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AUSTERITY MEASURES

Govt misses the mark

Saved Tk 15,000cr against target of at least Tk 23,000cr last fiscal year

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

In the end, the government's austerity stance did not yield much savings last fiscal year.

When the cocktail of belt-tightening measures was announced on the first working day of fiscal 2022-23, it was hoped that at least Tk 23,000 crore would be saved during the course of the year, a development that would help push down the elevated inflation level.

In reality, the savings amounted to Tk 15,000 crore as per initial estimates, The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials involved with the proceedings.

"The savings were not much as the belt-tightening measures were not implemented faithfully," said one of the officials, adding that the final calculation of the savings made would take some time to materialise.

Besides, save for the ban on foreign tours by government officials, all austerity measures were relaxed nine months into the fiscal year.

The centrepiece of the austerity stance was the ban on the purchase of vehicles, aircraft, helicopters, ships, boats or barges. That ban was lifted.

In fiscal 2022-23's annual development programme, projects were classified into A, B and C categories. The A-category projects could go on as normal, while up to 75 percent of the allocation for the B-category projects could be spent. All C-category projects were put on hold.

This criterion was relaxed in March. The B-category projects could spend up to 85 percent of their allocation, while the C-category projects that are nearing the end were allowed to proceed.

Subsequently, last fiscal year's ADP implementation status was business as usual, with no reflection of austerity.

> **"The austerity stance was a good step but the coordination, institutional strength, political commitment and accountability were lacking. It seems the ministries didn't get the memo about savings."**
>
> **Selim Raihan**
> professor of economics at DU

The government had allocated to spend Tk 149,016 crore from its own funds towards ADP. That was revised upwards to Tk 153,066 crore.

Eventually, Tk 125,162 crore of the government's own fund was spent on ADP, which is more or less the same as in previous years.

It is the same case when it came to non-development expenditure.

In the first nine months of fiscal 2022-23, which is the latest publicly available data, the growth in non-development expenditure was 15.9 percent in contrast to 15.82 percent a year earlier, as per the finance ministry's fiscal report.

Were the growth in non-development expenditure lower than in fiscal 2021-22, it would have been safe to assume that the austerity stance was working.

"It was a failure," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute.

The government should have gone for more severe austerity measures and the implementation should have been strict.

"The pressure on inflation would have been much less and there would not have been much need to print money," said Mansur, a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

The government borrowed more than Tk 90,000 crore from the Bangladesh Bank last fiscal year to meet its budget deficit.

"Deficit financing through monetisation fuelled inflation -- there was money injection into the economy, which created additional demand," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

Subsequently, there was no reining in inflation last fiscal year.

Inflation averaged 9 percent last fiscal year, still above the revised target of 7 percent.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Dengue patient Tasnima Akhter Toa is on a drip at the capital's Mugda Medical College Hospital yesterday. The seven-year-old has been undergoing treatment at the hospital for five days. The hospital's floor is packed with dengue patients as the number of cases continues to surge. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DENGUE OUTBREAK

WHO issues 'high risk' alert

Urges immediate measures as 14 more die; 2,432 new patients in hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Health Organization on Friday labelled the dengue outbreak in the country as "high risk", while 14 more people died and 2,432 new patients were hospitalised yesterday.

In anunprecedented alert issued concerning the situation in Bangladesh, the UN body has urged immediate measures to control the Aedes mosquito and alleviate the disease's impact.

With the latest count, the current number of dengue cases recorded has reached 82,506, putting additional pressure on medical facilities and intensifying the demand for injectable saline and other drugs.

Meanwhile, the total number of fatalities has reached 387.

In this context, Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque said that instructions have been given to import saline, if necessary, as the dengue cases have increased tenfold in the country.

According to Maleque, the daily requirement for injectable saline has shot up to 40,000 bags per day,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Uncapped Tanzid in Tigers' Asia Cup squad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday announced a 17-member squad for the upcoming Asia Cup.

Opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim received his maiden call-up to the national side after an impressive run for the Bangladesh A side in the recent Emerging Asia Cup. The left-handed batter scored 179 runs in four matches including three half-centuries. He joins Liton Das and Mohammad Naim as the three batters for the opening position.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Fears of diseases grow as waters begin to recede

Over 36,500 families affected in Ctg floods; roads to 3 upazilas in Bandarban still closed

STAR REPORT

The spread of water-borne diseases is now a major concern in Chattogram where receding floodwaters are revealing a trail of devastation.

Thousands of residents have been left without access to safe water, and an increased occurrence of diarrhoea, jaundice, typhoid and skin diseases may be imminent, health experts say.

"Between two and seven days after a flood, people usually get the symptoms of water-borne diseases," said Abdur Rob, associate professor of medicine at Chittagong Medical College.

People who got wet in floodwaters are also at risk of developing skin conditions, according to Barnali Barua, assistant professor of dermatology at the college.

Over 36,500 families have been affected by the flood in Chattogram, said administration officials.

At least 16 people had drowned in floodwater in Chattogram, said Saifullah Majumder, the district relief and rehabilitation officer.

Due to incessant rains, different areas in Chattogram saw

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Star BUSINESS

Banks face liquidity crunch

Most of the banks are facing difficulties in running their day-to-day banking activities owing to tightening liquidity caused by the dragging foreign currency crisis, slower deposit growth and lacklustre loan recovery.

This has forced lenders to turn to the call money market to secure funds in order to meet their payment obligations.

Multiple factors such as slower deposit growth, weak pace of loan recovery and the purchase of dollars by banks from the Bangladesh Bank have brought about the current situation.

STORY ON B1

Sixty-year-old Mohammad Rafiqul Islam is beaming after picking a fresh load of yet-to-bloom water lilies, the stems of which are a delicacy across the country, from a river in Barishal's Gaurnadi upazila yesterday. Each bundle sells for around Tk 20 on local market. PHOTO: TITU DAS

10 held from 'militant den'

Counter-terrorism police bust 'new outfit' in Moulvibazar

MINTU DESHWARA *and* MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Counter-terrorism police yesterday arrested 10 people – six women and four men – in a raid on a suspected militant hideout in Moulvibazar.

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police conducted the special drive, codenamed Operation Hill Sight, in a remote hilly region of the district's Kulaura area.

The new outfit – Imam Imam Mahmuder Kafela – follows the ideology of Ghazwa-e-Hind (Battle of India), and aims to establish control in the Indian subcontinent, CTTC chief Md Asaduzzaman told The Daily Star after the raid that ended around 10:30am.

Ghazwa-e-Hind refers to the Hadith that predicts the great battle for India, according to Hudson Institute, a Washington-based think-tank.

The arrestees include Shariful Islam, 40, Amina Begum, 40, Habiba Binte Shafiqul, 20, from Satkhira; Hafiz Ullah, 25, from Kishoreganj; Khairul Islam, 22, from Narayanganj; Rafiul Islam, 22, from Sirajganj; Shapla Begum, 22, from Pabna; Maisha Islam, 20, from Natore; and Sanjida Khatun, 18, from Bogra.

They also had three children with them, said Asaduzzaman, adding that the raid lasted about four and a half hours from around 6:00am.

Police recovered around 3kgs of explosives, 50 detonators, combat boots, boxing bags, several sacks of jihadi books and Tk 3.61 lakh in cash from their houses, he added.

Investigators said the detonators are neither handmade nor homemade.

"We suspect the detonators were illegally smuggled into the country," said a top CTTC official, requesting anonymity.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Ed Case

McCormick

2 US Congressmen to sit with political parties today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Two US Congressmen -- Rich McCormick and Ed Case -- will be holding meetings with major political parties today in Dhaka, including the ruling Awami League, the opposition BNP, and the Jatiya Party.

Republican Congressman Richard McCormick from Georgia's 6th Congressional District arrived yesterday, while Democrat Ed Case, who represents Hawaii's First Congressional District, is scheduled to arrive early today.

They will hold meetings with politicians today and also call on Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at the ministry, a politician who is invited to the meeting told The Daily Star.

A US embassy official said this is not a state visit, so the embassy is not engaged with the activities of the two Congressmen.

Tomorrow, they are scheduled to visit the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

The visit is being considered significant ahead of the country's general elections, as Washington has already put considerable pressure on Bangladesh to hold free and fair elections due late this year or early next year.

On May 24, the US announced a visa policy for Bangladesh, saying it would not issue visas to those who undermine the democratic election process.

As things stand, there is a stalemate over election-time government, with the AL wanting polls under the current regime and the opposition calling for an interim government.

Awami League lawmaker Nahim Razzaq said, "It's good that the US Congressmen are coming to Bangladesh. This will help them better understand Bangladesh's situation and improve bilateral relations."

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Omen said the main purpose of the visit of the US Congressmen is to visit Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar as the US is the largest donor to the refugees. "The Congressmen will see how their taxpayers' money is being spent."

"It will be good if they provide humanitarian assistance for the Rohingyas because their monthly food ration has recently been cut down to $8 from $12," he told this correspondent.

This is the state of the Majed Sarder road in the capital's Bangshal after water from the open drains flowed onto it during waterlogging, owing to the rain over the past few days. Once the water dried up, all that is left on the road is pure sewage, making it difficult for transport or people to move without slipping. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Hawaii seeks answers as fire death toll climbs to 80

AFP, *Lahaina*

The death toll from a horrific wildfire in Hawaii climbed to 80 as residents confronted the devastation and criticisms grew Saturday over the emergency response.

Over 2,200 structures were damaged or destroyed in the fire, the Federal Emergency Management Agency said, estimating that it would cost some $5.5 billion to rebuild affected communities.

Hawaiian authorities said they were opening a probe into the handling of the fire as a congresswoman from the state's Big Island acknowledged that officials had underestimated the dangers.

In the historic resort city of Lahaina on the island of Maui, resident Anthony Garcia said the fire had gutted the apartment he was renting and destroyed all his belongings and memories.

"It took everything, everything! It's heartbreaking," the 80-year-old California native, who has lived in Lahaina for three decades, told AFP. "It's a lot to take in."

The town of 12,000, once the proud home of the Hawaiian royal family, has been reduced to ruins, its lively hotels and restaurants turned to ashes.

A majestic banyan tree that has been the centre of the community for 150 years has been scarred by the flames, but still stands upright, its branches denuded of green and its sooty trunk transformed into an awkward skeleton.

Hawaii's Attorney General Anne Lopez said her office would examine "critical decision-making and standing policies leading up to, during and after the wildfires on Maui and Hawaii islands this week."

Maui County officials on Friday, revised the death toll to 80 and Governor Josh Green warned that the number of fatalities was sure to rise further.

Late Friday, Maui County officials revised the death toll to 80 and Governor Josh Green warned that the number of fatalities was sure to rise further. Over 1,400 people were in emergency evacuation shelters.

"We underestimated the lethality, the quickness of fire," Hawaii Congresswoman Jill Tokuda told CNN yesterday morning.

Maui suffered numerous power outages during the crisis, preventing many residents from receiving emergency alerts on their cellphones -- something, Tokuda said, officials should have prepared for.

"We have got to make sure that we do better," she added.

The fires follow other extreme weather events in North America this summer, with record-breaking wildfires still burning across Canada and a major heat wave baking the US southwest.

Europe and parts of Asia have also endured soaring temperatures, with major fires and floods wreaking havoc. Scientists have said global warming caused by carbon emissions is contributing to extreme weather.

For some of those who made it back into Lahaina, there was a momentary sense of elation when they tearfully reconnected with neighbours they feared might not have gotten out alive.

"You made it!" cried Chyna Cho, as she embraced Amber Langdon amid the ruins. "I was trying to find you."

For some of the luckiest, there was joy -- albeit tempered by the scale of the tragedy that counts among the worst natural disasters to hit the state of Hawaii.

"I just couldn't believe it," Keith Todd told AFP after finding his home intact.

"I'm so grateful, but at the same time it's so devastating."

MEDICAL ADMISSION

CID arrests 12 over question leak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has arrested 12 people, including seven doctors, in connection with leaking question papers of the centralised medical college admission test.

CID media wing additional police superintendent, Azad Rahman, confirmed the matter to The Daily Star last night.

CID Chief Additional IGP Mohammad Ali Mia will brief the media about the incident at the CID Headquarters in Malibagh today.

Met office forecasts rain in all divisions

BSS, *Dhaka*

Bangladesh Meteorology Department forecast light to moderate rain or thundershowers along with temporary gusts of wind in all eight divisions of the country in 24 hours commencing at 9:00am yesterday.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers along with temporary gusts of wind may occur at most places in Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, and Sylhet divisions and also in many places of Barishal and Chattogram divisions in this period, it said.

Some places may experience moderately heavy to heavy precipitation, with day and night temperatures remaining nearly unchanged.

The country's maximum temperature on Friday was recorded at 36.0 degrees Celsius in Rajshahi, while yesterday's minimum temperature was 23.0 degrees Celsius in Cox's Bazar.

The highest rainfall in the last 24 hours till 6:00am yesterday was recorded at 85mm in Rangpur.

The sun set at 6:35pm yesterday and rose at 5:33am today in the capital.

TCB's August sale starts today

BSS, *Dhaka*

The state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) is set to start selling essential commodities at subsidised prices today for the month of August.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi will formally inaugurate the operation at the west-side road of the Town Hall Market in the city's Mohammadpur.

Some 1 crore cardholder families would be able to buy subsidised lentil, edible

oil, and rice nationwide, said TCB spokesperson Humayun Kabir yesterday.

Beneficiaries will find these items at their designated areas or designated distributors in their respective areas.

Each cardholder is eligible to buy two litres of soybean oil, two kg of lentil, one kg of sugar, and five kg of rice.

The Directorate General of Food began selling subsidised rice last month, with each family purchasing a maximum of 5kg of rice.

Fears of diseases grow as waters begin to recede

FROM PAGE 1

floods on August 4. As the heavy shower continued, much of Chattogram division came to a standstill in the following days.

Meanwhile in Bandarban, roads to Lama, Ruma and Thanchi upazilas are still closed because of mudslides.

Residents are still left without safe water, electricity, and cellular networks.

But rapid erosion of the banks of the Sangu river, which flows through Bandarban town, is wreaking havoc in several neighbourhoods.

A two-storey building and seven small houses crumbled into the river in the last two days. Besides, over 100 huts on the banks are still under water, reports our correspondent in the district.

Officials have asked residents of Ujani Para, Madham Para, Marma Bazar, Barishailla Para, Puran Bridge Para, Islampur and anybody who lives on the banks of the Bokshi Khal not to return home because of the risks of erosion, said Purnochandra Mutsuddi, assistant director of the fire service office in Bandarban.

At least 50 huts and buildings may get washed away by the river anytime, said officials.

Mudslides killed at least 10 people and affected around 75,000 in Bandarban Sadar upazila, according to the district administration.

The floods have also damaged 8,253 hectares of farmland, officials said.

The residents of Bandarban town were still dependent on dry food and safe water provided by different government agencies yesterday as access to drinking water had not been restored.

DISEASE OUTBREAK LOOMS

In Chattogram's Satkania upazila, Sarwar Uddin Ahmed, former union parishad chairman of Amilaish Union Parishad, said many children and elderly in the area had contracted cold-related diseases.

Abdullah Al Noman Begh, former chairman of Dohazari Union Parishad in Chandanaish upazila, said people of his community were already suffering from diarrhoea, stomach problems and skin diseases.

Afrin Sultana, emergency medical officer at Satkania upazila health complex, said most of the people arriving at the medical facility over the last few days had injuries they received when they tripped over something on flooded streets.

Chattogram Civil Surgeon Ilias Chowdhury said health workers had the necessary preparations in case there is an outbreak of waterborne diseases.

RANGAMATI

At least 69 primary schools, and over 39,000 people in 199 villages had been affected by the flood in four upazilas of the district, officials said.

Deputy Commissioner Mosharraf Hossain Khan said 380 tonnes of rice and Tk 7 lakh were distributed among residents of the town. But officials have not been able to reach the remote areas.

The extent of damage to lives and property in several upazilas remains unknown, officials said.

COX'S BAZAR

Fazlul Karim Saidee, chairman of Chakaria Upazila Parishad, said paddy and rice stored in people's houses had been almost completely ruined.

Besides, villages in Shaharbeel, Badarkahli, Konakhali and Demusha unions are still flooded, he said, adding that hundreds of residents were living in shelters for over five days, and they were solely dependent on relief provided by the government and NGOs.

Earthen houses that are common in Chakaria have been washed away or damaged beyond repair in most villages, said Helal Uddin, chairman of Fasiakhali Union Parishad.

Death toll in IS attack on Syria army bus rises to 33: monitor

AFP, *Beirut*

An attack by Islamic State group jihadists on Syrian government forces in the war-torn country's east has killed 33 soldiers, a monitor said yesterday, revising an earlier toll of 26 deaths.

The shooting Thursday evening on an army bus was the extremist group's deadliest attack on government forces this year, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Despite losing their last piece of territory in Syria in 2019, IS has maintained hideouts in the vast Syrian desert from which it has carried out ambushes and hit-and-run attacks.

"The death toll from the army bus attack rose to 33 soldiers," said Rami Abdel Rahman, who heads the British-based monitoring group which relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria.

The jihadists surrounded the bus in the desert near Mayadeen, in Deir Ezzor province, and opened fire, the Observatory reported on Friday.

IS claimed the attack later Friday, saying its fighters had carried out an ambush "on two military buses", targeting them "with heavy weapons and rocket-propelled grenades" and setting one on fire, according to a statement from the jihadists' Amaq news agency.

Syrian state news agency SANA said the "terrorist attack" had caused a number of military casualties, citing an army source.

Abdel Rahman said IS "has recently been escalating its deadly military attacks... aiming to cause as many deaths as possible".

By doing so, the jihadists are trying to show that IS "is still active and powerful despite the targeting of its leaders", he told AFP.

Last week, IS announced the death of its leader Abu al-Hussein al-Husseini al-Qurashi, who it said was killed in clashes in northwestern Syria, and named a successor.

IS members in recent weeks have increased their attacks in Syria's north and northeast.

Earlier this week, 10 Syrian soldiers and pro-government fighters were killed in an IS attack in the former jihadist stronghold of Raqa province, the Observatory said.

Syria's war broke after President Bashar al-Assad's government crushed peaceful protests in 2011. It has since drawn in foreign powers and global jihadists.

The conflict has killed more than half a million people and driven half of the country's pre-war population from their homes.

Uncapped Tanzid

FROM PAGE 1

A major talking point was Mahmudullah Riyad's potential inclusion based on experience but the BCB left the veteran out as they opted for Afif Hossain and Shamim Hossain for the lower middle-order role.

Shamim, who is yet to make his ODI debut, might just get the nod owing to Afif's underwhelming form in recent matches.

Off-spinner Sheikh Mahedi made a return to the national fold after a one-year hiatus and will feature for the Tigers in a 50-over game after a gap of more than two years.

The choice for a second left-arm spin option was between Nasum Ahmed and Taijul Islam but the former got the nod, with Taijul being named as a standby option.

The most stable department, the pace brigade, had no surprises as all five expected candidates—Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud, Shoriful Islam, Ebadot Hossain, and Mustafizur Rahman—made the cut.

Bangladesh play their first Asia Cup match on August 31 against Sri Lanka in Kandy.

WHO issues 'high risk' alert

FROM PAGE 1

meaning 12 lakh bags per month.

"However, not all pharmaceutical companies are currently capable of producing such a substantial amount of saline ... That is why instructions have been given, if necessary, to import saline from abroad."

Injectable saline solution, an essential fluid used for treating dengue patients, has become scarce in retail drug stores in Dhaka due to the high demand.

Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) officials said they would sit with the pharmaceuticals and importers in this regard.

"Local companies are still meeting the entire demand; they said they would be able to fulfil nearly the entire demand [in the future]. But we are preparing for imports and boost the stock [to tackle future needs] if dengue cases rise further," Maj Gen Mohammad Yousuf, director general of the DGDA, told The Daily Star yesterday.

WHO'S ASSESSMENT

The WHO's assessment of Bangladesh's dengue situation was published on its website under the "Disease Outbreak News" category on Friday.

The organisation has called for efforts to control the mosquito vector population and minimise individual exposure by using mosquito repellents and wearing long-sleeved clothes.

The outbreak, which has escalated rapidly since late June, has seen a total of 80,074 confirmed cases and 373 related deaths between January 1 and August 11, according to the UN health agency. The cases were reported from all 64 districts in the country.

In July alone, 43,854 cases and 204 deaths were reported, accounting for 63 percent of the total cases and 62 percent of the deaths. The sharp increase in numbers, compared to the past five years, emphasises the gravity of the ongoing outbreak.

"The higher incidence of dengue is taking place in the context of an unusual episodic amount of rainfall, combined with high temperatures and high humidity, which have resulted in an increased mosquito population throughout Bangladesh," WHO said.

It called for integrated vector management to control mosquito populations and reduce human-vector contact, including removal of potential breeding sites, reducing vector populations, and minimising individual exposure.

Specific actions involve vector control strategies for larvae and adult mosquitoes and source reduction, especially of water storage practices, and include covering, draining and cleaning household water storage containers on a weekly basis, using insecticide-treated nets and indoor space spraying (fogging).

Experts, meanwhile, said that the WHO's news on the outbreak highlights the urgency for policymakers to act more proactively.

"This is the first time WHO has issued an alert regarding dengue in Bangladesh. There is a message for the policymakers in the alert. It highlights the need for a coordinated and multi-sectoral immediate approach," Dr Mahmudur Rahman, former director at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He added that the measures taken by different government bodies are not adequate or effective enough.

The health expert urged the government to arrange emergency funds for research and arrange other preventive measures to control the outbreak.

Govt misses

FROM PAGE 1

"It seems the ministries didn't get the memo about savings," said Selim Raihan, a professor at the University of Dhaka's economics department.

To make the austerity stance work, coordination, institutional strength, political commitment and accountability were needed.

"But it was completely lacking. Why was there no quarterly or half-yearly monitoring at the ministry level to see if they were adhering to the austerity measures?" said Raihan, also the executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling.

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Bodies of two newborns found near DU Ekushey hall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two infants' bodies were found in a pile of garbage on a footpath near Dhaka University's Amar Ekushey Hall.

Police recovered the bodies from in front of Anowar Pasha building of Ekushey Hall on Friday afternoon after getting a call at the national helpline 999, said Shahbagh Police Station Sub-inspector Harun-Or-Rashid.

The bodies were wrapped in an old clothe (lungi), he added.

It is not known who left the bodies of the newborn boys there, the officer said, adding that they will be approximately one-day old.

Their bodies were kept at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue after an autopsy.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Rickshaws remain parked in front of Shishu Hospital, occupying more than half of the busy Agargaon-Shyamoli link road. Though the road was widened to avoid traffic congestions, a lack of supervision often leads to gridlocks in the area. The photo was taken yesterday.

DHAKA AIRPORT

Bird strikes damage two aircraft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

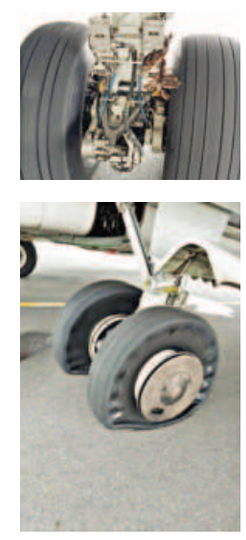


PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bird strikes damaged two aircraft of two airlines at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport during take-off yesterday.

Fortunately, both incidents didn't cause any casualties.

In the first case, a flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, BG 388, on the Dhaka-Bangkok route had to abandon takeoff at the last stage of acceleration as a bird strike caused one of its tyres to burst.

Passengers of the plane had to disembark in the taxiway, said a senior pilot of the national flag carrier.

Later, passengers were flown to Bangkok by another aircraft of Biman, said a senior Biman official.

A team of engineers inspected the plane to assess the damage.

In the second case, a flight of Fly Dubai abandoned take off after a bird strike on its left engine damaged three propeller blades. As the plane had to be halted on its final

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Two workers die falling from building

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Munshiganj*

Two people died yesterday morning after they fell from a height of about 50 feet while painting a building's exterior in Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients Industrial Park in Munshiganj's Gazaria upazila.

The deceased were identified as Md Shahid, 27, and Abdus Sobhan, 25, both from Madaripur, said Molla Soheb Ali, officer-in-charge of Gazaria Police Station.

Three building painters were working on the fourth floor of a five-storey utility building inside Acme Laboratories Limited in Gazaria's Bausia area, according to eyewitnesses.

Two of them were hanging from ropes and painting while the other was helping them from the building's rooftop.

Around 9:00am, the rope holding them tore and they fell.

Dr Arshad Kabir of the emergency department at Gazaria Upazila Health Complex declared them dead. The bodies were sent to Munshiganj General Hospital for autopsy, the OC said.

DHAKA-CHATTOGRAM HIGHWAY

Robbers on the prowl

10 vehicles robbed in one night

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

A group of masked men unleashed a wave of terror on the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway early yesterday, leaving behind a trail of looted vehicles and injured passengers.

The incident, which occurred past midnight near Panthachila area in Chattogram's Sitakunda upazila, marks the latest in a series of robberies that have plagued this crucial route.

At least 10 vehicles fell victim to the gang. The gang targetted vehicles by hurling iron rods, compelling the drivers to stop and check their cars. Taking advantage of this, the robbers snatched away all the passengers' belongings, according to victims.

"We have got some names of those involved in this connection and shared it with Sitakunda Police Station for the next course of action. Most of the criminals are addicts and frequently change their location during raids on the highway," said Md Shahadat Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kumira Highway Police Station.

Several groups of armed robbers are active in different parts of Dhaka-Chattogram Highway in Chattogram, Feni, and Cumilla, looting and harassing passengers and transport workers, law enforcers said.

Several groups of armed robbers are active in different parts of Dhaka-Chattogram Highway in Chattogram, Feni, and Cumilla, looting and harassing passengers and transport workers, law enforcers said.

Most of the robbers are aged between 20 and 40. The victims often opt to not report the crimes to police fearing legal hassles.

On April 7, Rab-7 arrested 10 alleged highway robbers during a drive in Sitakunda's Foujdarhat area and recovered firearms, ammunition, and knives from them.

Rab said the group used to rob people on the highway in Sitakunda.

On June 27, a gang tried to stop a private car in Feni's Mathbaria area, but failed.

Neeloy Sen Gupta, who was in the vehicle, told The Daily Star, "That night, three of us were traveling from Dhaka to Chattogram. A man suddenly appeared out of thin air and hurled a large stone at the vehicle's windshield, completely shattering it."

"When we realised we were being ambushed by robbers, our friend continued driving at full speed for 600 metres. Later, we dialed 999 because our tyres had also been damaged," he recalled.

He said two policemen visited the spot half an hour later and noted down the details. But no case was lodged in this connection, he added.

On July 18, Nayan Dhoom, a resident of Chattogram's Mirsarai upazila, shared his experience of highway robbery on Facebook.

He said the alleged robbers threw iron rods at his car at East Majar Gate of Baroawlia of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Polls as per constitution

Says Momen

BSS, *Dhaka*

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the next general election will be held according to the country's constitution.

He made this comment while talking to journalists after awarding certificates to students of RTM Al Kabir Technical University at Shahi Eidgah in Sylhet city in the afternoon.

He said, "The government has done everything necessary for fair elections in the country. A strong Election Commission has been constituted for this purpose."

"Bangladesh will not make any new agreement with any country in haste before the elections... Bangladesh is an independent state and we adhere to a balanced foreign policy," he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Dhaka seeks int'l support to bridge the digital divide

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has sought international support for reducing digital divide and ensuring equality in development.

The call was made at a meeting with the foreign diplomats and representatives of development agencies at the state guest house Padma in the capital yesterday.

"Information and communication technology is developing very fast, but its benefits are not reaching out to all equally. The poor people and the rural areas are lagging behind within the country. It is also the same globally. The small and developing countries are lagging behind.

SHAMSUL AREFIN
ICT Division Secretary

"Information and communication technology is developing very fast, but its benefits are not reaching out to all equally. The poor people and the rural areas are lagging behind within the country. It is also the same globally. The small and developing countries are lagging behind...," ICT Division Secretary Shamsul Arefin told The Daily Star about the meeting.

Bangladesh is trying to lead in ensuring equal

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

20 RMG workers hurt in clash with cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Savar*

At least 20 readymade garment workers were injured in a clash with Industrial Police yesterday.

The clash broke out after the workers blocked a road in Savar, demanding their arrears.

The workers of Pride Group's HR Textile Mills Ltd and Fashion Knit Ltd found a notice when they went to work around 9:00am, which read, "Factory authorities declared yesterday as a general holiday."

Other workers joined the crowd and tried to know the reason behind such a declaration, but to no avail. This prompted them to take to the streets.

Witnesses said they saw workers and police arguing on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in front of the factory.

At one stage, a clash broke out, they added. Police charged truncheons, lobbed teargas shells and fired rubber bullets to disperse the workers, who threw brickbats at the law enforcers.

Around 20 workers were injured in the clash, said a worker wishing anonymity.

The protesting workers also said their salaries for July are pending.

Referring to the police attack, Rafiqul Islam Sujon, president of Bangladesh Garments and Shilpa Shramik Federation, said several types of raw materials -- including yarn -- were being removed from the factory for a few days.

"The workers are fearing that the factories might get closed," he said.

Contacted, Afzal Hossain, assistant superintendent of police of Ashulia Industrial Police-1, said they did not charge batons or fire rubber bullets on the workers. They only lobbed tear gas canisters when the protesters threw brickbats at them.

Several types of raw materials -- including yarn -- were being removed from the factory for a few days. The workers are fearing that the factories might get closed.

This correspondent found the phone of factory general manager (administration) Monirul Islam switched off. When he went to the factory to talk to the authorities, the security guard told him that no officials were available there.

Shafiqul Islam, the factory's security officer, said, "No officers came to the factory [today]. Besides, I can't reach any of them over the phone. The factory will reopen tomorrow [Sunday] and the workers will be paid." Asked about the removal of raw materials from there, he said it was a rumour.

The censor certificate of "Mujib: The Making of a Nation" was handed over yesterday. Information Minister Hasan Mahmud gave the certificate to the movie crew during an event at a hotel in the capital. Stars of the film including Arifin Shuvoo, Atul Tiwari, Nusrat Imrose Tisha, Chanchal Chowdhury, Raisul Islam Asad, Rozina, Shahid Alam Sachchu, Khairul Alam Shabuj, Fazlur Rahman Babu, Riaz, Dilara Zaman and Prarthana Fardin Dighi were present on the occasion, among others.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Dhaka seeks

FROM PAGE 3

access to technologies globally, and has sought support of the international community towards this end, he said.

"We need cooperation and collaboration of all if we want to prosper. That's what we told our foreign friends and development partners," Shamsul Arefin said.

He said they discussed cyber security, quality service, exchange of expertise and technologies.

Private and public sectors -- all need to work together in this regard, he said.

Diplomats from various foreign missions in Dhaka, including from the US, China, Japan, Singapore, Maldives and development agencies such as World Bank, and the UN bodies were present at the meeting.

Slum dwellers residing in the capital's Agargaon area use this makeshift bamboo bridge over the Kalyanpur canal to cross over to the 60 Feet Road. However, due to the structure, waste continues to accumulate underneath it, choking the waterbody. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: **RASHED SHUMON**

Bird strikes

FROM PAGE 3

phase of take-off, two wheels also melted, sources at the Dhaka airport said.

Aviation experts said bird strikes, especially during take-offs and landings, are dangerous as jet engines lose thrust. This may lead to major accidents, they added.

In December last year, a Dreamliner aircraft of Biman was damaged when a bird hit the engine of the plane during landing at the Dhaka airport.

Officials of different airlines said bird strikes have become all too common at Dhaka airport.

Airlines are enduring huge financial losses because of it, in and around the airfield, they added.

Once a place of hope

FROM PAGE 5

without treatment after having to wait for hours in the outpatient department.

"Patients are getting X-rays done from elsewhere as the machine in the hospital is malfunctioning," said medical technologist Birendra Chandra.

The negligence, misbehaviour, and poor treatment by some nurses and staff is appalling, said Abdul Motalib of Rajanagar upazila.

"We don't really want to come here until we run out of options," he added.

Residential Medical Officer Dr Ahmad Faisal Zaman said, "If the vacant doctor posts are filled, we can enhance our outpatient services."

"Some special tests cannot be performed due to the lack of reagents and budget. We have informed the matter to the higher authorities," he added.

Acknowledging the issues, Dr Binendu Bhowmick, acting superintendent of the hospital, said, "We are doing our best to improve the hospital. However, the shortage of staff, doctors, and equipment is not just adding to the patients' suffering, but also burdening us with work."

"I hope the authorities will address the issue soon and take necessary steps," he added.

Often times, patients have to return home without treatment after having to wait for hours in the outpatient department.

PHOTO: **STAR**

Robbers on

FROM PAGE 3

Mirsarai on the highway.

Shamsuzzaman Sumon, port affairs secretary of Bangladesh Covered Van Truck Prime Mover Goods Carrier Owners Association, told The Daily Star, "Our drivers alleged that they were attacked by robbers in Baroawlia of Mirsarai, Kachpur-Bypass Kanchan Road, and Biswa Road-Gazipur of Daudkandi."

"We have already informed the matter to the highway police via an official letter," he added.

This correspondent tried to contact Highway Cumilla Zone's superintendent of police over phone for comment but he did not pick up.

Contacted, Assistant Superintendent of Police Nasim Khan, who also oversees Cumilla highway police, said, "I joined highway police four months ago and I am not fully aware about the robbery issue yet. I will talk to my subordinates about it."

WOMAN-DAUGHTER MURDER

Three brothers held in Bagerhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bagerhat*

Police arrested three brothers in Bagerhat's Sharankhola upazila early yesterday over their alleged involvement in the killings of a woman and her daughter the day before.

A 38-year-old woman, Papia Akhter, and her daughter Sauda Jeni, 5, were hacked to death by some miscreants at Uttar Rajapur village in the upazila around 7:00pm on Friday.

The arrestees -- Monir Howlader, 45, Neharul Howlader, 48, and Milan Howlader, 40 -- are from Paschim Rajapur village in the upazila, said police.

They were produced before a Bagerhat court yesterday, said KM Ariful Haque, superintendent of police in the district.

Earlier, Al-Amin Khalifa, brother of Papia Akter, filed a murder case with Sharankhola Police Station naming seven people, including the three arrestees and four unidentified persons.

The complainant in the case brought murder charges against Monir, while others were made accused of aiding and abetting the crime, said the police official.

Contacted, Papia's younger sister Sumi Akhter said Monir used to stalk Papia. He also threatened to kill her if she did not accept his "illicit proposal".

Besides, Papia's husband Abu Zafar Hawladar was also accused in the case as she had a feud with him, said the SP.

Efforts are on to arrest the other accused, he added. Zafar has been on the run since the incident, he said.

One dies of Covid, 12 get infected

UNB, *Dhaka*

Bangladesh reported one more Covid-19-related death and 12 new cases in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new numbers, the country's total fatalities rose to 29,476 and caseload to 2,044,969, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The daily case test positivity rate dropped to 1.87 percent from Friday's 1.88 percent as 641 samples were tested during this period.

The recovery rate rose to 98.39 percent. However, the death rate remained unchanged at 1.44 percent.

Bangladesh recorded its highest daily caseload of 16,230 on July 28 in 2021 and highest number of fatalities of 264 on August 10 the same year.

SYLHET BORDER

Cosmetics, sarees worth Tk 4cr seized

UNB, *Sylhet*

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) claimed to have recovered a huge amount of Indian sarees and cosmetics worth Tk 4.10 crore along the Jaintapur border in Sylhet on Friday night.

However, no one was detained in this connection.

On information, a team of BGB conducted a drive in the Sarighat area, said a press release of BGB-19 yesterday.

The BGB men intercepted a Bangladesh-bound truck along the border. Sensing their presence, the driver fled away leaving the vehicle, it added.

Later, 3,772 saris and 38, 514 cosmetic products were recovered from the truck.

The market price of the seized valuables is estimated at around Tk 4.10 crore, the release added.

Polls as per

FROM PAGE 3

About the upcoming BRICS conference, Momen said the organisers have invited Bangladesh. "It seems that the prime minister will go there," he added.

The foreign minister said even if BRICS does not include new countries this year, there will be meetings with the heads of state of many countries, and there will be an opportunity to discuss various issues there.

PRAYER TIMING
AUGUST 13

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-25	12-45	4-45	6-41	8-00
JAMAAT	5-00	1-15	5-00	6-44	8-30

SOURCE: **ISLAMIC FOUNDATION**

অফিস স্পেস বিক্রয়

কারওয়ান বাজার সিএ ভবনের উল্টো দিকে ৯৫০-২০০৫ বর্গফুটের অফিস স্পেস বিক্রয় হবে।
বিস্তারিত জানতে: ০১৯১৫-৭৯০৪১১

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
"শেখ হাসিনার নির্দেশ জলবায়ু সহিষ্ণু বাংলাদেশ"
Office of the Director
Forestry Development & Training Centre, Kaptai
Invitation for Tenders

01	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.	
02	Agency	Forest Directorate, Bangladesh, Dhaka.	
03	Procuring entity name	Director, Forestry Development & Training Centre, Kaptai.	
04	Invitation for	Supply of service provider through outsourcing.	
05	Invitation Ref. No.	01/FDTC Of 2023-2024.	
06	Date	08/08/2023.	
KEY INFORMATION			
07	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM); National Competitive Tender (NCT).	
FUNDING INFORMATION			
08	Budget and source of funds	GOB Budget, Government of Bangladesh.	
09	Development partners	Not applicable.	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION			
10	Project/program name	Director, Forestry Development & Training Centre, Kaptai.	
11	Tender Package No.	01/FDTC/2023-2024.	
12	Tender package name	Supply of service provider through outsourcing.	
13	Tender publication date	13/08/2023.	
14	Tender last selling date	30/08/2023 up to 4.00pm.	
		Date	**Time**
15	Tender closing date and time	31/08/2023	1.00pm
16	Tender opening date and time	31/08/2023	2.00pm
	Name & address of the office(s)	Office of Director, Forestry Development & Training Centre, Kaptai.	
17	Selling of tender document	Address: Sadar Range Office, Forestry Development & Training Centre, Kaptai.	
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER			
18	Eligibility of tenderer	• Tenderers will be the firms having required experience of service provider supply through outsourcing. • Tenderers shall have the legal capacity to enter into the Contract under the Applicable Law. • Tenderers shall be enrolled in the relevant professional or trade organizations registered in Bangladesh. • Tenderers shall have fulfilled its obligations to pay taxes under the provisions of laws and regulations of Bangladesh. • Others eligibility are mentioned in Tender document.	
19	Brief description of services	Supply of service provider for the position of (i) Mali (2 Nos.), (ii) Laboratory Bearer (1 No.), (iii) Bungalow Chokidar (1 No.).	
20	Price of tender document (Tk)	Tk. 1000 (One thousand) only (non-refundable).	

21	Lot No.	Identification of lot	Location	Tender security amount (Tk.)	Completion time in weeks/months/year
	1.	Supply of service provider through outsourcing.	Sadar Range Office, Forestry Development & Training Centre, Kaptai, Rangamati.	Tk. 27,000/-	June/2024

22	Name of official inviting tender	Abu Naser Md. Yasin Newaz.
23	Designation of official inviting tender	Director.
24	Address of official inviting tender	Director, Forestry Development & Training Centre, Kaptai, Rangamati.
25	Contact details of official inviting tender	Phone No: +88-02334461421, E-mail: directorfdtc@gmail.com
26	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.	

8.8.23
Abu Naser Md Yasin Newaz
Director
Forestry Development & Training Centre, Kaptai
Phone No. +88-02334461421
E-mail: directorfdtc@gmail.com

GD-1217

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Director
Chittagong Medical College Hospital.
www.cmch.gov.bd

Memo No: CMCH/Tender/2023-2024/MSR/**9205** Date: 12-08-2023.

Inviation For Tender

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from experienced Importers / Contractors / Suppliers / Distributors to supply MSR goods for CMCH in the fiscal 2023-2024. As per PPA-2006 & PPR-2008 (Including all corrigendum); Terms and conditions are as follow(s):

KEY INFORMATION		
1	Ministry / Division	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
2	Agency	Chittagong Medical College Hospital, Chattogram.
3	PE Name, Designation & Contact details	Brigadier General Md. Shamim Ahsan; Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Telephone: +8802333360179 E-mail address: cmch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd
4	Procuring Entity Code & District	GOB, Chattogram.
5	Invitation for	Procurement of MSR goods for Chittagong Medical College Hospital in the fiscal year 2023-2024.
6	Tender Ref. No & date	CMCH/Tender/2023-2024/MSR/9205 Dated: 12-08-2023.
7	Procurement Method	Open Tender Method (National). Item-by-item.
8	Budget and Source of Funds	GOB, Economic code: 3252105.
9	Tender Publication Date	13-08-2023.
10	Tender Schedule Selling Starting Date and Time	17-08-2023 During office hours.
11	Pre-Tender Meeting	24-08-2023, 11:00 A. M.
12	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	13-09-2023, 12:00 P. M.
13	Tender Dropping & Closing Date and Time	Dropping date: 14-09-2023, Dropping time: from 09:00 AM to 12:00 PM Closing time: 12:01 P. M.
14	Tender Opening Date and Time	14-09-2023 at 01:00 P.M.
15	**Name and address of the Office's**	
	(a) Selling Tender Documents	Cashier, Office of the Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital.
		Cashier, Office of the Civil Surgeon, Chattogram District.
	(b) Receiving Tender Documents	Office of the Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital.
		Officer In-charge, Panchlaish Model Thana, Chattogram Metropolitan Police.
	Tender Documents Opening Place	Office of the Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital, KB Fazlul Kader Road, Chattogram-4203.
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER		
16	Bidders Eligibility	**Details in Tender Booklet.**

17 Description of Group, Price of Tender Document, Tender Security etc.

Name of Group	Description of Group	Price of Tender Document in BDT (Only in Cash, Non Refundable)	Tender Security in BDT (Bank Draft / Pay Order to be submitted with the tender booklet in favor of The Director, CMCH). **Bank guarantee is not acceptable.**
A	Medicine (Including IV fluid, Dental Utensils).	2,500.00 (Two Thousand Five	12,00,000.00 (Twelve Lakh Only)
B	Recruiting Carrying Contractor.	1,000.00 (One Thousand Only)	40,000.00 (Forty Thousand Only)

18	Description of Related Services	**Details in Tender Booklet.**

Note:
(a) *Corrigendum if necessary in future will be a part of this notice. The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender without assigning any reason whatsoever.*
(b) *If the date of selling, receiving & opening of tender is disturbed under any unavoidable circumstances, the next working day will be applicable for the same respectively.*

(Brigadier General Md. Shamim Ahsan)
Director
Chittagong Medical College Hospital.
Telephone: +8802333360179
E-mail: cmch@hospi.dghs.gov.bd

GD- 1216

MOULVIBAZAR SADAR HOSPITAL

Once a place of hope, now in a shambles

MINTU DESHWARA, *Moulvibazar*

Moulvibazar District Sadar Hospital used to be a place of hope for the people of tea gardens and haor areas.

Locals regarded it as one of the best facilities for maternal health in the division.

However, the hospital is now in a dilapidated state due to the authorities' negligence, leaving around 2.2 million people in the district deprived of proper healthcare. A shortage of doctors and technologists further adds to the menace.

A total of 44 posts at the 250-bed hospital have remained vacant for a long period, including that of 16 specialist doctors for surgery, anaesthesia, ophthalmology, gynaecology, paediatrics, orthopaedics and cardiology.

Diagnostic services are being disrupted due to poorly functioning equipment as patients are able to only get ultrasonograms, ECG, and four to five blood tests done at the hospital.

Four posts of nursing officer, 16 posts of Grade II and III and eight posts of Grade IV employees are vacant. The hospital has only 37 doctors out of 53 posts. As a result, not all patients receive treatment.

Zulekha Bibi, a patient, said a doctor prescribed her tests and medicines and asked her to get those done from clinics outside.

"I am a poor woman. I don't even have enough to return home now," said Zulekha, who ran out of money after completing the suggested tests.

Patients also complained about the facility's hygiene, and expressed annoyance over the menace of brokers.

"The unhygienic and dirty environment in and outside the hospital make visits to it a nightmare. There is a constant stench in the wards," said Mubarak Mia of Kulaura upazila's Hajipur area.

Visiting the facility recently, this correspondent observed several non-functional diagnostic machines. A lack of pathology reagents, the only lift in the hospital being out of order, and untidy wards and cabins further exacerbated the patients' sufferings.

Many were seen returning home

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Rain may have inundated the field but that could not dampen the spirit of these boys as they play with a group of geese in Chalia area of Sylhet Sadar yesterday.

PHOTO: **SHEIKH NASIR**

Microbus catches fire on Purbachal Expressway

OUT CORRESPONDENT, *Narayanganj*

A running microbus caught fire near Kanchan Bridge on Purbachal Expressway in Narayanganj's Rupganj upazila yesterday afternoon, causing temporary tailback on the busy road.

However, there were no report of casualties.

Two firefighting units of Purbachal station brought the fire under control.

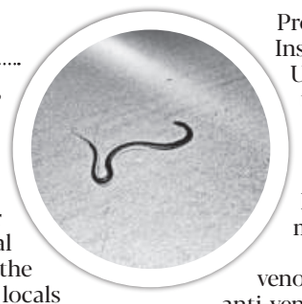
A fault in the engine of the microbus might have caused the fire, said station chief Ratan Roy.

There were no passenger in the car and the driver managed to get off the vehicle soon after the fire broke out, the fire official said. He said the microbus was completely gutted.

The fire caused a four-kilometre tailback in the area. Later, highway police restored traffic on the road.

Venomous sea snake on Cox's Bazar beach

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*



A yellow-bellied sea snake, one of the most venomous ones, washed up ashore at Samitypara Point of Cox's Bazar beach yesterday.

According to Abdur Rashed Manik, a local journalist who filmed the incident, he and a group of locals spotted the snake on the beach. However, the snake eventually retreated back into the sea after a short while.

Prof Sayedur R Chowdhury of Institute of Marine Sciences, University of Chittagong, said this is a common sea snake, but rare to find on shores.

This snake has been found several times in Cox's Bazar in the last couple of months.

"Most sea snakes are venomous. Since we don't have anti-venoms, people should be cautious if they saw these species of snake. They should keep their distance and let the snake return to sea," he said.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Principal
Rangpur Govt. Technical School and College, Rangpur
E-mail: tscrangpur16031@gmail.com

Memo No. 57.03.5585.031.00.00.23-582 Date: 06/08/2023

Invitation for e-GP Tender

Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of Goods and related Services under following Tender ID:

Tender ID	Package No.	Package description	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time	Opening date and time
859215	tsc/rang/0208/006	Supply of Furniture under financial code 4112314	27/08/2023 15:00	28/08/2023 12:00	28/08/2023 12:00
869212	tsc/rang/0208/005	Supply of Teaching and learning material under financial code 4112312	27/08/2023 15:00	28/08/2023 12:00	28/08/2023 12:00
859207	tsc/rang/0208/004	Supply of Engineering and other equipment's under financial code 4112304	27/08/2023 15:00	28/08/2023 12:00	28/08/2023 12:00
859170	tsc/rang/0208/003	Supply of Raw Materials and spare parts under financial code 3256105	27/08/2023 15:00	28/08/2023 12:00	28/08/2023 12:00
859148	tsc/rang/0208/002	Supply of other stationary under financial code 3255105	27/08/2023 15:00	28/08/2023 12:00	28/08/2023 12:00
859015	tsc/rang/0208/001	Supply of Computer Equipment under financial code 3255101	27/08/2023 15:00	28/08/2023 12:00	28/08/2023 12:00

These are online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender please register on e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd).
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

06.08.2023
Md. Ayub Ali
Principal
Rangpur Govt. Technical School and College
Rangpur

GD-1215

Mymensingh City Corporation
Mymensingh
Estd: 2018
Engineering Division
www.mcc.gov.bd

শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

Memo No. 46.21.6100.014.00.000.23-1681 Dated: 10/08/2023

e-Tender Notice-06/2023-24

e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the Procurement of following works under Mymensingh City Corporation, Mymensingh:

Sl. No.	Tender ID & Package No.	Name of work	Tender publication date & time	Tender document last selling date & time	Tender closing and opening date & time
01	ID No. 860231 & MCC/DPP/03/PW-14	D-1804) Construction of RCC Drain from Tinkona Pukurpar to Nizkolpa Road (L= 1,400km), R-1793) Development of Road by RCC Pavement from Khagdohor Railway Station to East side of Morol Bari (L=0.245km), R-1794) Development of Road by RCC Pavement from Khagdohor Ghunti Amanullah House to Shohag BDRs House (L=0.720m), R-1796) Construction of Road by RCC Pavement from Kismot Azizur Rahman Kalu Bhais House to Nadi Via Nasims House (L-0.700km), R-1798) Part: A- Construction of Road by BC Pavement from Pachmail More to Kismot Taragai Culvert (L-1.020km), Part: B- Construction of RCC Palisading at different places from Pachmail More to Kismot Taragai Culvert (L=0.400 km).	13/08/2023 10.00am	11/09/2023 15:00pm	12/09/2023 13.00pm
02	ID No. 860232 & MCC/DPP/03/PW-17	R-1776) Construction of Road by RCC Pavement Starting from Nizkolpa Primary School west side to north side at Maidum Khal (Road: 0.340km & Drain: 0.340km); R-1777) Construction of Road by BC Pavement starting from Ghunti Mondol Bari Graveyard to Mokbul Shaheb house. (L: 0.620km); R-1770) Part-A Construction of Road by RCC/BC Pavement starting from behind Khagdohor CSD Godown to Aroj Beperi More via Robir More (BC Road: 2.510km & RCC Road: 0.475km, RCC Drain: 0.35km, CC Road: 0.150km), Part-B Construction of RCC Palisading & Culvert starting from behind Khagdohor CSD Godown to Aroj Beperi More via Robir More, R-1771) Part-A) Construction of Road by BC Pavement from Khagdohor RHD Road to Bagerkanda Bypass Road (L: 1.920km); Part: B) R-1771) Construction of RCC Palisaiding and Culvert at different places from Khagdohor RHD Road to Bagerkanda Bypass Road; R-1772) Part-A Construction of Road by RCC Pavement starting from Tinkona Pukurper to Nizkolpa Road (RCC Road: 0.720km & RCC Drain: 0.720km), Part-B Construction of RCC Palisading and Culvert at different places from Tinkona Pukurper to Nizkolpa Road.	13/08/2023 10.00am	11/09/2023 15.00pm	12/09/2023 13.00pm
03	ID No. 860233 & MCC/DPP/03/PW-105	D-1004: Construction of RCC drain starting from Bolashpur Nabu house to Akmal house. (Total Length=1230m) D-1006; Construction of RCC Drain starting from Top Baba Mazar to Dipjol house in ward No-19 (L=100m) D-1007: Construction of RCC drain starting from Boashpur Gias Uddin Saheb house to Advocate Saiful Islam house in ward No-19. (Total=275m) D-1008: Construction of RCC drain Starting from Bolashpur Advocate Golap house in Karim Saheb house in ward No-19 (L=105m) D-1009: Construction of RCC drain starting from Vatikashor in front of Zia house to away of Goni Mia house in ward No-19. (Total=675m) D-1010: Construction of RCC drain starting from Bolashpur main road to Mr. Aziz house in ward No-19. (Total=246m) D-1011: Construction of RCC drain starting from Palpara Mr. Mossharrof house to Mondir (Length=150m) D-1012: Construction of RCC drain starting from Vatikashor Main road to Sofor Member house in ward No-19 (Total L=180m) D-1014: Construction of RCC Drain starting from Vatikashor Amir Saheb house to Nazim Uddin house in ward No-19 (L=100m) D-1015: Construction of RCC drain starting from Bolashpur Moddhopara main road to Shawpon house in ward No-19 (L=100m) D-1017: Construction of RCC drain starting from Palpara Mondir to Kashi house with bylane drain (Total Length=1815m) D-1018: Construction of RCC drain at Bolashpur starting from Jobbar Morol house to Kashem house in ward No-19 (L=70m).	13/08/2023 10.00am	11/09/2023 15.00pm	12/09/2023 13.00pm

This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches.
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Md. Rafiqul Islam Miah
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We. hereby, announce that the name of **United Dhaka Tobacco Company Limited (UDTCL)** has been changed to **JT International Bangladesh Limited** pursuant to the due provision of the Companies Act, 1994 with effect from 5 April 2023.

All concerned are requested to make necessary changes in the records to reflect the new name of the Company, i.e., **JT International Bangladesh Limited.** All future correspondences with the Company should be made to **JT International Bangladesh Limited.**

Paul Martin Essex Holloway
Managing Director
JT International Bagladesh

A TRAVELING STORYTELLER of a living culture

12 years without Tareque Masud

Tareque Masud, a name highly regarded by Bangladesh and the international film fraternity, was an enigma. A film activist by heart, his legacy is not only limited to his films but also includes his ideas. On this fateful day, the Bangladesh film industry lost one of its finest filmmakers in an unfortunate road accident on August 13, 2011. On his 12th death anniversary, The Daily Star looks back at the life of this fascinating filmmaker.

DOWEL BISWAS

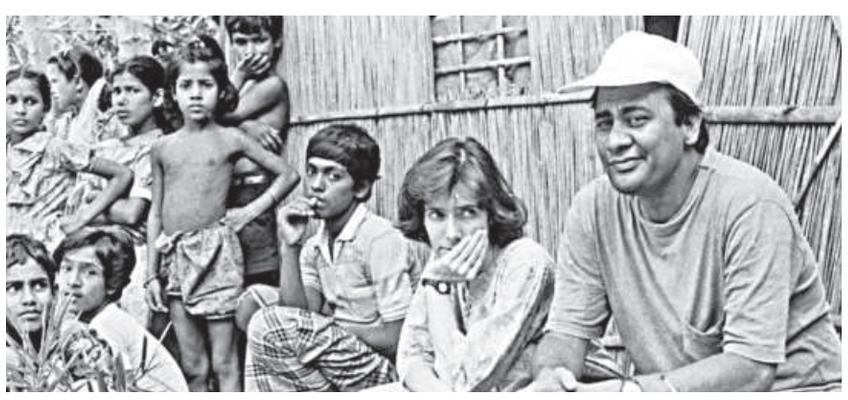
"In Sufism, the human body is made of clay, and the soul is always associated with a free bird. This soul is encaged in a clay body, and the body is very limited, very transitory, fragile, weak; the soul always wants to be free and has an immense desire to be free," Tareque Masud, the esteemed filmmaker, said on naming his most renowned autobiographical film, ***The Clay Bird***, in an interview.

Widely acclaimed, Tareque acquired a much-loved title, Cinema *Feriwala*, the Peddler of Movies, as this storyteller didn't stop at making socially responsible, relevant, religiously 'awakened,' and politically 'incorrect' cinema, docu-fictions, short films- he ensured that the people whom he made films for and with, experience these with him.

His notable productions include ***Sonar Beri*** (1985), ***Adom Surat*** (1989), ***Muktir Gaan*** (1995), ***Muktir Kotha*** (1999), ***Matir Moyna*** (2002), ***Ontarjatra*** (2006), ***Runway*** (2010) and the unfinished project ***Kagojer Phool*** (2011).

A man with strong conviction and tenacity, Tareque, with his beloved confederate in life and filmmaking, Catherine Masud, brilliant cinematographer Mishuk Munier, and their trusted crew traveled all through the villages of Bangladesh to reach the common masses with their films.

To understand Tareque, we need to first look into one of his earliest and most outstanding works of art, ***Adam Surot,***which he made about the legendary impressionist mystic painter S M Sultan. In 1982, he, along with his Kaleidoscope camera and a very limited number of films, went to Narail and shot this 54-minute documentary over the next seven years, which would later change the history of Bengali cinema.



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Tareque was more of an archivist, the finest kind, than a filmmaker. He and Catherine made ***Muktir Gaan*** by painstakingly collecting and stitching footages of 1971 shot by an American filmmaker, Lear Levin, along with other archival footages. The film proceeds with a musical troupe, traveling from one place to another during the Liberation War, entertaining and motivating refugees and freedom fighters.

In a sense, the tremendous appreciation of ***Muktir Gaan*** on national and international grounds paved the way for another of his masterpiece, ***Muktir Kotha***,-- a film featuring real stories of freedom fighters, as told by them — an oral history project, a painstaking narrative, too bold to ignore.

"The audience of the film ***Muktir Gaan*** became the protagonists of ***Muktir Kotha***...When they saw ***Muktir Gaan***, they said, it is good, but we have also fought; our stories are not there in ***Muktir Gaan***; we will tell our stories, and thus ***Muktir Kotha*** was made," Tareque Masud explained in an interview.

Tareque's brilliance in utilizing Moushumi Bhowmik to render Allen Ginsberg's iconic poem on the refugees of the War, ***September on Jessore Road***, deserves a separate mention by itself. The song, with Bhowmik's mesmerizing voice and accompanied by scenes of devastated refugees shown on the screen, sparks a sense of horror, morbidity, and melancholy in the audience, an impact that lasts for some time even after the film is over.

A film activist at heart, Tareque did not shy away from presenting stories of people who may be argued to be relatively underrepresented or voiceless — the poor, the marginalised, and the minority groups.

Tareque Masud's artistic mind was not only engrossed in art, but he also went out in search of his Bengali roots. He also went out to seek the existence of a larger society beyond the concept of religion, freedom of expression, and ethnicity. To understand Tareque Masud, we need to adhere to his ideals.

Watched 'Priyotoma' more than once: Apu Biswas

From the former couple's statements about each other now, it seems that they have let bygones take their place.

The actress was alight with praises about Shakib Khan's, "It's an amazing film, there are only a few like it". Apu also spoke about her own production, ***Laal Shari***, expressing her satisfaction at the response it received.

Rani Mukerji shares harrowing story of losing her baby

Rani Mukerji recently shared a tragic personal anecdote at Indian Film Festival of Melbourne, that she suffered a miscarriage five months into her second pregnancy, in 2020. She tragically added that the incident occurred before filming of ***Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway***, which was released back in March this year.

The actress said, "I didn't speak about this when I was promoting the film because it would have come across as me trying to speak about a personal experience that would propel the film... so, it was around the year when Covid-19 struck. It was 2020. I got pregnant with my second baby at the end of 2020 and I unfortunately lost my baby five months into my pregnancy."

Mukerji also shared, "Around 10 days after my miscarriage, Nikhil (Advani) reached out to me with the story. I was instantly drawn to it, not that my personal experience had to align for me to connect emotionally with the narrative."

COUNTRYWIDE

Growers busy in producing vegetable saplings on floating seedbed

KM HABIBUR RAHMAN

Farmers in Pirojpur and Barisal are passing busy time in growing vegetable saplings on floating seedbeds.

The innovative method, locally called Dhap, started around two months ago and will continue till October.

But, compared to the previous years, the production cost has increased a bit this year.

Currently, saplings of different vegetables like bottle gourd, pumpkin, chili, papaya, bean and many more are produced in the marshland of Pirojpur's Nazirpur and Nesarabad upazila and Barisal's Banaripara upazila.

These saplings are later taken to different areas across the country by boats, trawlers and trucks.

"Previously we used to buy a 180-feet-long floating seedbed at Tk 10,000, but this year we are paying Tk 3,000 more for the same," farmer Jakir Hossain said.

Another farmer Mohammad Mamun said beside the seedbed price, wages of day labourers' has also increased.

"This year we are paying Tk 200 more for a farm labourer," Mamun said.

Meanwhile, a number of farmers said production of saplings has been hampered a bit due to low water level in the marshland.

"If there is not enough water, farmers cannot tend the saplings properly as they have to depend on boat for the work," farmer Rezaul Karim said.

One of the sapling traders Bakir Hossain said at present each sapling is being sold between Tk 5 to Tk 8, depending on its variety, to the wholesalers.

Wholesalers can hardly make a profit of Tk 2 to Tk 3 by selling those to the retailers, Bakir added.

Starting from June, production of vegetable saplings continues for the next four to five months, the farmer said.

Contacted, Pirojpur Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Deputy Director Nazrul Islam Sikder said they are working with the farmers to increase the quantity of the saplings produced in the marshland.

The area of cultivable land is gradually increasing every year," he added.

A farmer tends his floating seedbeds at Muluhar village in Barishal's Banaripara upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

8 Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 12

over the phone after several hours, but found the phone switched off," said Lutfa Begum, 35, elder sister of Monir.

The next morning, she tried to contact broker Zakir over instant messaging app imo.

"Answering the call, one of his assistants said eight people, including my brother, went missing after the boat capsized," Lutfa added.

Jamal Hossain, brother of another missing person Kamal, said, "My brother left Bangladesh about six months ago. Zakir took him to Libya."

His brother called him around 8:00pm on Wednesday and said he would take a boat soon.

"That was my last conversation with my brother," Jamal said.

He said local union parishad member Milon Mia on Friday told him that his brother along with some others went missing after a boat capsized.

Contacted, Milon, member of Narayanpur Union Parishad, said he came to know about the incident from some locals.

"I tried to contact Zakir [in Libya] over imo. But another person answered the call and said eight people went missing. The man didn't elaborate on the incident."

Mohammad Tanvir Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Belabo Police Station, said he heard about the incident from some locals, but was yet to receive any written complaint.

Kazi Asif Ahmed, head of the diplomatic wing at the Bangladesh embassy in Tripoli, last night said the incident took place outside Libya.

The mission was trying to get details of the incident, the official told this newspaper over the phone.

BNP has no global support

FROM PAGE 12

governments, three leaders present at the meeting told The Daily Star.

Hasina, also the prime minister, said BNP has no global support, reports BSS.

According to the three leaders, who spoke on condition of anonymity with this newspaper, Hasina told the meeting that BNP-Jamaat's current position is completely contradictory to their past actions.

"Have the people of the country forgotten their wrongdoings? We suffered torture at their hands, and it is our responsibility to publicise the wrongdoings of BNP-Jamaat," Hasina told the meeting that started at 7:30pm and ended at 11:00pm.

The meeting decided that AL will hold rallies in Sylhet, Khulna, Cumilla, Dhaka, Barishal and Chattogram cities in the coming months, and Hasina will address every rally. Further details of the rallies are yet to be finalised.

Addressing the meeting, Hasina warned that those engaged in tarnishing the image of the party lawmakers will not be considered for nomination.

To strengthen the party, Hasina directed the leaders to accommodate devoted activists in different committees.

She assigned presidium members Faruk Khan and Abdur Razzaque to supervise the formation of thana and ward committees under Dhaka north and south city units.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader moderated the meeting, also attended by Matia Chowdhury, Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Kazi Zafarullah, reports BSS.

Ukraine

FROM PAGE 12

yesterday said Minister Sergei Shoigu inspected troops deployed in the Arctic as well as preparations "to defend specially important installations" in this strategic zone,

Shoigu was accompanied by Alexey Likhachev, head of the state nuclear company Rosatom, and visited Novaya Zemlya, in Russia's extreme north, a statement said.

They also inspected a testing site for nuclear weapons used during the Soviet era, where "advanced tests for military weapons and equipment" were taking place, the defence ministry said, without giving details.

Ukraine launched a highly anticipated push in June after stockpiling Western weapons but has struggled to make headway in the face of stiff Russian resistance.

Russia had beefed up its military presence in the Arctic before it launched what Moscow terms a special military operation in Ukraine in February last year.

It has rehabilitated Soviet-era bases and deployed weapons and anti-aerial S-400 systems in the region, which has vast reserves of hydrocarbons and can serve as a major maritime route between Europe and Asia due to global warming and melting glaciers.

Russia views the entry of two countries in the region -- Finland and Sweden -- in the western military alliance Nato as a threat to its security.

Finland joined the alliance in April and Sweden is expected to be formally admitted in the coming months.

10 held from 'militant den'

FROM PAGE 1

Investigators suspect the group has adopted a new operational and recruitment model. This "new method" entails persuading an entire family, rather than a lone wolf, to abandon their homes and join the militants on "hijrat".

This way, they can avoid suspicion as no one from their family files any complaint about their going missing.

"Tracing this outfit took us time, as no one from these families were left behind to file a complaint," said Asaduzzaman.

He added that they arrested a man in Dhaka a while ago when he was planning to take his family to the Moulvibazar den. "This led us to the hideout."

This strategic shift indicates that militant outfits are adapting to new situations to remain operational, evading the radar of law enforcers, the CTTC chief added.

In the past, a single individual would leave home to join militant outfits. Subsequently, their family members would file a missing report, alerting the law enforcers.

Locals around the Moulvibazar "hideout" said some of the arrestees bought a piece of land from a local, Rafiq Mia, and built several houses about a year ago.

"We noticed the presence of women and children only a few months ago," said Babul Mia, a resident of Jogitila area of Tatuli.

Zoynal Mia, also from the area, said the arrestees had earlier told them that they lost their homes to river erosion.

"They would not talk much with the locals. But they told us that more of their relatives would soon join them," he told The Daily Star.

According to Asaduzzaman, the CTTC chief, the suspects invited some other members of the outfit to join them from different parts of the country.

"We have the name of the key person of this outfit. The outfit has quite a few operatives and we are trying to nab them," he said.

The country saw a major surge in militant activities and drives in militant hideouts in 2016-2017. Law enforcers conducted at least 23 major anti-militancy drives across the country that left around 69 militants killed in those two years.

However, there has not been any major militant activity or drive in militant hideouts for the last couple of years, except for some activities by Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya. The government banned this group on August 9 this year.

Officials involved in anti-terrorism activities had been claiming that militant outfits were under control, although they were on alert.

Saudi names ambassador for Palestinian Territories

AFP, *Riyadh*

Saudi Arabia yesterday named a non-resident ambassador for the Palestinian Territories who will also serve as consul general in Jerusalem, a new position announced amid speculation about possible future ties with Israel.

The role will be filled by Nayef al-Sudairi, the current ambassador to Jordan, according to a social media post from the embassy in Amman confirmed by a Saudi foreign ministry official.

The appointment represents "an important step" underscoring the desire of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman "to strengthen relations with the brothers of the State of Palestine and give it a formal boost in all areas", Sudairi said in a video broadcast by the Saudi state-affiliated Al-Ekhbariya channel.

The file for the Palestinian Territories has traditionally been handled by Saudi Arabia's embassy in Amman.

Saudi Arabia does not recognise Israel and did not join the 2020 US-brokered Abraham Accords that saw Israel establish ties with two of the kingdom's neighbours, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

But during US President Joe Biden's tour of the Middle East last year, the Saudi civil aviation authority announced that it was lifting overflight restrictions on "all carriers", paving the way for Israeli planes to use Saudi airspace.

Biden himself flew directly to Jeddah from Israel's Ben Gurion airport for his talks with Saudi leaders.

The kingdom denied at the time that the airspace move was "a precursor to any further steps" towards normalisation.

A man wades through a flooded street in Bago township in Myanmar's Bago region, yesterday. Floods and landslides caused by monsoon rain have killed five and forced around 48,000 people to flee their homes, the relief ministry said.

PHOTO: STAR

What lies ahead for Pakistan as it heads to polls

REUTERS

Pakistan's caretaker government under interim Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar will oversee a general election after the dissolution of the lower house of parliament. Kakar and his cabinet will run the government until a national election is held and the winner can secure a parliamentary majority and select a new PM.

Will the elections be delayed?

Kakar's caretaker government must hold elections within 90 days. However, after the outgoing government approved a new census in its final days, new electoral boundaries must be drawn up by the Election Commission. The exercise of drawing fresh boundaries for hundreds of federal and provincial constituencies in a country of 241 million people may take six months or more, according to a former commission official. The Election Commission has to announce how long it will take to complete the exercise, which may also involve litigation by candidates over the new formations of the constituencies, and, based on that, give an election date.

What is the role of the caretaker government?

Caretakers are usually limited to overseeing elections, but Kakar's set-up will be the most empowered in Pakistan's history thanks to recent legislation that allows it to make policy decisions on economic matters. The move is ostensibly aimed at keeping on track a nine-month $3 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout secured in June.

What is the military's role?

The military still has a huge role behind the scenes. Kakar's party, the Balochistan Awami Party, is widely considered to be close to the military. Political analysts fear that if the caretaker set-up stretches beyond its constitutional tenure, a prolonged period without an elected government would allow the military to consolidate control.

Who are the main contenders?

There are three main contenders to lead the next government: Khan's PTI, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) of Shehbaz Sharif and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

With Khan in jail and barred from the polls, his PTI will hope to exploit supporters' sympathy and anger and repeat its 2018 victory. But amidst a continuing standoff with the military, PTI's prospects hinge on a detente with the generals, which looks unlikely.

Three-time premier Nawaz Sharif, the brother of the outgoing prime minister and whose PML-N was the senior partner in the outgoing coalition government, is seeking a return from exile. But with a corruption conviction against him still in force, Shehbaz remains a front-runner to return to power.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, 34, the young chairman of the PPP and son of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, is another key candidate. He made waves locally and in foreign capitals in his first government job as foreign minister in the outgoing government, and is widely seen as a future premier.

6 die in migrant boat tragedy in Channel

AFP, *LILLE*

Six people were killed when a boat carrying migrants heading to Britain sank in the Channel early yesterday, French maritime officials said, as a search continued to find those still missing. A spokeswoman from the French coastal authority Premar said between five and 10 passengers were still missing, while 55 had been rescued. Three French ships, a helicopter and a plane have been mobilised to search the area off Sangatte in northern France, along with two British ships. The boat capsized around 2:00am local time off the northern coast of France, according to the prosecutor. More than 100,000 migrants have crossed the Channel on small boats from France to southeast England since Britain began publicly recording the arrivals in 2018, official figures revealed on Friday.

Security alert prompts Eiffel Tower evacuation

AFP, *Paris*

A security alert yesterday prompted the evacuation of three floors of the Eiffel Tower in central Paris, France's most emblematic symbol which drew 6.2 million visitors last year. SETE, the body which runs the site, said bomb disposal experts as well as police were scouring the area, including a restaurant located on one of the floors. "It's a usual procedure in this kind of situation which however is rare," a spokeswoman said. Visitors were evacuated from both the three floors and the square under the monument shortly after 1:30pm (1130 GMT). Construction work on the tower began in January 1887 and was finished on March 31, 1889. It received two million visitors during the World's Fair of 1889.

Malaysians vote in six state polls

AFP, *Kuala Lumpur*

Malaysians in six states went to the polls yesterday to vote for state assembly members in elections widely seen as a barometer of support for Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's unity government. While the elections are unlikely to immediately affect Anwar's current two-thirds majority in parliament, analysts said his hold on power could weaken if his Pakatan Harapan coalition suffers a setback, especially among Malay Muslim voters in the largely Islamic Southeast Asian nation. More than 9.7 million voters are expected to cast their ballots to elect 245 assembly members in the states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, Penang, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. Of the six states, Anwar's coalition holds three, while the rest are controlled by an influential rural-based Malay Muslim alliance led by former PM Muhyiddin Yassin.

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The Daily Star
FOUNDER EDITOR: **LATE S. M. ALI**

Bring down prices of eggs urgently

Govt must address factors destabilising the kitchen market

It has been months now that the prices of essentials have been soaring, plunging many middle- and low-income families into financial hardship. Although the government has been trying to tackle the effects of food inflation through various measures, there seems to be little control over the prices of some essential food items, such as eggs, chicken, onions and potatoes.

The latest shock has been the prices of eggs and broiler chicken which are the main sources of protein for middle and lower income groups. Just a month ago, a dozen eggs cost Tk 150 – quite high by any measure – but that has jumped to an unprecedented Tk 170 now. It is depressing to know that those with limited means are being forced to buy "cracked" eggs because they are a few takas cheaper. Others have just cut down on egg consumption, or stopped buying eggs altogether. Broiler chickens have also become more expensive, making even middle-class families reduce their intake.

Various reasons have been cited to explain such spiralling of food prices. These include an overall increase in global prices because of the war in Ukraine leading to hikes in fuel prices, as well as the depreciation of the Taka making import of food items costlier. Curiously, this year, we have seen how prices of certain essentials have shot up even when global prices of the same commodities have gone down. Meanwhile, poultry farmers have made allegations of a syndicate of large businessmen manipulating the market of eggs and chickens and keeping their prices high. In addition, the ongoing floods have destroyed many poultry farms, causing a shortage which may drive prices further up if no action is taken by the government.

In March, the country's poultry farmers had pleaded to the government to fix the prices of chicken and eggs, saying they were incurring losses even though consumers were paying high prices. We would like to know what action has been taken by the committee that was assigned to devise a strategy to help the livestock ministry set the egg and chicken prices. It is because of the inaction or failure of responsible departments that not just the prices of poultry items, but those of turmeric, garlic and ginger as well as other spices have also gone up.

Often, despite the government setting prices in the kitchen market, the sellers do not adhere to them. Therefore, the government must adopt and implement strict market monitoring policies that will keep prices in check. There are various organisations of the government as well as laws that have been created to keep the prices of essentials under control. The government must activate these organisations and enforce these laws. Most importantly, the authorities must vigorously investigate allegations of manipulating prices of poultry items and clamp down on the syndicates behind them. They must not be allowed to randomly "fix" prices of these commodities.

Aspirant migrants deserve better care

Authorities must properly staff and equip Moulvibazar manpower office

The struggles faced by the Moulvibazar District Manpower and Employment Office stand as a reminder of the manifold challenges that aspiring migrant workers have to grapple with, but also of the haphazard manner in which many government institutions are run. According to our report, this office, in operation since 1997, serves as a conduit for people from Moulvibazar and Habiganj districts pursuing overseas employment opportunities. Its mandate extends beyond registration and fingerprinting – it also encompasses investigating complaints by wronged migrant workers and guiding aspirants on pre- and post-departure procedures. However, its capacity is being severely strained by its meagre workforce.

Reportedly, the office has five official posts (against a requirement of at least eight) – with only three currently occupied. Just imagine: only three. This is nowhere near enough for a region with a rich history of exporting labour. And even though two computer operators have been hired through outsourcing to manage the day-to-day tasks of data registration and fingerprinting, they are unable to cater to the daily influx of around 150 to 200 people seeking services. The situation is further compounded by recurring issues with faulty servers. Reportedly, the provision of services is brought to a halt whenever the system falters – which, we are told, it often does. Over the past two weeks alone, there have been many instances of hopeful registrants being turned away due to server problems. These problems have persisted even after the higher authorities were informed of them several times.

True, many government offices are similarly plagued by staffing limitations and server malfunctions – a modern-day addition to the suffering of people trying to navigate the bureaucratic labyrinths. But their convergence in Moulvibazar embodies the wider struggle faced by aspiring migrant workers in Bangladesh. The story of these people is fraught with uncertainties, delays, and setbacks. We have repeatedly seen how they have had to endure challenges in various stages of their preparation thanks to corruption, irregularities and mismanagement at both the recruiting agencies and public offices overseeing migration. A continuation of this situation flies in the face of the high regard that the authorities publicly show for our remittance earners.

We, therefore, urge the government to address the operational challenges of the Moulvibazar manpower office and ensure it is adequately staffed and equipped. All other similar offices also need to be reviewed so that they can function better. Migrants – as citizens of this country but also because of their storied role in its development – deserve better care and support in every stage of their journey.

Why is the EC unable to do its due diligence?

Kamal Ahmed
is an independent journalist. His X handle is @ahmedka1

KAMAL AHMED

By now, most of us know the term *"gayebi mamla"* which is used to describe fake or fictitious cases filed against opposition activists, including leading politicians. For nearly a decade, police have been using this tactic to deter activists taking part in anti-government politics by lodging false cases for incidents of violence, use of explosives, and so on. Subsequent media investigation usually reveals that no such incident ever took place at the given date, time, and place. There are a number of reported cases in which the accused included people who died years ago, or were living in another country when the alleged incident happened.

Now, our Election Commission seems to be following a similar path. It has selected some organisations for the purpose of election observation which exist only on paper. A recent investigation by *Prothom Alo* has revealed that a number of those organisations stopped functioning years ago. Its investigation into 32 out of the 68 organisations selected by the EC as being fit for poll monitoring found that seven of them exist only on paper. Moreover, members of the board of directors or their close relatives in at least 10 other organisations reportedly have political affiliations.

Earlier, on July 27, Bangla daily *Jugantor* reported that on the list of 94 organisations prepared by the EC for election monitoring, there were many that were floated and led by political activists. The recently published primary list of 68 selections suggests that many of the 94 "political monitors" have been dropped. But latest reports also prove that the screening process has largely failed. Investigations by the media found that most of these organisations do not have adequate human resources, thereby raising questions about their ability of conducting impartial monitoring of the national polls.

According to *Prothom Alo*, Seba Social Foundation of Laxmipur district has been selected as an election monitor despite the fact that its lone functionary, executive director Jashim Uddin Ripon, has been living in Saudi Arabia for five years, and the organisation has been dormant for just as long. It is even more intriguing to know that the local police had reported all this to the EC following their inquiry, but their finding seems to have been overlooked.

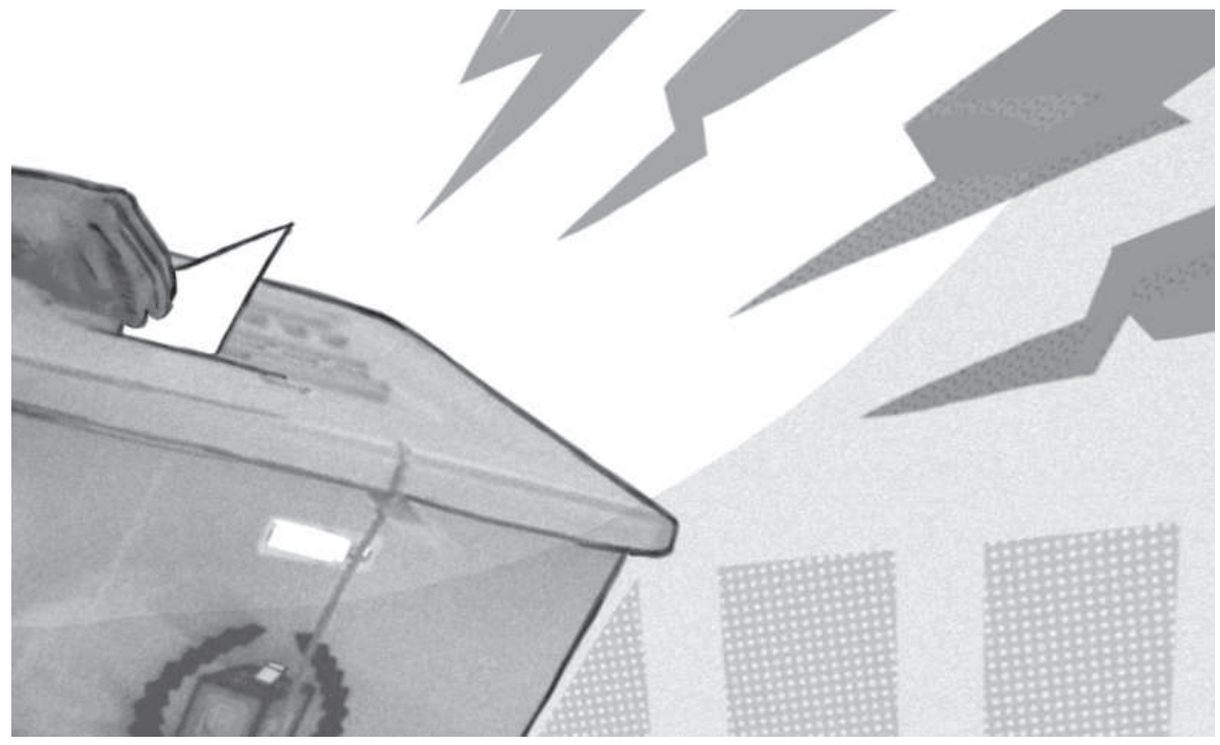
One may recall the EC's largely discredited meeting with a group of so-called multinational observers brought in by the now-disqualified Election Monitoring Forum (EMF), which was apparently set up by the close associates of some politicians belonging to the ruling party. Responding to the controversies, Election Commissioner Md Alamgir told the media on August 2 that, as the EC didn't have offices overseas, it was not possible for them to detect the inauthenticity of the foreign observers.

EC Alamgir's clarification, however, falls far short of being convincing, as their primary responsibility was to ascertain the locus standi of the foreign observers in order to bring them in. Besides, the EC should have known that the EMF didn't have any recognition as an observer group. Sure, the chief of the EMF had earlier represented a separate organisation called the Saarc Human Rights Foundation (SHRF). But the SHRF's tenure as a poll observer, too, expired last May after five years. The EC's attempt to justify its lack of due diligence in dealing with the issue of poll observation is simply shocking. It even failed to express any regret for wasting the valuable hours of the Commission and its resources, however little that may have been. Interestingly, the EC does not deserve much credit for the removal of the EMF, as the lone member organisation of this forum, Bibi Asiya Foundation, has succeeded in securing a place in the new list of election observers.

It is not only the issue of dealing with election observers that has caused controversy. The registration of political parties, too, has given rise to serious questions about the EC's fairness and motivations. The two previously unknown political parties – Bangladesh Nationalist Movement (BNM) and Bangladesh Supreme Party (BSP) – have received the EC's approval despite the media's field-level investigations finding that both of these suddenly created parties do not fulfil the required conditionalities, including having a minimum grassroots organisation and appropriate party offices or headquarters. Why have these media reports been largely ignored?

Certain quarters' interests in propping up these two parties are quite evident, as people familiar with their activities have suggested that fresh initiatives are in full steam to attract leaders and activists from BNP – people who have been sidelined in the party for some time – to the new parties. There are widespread speculations that in the case of a BNP boycott in the upcoming parliamentary election, one of these two parties will get all the support required to replace BNP and make the contest a "participatory" one.

Ignoring evidence appearing in the media runs contrary to the legal requirements in terms of both the registration of political parties and selecting impartial and genuine election observers. And this indicates a disturbing trend. These deviations not only erode the EC's credibility but also strengthen their critics' argument that the Commission has neither independence nor the ability to fulfil its obligations with due diligence.



VISUAL: **REHNUMA PROSHOON**

FAMILY PLANNING IN BANGLADESH

Despite progress, there are miles to go

Dr Md Nuruzzaman Khan *is an assistant professor at the Department of Population Science of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Mymensingh, Bangladesh.*

MD NURUZZAMAN KHAN

In 2012, the London Summit on Family Planning marked a significant turning point in the global family planning movement and its progress towards achieving universal access to family planning services. This collaborative summit brought together key stakeholders and partners dedicated to advancing family planning initiatives. As a result, the Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) partnership was established, setting an ambitious agenda to improve access to voluntary family planning information and services worldwide.

One of the main objectives within the FP2020 framework was to empower an additional 120 million women across 69 countries, including Bangladesh, to adopt modern contraceptives by 2020. Bangladesh made several commitments aligned with this goal, such as increasing access and usage of family planning services to 80 percent, with a specific focus on reaching 60 percent in low-performing areas, by 2021. Other targets included increasing the utilisation of long-acting and permanent methods to 30 percent, reducing unmet need for contraception to seven percent and reducing contraceptive methods' discontinuation rate to 20 percent. Bangladesh aimed to extend effective family planning services to approximately 39.4 million couples by 2021. However, the country has made minimal progress in all of these targets, making the provision of contraception a major challenge for Bangladeshis.

According to the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) 2022, 64 percent of currently married women utilise contraception, with 55 percent opting for modern contraceptive methods. This is significant in terms of actual numbers, as it means that approximately 4.5 million couples started using modern contraception over the FP2020 initiative period. When combined with the estimated 17.75 million contraception users in 2011, the current estimate suggests that approximately 22.30 million couples are now using modern contraception. Although this falls short of Bangladesh's commitment to providing contraception for 39.4 million couples under the FP2020 initiative, it is important to acknowledge that the use of modern contraception has prevented a significant number of unintended pregnancies, abortions, and maternal deaths.

But targets to reduce geographic disparities and inequality achieved minimal success. For instance, the usage of contraception among poorer and poorest women increased from nearly 53 percent and 54 percent in 2011 to approximately 61 percent and 57 percent, respectively, by 2022. Interestingly, these percentages surpass those of the advantaged group. Nevertheless, there has been limited progress in increasing modern contraception usage among disadvantaged groups, such as the slum or floating populations. To note, the urban-rural disparity in modern contraception usage has slightly decreased from 2.6 percentage points in 2011 to 1.2 percentage points in 2022. But regional disparities of modern contraception use are still very high, with approximately 17 percentage points between Rajshahi (61 percent) and Sylhet (44 percent) regions reported in 2022. The contraception discontinuation rate was still very high at approximately 30 percent in 2022, instead of the targeted 20 percent by 2021. These failures contribute to the stagnation of contraception use in Bangladesh, underscoring the need for renewed efforts to address gaps, reduce disparities, and improve access to comprehensive family planning services.

In 2022, Bangladesh made another significant commitment to ensuring rights-based family planning with the FP2030 initiative. A key principle of FP2030 is that family planning should be provided in a manner that respects individuals' rights. This includes granting women and girls the autonomy to make decisions regarding their own bodies and reproductive health, and ensuring access to family planning services without discrimination or coercion. However, achieving this objective in Bangladesh poses significant challenges.

Existing community norms still consider contraception as primarily the responsibility of women, rather than the shared responsibility of a couple. This results in the marginalisation of women's choices, which is evident in national-level estimates, where only 10 percent of the 55 percent of modern contraceptive method users are men, and a mere 2.6 percent of the 7.5 percent of long-acting and permanent contraceptive method users are men. Government initiatives aimed at involving men in formal family planning services have faced limited success thus far. The country also faces a high burden of unintended and short interval pregnancies, with a prevalence of approximately 25 percent. However, a significant portion of these pregnancies are wanted from the husband's perspective, indicating evidence of reproductive coercion.

Addressing these challenges requires increased effectiveness of government-level initiatives at the lowest levels. However, the real scenario is contrary to this, with a declining number of family planning visits and exposure to awareness messages. Private sources are steadily becoming the dominant source of contraception information. The public sector now provides only 37 percent of modern contraception, down from 44 percent in 2011. Such challenges make access to rights-based family planning services difficult for a specific group of Bangladeshi women, who cannot access contraception of their choice due to financial or other restrictions or can only use contraception as per their partners' desires.

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How to integrate the health sector more prominently in our national adaptation actions? PHOTO: REUTERS

Health needs more focus in our climate actions

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HASEEB MD IRFANULLAH

In October 2022, the National Adaptation Plan of Bangladesh 2023-2050 (NAP2050) was approved. This 28-year-long plan has 113 priority interventions to combat climate change, requiring $230 billion. This instrument not only talks about what we should do for the disaster management, social security, food and agriculture, biodiversity and water sanitation sectors, but also which policy and institutional arrangements, capacity building, research, and innovations are needed. However, one very important sector is only lightly touched upon in the NAP2050: human health.

Of course, "health" is mentioned often in the NAP2050, mostly under public health, along with water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), healthcare infrastructure, and the impact of climate change (heat and cold waves, salinity, etc) on physical and mental health, especially for the vulnerable sections of our society. Climate-resilient WASH and healthcare facilities are also referred to several times. But when the adaptation strategy framework is laid out, we don't find human health as one of the six standalone goals of the NAP2050. Under the goal of building "climate-smart cities," we see a strategy on developing climate-resilient healthcare and WASH facilities. Under the goal of "capacity-building and innovation," we find a plan for research in improved health and WASH technologies. This limited focus is also reflected in the 113 priority activities, where only three mention health.

This is surprising because the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) starkly displayed the increasingly negative effects of climate change on human health. It also predicted an increase in untimely deaths, including from heat, from food-, water-, and vector-borne diseases, and mental health challenges among children, adolescents, and elderly people. The heat waves we have been facing all over the world this summer are the latest evidence supporting these projections.

One of the reasons behind the exclusion of the health sector from the NAP2050 might be the drafting of the Bangladesh Health-National Adaptation Plan (HNAP) in 2018 with support from the World Health Organization. But there is hardly any mention of the draft HNAP in the final NAP2050, except under the policies and regulations subsection where it is noted that a National Adaptation Plan for Health was being developed.

Although the draft HNAP is yet to be approved, it comprehensively focuses on health aspects of adaptation. The plan outlines 30 actions under 10 components: governance, manpower, needs assessments, surveillance, research, infrastructure, environment, programmes, preparedness, and finance. But these actions altogether needing only around $1 million over five years (2018-2023) seems to be an underestimation.

It is true that addressing climate change is a global concern, but nations need to plan and take action as per their geographical and political contexts, too. The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) of 2009 or the draft Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCPP) of 2021 demonstrate concerted efforts by focusing prominently on human health. As such, the limited inclusion of health in the latest NAP2050 seems to be a missed opportunity.

The coordinated system demanded by the NAP2050 will fail if we cannot reduce the gap between the health sector's climate action and other national efforts. Also, if we look into the national budget of FY 2023-24, of the total budget for the Health Services Division (HSD), only 2.02 percent is allocated towards climate action – the fifth-lowest among 25 ministries and divisions receiving climate change allocations. It is thus difficult to understand how the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) could lead a climate adaptation process parallel to the NAP2050.

But how to integrate the health sector more prominently in our national adaptation actions? First, since a lot of effort has already been put into drafting the HNAP, it should be finalised and approved by the government as soon as possible. But before that, it must be aligned with the current strategic and operational philosophies of the government in terms of resilience building as depicted in the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, the Vision 2041, the MCPP, and the NAP2050. "Establish synergies with the health NAP and other aligned policies and plans" is also envisaged as a prime activity under the "policies and institutions" aspect of the NAP2050.

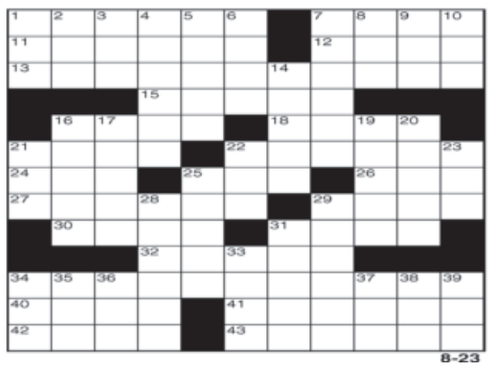
Second, the institutional mechanism outlined in the NAP2050 should include the MoHFW, the HSD, the Directorate General of Health Services, Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, the Climate Change & Health Promotion Unit, the Department of Public Health Engineering, Bangladesh Medical Research Council, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and relevant medical colleges, communicable, non-communicable and vector-borne disease control programmes, and non-governmental institutions. These health-related entities should be appropriately represented in the Inter-ministerial Steering Committee on Climate Change and the Technical Advisory Committee on climate change at the national level, and the District Development Coordination committees at the sub-national level to properly attend to the emerging health concerns of Bangladesh's vulnerable and marginalised populations.

Finally, the health sector indeed needs an increased climate budget allocation. This could mean rebranding prevailing allocations to be linked to climate change responses, repurposing allocations based on renewed priorities, and minimising system loss. It should also be accompanied by geographical allocations targeting vulnerable rural and urban locations, based on analysing the trends of climate-induced diseases (such as the dengue endemic), shocks (for example, the recent heat waves), and stresses like salinity intrusion. Stronger surveillance is crucial in order to track changing patterns of health impacts and to promptly respond to changed situations with sufficient manpower and financial resources, and a collaboration with the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Stood up to
7 Banana leftover
11 Grove fruit
12 Choir voice
13 Hall of Fame pitcher
15 Some tournaments
16 Glasgow native
18 Final, for one
21 Penniless
22 Church leader
24 Sick
25 Opening
26 2016 Olympics host
27 "What a shame!"
29 Group of believers
30 Snooty fellow
31 Feedbag fill
32 Warning sound
34 Hall of Fame pitcher
40 Corrosive stuff
41 Bald spot cover
42 Cincinnati team
43 Add with a caret

DOWN
1 Uno doubled
2 Pitcher's stat
3 Summer cooler
4 Like some pools
5 Sphinx setting
6 Astronaut Slayton
7 Takes a breather
8 Hobbit helper
9 Greek vowel
10 Smoked salmon
14 Like draft beer
16 Recital highlights
17 Two-dot character
19 Swagger
20 Works hard
21 Deep hole
22 Spot to jot
23 Nonsense
25 Roof feature
28 Floor makeup
29 College grounds
31 Welles of "Citizen Kane"
33 Opposed
34 Combat
35 Good serve
36 Relieve (of)
37 Gorilla, for one
38 That lass
39 Tennis need



8-23

YESTERDAY'S **ANSWERS**

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WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

Barbenheimer was insensitive, actually

Ramisa Rob *is a journalist at The Daily Star.*

RAMISA ROB

A few days before the 78th anniversaries of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the hashtag #NoBarbenheimer started gaining popularity in Japan, demanding an end to the most viral trend of the summer: Barbenheimer. The buzzword was created by fans on social media embracing the simultaneous releases of the two diverging blockbusters, *Barbie and Oppenheimer*, produced by Warner Bros and Universal Studios, respectively. It then turned into a media firestorm – with hashtags and memes serving as unpaid promotion for both films – and fueling a global zeitgeist that is now more exploitative than entertaining. Barbenheimer is truly the definition of overkill.

People – critics, commentators, fans, etc – apparently feel Barbenheimer marks a "cultural moment," reviving the appeal of going to the movie theatre globally and showing how cross-marketing competing films can eschew bitter capitalist rivalry and lead to a "two is better than one" situation. It is undoubtedly a major moment in pop culture but it's also a telling testimony regarding present culture: how toxic positivity in mainstream media drives a runaway train to regions where sensibilities are nowhere to be found.

The #NoBarbenimer moment in Japan, where *Oppenheimer* has not yet been scheduled for release, is a valid call to take a step back and reassess what we are doing. It came about after Warner Bros retweeted a viral Barbenheimer meme, featuring Margot Robbie (as Barbie) atop the shoulders of Cillian Murphy (as J Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb), against a backdrop of the mushroom cloud. *Barbie's* producers, while marketing a movie as being feminist, went on to promote co-marketing that entailed making "harmless fun" out of the first and only ever use of an atomic bomb. The Japanese subsidiary of Warner Bros, rightly, criticised this publicly as being "extremely regrettable."

The US division did immediately issue an apology. But the fact that they egregiously embraced the tone-deaf meme as part of their marketing campaign implies two things: Hollywood's money-making knows no boundaries, and the mass destruction in Hiroshima and Nagasaki has clearly not yet entered the laundry list of the topics of which we must be socially-aware.

We live in the age of cancel culture, where people are very "woke" and hyper-sensitive to what we can or cannot joke about. It's not socially acceptable to make jokes about Nazis or the Holocaust or 9/11, for example. So why is it okay to make jokes about the bombing of two major cities in Japan?

Barbenheimer has revealed a blind spot in our history-citing activism today. Persecution of civilians in conflict is on the list of topics that the current global culture deems "serious." But somehow, the moral implications of the most grotesque bombings in history are not yet acknowledged with the same seriousness.

The memes, some AI-generated and some made by humans, include the orange hues of the nuclear attacks. Some show Mattel studios with grey fumes behind them, others have pink-washed the mushroom clouds – all of which dissolves the message, or debates, offered in both films into a meaningless reincarnation of Hollywood's sensationalist glam and glitz. Pink clouds depicting a nuclear attack will definitely not take down the patriarchy – which is the underlying theme of *Barbie*. And showing *Oppenheimer* carrying a doll on his back while the atom bomb he made explodes in the background glosses over the guilt of the scientist, and the conflict between science and politics captured in Nolan's film.

Not to be a party-pooper, but over an estimated 200,000 Japanese civilians died in those flaming clouds; the actual number of casualties from the lingering radiation is still unknown.

There's a fundamental issue with the concept of co-marketing a subversive satire about the world's most popular doll with a historical biopic about the scientist who made the most destructive weapon ever used in war. *Oppenheimer* is a tricky, consequential film, grappling with a moral dilemma that still haunts US history: whether the scientists and the politicians had a real sense of the indiscriminate damage that it would cause and whether Japan would have surrendered even if the bomb had not been dropped. The official Strategic Bombing Surveys in 1946 concluded that Japan would have surrendered, leading to unresolved debates as to whether the bombings were war crimes committed unscrupulously as a power move in the arms race with the Soviet Union.

Some critics, on the other hand, have speculated whether the insensitivity fuels Nolan's Oppenheimer itself, which did not feature the bombings from the Japanese perspective. Nolan has said that showing the bombings would "depart from Oppenheimer's experience and betray the terms of storytelling." The scientist learned about the atom bomb on the radio, and the three-hour film adopts a personal prism, portraying the mix of accomplishments and guilt that Oppenheimer felt regarding the consequences of what he had created. Hollywood's tendency to create films from the perspective of White men, while demoralising the lived experiences of Asian people, is one that should be discussed. But the fact is, relevant debates have faded into the background because of the craze, and people seem more interested to know if Cillian Murphy would be open to playing the role of Ken in a *Barbie* sequel.

VISUAL: TEENI AND TUNI

The truth is, the reason behind the blind spot persisting till date lies in the fact that the US has not yet had a moral awakening regarding Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There is undoubtedly a deliberate amnesia regarding these existential horrors. On May 18, US President Joe Biden travelled to Hiroshima to meet with G7 leaders. He said nothing about the bombing when visiting the peace memorial. Neither did he meet with the survivors. Biden, who talks about atonement and thinks that coming to terms with their dark sides is what great nations do, still seems to not have come to terms with the dark history of Hiroshima-Nagasaki.

Nolan's film ends with Oppenheimer telling Einstein that they've started a chain reaction that could destroy the world. That chain reaction is still very relevant, as the Russia-Ukraine war continues,and the US and China continue to lock horns in a new Cold War. The same "race war" between the Soviets and the US that unleashed cataclysmic power is not beyond the threats lurking in the current bottleneck geopolitical climate. So, instead of stretching the memory-hole of the bombings with Barbenheimer, it's time for us to use this moment to learn from the worst of humanity.

The truth is, the reason behind the blind spot persisting till date lies in the fact that the US has not yet had a moral awakening regarding Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There is undoubtedly a deliberate amnesia regarding these existential horrors. On May 18, US President Joe Biden travelled to Hiroshima to meet with G7 leaders. He said nothing about the bombing when visiting the peace memorial. Neither did he meet with the survivors. Biden, who talks about atonement and thinks that coming to terms with their dark sides is what great nations do, still seems to not have come to terms with the dark history of Hiroshima-Nagasaki.

Diet's impact on cognitive health in older adults at risk of dementia

A study featured in The New England Journal of Medicine explored the potential link between diet and the risk of dementia in older adults. While previous research indicated that diet might influence dementia risk, it remained uncertain whether dietary changes could directly enhance cognitive function. The study involved 600 overweight older adults, averaging 70 years of age, who had a family history of dementia.

These participants were split into two groups: one following the MIND diet, a blend of the Mediterranean and DASH diets, and the other practising portion control on its own. Over the course of 3 years, both groups received personalised weekly guidance from dieticians for the first 6 months, followed by biweekly sessions. Their target was to lose 3% to 5% of their initial weight. The MIND group received "brain-healthy" foods weekly, such as olive oil, blueberries, and mixed nuts, while the control group got gift cards.

After 3 years, both groups experienced improved cognitive scores across various aspects compared to their starting points. However, there was no notable difference in cognitive scores between the MIND diet group and the control group. Interestingly, both groups lost around 5 kilogrammes on average, and brain scans of a subset of participants showed similar results for both groups.

Adherence to the MIND diet was confirmed through surveys and biomarker measurements. The noteworthy aspect is that both groups demonstrated cognitive improvements. This suggests that cognitive benefits might be linked to dietary changes and weight loss, or possibly other unrelated behaviours that participants engaged in. Overall, the study sheds light on the complexities of diet, cognitive health, and weight loss among older adults with a familial risk of dementia.

Navigating the political economy of non communicable diseases

UMMAY FARIHIN SULTANA

In the 20th century, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) emerged to take control of the epidemiological landscape as a result of successive industrial revolutions and the ageing of the world's population. Instead of a relatively acute and brief course of diseases that were largely curable, NCDs brought predominantly lifelong illnesses that were incurable, which increased the demand for chronic medical expenses. In the realm of global development, the MDGs overlooked the dark threads of NCDs, but with the advent of the SDGs, a new dawn of awareness emerged, requiring urgent attention from the country's leaders and policymakers. And for developing comprehensive strategies to address this growing health crisis, it is important to understand its political economy.

The perspective of the political economy of NCDs refers to the route-turn where the health risk (e.g., behavioural or biological) of an individual connects with political and economic structures and practises. Viewpoint question includes, for example, how do political decisions and economic priorities interact to influence the surroundings in which people live? For instance, political choices motivated by desires to release the commercial sector from regulation have created an environment where it is challenging to make healthy choices.

Amidst the fabric of the nation's political economy, the fingerprints of industry and corporations can be found, each thread leaving its mark on consumer choices and lifestyle patterns. In such a setting, the objective of public health regulation to limit consumption of products that increase NCD risk creates a real dilemma for governments, with an apparent tradeoff between profits and public health interests. Industries that profit from the continuation of behaviours that increase the risk of developing NCDs are all significant contributors to GDP and job creation in the country. Instead of fresh and unprocessed food, highly processed foods, for example, have better profit margins due to their lengthy shelf lives. This perception of profit overlooks the adverse consequences, such as poor health, social costs, and lost productivity, that result from consuming unhealthy foods.

Companies with a stake in these products frequently drown out the voice of the health sector when it calls for policy changes in economic sectors that will lower consumption of profitable products. Thus, for more effective and progressive policies and dynamic collaborations in the arena of NCD control and prevention, we must delve deeper into the nexus of politics, economics, and public health, scripting a tale of resilience and well-being for generations to come.

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HAVE A NICE DAY

The butterfly effect

DR RUBAIUL MURSHED

Cloudy weather during the World War II led to a fateful shift in plans, sparing Kuroko from destruction and changing history. Nagasaki became the target instead, highlighting the immense impact of split-second decisions. This incident, akin to 'the butterfly effect,' continues to resonate with Kuroko's inhabitants, reminding us of history's delicate balance.

The butterfly effect, a part of chaos theory, states that predictions have limitations even in small, discrete systems. It was summarised by Edward Lorenz, the meteorologist who discovered it. He noted that a tiny change in the initial conditions had enormous long-term implications. By 1963, he had formulated enough ideas to publish an award-winning paper. For

instance, when a butterfly flaps its wings in Cox's Bazar, that tiny change in air pressure could eventually cause a tornado in Florida. That means something minor, like a small mosquito bite, can have much more significant effects, such as putting someone's health in danger, called the butterfly effect.

The butterfly effect rests on the idea that the world is deeply interconnected; such a tiny occurrence can influence a much larger, complex system with enormous long-term implications.

Although chaos theory was the initial term, complexity science, or complex systems theory, is often used to describe chaotic behaviour. Around the world, people view the butterfly symbol as representing resolution, hope, and life. It also represents a state of naturalness and purity. But in reality, this theory teaches us that 'small things matter', and we are all 'connected to a bigger system'.

Our action now, today, would have been the result of a previous action, and this could, in turn, lead to future action. And with a small gesture, someone can change somebody's life.

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The National Guidelines on Diabetes Mellitus were launched

STAR HEALTH REPORT

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh (BADAS) have provided technical support to the Non-Communicable Disease Control (NCDC) to develop a National Guideline on Diabetes Mellitus, says a press release. The guideline was launched on August 6, 2023, and it will help guide Bangladeshi physicians to choose adequate treatment for managing their patients.

Diabetes is a long-lasting illness that requires continuous medical care and patient self-management education for optimal management outcomes and to reduce the risk of complications. The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) reported that Bangladesh is in the 8th position in the world ranking, with 13.1 million people having diabetes.

JICA's technical cooperation project for 'Strengthening Health Care Systems for Organising Communities' (previously known as SHASTO) closely worked with the NCDC and the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) to develop and implement the NCDC's programme activities, including promoting the NCD management model to prevent hypertension and diabetes.

Regarding the launch, Mr KOMORI Takashi, Senior Representative, Japan International Cooperation Agency, said, "JICA is pleased to provide technical support to NCDC, DGHS, BADAS, and the Government of Bangladesh to establish the National Guideline on Diabetes Mellitus to help the physicians offer appropriate treatment to the patients. We hope the guidelines will help healthcare professionals ensure high-quality healthcare services, improving patient outcomes and quality of life. We all want to strengthen the healthcare system in Bangladesh. We are also looking forward to launching The Project to Strengthen Healthcare Systems for Preventing Non-communicable Diseases (SHASTO2) this month. It will be part of our continuous alliance with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)."

The National Guideline on Diabetes Mellitus would provide evidence-based guidance for diagnosing, preventing, and managing diabetes in Bangladesh that has been tailored to local practises, needs, and resources. It would cover numerous aspects of diabetes care, including screening, risk assessment, glycemic control, use of medications, insulin therapy, lifestyle intervention, and managing diabetes-related problems such as retinopathy, neuropathy, and nephropathy.

Daily multivitamins may offer modest cognitive benefits for older adults

Recent articles in Alzheimer's and Dementia and the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition shed light on the potential benefits of daily multivitamin supplementation for older individuals' cognitive health. While randomised trials have generally shown the limited advantages of multivitamins, these studies suggest a nuanced perspective.

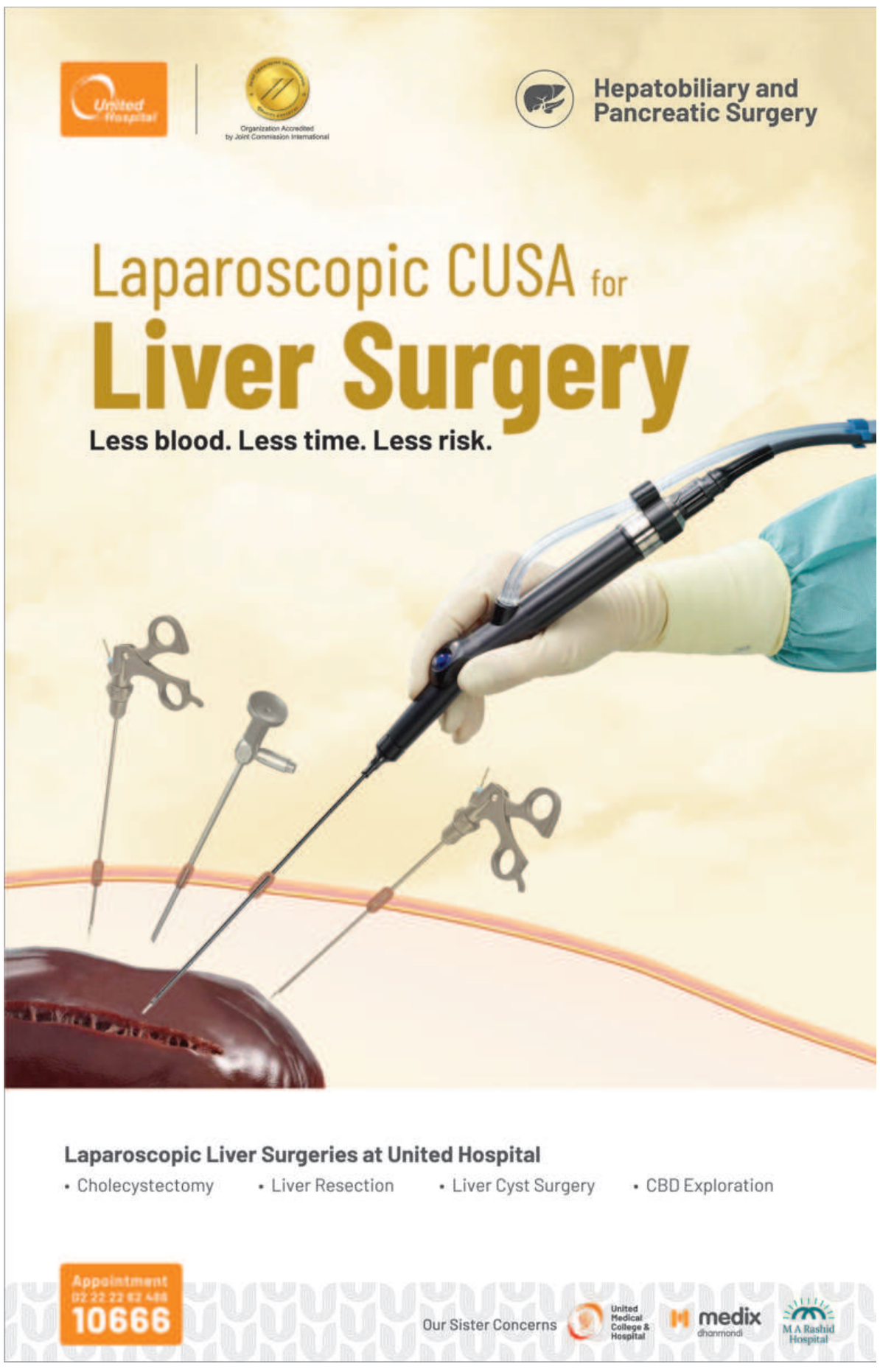
Two separate trials, each spanning three years, examined the effects of a comprehensive daily multivitamin regimen containing vitamins A, B12, C, D, E, biotin, potassium, magnesium, and zinc on cognitive function in older adults.

In the first trial, involving 2,262 participants with an average age of 73, individuals were randomly assigned to either take the multivitamin or a placebo. Initially, both groups

showed comparable cognitive scores, but after three years, the multivitamin group exhibited a significantly higher combined cognition score. Notably, this improvement was more noticeable among participants with existing cardiovascular disease.

The second trial engaged 3,562 participants with an average age of 71, none of whom had a history of heart attack, stroke, or invasive cancer. Over the course of three years, their cognitive abilities were repeatedly assessed. Interestingly, those taking multivitamins outperformed the placebo group on a test involving the immediate recall of 20 words.

In summary, while the benefits of multivitamins for cognitive function in older adults appear modest and are expressed through specialised measures, these trials offer a fresh perspective on potential cognitive health advantages.



Star SPORT
DHAKA SUNDAY AUGUST 13, 2023, SRABAN 29, 1430 BS

What to WATCH

Star Sports Select HD1
English Premier League
Brentford vs Tottenham
Live from 7:00 pm
Chelsea vs Liverpool

DD Sports
India vs West Indies
5th T20I
Live from 8:30 pm

Forward-thinking approach in Asia Cup squad-selection

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's Asia Cup squad was named yesterday with youngster Tanzid Hasan Tamim the only new face. There were some interesting picks by Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and, by and large, the selection was based on forward-thinking, done after discussions with both the team management, head coach Chandika Hathurusingha, and newly appointed ODI skipper Shakib Al Hasan.

The squad left little room for controversy, with due process maintained, and not many options were left outside the 17 members picked for the Asia Cup. The selectors yesterday clarified the team was only being announced for the Asia Cup and not the coming series against New Zealand or the World Cup.

The most interesting part of the selection was the inclusion of the trio: Afif Hossain, Shamim Hossain and all-rounder Mahedi Hasan. Shamim, yet to make his ODI debut, came up with an adequate performance in the first T20I against Afghanistan during a pressure situation and was rewarded.

Mahedi last featured for the Tigers last year in the previous Asia Cup, played in the T20 format. He had struggled since then but his performance in the recently concluded Emerging Teams Asia Cup in Sri Lanka, and his profile as an off-spinner who can bat, meant the team management wanted his versatility.

Afif, meanwhile, did not perform up to expectation and his inclusion was the most discussed by selectors. He was picked on potential.

"We have discussed a lot about all the players. We discussed a lot about Afif and on why the team management wanted him. There were also some considerations on what the captain and the head coach wanted, and that's how we provided support," chief selector Minhajul Abedin said about Afif during a press conference yesterday.

Along with Mehedi Hasan Miraz, the aforementioned trio may have to contend for the number seven or number eight positions in the batting order. Given the profiles, Minhajul clarified that these picks were not made with batting order in mind, rather in the flexibility of their utility.

"Not a matter of playing them at seven or eight. They will be played in the position that the team management sees fit. It's not that they have been assigned particular positions. According to team's requirement, they may bat higher up the order or at lower order."

After opener Tamim Iqbal's injury, the team management favoured two openers in the squad, picking Tanzid and Mohammad Naim. Tanzid got the reward of hitting three fifties in the Emerging Teams Asia Cup. Naim, meanwhile, despite not having channelled his considerably good domestic performance internationally, was carried due to the requirement for a backup option at the opening slot.

Mahmudullah Riyad's inclusion was a topic of great interest but the 37-year-old, dropped from the last three ODI series following England ODI series at home in March this year, did not get in with team management's plan weighing against his Asia Cup inclusion.

"We had a long discussion regarding Mahmudullah [Riyad] initially. Afterwards, the team management gave us a plan entailing how they want to approach each team [in the Asia Cup]. Riyad has been left out after considering all these scenarios," Minhajul said, adding there was no discussion on Soumya Sarkar for the Asia Cup.

All the usual names were there while Nasum Ahmed made a return to the side and was picked over Taijul Islam. The Tigers have also named all five of their pacers, with rotation an important aspect ahead of the World Cup.

BANGLADESH SQUAD

Shakib Al Hasan (C), Liton Das, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Hasan Mahmud, Sheikh Mahedi, Nasum Ahmed, Shamim Hossain, Afif Hossain, Shoriful Islam, Ebadot Hossain and Mohammad Naim Sheikh.

Stand By: Taijul Islam, Saif Hassan, Tanzim Sakib.

Tanzid Hasan Tamim, called up to the national team for the first time for the upcoming Asia Cup, wears a broad smile as he speaks with head coach Chandika Hathurusingha during Bangladesh's ongoing training camp at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Tanzid comes prepared for adventure

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Yesterday morning, youngster Tanzid Hasan Tamim got a taste of the national team's atmosphere in more ways than one.

Facing Taskin Ahmed, albeit in a match-scenario training, is a difficult prospect even for someone playing international cricket. When the 22-year-old picked Taskin off for six over square-leg, with what could best be described as something in between a front foot and a flick, it showed his potential for havoc; an x-factor perhaps. Chandika Hathurusingha was watching closely from the sidelines.

Tanzid got his call for a very important Asia Cup tournament with the World Cup looming in the horizon. His namesake Tamim Iqbal's injury had put him in the squad and, going by current form, he may well be the main opener alongside Liton Das in the upcoming tournament in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Taskin bowled with venom, often getting the ball to tail in viciously at the left-hander. He got Tanzid's scalp as well, although the youngster had pointed to his bat after pace-bowling coach Allan Donald, standing-in as the umpire, raised his finger for a leg-before decision.

Before that, Tanzid looked unnerved against Taskin and Hasan Mahmud's short stuff. A glorious cover-drive off Hasan, a few lofted shots for four against Mustafizur Rahman showed he was not out of place amongst the big boys.

Adventure was part of his strength and struggle through to his national team journey.

Tanzid is a product of Bangla Trac academy, under former Bangladesh team director Khaled Mahmud Sujon who remembered the criticism he once faced when picking Tanzid for Dhaka Dynamites in 2020.

"When Tanzid called me this morning and said he was picked, I started remembering that day and the manner of criticism I faced for having picked him.

"I knew he had potential. He is good at playing the cut and pull shots. He is also good at drives and over the top shots. This morning I told him that you have to play your own natural game when you get the opportunity. If he tries to change his natural game, curb his aggressive instinct, it will only cause him hardship," Mahmud told The Daily Star yesterday.

Tawhid Hridoy also hails from the same Bangla Trac batch as Tanzid. "Hridoy was more disciplined while Tanzid was more adventurous," Mahmud recalled.

Having first entered the limelight for Uttara Sporting Club in the Dhaka First Division Cricket League in 2017-18, his two tons that season saw his prospects improve with U-17 selection. Tanzid would then make the U-19s side after scoring 371 runs in the next season for Uttara.

A lean patch, too, came in 2022 as he suffered a shoulder injury following the tournament. 474 runs for Brothers Union in the last DPL showed he can suffer and rise.

"He had a lean patch in between, after the initial burst, but it only made him stronger," Mahmud felt.

Mahmud, as manager of the U-19 World Cup-winning side in 2020, saw Tanzid's potential early.

"We knew that he had ability to play shots and also had power. He had innings which did not get too long but the starts were aggressive like Tamim's [Iqbal] and he had variety of shots. During the World Cup, he was getting out after scoring 40-50 quickly and coaches have worked on it. At Potchefstroom, he was sending deliveries out of the park," U-19 game development Abu Emam Mohammad Kawsar recalls.

The team management are banking on that potential. Judging by Hathurusingha's discussion with the opener, he may just be given the licence to go with the natural game he possesses.

MESSI ON SCORING SPREE

Lionel Messi continued his scoring streak as the Argentine superstar made it eight goals in five games for Inter Miami during a 4-0 win over Charlotte FC on Friday. It was a quiet night by Messi's standards a Leagues Cup quarterfinal match, scoring only on a late one-timer from Leonardo Campana's cross after he had found the net twice in each of his first three starts. Messi slotted in Miami's fourth goal, at DRV PNK stadium, in the 86th minute of what was a relatively routine victory for Gerardo Martino's team. All of his eight goals have come either from a first-time shot or a free kick.

Bayern move a 'right step' for Kane

REUTERS, MUNICH

England captain Harry Kane has joined Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich from Premier League club Tottenham Hotspur on a four-year deal, the German club said on Saturday.

Bayern, who kick off their season later on Saturday in the Super Cup against RB Leipzig, said the 30-year-old striker was signed until 2027 after protracted talks between the two clubs.

They did not disclose the transfer fee, which media reports have put at around 100 million euros ($109 million). That would be a Bundesliga record, smashing the 80 million euros paid by Bayern to sign Lucas Hernandez from Atletico Madrid in 2019.

Kane, who passed his medical late on Friday, has spent most of his career at Tottenham after joining their academy as an 11-year-old, scoring a club record 280 goals in over 430 appearances in all competitions.

He is also the second-highest Premier League scorer of all time with 213 goals - 47 behind Alan Shearer - and with 58 goals for his country in 84 games, Kane is England's all-time leading marksman.

"I am happy to be here," Kane said in club interview. I felt it was the right step in my career. (Bayern have) a good winning culture year-on-year," he added.

Signing Kane, who also brings a wealth of experience and leadership qualities, means Bayern have finally landed a striker to replace Robert Lewandowski who left for Barcelona in 2022.

England's Alessia Russo celebrates with teammates after scoring the winning goal in a 2-1 victory over Colombia during their FIFA Women's World Cup quarterfinal fixture in Sydney yesterday. The Lionesses will play their semifinal against cohosts Australia (Inset), who beat France in penalty shootout in the other quarterfinal of the day in Brisbane.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Gustavsson hails 'leave it all out there' attitude

REUTERS, *Brisbane*

Australia coach Tony Gustavsson expressed his pride in his team for the dramatic penalty shootout victory over France on Saturday that, he felt, meant much more than just a place in the semi-finals of the Women's World Cup.

As the nation celebrated, Cortnee Vine's winning penalty was already being compared in its impact to the one John Aloisi converted against Uruguay in 2005 to send Australia's men to their first World Cup for more than three decades.

The Matildas have now exceeded anything the Socceroos have managed at a global level and the significance of being one of the best four teams in the world for the first time was not lost on an emotional Gustavsson.

"The amount of heart and soul and passion that this team showed tonight," the Swede told reporters.

"There's different ways of defining success but, for me, success is when you leave it all out there, no matter the result, you play with your heart and give it your best with the crest on your chest and the players did that tonight."That represents so much more than 90 minutes of football," he continued.

Arsenal clinch nervy win over Forest

REUTERS

Arsenal began their new Premier League campaign with a nervy 2-1 home win over Nottingham Forest on Saturday after first-half goals from Eddie Nketiah and Bukayo Saka.

Forest's Taiwo Awoniyi gave Arsenal a heart-in-mouth moment with a late goal but victory moved last year's runners-up level with leaders Manchester City on three points but behind on goal difference after the champions beat Burnley 3-0 on Friday.

Kickoff was delayed by 30 minutes due to turnstile issues at Emirates Stadium which prevented fans from getting in on time. But once the game kicked off Arsenal shot out of the blocks, dominating possession and cutting through Forest's defence.

Arsenal's persistence paid off and they put an end to Forest's stubborn resistance when a sublime pirouette from Gabriel Martinelli put two defenders in a spin and set up Nketiah, who fired home past former Arsenal keeper Matt Turner.

They doubled the lead six minutes later when 21-year-old Saka received the ball at the edge of the box and curled in his shot from distance, giving Turner no chance to make a save.

MIGRANT BOAT CAPSIZE

8 Bangladeshis feared missing

Say families after the boat sank in Med last week; no official version available yet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Narsingdi*

At least eight Bangladeshis are feared to have gone missing after a boat carrying migrants to Italy from Libya capsized in the Mediterranean Sea, say family members.

However, there was no official confirmation from the foreign ministry or the Bangladesh embassy in Tripoli of the eight going missing as of filing this report last night.

According to media reports quoting survivors, the boat carrying at least 41 people capsized off Tunisia last week.

All the eight are from Narsingdi's Belabo upazila. They are Moklesur Rahman, 20, and Kamal Hossain, 34, of Kangalia village; Masud Rana, 22, of Bhatergram village; Monir Hossain, 22, Rabiul Islam, 33, and Raihan, 22, of Dulalkandi village; Swadhin Miah, 20, of Laxmipur village; and Emon, 20, of Dewanchar village.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, family members said the eight left Bangladesh in phases about five to six months ago with the help of local manpower broker Zakir Hossain and his aunt Shahinur to migrate to Italy. Each of them paid Tk 10 lakh to 12 lakh to the broker, they claimed.

"I talked to my brother over the phone around 8:00pm on Thursday. He told me that they would start their boat journey within a few moments. I tried to reach him

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

This passenger shed along Atish Dipankar Road is in such a bad shape that it can barely be used. The photo was taken in the capital's Kamalapur yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BNP has no global support

Says Hasina, asks party leaders to bury differences

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked party leaders to leave internal feuds behind and work unitedly to get the party elected for the fourth time in a row in the upcoming national election.

Hasina said this at a meeting of the party's Central Working Committee, the highest decision-making body of AL, at the Gono Bhaban.

She also instructed the party leaders and activists to conduct election campaigns highlighting the government's achievements, and the differences between the AL and BNP

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

AL spreading 'disinformation' to Indians

Fakhrul alleges ruling party labelling BNP as 'anti-Hindu'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has said Awami League "spreads disinformation to Indians" that BNP is an anti-Hindu organisation.

"People of the country no longer believe in such propaganda," he said at the inaugural ceremony of the representatives' conference-2023 of Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Welfare Front yesterday.

"Do the people of this country believe it? Have you ever seen it? We can firmly say that they [members of religious minority communities] live safely when BNP is in power," Fakhrul said.

He accused the AL government of portraying BNP as an anti-Hindu organisation.

The BNP leader said homes, shops, and businesses of the people from religious minority communities were mostly "grabbed by AL men".

He also claimed that members of religious minority communities do not feel secure when AL is in power.

Ukraine missiles shot down over Crimea bridge

Claims pro-Russia official; 20 Ukrainian drones downed near Crimea

AFP, *Moscow*

Russian air defence forces shot down three Ukrainian missiles over a bridge connecting Moscow-annexed Crimea to the Russian mainland, an official said yesterday.

"Air defence forces shot down two enemy missiles over the Kerch Strait. The Crimean bridge was not damaged," Sergei Aksyonov, the Russian-installed governor of the Crimean peninsula, said on social media.

In a later statement, he said that Russian air defence forces had shot down another Ukrainian missile targeting the bridge.

He urged locals to remain calm.

Pictures on social media showed columns of smoke rising in the vicinity of the bridge.

Separately, the Russian defence ministry said that the Kyiv regime attempted to strike the Crimean bridge with an S-200 anti-aircraft guided missile.

Later in the day, the defence ministry reported a new Kyiv attempt to target the bridge with an S-200 missile.

The missiles were detected and intercepted by Russian air defence systems, the ministry said, adding that there were no victims or damage.

Earlier yesterday, Russia said that its forces shot down 20 unmanned Ukrainian drones near the Crimean peninsula where Kyiv has stepped up attacks.

Fourteen drones were downed by air defence systems and six more through electronic warfare, the defence ministry said.

Crimea, annexed by Russia in 2014, has been targeted by Kyiv throughout Moscow's Ukraine offensive.

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Moscow condemned "these terror attacks".

"Such barbaric actions cannot be justified and will not go unanswered," she said in a statement.

Kyiv, which says it plans to take Crimea back, has repeatedly targeted the Crimea bridge, one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's pet projects.

Crimea, annexed by Russia in 2014, has been targeted by Kyiv throughout Moscow's Ukraine offensive but has come under more intense, increased attacks in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, Russian defence ministry

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

Doctors voice worries over Khaleda's health

Says Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The medical board formed by the Evercare Hospital for the treatment of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has expressed serious concerns over her health condition, party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

"They (doctors) repeatedly said she needs to be sent to an advanced treatment centre abroad immediately," Fakhrul said after offering a munajat at the grave of BNP leader Arafat Rahman Koko, also the youngest son of Khaleda Zia, at Banani Graveyard.

Khaleda was admitted to Evercare Hospital for a health checkup on August 9.

Musk says cage fight with Zuckerberg will be in Italy

AFP, *Washington*

Elon Musk said Friday that his much-hyped cage fight with Mark Zuckerberg would take place in Italy, as authorities there confirmed talks about hosting a "great charity event."

While any showdown between the two tech titans has yet to be officially confirmed, Musk said on his X social media platform -- formerly known as Twitter -- that arrangements were advancing.

"I spoke to the PM of Italy and Minister of Culture," Musk wrote, referring to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. "They have agreed on an epic location."

Meta chief Zuckerberg responded on his Threads social network, posting a photo of himself shirtless and pinning down an opponent in his "backyard octagon."

In an aerial view, homes and businesses that were destroyed by a wildfire are seen in Lahaina, Hawaii, on Friday. The death toll from the Maui wildfires rose to 80 on Friday as search teams combed through the ruins of Lahaina. Story on page 2.

PHOTO: AFP

Baloch senator picked as Pak caretaker PM

REUTERS, *Karachi*

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and opposition leader Raja Riaz agreed yesterday to name Senator Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar as caretaker premier to oversee elections, the Prime Minister's Office said.

Kakar, a lesser known politician from the southwestern province of Balochistan, will name a cabinet and head a government to steer the nuclear-armed nation through an economic and political crises until a new government is elected.

"The prime minister (Sharif) and leader of opposition have jointly signed the advice which will be sent to the president for approval," the statement said.

Pakistan's Geo News said President Arif Alvi approved Kakar's appointment.

Under Pakistan's constitution, a neutral caretaker government oversees national elections, which must be held within 90 days of the dissolution of the parliament's lower house - which in this instance means early November.

The choice of caretaker prime minister has assumed heightened importance this time because the candidate will have extra powers to make policy decisions on economic matters, and amid fears the elections may be delayed by as much as six months.

The Election Commission has to draw new boundaries for hundreds of federal and provincial constituencies and, based on that, it will give an election date.