Trump-allied lawyer went to such extremes to grab power back in the face of a legitimate election loss shows the depth of corruption that was at play.

Trump's response to the indictment was expectedly inflammatory. His campaign published a statement echoing the classic Trumpian twisted rhetoric: “The lawlessness of these persecutions of President Trump and his supporters is reminiscent of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, and other authoritarian, dictatorial regimes.” The indictment is really the lowest standard of accountability for Trump's large-scaled anti-democratic acts, and here they are likening a legal process – with a great deal of merit to the allegations – to Nazi Germany. The irony could not be more unreal.

Fending Trump off, even through the three cases, is no easy task. In a better world, Trump would take the insanity plea or just retire and spend the rest of life playing golf. But in the world we live in, we know he's going to stall and fight



President Donald Trump talks on the phone to Vice President Mike Pence from the Oval Office of the White House on Jan. 6, 2021.

FILE PHOTO

impeached, and deemed liable for sexual assault. But he speaks the nasty and people do like the nasty.

The indictment should instead be viewed as a chilling reckoning for the United States: the biggest national security threat they face today is not in some balloon flying across the ocean, but in their own homegrown soil. Their once “exceptional” political system that was able to get rid of a repugnant leader like Richard Nixon after the Watergate scandal simply does not exist anymore.

In many ways, the indictment criminalises disturbing facts we have already known, or either suspected, since the Capitol riots on Jan 6, 2021. We all knew the ballot tampering claims were absurd lies and that Trump “was determined to remain in power.” But what makes this case remarkable is the crux of Smith's argument that rests on details after details showing how Trump and his co-conspirators “knew” they were lying when they pursued the voter fraud claims. America's affair with fascism during the last few nightmarish days of Trump's presidency is vividly painted in the 45-page document.

The indictment describes that Trump called his vice president, Mike Pence, “too honest” for refusing to overturn certified election results. A chorus of top Justice Department officials, top White House attorneys and campaign staff members, key state legislators and officials, and state and federal courts had told the former President that his frivolous scheme was untenable. Trump, along with accomplices cheering him on, proceeded to get on with it anyway. The case is expected to unfold with Trump's defense lying on the ground that he did not delusionally believe he was lying.

Most abhorrent of all, the indictment also reveals that Trump and his co-conspirators were indeed aware of inciting violence, that it was not a mere by-product of the conspiracy but a purpose. On 3 January, just days before the riot, a member of the White House counsel's office told Jeffrey Clark, a top Justice Department official at the time, that if Trump tried to remain in office, there would be “riots in every

to undermine a trial before the election. Even if it does go on trial, outcomes offer no definitive respite either because he “can” still run if he's convicted. Even if he goes to prison, he “can” still be elected. No one knows what happens then.

But what we do know is that if Republicans nominate him now – which seems very likely – they'll make an utter mockery of themselves and lose whatever is left of their brand as a legitimate party that cares even an inkling about the core values of the country. If Donald Trump does come back to the White House, after

Trump's track record is as bad as it gets: three times indicted, twice impeached, and deemed liable for sexual assault. But he speaks the nasty and people do like the nasty. The indictment, as such, is a reckoning: the biggest national security threat the US faces today is the return of their worst, most dangerous President in history.

being charged with conspiring to “defraud the United States,” then the future of the nation will be unthinkably disastrous. Imagine walls, science denial, xenophobia with a mix of anti-semitism, a high dose of racism, making a vendetta machine out of the Justice department, special counsel Jack Smith definitely losing his job, the corrupt Jeff Clark being appointed as attorney general, a whole lot of white supremacy topped with unthawing the China impasse, and a horde of many more horrible things.

The most realistic best-case – or tolerable – scenario we're looking at seems to be the not-so-fun Biden-Trump rematch where the latter loses and goes on again claiming that he won. And then more indictments and embarrassing history making, where hopefully one day, one stop sign somewhere can put an end to the madness.

BFF Academy players up for auction

SPORTS REPORTER

As the Bangladesh Premier League outfits do not have any permanent youth development programme yet, three top-tier clubs have kept their eyes on promising players of the BFF Elite Academy for the upcoming season.

With the players' transfer window for the top-tier already on since August 1, Mohammedan, Sheikh Russel and Brothers Union have recently officially asked for four, seven and 10 players respectively to Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF), mentioning their offer prices. Interestingly, seven of those 15 players are common in three clubs' demand, forcing the BFF development committee to float an open bidding process for the players.

"Brothers, Mohammedan and Sheikh Russel have placed letters, asking permission to release 15 BFF Elite Academy players for their clubs. Seven of those players are have been sought by all three clubs," BFF's vice-president and chairman of development committee, Aatur Rahman Bhuiyan Manik, told the Daily Star after a meeting of the committee yesterday.

"If the committee distributes players as per their requirement, there will be questions raised, so we decided to put the players through an opening process. The club with the highest bid will get a player on loan for a season," Manik added.

It has been learnt that the clubs wanted to buy the players for an average of Tk 6.2 lakh, but the committee may fix a floor price for each player on the basis of the clubs' desired price. If all 15 players are sold for an average of Tk 6.5 lakh, BFF will earn approximately Tk one crore.

After BFF Elite Academy started operation in 2021, the players played in the second-tier Bangladesh Championship League as a team in the last two seasons and are set to play their third season in 2023-24. In the last season, Sheikh Russel wanted a few academy players to play for them but the game's local governing body did not release the players even though it released forward Mirajul Islam in the 2021-22 season for Mohammedan for Tk 10 lakh.

It has been learnt that the BFF gave away 30 percent of the whole amount to Mirajul, however, this time it may pay 40 percent of the release price to the players.

Asked whether the academy will struggle to form its squad for the BCL if they release 15 top players, Manik said, "We have 63 players and there is little difference in quality among them as we regularly fire and hire players on basis of performance. We won't face any problem to form a good squad for BCL."

"We believe we can produce quality players for the national team within four to five years. Loaning out players to clubs will help us continue our activities," opined Manik.



Japanese players pose for a photograph before taking part in a training session in Wellington on Friday, ahead of today's Women's World Cup Round of 16 match against Norway. Having cruised through the group stages with maximum points, the 2011 champions should pose stiff challenge to the Norwegians, who won the world title back in 1995. PHOTO: AFP

Will serious investigation follow serious accusation?

SPORTS REPORTER

The most crucial aspect in the situation surrounding Tamim Iqbal's injury is how things were allowed to escalate so far that led to the skipper having to step down from captaincy.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief Nazmul Hassan on Thursday attended a press conference alongside Tamim and cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus. The board president said it needs to be investigated as to why there was a discrepancy between how the matter was presented to him and what happened in reality.

Tamim had underwent multiple MRI scans in various countries but only the MRI done in Dubai recently, one which Tamim forwarded to the BCB president, had revealed a 'problem'. The issue invoked the BCB president's ire as he was struck by the fact that the matter had not been revealed to him much earlier.

Tamim, at the same press conference, also stated clearly that he himself had knowledge of the particular back injury he had suffered since November 2022.

It is a serious allegation that a national team player's injury was either downplayed or there was a negligence in dealing with the matter.

"Tamim had done MRI in Dhaka as well along with everything that was required. He went to see doctors in India, Bangkok and London by his own means, so he has done that quite a few times now. This is the first time he sent me a report from Dubai and in that report I saw that he has a problem. You can ask him [Tamim] what was the first thing I told him. I asked him to make a conference call with me, along with Debashish Chowdhury [BCB's chief physician], the three of us together. Why wasn't I told this thing (before)," Nazmul said at the press conference.

"The problem I have was revealed in November 2022. The thing is that someone informs him [Nazmul] of the matter. When I sent the report to him [BCB president] for the first time, he immediately called me and asked why this matter was not informed to him before. We have discussed this matter a lot today. It should not happen to anyone and if we are open in most cases then these confusion or problems won't arise. We are very clear what has happened and what there was for the last six months," Tamim had clarified.

It was, however, learnt that the medical team had informed the team management of the left-hander's injury

status on a regular basis. According to BCB sources, that medical department related personnel such as physio and those who provide support with rehab have all the information regarding injuries. The coaches, cricket operations chairman are ones who the medical department pass the information to. Then the responsibility becomes theirs to communicate to the BCB president about urgent developments related to injuries.

Nazmul himself said that he relies on Jalal Yunus to keep him informed, with Khaled Mahmud now not serving as a team director. Tamim also stated that he goes by the chain of command and relays things to his immediate boss Jalal.

Whether the diagnosis is wrong, or whether the matter was not communicated properly is the question now. When The Daily Star reached out to Jalal, he said he would talk later regarding the issue while BCB medical department, too, refrained from talking about the development. It was, however, learned that the cricket operations committee had asked the medical team for Tamim's full report.

Nazmul said that the 'matter needs to be investigated'. The injury has already been 'neglected' according to the BCB boss. Tamim's career has already come under threat due to the injury but whether a serious investigation follows will determine whether or not such occurrences take place in the future as well.



'No alternative to Shakib for captaincy'

SPORTS REPORTER



Following Tamim Iqbal's decision to step down as the Bangladesh ODI captain on Thursday, there were talks regarding the Tigers' next captain in the format ahead of two major events this year - Asia Cup this month and the World Cup in October-November.

As things stand, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is willing to appoint an ODI captain on a long term basis keeping the World Cup in mind.

The name of Shakib Al Hasan, skipper of the Tigers' Test and the T20I units, has been uttered in the media as the ideal candidate for the post considering his vast experience.

According to Nazmul Abedeem Fahim, prominent coach and mentor to many Bangladesh players including Shakib, there are no alternative to the champion all-rounder for this post if Bangladesh want to do well in the coming days.

"If it is just about naming a captain then you can make anyone the captain. But if the reason is to put someone who can manage the team well and can bring the best possible result for the team then there is no alternative to Shakib. He is the best choice and I think there is no room for comparison with anyone. If we want to get good results, we have no other alternative other than handing the captaincy to Shakib," Fahim told the media yesterday.

It is, however, still not confirmed whether Shakib would agree to take up ODI captaincy. And in that case, Liton Das, who led Bangladesh during the home series against India last year and also in the recently concluded series against Afghanistan, could be another candidate.

Fahim informed that even if Shakib does not agree to assume the role of the captain, the board should try to convince him for the betterment of the team.

"If Shakib does not agree then we can think about other options but I think attempts should be made so that he agrees to take the captaincy," he added.

Pep keeps Arsenal ahead for Community Shield

REUTERS

Arsenal hold an advantage heading into the Community Shield over Manchester City due to the treble winner's packed schedule during the final stretch of the last season, manager Pep Guardiola said on Friday.

City faced a gruelling schedule season thanks to their successful runs in the Champions League and FA Cup, while Arsenal had a less busy campaign and were chasing Guardiola's side for the Premier League title.

City, who won their first Champions League title in June, will kick off their 2023-24 season against runners-up Arsenal on Sunday in the traditional curtain-raiser to the Premier League season.

"The situation that we are in, we finished (last season) two weeks later than Arsenal and we start (this season) two weeks later. So, we are not in the best way," the Spaniard told reporters. "We struggle to restart every season. Hopefully our mentality can help us to be there and compete."

Liverpool, not Barca, started playing high-pressing: Ian Rush

Liverpool legend Ian Rush hung up his boots in 2000 after 356 goals to his name, of which 346 came with the Merseyside club - making him the all-time highest goal-scorer for The Reds, a record that still stands. It was at Anfield where he won two Champions Leagues, five Premierships, and three FA Cups. In an interview with Shabab Chowdhury of The Daily Star, the 61-year-old Welshman discussed all things Merseyside yesterday.

The Daily Star (DS): How did a boyhood Everton fan sign for Merseyside rivals Liverpool?
Ian Rush (IR): When I was a kid, when I was 17 and playing for Chester City, Everton manager Gordon Lee came to watch me. I'll never forget it because it was in the newspapers. It was on a Monday, he said that Ian Rush wasn't good enough to play for Everton. I was really gutted.

If Everton said they wanted to sign me, I would've signed for Everton. But they said no and I signed for their rivals and made them pay.

DS: Who influenced your decisions when it came to moving to different clubs?

IR: When I went to Liverpool for a world record fee of 300,000 pounds

at the time, it was myself; it wasn't my dad or anyone. Bob Paisley helped but Alan Oakes, the manager of Chester, helped me as well. He said that you can go to Liverpool but you'll hate the first year, which I did. He said if you don't like it, you can always come back to Chester. So, that's why I decided to give it a go. He wasn't wrong because the first year, I did hate it, it was difficult. Luckily enough, I just kept on at it.

DS: What defines a modern-day striker?

IR: For me, confidence. I think the most important part for me with strikers is the mental toughness. If you know that, you won't be scared to miss. You get in there, again and again.

DS: You've played in great Liverpool teams. Where do you place Klopp's legacy at the club?

IR: For me, he [Klopp] is a modern-day Bill Shankly. He's excited and all that. Bob Paisley didn't do that, Joe Fagan

didn't do that. The crowd loves Klopp when he goes and punches his arms after a game. If you just sit back as a manager, especially in today's world, the crowd would have a go at you.

The difference between when we played and now is that we were pressing down from the front in the '80s. We started that. People say Barcelona but we started it. It's okay if you do that for 45 minutes but with Jurgen, if you don't press for 90 minutes, you will not be playing.

DS: Whose has been your favourite striker in the modern era?

IR: For me, one of the best ones in the Premier League was [Sergio] Aguero but the one I would have to say is Harry Kane. You've got [Erling] Haaland who was the player of the last season, without a doubt. He was unbelievable but he's got to do it again this season.

I can't say someone from Liverpool because we haven't really got a proper

number nine yet. You're looking at [Darwin] Nunez to do that. If he took his chances last year, he could be like Haaland.

DS: Who did you enjoy playing with the most?

IR: It has to be Kenny Dalglish. For me, he is the best player Liverpool have ever had. Kenny never put the ball at my feet and would always put it in front of me. The first time he did that, I didn't run. The face he gave me then, the look in those eyes, and I knew that I've got it now.

DS: Who would you love to play alongside the current pool of Liverpool players?

IR: Previously, it obviously would've been [Steven] Gerrard. If you look at Mohamed Salah, especially if he plays down the middle, we would've gotten in the way of each other but with him on the wing, definitely him.

DS: Can Liverpool make another title bid for the upcoming season?

IR: Hopefully, but I think the main objective would be to get into the top four. If we can get a good cup run, I'd love to see us do well in the Europa League.

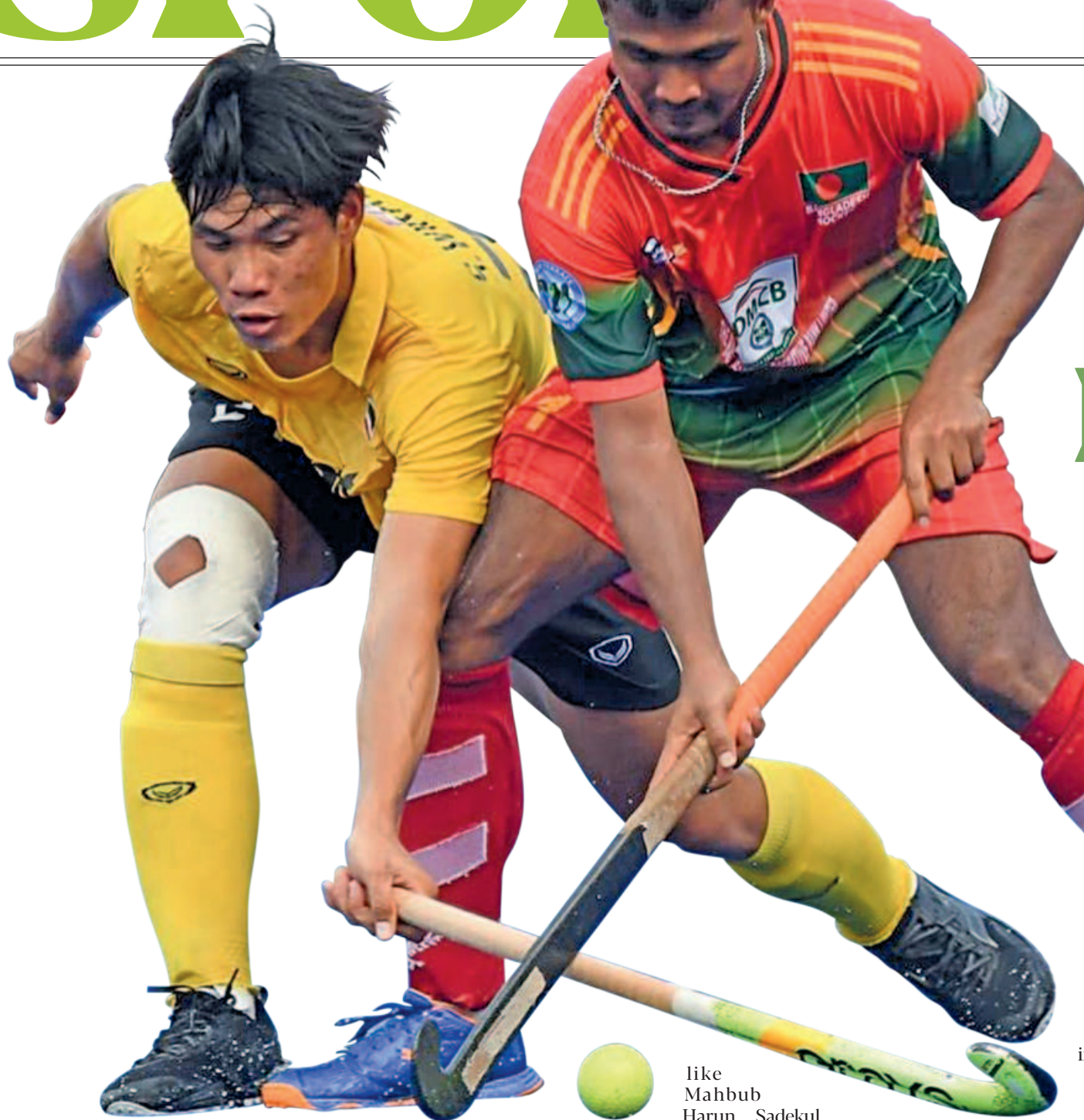


PHOTO: AL NASSR

Sadio Mane's much-anticipated Al Nassr debut on Thursday could have been marred had it not been for yet another trademark towering header from Cristiano Ronaldo that saw the Saudi Pro League club salvage a 1-1 draw against Egyptian giants Zamalek, ensuring their spot in the knockout stages of the Arab Club Champions Cup (ACCC) in the process.

Some of the strong teams in the world will compete at the upcoming Asian Games. There will be teams that featured in the last World Cup. We shall, however, attempt to win a medal.

ASHRAFUL ISLAM
Bangladesh national hockey player



An onerous quest to RESTORE STABILITY

The current high-ups in BHF have come unopposed and their tenure is set to run for the next four years. Their primary challenge lies in holding premier league, which saw one edition in past four years, and pulling it off would steer Bangladesh hockey in the right direction.

ANISUR RAHMAN

It can be quite hard to imagine hockey's popularity in the country was only second to football in the 80's. Although football's craze was unmatched back then, hockey boasted a fair share of spectators who thronged stadiums to watch domestic and international matches. A once prospectus discipline, however, could not meet expectations at the turn of the millennium despite having occupied a special place in people's hearts.

Names of Abdus Sadek, Pratap Sankar Hazra, Ehtesam Sultan, Sona Mia, Sabbir Yousuf, Ibrahim Saber, Bashir Ahmed, Ehsan Nammi are bound to pop up while revisiting Bangladesh hockey. Also, a certain tournament created a shockwave of interest among fans: the 1985 Men's Asia Cup in Dhaka following Bangladesh's impressive performances against heavyweights Pakistan, China, Japan, and Iran.

Performances of goalkeeper Mohsin, Jummon Lusai, Shahabuddin Chakladar, Khaza Rezwon Arzu, Alamgir Chunnu, Abdullah Piru, Jasimuddin Kanchan, Waliul Islam Nasim, Salahuddin Tisha, Abdul Malek Chunnu, Barkat Ullah Chapal, Jamil Parvez Lulu and Kamrul Islam Kismat arrived as inspiration for aspiring hockey players across the country.

Amid huge interest and with brilliant players

like Mahbub Harun, Sadekul, Mamunur Rashid, Kamal, Musa Mia, Akter, Nixon, Sajul Mahmud, and others, Bangladesh team were primed to shine at international level.

Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF), however, could not cash in on the overflowing craze. The reasons behind hockey's lingering lean patch revolve around the usual suspects: lack of vision and leadership at both clubs and federations, coupled with their financial shortcomings, a faulty domestic structure based on a lack of infrastructure, and so on.

It is worth breaking down the factors responsible in this case.

Destabilised domestic structure: The structure of domestic competitions plays a pivotal role in taking any genre of sports forward. The fact that the domestic hockey league took place once in two to three years in Bangladesh had left players to consider other options for their bread and butter.

Since BHF's inception in 1972, the local regulatory body held the top-flight hockey competition titled "First Division Hockey League" almost regularly: 19 times in 23 years from 1974 to 1997. However, when it was renamed to the "Premier Division Hockey League", the last 25 years saw the top-tier competition held only 13 times.

Subsequently, uncertainty trickled down to lower division leagues and

fervour for hockey almost diminished completely.

Former national player-cum-coach Mahbub Harun recalled that he received Tk 3 lakh payment from a club when he was first called for the national team in 1989. Interestingly a national player also received more or less Tk 3



lakh around 34 years later.

The players of Mahbub's generation and his predecessors were part of club transfers almost every season but the current generation got only four transfers in the last 10 years, forcing them to seek opportunities in different professions while national team's

pipeline suffered.

Disinterested clubs: Once clubs were the driving force of Bangladesh hockey and everything revolved around their activities, but due to financial constraints the clubs resorted to remaining uninterested in playing league every year.

Moreover, with no district leagues in place, the known breeding grounds of hockey players -- Faridpur, Jashore, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Chattogram, and a few other districts -- kept losing their output.

As a result, the sole burden of responsibility fell on BKSP -- an educational institute providing hockey players since 1996 after starting its journey in 1986 -- to be the source of all national hockey players.

As clubs continue to defer leagues every time, citing financial constraints, BHF has also been unable to bring clubs into the league by providing necessary financial incentives.

The last edition of the Premier Hockey League was held in 2021 because

again, while organisers fought among themselves to hold positions in the federation. In turn, BHF hardly had any visionary leader to steer Bangladesh in the direction of world level.

Meanwhile, hockey, which is arguably one of the fastest sports, has evolved in such a way that it has become more difficult for inactive nations to keep up.

The current high-ups in BHF have come unopposed and their tenure is set to run for the next four years. Their primary challenge lies in holding premier league, which saw one edition in past four years, and pulling it off would steer Bangladesh hockey in the right direction.

Outdated infrastructure: Once hockey was played on grassy turf which had long been replaced by fast artificial turf. Except the turf at BKSP, the federation could not increase the number of artificial turf from the one at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium, where top to lower division leagues take place and clubs and national teams prepare ahead of any competitions.

It, therefore, left no room for upcoming players to familiarise themselves with artificial turfs. Besides, a lack of modern equipment in training also impeded progress of Bangladesh hockey.

Road map to recovery: With the rise of other sports and changing societal priorities, BHF has to think differently to ensure the premier league gets to roll on every year, as well as introduce new competitions in the form of franchise-based tournaments that will, most importantly, provide financial safety net for players.

A concerted effort from all stakeholders is crucial to overcoming the existing challenges and unlocking the nation's true potential in this sport. Hockey federation and the government must address those challenges and implement sustainable solutions: investing in infrastructure and facilities at least in divisional headquarters, ensuring a good financial flow with collaboration with sponsors and from direct financial assistance from the government, promoting youth and school hockey to make it popular among the young ones, strengthening domestic leagues and, last but not the least, giving players the all-important international exposure to realise target.

'Can't survive on earnings from a single premier league'

Rezaul Karim Babu, who made his debut for the Bangladesh national hockey team in 2014, was named captain for the Asian Games Qualifiers last year. The Bangladesh hockey team have been undergoing a training camp for the past one-and-a-half months and the training camp is scheduled to go on a bit longer as the country prepares for the upcoming Asian Games. Rezaul shared his and the team's goals for the forthcoming multi-sport event, and his expectations from a sport that has left its heydays long behind, among many other topics during an interview with The Daily Star's Sabbir Hossain. The excerpts from the interview are as follows:



We have a lot of plans, but the most crucial issue is finance. If you don't have financial freedom, you won't succeed with any plans. The fund that we get annually through the sports ministry worth around Tk 23-24 lakh, and with that we face a shortfall of around 3 to 4 lakh taka just to pay our office staff. We get some amount after submitting bills following participation in any local or international competition. So it is very difficult to get the desired results with such limited resources.

Mominul Haque Shaheed
General Secretary, Bangladesh Hockey Federation

The Daily Star (DS): What is your goal for the Asian Games, beginning in September?

Rezaul Karim Babu (RKB): We placed sixth in the last Asian Games in 2018. This time, we are targeting the semifinals. We will have a chance to advance to the semifinals if we can defeat at least one strong team from our group. This will also see us gaining eligibility for the qualifying stage for the 2024 Olympics.

DS: What type of training is currently taking place at the camp?

RKB: For the majority of the time, players undergo basic training. Besides that, we have emphasised developing the physical abilities of the players.

DS: How has it been working under the new South Korean coach Young Kyu Kim, who joined the national team last month?

RKB: He appears to be following a clear

plan and pattern while working. Future results will be good if we can execute that properly. We are attempting to learn the zonal marking strategy which has been used by teams currently ruling the hockey world. Earlier, we used to follow the man-to-man marking pattern.

DS: The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) does not organise leagues on a regular basis. Isn't it frustrating for the players?

RKB: This discussion about leagues not being held every year has been going on for a long time. Premier Division Hockey, for example, was last played in 2021. Two

years have gone by, and we still don't know if it will be held this year or not. It is our players' primary source of income. Because of the irregularities, it is tough for a player to pursue this sport as a profession. National camps are only held for two or three months prior to tournaments. A significant number of players who are not part of the national team sit idle for the most part of the year. You can't survive for two years on the earnings from a single premier league.

DS: So, how do they manage their financial situation?

RKB: Some of the players work for the



service teams. They lead a financially stable life. However, things are difficult for some of the players who need to do other jobs or businesses to maintain a decent lifestyle.

DS: How was the experience of featuring in the country's first franchise-based Hockey Champions Trophy last year?

RKB: It was a fantastic experience. Every single match in that competition was tough as many overseas players came to participate. I believe it was a milestone for our hockey. However, we are yet to receive our full payment.

DS: As a player, what are your expectations from this sport?

RKB: I would like to see the Hockey Champions Trophy continue in the future because it will help us grow. However, it is vital to ensure that we receive our full payment. Again, the federation must organise the leagues on a yearly basis.



Rahul set to return to parliament

Indian SC suspends his defamation conviction



REUTERS, New Delhi

India's top court yesterday suspended opposition Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi's defamation conviction, allowing him to return to parliament and contest national elections due next year. Gandhi was convicted in March in a case brought by a lawmaker from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the western state of Gujarat over comments he made in 2019 deemed

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A microbus, which got stuck after a mudslide, being recovered by a crane in Chattogram city's Tiger Pass area yesterday morning. The port city experienced incessant rain over the last couple of days.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Criminals rape woman tying up her husband

Cops arrest 6 suspects

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police on Thursday night arrested six men on charges of raping a woman after tying her husband to a tree in Tangail's Sakhipur upazila.

The couple was walking in Chader Hat area in the evening when eight to nine men stopped them and forced them to go inside a forest, said Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Sakhipur Police Station.

The suspects then tied the man to a tree and gang-raped the woman, he said, quoting the case statement filed by the husband.

The suspects tied the man to a tree and gang-raped the woman.

Locals later rescued them, he said.

The arrestees are Shafiq Ahmed, 25, Mozammel Haque, 30, Labu Mia, 25, Bulbul Ahmed, 25, Babul Mia, 30, and Asif Ali 24.

Mozammel made a confessional statement in a court about his involvement in the crime, police said.

The suspects, sent to jail by a court, are known as petty criminals in the area, he said.

Police are trying to arrest the others, he added.

The woman was sent to a one-stop crisis centre for medical examination, he said.

FAILED RAPE ATTEMPT

Man kills two children, stabs sister-in-law

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Failing to rape his sister-in-law after breaking into her house, a man stabbed her and killed two children in Barguna on Thursday night.

Police arrested the suspect, Elias Pahlan, 30, yesterday, and a court later sent him to jail, said AKM Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Barguna Police Station.

The children he stabbed to death are Taifa, 3, and Hafizur, 13.

Police said the suspect sneaked into the house of Reagan Akhter, a single mother, in Fuljhuri area of Barguna late at night and tried to rape her.

When Reagan resisted the rape attempt, Elias stabbed her with a sharp weapon, said AKM Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Barguna Police Station.

As Reagan screamed for help, her daughter Taifa and neighbour Golam Khair's son Hafizur, who was sleeping in the house, woke up and started to cry, the officer said, quoting Reagan.

Elias then stabbed both of them. Hafizur died at the scene and Taifa died while she was being taken to a hospital, OC Mizanur added.

Reagan was taken to Sher-e Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barisal in a critical condition, he said.

The suspect had admitted to police that he had committed the crimes, he said.

The bodies of the children were recovered and sent to Barguna General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Reagan is the younger sister of Elias's wife.

Rice for poor in the hands of clubs

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Pabna Officers' Club received rice from a government support programme meant for the vulnerable and the poor.

From the district relief and rehabilitation office, it received 3 tonnes of rice for making furniture for its office and another 5 tonnes for installing submersible pumps on June 25.

This club is not alone. Officers' clubs and press clubs in six upazilas of the district — Chatmohor, Faridpur, Bhangura, Sujanagar, Santhia and Ishwardi — and Rifle Club, Tennis Club, and Ladies' Club in Sadar upazila also got the assistance known as Manobik Sohoyota Kormosuchi, according to documents.

Biswas Russel Hossain, then deputy commissioner of Pabna, signed two memos distributing 203 tonnes of relief rice among 100 organisations.

According to the disaster management and relief ministry guideline on its website, those who are poor and ultra-poor; people, families, and institutions affected by disasters; people who do not have food; children suffering from malnutrition; underprivileged people during religious festivals are eligible for the support.

Government and non-government orphanages, and religious institutions are also eligible for the assistance.

Each organisation may get highest 5 tonnes in each allotment, according to the guideline.

Depending on necessity and under

special consideration, the government can extend the support to any person, organisation, and community, it said.

Mirza Hasan Shahid, a retired government officer living in the district, told The Daily Star that privileged public and private social clubs receiving the humanitarian assistance was shocking.

"The government runs the relief distribution work for the development of the underprivileged people and communities. Surprisingly, some of the relief materials are distributed among the privileged organisations, depriving the poor." He added that a syndicate is involved in misappropriating relief materials.

"This is a long-time practice that must be stopped," Shahid said.

Prof Shibojit Nag, president of anti-graft committee of Pabna chapter, said distribution of relief rice among the "elite" organisations is a violation of the rules.

"The government runs relief schemes to improve the lives and livelihoods of the underprivileged people and communities, but in many cases, the real beneficiaries are deprived," said Nag.

He added that proper monitoring is essential so that the right people and communities get the benefit.

WHAT RECIPIENTS SAY

Pabna Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Tahmidia Akter, also the Pabna Officers' Club secretary, said they got the rice allocation following due procedure.

Asked whether the club sought the rice, Tahmidia sidestepped the question and said, "The authorities can allocate rice to any organisation according to need."

Regarding the allocation for installing submersible pumps and making furniture, she said, "There are many needs of the organisation. So, the club got the allocation like any other organisations."

Sujanagar UNO Tarikul Islam, also president of Sujanagar Officers' Club, said they got 3 tonnes of relief rice for repair of the club building and other expenses.

"Although this is an organisation of the government officers, it does not earn enough to maintain itself. The club building needs some repair work and that's why we have taken the relief rice following the procedure."

Santhia UNO Md Masud Hossain, also president of Santhia Officers' Club, said by taking the relief rice, the club did not violate any rules.

Helalur Rahman Jewel, former president of Chatmohor Press Club and



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Panna Kaiser passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Author and former lawmaker Panna Kaiser died yesterday at the age of 73 while undergoing treatment at the capital's United Hospital.

She was a writer, intellectual and cultural organiser. She was also chairperson of Khelagharb Kendriya Asar, a children's organisation.

She dedicated her life to spreading the spirit of the Liberation War and the pursuit of justice, members of Khelagharb told The Daily Star yesterday.

She was the wife of martyred intellectual Shahidullah Kaiser and mother of actress and entrepreneur Shomi Kaiser.

In a condolence message, President Mohammed Shahabuddin said the nation would remember Panna Kaiser's contribution as a member of a martyred intellectual's family

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Coal miners uncover Roman ship in Serbia



REUTERS, Kostolac

Archaeologists in Serbia are painstakingly brushing sand and soil off the ancient woodwork of a Roman ship discovered by miners in a vast opencast coal quarry.

After an excavator at the Drmno mine uncovered some timber, experts from the site of a nearby former Roman settlement known as Viminacium rushed to try and preserve the skeleton of the ship, the second such discovery in the area since 2020.

The vessel was probably part of a river fleet serving the sprawling and highly developed Roman city of 45,000 people which had a hippodrome, fortifications, a forum, a palace, temples, amphitheatre, aqueducts, baths and workshops.

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BNP leaders and activists gather for their rally on the waterlogged street in front of the party's Nayapaltn headquarters yesterday. The meeting was organised to protest the sentencing of BNP acting chairperson Tarique Rahman and his wife Zubaida Rahman by a Dhaka court.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Fresh violence in Manipur leaves 23 hurt 'Armoury looted'

TNN, Guwahati

India's Manipur state saw a resurgence of lawlessness exactly three months after ethnic strife first erupted on May 3, leaving 23 people wounded on Thursday, media reported yesterday citing officials.

The violence centred in Bishnupur, where hundreds of woman protesters initiated a march to "prevent" the mass burial of 35 victims of the festering violence in Churachandpur, which was postponed earlier following the intervention of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the Manipur High Court ordering a status quo at 6:00am.

The protesters clashed with central security forces, who responded with tear gas shells and mock bombs, resulting in 21 people being wounded, many of them women, while a mob reportedly looted a significant number of arms and ammunition from the armoury of the 2nd India Reserve Battalion (IRB) in Naransena of Bishnupur district.

In a separate attack, a Manipur Rifles jawan and another man

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Gokyo Lake

THE GREAT HIMALAYAN TRAIL

Shakil's story of PERSEVERANCE

According to The Great Himalaya Trail, a Nepal-based website that works to promote GHT adventures, 32 mountaineers from all over the world had successfully conquered the GHT as of September 2019.

MD ABBAS AND SAJJAD HOSSAIN

"Throughout the journey, death knocked at my door several times, but I never lost my focus, I never gave up," said Ikramul Hasan Shakil, the intrepid conqueror of the Great Himalaya Trail (GHT), home to three of the highest peaks in the world.

He is the first Bangladeshi to successfully complete the 1,700km GHT in Nepal by the upper mountain route. It took him only 109 days to complete this mammoth task.

Robin Boustead, a Spaniard travel guru, completed the GHT between 2008 and 2009 and later he wrote a book titled "Nepal Trekking and the Great Himalaya Trail: A Route & Planning Guide" detailing the remote and challenging route.

After the publication of his book, more mountaineers started exploring the GHT.



Kanchenjunga Base Camp

concept, if completed, it would be the longest and highest alpine hiking track in the world.

Shakil's GHT dream and preparations

Before embarking on the Great Himalayan Trail, Shakil received training in India. He completed basic mountain training from India's Nehru Institute of Mountaineering in 2014, and later, in 2018, he received advanced training from the same institute.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, Shakil spent his time doing his favourite thing – researching mountains across the globe. During that period, he first came to know about the Great Himalayan Trail. The difficulty, challenges and beauty of this mega trail instantly hooked him up and set his goal of conquering it.

Over the next two years, he diligently

Kanchenjunga Base Camp.

Earlier, on July 10, 2022, Shakil left Dhaka for Nepal's capital, Kathmandu. After completing all necessary formalities, he set off for Nepalganj on July 26, taking a bus from Kathmandu. From Nepalganj, he reached Simikot and began his trekking expedition from there.

On the morning of July 28, Shakil started on a four-day trek, eventually reaching the village of Hilsa at an altitude of 3,642 meters.

During his expedition, he accidentally took the wrong routes multiple times due to the less-travelled route. It took him one or two days to get back on track.

The adverse experiences

As he recounted his extraordinary experience, he faced and overcame a myriad of challenges, including numerous landslides and other formidable obstacles along the way while completing the trek.

"I had to bypass Sherpani Col Pass (6,155 meters) and Amphu Labtsa Pass (5,845 meters) in inclement weather relying solely on the direction of locals. However, I did not change the upper route," Shakil said.

"I encountered at least 40 massive landslides and conquered 29 mountain passes, with 14 of them soaring beyond 5,000 meters, en route to my final destination", he shared in a conversation with The Daily Star on Wednesday (August 2).

Describing one of his most remarkable moments, he recollected, "While crossing Makalu National Park, I had to alter my route due to a colossal landslide. The path was severely damaged by glaciers and fierce weather."

During the landslide, he and his guide, along with their porter, sustained injuries.

After receiving first aid in Namche Bazaar, a town in Khumbu Pasanglhamu Rural



Gunsa, Kanchenjunga National Park



Shakil's belongings during the trek



Tashi Labtsa Pass



On the way to Tilman Pass



On the way to Larkey La Pass



Upper Dolpo



I encountered at least 40 massive landslides and conquered 29 mountain passes, with 14 of them soaring beyond 5,000 meters, en route to my final destination.

Ikramul Hasan Shakil



However, the successful conquerors' number shows how difficult the task is.

According to The Great Himalaya Trail, a Nepal-based website that works to promote GHT adventures, 32 mountaineers from all over the world had successfully conquered the GHT as of September 2019.

Shakil, 29, has already submitted all relevant documents, including photos and videos to this newspaper supporting his conquest of the GHT.

About Great Himalaya Trail

Since 1997, there were many attempts to traverse the Himalayas by walking, running, and biking, but all of these expedition attempts failed due to restrictions. In 2002, things changed as Nepal opened all her mountain ranges to permit-based trekking.

The first person to take advantage of this was Rosie Swale-Pope, who ran across Nepal in 2003. Her 1700km mid-hills route from Taplejung to Simikot was an early precursor to the current Great Himalaya Trail concept, according to the GHT website.

The Great Himalaya Trail spans across the Himalayas from east to west, covering a total distance of approximately 1,700 kilometres. The idea behind this route was to create a single long distance trekking trail that would stretch from the eastern end to the western end of Nepal.

However, there is a proposed trail of more than 4,500 kilometres stretching the whole length of the Greater Himalaya range from Nanga Parbat in Pakistan to Namche Barwa in Tibet, passing through, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. Although this only remains a



On the way to Lama Hotel, Syabrubesi

maintained a routine of diet and exercises for the mammoth task ahead.

His daily regimen included running 5 kilometres, cycling 22 kilometres, and dedicating an hour to free-hand exercises. He even experimented with eating less food to extend his survival capabilities.

How it began

On August 1, 2022, Shakil embarked on the main expedition from Hilsa, a village in the northwestern corner of Nepal bordering the Tibet Autonomous Region, passing through various challenging regions including Humla, Mugu, Dolpa, Manang, Gorkha, Ruby Valley, Langtang, Helambu, Gauri Sankar, Solukhumbu, Everest Base Camp, Makalu National Park, until finally reaching

Municipality, Solukhumbu District, he and his guide resumed their expedition.

After a 109-day life-changing trek, he finally reached his ultimate destination, the Kanchenjunga Base Camp.

"When I arrived there at 7:45 am on the morning of July 9, I was left speechless. I cannot possibly convey the emotions I felt at that moment," he said.

Financial distress

Throughout this journey, Shakil had to deal with financial crises while navigating through treacherous routes.

On December 6 last year, due to financial constraints, Shakil had to return to Dhaka from Sapru Base. However, after managing his finances, he resumed his journey on May 16 and

successfully completed the Great Himalayan Trail.

How it all started and accomplishments

His interest in mountain journeys grew back in 2010 when Musa Ibrahim conquered Mount Everest. In 2012, he began summiting domestic mountains, and later, his interest expanded to neighbouring countries.

In February 2013, he conquered Keokradong, the highest peak in Bangladesh, and later summited Tajingdong, another highest peak in the country.

In the same year, Shakil walked from Kolkata to Dhaka in 11 days to raise awareness against drug abuse.

Before this incredible accomplishment, Shakil, born in 1994 in Gazipur, had already conquered several mountains, including Kyajo Ri (6,186 m), Himlung Himal (7,126 m), and Dolma Khang (6,332 m).

Future plans

When asked about his future plans, he said that he is now preparing to conquer Mount Everest and is looking for sponsors. "If I get the sponsors, I will start the journey next year," he added.

Appreciating Shakil's achievement, trekker and mountaineer MA Mohit, who has previously scaled Mount Everest twice, said, "Our youths are scaling new heights. This is highly commendable."

"His accomplishment will inspire more youth in loving nature and mountains", said Muhi, also the president of the Bangla Mountaineering & Trekking Club where Shakil is also a member.



ESSAY

RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S 'GORA'

From notions of purity to an all-embracing Bharatborsho

Tagore seemed to have realised that the earlier Indian Bengali champions of nationalism had been too complacent in this regard. Also, to achieve collective nationhood for the people of the subcontinent as a whole would require overcoming racial, religious, and caste prejudices as well as the elimination of at least some of the barriers women were facing in trying to join men in the movement to create a radically transformed and lot more egalitarian society in Bharatvarsha.

FAKRUL ALAM

Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora*, written between 1907 and 1909, reveals the ways in which Tagore addresses the all-important issues of his time—national identity formation, the coming together of people over time, and obstacles or barriers put in the way of the progress of a nation. The novel captures Tagore's fascination with envisioning a future based on human amity or *moitri*, one where the powerless and the dispossessed transcend the barriers of division and distrust.

A good way to think about Tagore's novel from these viewpoints is to consider the title of his novel, for it evokes three Bengali words simultaneously. Primarily, and the way the word is spelt in the Bengali original, to be "gora" is to be fair-complexioned or even a white man or woman, and a European to boot; however, the word is also related to a homonym implying "root", or "foundation" or "origin". The deftly chosen word is thus especially apt for the novel since its titular protagonist is revealed to be an Irish orphan abandoned and then rescued during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Named Gora since he is fair-skinned, the protagonist is nonetheless in a quest to go back to the roots of Indianness and preserve and perpetuate the founding values and unity of his "Bharatvarsha". But a third similar sounding word, albeit inflicted by a nasal sound in Bengali, tells us that it can also be someone who is a blind follower of his faith and even fanatic about it. All three words are relevant to Tagore's *Gora* and the narrative that Rabindranath creates, for he presents not only an apparently fully Indian Bengali protagonist who paradoxically turns out to be a European white person by birth, but who had become a fanatic about Hinduism and intent on establishing it in its purest form in 1870s India. He is, of course, ironically oblivious of his origins till he learns about it at the end of the novel, and had overlooked till then the many streams that had poured into the river of Indian civilisation but is visible to orthodox Hindus of his time as only one mighty body of water flowing through the course of subcontinental history.

Although the setting of *Gora* is mostly in and around colonial Calcutta in the seventh decade of the 19th century, it is important to note that it is a novel that could only have been written after Bongobhongo or the 1905 partition of Bengal, which was clearly part of Britain's colonial policy to "divide and rule" the resurgent province. The short-lived division of Bengal had immediately led to the Swadeshi movement that Rabindranath had championed creatively and energetically for a few years, only to be quickly disillusioned by what he perceived

to be its excesses, and by the divisiveness he felt it was creating in his country. He had rued its excesses subsequently and underscored it as the kind of nationalism to avoid. He would write against such nationalism—whether in India, or Japan or the West—in outspoken and even hectoring fashion in later years after he had seen the manifestations of its ugly side not only during the later years of the swadeshi movement but also just before, during and after the First World War.

To illustrate these points, one may cite a few passages from his third lecture of his 1917 lecture tour to Japan and the United States, "Nationalism in India". The positive thing he has noted about the subject, he tells his American audience while delivering the lecture there, is that he found "a parallelism exists between America and India—the parallelism of welding together into one body various races". But he is convinced by now that nationalism has also become a "great menace," for in India too he feels "it is the particular thing which for years has been at the bottom of India's troubles". Tagore feels that the 'caste system' and burdensome traditions have been imperiling India in his own times. Instead of such things that lead to divisiveness he would like to see "social cooperation" as the basis for both the east and west to move forward internally and externally.

Gora illustrates all these issues in the course of its 500 or so pages. On the one hand are people in it like the protagonist, idealistically representing those who would like to see Hinduism flourish throughout the land in its pristine form, unlike the other Hindu zealots of the novel who espouse the Hindu cause but without his humanity. On the other hand, reformist Bengali Brahmo zealots would like to see a faith without some of the Hindu ritual practices that they claim would make it similar to the religion that existed in their land in its original form. But from time to time, we glimpse people of other faiths such as Islam that has spread in the subcontinent, but that seemed to have been shut out of any consideration in the tussle between the supposedly orthodox and the professedly reformist versions of Hinduism professed by the Hindus and the Brahmos of the novel respectively. *Gora's* Bengal, then, is an area of ideological skirmishes, misunderstandings, and aggressive proselytising by some zealots at the expense of the silence, backwardness, and lack of power of the silent majority. All this, moreover, is taking place at a time when the British have further consolidated their power after silencing Indian protests against their rule, seemingly decisively in 1857. By the 1870s, as depicted in the novel, at least a few "babus" had taken their sides! But American

transcendentalism is also a presence in the novel and we have references to the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker and other transcendentalists as influences on at least a few of the open-minded Brahmo characters.

It is not necessary to dwell here on the religious divide between the Hindu and Bhramos as depicted in *Gora* in any detail since this has been dealt with well by earlier critics who have also pointed out Tagore's critical treatment of the religious bigotry, racial prejudice, and casteism evident in *Gora's* world, as well as English contemptuous treatment of the natives of the land they had taken over. But what can be emphasised now is Tagore's awakened sympathies for the Muslims, ordinary Indians, and women's lot as depicted throughout the

A good way to think about Tagore's novel from these viewpoints is to consider the title of his novel, for it evokes three Bengali words simultaneously. Primarily, and the way the word is spelt in the Bengali original, to be "gora" is to be fair-complexioned or even a white man or woman, and a European to boot; however, the word is also related to a homonym implying "root", or "foundation" or "origin".

novel. His field level experience in East Bengal at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning years of the 20th century and first hand encounter with the excesses of some of the Swadeshi movement activists as far as Muslims were concerned, as well as disillusionment after witnessing the tendency of the movement to take violent turns, and his increased sensitivity to the way women were being treated as inferior people by his own people, were bothering him now. He felt that such things needed to be remedied for the coming together of peoples. Tagore seemed to have realised that the earlier Indian Bengali champions of nationalism had been too complacent in this regard. Also, to achieve collective nationhood for the people of the subcontinent as a whole would

require overcoming racial, religious, and caste prejudices as well as the elimination of at least some of the barriers women were facing in trying to join men in the movement to create a radically transformed and lot more egalitarian society in Bharatvarsha.

In the opening page of the novel, we encounter not only bird songs, but a baul or mystically inclined wandering minstrel singing about the *achin pakhi* or unknown bird flitting "in and out of the cage" eluding even the attempt of the lyricist to "chain it" with his heart. That is the kind of free, borderless space he is proposing symbolically as the landscape he would like to project ideally in the course of the novel. At the end of it, and after Gora finds out that he is not a Hindu at all, since he discovers he was actually an Irish foundling, he realises that he need not longer be afraid of "becoming a fallen person and losing my caste status". Gora feels that he no longer needs to be troubled by apprehensions created by "an untroubled, unblemished image of Bharatvarsha", that he is now freed from "from an impenetrable...imaginary fortress", and he can delight in having "arrived at the heart of a great reality" where he can serve his people. The great thing for Gora at the end of the novel is that he believes that he has now become truly a citizen of a land where he need not feel any "hostility towards any community, Hindu, Muslim or Christian". He can now "belong to every community of Bharatvarsha", having "become so pure that even in a low caste chandal's home I will no longer be afraid of sullying myself".

Partha Chatterjee mentions Rabindranath Tagore only twice in his excellent diagnosis of the pitfalls of nationalism, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993), but one of these references is his very acute comment on the works of Rabindranath Tagore in "his post-swadeshi period". Chatterjee argues that Tagore at this point of his life and writings was intent on writing the nation from the newly found perspective of someone who saw that "the true history of India" was "in the everyday world of popular life whose innate flexibility, untouched by conflicts in the domain of the state, allowed for the coexistence of religious beliefs." That Tagorean perception fashions the trajectory of his novel and makes it so very relevant to our contemporary moment.

This paper has been edited for brevity. It was first presented virtually at Gauhati University as part of their Distinguished Speaker series. It was later published in their journal.

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TRIBUTE

Together in Tagore's IMAGINED WORLD

What made Tagore into the giant he was—writing, feeling and acting to bridge gaps to create a new world with his vision—is well brought out in the *Jorasanko* novels. The two novels map Tagore's journey from birth to death, giving the reader a comprehensive view of his times, the changes the world went through and a smattering of major historic events that affected the Asian subcontinent.

MITALI CHAKRAVARTY

“Who am I?” This was a question asked by Tagore in his poem, “Prothom Diner Shurjo” (The First Day’s Sun) written during his last days. Aruna Chakravarti, an eminent writer and academic, rebuilds the poem not just with translation but with the joie de vivre of an artiste creating a theatrical scene, wrenching out the poignancy of the departure of a great soul and the end of an era. Only she does it with words in her historical novel, *Daughters of Jorasanko* (HarperCollins India, 2016). She tells us how the poet called his granddaughter, Nandita, to jot down his last poem on July 30, 1941. He was too sick to write himself as reflected in the academic works that cluster around Tagore’s lifetime. Chakravarti says most of her novels are fiction, with roots deeply embedded in factual research. She recreates, rebuilds the characters in keeping with the times and the era he lived in. The effect is immersive.

Tagore’s last days have also been recorded by Somdatta Mandal in her more academic based *The Last Days of Rabindranath Tagore in Memoirs* (Birutajatio Sahitya Sammiloni, 2021), gleaned from the writings of the many women around him, women who became big names in their own lives. Perhaps, being in touch with a soul like Tagore, changed them in ways more than one. This has been corroborated by Mahasweta Devi (1926–2016), who won a Magsaysay Award for her “compassionate crusade through art and activism to claim for tribal peoples a just and honourable place in India’s national life”. In *Mahasweta Devi: Our*

the educated, often corroborated by sentiments expressed in his own writings. Das Gupta refers to the maestro’s poem “Ebar Phirao More” (Now Take Me Back) where the maestro writes:

Poet, come forward—if you have only life,
Then get that with you and dedicate that today.
With immense pain, sorrow, the deprived
Suffer hardships, weakness, death and darkness.
They need food to live, light to find the breeze of freedom.
They need strength, health, a bright happy future,
Courage, guts. Amidst this poverty, O poet,
Inspire a vision of trust that creates a heaven.

(Excerpted from the translation of “Ebar Phirao More” from *Borderless Journal*)

What made Tagore into the giant he was—writing, feeling and acting to bridge gaps to create a new world with his vision—is well brought out in the *Jorasanko* novels. The two novels map Tagore’s journey from birth to death, giving the reader a comprehensive view of his times, the changes the world went through and a smattering of major historic events that affected the Asian subcontinent. The movement out of oborodh or purdah is mapped in *Jorasanko* (HarperCollins, 2013) along with the start of the modern woman as visualised by Tagore, the start of Santiniketan with the support of his wife who dies at the end of the novel, and of the strengthening of Brahmoism under Debendranath, Tagore’s father. In *Daughters of Jorasanko*, Chakravarti has brought into play characters like Swami Vivekananda and Margaret Noble to give

Bangla’, he wrote one night on a visit to the family estate in Shilaidaha, ‘ami tomai bhalo bashi’ (My Golden Bengal/ I love you). This song captured the public imagination so powerfully it became an anthem for the movement and was sung at all the assemblies.”

Later, she describes Tagore’s rejection of knighthood after the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre (1919)—far from Bengal but still a matter of great perturbation to his genius as he believed in a united world. Tagore’s reaction and the Western world’s dismay over this act of his has been discussed in the podcast, *Empire*, by William Dalrymple and Anita Anand. Some of the social implications, like girls marrying later, mixed marriages, and women involved in changes outside their homes, the breaking of taboos, like those associated with overseas travel, are sprinkled through both the novels.

The last chapter of *Daughters of Jorasanko* describing Tagore’s death and its aftermath is not just relevant but also a powerful comment on the way the world has treated Tagore’s ideology and vision. Chakravarti visualises this conversation before his death in *Jorasanko*:

“Why do you talk of death?” Rathindranath felt a ball of lead thump slowly against his chest. ‘You’re not dying.’

“I don’t want to be carried in a procession to Neemtala,” Rabindranath continued as though he hadn’t been interrupted, ‘with shouts of Rabindranath jai bursting my eardrums. I want a quiet cremation by the banks of the Kopai river. And my ashes... I want my ashes to be strewn over the khowai.’ He paused for a few moments and added, ‘But before that, place my body on the ground in the shade of the chhatim tree where, nearly a century ago, my father meditated and found peace.’”

But when he died, his wishes were as disregarded as history has shown his hope for a united Bengal or even his desire to bridge gaps and social distances. His corpse was carried in a procession that rang with the chants of “Rabindranath jai” as Rathindranath weakly protested about the need to respect his father’s wishes. With this single stroke, Aruna Chakravarti highlights how society creates icons, disregarding the vision or values cherished by the man behind the image, leaving us wondering if fame is at all desirable.

History and civilisation with its divisive constructs seem to have continued to disregard the dreams of the polymath, who, as Nigel Hughes, a professor of geology who had spent some years in Santiniketan, contended, was more than just a poet, a writer, an artist and philosopher. Hughes comments: “Were Rabindranath not so famous for his other accomplishments, his role as an internationally important practitioner in comprehensive rural developmental work would be more widely assured and appreciated.” Maybe, we can only imagine, imagine a world woven out of the fabric of Tagore’s writings, dreams and actions.

Mitali Chakravarty writes and edits for peace, love and harmony. In that spirit, she has founded an online journal, *borderlessjournal.com*, which has recently brought out its first anthology edited by Mitali, *Monalisa No Longer Smiles: An Anthology of Writings from Across the World*.

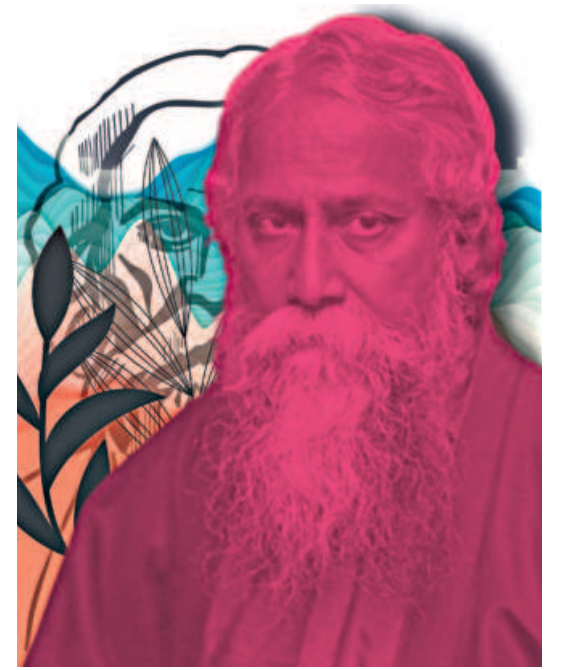


ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

EDITORIAL

On remembering Rabindranath

One can find Rabindranath anywhere—he’s there in the words we whisper, in the tunes we hum, in the ethos we believe in, in the ideal of the human we wish we were. For years, I drew inspiration from Rabindranath’s women—their quotidian resistance to “aachar” (Kumu from *Jogajog*), their quiet dismissal of norms (Moitreyi from ‘Somapti’), their ability to transcend the realm of life (Kadambini from ‘Jibito o Mrito’), their affection for those rendered mute by the system (Mrinal from ‘Strir Potro’)—Rabindranath’s women were flawed and frivolous, courageous and coquettish, driven and demure. They were also—to borrow a term

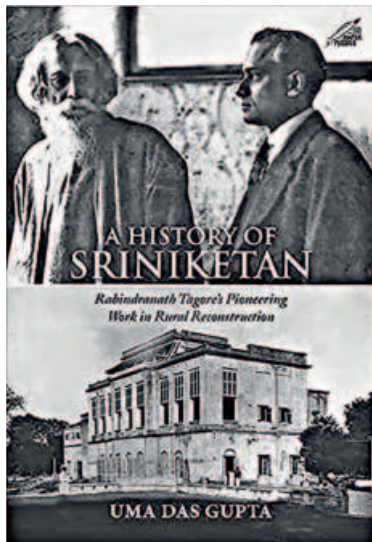
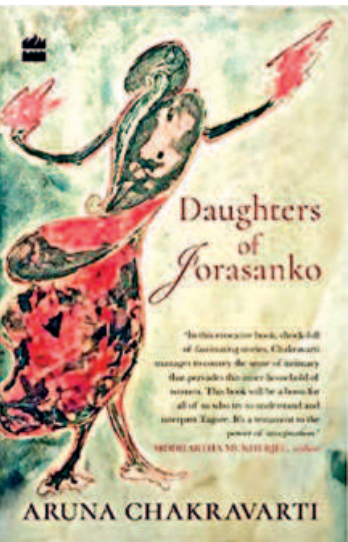
made famous by the modernist poet Ezra Pound—making it new. In Satyajit Ray’s 1984 film version of Rabindranath’s *Ghore/Baire*, Bimala’s crossing the threshold of the interior space and stepping out into the outside marks a period in our history where the new woman steps outside the ondormohol—the interior domestic space—and into the bahir—the outside world—and takes her rightful position next to the bhadrolak as her ideal partner. Bhadrolok, literally meaning “gentlemen”, refers to an elite social class of individuals that emerged during colonial era India who by the mid 19th century became educated and wanted change, namely a free society. That the widows didn’t fit into this scheme is a discussion for another time. In significant ways then, Rabindranath’s women have helped me think alternatively about the idea of being a gendered, political subject of the state. Elsewhere, Tagore’s travelogues and lectures demonstrate to me how Tagore’s idea of humanism is not only remarkably different from its rigidly defined Western counterpart but it also in fact, aligns, or pushes further some of the contemporary posthumanist ideas. His work offers us instances that help rethink the representation of a nonbinarised human/nonhuman world (as seen in the story ‘Bala’), a world oriented around an object (such as ‘Khata’), or death not being the parameter of life itself (such as ‘Konkal’).

In *Europe Jatrir Chithi*, written more than a decade after *Europe Probashir Potro*, Rabindranath seems disillusioned with the destruction brought on by Western modernity. Bhashkar Chakrabarty however argues that the poet’s travel writings reveal the ways in which “his sense of the Indian self was shaped largely by his assessment of European culture”. Crucially in *Pather Sanchay*, the polymath talks about how England’s intellectual world bore little parallels with the condescension the ruling British in India had for Indians. Rabindranath’s ideas thus, are ever evolving and his readers are urged, constantly that too, to rethink and recalibrate their perceptions of the world around them.

On the occasion of the anniversary of his death, may we continue to think critically through Rabindranath. May our visions and ideas continue to be challenged through Rabindranath. May the forces of hate, bigotry, and divisionism weaken in the face of Rabindranath’s ethos.

Ontoro momo bikoshito koro, ontoro momo he.

Nazia Manzoor



Santiniketan (Seagull Books, 2022), recently translated by Radha Chakravarty, the author mentions how she was impacted as the students mingled with Adivasis during festivals and how the older children from Santiniketan would go to the village of Surul, where Tagore had set up Sriniketan in 1922. Uma Das Gupta tells us in her book based on decades of research, *A History of Sriniketan: Tagore’s Pioneering Work in Rural Reconstruction* (Niyogi Books Pvt Ltd, 2022), that Tagore considered Sriniketan as his ‘life’s work’. Mahasweta Devi writes how Tagore had a conglomerate vision where he wanted the literate middle class to bridge borders between villagers and the city folk, the uneducated and

authenticity to the era. She has brought into focus Tagore’s son’s and family’s involvement with Sriniketan. Some of the events mapped in this novel include a visualisation of his response to the first partition of Bengal in 1905. She expresses the outrage felt by Bengalis united by culture. “Bengalis were waking up to a sense of nationhood and they were coming together through their language and literature.” She moves on to describe the historical events: “The news of the impending partition was followed by indignant meetings and rallies aimed at stalling the move. Rabindranath, the leading poet and composer of Bengal, voiced his protest through a number of soul stirring lyrics. ‘Amar Shonar

POETRY

In the domain of MIRTH, IN THE REALM OF ECSTASY

Affection, amor, and grace and piety soften the soul, The soothing solace thou dost shower succors all the sorrow.

TRANSLATED BY ABDULLAH RAYHAN
from Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘Anondoloke Mongolaloke’

Truth and beauty reign supreme in the domain of mirth, in the realm of ecstasy.
Thy glory resounds within the vast heaven,
And the entire world lay at thy gem-bedecked pes.
The stars, planets, sun, and the moon are impetuously
Quaffing and bathing in thy eternal radiance.
An alluring elegance does shower the earth
With splendor of flora, folia, and fragrant melodious hymns.

Life eternally doth flow within untrodden streams,
Thy compassion here is the refuge from birth to demise.
Affection, amor, and grace and piety soften the soul,
The soothing solace thou dost shower succors all the sorrow.
The entire creation adores the grand majesty that art thou,
And offereth homage to thy sanctuary of omnipresent abode.

Abdullah Rayhan is studying English Literature at Jahangirnagar University.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA



The two men in this photo fainted just after the picture was taken.

PHOTO: JEFFREY F LIN

Girls' football jerseys leave several injured, doctors helpless

"We cure physical injuries, but this is a sickness of the mind. These people are not just ill, they are sick. There need to be medical conferences about this."

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

The days of getting injured by just deadly weapons or human assault are past as Bangladesh witnessed its first ever case of people sustaining serious injuries from the shorts worn by female footballers. Doctors said these injuries were incurable.

Recently, there have been numerous cases of innocent bystanders just collapsing without warning while walking past fields where girls were playing the beautiful game.

"My grandfather was in Japan when World War II broke out. He even survived America's detonation of atomic bombs. But he couldn't save himself from the horrendous hurt caused by these girls' shorts," a man named Natimar said.

"Now he is struggling in hospital, and sometimes stops breathing whenever he remembers that sight of girls playing football wearing football uniforms," he continued.

"I wonder why these girls don't play football

wearing longer outfits, preferably sarees or kameezes. Anyway, I don't know why girls even need to play football, leaving kitchen chores undone," Heartkiller Habu, another injured person, said while buying painkillers from a local pharmacy.

Severely injured persons were admitted to local hospital for their speedy recovery, but doctors said their injuries were incurable as they took the hurt to heart, and there was no sign of physical fracture.

A doctor said, "We cure physical injuries, but this is a sickness of the mind. These people are not just ill, they are sick. There need to be medical conferences about this."

Another doctor surmised that the jerseys may actually be radioactive, and are dangerous when encountered in person. "The girls' outfits never create a problem when seen through the television screen, as we know from people loving to watch them winning football matches."

There is speculation that radiation from

the outfits is more dangerous than that from Oppenheimer's atom bomb. As the news went viral, Kim Jong Un advised Vladimir Putin to use girls' outfits instead of nukes if he really wanted to win the Ukraine war.

The girls, on the contrary, have been wondering why people were just falling flat as soon as they saw them playing football.

"I was totally clueless about why there were no spectators. Later, I heard that the spectators actually came, but as soon as they saw us playing football wearing shorts, they just couldn't bear this unbearable shock and became senseless. I think our dresses emit deadly radiation," one of the girls said.

Experts say the victims may have been senseless to begin with, but we have not been able to independently verify that claim.

"Now you know the reason why we are bad at all the global indexes -- girls and their outfits!" Tiktostar Tuku, a Hatirjheel-based TikToker, thus released his pent-up anger.

Rain destroys Dhaka drivers' muscle memory: a study

AUTO PILOT CORRESPONDENT

Drivers on Dhaka roads lose the ability to switch on muscle memory the moment there is more than 5mm of rain, according to an in-depth study.

Researchers involved said the study was in-depth because they stood on the roadside in shin-deep rainwater while conducting the research.

"Drivers lose all muscle memory when the rain becomes even a little heavy," Hashem Kashem, lead researcher, told a fellow shelter seeker beneath the awning of a roadside shop while it was pouring down yesterday.

Moreover, he said, shouting to be heard above the din of the rain, it initially seemed that the puddles, that form conveniently next to sidewalks during rain, emanate a magnetic force that draws

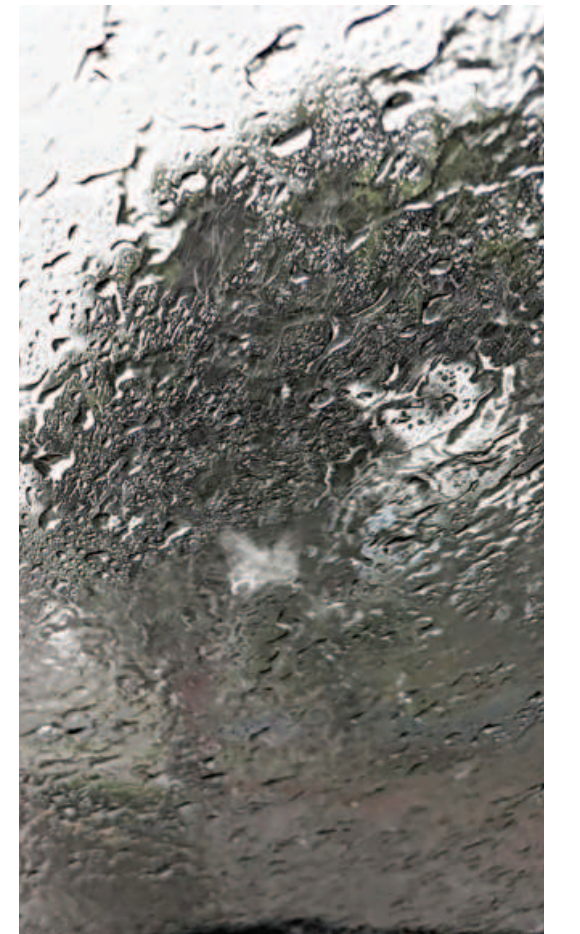
According to the in-depth study, this incapacitation leaves drivers unable to turn on their wipers, and some just stop in the middle of the road.

vehicles to them and result in dirty water being splashed on pedestrians.

Stepping past a car that was wrapped around a lamp post, another researcher said, "But soon our research revealed that puddles form everywhere on Dhaka streets. It's not just by the sidewalk."

"Anyway," Hashem said, casting a dirty glance at his soaked co-researcher, "The crux of the matter is that even if there are puddles everywhere, the rain induces a level of panic in the drivers that retards their muscle movement, so they are unable to avoid the puddles. This is latest research, and we have arrived at the conclusion just now after tens of minutes of study."

According to the in-depth study, this incapacitation leaves drivers unable to turn on their wipers, and some just stop in the middle of the road.



WHEN READERS WRITE

Concert organisers play victim after things go wrong for 100th time

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

After attendees were left suffocated and sick in a mismanaged concert for the hundredth time in a row, the event management firm unSound Event Management has decided to play the victim yet again.

In a press conference earlier today, the CEO of the organisation and predictably enough a BBA graduate, Shadman Sakib told the press, "After careful consideration and analysis of the recent events, this organisation has reached the unanimous conclusion that we're too good for this country and we don't owe anyone any explanation."

"It's not our fault that people are naive enough to assume that we'd have the barest sense of responsibility," continued Shadman. "Peasants like you are lucky that you got to see



PHOTO: RAPHAEL SCHALLER

This is obviously too much smoke for a healthy concert.

"In the last concert, we were accused of selling tickets well over the capacity of the venue. There were multiple casualties owing to the heat, mismanagement, smoke and lack of ventilation. So, this time, we decided to go all in and put no cap on the ticket limit."

even a glimpse of the Indian singer we advertised in all our banners. Sure, it was just 15 minutes of him after 60 days of spamming your timelines with his face. But we could've just not brought him on stage at all and you wouldn't have been able to do anything other than whining about it on social media. In this country, everything is borderline fraudulent!"

The organisers were also accused of not letting the headliner complete his set.

"We let our local bands perform well over an hour by cutting some time allotted for the Indian singers," explained Shadman. "This is our way

of promoting local singers and if any of you have any complaints regarding this, you're clearly anti-nationals. In the next concert, we intend on bringing the foreign singer live on a video call, let him cover one song and charge the audience 10,000 bucks for it. If there's one thing I know about from years in the event management industry, it's that if you put a foreign face on the poster, gullible teenagers will pay no matter how pathetic our reputation is."

Addressing allegations of overselling the venue, the LinkedIn influencer defended his organisation. "In the last concert, we were accused

of selling tickets well over the capacity of the venue. There were multiple casualties owing to the heat, mismanagement, smoke and lack of ventilation. So, this time, we decided to go all in and put no cap on the ticket limit," Shadman bragged. "The event was so mismanaged, we made our cricket board look good! Things got so bad that Times Magazine called us the greatest scam of the 21st century since the education sector."

"And when it comes to the claustrophobic condition of the venue and the smoke all around, do you have any idea how much people pay to be surrounded by smoke like this?" asked Shadman. "Just ask your friends who visit shisha lounges on weekends. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a long paragraph to write on Facebook claiming how I'm the real victim in this situation."

Meanwhile, the concert attendees are outraged by the lack of responsibility on the organisers' part.

Rupban Zuberi, one of the victims of the mismanagement, said, "Even after causing so much damage to the attendees, the organisers aren't apologetic. They've announced yet another event featuring another international artist next month in the same claustrophobic venue and they have the audacity to charge 10,000 bucks for it. I'm sure the concert will be as mismanaged as the rest of them."

I can't wait to get the tickets!"

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com

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