



QUALITY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

Survey reveals grim picture

Majority of students fail to attain competence in maths, Bangla

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Over 60 percent of the third graders and 70 percent of the fifth graders don't have the proficiency in maths, appropriate for their grades, finds a government assessment depicting a grim picture of the quality of the country's primary education.

Besides, 51 percent of the third graders and 50 percent of the fifth graders lack grade-level competence in Bangla.

The National Student Assessment 2022 by the education directorate and Unicef says students in government and private schools are doing comparatively better than those in madrasas and NGO-run schools.

The students, who read different books as well as textbooks, perform significantly better than others, according to the survey on 25,480 students of class-III and 28,752 students of class-V from 1,483 schools across the country.

The findings were revealed at a discussion at a hotel in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

"The assessment portrays a dismal state of the quality of education. SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



This part of Bandarban-Thanchi road collapsed after a recent landslide due to torrential rain. Workers of the power department have been working to restore electricity supply to the area. The road communications between Bandarban and Thanchi remains snapped. The photo was taken in Parilpar area of Thanchi on Friday.

BRICS SUMMIT

PM may hold talks with Modi, Xi

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to hold separate meetings with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and other leaders during the BRICS summit from August 22 to 24.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The PM will travel to Johannesburg at the invitation of South African President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, the current president of the alliance comprised of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Presidents of South Africa and China, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and the Indian premier are expected SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Over 200 hurt in BNP-cops clash

Police fire rubber bullets, use tear gas to disperse BNP men during road march in three districts

STAR REPORT

More than 200 people were injured in clashes between law enforcers and BNP activists in Habiganj, Barguna, and Narayanganj yesterday.

The clashes took place when BNP activists took out road marches in the three districts, demanding the release of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia for treatment abroad.

In Habiganj, at least 150 people, including several policemen, were wounded at Shaestanagar in the town, reports UNB.

BNP leaders and activists from nine upazilas of the district started gathering near the house of GK Gaus, joint convener of district unit BNP and former municipal mayor, in the afternoon.

Around 5:00pm, the BNP activists began the march from the Shaestanagar Bazar area.

When they reached the Water Development Board office, police obstructed them. As the BNP men attempted to move forward, police responded with a baton charge, resulting in a clash.

During the chase and counter-chase, the BNP men threw brickbats at the police, who fired tear gas shells and rubber bullets.

Several cops, including OC Ajay Dev, were injured during the clash, Habiganj Police Station OC (Investigation) Badiuzzaman told UNB.

Meanwhile, GK Gaus said, "When we were going home after completing the march peacefully, police personnel, led by OC Ajay, attacked us, leaving 150 leaders and activists injured.

In Barguna, at least 50 BNP men SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

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AEDES CONTROL TO CURB DENGUE

'Unscientific methods are causing surge in cases'

Experts say as nearly 1 lakh infected this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Authorities have failed to control Aedes mosquitoes as the activities taken up in this regard are unscientific, resulting in a surge in dengue cases across the country, a group of entomologists said yesterday.

They were speaking at a press conference, titled "Why this dengue epidemic? What's the solution?", organised by Bangladesh Vector

Management Group at the Cirdap Auditorium in Dhaka.

According to them, there is a need for a collaborative approach with the participation of city dwellers in order to bring the mosquito population under control.

Meanwhile, at least 13 more people died from dengue in the last 24 hours since 8:00am yesterday, taking the total number of fatalities to 466. At the SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

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Alarming trend of rising dengue cases!

Bangladesh is yet again experiencing a recurring outbreak of the dengue virus as the number of total reported death cases continue to increase!

Latest news reports and updates suggest that a total of 2,149 admissions have been recorded across the country's hospitals in past 24 hours (as on August 17, 2023) with patients diagnosed with Dengue Fever. Furthermore, 184 dengue-related fatalities have been recorded in the past 16 days of this ongoing month. Dhaka, as well as every region outside the capital, is battling against one of the worst dengue outbreaks as Bangladesh tries to cope against the unbridled rise and spread of this deadly virus. Reportedly, statistics show that the total number of dengue infected cases outside Dhaka region is expected to be higher, standing at 46,794 cases registered. Experts have also shared concerns over insights that suggest the likelihood of dengue outbreaks to be comparatively higher this year. The number of affected individuals is expected to increase too, potentially creating a fragile situation. One of the stronger contributing factors to this outbreak is the presence of stagnant water around various under-construction buildings, which serves as a breeding ground for Aedes mosquitoes, responsible for the disease. This issue was reported by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) after a pre-monsoon review from March to April. The survey found three Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) wards to be at 'high risk' and ten at 'medium risk' of an outbreak. Nine wards in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) are at medium risk. Experts have asked authorities concerned to take immediate steps to address the matter. And not just dengue, mosquitoes can spread other deadly diseases like malaria and chikungunya.

The entire nation is trying to protect themselves from the attacks of these deadly mosquitoes at home, workplaces and outdoors. Not just Dhaka, mosquitoes have become a major concern for everyone all over the country. If the global pandemic Coronavirus were not enough, now these mosquito-related diseases have added more anxiety among people. Many specialists are saying the situation had never been this bad before. And it's getting worse over time. Never before have people suffered so much due to mosquitoes. Scattered constructions and crowded localities are often blamed for creating the breeding grounds for mosquitoes. The water bodies used for drainage for these sites have become extremely polluted, producing thousands of mosquitoes from the stagnant water. As there are no vaccines to such mosquito borne diseases, experts suggest that prevention is the best way to tackle this problem. Some of the best ways to protect oneself and loved ones are to make sure that there is no stagnant water or clogged drainage near our homes and to take preventative measures such as using coils, aerosols and mosquito nets when sleeping.

The nation is asking for viable solutions to this problem. We need to keep our localities clean and hygienic from dirt, garbage and stagnant water. But such actions require time, money and joint effort of many people. For the time being, people need instant safe solutions like mosquito repellents that don't have any harmful side effects on health or skin. The fight against mosquitoes and the deadly diseases is not an easy one. But we believe that like always, we shall overcome this crisis too, protecting ourselves and our loved ones.

Source: The Daily Star, August 15, 2023
Prothom Alo, August 17, 2023

Introducing a new way of protection against mosquitoes!

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*Applicable for babies aged 2 months & above
*Based on lab studies *Creative visualization

6 JCD leaders arrested with firearms: cops

BNP says plainclothes men picked them up Friday night

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the student wing of BNP, were arrested with firearms and ammunition, police said late last night, over 24 hours after they were allegedly picked up by plainclothes men from the capital's Lalbagh area.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police in a WhatsApp message to reporters at 11:35pm said detectives arrested them with three pistols and 37 bullets.

Officers will brief journalists on the matter today, it added.

Contacted at 11:19pm, Khandaker Mohammad Helal Uddin, officer-in-charge of Lalbagh Police Station, said that filing of two cases -- one for carrying illegal arms and another for acts of sabotage -- was underway against the six.

Earlier in the day, a family member of one of the arrestees said a team from the Detective Branch picked them up in a microbus which was later seen entering the DB headquarters.

However, Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Lalbagh division) of DB, had then denied detaining the Chhatra Dal men.

The arrestees JCD leaders are Mominul Islam Jisan, senior joint secretary of the Dhaka University unit; Shahadat Hossain, assistant general secretary of central committee; Hasanur Rahman, vice president of the DU unit; Abdullah Al Riyad, joint general secretary of the DU unit; Shariful Islam, joint secretary of the DU AF Rahman Hall unit; and Zahir Mohammad Babar, former leader of the Jahangirnagar University unit.

Contacted at 12:00am, Jisan's brother Anamul Haque, said that no one from the law enforcement agencies informed him about the arrest of his brother and that he learned it from the media.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday issued a statement, saying Jisan went missing after he left home Friday night.

Rizvi further said, "Five other Chhatra Dal leaders were taken away by men in plainclothes when they went to Jisan's home looking for him."

Moreover, Amnesty International also expressed its concern in a statement, urging the police to "immediately disclose the whereabouts of these six individuals, clarify on what legal grounds they have been picked up and held and also to grant them access to proper legal representation."



Policemen firing tear gas shells during a clash with BNP activists, who were marching on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Narayanganj yesterday. At least 25 people, including five cops, were injured in the clash.

PHOTO: STAR

RESPONSE TO LAI'S US TRIP China launches drills around Taiwan

Taipei strongly condemns, deploys ships, aircraft

REUTERS, Shanghai/Taipei

China yesterday launched military drills around Taiwan as a "serious warning" to separatist forces in an angry but widely expected response to Taiwan Vice President William Lai's visit to the United States, drawing condemnation from Taipei.

Lai, the front-runner to become Taiwan's president in elections in January, returned from the United States on Friday. He officially made only stopovers on his way to and from Paraguay but gave speeches while in the US.

China views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, despite the strong objections of the island's government.

The People's Liberation Army's Eastern Theatre Command, said in a brief statement it was carrying out joint naval and air combat readiness patrols around the island.

Taiwan's defence ministry said it had detected 42 Chinese aircraft and eight ships involved in drills around the island from yesterday morning and that it had deployed ships and aircraft in response.

Twenty-six Chinese aircraft crossed the median line of the 100-km (60-mile) wide Taiwan Strait, or areas beyond each end of the line, the ministry said in a statement. For decades, the line served as an unofficial barrier between the two militaries.



William Lai

In text accompanying the footage, set to a thumping orchestral score, it said the drills were to "test the actual combat capabilities of joint operations of forces in the theatre".

Equipment deployed included destroyers, frigates and fast attack missile boats as well as fighters, early warning and jamming aircraft that "assembled in a predetermined area", it said, without giving details.

The command released video footage purportedly taken yesterday, showing J-16 and J-10 fighter jets and a naval destroyer on patrol.

The assessment says specific measures should be adopted for madrassas and the schools in low-performing areas.

It recommends capacity-building programmes to improve student-teacher interaction, safe environment in schools.

Deepa Sankar, chief of education of Unicef Bangladesh and Prinaka Sharma, director of Australian Council for Educational Research, presented the findings at the event in Cox's Bazar.

Assessment 2017.

Survey reveals grim picture

FROM PAGE 1

Academics and stakeholders have been talking about the issue for a long time, but nothing has changed," Professor Emeritus Manzoor Ahmed, founding director of the Institute of Educational Development at BRAC University, told The Daily Star.

A lack of proper classroom teaching, high student-teacher ratio, poor student-teacher interaction, inadequate infrastructure, and fund shortage are responsible for this state of primary education, he added.

The assessment shows 12 percent of class-III and 8 percent of class-V students have advanced proficiency in Bangla. In maths, the percentages are 11 percent and 9 percent respectively.

Students in Dhaka and Mymensingh divisions perform better while those in Sylhet continue to underperform.

Children from plain land, coastal

areas, and border regions perform better than the ones from near water bodies, remote places and islands.

Mohammad Tariq Ahsan, professor at the Institute of Education and

Students' lack of competence (grade-wise)	
Bangla	Mathematics
51pc (Class-III)	61pc (Class-III)
50pc (Class-V)	70pc (Class-V)

Research, Dhaka University, explains that grade-level competence means a student has learnt the lessons on a topic and is able to apply that knowledge in real life situations.

But as students usually memorise lessons to prepare for exams, they perform poorly in the national

assessment in which the questions are focused on competency, says Tariq, also a member of the Curriculum Development and Revision Core Committee.

Students are learning maths, but they do not know how to use that in real life. Once the exams are over, they forget what they learn.

"In many cases, there are so many students in a classroom that a teacher cannot pay attention to individual learners. So, the slow learners get no special care."

Tariq also points out that the teachers don't get pre-service training. In classrooms, the teaching method is "one-way", and the student-teacher interaction is almost non-existent, he adds.

Contacted yesterday, Primary and Mass Education Secretary Farid Ahmed said the findings are similar to those of the National Student

can expand our relations," said the foreign minister.

International relations analysts said there is nothing wrong for Bangladesh joining the BRICS for expanding trade and investment. However, the time is very interesting because of the new global polarisation -- one led by the West and the other by Russia-China -- amid Russia-Ukraine war.

Therefore, some people may perceive that Dhaka is trying to join the alliance amid pressure from the West on human rights and democracy ahead of the national polls, they said.

M Humayun Kabir, president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, said in the long run, BRICS intends to introduce a common currency and push for de-dollarisation, which the US would not like.

"So, we need to be clear in our mind -- how we can get benefits joining the BRICS and how we avoid any risks of geopolitical trap," he said.

Delhi stands with Dhaka as 'steadfast partner'

Says Indian envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma yesterday said India stands with Bangladesh as a "steadfast partner" and committed to supporting its aspirations for a

"peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive" future. "Today, Bangladesh is on a path of progress and development," he said, adding that their "collaborative efforts" in areas such as trade, connectivity, security, and people-to-people ties continue to flourish, cementing our place as two nations united by common goals and shared values.

Verma was invited by Bangladesh India



Pranay Verma

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK Test run of inspection car on Dhaka-Mawa route ends

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A test run of an inspection car on the Dhaka-Mawa route of Padma Bridge Rail Link Project was completed yesterday.

The inspection car left Dhaka's Gandaria Railway Station around 9:30am and reached Munshiganj's Mawa around 11:00am after a 40km journey, said Brig Gen Ahmed Jamiul Islam, the project manager of the scheme's Dhaka-Mawa section.

An observation team identified some problems at different points and stations, the official said.

"After leaving Dhaka, we stopped at Keraniganj station. The railway director general inspected the project work there. We reached Mawa after crossing four main bridges, including those over the Buriganga and the Dhaleswari. The gang car left Mawa for Faridpur's Bhanga in the afternoon."

Missing HSC examinee's body found after 22 hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

The body of a college student was recovered yesterday, 22 hours after he went missing while swimming in Rowmari canal in Jamalpur's Madaganj upazila.

The deceased, identified as HSC examinee Shohardho, 16, son of Shahjahan Ali of the upazila's Degolkandi village.

Quoting locals, Madaganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Delower Hossain said Shohardho with some friends went swimming in the Rowmari canal Friday evening.

At one point, he drowned in the canal and went missing. A seven-member dive team from the local fire service unit started a rescue operation around 1:30pm. Later, locals found the body floating in the canal around 2:30am and informed police.

Member of Orao community stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

An indigenous man was stabbed to death allegedly over a land-related dispute at Parishadpara in Thakurgaon municipality on Friday night.

Stephen Tirki, 50, was a local and a member of the Orao community.

Police detained three people, Julian Toppo, 42, Propid Tirki, 19, and Manaranjan Tigga, 37, for interrogation early yesterday.

Maria Lalita, 32, a local grocery store owner, claimed to have seen Stephen with several members of his community, including one Gabriel, 40, near her shop around 10:30pm.

At one point, Stephen fell to the ground after Gabriel stabbed him in the chest before fleeing the scene, she added.

Quoting locals, Thakurgaon Police Station Sub-Inspector Md Mamun said locals took Stephen to Thakurgaon General Hospital around 11:00pm, where the on-duty doctor declared him dead on arrival.

Police suspected that the murder occurred over a land-related dispute, said Md Mamun, also the case investigating officer.

The victim's family is preparing to file a case in this connection.

'Unscientific methods are causing surge in cases'

FROM PAGE 1

same time, 1,983 more patients were hospitalised, raising the total number of cases to 97,860, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

At the press conference, entomologist Monjur Ahmed Choudhury, who is also chairman of the National River Conservation Commission, said, "The activities taking place under the guise of 'mosquito control' in the country is a farce. Earlier, there were even attempts of controlling mosquitoes using frogs, deer and ducks. Such methods aren't used anywhere in the world."

He added that physicians were assigned to carry out researches on mosquitoes. "This is not their [physicians'] job. Kolkata [city corporation] has been seeing success [in mosquito control] because they made proper use of their entomologists."

Entomologist Dr Saifur Rahman, of National University, said, "We still couldn't develop an effective method of mosquito control. As a result, the dengue outbreak has taken a dangerous turn."

He said the authorities remain confused about their primary focus -- whether to eradicate dengue or to treat the patients.

Lambasting the city corporations, he said, "We have long been asking for a mosquito research centre. We have to know if the mosquitoes alone are carrying the virus or if asymptomatic people are carrying it too ... We need to strengthen our serosurveillance."

He also stressed clear and compact planning with a timeline to eliminate mosquitoes and budgetary allocation for the activities.

Entomologist Prof Dr Aslam expressed his skepticism about the authenticity of the bacteria (Bacillus

thuringiensis israelensis) imported by Dhaka North City Corporation for mosquito larvae control.

"Spraying BTI may lower mosquito numbers, but it won't provide a lasting solution for dengue and the casualties among patients. Those who have made the decision to use it should have consulted experts first."

He recommended using multiple methods to control dengue mosquitoes.

Tahmina Aktar, a medical entomologist of Jahangirnagar University, said the information on the presence of Aedes mosquitoes in lakes and canals is completely "unscientific and baseless".

"Aedes mosquitoes are mostly active two hours after sunrise and two hours before sunset. They are most likely to bite people during these times."

"No one has done any complete study," she said, adding that containers with stagnant water are the main breeding grounds for Aedes mosquitoes.

She also said the latest circulated information on the time that Aedes is most active is also misleading.

"Aedes mosquitoes are mostly active two hours after sunrise and two hours before sunset. They are most likely to bite people during these times."

The experts further said the authorities have been misled by unscientific claims by a few people and are taking up paths that are failing to control mosquitoes and ultimately resulting in human deaths.

Former secretary Margub Morshed and entomologist Indrani Dhara were also present among others.

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Unite for freedom of expression

Discussants urge freethinkers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday opined that a greater unity among the country's freethinkers -- including public intellectuals, writers, journalists and artistes -- for a common cause is required to ensure freedom of expression.

For this, freethinkers need to optimise the use of social media to reach mass people, alongside taking the opportunity to express their thoughts in the mainstream media, they said.

Rashtrachinta, a journal, organised the discussion on "Existing political reality: Role of intellectuals-writers-artistes-litterateurs" at the capital's Jatiya Press Club.

An oppressive state machinery can create a "strong storyline" for its own cause and to materialise different objectives, said urban planner Khandaker Niaz Rahman.

The role of freethinkers in such a situation should be to counter the storyline and deconstruct it, he said.

He added that due to an increase in

surveillance, people have become more indifferent.

Prof Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University's law department said freethinkers need to be united and demonstrate their courage.

He laid emphasis on freethinkers' ability to utilise their access to social media properly.

Moshreka Aditi Huq, associate professor at anthropology department of Chittagong University, said an undemocratic situation can give rise to "political apathy" among people.

This could create an inertia in terms of political expectation, she said, stressing for freethinkers to work on a

common platform. Litterateur Rakhal Raha said irrespective of the nature of a state machinery, there have to be freedom of expression and people's right to vote.

Freethinkers should work to ensure people's voting rights and freedom of expression, he also said.

Rakhal Raha stressed that freedom of expression for journalists is crucial.

"An oppressive state machinery can create a "strong storyline" for its own cause and to materialise different objectives".

KHANDAKER NIAZ RAHMAN
Urban planner



Covering her nose with her saree, a woman walks through a gust of dust on the busy Beribadh road in the capital's Mohammadpur. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Raushan assures PM of JP support

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad yesterday assured Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that the Jatiya Party, the main opposition in parliament, will provide all support and cooperation to the PM.

Raushan, also the chief patron of the party, said this while meeting with Hasina at her Gono Bhaban residence.

After meeting the PM, Raushan shared the meeting's excerpts with her political secretary Golam Moshi, her son Rahgir Al Mahi Ershad, and JP lawmaker and the spokesperson of the opposition leader Kazi Mamunur Rashid. The Daily Star learned about the discussion after talking to one of them.

During the meeting, the PM extended thanks to Raushan for her role in the last five years in and outside the parliament, said the JP leader.

Raushan also reciprocated that she would extend all support and cooperation to PM.

During the hour-long discussion, the premier hoped that the main opposition party in parliament would participate in the upcoming general election in line with the constitution while thanking their role in strengthening parliamentary democracy.

The PM exchanged pleasantries and inquired about Raushan's physical condition, said the PM's Deputy Press Secretary, KM Shakhawat Moon, reports BSS.

Different issues, including the current political situation and forthcoming polls, were discussed, he said.

Earlier in December last year, PM Sheikh Hasina, during a courtesy call with Raushan and JP chairman GM Quader, called upon them to patch up differences, be united, and prepare to take part in the next general election independently.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Held hostage and tortured for ransom in Myanmar

Family of a Malaysia-bound victim shares ordeal; 3 traffickers held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Allured by the promise of a better life in Malaysia, the victims are first taken to Teknaf using public transport. They are then transferred to Myanmar via small fishing dinghies manned by "Rohingya" boatmen, only to be held captive by the syndicate until their families agree to pay heavy ransoms.

A transnational syndicate, reportedly led by Rohingya members, has emerged, utilising a new route to traffic individuals from Bangladesh to Malaysia via Myanmar.

Rab yesterday arrested three members of the racket from Narayanganj and Narsingdi on Friday while investigating a trafficking case filed by one Abul Kalam Azad with Araihazar Police Station following the tragic demise of his younger brother Jahirul Islam.

The arrested are Md Ismail, 45, ringleader of the syndicate's Bangladesh part, and his associates, Jasim, 35, and Md Elahi, 50.

For this perilous journey, a

preliminary deal is struck, involving a payment of Tk 3.2 lakh from the aspiring migrants. The payment is to be made once they reach their destination.

Upon arriving in Myanmar, the victims are handed over to a syndicate, which sends videos of them being tortured to their

second ransom is paid. However, they are left to struggle without proper documentation and lack of employment opportunities.

During a media interaction at Rab's media centre in Karwan Bazar, Azad recounted the harrowing ordeal experienced by his family.

Once in Malaysia, the syndicate members demand a second ransom from the victims' families. They are released only after the second ransom is paid. However, they are left to struggle without proper documentation and lack of employment opportunities.

families.

Following the payment of ransom, the fortune seekers are transported to Malaysia through larger sea vessels, where they are handed over to the counterpart syndicate.

Once in Malaysia, the syndicate members demand a second ransom from the victims' families. They are released only after the

They took Tk 4.20 lakh as ransom in the first phase, and then again 2,000 Malaysian Ringgit, said Azad.

"But my brother died. Our entire family is now struggling," said Azhar.

Jahirul has a one and a half-year-old son and a seven-month-old daughter.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY Prioritise safety for local aid workers

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said the safety and security of aid workers in Bangladesh, especially those involved in humanitarian responses to the Rohingya crisis, should be given the highest priority.

They also urged international development organisations to take leadership role and provide support to the local non-government organisations in planning and implementing any humanitarian activities for the best outcome.

COAST Foundation, Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum (CCNF) and BDCSO Coordination Process organised the virtual discussion titled "No Matter What - Together We Stand Beside Affected Communities - Empower Local Actors," marking World Humanitarian Day 2023.

M Mustafa Kamal Akanda, director of COAST Foundation, and Md Iqbal Uddin from the same organisation, presented a keynote at the event.

In his keynote presentation, Md Iqbal Uddin laid emphasis on the importance of advocating for the well-being, dignity, and survival of all humanitarian workers, while also ensuring their fair compensation, adequate facilities, life insurance, and comprehensive support.

He also emphasised dedicating 25 percent of direct funding to local organisations.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Still far away from ideals of Bangabandhu

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is still far away from implementing the ideal of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, about democratic freedom and the country's four principles, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They also said the country is now backtracking from the spirit of the Liberation War.

"We are remembering our Father of the Nation every August, but we are not following in his footsteps," said Syed Anwar Husain, a prominent historian and a professor of Dhaka University.

Sammilito Samajik Andolon, a platform of social movement, organised the roundtable titled "In the question of democratic freedom: Bangladesh and the present reality", marking

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Constructed to serve pedestrians and prevent erosion, the walkways along the river Turag dilapidate as large vessels continue to dock its bank illegally. The photo was taken recently from the capital's Gabtoli.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

JP delegation may visit India today

RASHIDUL HASAN

A three-member delegation of the Jatiya Party is likely to visit India today.

JP chairman and deputy leader GM Quader will lead the delegation which also comprises his wife Sherifa Quader, also a woman lawmaker from reserved seats, and his international affairs adviser Masroor Mawla.

The JP delegation's India visit comes at a time when the country's forthcoming national election is very near.

"I haven't been to India in a long time. That's why I am travelling to India with a delegation from my party. We will speak with different officials from the Indian government and the ruling party," GM Quader told The Daily Star.

"Besides, I'll be there for treatment," he added.

Quader, however, said it was yet to be finalised who they will meet in India.

Masroor Mawla said the JP delegation will likely meet India's Ministry of External Affairs officials during its three to four days of stay.

"We will also likely meet India's ruling BJP leaders, but this is still to be finalised," he also said.

Political analysts term the JP chairman's visit to New Delhi ahead of the national polls to be politically significant.

Earlier, a five-person Awami League delegation, led by party praesidium member Md Abdur Razaque, went to New Delhi on a four-day visit on August 6, upon invitation by BJP President JP Nadda.

During that visit, the AL delegation called on top BJP leaders, India's external affairs minister S Jaishankar, and important government officials.

Meanwhile, GM Quader recently held several meetings with foreign ambassadors, including the United States

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PANDITPARA IN MYMENSINGH

Damaged road adds to locals' woes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Locals have been facing difficulties with their commute on Panditpara Road in Mymensingh city as it is lying in dilapidated state for the last six months.

The situation began about half a year ago when the authorities started setting ring culverts to improve the city's sewerage system. The culverts are being deployed from Panditpara to Notun Bazar areas. Though the physical works were completed about a month ago, the workers are yet to repair the road, making it unfit for both vehicles and pedestrians, said Abhijit Pal, a local.

"Only one side of the road somewhat usable, allowing people and vehicles to pass with difficulties. The rest of the road is in a bad shape, with deep potholes and dumped garbage taking up much of it," said Abul Hasan, another resident of the area.

Also, unused ring culverts have been kept for months on both sides of the busy Saheb Ali Road in Notun Bazar area, a road leading to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, creating severe traffic congestion

on a daily basis.

According to locals, the authorities concerned did not respond to their plea for completing the service works on this important road a month ago. The blamed the contractors' negligence and Mymensingh City Corporation's lack of monitoring for the delays.

This road connects several schools, colleges, district and divisional administration offices, Judge's Court, offices of Deputy Inspector General of Police, and Mymensingh Museum at Shashi Lodge and Alexandra Castle (Lohar Kuthir), an archeological site.

With HSC examinations underway, examinees and their guardians are gravely concerned over the condition of the road. The incomplete works will lead to a delay for hundreds of students as they will be unable to reach examination centres across the city on time.

Mohammad Azaharul Haque, assistant engineer of MCC, said they have been monitoring the progress of work regularly.

Contacted, Md Rafiqul Islam Miah, executive engineer of MCC, said the repair works were delayed due to rain.



Dug around six months ago to deploy ring culverts to develop the area's sewerage networks, the Panditpara Road in Mymensingh city is yet to be repaired, leading to locals' woes.

PHOTO: STAR

'Conspirators attempting to recreate Aug 15' Deputy education minister tells event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Nowfel claimed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has become an eyesore to foreign superpowers as she is leading Bangladesh to prosperity.

He made the remark yesterday while speaking at a discussion organised by Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) on the occasion of National Mourning Day at the CMP auditorium in the port city.

"The conspirators are targeting the country's forces by spreading propaganda in a planned way. They are doing that by spending money and motivating external forces," he said.

"There are many good people who understand what the country's situation would be without Sheikh Hasina," Nowfel said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

6 robber gang members held with arms, ammo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rab claimed to have busted the hideout of a robber gang in a remote hilly area under Teknal upazila of Cox's Bazar.

Six robbers were detained in this connection alongside recovery of firearms and ammunition.

Maj Syed Sadiqul Haque, acting commander of Rab-15, revealed the developments during a press briefing yesterday afternoon.

Acting on a tip off, Rab-15 members conducted drives in the remote hills of Rangikhali under Hnila union of the upazila from Friday night till early morning yesterday, he said.

During the drive, the robbers opened fire on the Rab personnel and tried to flee the scene. However, the elite force was able to detain them, the Rab official said.

The detainees are Faisal Uddin, 40, Badi Alam, 35, Syed Hossain, 32,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

WATERLOGGING IN PATUAKHALI

Rain ravages Aman seedbeds in low-lying areas

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Heavy rain over the last few days has caused waterlogging in different areas of Patuakhali, severely damaging Aman seedbeds.

Paddy farmers in the district are now passing their days amid uncertainty regarding Aman cultivation this season.

However, the agriculture department has claimed that the seedbeds will be fixed once the water recedes.

Hedayet Ali Howladar, a 65-year-old farmer of Fatehpur village in Kalapara upazila, said that he borrowed money to plant Aman seedlings on 12 bighas of his land. But the inundation caused by heavy rain over the last week has badly damaged his seedbeds.

"Most of the seedlings are rotten. I have suffered a financial loss worth Tk 20,000 while uncertainty looms over his cultivation in the Aman season.

Another farmer, Yasin Ali, of Paschim Sonatala village, planted Aman saplings on 10 bighas of land. The field, along with the newly planted seedlings, has remained submerged for a week, causing the saplings to rot.

"How will I collect saplings and cultivate my land again," he said.

About 80 percent of farmers in 12 unions of the upazila have lost their Aman seedbeds, said local farmers.

Sultan Gazi, a farmer of Kumirmara village, informed that most of them do not have enough seeds to prepare new seedbed. They also do not have the financial support to buy seeds again, he added.

"It rained continuously for 90 hours last week, which does not happen often," he said.

Kalapara Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer ARM Saifullah said, "The farmers' seedbeds of Bri-51, 52, 76 varieties were damaged due to rain water. However, there is no shortage of seeds. There is enough stock



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers in Patuakhali in distress as heavy rainfall in the last few days inundated Aman seedbeds before planting season.

of the Bri-22, 23, 33, 62 and 75 varieties. Farmers have no reason to panic."

He also said that the assistant agricultural officers at the field level will assess the damage and provide necessary advice to the farmers.

Meanwhile, Abul Kalam, a farmer of Nayavanguni village of Rangabali upazila, alleged that influential people have also blocked the canal for their fish farming operation, further aggravating the waterlogging situation.

This has caused damage to the seedbeds in the area. As there is no time to prepare new seedbeds, the farmers are worried if they would be able to plant Aman saplings on

time, he added.

Contacted, Deputy Director of Patuakhali Department of Agricultural Extension Md Nazrul Islam said that some seedbeds have been badly damaged in various areas of the district, especially in the low-lying areas.

According to his office, Aman seedbeds had been prepared on 12,000 hectares of land in the district. Of this, 165 hectares have been damaged, incurring a loss of around Tk 30 lakh.

Nazrul Islam also mentioned that 153 hectares of saplings have been damaged in the district.

Field level DAE officials have been instructed to provide necessary advice to the affected farmers, he added.

'Nothing will be done outside the constitution' Liberation war affairs minister tells discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nothing will be done outside the constitution during the national elections, said Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque said yesterday.

He made the remark during a discussion programme commemorating Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 48th death anniversary. The event was organised by Bangladesh Bharat Maitri Samiti organised at National Museum in the capital.

The government has made it clear that nothing related to the election will be done outside the constitution. This constitution was forged in the blood of 3 million martyrs. Not only the election but also people's futures will be shaped according to the constitution, he said.

"Bangladesh has been led towards communal politics before by assassinating the Father of the Nation. Now is the time to stop it."

Bangladesh has been led towards communal politics before by assassinating the Father of the Nation. Now is the time to stop it.

AKM Mozammel Haque
Liberation War Affairs Minister

He also urged foreign countries to hand over the self confessed killers of Bangabandhu, showing respect for Bangladesh's laws.

Present as special guest, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma highlighted Bangabandhu's contributions to the liberation and building of this nation.

"Bangabandhu's life and ideals continue to guide special relations between India and Bangladesh as the two countries work together towards a brighter and more prosperous future," he said.

Eminent journalist Abed Khan, Prime Minister's former information advisor Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, lawmaker Aroma Dutta and Narayan Saha Moni, general secretary of Bangladesh Bharat Maitri Samiti also attended the meeting, presided over by Rashidul Alam, president of the organisation.

'School feeding programme in 150 upazilas soon'

UNB, Dhaka

Primary and Mass Education Secretary Farid Ahmed on yesterday said that the school feeding programme will be launched in 150 upazilas of the country in a new way within a short time.

He came up with the announcement while addressing the "National Dissemination Workshop" on Findings & Factors of National Students Assessment 2022, organised by Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), at a hotel in Cox's Bazar.

The secretary hoped that a new door will usher in the primary education sector through the school feeding and it will script a base for building a developed and prosperous Bangladesh.

Farid Ahmed said the children will be provided nutrition-rich biscuits along with other foods which will be attractive to them and play a special role in fulfilling demand and forming the body.

Addressing the government's initiatives to ensure quality education, he said dropping out the children from the school will reduce and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Shoti and Shilpi Das are busy weaving baskets in Rishipara in Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila. They said they make around 25-30 baskets each every day, which are sold for Tk 30 apiece. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

PRAYER
TIMING

AUGUST 20

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-25 12-45 4-45 6-38 8-00
JAMAAT 5-00 1-15 5-00 6-41 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

INTERNATIONAL

N Korea slams UN meeting as a US 'scheme'

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea slammed a recent United Nations meeting about its human rights record, asserting the United States used the international organisation for a "scheme" against Pyongyang, state media KCNA reported yesterday.

The UN Security Council discussed human rights abuses in North Korea on Thursday, with the US ambassador criticising leader Kim Jong Un for using "repression and cruelty" to develop nuclear weapons and missiles.

US President Joe Biden and the leaders of South Korea and Japan agreed at Camp David on Friday to deepen military and economic cooperation, facing China's growing power and nuclear threats from North Korea. They also agreed to hold military training exercises annually and share real-time information on North Korean missile launches by the end of the year.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Migrants arrive by boat at the Temporary Station of Humanitarian Assistance (ETAH) in Lajas Blancas, Darien Province, Panama, on Friday. According to Panama's Immigration Department, from January 1 to August 8, more than 300,000 people crossed the Darien border, despite the fact that the United States warned that it would not admit migrants who entered the Central American country in an irregular manner.

BLASPHEMY RIOTS

Pak mosques probed over protest call

AFP, Lahore

A Muslim cleric is among a dozen people being investigated for using mosque loudspeakers to order protests against alleged blasphemy by Christians which erupted into mob violence in Pakistan earlier this week, a senior police official said.

More than 80 Christian homes and 19 churches were vandalised when hundreds rampaged through a Christian neighbourhood in Jaranwala in Punjab province on Wednesday.

Reports that a holy Quran had been desecrated were broadcast from mosques, with one cleric telling his followers it was "Better to die if you don't care about Islam".

"That cleric should have understood that when you gather people in such a charged environment... in a country in which people were already very sensitive about (blasphemy) it is like adding fuel to fire," Punjab police chief Usman Anwar told AFP during an interview in Lahore on Friday.

"He's not saying that go and burn their houses. But when the mob gathers, it's really impossible to control that."

He said the cleric was one of 12 people who were being investigated for using mosque loudspeakers.

SPAIN'S TENERIFE ISLAND

More evacuations as wind fans wildfire

5,000 hectares of land so far destroyed

AFP, La Orotava

Stronger winds and higher overnight temperatures caused a vast wildfire raging out of control in Tenerife to spread, prompting more residents to flee their homes in the northern sector of the Spanish holiday island, officials said yesterday.

The huge blaze, which broke out late Tuesday in a mountainous northeastern area of the island, is the "most complex fire" to hit Spain's Atlantic Canary Islands in more than 40 years, the authorities say.

"The fire is beyond our capacity to extinguish it, maybe not in all sectors, but in a large part of the sectors," said Pedro Martinez, who is in charge of efforts to quench the blaze, saying efforts to tackle the flames were being hampered by the huge clouds of smoke and the wind.

"Weather conditions last night were frankly severe... meaning the fire spread, mainly along the northern slopes," Canary Islands leader Fernando Clavijo told reporters, pointing to "much stronger winds, temperatures much higher than expected and lower relative humidity".

By Friday night, the fire had forced more than 4,500 people to flee although there was no update on how many people had been affected by the early morning evacuations in five municipalities.

"The fire and the weather have changed and we've had to evacuate five municipalities in northern Tenerife," said Manuel Miranda, the islands' head of emergencies on X, the social network formerly known as Twitter, pointing to "the danger and the proximity of the fire".

The latest evacuations came as forecasters warned that high temperatures and strong gusts of wind over the weekend would complicate efforts to tackle the blaze.

The fire, which has a perimeter of 50 kilometres (30

miles), has so far destroyed 5,000 hectares (more than 12,300 acres) of land with 225 firefighters engaged in overnight efforts to control the flames.

The area affected by the fire equates to nearly 2.5 percent of Tenerife's surface area, which stretches 203,400 hectares.

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska was due to visit the fire control centre yesterday along with Tourism Minister Hector Gomez, while Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez is due to fly in on Monday, officials said.

By Friday night, the blaze had affected 10 municipalities on Tenerife, the largest of the seven islands that make up Spain's Canary Islands.

Another 1,700 people have been ordered to stay inside their homes.

On Friday, there had been a "favourable evolution" after a night in which the flames advanced more slowly and predictably and the winds had eased. That followed two days in which the behaviour of the fire was "highly unusual", complicating efforts to control it.

The blaze has generated a vast pillar of smoke that now stretches eight kilometres into the air, rising far above the summit of Mount Teide, the volcano that towers over the island.

At 3,715 metres (12,200 feet), Teide is Spain's highest peak and a popular tourist destination, but all roads to the national park were closed on Thursday.

The blaze broke out after the archipelago suffered a heatwave that left many areas tinder dry.

As global temperatures rise due to climate change, scientists have warned heatwaves will become more frequent and intense.

Last year was a particularly bad year for wildfires in Europe, with Spain the worst-hit nation, suffering nearly 500 blazes that destroyed more than 300,000 hectares, according to the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS).



Over 200 hurt in BNP-cops clash

FROM PAGE 1

were injured as police charged batons on a road march, local party leaders alleged.

Nazrul Islam Molla, former president of district unit BNP, said leaders and activists brought out the road march from their party office at noon as part of the party's fresh agitation programme.

As they were marching on different streets in town, police stopped them near the municipal market. When they tried to march forward, police charged batons, leaving at least 50 BNP men hurt, said Nazrul.

However, Barguna's Additional Superintendent of Police Abdul Halim denied the allegation.

He said, "BNP men got permission to hold a rally in front of their party office. But they violated the condition and started marching on the streets. That is why, police obstructed them. As a

result, the scuffles took place."

In Narayanganj, some 25 people, including five police personnel, were injured in a clash between police and BNP activists.

Witnesses said several hundred BNP men started gathering near Kanchpur bridge on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway around 4:00pm. When the police personnel on duty there asked them to move away from the highway, an altercation ensued between them.

At one stage, police started charging batons. In response, BNP men hurled brickbats at police. Soon, the entire area turned into a battlefield with police firing tear gas shells and rubber bullets, witnesses added.

Golam Faruk, general secretary of Narayanganj district unit BNP, alleged that at least 20 party activists were injured in the clash. Three of them were

hit by rubber bullets, he said.

Contacted, Chai Lau Marma, additional superintendent of Narayanganj police, said, "BNP men did not get permission from the police to hold the programme. Moreover, they tried to put a blockade on the highway."

"When police requested the BNP men to leave the highway, they became furious and started hurling brickbats, injuring five policemen."

Later, police charged batons, lobbed tear gas shells, and fired rubber bullets to bring the situation under control, the police officer added.

Meanwhile, in Manikganj, police stopped another BNP road march, but there were no reports of violence.

[Our correspondents in Patuakhali, Narayanganj, and Manikganj also contributed to this report.]

Be mindful of reach before posting on social media

Says India SC

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Users of social media must remain mindful of its impact and reach, India's Supreme Court stressed on Friday, offering no relief to actor, playwright and former legislator S Ve Shekhar, who wanted to be let off in cases registered against him for sharing a derogatory Facebook post against women journalists in April 2018.

Shekhar claimed before a bench, led by justice Gavi, that he had put eye drops on the date of the incident, leading to his "mistake" of sharing offensive posts against women journalists without reading it or realising its content.

"If he had allegedly put eye drops, he should have been more careful about what he was doing. It is not essential to use social media. Who forces you? But if one uses social media, then he should be more careful about its impact and reach," the bench, which also comprised justice Prashant Kumar Mishra, told senior advocate S Nagamuthu, who appeared for Shekhar.

Nagamuthu submitted that Shekhar is 73 years old and has already tendered his apology before the Tamil Nadu high court.

'D-Day decided' W Africa military chiefs ready to intervene after Niger coup

AFP, Accra

West African military chiefs said on Friday they were ready for an armed intervention in Niger after a coup ousted President Mohamed Bazoum last month, but a diplomatic mission was possible over the weekend to keep talks open.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has agreed to activate a "standby force" as a last resort to restore democracy in Niger after generals toppled and detained Bazoum on July 26.

ECOWAS defence chiefs met this week in the Ghanaian capital Accra to fine-tune details of a potential military operation to restore Bazoum if ongoing negotiations with coup leaders fail.

"We are ready to go any time the order is given," said Abdel-Fatau Musah, an ECOWAS commissioner for political affairs and security. "The D-Day is also decided."

But the leaders also say they still favour dialogue and that ECOWAS could send a diplomatic mission to Niger.

"Tomorrow there is the possibility of an ECOWAS mission going into Niger to continue to pursue the peaceful path to restoration of constitutional order," he said. "We are ready to resolve the issue peacefully but it takes two to tango."

ECOWAS leaders say they have to act after Niger became the fourth West African nation since 2020 to suffer a coup, following Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea.

The Sahel region is struggling with growing jihadist insurgencies linked to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. Frustration over the violence has in part prompted the military takeovers.

ECOWAS troops have intervened in other emergencies since 1990, including civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

X will scrap 'block' feature: Musk

AFP, San Francisco

Elon Musk said Friday his social media company X would scrap a feature that allows users to block posts from specific accounts. "Block is going to be deleted as a 'feature', except for DMs," Musk posted, indicating the option would still be available for "direct messages" between users of the social media platform, formerly known as Twitter. The feature is used to restrict interaction with specific accounts on the platform. Musk has repeatedly cited a desire for free speech as motivating his changes, and lashed out at what he sees as the threat posed to free expression by changing cultural sensitivities. According to the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), hate speech has flourished on the platform.

Pak opposition leader Qureshi detained

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistani opposition leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi was detained yesterday, his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party said, just hours after he said it would challenge any delay to the election in the courts. Party spokesman Zulfi

Bukhari told Reuters the specific reason for detention of Qureshi, twice Pakistan's foreign minister, was not immediately clear. The caretaker information minister did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Bukhari condemned the arrest on X, saying he was "arrested for doing a press conference and re-affirming PTI stance against all tyranny and pre-poll rigging that is going on currently in Pakistan".



Rescuers work on the site hit by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Chernihiv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

US warns space companies about foreign spying

REUTERS, Washington

US counterintelligence agencies on Friday warned the American space industry to guard against efforts by foreign intelligence entities to steal research and trade secrets as they try to boost their own countries' space programs.

"We anticipate growing threats to this burgeoning sector of the US economy," a US counterintelligence official told Reuters, adding that "China and Russia are among the leading foreign intelligence threats to the US space industry."

The FBI, the National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC) and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) issued a two-page bulletin, saying unspecified foreign entities were using cyberattacks and techniques such as strategic investment through joint ventures and acquisitions to gain access to the US space industry.

Slum children need special care

Authorities must ensure that poorer students are not left behind

The crisis of education in urban slums is nothing new, but following the pandemic, it seems to have come back with a vengeance. As per a report by The Daily Star, many schools that shut down during the pandemic has never since reopened. This as well as their inability to be readmitted in other schools, because of financial constraints, have forced many children to drop out. Consequently, many have been forced into labour or early marriage at an age when they should be in classrooms, preparing for a brighter future.

Our report presents a compelling case based on the situation in several slums in Dhaka, highlighting the unfortunate trade-off between education and survival that these children face. One of them is 12-year-old Rasel, whose family lives in Karail. A brilliant student who stood first in second grade, his school was closed during the pandemic, causing him to drop out. He now babysits his younger siblings while their mother works outside. Like him, Bayzid, whose family lives in Bhashantek, also dropped out after second grade, and now works as a vegetable vendor. It is likely that these children will never go back to schools.

Although we don't know the number of slum children who fell through the cracks during the pandemic, it is believed to be significant. They sit at the top of the pile of vulnerable students, and the end of the pandemic has done little to improve their odds. The financial strain their families continue to face is a stark reminder that educational costs are a significant deterrent for children's enrolment. NGO-run schools have been somewhat helpful in addressing the crisis, but the challenges they face in terms of funding shortages and operational uncertainties remain daunting. Evidently, the number of schools and learning centres in Dhaka's slums has declined post-pandemic, even though their demand is much higher. Even the Bureau of Non-Formal Education – which has a special programme that offers primary education with a shortened syllabus – hasn't had much success in changing this scenario.

The continued education crisis in slums is a result of many factors, but this is not a battle we can afford to lose, as it has far-reaching consequences for the future of these children, their families, and society at large. We urge the authorities and all stakeholders to take concerted action to address this situation.

Gender biases in the courtroom

Indian SC's initiative should inspire Bangladeshi legal community

We are impressed by the Indian Supreme Court's initiative to release a glossary of "gender-unjust terms" so that the legal community avoids them when preparing pleas, orders, and judgements. The glossary also provides alternative terms that are gender-sensitive and in keeping with the times. Though quite late in coming, we welcome this change which aims to do away with gender stereotypes that often colour how women (and girls) are treated at court. At the same time, this move is one that courts in other countries, including Bangladesh, should follow.

It is hard to believe that even now, terms like "fallen woman", "harlot", "seductress" and "whore" still exist in legal parlance. The Indian handbook advises the use of the phrase "street sexual harassment" instead of the archaic and chauvinistic "eve-teasing", which, until recently, was very much in use in Bangladesh. The phrase "unwed mother" is to be changed to just "mother", and instead of "violated", the handbook suggests "sexually harassed, assaulted, or raped" to be used. The Indian chief justice has rightly observed that these predetermined gender stereotypes affect judicial decisions.

The initiative gives us hope that it will be emulated by the Bangladeshi legal community resulting in a more gender-sensitive approach towards women and girls. Rights activists in our country have long been demanding gender sensitivity training for judges and lawyers who deal with cases of sexual violence. It is because of the lack of such training that often a victim of sexual violence, particularly rape, faces a gruelling ordeal of humiliation starting from the time she/he reports the crime to their medical examination to court proceedings. We are thus encouraged by the passing of "The Evidence (Amendment) Bill, 2022" that stipulates that in a prosecution for an offence of rape or attempted rape, the victim cannot be asked questions that refer to their character or previous sexual behaviour.

At the same time, we urge our Supreme Court to bring out its own glossary and ensure regular gender-sensitivity training for police, lawyers and judges. This will undoubtedly ensure a more objective approach to victims of sexual violence.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Raise dengue awareness

The alarming rise in the number of dengue infections and deaths throughout the country is a result of the lack of preventive measures taken by authorities. The measures put in place in cities with dense populations are scanty. At present, hospitals are struggling to gather necessary medicines and supplies to treat the large number of dengue patients. While urban people are somewhat aware about the epidemic, those living in rural areas are not informed enough. The government needs to raise awareness among people to prevent dengue from spreading further. NGOs, the civil society, print and electronic media, as well as teachers' and students' groups should also conduct awareness campaigns.

Mohammad Al-Amin
Comilla University

UNIVERSAL PENSION SCHEME

Can equitable security be ensured?



Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb is a Bangladeshi columnist and writer living in the Netherlands.

FAIZ AHMAD TAIYEB

On August 17, the government introduced a broad pension plan for citizens aged 18-50 years. Though the ideal age range would be 25-60 years, this is still a positive initiative. Until now, pension plans have been like life insurance schemes, wherein the amount that a person gets back depends on how much money they had deposited. But the philosophy of the universal pension scheme goes deeper. It is primarily concerned with offering social security during retirement, rather than providing excessive returns based on multiplied dividends as a percentage of interest on the deposited money. The aim of universal pension is to ensure a basic cost-of-life amount for one to live off of during retirement. Nonetheless, global norms often link increased pensions to higher savings, aligning with improved living standards. The pension system aims to cover essentials and provide an adequate income replacement for the retired.

As per the new universal pension programme, those who participate from age 18 can later enjoy the most benefits. However, since completing education in Bangladesh takes roughly 25 years, and 30 is the current age limit for government job applications, a better minimum age for participating in the pension scheme could be 35 years. In this scheme, as the entry age rises, benefits naturally decline. Pension rewards range from 2.3 to 12.3 times one's total contributions. With rising inflation, the future value of these payouts might diminish significantly. Government contribution is also noticeably low, making the scheme less suitable for the impoverished masses.

Pension schemes, aimed at the poor with a seven to eight percent interest rate over 10 years or more, won't guarantee a decent living at age 60. Nor will it cover essentials. As such, contributions should be tied to earnings, one's saving ability, or the current value of different job sectors, thus reflecting financial capacity. Pension calculations should consider future costs of living, keeping in mind uncertain inflation and purchasing power.

A cornerstone for the universal pension philosophy would be intergenerational solidarity or demographic mapping. This means that the current workforce will contribute to the pension system to support current retirees, with the expectation that future generations will do the same. Such systems aim to address



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

inequalities and provide additional support to vulnerable groups. After all, if a pensioner's intention is to save money for a few decades and then enjoy it, a private pension scheme, and not a public one, would be the option for them.

In order to establish a substantive pension system, it is imperative to ensure the assignment of autonomous government bodies for regulation, engagement of the finance ministry for social security subsidisation, collaboration with insurance firms, commercial banks, and financial entities as investment facilitators, and the involvement of public and private independent bodies for oversight. However, in the context of Bangladesh, these components fall within the purview of the Ministry of Finance, with reliance on one government-owned bank. Unfortunately, this bank has been beset by numerous grievances, encompassing capital insufficiency, erosion of depositors' trust, instances of loan fraud, loan defaulting, and instances of managerial malfeasance.

Given the current economic turmoil, marked by a substantial budget deficit funded through money printing, the introduction of a universal pension scheme has triggered doubts regarding its credibility. A backdrop of capital and deposit crises in commercial banks, instances of loan fraud, money laundering, frequent loan rescheduling, and politically driven defaulting has significantly eroded public trust in the financial sector. Consequently, some view public pensions not as a laudable

government initiative, but rather as a potential avenue for misappropriation and looting. Traditional sources of financing (such as savings certificates, bonds, bank loans, and funds from self-governing entities) have diminished considerably. This has led to suspicions that the public pension system is being employed as a method to accumulate funds, particularly in the absence of

to the exclusion of underprivileged populations in their retirement.

The exclusion of social benefit recipients from the universal pension scheme is problematic. Bangladesh's poverty alleviation approach is vulnerable, with the current allowance of Tk 600-900 rendering true poverty reduction unfeasible. An innovative pension programme is necessary for the

substantial consequences for major financial improprieties. Given the prevailing lack of accountability for major financial scandals, concerns naturally arise regarding the ultimate accessibility of funds within the pension scheme.

Transparency is also a concern in terms of the utilisation and investment of the collected pension deposits. While pensioners have the option to acquire half of their deposited amount as a bank loan, it is imperative that pension funds do not become a new source for covering up budget deficits in other areas.

Questions may also arise regarding the fairness of retirement allowances, as well as the degree of contribution from employers and the government to the pension accounts of low-income pensioners. Under the Somota scheme, for low-income people, the monthly subscription is set at Tk 1,000, with applicants covering one half and government subsidies paying for the other. After a decade, the individual availing the scheme will receive Tk 1,530 per month. But, presently, this amount can only buy less than 2 kg of beef. The future purchasing power of this amount is also highly uncertain due to dollar inflation. Bangladesh's poverty and extreme poverty thresholds have been skewed by dollar inflation, producing the need for a re-evaluation. In reality, extreme poverty should not be pegged at \$1, but closer to \$3. Employing the current purchasing power parity criteria may lead to inaccuracies in identifying individuals below the extreme poverty line, which may lead

disabled and elderly underprivileged, with full government backing. Safeguarding the informal labour sector (which consists of extremely poor, impoverished, and low-income individuals) is the state's responsibility. While the Progoti scheme does not obligate the engagement of private employers (except for selected reputable corporations), most may not voluntarily contribute to the scheme. Also, many segments of society such as farmers, rickshaw pullers, and construction and transport workers cannot afford the monthly payments of Tk 1,000 to Tk 5,000 required by the Surokha scheme. After all, those struggling to afford food, nutrition, or medicine cannot possibly be expected to partake in such a pension programme. Thus, the government's contribution of at least 25 percent of the deposit seems necessary. Moving on, the target is to acquire 100 million pensioners from the labour market, but no provisions have been made for the unemployed in the universal pension scheme. With tens of millions of the population being unemployed, addressing future unemployment benefits and pension coverage is vital.

While a public pension scheme is crucial, discrepancies persist within the government's new pension framework. Moreover, given the current absence of rule of law, rampant corruption and a lack of accountability (compounded by prolonged economic challenges), the question arises: in times like these, will individuals feel secure depositing money to the government at all?

We should ratify the high seas treaty



Jenifar Nesa Popi is a lecturer at the Department of Maritime Law and Policy of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University.

JENIFAR NESA POPI

On June 19, all 193 member states of the United Nations came together to unanimously adopt an unprecedented agreement, known as the "high seas treaty" or the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty. This landmark treaty follows two decades of intensive negotiations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a framework that had already paved the way for significant advancements in ocean governance since its inception in 1982. Bangladesh became a signatory to the UNCLOS in 2001, affirming its commitment to international maritime regulations.

The UNCLOS divided the world's oceans into two parts: areas under national jurisdiction and areas beyond national jurisdiction. Remarkably, just 39 percent of the global ocean is governed by individual countries, leaving the rest unregulated. At the same time, UNCLOS' existing framework falls short in addressing conservation and the sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national borders. This has led to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation due to climate change and human activities like overfishing, pollution, and deep-sea mining.

The high seas treaty presents a promising solution to address these gaps and provide improved protection

for our oceans. Its adoption marks a significant stride in safeguarding marine resources by rectifying shortcomings and establishing a stronger system for conserving and managing marine biodiversity beyond national boundaries. But for this treaty to be effective, nations must ratify it.

In a significant step towards safeguarding marine biodiversity and sustainable utilisation of ocean resources, the European Union has pledged its support for the ratification and early implementation of the treaty, once it is ratified by 60 parties. As part of its commitment, the EU has allocated 40 million euros through a Global Ocean Programme to facilitate the ratification process. Additionally, it has urged all countries to contribute within their capacities to ensure the treaty's successful implementation.

Situated in a region with extensive maritime boundaries and diverse marine ecosystems, Bangladesh stands to gain immense benefits from this agreement. By becoming a party to the treaty, the country can play a pivotal role in global efforts to address critical challenges such as overfishing, marine biodiversity loss, and habitat degradation in areas beyond national jurisdictions. The treaty's provisions would provide a framework for cooperation, technology transfer, and

capacity building, enabling Bangladesh to better conserve and responsibly utilise high seas resources. By joining the ranks of nations championing the BBNJ treaty, Bangladesh can reinforce its position as a responsible steward of marine ecosystems and demonstrate its determination to secure a sustainable future for its citizens and the broader global community.

Amidst Bangladesh's fervent focus on the blue economy and its various development projects, concerns of potential environmental degradation loom large. Agreeing to the treaty could serve as a vital tool in mitigating these environmental risks. As the treaty emphasises the enhancement of resilience and incorporates provisions grounded in the "polluter pays" principle, it offers a comprehensive framework to address and rectify the negative impacts that may arise from developmental activities through environmental impact assessment. Ratifying the treaty would be a proactive stance that aligns perfectly with Bangladesh's aspirations for sustainable development.

Bangladesh can also gain significant advantages in terms of capacity building and technology transfer. The treaty acknowledges the vital role of these elements in bolstering the capabilities of developing nations, enabling them to actively engage in high seas activities and reap the benefits. Additionally, the focus on benefit-sharing underscores the treaty's commitment to equitable distribution of gains from marine genetic resources, a crucial provision ensuring that developing countries receive their fair share. The treaty's emphasis on scientific research and data sharing is equally noteworthy, as it facilitates the exchange of essential

scientific and technical insights related to marine biodiversity and ecosystem dynamics in the high seas.

Developing countries face challenges in preventing marine pollution beyond their borders due to limited resources, but a collaborative approach under the treaty among neighbouring nations will offer a pragmatic solution. By pooling resources and expertise, these countries can enhance monitoring and enforcement capabilities, addressing pollution by shipping and offshore activities. This strategy fosters regional responsibility and enables joint monitoring systems and response protocols, bolstering the ability to tackle pollution in high seas areas. However, during the ratification process, Bangladesh should take specific factors into account. While the treaty offers good things, it also comes with duties and responsibilities. It says we have to be careful when using ocean resources, check how our actions might harm the environment, and share knowledge fairly. To make all this work, we need to have the necessary ability, resources, and coordination. Hence, Bangladesh should proactively work to align the treaty with its own growth ambitions, ensuring a harmonious balance that prioritises environmental well-being.

Bangladesh stands on the brink of a transformative opportunity: the chance to ratify the high seas treaty. This holds immense promise for our nation and the oceanic treasures that surround us. Through the ratification, we can showcase our commitment to global cooperation and environmental stewardship. Bangladesh should seize this moment and stand at the forefront of ocean protection – for our prosperity, our environment, and our shared future.



The Prague Spring in 1968 was a brief period of economic and political liberalisation that was quickly snuffed out when Soviet forces invaded Czechoslovakia. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Tyranny, anywhere, is a threat to democracy

Safin Junayed Rouf is an English teacher at Success Academy, Public Charter School in New York City, U.S.

SAFIN JUNAYED ROUF

In September 1938, the Munich Agreement was signed by Britain, France, Italy, and Germany, granting Adolf Hitler the Sudetenland, a border area of Czechoslovakia and home to many ethnic Germans. Five months later, Hitler violated the agreement by invading and occupying the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Six months later, in September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, in response, Britain and France declared war on Germany.

It was only in June 1941 that the USSR joined the war, spurred by Operation Barbarossa – the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Yet, in May 1945, it was the Red Army that arrived in Prague, putting down any German soldier who had not left with the rest of their forces earlier that morning. Czech citizens poured out into the streets to welcome them and celebrate the ending of a dark period in their history. After almost seven years of Hitler's Nazi occupation, they had been liberated.

On February 25, 1948, Czechoslovakia became the last democracy in Eastern Europe to adopt a communist government, after a coup orchestrated by its own Communist Party. This triggered more than 40 years of totalitarian rule, where Czechoslovakia's political decisions came to be dictated by the Soviet Union. Nestled within the party, which was now responsible for ushering in a new era of governance in the country, was a generation of young Czechs, in their teens or early twenties, who enthusiastically embraced the arrival of communism. Their generation was one made aware of politics early on, during the war. This both shaped and limited their vision of the world, into a binary black-and-white; people, and ideas, were either friend or foe, bearing total destruction and dissolution of anything remotely adversarial. A generation as politically charged as it was inexperienced. One of the individuals belonging to this sub-group was Milan Kundera.

Kundera was an energetic and active member of the Communist Party, whose early writing was vocal in its communist support, as can be seen in his poem *The Great Parade*. However, Kundera, like many others around him, gradually discovered the limitations and oppressive tendencies of the political system that he had helped build, and began rebelling against it. In 1950, he was kicked out of the Party for criticising its totalitarian nature, under the charge of "anti-Party activities." Kundera later rejoined, in 1956, suggesting he still sustained hopes of reforming the organisation. These hopes, however, were extinguished during the Prague Spring of 1968, a brief period of economic and political liberalisation that was quickly snuffed out when Soviet forces invaded the country. Alexander Dubcek, the first secretary of the Communist

judgements. Ludvik's message was clearly meant as a joke, but, under tyranny, things are seen through the lens of domination and self-interest, bereft of common sense.

The Joke quickly became one of the many works of literature to be banned after the Soviet invasion, and Kundera was blacklisted. In 1975, seven years later, Kundera left for Paris with his wife – he had officially been exiled.

Even though Kundera went on to write many more books which received great acclaim, his deeply personal and perceptive account of Ludvik and his series of misfortunes always returns to me. Ludvik gets confronted by the blunt authority of the authoritarian system that he once supported, deprived of the benefit of the doubt from his fellow party members. The fervour with which he once championed the cause becomes jaded by the ridiculousness of his plight, until eventually being channelled into a labour of revenge. It is here, within the realm of the absurdity of oppression – which plagues Ludvik in fiction but many others in reality – that Kundera's voice distinguishes itself as one of disclosure. Kundera was not only willing to reveal ugly truths, but he weaponised them. Speaking of communist censorship, he said,



The Joke (1967) by Milan Kundera.

"The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long that nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was." It is the erasure of the past that Kundera attempts to guard against in *The Joke* and in his later works, warning his readers of its dangers whilst laying down signposts to help them recognise and fight it. He saw the struggle against power as the struggle of memory against forgetting.

Understanding how collective ideology can be twisted to serve the ambitions of a few, Kundera, having experienced both, shed light on the other side of oppression: "Totalitarianism is not only hell, but also the dream of paradise." Leaders, governments, bureaucrats, and especially the youth, often engender the wheels of change with the goal of achieving something greater, something better, than the present. However, the search for more, when left unchecked, will someday take you to such great heights that you shall suffer vertigo. In this case, vertigo is not the fear of falling but "the voice of the emptiness below us which tempts and lures us, it is the desire to fall, against which, terrified, we defend ourselves."

In a world where authoritarian leaders and regimes try to defend themselves from their inexorable fall, it remains up to the citizens of those nations just how prolonged this battle shall be. How long until you see that those who once liberated you are the same that now subjugate you?

It is the erasure of the past that Kundera attempts to guard against in *The Joke* and in his later works, warning his readers of its dangers whilst laying down signposts to help them recognise and fight it. He saw the struggle against power as the struggle of memory against forgetting.

Party at the time and the leader behind the movement, was unable to ensure the survival of his programmes, which came to be referred to as "socialism with a human face."

In between these two periods Kundera wrote and published his debut novel, *The Joke*. The novel takes place at a point in time where the communist regime is fully entrenched in Czechoslovakia. The titular joke, a message on a postcard that Ludvik – the protagonist – writes to his girlfriend, meant to be ironic, gets him expelled from the Party and sent to a labour camp. The story, told through the perspectives of its many characters, follows Ludvik as he seeks to exact revenge on the person that sentenced him. Parallel to exploring themes of accountability and blame in friendships, Kundera also investigates the theme of fear in a totalitarian regime and its distortion of people's

Agritourism for improving education and rural entrepreneurship



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SUSMITA DAS

Agritourism, through which visitors can experience how a farm works, presents a unique opportunity to leverage Bangladesh's rich agricultural heritage and diverse rural landscapes. With its vibrant farming communities and traditional agricultural practices, the country could become a leading destination for such tourism.

Tourism itself is a learning process for all age groups. Now, it's time to explore the untapped potential of agritourism for our sustainable development. A glimpse of this can be seen in Sylhet and Jashore, as the Bangladesh Tourism Policy 2010 already recognises community tourism, which helped initiate a few programmes

Considering the recent experiences of Bangladeshi investors leasing land in African countries to farm, such practices have introduced opportunities of foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunities abroad. Agritourism also empowers local communities and contributes to their economic development. This improves income generation, job creation, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

But the development of agritourism in Bangladesh faces several challenges, including infrastructural limitations, lack of awareness, and limited options to ensure sponsorship for supporting programmes and sound policy favouring agritourism and learning. The solutions

situations, and develop practical skills in various agricultural disciplines. To unlock the full potential of such tourism, effective promotion and marketing strategies are required. This includes domestic and international campaigns and collaborating with travel operators and educational institutions.

In Thailand, agritourism has flourished through the promotion of homestays and organic farms. Visitors have the opportunity to stay with local families, experience rural lifestyles, and engage in farming activities such as rice cultivation, vegetable gardening, and traditional cooking. Organic farms, especially in northern Thailand, provide educational experiences on sustainable agriculture and offer farm-to-table dining experiences.

Taiwan has embraced this kind of tourism with a focus on fruit-picking experiences and tea tours. Visitors can participate in activities such as strawberry picking, harvesting citrus, and exploring fruit orchards. These initiatives have attracted both domestic and international tourists, contributing



By engaging in agritourism, Bangladesh can showcase its agricultural diversity, foster community engagement, and promote sustainable practices. FILE PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

in these places through community participation.

Bangladesh has formal and informal clusters of the farming of diverse commodities, wherein the work ranges from cultivation to processing and marketing through formal and informal institutions. These commodities include traditional paddy, tea, jute, local fruits, and inland and sea fish or shrimp in different ecological environments. Notable examples include Tangail's pineapples, Jhalakathi's guavas, Bagerhat's shrimp, Chandpur's hilsa, the floating gardens on the wetlands of Barishal, hill farming, char land cultivation, and so on. Each unique production system involves different livelihoods being supported by technological and innovative practices.

Our public universities could introduce village and agro-industrial attachment programmes for skill enhancement. These programmes can ensure apprenticeship for university graduates to prepare them for the competitive global job market. The programmes will also provide two advantages: 1) connecting job providers with job seekers and 2) opportunities for students to gain experience based on theories.

include public-private partnerships, regulatory frameworks, and the involvement of local communities in planning and management processes for agritourism.

In Bangladesh's context, agriculture-focused universities can play a vital role in promoting and facilitating agricultural apprenticeships. Agri-businesses can also participate here by organising and deploying the learners while also promoting their business. Such programmes will require careful design and should be administered in a participatory manner with the universities. Agricultural universities can also collaborate with government agencies, tourism boards, and private sector entities to develop these tourism initiatives. Such partnerships can help to secure funding and create supportive infrastructure for agritourism development.

By implementing these practices, universities in Bangladesh can contribute to agritourism for learning. They can provide students with practical exposure, support local communities, and help create an educated workforce. These opportunities will allow students to gain hands-on experience, apply their classroom knowledge to real-life

to local economies and enhancing cultural exchange.

In India, farmstays and spice plantation tours have gained popularity. Farmstays offer visitors the chance to stay on working farms, experience rural life, and participate in agricultural activities. These initiatives support local farmers, promote cultural exchange, and offer unique insights into agricultural practices.

In the US, University of California, Davis has an extensive internship programme called the Student Farm. It provides hands-on training to students on organic farming, sustainable agriculture, and farm management.

Agritourism in Bangladesh would act as a gateway to sustainable rural development, economic empowerment, and skill enhancement in farming and post-harvest operations. By showcasing the country's agricultural diversity, fostering community engagement, and promoting sustainable practices, Bangladesh can position itself as a desirable destination for tourism and learning. Awareness building with local communities, marketing sites, and creating adequate facilities should be undertaken to fulfil this promising opportunity.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 June honoree
- 5 Saudi Arabia neighbor
- 9 Sorceress of myth
- 10 Second TV airing
- 12 Next to
- 13 "I do" utterer
- 14 Legal expert
- 16 Use a chair
- 17 Lofty poems
- 18 Fixate
- 21 Spectrum color
- 22 Attractively old-fashioned
- 23 Sings
- 24 Frightened
- 26 Have debts
- 29 Prepares cutlets, perhaps

DOWN

- 1 Trick
- 2 Found darling
- 3 TV's Leary
- 4 Hangs low
- 5 Sphere
- 6 Sea, to Simone
- 7 No longer in bed
- 8 Buff buff

- 9 Captain's superior
- 11 Brooklyn team
- 15 Guidebook user
- 19 Rock group
- 20 Bro's sibling
- 22 Campus area
- 23 Lingerie item
- 24 Painter, e.g.
- 25 Like mares and fillies
- 26 Morphine, for one
- 27 Frittered away
- 28 Door sign
- 29 Island east of Java
- 30 Binge
- 33 Golfer's nervousness
- 35 Writer Stout
- 36 Speedy jet



FRIDAY'S ANSWERS

S	P	E	W	D	A	R	E	D
H	A	V	O	C	E	L	I	T
A	R	E	N	A	A	L	B	U
F	I	N	T	A	D	A	D	O
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H	O	U	R	H	A	N	D	S
T	E	A	S	E				
G	O	U	R	M	A	N	D	S
R	U	M	S	E	D	D	I	E
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T	A	S	K	S	G	E	N	E



Global summit on traditional medicine to explore evidence base, opportunities to accelerate health for all

The World Health Organisation (WHO) convened the Traditional Medicine Global Summit on 17 and 18 August 2023 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India. Co-hosted by the Government of India, the Summit explored the role of traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine in addressing pressing health challenges and driving progress in global health and sustainable development.

High-level participants included the WHO Director-General and Regional Directors, G20 health ministers and high-level invitees from countries across WHO's six regions. Scientists, practitioners of traditional medicine, health workers and members of the civil society organisations also took part.

The Summit explored ways to scale up scientific advances and realise the potential of evidence-based knowledge in the use of traditional medicine for people's health and well-being around the world. Scientists and other experts will lead technical discussions on research, evidence and learning; policy, data and regulation; innovation and digital health; and biodiversity, equity and Indigenous knowledge.

Amid an expansion in the use of traditional medicine worldwide, safety, efficacy and quality control of traditional products and procedure-based therapies remain important priorities for health authorities and the public. Natural does not always mean safe, and centuries of use are not a guarantee of efficacy; therefore, scientific method and process must be applied to provide the rigorous evidence required for the recommendation of traditional medicines in WHO guidelines.

A stronger evidence base will enable countries to develop appropriate mechanisms and policy guidance for regulating, ensuring quality control and monitoring traditional medicine practices, practitioners and products, according to national contexts and needs.

122 million more people pushed into hunger since 2019 due to multiple crises

Latest research shows around 735 million people currently facing hunger, compared to 613 million in 2019

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Over 122 million more people are facing hunger in the world since 2019 due to the pandemic and repeated weather shocks and conflicts, including the ongoing war, according to the latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report published jointly by five United Nations specialised agencies.

If trends remain as they are, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of ending hunger by 2030 will not be reached, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) warn.

A wake-up call for the fight against hunger

The 2023 edition of the report reveals that between 691 and 783 million people faced hunger in 2022, with a mid-range of 735 million. This represents an increase of 122 million people compared to 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic.

While global hunger numbers have stalled between 2021 and 2022, there are many places in the world facing deepening food crises.

Beyond hunger

The food security and nutrition situation remained grim in 2022. The report finds that approximately 29.6 percent of the global population, equivalent to 2.4 billion people, did not have constant access to food, as measured by the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity. Among them, around 900 million individuals faced severe food insecurity.

Meanwhile, the capacity of people to access healthy diets has deteriorated across the world: more than 3.1 billion people in the world – or 42 percent – were unable to afford

a healthy diet in 2021. This represents an overall increase of 134 million people compared to 2019.

Millions of children under five continue to suffer from malnutrition: in 2022, 148 million children under five years of age (22.3 percent) were stunted, 45 million (6.8 percent) were wasted, and 37 million (5.6 percent) were overweight.

Progress has been seen in exclusive breastfeeding with 48 percent of infants under 6-months of age benefiting from this practice, close to the 2025 target. However, more concerted efforts will be required to meet the 2030 malnutrition targets.

and types of connections that exist between urban and rural areas.

For the first time, this evolution is documented systematically across eleven countries. The report illustrates that food purchases are significant not only among urban households but also across the rural-urban continuum, including those residing far from urban centers. The new findings also show how consumption of highly processed foods is also increasing in peri-urban and rural areas of some countries.

Unfortunately, spatial inequalities remain. Food insecurity affects more people living in rural areas. Moderate



New evidence: Urbanisation is driving changes in agrifood systems

The report also looks at increased urbanisation as a 'megatrend' affecting how and what people eat. With almost seven in ten people projected to live in cities by 2050, governments and others working to tackle hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition must seek to understand these urbanisation trends and account for them in their policymaking.

In particular, the simple rural and urban divide concept is no longer sufficient to understand the ways in which urbanisation is shaping agrifood systems. A more complex rural-urban continuum perspective is needed considering both the degree of connectivity that people have

or severe food insecurity affected 33 percent of adults living in rural areas and 26 pe in urban areas.

Children's malnutrition also displays urban and rural specificities: the prevalence of child stunting is higher in rural areas (35.8 percent) than in urban areas (22.4 percent). Wasting is higher in rural areas (10.5 percent) than in urban areas (7.7 percent), while overweight is slightly more prevalent in urban areas (5.4 percent) compared to rural areas (3.5 percent).

The report recommends that to effectively promote food security and nutrition, policy interventions, actions and investments must be guided by a comprehensive understanding of the complex and changing relationship between the rural-urban continuum and agrifood systems.

HAVE A NICE DAY The 'C C Mindset'

DR RUBAIUL MURSHED



'You're only as old as you feel' – a pearl of folk wisdom. Counterclockwise (CC) is an excellent concept that reverses everything from hearing, paralysis, cardiac problems, memory loss and more. It is a proven way to think of someone as younger.

The counterclockwise concept implies positiveness. It is strongly related to mindful health and the power of possibility. Possibility thinking takes one beyond dead-ends by reminding that anything is possible. Even though elderly people's ageing is supposed to be a biologically determined process, studies increasingly emphasise the importance of psychological issues in age-related stereotypes and cognitive mindsets.

This theory was first established by Ellen Langer's 'counterclockwise study', which looked at what effects turning back the clock psychologically would have on an older adult's physiological state. Langer shows that the magic of rejuvenation and ongoing good health lies in being aware of the ways we mindlessly react to social and cultural cues.

Her research shows a new way to practice mindfulness – not through meditation but by simply noticing new things. She demonstrated the benefits of mind/body unity theory and has spent years after years exploring the interplay between mindfulness, health, well-being, and ageing. Her research provided improved methods in nursing, old homes, and assisted living facilities.

She also proposes that we experience better health, lead more optimally, and learn more effectively when we make more mindful choices. Mindfulness helps people cultivate happiness by stepping away from habitual, often unconscious, emotions and reactions to everyday events and responding, instead, with thoughtfulness. Mindfulness supports many 'Happiness Habits' like building strong relationships and maintaining a positive mindset and optimism.

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APHTHOUS ULCERS: how do lesions grow?

DR ADILY ADIB KHAN

Apthous ulcer is the most frequent type of oral mucosal ulcer. This is also called canker sores. Apthous ulcers are small, shallow ulcers that develop in the mouth lining. This ulcer can appear on the tongue, gums, roof of the mouth, inside of the lip, or beneath the tongue.

They can hurt, and frequently make talking and eating uncomfortable.

Who has apthous ulcers?

Canker sores can occur in anyone. However, they are most common in adolescents and persons in their twenties. It is more common in women than in men. Experts believe this is linked to hormonal changes.

Signs and symptoms

- You may have one or more painful sores inside your mouth. Ulcers can form on your tongue, within your lips, inside your cheeks, or on the roof of your mouth.
- Sensations of burning or tingling.
- Small, spherical ulcers with a red border that are white, grey, or yellow.

In extreme circumstances, you may also experience fever, sluggishness of the body, and lymph nodes that are swollen.

Why some people are more prone to developing canker sores is a mystery to experts. However, a variety of factors, such as the following, have been found to be ulcer-causing, including - emotional stress among young age groups like relationship affair;

poorly fitting dentures, abrasions, and injuries to the oral mucosa; meals that are acidic, like citrus fruits; Ibuprofen is one example of a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication (NSAID); frequent oral sex damaging the epithelial lining of the mucosa; immune system disorders, such as celiac illness, inflammatory colitis, and Crohn's illness; nutritional deficits in



vitamin B-12, zinc, folic acid, or iron may also be associated with apthous ulcer; using mouthwashes and toothpaste containing sodium lauryl sulfate; pregnancy and associated hormonal changes.

Precautionary measures

- Stop smoking since it raises the risk of apthous ulcers in vulnerable persons.
- Hot beverages and snacks should be avoided.
- Make use of correctly fitted dentures.
- Avoid oral intercourse since it can harm the mucous membrane epithelium. It can lead to severe illnesses such as syphilis and gonorrhoea.
- Stay away from tension and worry.
- If you develop an ulcer after using toothpaste or mouthwash, discontinue use.
- Because they are vulnerable, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers should eat a well-balanced diet.

Remember to schedule an appointment with your dentist to have your oral health checked out.

The writer is the founder of Dental Pixel. Email: adily.adib@gmail.com

Does menopausal hormone therapy raise dementia risk?

In an observational study, a modestly higher risk for dementia was noted among menopausal hormone users.

Some studies have shown excess risk for dementia in older women (age, >65) who use menopausal hormone therapy. Whether use of hormone therapy by younger women, around the time of natural menopause, is associated with dementia risk is uncertain.

In this case-control study using Denmark's national registries, researchers identified 5600 incident cases of dementia in the years 2000 to 2018 among women who were middle-aged (age range, 50-60) in 2000. Cases were compared with 56,000 age-matched controls, with combined estrogen-progestin treatment as the primary exposure of interest. In analyses adjusted for potentially confounding factors, the following outcomes were noted:

Compared with never-users, users of hormone therapy had significantly higher incidence of all-cause dementia (hazard ratio, 1.24), late-onset dementia, and Alzheimer disease.

Longer duration of menopausal



hormone therapy was associated with higher risk; HRs ranged from -1.2 (for 8 years) to 1.7 (for 12 years).



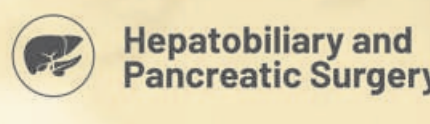
Both cyclical and continuous hormone therapy prescriptions were associated with similar excess

dementia risk.

Almost 97% of hormone therapy users received oral hormone therapy, precluding evaluation of transdermal hormone therapy.


Causality cannot be proven in this observational study, given potential residual confounding.

Nevertheless, some clinicians will find it reasonable to discuss the possibility of a small excess risk for dementia when counseling women who are considering hormone therapy. One reason to do so is that, during initial discussions, we can't predict whether some patients will choose to continue treatment into older age – where an association between hormone therapy and dementia risk was shown in randomised trials (NEJM JW Gen Med Jul 1 2003 and JAMA 2003; 289:2651; NEJM JW Gen Med Aug 1 2004 and JAMA 2004; 291:2947).

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Our Sister Concerns

England, Spain eye WC summit

REUTERS, Sydney

Women's football will crown a first-time champion today when the ninth Women's World Cup concludes with England and Spain, both proud footballing nations, facing off in an intriguing final in Sydney.

The highly-successful tournament in Australia and New Zealand was destined to have a fresh winner from the quarter-finals when Japan joined the United States, Germany and Norway in making a premature exit.

The tournament has showcased the development of the women's game but the finalists do present a contrast in styles – England pragmatic, ruthless, resilient and Spain displaying all the technical skill the country's football is famed for.

The finalists have had their blips – Spain thrashed 4-0 by Japan in their last group game and England taken to penalties by Nigeria in the last 16 – but both have grown into the tournament and were convincing semi-final winners.

Expectations of a tight final in front of another sellout crowd of 75,000 at Stadium Australia might not be too wide of the mark if England's 2-1 win in the European Championship quarter-final between the sides last year is any guide.

"We are ready," England coach Sarina Wiegman said yesterday. "Technically, tactically. We have watched Spain, of course, analysed them with our analysis team, and I think we're ready."

On the other camp, Spain coach Jorge Vilda said, "What we want to do tomorrow [today] is to be the best in the world."

For all the excitement that accompanied Australia's run to the semi-finals and Japan's brilliance in the early rounds, the consensus is that England and Spain are worthy first-time finalists.



With a maiden World Cup trophy in sight, England and Spain train at the Stadium Australia on the eve of the Women's World Cup final, which will end a month-long entertaining affairs that highlighted the exponential progress made by women's football.

PHOTO: AFP



Jamal's Argentina move 'is good for Bangladesh'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team's head coach Javier Cabrera has praised captain Jamal Bhuiyan's move to Argentine club football, calling it a good move for Bangladesh and the player.

Speaking at a press conference to announce Bangladesh's preliminary squad for the upcoming FIFA Friendly matches against Afghanistan, the coach said, "It's good news that Jamal is having this experience in Argentina. It's good for him and Bangladesh football. It gives good exposure to everyone. We have talent in this country to play abroad and we have to be supportive of that."

Jamal, on Friday, signed a contract with Argentina's third-tier club Sol de Mayo. According to reports, the 33-year-old midfielder will receive a monthly salary of 13,000 dollars during his one-and-a-half-year deal.

When asked when the captain will be available at the training camp for the two matches, which are scheduled to be played in Dhaka on September 4 and 7, Cabrera said, "Jamal will join when his club releases him and it's the right of the club, we have to respect that. We will welcome him whenever he will be available."

"Hopefully, he will train with us in the last full week before the first game. It's still not confirmed but we are in conversations with the club. It's being done on a positive note and with good communication. So, there's nothing negative in that," the Spaniard added.

Cabrera gauging Afghanistan with an eye on Maldives

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team's head coach Javier Cabrera said his main objective in the two FIFA Friendly matches against Afghanistan next month would be to carry the momentum from a satisfactory SAFF Championship campaign, with an aim for a positive result against Maldives in October's World Cup Pre-qualifiers.

Bangladesh will host Afghanistan for the two FIFA Friendlies on September 4 and 7 at the Bashundhara Kings Arena in Dhaka, with 32 players called up for reporting today. The team will stay at the Regency Hotel and will start training from the following day, with Afghanistan slated to arrive on August 6 and follow the same routine as their Bangladeshi counterparts.

These will be the first international matches since Cabrera's charges reached the semifinals of the SAFF Championship in India in June-July this year.

"Our main objective is to prepare for Maldives. We are playing at home and we want to win, we will go for the win for sure," the Spaniard said during a press conference arranged to announce the preliminary squad at the BFF House yesterday.

"We want continue the good momentum we showed in SAFF. It has to be that and we cannot perform below that. That cannot

SQUAD	
Goalkeepers:	Anisur Rahman, Shahidul Alam, Mitul Marma, Pappu Hossain
Defenders:	Bishwanath Ghosh, Topu Barman, Tariq Kazi, Rimon Hossain, Saad Uddin, Rahmat Mia, Alomgir Molla, Murad Hasan, Mehedi Hasan, Isa Faysal, Atikuzzaman
Midfielders:	Sohel Rana, Sheikh Morsalin, Mohammad Ridoy, Mohammad Sohel Rana, Abu Shaied, Mojobur Rahman Joni, Robiul Hasan, Jamal Bhuiyan
Forwards:	Rakib Hossain, Matin Mia, Sumon Reza, Faysal Ahmed Fahim, Dipok Roy, Aminur Rahman Sojib, Sarwar Zaman Nipu, Jafar Iqbal, Mohammad Ibrahim

happen. But we know Afghanistan is a strong team, especially physically," Cabrera said, adding that results against Afghanistan will not be his priority, instead these matches will be preparation to get positive results against Maldives.

The men in red and green, who had beaten Maldives 3-1 in the SAFF Championship, will play against their South Asian counterparts in a doubled-legged tie for the World Cup Qualifying group stage on

October 12 and 17.

The Spaniard called up two new faces while excluding one from the SAFF Championship squad in his 32-member preliminary squad.

Sheikh Russel forward Dipok Roy and Azampur FC forward Sarwar Zaman Nipu are the two fresh faces in the preliminary squad, even though both are quite familiar faces in domestic football and have been regarded as future stars for a long time.

The only player left out from the last squad, which played in the SAFF Championship, is Fortis FC forward Rafikul Islam.

There were also a number of senior players who returned to the squad, including Rimon Hossain, Saad Uddin, Alomgir Molla, Matin Mia and Jafar Iqbal.

However, the coach said that this squad features players from the senior side alongside some from the Asian Games, who will be with the team till the second match against Afghanistan.

Cabrera, though, will not get all of his players to start training on Monday. Only the players who have not been part of AFC competitions recently will start from Monday while the 11 Bashundhara Kings players will join on August 25 and six Abahani players will join on August 27. Captain Jamal Bhuiyan, who is in Argentina currently, is likely to join at the start of the second week of the camp.



Bangladesh's Imranur Rahman crosses the finish line in the men's 100m preliminary round during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest yesterday. The fastest sprinter of the country eased through to the main heats with a timing of 10.50 seconds, 0.25 seconds slower than his personal best. The heats were scheduled to be held later last night.

PHOTO: AFP

City cannot do 'whatever they want' like Chelsea: Guardiola

AFP, Manchester

Pep Guardiola has claimed Manchester City would be "killed" if they spent as much money on new signings as Chelsea have over the last 12 months.

City's spending since Sheikh Mansour's takeover in 2008 has repeatedly come under scrutiny, with the club facing 115 Premier League charges for alleged breaches of financial regulations.

But Guardiola is adamant their approach had always been prudent, in contrast to the wild spending by Todd Boehly's ownership group at Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea have splashed out nearly \$1.2 billion since the start of last summer.

City have signed Josko Gvardiol and Mateo Kovacic in this window for a combined £100 million, yet Guardiola was quick to show irritation over the astronomical sums paid by Chelsea.

"I couldn't sit here if we spent what Chelsea spent in the last two transfer windows – you would kill me," Guardiola told reporters on Friday.

"We wanted (Harry) Maguire and didn't buy him because we didn't want to pay. We wanted (Marc) Cucurella and didn't pay. We wanted Alexis Sanchez and didn't pay."

"In the end, we will pay what is fair to do it. Otherwise, we have the academy."

Guardiola tried to insist he was not criticising Chelsea. "They can do what they want," he added. "I don't criticise Chelsea for one second. I'm saying, if we do it, we are dead, all around the world. They can do whatever they want."

Despite bemoaning Chelsea's spending, Guardiola said he was speaking to director of football Txiki Begiristain about their options in the window after star midfielder Kevin De Bruyne was ruled out for several months with a hamstring injury.

"We maybe need to add someone else," Guardiola said. "My opinion is I like a small squad. But the blow from Kevin changes the perspective. He is a very important player and it is not one or two weeks."

Backing players key to fearless cricket, says Bashar

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) selector Habibul Bashar put the onus on backing players despite their poor form as he emphasized on the importance for Bangladesh to play a fearless brand of cricket, with two major tournaments upcoming.

Bashar tried to put out that the Tigers have transitioned their playing style into a more proactive approach which has been reflected in their performances of late.

"Our goal is clear about the cricket we are trying to play. You can see that our style of play has changed. Fearless cricket, we said we wanted to play, we've been playing it in the last two to three series. This you can see in our performances," Bashar told reporters in Mirpur yesterday.

Despite a recent good run, one of the main concerns for the Tigers leading up to the Asia Cup is the opening slot.

Opener Tamim Iqbal's absence has

provided an opportunity to newcomer Tanzid Hasan Tamim and a struggling Mohammad Naim who, despite becoming the highest run-getter in this year's Dhaka Premier League, is still yet to come to terms with international cricket.

To add to head coach Chandika Hathurusingha's headache

managed three fifties with an average of 30.1 – a stark decline from his ODI average of 52.45 in 13 outings, in 2022.

Despite the unsettled status of the opening slot, Bashar believes that Liton and Naim possess the ability to overcome their slump.

"You have to back the cricketers if you want to play fearless cricket, because

"Our goal is clear about the cricket we are trying to play. You can see that our style of play has changed. Fearless cricket, we said we wanted to play, we've been playing it in the last two to three series. This you can see in our performances."

Selector **Habibul Bashar**



is ODI vice-captain Liton Das' form across formats. The right-handed batter had a 2022 to remember as he was amongst the highest run-getters across the three formats but has failed to live up to his standards the year after.

In the 12 innings he has batted so far in ODIs in the year, the 28-year-old has

the main mantra in this type of cricket is that you play positive cricket. If you don't score runs in one or two matches, your team will back you. Giving that confidence is very important.

"Liton Das is a class cricketer, a big one. I would want and I know for sure that he will overcome this off form in due time. Cricketers go through this at



Ponzi trading app 'MTEF' shuts down

Bangladeshi customers set to lose hundreds of crores

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It has the classic appearance of a Ponzi scheme: promising high returns to potential investors and offering unusually high returns on their investments in a short span of time.

Some participants do receive the promised returns until one day, the venture disappears into thin air, and with it, all the money invested.

The same thing happened to the Bangladeshi customers of MTEF, a so-called Dubai-based trading company, which has now stopped providing payment to investors. Now, hundreds of investors are fearing that they may lose a big amount of money.

MTEF introduces itself as a trading service provider for online investment in foreign exchange, commodities, stocks, stock indexes and other products.

According to the people who invest in the app, investors are enticed to contribute a set amount, divided into varying tiers. They receive a payout window of 3 days a week. To attract new participants, commissions are dangled as incentives.

One such customer is Comilla's Md Hasan, who is fearing losing about half of his investment.

About one and a half months ago, Hasan became

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Bholra's Razapur area, which is located outside the district flood protection embankment, has gone under water during high tide in the nearby Meghna river. Several thousand locals endure frequent waterlogging during monsoon. The photo was taken on Friday afternoon.

PHOTO: MONIR UDDIN ANIK

Delhi did it for its own sake

Quader about India's 'message to US'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday claimed that India's reported message to the US regarding Bangladesh's elections is not an interference in the country's internal matters.



"Both India and the US have common interests in this region regarding regional politics. Therefore, if India communicated it with the United States, they have done it in their own interest," he said.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, was addressing a dengue awareness programme organised by AL's health affairs sub-committee at Rabindra Sarobar in Dhanmondi.

Asked about India's meddling, he said, "India has been a tested friend of us. We lost power in 1975 and India did not put us in power at the time. Similarly, our exit from power in 2001 was a result of the people's choice."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

CYBER SECURITY ACT It won't be much different from DSA

Say speakers at webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Though the government claims it is making the DSA more flexible by changing it into the Cyber Security Act, the changes are very nominal, speakers said at a webinar yesterday.

"One thing is evident - the DSA correction will only be ceremonial. The CSA [Cyber Security Act] is just a replication," Dr Ali Riaz, a distinguished professor at Illinois State University, told the webinar, organised by Centre for Governance Studies (CGS).

"The problem with the replication of the DSA is that it gives institutions like law enforcement agencies too much power, making them act like the government instead of a part of the neutral state."

The Digital Security Act allowed the police to take preemptive measures against any individual they thought was conspiring against the state or would commit violations of the law before any case was filed, Riaz said, adding, "The CSA draft retains the same [allowance of power to law enforcers]."

Some speakers pointed out that the United Kingdom will be passing its Digital Safety Act this September - three years after the proposal, showing that intensive research was done for the law.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government has only given citizens 14 days to submit their opinions about the CSA.

Many also questioned why prosecutions under the DSA are being continued even after it was established that the law has been abused and misused.

Faruq Faisal, regional director of Bangladesh and South

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

MONEY LAUNDERING RAID \$S7m watch among items seized in S'pore

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE

A \$S250,000 Hermes Birkin bag and a rare Patek Philippe watch that costs over \$S7 million on the resale market are said to be among the items seized in raids this week conducted by Singapore police in a billion-dollar money laundering case.

Three industry experts, and those who own businesses reselling such designer goods, said these luxury items are not easily bought.



On Tuesday, 10 foreigners holding passports from countries such as China, Turkey and Cambodia were arrested in an anti-money laundering operation. Cash and assets of about \$S1 billion were seized, frozen or issued prohibition of disposal orders, which mean they cannot be sold.

The nine men and one woman, aged 31 to 44, were charged on Wednesday over

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Russian missile hits univ, theatre in Ukraine

Seven killed; UN condemns the attack

AGENCIES

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that a Russian missile had hit the central square of the northern city of Chernihiv including a theatre and a university.

Seven people were killed and 117 wounded in the missile strike, the interior ministry said. Chernihiv lies some 150 kilometres north of Kyiv towards the border with Belarus.

"A Russian missile hit right in the centre of the city, in our Chernihiv," Zelensky said on Telegram. "A square, the polytechnic university, a theatre. An ordinary Saturday, which Russia turned into a day of pain and loss. There are dead, there are wounded."

He posted a video from the scene that showed debris around a large Soviet era building, with parked cars around it that were partially destroyed, with smashed roofs and windows blown out.

"It is heinous to attack the main square of a large city, in the morning, while people are out walking, some going

to church to celebrate a religious day for many Ukrainians," said Denise Brown, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for Ukraine.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian drone targeted a military airfield in Russia's Noygorod region, causing a fire and damaging one warplane, reports Reuters.

The Russian defence ministry said nobody had been hurt in what it called "a terrorist attack", adding that the fire had been quickly extinguished. The Noygorod region lies northwest of Moscow.

As Ukraine claimed counteroffensive gains on the southeastern front, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the commander of Russia's operation in Ukraine and other top military brass, the Kremlin said yesterday.

The Kremlin added that Putin, Russia's supreme commander-in-chief, listened to reports from Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the General Staff of the Army in charge of Moscow's operations in Ukraine, and other top military commanders and officers.

PHOTO ON PAGE 7

Troop deaths, injuries in Ukraine war nearing 500,000, says NYT citing US officials.

India shouldn't go against will of people here

Says Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir has said it will be very unfortunate if India does something against the will of Bangladeshi people.



"It will also not be good for regional security," he told reporters after paying his tributes at late president Ziaur Rahman's grave in the capital yesterday morning.

"We hope India will respect Bangladeshi people's desire for democracy and fully support a fair election participated by all parties," he added.

German media outlet Deutsche Welle recently reported that India apprehends radical groups in Bangladesh may become more powerful if the Awami League government becomes weak.

As reporters asked for his take on the report, Fakhru said India is giving its opinion about Bangladesh's internal political matters.

"There is no chance a radical party will take power in Bangladesh. No radical party has been able to take power in

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

POLITICAL DEADLOCK Thai ex-PM Thaksin to return from exile

REUTERS, Bangkok

Thailand's self-exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin



Shinawatra plans to return to the country on Tuesday, his daughter said, as the country is struggling to overcome a political deadlock after a May national election.

The former telecommunications tycoon, premier from 2001 until he was ousted in a 2006 coup, lives in self-imposed exile after fleeing Thailand to avoid a jail sentence for graft in 2008. He would still be subject to jail upon a return.

In a social media post yesterday, Thaksin's youngest daughter, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, said she would meet her father at Bangkok's Don Muang Airport on "August 22".

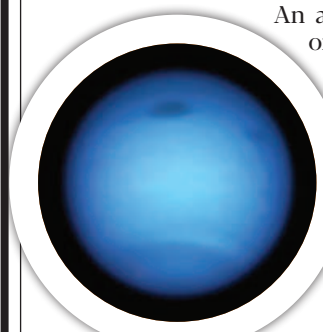


Indiscriminate dumping of waste on the banks of the Adi (old) channel of the Buriganga at Kamrangirchar Beribadh is polluting the river and the environment. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

All of Neptune's clouds suddenly vanish Scientists perplexed

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



An abundance of clouds seen on the planet Neptune have now all but vanished, rapidly fading out of existence since 2019, "surprising" findings of a new study reveal.

Observations of images of the blue planet taken from 1994 to 2022 suggest Neptune's clouds are nearly gone with the exception of its south pole.

The research, published recently in the journal Icarus, reveals a connection between the ice giant's disappearing clouds and the solar cycle.

Scientists, including those from the Keck Observatory in Hawaii, say this link between Neptune's vanishing clouds and the Sun are "surprising" given that the planet is the farthest major planet in the Solar System, receiving only 1/900th of the sunlight Earth gets.

"I was surprised by how quickly clouds disappeared on Neptune. We essentially saw cloud activity drop within a few months," study co-author Imke de Pater from UC Berkeley said.