



Remnants of a wrestlers' nest



Jumping from billboards to OTT



Why Western approaches can't prevent river erosion



Putin has no plans to attend G20 in India in person

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Changes in law to streamline trustee boards

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

At least a third of the trustee board members of a private university will have to be academics, according to a draft amendment to the Private University Act-2010.

Under the existing law, a private university can have nine to 21 members in its trustee board. The proposal to have a third of the trustee members from educationists is aimed at creating a congenial academic atmosphere at the private institutions, said officials of the education ministry and University Grants Commission.

The draft proposes that a trustee will not take financial benefits for attending any meeting as well as for other university-related activities. Also, the trustees and their family members will not hold any offices of profit at a university, it says.

The other major changes in the draft include empowering the government or the UGC to appoint observers at private universities if there arises any situation that may hamper academic activities.

A five-member committee led by UGC member Professor Biswajit Chanda prepared the draft and submitted it to the education ministry. The committee was formed by the ministry following a recommendation from the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry.

"The new amendments aim to bring more transparency to running non-government universities," Biswajit Chanda told The Daily Star on Thursday.

Explaining the reasons for amending the existing act, the draft says, "It is a matter of concern that the trend of corruption, nepotism, and academic, financial and administrative irregularities at private universities has increased alarmingly in recent times."

It says empowering universities as well as the UGC, and enforcing laws strictly is necessary to establish good governance at private universities.

The Secondary and Higher Education Division of the education ministry is likely to hold an inter-ministerial meeting on Tuesday to finalise the draft, said Abu Yousuf Miah, additional secretary of the ministry.

Currently, there are 112 private universities in the country. The first private university was established in 1992 through a law, which was amended in 2010 to meet a growing demand for higher education.

ACADEMICS AND OBSERVERS

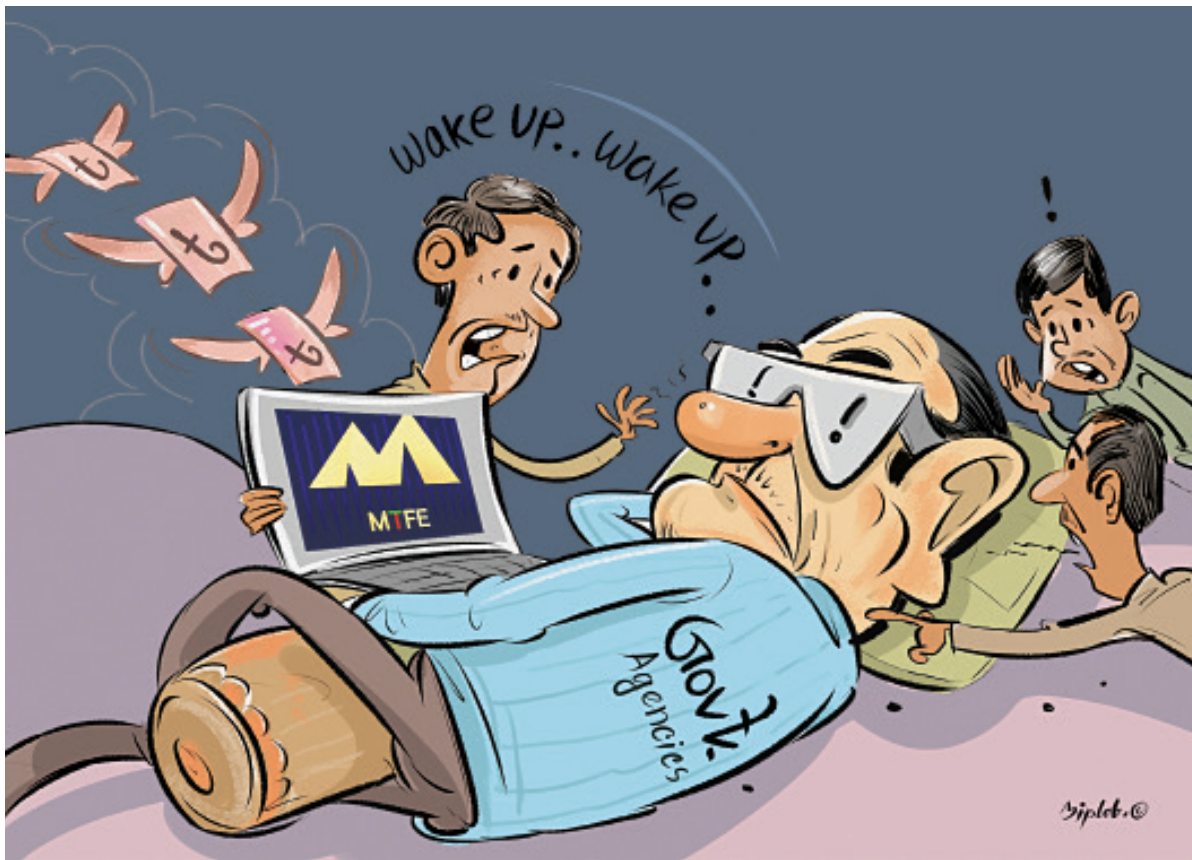
According to the draft, there will be no change in the trustee board of a private university without UGC recommendation and government approval. If needed, the UGC or the government can appoint observers at the universities.

Academics at the trustee board will be able to play a positive role in enriching academic atmosphere and research of the university, said Biswajit.

"Appointment of observers will take place only when the university administration faces a crisis period, or is marked by a lack of order, or on the brink of closure. On many occasions, the authorities appoint observers in banking and other sectors," he added.

UGC and education ministry officials say many universities have virtually turned into family businesses. "If a third of trustee members are academics, there will be a balance at the board. It will also reduce the chance of corruption," an UGC official said, wishing not to be named.

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MTFE SCAM

Whose responsibility is it, anyway?

MAHMUDUL HASAN

No government agency is taking responsibility for the MTFE scam that has left thousands of Bangladeshis staring at catastrophic losses due to the murky nature of its operations.

Dubai-based app MTFE, short for Metaverse Foreign Exchange Group, enticed individuals in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh by branding itself as a Shariah-compliant platform for cryptocurrency, forex, commodities and stocks with unusually high returns on investments.

It gained popularity through a referral programme that gave existing users bonuses if they brought in others, working in essence as a Ponzi scheme.

So irresistible were the app's money-making promises that thousands of people right down to the upazila or village level in Bangladesh poured crores into it.

On August 17, the Android app went under, freezing out the balances of hundreds of thousands of people everywhere.

The precise scale of the scam -- that is the total financial losses and the number of affected individuals in Bangladesh -- remains

undetermined by any government agency as they are not sure under whose purview the overseas forex trading platform falls.

The nature of the MTFE scam falls outside the jurisdiction of the commerce ministry, said Commerce Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh.

"No actual buying or selling is taking place here like in e-commerce. It's more akin to

Consumers Rights Protection (DNCRP), the quasi-judicial government department responsible for hearing and addressing consumer complaints over goods and services, haven't received any complaint either, according to its director general AHM Shafiquzzaman.

"Besides, DNCRP doesn't deal with such things as the law doesn't allow us. The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit [BFIU] is tasked with overseeing it," he added.

BFIU is a government agency of Bangladesh responsible for investigating money laundering, suspicious transactions and cash transaction reports. The unit works under the Bangladesh Bank.

Like Shafiquzzaman, Shyam Sunder Sikder, chairman of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), shifted the responsibility on the central bank's shoulders "since the issue of MTFE is related to financial transactions".

If cryptocurrency was used, the central bank has to take responsibility for the MTFE scam, Jabbar said, adding that law enforcement agencies are tasked with monitoring crime on digital platforms too.

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"MTFE is just like a trap. People are not learning from history -- this is a big challenge."

Md Masud Biswas
Chief of Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU)

making money through depositing funds. Therefore, we do not exercise oversight over it," he added.

And the law enforcement agencies have not received any complaint against the MTFE scammers as the investors were aware that they were involved in illicit activities through the app, Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar told The Daily Star.

The Directorate of National

'Looters' must not come to power: PM

AGENCIES, Johannesburg

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has warned the people against bringing "looters" to state power.

"Don't leave the country in the hands of looters. If that happens, the country will be destroyed," she said while addressing a civic reception accorded to her by Bangladeshi expatriates in South Africa on Thursday.

The PM has been on a visit to South Africa to attend the 15th BRICS summit.

Hasina urged all to make sure that the country's journey towards development continues without any disruption.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



A stronger BRICS can promote peace, dev

Say analysts

PORIMOL PALMA

The expansion of BRICS, an alliance of the Global South, comes at a time of increasing geopolitical polarisation and economic turmoil across continents caused by the Russia-Ukraine war.

As different countries are showing a vigorous interest in joining the alliance, formed in 2009 to act as a counterbalance to the hegemony of World Bank and IMF, many analysts ask if the world would see further tension and division.

Questions also remain as to whether BRICS will be able to achieve its goals.

Foreign policy analysts hope BRICS' expansion and strength will foster peace and development, not rivalry.

"BRICS was formed not to replace the World Bank or IMF, but to strengthen the member states so that they are not fully dependent on the West-dominated institutions," said Munshi Faiz Ahmad, former ambassador to China.

The alliance members -- Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa -- in their summit in Johannesburg on Thursday announced Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE as new member states of the alliance.

Bangladesh is among the 40 countries that applied for BRICS membership.

The BRICS was formed when countries with emerging economies realised they were not getting enough opportunities and the domination of the US dollar was a barrier for trade, especially when there were sanctions.

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Rohingyas at a rally demanding repatriation to their homeland Myanmar. The rally was organised yesterday at Kutupalong Lambashia camp-1 in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar on the occasion of Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day. PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Ensure safe return to Myanmar

Demand refugees on Rohingya Genocide Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rohingyas have once again demanded their safe return to their homeland Myanmar.

They made the call at a rally in Lambashia camp-1 (East) in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya. The rally was organised on the occasion of Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day yesterday.

Braving rain, thousands of refugees took part in the rally.

Rohingyas across the world observe the day on August 25, commemorating the brutal military campaign beginning this day in 2017 that forced some 750,000 Rohingyas to flee to Bangladesh.

Speaking at the rally, Mohammad Zubair, chairman of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights, a camp-based organisation working for rights and justice of Rohingyas, said the international community should put more pressure on the Myanmar junta to start repatriation as soon as possible.

He mentioned that after scraping citizenship of Rohingyas, the junta imposed restrictions on their movement, education and livelihoods.

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MORE NEWS

Homemaker answers DU emergency calls!

PAGE 3

Desolation in Daulatdia

PAGE 3

REMEMBRANCE

We remember with deep reverence and heartfelt sorrow the 3rd death anniversary of the esteemed **Mrs. Lutfunnesa Ahmed "Jimmy"** former Chairman of Super Group of Companies. A shining light in the realms of industry and compassion, She was the beloved wife of a renowned industrialist **Mr. Salim Ahmed-Vice Chairman of Elite Paint & Chemical Industries Ltd & The Chairman of Super Group of Companies.**

May Allah, the Most Merciful, grant her a place in Jannah and shower her with His boundless blessings.

Our Deepest Sympathies on her death,
From all the members of
Elite Paint & Chemical Industries Ltd
&
Super Group of Companies



US committed to advance justice for people of Burma: Blinken

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday said the United States is committed to advancing justice and accountability for all the people of Burma and will continue to stand with them in their aspirations for a democratic, inclusive, and peaceful future.

"We are deeply grateful to the government and the people of Bangladesh for giving shelter and refuge to nearly one million Rohingya, as well as other countries in the region hosting Rohingya refugees," he said in a press statement issued yesterday.

On August 25, the sixth anniversary of the genocide against Rohingya, the US reaffirmed its commitment to hold the Myanmar military accountable for the atrocities against Rohingya.

The US has provided over \$2.1 billion to assist those affected by the crisis in Burma, Bangladesh, and elsewhere in the region since 2017, remaining the single largest donor of life-saving humanitarian assistance to those whose lives have been upended by the violence.

The escalation of violence throughout the country has exacerbated the dire humanitarian situation, particularly for members of ethnic and religious minority communities, including the Rohingyas.

Since December 2017, the US has imposed sanctions and visa restrictions on individuals and entities most responsible for the ongoing violence, Blinken said.

In another press release, the US Embassy in Dhaka said, "Until conditions in Burma improve, we call upon the international community to continue providing humanitarian aid to one of the world's most vulnerable and marginalised populations."

In a statement, the High Commission of Canada, said "Canada remains determined to end impunity and to pursue accountability for perpetrators of serious human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence, and justice for Rohingya survivors.

"We reiterate our intention to intervene in the Rohingya genocide case brought by the Gambia against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Canada also supports the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar's efforts to collect concrete evidence of crimes committed, and continues to call for the UN Security Council (UNSC) to refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court," reads the statement.

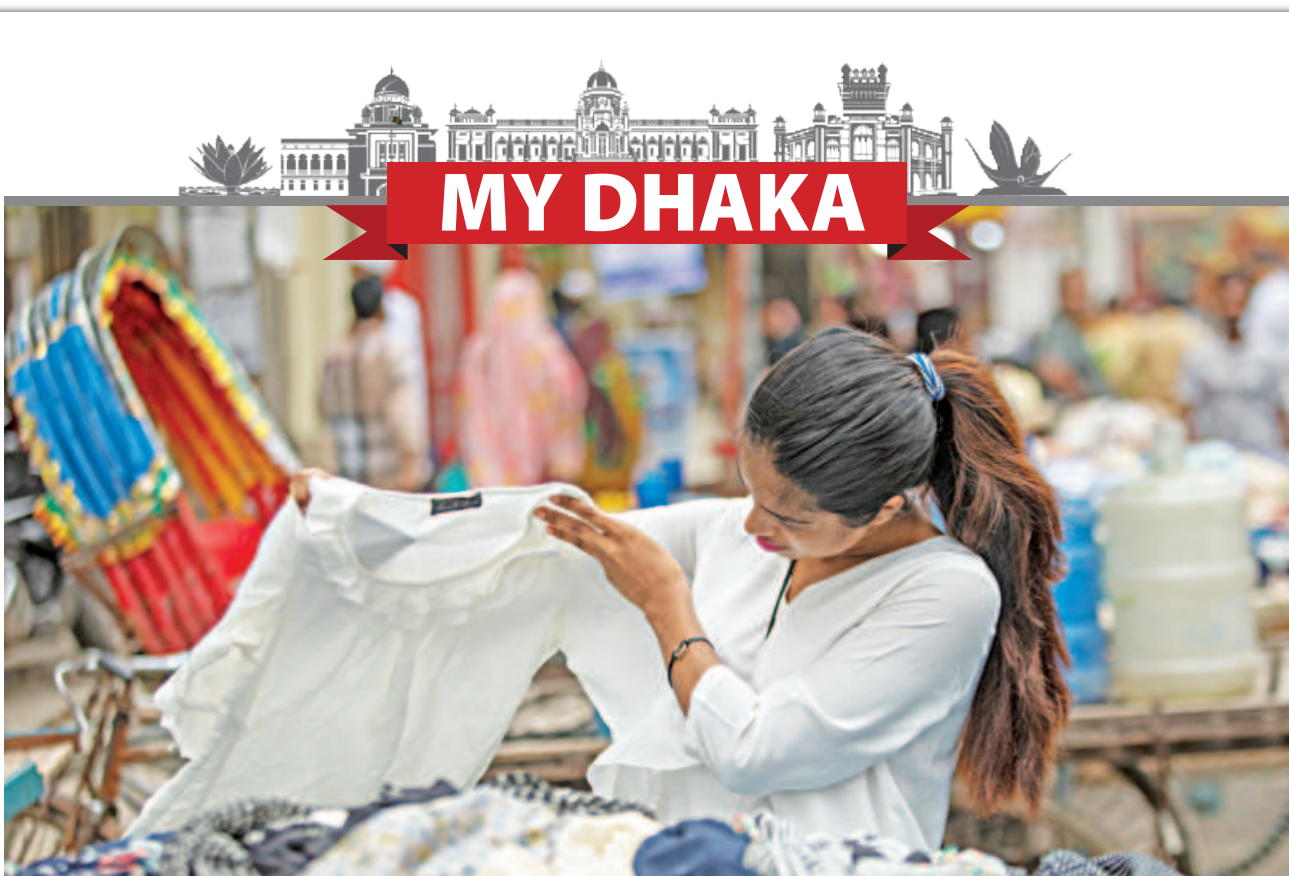


PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED/LS ARCHIVE

A HAVEN FOR CLOTHES Uttara's bustling shopping scene

RBR

Buying a trendy Zara shirt for just Tk 300 is only possible in Dhaka. Of course, one must take into consideration that the sleeves might be a little off or a stitch out of place. Brand clothes, thanks to our RMG sector, are no big deal for us, and we have learned to overlook the defects.

Having said that, the culture of shopping for such branded items at Bongo Bazar and Doza Market has now spilled over to vans in Uttara, among other places in Dhaka. The street

is the new hub for clothes, and frenzied shopping reaches its peak in the evening.

Uttara residents crowd the street every single day, as if it's "chandraat"—the evening before Eid. From oversized clothes to petite size zeros, one gets a freight full of a variety of products and buyers can haggle to their heart's content.

The clothes are trendy, and the fabrics soft, breathable, and of fine quality.

There are plenty of options available,



from ripped jeans to colourful jeggings, summer jackets or tops for casual officerwear, to maxi dresses for a friend's get-together.

Going back to the vans at regular intervals, thinking about what's new, or waiting for the call from the vendor when a new lot arrives — all these activities become quite a habit. Besides, reasonable and discounted price is an added attraction.

In our country, where the wardrobe for young girls and adolescents is stuck to just trousers or shalwar kameezes, the availability of dresses, maxis, midis, skirts, jumpsuits, or denim is such a boon. An added bonus is finding

oversized clothing.

Plus sizes have always been ignored by our local designers, but here one stall is dedicated solely to oversized customers. You can easily go over the top and buy maybe a dozen of them. Undergarments, kaftans, maxi dresses, nightwear — you can find almost everything in these vans.

If you venture to the underground stores of Rajlaxmi Complex, you are in for a delightful surprise. Beautiful chikankari tops, shalwar kameezes, trending co-ords, coordinated sets, cotton kurtis, or tassard scarves are all there at bargain prices.

I guess the final surprise is the jewellery vans lined up in front of the market. Oxidised trinkets that you see on expensive online pages are all replicated and available. The price starts at Tk 100 and goes up to Tk 500 at the Uttara vans.

The best part of shopping in Uttara is its van culture, meaning carts vending everything under the sky, from vegetables to curtains. Just imagine the wide range and the best buys are perhaps the clothes; and a single cart is almost like a supermarket in itself!



Woman gang-raped in Pirojpur, 2 held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested two men for allegedly confining a woman in an empty house and gang-raping her in Pirojpur.

Amin Khan, 42, and Sohag Meer, 34, were arrested in separate drives, said Abir Mohammad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Pirojpur Sadar Police Station, reports UNB.

Quoting locals, police said two men abducted the woman around 11:00am on Thursday from Kadamtala area.

She was kept confined in an empty house for two hours and during then she was gang-raped, said police.

The woman filed a case the same night after she was freed.

"We are trying to arrest the other accused and the case is under investigation," said the OC.

Rohingya woman killed in Teknaf camp

UNB, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya woman was stabbed to death yesterday, allegedly by her husband, over a family feud in a refugee camp in Teknaf upazila, Cox's Bazar.

The deceased Adiya Khatun, 23, was the wife of Nur Kamal of Block D in Camp 25.

Locals said the couple got into a heated argument, and at one stage, Kamal stabbed Adiya with a sharp weapon.

Sayed Jubayer, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Model Police Station, said on information police rushed to the spot and found the woman was taken to an NGO-run hospital, where physicians declared her dead on arrival.

Her body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, he said, adding that a process was underway to file a case in this connection.

"The accused is now on the run, and efforts are on to nab him," the OC added.

'Cattle thief' killed in mob beating

UNB, Pabna

A man was killed in a mob beating early yesterday after he was allegedly caught trying to steal cattle in Ishwardi upazila of Pabna.

The deceased Babu, 45, was a resident of the district's Bera upazila.

Locals said around 1:00am, farmer Idris Ali called for help, saying someone was in his barn trying to steal cattle.

Subsequently, neighbours rushed out, caught Babu, and beat him severely, leaving him dead on the spot, they said.

The incident took place in Goalbathan village, under the Muladali union.

Hasan Basir, inspector (investigation) of Ishwardi police station, confirmed the man's death, saying that the body would be handed over to his family after legal procedures.

Changes in law to streamline trustee boards

FROM PAGE 1

UGC officials have pointed out that on many occasions the "profiteering attitude" of trustees created a "non-congenial" academic atmosphere. They have said most of the trustees at private universities are businessmen and politicians, and that some of them are educationists.

"I think the decision of having more academics at trustee boards is a good one. That trustees cannot hold offices of profit is also positive. Many trustee board members do not act responsibly; they want to take some benefits," said former UGC chairman Prof Nazrul Islam.

Contacted, Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) Chairman Sheikh Kabir Hossain said, "If the educationists invest in the university, there are no objections regarding the matter. They themselves

can invest or the government can invest on their behalf."

About the appointment of observers, he said observers are usually appointed in companies when they face losses.

"But private universities are non-profit, there is no reason to appoint observers at these institutions. Each university has a syndicate with representatives of the chancellor and the UGC, who act like observers," Hossain said.

Usually, trustee board members do not take a sitting allowance. Trustees and their families should not hold offices of profit at universities as it is a conflict of interest, he added.

MORE SPACE, MORE RESERVE FUND

The draft amendment proposes that a private university will get approval if it has an area of at least

one lakh square feet, whether owned or rented. Currently, a private university can have approval if it has at least a 25,000 square feet space.

It says a private university should have at least five acres of land to establish a permanent campus. But this provision will not apply to universities that were set up before the proposed amendments are enacted. Currently, a university needs at least one acre of land for permanent campuses in Dhaka and Chattogram metropolitan areas, and two acres in other areas.

As for a reserve fund, the draft says a private university in Dhaka and Chattogram should have Tk 8 crore, a university in other metropolitan cities Tk 5 crore, and a university in other places Tk 3 crore. Under the existing law, reserve fund for universities in Dhaka and Chattogram is Tk 5 crore, for those

in other metropolitan cities Tk 3 crore, and for those in other places Tk 1.5 crore.

The new draft also proposes that maternity leave for female teachers, officers and employees should be fixed in line with the latest government order and there should be a guideline for study leave of teachers.

NO CHANGE OF TUITION FEES

Under the existing law, private universities can fix tuition and other fees taking into consideration the socio-economic conditions, after securing approval of the UGC.

The draft amendment retains this provision but adds that universities will need to take approval before bringing any changes to the existing fee structures. The universities will not be able to change fees that were fixed during enrolment of students to a course till the completion of the said course.

create awareness among the people about the risks of such investments," he added.

As things stand, the police's Criminal Investigation Department has not initiated any formal investigation into MTFE as no formal complaint was received, said a top official on condition of anonymity.

"But we have started a shadow investigation," he added.

Another official of CID said they are collecting information and documents regarding the MTFE issue.

"The main responsibility of investigation and taking action falls on the central bank or BFUI since banking channels, mobile financial services and crypto were used in the scam," he added.

(Partha Pratim Bhattacharjee and Md Mehedi Hasan contributed to this report)

'Looters' must not come to power: PM

FROM PAGE 1

The premier, also Awami League president, sought votes for "boat", her party's electoral symbol, in the next general election.

She said people achieved independence and a strong economy as they voted the AL to power.

"On the other hand, they [BNP-Jamaat] were involved in looting, corruption and killing."

Hasina said the government already brought back some money which was siphoned off by two sons of BNP chief Khaleda Zia and the remaining money was frozen.

"I don't know from where they are getting money with which they have again started destruction by setting police vehicles and buses on fire," she said.

The PM called upon the expatriate Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh to join hands in making the country a developed one.

She urged them to send money home through banking channels. She also advised them not to go abroad for jobs with fake certificates.

South African unit AL President Lutfor Rahman Rupok spoke at the function.

The PM joined the reception from Hotel Radisson Blu Hotel Sandton through videoconferencing.

PM MEETS HEADS OF STATE

Hasina held bilateral meetings with the heads of state of four countries on the sidelines of the 15th BRICS summit in Johannesburg on Thursday, reports BSS.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen briefed reporters about the PM's daylong engagements.

The premier said Bangladesh has attached priority to enhancing bilateral and trade relations with the African nations

She sought investments in various

sectors from the African countries.

The bilateral meetings between Hasina and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Mozambique President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, Tanzania President Saima Suluhu and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi were held at Sandton Convention Centre.

A meeting was also held between Hasina and Dilma Vana Rousseff, president of New Development Bank, at the same venue.

During the meetings, the five dignitaries highly praised Bangladesh's remarkable development under the PM's prudent leadership, Momen said.

The foreign minister said Brazilian President Lula assured Bangladesh of all sorts of cooperation. He invited the Bangladesh premier to visit Brazil.

After the bilateral talks with Hasina, Iranian President Raisi expressed his desire to visit Bangladesh again to see in person the massive development.

During the meeting with Mozambique President Nyusi, Hasina sought investment from the African country, particularly in pharmaceuticals.

President of New Development Bank Rousseff has expressed her organisation's eagerness to provide assistance to Bangladesh, particularly in women empowerment. She said the bank has already sanctioned \$700 million for two development schemes in Bangladesh.

Hasina reached Johannesburg on August 22 to attend the 15th BRICS summit at the invitation of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, also the current chair of BRICS.

The PM is scheduled to depart Johannesburg for home today. She is expected to arrive in Dhaka tomorrow morning.

Ensure safe return

FROM PAGE 1

At last, they were expelled from their homeland by the junta in 2017.

"They burnt our houses, raped our women and committed genocide against us. We want justice," he said.

Zubair also raised a five-point demand, including repatriation, recognition of their ethnicity, safe zone for Rohingyas, and giving back their citizenship.

Another Rohingya leader Kamal Hossain said, "We want our citizenship back. We are citizens of Myanmar and it must be accepted by Myanmar. They will have to take us back with full dignity, safety and security. They should do it in coordination with the international community."

Shahid Win, a Rohingya woman, said, "Six years have already passed since we fled the country. We don't want to stay in Bangladesh anymore. We want justice for the genocide."

At least 12 more rallies were held at different camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf.

Whose responsibility is it, anyway?

FROM PAGE 1

"Had they informed the BTRC, it would have acted against that platform. No one — conned customers, law enforcement agencies, Bangladesh Bank — informed BTRC about it," he added.

The central bank denied any responsibility.

"The Bangladesh Bank is not responsible for taking any measures concerning this matter," said its spokesperson Md Mezbaul Haque.

According to the law, the jurisdiction for addressing the matter of money laundering lies within the purview of BFUI, Haque said.

Over the past year, BFUI has been working with other law enforcement agencies to tackle online gambling, betting, foreign currency and crypto trading since the last year, said its chief Md Masud Biswas.

"We are always trying to raise awareness among people through

advertisements in newspapers. The agency created a study group to reform gambling-related acts. We closed nearly 1,000 apps, websites and YouTube links related to gambling through BTRC."

However, he hasn't said whether any specific steps have been taken regarding MTFE.

"MTFE is just like a trap. People are not learning from history — this is a big challenge," he added.

Ghulam Rahman, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, thinks although the greed of the people was instrumental in falling victim to this scam, the government has a responsibility to prevent such incidents.

"Whenever a crime is committed, the government should bring those perpetrators to book," he added.

Abu Saeed Khan, senior policy fellow at LIRNEasia, echoed the same. "There was no social campaign to

DENGUE SITUATION

Nurses struggle as outbreak worsens

14 more die; 1,594 hospitalised

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

In the corridors of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), amidst the relentless wave of patients, Shapla Biswas, a nurse and a mother to an eleven-month-old, finds herself navigating the balance between duty and motherhood.

As the facility grapples with an overwhelming influx of patients, Shapla, like her fellow nurses, shoulders the weight of an extraordinary workload, particularly exacerbated by the ongoing dengue crisis which has taken 528 lives so far this year.

And she has no scope to be lenient. The mosquito-borne disease killed at least 14 people yesterday. 1594 people were also hospitalised, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Juggling her responsibilities as a nurse with the demands of her child and the absence of her husband due to work abroad, Shapla's days are a delicate dance of professional commitment and maternal devotion. Often, she entrusts her child's care to a domestic help while she takes on the night shifts.

"Sometimes my child resists staying with the maid and breaks into tears, but

the relentless pressure of my duties leaves me with no choice," she shares with this newspaper.

Within the hospital's wards, the challenges are palpable – merely four nurses per shift tend to the needs of around 100 patients daily, with the number even reaching 200 at times, she says.

Often, two nurses are occupied overseeing the process of patients' admission, while the remaining two administer essential treatments such as cannula insertions and other similar care.

Ashish Kumar Ghosh, a male nurse of ward-701, in DMCH medicine unit said there was huge pressure on Friday night as it was the date of new patients' admission in their ward.

"Among the roughly 200 patients already on the ward, we have administered an additional 38 dengue patients. It is quite difficult to give adequate care to them with so minimal resources. But we do our best," said Ashish.

Echoing the same, Md Shahed Mia, another male nurse, said even amidst such a huge workload, they cannot afford to lose their cool for a single moment as

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Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader waving at party leaders and activists at their peace rally organised in front of the ruling AL central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

DESOLATION in Daulatdia

Brothel workers going through tough times amid scarcity of clients since the opening of Padma Bridge

SUZIT DAS and NAZIBA BASHER

The opening of the Padma Bridge promises an economic boon, but for the sex workers of the country's largest brothel, right next to Daulatdia ferry terminal, it spells doom.

Only a few ferries now operate between Daulatdia and Paturia, and it means a drastic decline in the number of clients for them.

Having suffered a huge blow to their source of income, these women face the challenge of integrating back into a society that is not ready yet to accept them.

Forced into a life of despair, the women of brothels are among the most neglected and ostracised people in the country.

In most cases, they were forcefully taken and sold there at criminally young ages. Many of them have spent their entire life at the brothel and know little about life outside.

Daulatdia brothel in Rajbari has been "home" to over 1,000 such women.

Julie Akhtar, 25, has been there for four and a half years. Every month, she has to send her family of five at least Tk 10,000 from whatever she earns at the brothel.

However, her life has taken a difficult turn since the opening of the Padma Bridge.

According to the Paturia-Daulatdia terminal authorities, before the Padma bridge opened, around 20-22 ferries would ply the route; now the number has come down to 11 or 12.

The number of vehicles using the ferries too has decreased by 75 percent.



How are we to expect that a society, which has always shunned and stigmatised sex workers, will help them get integrated back into it again? We can't. It's sad to say so, but if these women come out of Daulatdia in search of alternative work, they will have to starve.

Jahanara Khatun, Naripokkho

Most of Julie's customers were those who took the ferries. And now, like her, hundreds of them are without clients – none of them knows what the future holds.

During a recent visit, one of these correspondents saw most of the women sitting idly in front of their rooms. Some were seen cooking, the others roaming about.

They all had the same thing to say – the Padma Bridge will likely move the country miles forward, but it came as "a curse" to them.

Farida Parvin, 36, said, "I have been working here for 16 years and I have never seen such a situation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we had a lot of help from different individuals, organisations and the government. But now nobody comes to help us.

"I have to pay Tk 200 per day for house rent. I have to send money back home, where my mother and daughter, a 10th grader, live. The situation has become so dire that I don't know how to pay for even the basic necessities."

Moni Begum, general secretary of Daulatdia's Helpless Female Unity Organisation, said, "It's true the situation is grim. It isn't just because of the Padma Bridge, but people of the low-income brackets [who account for most of the customers] are also facing financial woes due to rising commodity prices.

"Some of the workers have already left the brothel in search of an alternative income source."

Even during this Eid-ul-Fitr, when many people are expected to use the Daulatdia ferry terminal, the number of customers remained scanty.

"Some people did come by during the few days of Eid, but the numbers weren't that high."

Mukta Akter, also 50, said, "Before the opening of the bridge, thousands of

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IOM urges support for Rohingyas, local hosts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) yesterday called on the international community to ensure much-needed humanitarian assistance and long-term support for Rohingya refugees and their host communities.

"As the Rohingya crisis marks its sixth year in Bangladesh, the plight of nearly one million refugees remains unchanged, trapped in a cycle of uncertainty and vulnerability," IOM said in a statement.

On August 25, 2017, hundreds of thousands of people fled violence in Rakhine, Myanmar, to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Since then, Cox's Bazar has been home to the world's largest refugee settlement, hosting almost one million refugees – half of whom are children, IOM said.

This year, humanitarian organisations have appealed for \$876 million in aid for around 1.47 million people, including both Rohingya refugees and local communities.

However, the funds raised for this Joint Response Plan had only reached nearly 29 percent of the target as of the middle of this year.

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Of shattered dreams and life under tarpaulin

Rohingyas yearn for dignified return to 'homes'

MOKAMMEL SHUVO and PORIMOL PALMA

It was October 2017. A 13-year-old Kahed Ullah had to leave his home in Buthidaung, Rakhine with 13 other family members in the face of a brutal crackdown by the Myanmar military.

The memories of brutalities are still fresh in Kahed's mind, who is 19 now.

Though once owners of fertile lands, destiny forced them to be refugees.

After crossing the border, they first took shelter at a makeshift camp in Teknaf. "We had to depend totally on relief for food, water, medicine. I never lived in such a vulnerable situation, but I had to accept it," Kahed told The Daily Star.

Jahed was in sixth grade when they had to flee. Now, he finds himself in the role of a volunteer for an NGO within a Teknaf camp.

"I wanted to be educated and do a job to pursue a good living. That dream is now shattered. Now our only aim in life is survival," Kahed said.

"I still want to return to my homeland, reclaim our lost property, and rebuild for a better future. We are all anticipating the arrival of that hopeful day," he added.

Although the government has taken some initiatives to improve the Rohingya refugees living conditions, their struggle still persists.

According to UN officials, about 300,000 Rohingya children in the camps have been enrolled for education under the Myanmar curriculum.

The government has recently launched vocational training to develop skills of the Rohingya youths so that when they return to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Homemaker answers DU emergency calls!

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Imagine if you are a student of Dhaka University. It is the night before your application deadline, and you are confused about how to complete the online examination form. You call the designated helpline numbers from the DU website and to your surprise a housemaker living in Sunamganj, who has no idea what you are talking about, greets you.

This might sound too absurd to be true, but some students have actually gone through the experience recently.

In 2019, DU introduced some digital services for the convenience of students.

In one such attempt, the exam controller's office listed three emergency contact numbers on its website for troubleshooting. If any student faces problems with academic issues like collecting admit cards, transcripts, or filling out forms, he or she could dial the numbers to seek online solutions.

However, students allege that, when they call the first listed emergency number, a woman from Shalla of Sunamganj receives, instead of a DU official.

The second number is unresponsive and the third number is not in service.

As none of the numbers work, students said they have to visit offices on the campus to get the jobs done.

One such student, who wants to collect his transcripts for his study abroad, said he called the numbers failing to fill up the form online.

Requesting anonymity, he told this correspondent,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A DANGEROUS TURN... A CNG-run auto-rickshaw topples over after attempting a swift turn near the roundabout on Minto Road in Dhaka yesterday. The vehicle had three passengers in the back while one sat with the driver. *Inset*, Police and locals rescue the driver and passengers from the vehicle.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



IFJ condemns assault on two journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) yesterday condemned the alleged assault on two journalists in separate events on August 21 by Bangladesh Chhatra League activists and urged authorities to launch an immediate investigation.

In a statement published on its website, IFJ said university-based journalists in Bangladesh have been subjected to an increasing number of attacks and threats while on campus.

"Student organisations have been responsible for a growing trend of assaults, threats, and abuse against university journalists and media workers," it said.

It urged authorities to investigate the assaults of these journalists and to guarantee the safety of journalists and media workers in Bangladesh.

According to the statement, several Jahangirnagar University

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Of shattered dreams

FROM PAGE 3
Myanmar, they can earn a decent livelihood.

"If the young Rohingya populations are not educated and trained, they will remain frustrated. So, we are focusing on education and vocational trainings," a UN official told The Daily Star.

Md Hossain, a community leader in the camp, says he is pleased with the educational facilities provided for the children, but the lack of skills training and a source of income is a serious issue for them.

He said the food ration for the Rohingyas has been cut down to Tk 840 from Tk 1200 per person [S12-S8] this year.

"Ration cuts had put us in a tight spot. We had to cut fish and meat from our meal. I am struggling to run my nine-member family properly," said the 42-year-old Hossain.

Amidst the sprawling expanse of the camp's cramped shelters, Hossain expressed the profound weariness that accompanies such living

conditions. The notion of persisting under tarpaulin roofs for years appears untenable to him and his fellow displaced residents. "How can one live like this for years?" he asked.

He expressed disappointment at what he said was the 'absence of international pressure' on the Myanmar government to secure their citizenship, ethnic identity, and safety within their ancestral Rakhine territory. "We want our recognition and citizenship. We want to go back to Myanmar and live a life with dignity," he said, echoing the collective yearning for a restoration of their rights and a life of honour.

Mohammed Zubair, chairman of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights, said though some improvements have been made in the camps, the challenges of living as refugees remain a daunting task for many.

"Bangladesh is not our country. Our country is Arakan. We want to go back there," he added.

Homemaker

FROM PAGE 3
"To get university transcripts, you have to apply online. I couldn't do it with the new system, and when I called one of the three listed numbers, a woman answered the phone. The rest of the numbers are non-operational."

Contacted by The Daily Star, the housemaker from Sunamganj said she has no connection with DU, but said she frequently receives calls from students frequently.

She said she bought the SIM card 2 months ago and registered it to her name.

Surprisingly, the woman said she didn't have any bitter memories regarding the calls.

"I am quite used to it now. When someone from DU calls, I inform them that they have dialled 'wrong number', and they usually hang up," she added.

This correspondent tried to contact Bahalul Haque Chowdhury, the controller of examinations, DU, several times but failed. He did not respond to any text messages either.

Contacted, DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, "It is unacceptable. We are looking into the matter and will inform the respective authority."

IFJ condemns assault

FROM PAGE 3
BCL activists chased a student into a campus guest hall on August 21.

United News of Bangladesh JU correspondent and media studies student Asif Al Amin, then sitting outside the guest hall, went to investigate the incident upon hearing a commotion.

Suspecting the journalist had been recording them, the activists allegedly proceeded to assault Al Amin, despite him

identifying himself. The attackers are allegedly affiliated with JU BCL.

In a separate incident, Daily Ajker Darpan and bartabazar.com Patuakhali district correspondent, Md Nayan Mridha, was attacked and injured on the evening of August 21 while returning to the local Press Club.

Around 7:30pm, a group of men, allegedly members of a local BCL chapter, began to verbally abuse the journalist and then assaulted him.

IOM urges support

FROM PAGE 3
This shortfall underscores the urgent need for unwavering and consistent financial support for the refugees, who almost entirely rely on humanitarian assistance.

"The crucial funding that sustains the hopes and aspirations of these refugees is dwindling, casting a

shadow of uncertainty over their future," said IOM Bangladesh's Chief of Mission, Abdusattor Esoev.

"The international community must reaffirm its steadfast commitment to these vulnerable people, as well as to the Bangladeshi communities that have stood in solidarity over the years," he added.

Schoolboy among 4

FROM PAGE 5
man came in front of the vehicle, leading to the accident, he said.

Locals rescued the injured from the spot and they were later admitted to Ishwardi Upazila Health Complex and Pabna General Hospital, the OC added.

In Bagerhat, a motorcyclist and his two pillion passengers were killed after a truck hit their motorbike on the Dhaka-Mongla highway in Rampal upazila on Thursday night.

The deceased were Enamul, 26, and Arif, 27,

of Belai village in Rampal; and Saidul Rahman, 25, of Lakhpur area of Fakirhat upazila. All three of them were employees of a local fishery, said SM Ashrafur Alam, officer-in-charge of Rampal Police Station.

The truck hit their bike in Tatulia Bridge area, killing them instantly, he said.

On information, Katakali Highway Police, fire service, and Rampal police rushed to the spot, recovered the bodies and sent those to Bagerhat District Hospital for autopsy, the OC added.

2 workers die

FROM PAGE 5
from the ninth floor of the 10-storey under-construction building of Sheikh Russell Hall on the campus, after the rope they were using to work tore apart, leaving one of them dead on the spot and two others critically injured.

The injured were first taken to Pabna General Hospital and then shifted to RMCH where another worker succumbed to his injuries, the OC said.

The bodies of the deceased have been kept

at Pabna General Hospital morgue.

Confirming the incident, PUST Proctor Dr Kamal Hossain said the construction work of the building is going on under a project and officials concerned of the project may shed light on how the incident occurred.

This correspondent could not reach project director Azizur Rahman and the university's executive engineer Farid Ahmed for comments over phone, despite several attempts.

Risk of landslides

FROM PAGE 5
off. The vehicle, however, was later released for a fine of Tk 30,000.

However, hill razing is continuing right under the nose of the local administration and authorities concerned, Konor Mia said.

"We have recently held a meeting in this regard. I urged the construction of a gate on the road to stop the trucks. If they still cannot be stopped, legal action will be taken," said Jaychandi Union Parishad Chairman Abdur Rob Mahabub.

Contacted, Chan Mia refuted the allegations made against him and claimed someone wanted to tarnish his reputation.

Section 6 (Kha) of the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995 prohibits illegal cutting or razing of hills and hillocks, except for national interest with the necessary permission of the Department of Environment.

The maximum penalty for illegal hill cutting is 10 years of imprisonment and a fine of Tk 10 lakh.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary (Sylhet chapter)

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Caught in the 'easy money' scam

FROM PAGE 5
Daily Star, "An investigation needs time." He didn't give any further details.

The Daily Star talked to a few victims of the MTFE scam at the city's Ahmedpur area who revealed, seeking anonymity, that they started investing in the company's app in April.

"We're ashamed," said one of the victims, adding that some of them managed to earn some profits before the app completely disappeared with all their investments.

However, they refused to disclose further information fearing legal repercussions and social stigma.

THE CASE
A lawyer named Md Zahurul Islam filed a public interest case on July 23 under the Digital Security Act with the Cyber Tribunal of Rajshahi, alleging that MTFE had defrauded many individuals in the division and had been operating without the approval of Bangladesh Bank.

Citing a newspaper report, the lawyer alleged that MTFE even opened an office at Laxmipur area of the city and Sabuj, a youth, ran it under the nose of local Rajpara police station.

The case named another youth, Rubel of Durgapur, who lured hundreds of people to invest in MTFE.

The lawyer alleged Rubel of earning commissions from the investments made through him.

"If one brings 100 investments, he qualifies to open an office and enjoys the post of CEO," read the case statement citing the newspaper report which

published Rubel's quote.

"In this way, hundreds of people are falling into traps of MTFE by investing money in the dream of becoming a millionaire overnight," the statement added.

"Besides MTFE, many people were cheated by investing in several other apps. Such apps allow people to invest until it disappears one day," Islam told this correspondent.

Take the case of Sabuj, Liton and Eklas of Rajshahi for example. They invested roughly Tk 20 lakh in the Ultima Wallet app and received payments ranging from Tk 10,000 to Tk 20,000 a few times before the app was shut down in June.

Sabuj Ali, a victim, filed a case with Boalia police station in this regard on June 26. So far, police have arrested six people in connection.

Before that, many people in the city were cheated through one Muvi app, the case description says.

THE PLAYBOOK
MTFE 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 three days a week. To attract new participants, commissions are dangled as incentives.

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

About one and a half months ago, Hasan became acquainted with the app through a friend.

"It offered a 39 dollar profit each week for investing 501 dollar. At the beginning of August, it suddenly stopped paying money. At that time, they told us that the app is under maintenance. But since Thursday, my balance in the app has turned to minus."

Like him, there are thousands of people in Comilla, Noakhali and Rajshahi who lost hundreds of crores, he said.

Around five

FROM PAGE 5
MTFE, a so-called Dubai-based trading company, introduces itself as a trading service provider for online investment in foreign exchange, commodities, stocks, stock indexes and other products.

The CID said that MTFE launched a massive campaign through Facebook and YouTube saying that it is a easy way of earning income sitting at home, by which many investors got attracted.

Hundreds of Bangladeshi investors are now fearing that they may lose a big amount of money as MTFE has recently stopped providing payment to investors.

The CID said that not only MTFE, similar app-based multi-level marketing and cryptocurrency schemes are operating in Bangladesh illegally, and people should be cautious and alert to not get scammed by the illegal business.

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The appointment will be given subject to approval of the Honorable Chancellor of the universities and the tenure will be for 4 (four) years from the date of joining.
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Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology
141-142, Love Road, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208

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Secretary, Board of Trustees
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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Brahmanbaria
Phone-0851-59632
eebra@rhd.gov.bd
Memo No-35.01.1213.406.14.259.21-২০২৩ Date-২৪/০৮/২০২৩
e-Tenders are invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, RHD, Road Division, Brahmanbaria for the procurement of :
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1. 01/e-gp/EE/RHD/ Brahmanbaria/ 2023-2024 865194 Widening & Footpath at Ch. 00+288m to Ch. 00+493m = 205.00m (1st (p) km) of Brahmanbaria Town Portion Road (N-103) under Road Division, Brahmanbaria during the year 2023-2024.
2. 02/e-gp/EE/RHD/ Brahmanbaria/ 2023-2024 865195 Supplying of P.J bricks and local sand (F.M.O.80) for repairing of different Roads of Brahmanbaria Road Sub-Division under Road Division, Brahmanbaria during the year 2023-2024.
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(Mir Nizam Uddin Ahmed)
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GD-1294

MTFE SCAM

Around five lakh might be victims: CID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around five lakh people might have been scammed by the cyber ponzi scheme Metaverse Foreign Exchange (MTFE), losing several thousand crores of taka, suspect the Criminal Investigation Department of police.

Most of the victims are from Dhaka, Barishal, Rajshahi, Cumilla, Naogaon, Kushtia, Brahmanbaria and Satkhira, said CID following primary investigation.

The aggrieved are advised to contact the CID Cyber Support Center to inform and report the fraudsters, said CID media wing additional police superintendent Azad Rahman.

They may contact through CID's Cyber Police Centre Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/cpcidbdpolice/>), through email: cyber@police.gov.bd, contact at mobile number +8801320010148 and national emergency hotline 999.

CID's special police superintendent for Financial Crime unit, Basir Uddin, said that they have started a money laundering inquiry over the MTFE embezzlement.

"We came to know about this matter recently. We are gathering information from media and other sources," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

PRAYER TIMING		AUGUST 26			
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 4:30	12:45	4:45	6:33	8:00	
JAMAAAT 5:05	1:15	5:00	6:36	8:30	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					



Illegal hill cutting in Jaychandi union of Moulvibazar has left the area desolate. A syndicate operating in the area is razing the hill to sell soil and stones. As a consequence of their activities, the risk of landslides has mounted. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

HILL RAZING IN MOULVIBAZAR

Risk of landslides mount amid monsoon

MINTU DESHWARA

Risk of hill collapse and landslides amid monsoon mounts in Jaychandi union in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila as hill razing continues unabated in the area.

While the activity has numerous adverse impacts on the environment, there are still no visible measures from the authorities concerned to stop hill cutting and prevent any potential disaster.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent saw a local syndicate razing and levelling hillocks and mounds of around 20 feet in height next to a road in union's Panchpir Jalai area, disregarding environmental laws. They also sell the soil and stones illegally.

Seeking anonymity, some locals alleged that a local syndicate led by one Chan Mia of area Number 10 in the union is involved in the hill razing activities, while some government officials are on their payroll.

Local ward member Md Manu Mia said the syndicate members from the neighbouring area are cutting soil from the hillocks every day after midnight.

They then transport the soil and stones using trucks and sell those in different places with the help of some locals.

The syndicate is so strong that most of the locals do not dare to speak against them. They also threatened them in the past, said Goni Mia, a resident.

The risk of landslides has increased manifolds and may occur at any time due to rainfall in the ongoing monsoon, said Konor Mia, another local.

Hill razing is continuing right under the nose of the local administration and authorities concerned.

KONOR MIA

If landslides close roads, it will result in immense suffering for locals, he added. Besides, the presence of a mosque next to the hillock raises the possibility of a worse disaster, he added.

Two months ago, government officials went to the Bijaya Bazar area and seized a vehicle with hill soil after being tipped

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Caught in the 'easy money' scam

How ponzi schemes like MTFE operated freely in Rajshahi

ANWAR ALI

The lure of earning easy money is often too much for a common person to resist. This is where ponzi schemes like Metaverse Foreign Exchange Group (MTFE) come in.

Like any fraudulent company, they promised high returns to potential investors and offered unusually high returns on their investments in a short span of time.

They then disappeared into thin air, leaving lakhs of investors

high and dry.

Evading law enforcers and relevant authorities, this fraudulent company also operated freely in Rajshahi just like other parts of the country, for four months, until the end of July, deceiving many unsuspecting individuals in the meantime.

The local representatives of the Dubai based organisation went underground after a case was filed against the company on July 23.

On the same day, the Cyber Tribunal of Rajshahi ordered

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP), Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to launch a joint investigation against these fraudsters.

However, several victims have alleged that the representatives of MTFE remained active all over Rajshahi till August 17, when the company app collapsed and any trace of the organisation suddenly disappeared from the web, along with hundreds and thousands of money invested by

individuals willing to find a 'short cut' to success.

They alleged that despite knowing about this group, police only became active when the case was reported by several prominent media outlets, which resulted in the arrest of two suspects on Thursday- Debedranath Saha, 43, of Rajshahi and Latiful Bari, 42, of Naogaon.

When asked about such accusations, RMP Commissioner Biplob Bijoy Talukder told The

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Schoolboy among 4 dead in road crashes

STAR REPORT

Four persons died and 10 others were injured in road accidents in two districts during the last two days, according to reports from our local correspondents.

In Pabna, a human hauler carrying passengers skidded off Pabna-Pakshey road in Mohadebpur area under Ishwardi upazila, killing a 10th-grader on the spot and leaving 10 others injured yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abir Hossain, 15, from Boktarpur village in the upazila, said Arbinda Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station.

The driver lost control over the steering as a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

AL, BNP hinder democracy

Says Zaker Party chairman

DU CORRESPONDENT

The two main political parties are creating obstacles to establishing institutionalised democracy, alleged Zaker Party Chairman Khwaja Mostafa Amir Faisal Mujaddedi yesterday.

He made the remarks during the party's national council at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan.

Awami League and BNP are confrontational and malicious, he said.

"Democracy is not established through dictatorship. Democracy is founded on its own rules..." he further added.

A partial committee was formed during the council, with Mujaddedi elected as party chairman and Shameem Haider as secretary-general.

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GID-1293

2 workers die after falling off PUST building

One injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two construction workers died and another was critically injured after the trio fell from an under-construction building on Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) campus yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Tuhin Hossain, 25, of Chapainwabganj and Asadul Ali, 35, of Godagari upazila in Rajshahi.

The injured, Rabiul Awal, 30, of Chapainwabganj, is being treated at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in critical condition, police said.

Kripa Shindhu Bala, officer-in-charge of Pabna Sadar Police Station, said the three fell to the ground

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Sudan war threatens to ‘consume entire country’: UN

AFP, Geneva

War and hunger threaten to “consume” Sudan where hundreds of thousands of malnourished children are at risk of dying, as fighting between rival generals rages on, the United Nations warned yesterday.

The conflict between the army under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo broke out on April 15.

“The war in Sudan is fuelling a humanitarian emergency of epic proportions,” said Martin Griffiths, under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator.

“This viral conflict — and the hunger, disease and displacement left in its wake — now threatens to consume the entire country.”

Conservative estimates from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project say nearly 5,000 people have been killed.

But the battles have prevented the recovery of the bodies of many others thought to have died.

In the four months since fighting broke out, more than 4.6 million people have been forced to flee their homes, according to UN figures.

“The longer the fighting continues, the more devastating its impact. Some places have already run out of food,” Griffiths’ statement said.

“Hundreds of thousands of children are severely malnourished and at imminent risk of death if left untreated.”

He said that in Kadugli, in South Kordofan state, “food stocks have been fully depleted, as clashes and road blockages prevent aid workers from reaching the hungry.”



PHOTO: AFP

Civil society activists and members of the Christian community hold placards as they take part in a protest rally in Hyderabad, India yesterday, against ongoing ethnic violence in the north-eastern Manipur state.

HAWAII WILDFIRE Officials release list of hundreds missing

REUTERS

Hawaii officials released the names of 338 people still missing more than two weeks after the deadliest US wildfire in more than a century swept through the resort town of Lahaina.

The list, compiled by the FBI, includes only people whose full names are known and who were reported missing by someone for

whom authorities have verified contact information.

The death toll from the August 8 fire on the island of Maui stands at 115, but officials have warned that figure is likely to rise substantially, with search teams still sifting through the ashes.

In releasing the names late on Thursday, authorities urged anyone who knows that someone on the list is safe, or has additional

information that might help locate them, to contact the FBI.

Officials also encouraged relatives to submit the names of anyone else still missing and to provide DNA samples to assist in identifying remains.

The number of families that have provided DNA is lower than authorities had hoped thus far, making a difficult job even more challenging.

Govt resorting to torture to suppress BNP

FROM PAGE 12

love the country. They love money. They have looted money, amassed wealth, and laundered thousands of crores of taka abroad.”

He said people have been “economically impaired” due to the abnormal price hike of essentials. “They are also becoming politically impaired because of the killings and disappearances.”

Referring to recent media reports on India’s stance on Bangladesh’s general elections, Abbas said India should make friendship with the people rather than particular political parties like Awami League and BNP.

Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, another BNP standing committee member, said, “We are not afraid of death anymore. Don’t try to point guns at us. Nobody will retreat in the face of your [the government] firing.”

Another procession by BNP’s north city unit began from the Shyamali intersection and ended at Mohammadpur Bus Stand.

BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, who led the procession, said Awami League has now become an “opponent

of the people”. He said nobody can win by going against the people.

Terming AL a “militant party”, Khasru said the government has been staging drama over militancy to come to power again.

“Nobody believes in their drama over militancy anymore. Those days are gone. This game will no longer work. Awami League itself is militant,” he added.

Khasru said the BNP’s movement will continue and it won’t stop in the face of suppression. “This fascist government will be removed through the movement.”

About Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s tour of South Africa, he said, “She went to South Africa spending public money. She wanted to make the country a member of BRICS, but she couldn’t. Instead, she sought votes for Awami League and rebuked BNP.”

Braving rain, thousands of BNP leaders and activists joined both the processions, which began around 4:00pm and ended around 5:30pm.

Carrying banners, fests, placards, and portraits of the party’s top leaders, they waved black flags and chanted anti government slogans.

Roads stretching from Nayapaltan to Dayaganj and Shyamali to Mohammadpur were crowded with BNP activists, causing disruptions to traffic in and around those areas.

A large number of law enforcers were deployed to avoid any untoward incidents.

Meanwhile, the BNP’s 36 like-minded parties also brought out mass processions in the capital yesterday as part of their simultaneous movement to press for the one point demand.

ROHINGYA CRISIS

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, joint secretary general of BNP, at a press conference yesterday evening said the government has failed to address the Rohingya crisis.

He called on the government to ensure better life for the Rohingyas and their quick repatriation by taking into account the concerns and recommendations made by different stakeholders, including human rights organisations and international NGOs.

The press conference was held at the BNP’s central office on the occasion of the Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day.

tourist spots in the district. I could not believe my ears when I heard over the phone about the death of my brother.”

OC Firoz said they primarily suspected that over speeding might have caused the accident.

He said police detained the truck driver for interrogation.

Weekend trip ends in tragedy

FROM PAGE 12

upazila; Raju Mia, 37, of Jamalpur’s Sarishabari upazila; and Md Nasir, 28, the driver of the microbus.

Abdul Hamid, commercial manager of SB Knitting, told The Daily Star that the microbus was carrying 11 employees of the company to Sylhet.

Firoz Talukdar, officer-in-charge of

Shibpur Police Station, said the four injured received primary treatment at Narsingdi District Hospital. Later, they were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for better treatment.

Adif Khan, younger brother of deceased Al Amin, said, “As I work at a resort in Sylhet, I planned to show my brother and his colleagues some

Trump gets a mugshot

FROM PAGE 12

which was Trump’s favourite bullhorn until he was banned from it after the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the US Capitol by a mob of his supporters.

New owner Elon Musk reinstated Trump on X in November of last year,

but Trump stayed away and posted instead on Truth Social. This was Trump’s first post since 2021 on what had been Twitter.

Trump was given the inmate number “POI135809” by the Fulton County Jail, which listed his height as six foot three inches (1.9 meters), his weight as

215 pounds (97 kilograms) and his hair colour as “Blond or Strawberry.”

The billionaire has been criminally indicted four times since April, setting the stage for a year of unprecedented drama as he tries to juggle multiple court appearances and another White House campaign.

It’ll give fresh momentum to bilateral ties

FROM PAGE 12

cooperation, the two leaders vowed to further strengthen the integration of development strategies, deepen practical cooperation in various fields, and enhance all-round exchanges, so as to bring more benefits to the two peoples.

During this meeting held on the sidelines of the BRICS summit, Bangladesh showed interest in strengthening cooperation

with China in the bloc and other multilateral mechanisms.

The Chinese leader congratulated Bangladesh on joining the New Development Bank and vowed to enhance coordination and cooperation with Bangladesh in multilateral affairs to safeguard international fairness and justice and serve the common interests of developing countries.

“From the minutes of the meeting,

all we read is mutual support and joint cooperation, with no hint of any difference,” said Yao, stressing that interactions between top leaders provide political and strategic guidance for the development of bilateral relations, the importance of which would never be exaggerated.

“It is high on my agenda to facilitate more in-person visits and meetings of this kind in the days to come,” he added.

done much; now I request you to return home. But if you try to hatch any conspiracy, we will resist it with iron hands.”

Among others, AL presidium member Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Organising Secretary SM Kamal Hossain and executive member Sanzida Khanam spoke at the programme.

Desolation in Daulatdia

FROM PAGE 3

vehicles would pass through the ferry terminals and the drivers waiting for two-three days would account for most of our daily earnings. That situation has changed completely....

“Even this Eid, though some people came, most of them were tourists. Just because they came does not mean we were able to earn anything. Only some of the younger sex workers were able to earn a little at that time.”

Farida Parvin, president of Daulatdia Obohelito Mahila-Shishu Unnayan Sangstha (Neglected Women and Children Development Organisation), said, “There are 1,420 listed sex workers in this brothel and all of them are suffering for a lack of work.”

About what could be done for the sex workers, Aleya Akhter Lily, president of Sex Workers Network, Bangladesh, said, “The first thing they need is counselling. They are breaking down mentally due to the economic distress. Through counselling, they should be made mentally strong enough to pursue other professions.”

Zakir Hossain, upazila nirbahi officer of Goalanda in Rajbari, said, “We are continuing all kinds of activities through NGOs at the brothel. If any of them wants to venture out and return to a normal life, we are ready to give them training and other forms of assistance.”

However, the question remains: Will society take them back and let them live “a normal life”?

GETTING BACK INTO SOCIETY

Jahanara Khatun, member, volunteer coordinator and programme manager at Naripokkho, an organisation that works for the rights of sex workers, said, “How are we to expect that a society, which has always shunned and stigmatised sex workers, will

help them get integrated back into it again? We can’t. It’s sad to say so, but if these women come out of Daulatdia in search of alternative work, they will have to starve.

“We must hold the government accountable and responsible first. Sex work is not declared illegal in the country, and even in 1999 when sex workers were removed from a brothel, the High Court ruled that it was unconstitutional and human rights must be guaranteed for all sex workers.”

In an earlier discussion with The Daily Star, experts had said that though article 18 (2) of the constitution stipulates that the “state shall take effective preventive measures against prostitution and gambling”, an adult person has the option to declare his or her entry into the profession before a magistrate.

“Nowhere in the constitution is the profession declared illegal directly,” a former director of the Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers’ Association told the discussion.

Jahanara, who has recently concluded a Naripokkho programme on the media’s role in ensuring the rights of sex workers, added, “Most of these women are always stamped with the seal of being a sex worker and that is how they are always viewed and treated, no matter how much they try and venture outside.

“Removing this seal and ensuring that these women can live respectable lives and are given their basic rights irrespective of their current or previous professions is a responsibility the government must take.”

She concluded that unless the society changes its views towards sex workers and the government raises adequate awareness, the women of Daulatdia, or any of the brothels in

the country, will never be able to get out of this desperate situation.

Joya Sikder, founder of trans rights organisation Shomporker Noya Shetu, researcher at icddr, b, and former president of the Sex Workers’ Network, further elaborated, “Most of the people who are leaving Daulatdia are middle-aged women, and their age is what will make it tough for them to find new work.

“On the other hand, finding a home will be a huge challenge. Once the people in a neighbourhood find out she was a sex worker, they will mentally torture her and want her out of the area.

“We have heard people claim sex workers to be ‘dirty objects’. That’s our society – we hate sex workers during the day, but we secretly love them at night.”

Joya also believes the biggest actors in this regard have to be the state and the society.

“Teaching the society to treat sex workers with dignity is something the government and all other authorities concerned must do. We have had instances where sex workers were given dignified funerals. Steps like this will make a difference.

“Meanwhile, the state should remember that these women also pay rent tax, and that way the state is also benefitting from them. It must treat every tax-paying citizen equally.”

Abul Hashem, assistant director of the social services department in Rajbari, said, “Since there is no legal recognition of the profession of sex workers yet, there is not much we can do to help them. However, we are sympathetic to the situation they are facing. We are working with some local and international NGOs to help the children of the workers.”

Inflation hurting Modi

FROM PAGE 12

lower house of parliament if elections are held now, it said.

National elections are due by May 2024, though several state polls are expected to be held before then. Promising change, Modi swept to power in 2014, and he has consolidated his hold since with welfare economics, a focus on boosting infrastructure and aggressive Hindu nationalism.

Rivals say the government has ensured that the BJP’s line dominates mainstream newspapers, television news channels and social media with its combativeness, often drowning out critical voices.

India’s sticky retail inflation hit a 15-month high of 7.44 percent in July, pushed by soaring food price inflation which rose to 11.5 percent, its highest in more than three-and-a-half years.

India is the world’s fastest growing large economy but an unemployment rate that has stayed around 8 percent in recent months is considered a major challenge.

Economists say India needs to create 70 million new jobs over the next 10 years but only 24 million will likely be created.

The India Today survey, conducted twice a year, said 59 percent of the more than 160,000 people polled between July 15 and August 14 said they were satisfied with the performance of Modi’s government, down from 67 percent in the previous survey in January.

Nurses struggle

FROM PAGE 3

their work involves dealing with critical patients.

Like Shapla, Kumar and Shahed, the situation is more or less the same for nurses of different government hospitals.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital said nurses play a vital role in the treatment of dengue patients as all the follow-up based on the instruction of a doctor has to be maintained properly by them.

They have to constantly check pressure, pulse, temperature and some other things, he added.

However, they are struggling to keep up amid a scarcity of nurses in government facilities. This is unfair,” he added.

“In most government hospitals, there are usually three nurses per 100 patients,” he confirmed.

G20 SUMMIT

Putin has no plans to attend meet in person

REUTERS, Moscow

The Kremlin said yesterday that Russian President Vladimir Putin had no plans to attend the G20 summit in India in September in person.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued an arrest warrant for Putin accusing him of war crimes in Ukraine, something the Kremlin strongly denies. This means he risks arrest when travelling abroad.

This week he attended a gathering of leaders from the BRICS group of emerging economies in South Africa by video link.

Meanwhile, India hopes to convince members of the G20 grouping of nations to find amicable solutions to geopolitical issues, its G20 summit negotiator Amitabh Kant said yesterday.



Syrian artists paint a mural on the wall of a house previously destroyed in an airstrike in Binnish in the rebel-held northwestern province of Idlib, showing an image of late Wagenr leader Yevgeny Prigozhin and denouncing Russia's military actions in their country as well as in Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Myanmar plans to curb rice exports

Aims to control domestic prices

REUTERS

Myanmar is planning to temporarily restrict rice exports to control rising domestic prices, an official of its rice industry body said yesterday, joining India, the world's biggest shipper of the staple amid tightening world supplies.

"We will temporarily limit rice exports for about 45 days from the end of this month," a senior member of the Myanmar Rice Federation told Reuters, adding that rising domestic prices was prompting authorities to limit exports.

Myanmar is the world's fifth-largest rice exporter, selling more than 2 million tonnes a year, according to US Department of Agriculture data.

Last month, India banned exports of non-basmati white rice, reducing supplies on the global market by about 10 tonnes, or 20 percent.

"Myanmar is not a big player in the rice market like India or Thailand but the restrictions are coming at a time when supplies are tightening," said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trade house.

"This will send a bullish signal to the market and increase the concerns of buyers," the dealer added.

BRICS expansion could hinder bloc's geopolitical aspirations

Analysts say admitting more members will make agreement more difficult

REUTERS, Johannesburg

When a British economist coined the BRIC acronym two decades ago to denote Brazil, Russia, India and China, he didn't have in mind an alliance that would seek to challenge Western dominance in global affairs.

Jim O'Neill, then a Goldman Sachs banker, was writing about investment opportunities in nations set to become among the world's top emerging markets.

The BRIC countries started meeting formally in 2014 to improve economic cooperation, and added South Africa in 2010 to become BRICS. The bloc now seems to have loftier geopolitical ambitions.

In a surprise decision at a summit this week in Johannesburg the group invited Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina and the United Arab Emirates into the club.

The move is aimed at increasing BRICS' clout as a champion of so-called Global South nations, many of which feel unfairly treated by international institutions dominated by the United States and other wealthy Western nations.

But expansion will likely mean more disagreements in a club that already struggles to make decisions because of the need for consensus. Even a joint declaration

on expansion got stuck in eleventh-hour negotiations on Wednesday over the criteria for admitting new members.

"It's definitely going to be a problem if they are going to do everything by consensus. You need to change the model ... to majority vote," said Patrick Lukusa, a specialist in international cooperation at Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand.



"There are already differences between the five on the common currency. What happens if you have 10 more?"

Pledges by BRICS leaders to defend non-Western countries' interests are part of a gradual shift in emphasis by the group from economics to geopolitics.

"Make no mistake: this is not just about trade. This is about the fragmentation and political polarisation we are seeing in the

world," said Daniel Silke, director of the South Africa-based Political Futures consultancy, noting that China had cited threats of a new Cold War with Washington as a reason to expand.

Yet BRICS nations have a long way to go to transform themselves into a unified global organisation that can effectively challenge Western domination of international bodies such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.

Its heavyweight members, China and India, are often at odds: New Delhi is more friendly to the West and has military deals with the United States, while it is in sometimes violent conflict with Beijing over their Himalayan border.

For Russian President Vladimir Putin the bloc is a forum to jab at the West that has sought to isolate Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine. In a videolink address on Thursday, he took aim at Western powers whose "neo-liberalism" he said threatened the emergence of a multi-polar world.

His remarks appeared to contradict Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who said in a social media broadcast while at the summit on Tuesday that BRICS was not meant "to be a counterpoint to the G7, G20 or the United States."

'Absolute lie' Kremlin rejects Prigozhin killed on its orders

AFP, Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday rejected rumours it had ordered the death of Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, presumed to have died in a plane crash two months after leading a mutiny in Russia.

Speculation the Kremlin may have been involved has swirled since Wednesday, when a private jet reportedly carrying Prigozhin crashed between Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

The rumours have been voiced by Western countries, Kremlin critics and even suggested by some pro-Kremlin figures.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described the incident as "tragic" to reporters yesterday and acknowledged public discourse around foul play and possible involvement of the authorities.

"Of course, in the West, this speculation is being presented from a certain angle. All of this is an absolute lie," Peskov said, urging patience and adding that ongoing probes would reveal facts around the fatal crash.

Russian officials have opened an investigation into air traffic violations but have so far not disclosed details of the probe or the incident.

Ukraine fires missile towards Moscow

Sends 42 drones to Crimea; Russian air defences destroyed all

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia said yesterday Ukraine had fired a missile towards Moscow and attacked Crimea with 42 drones, in what would be one of the biggest known coordinated Ukrainian air attacks to date on Russian-held territory.

The Russian defence ministry said a modified S-200 missile had been shot down over the Kaluga region, which borders the Moscow region. The city of Kaluga is less than 200 km (124 miles) from Moscow.

"The missile was detected and destroyed by air defences over the territory of the Kaluga region," the defence ministry said. There were no casualties, said Kaluga governor Vladislav Shapsha.

Ukraine did not immediately comment on the reports, and almost never publicly claims responsibility for attacks inside Russia or on Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine.

The Russian defence ministry also said Crimea, which Russia seized and annexed in 2014, was attacked. Nine drones were destroyed by air defence forces while 33 were suppressed by electronic warfare and crashed over Crimea without reaching their targets, it said.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Moscow-installed governor of the port city of Sevastopol in Crimea, said on the Telegram messaging app that a number of drones had been destroyed on Sevastopol's outskirts.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage from the attacks.

Respect press freedom

African media urges Niger

AFP, Abidjan

Dozens of African media figures yesterday called on the new military regime in Niger to respect press freedoms after a series of incidents. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) organised the appeal of some 80 people, including media owners in francophone Africa. "We ask the junta to respect the right to information, to pluralism and media independence," said the statement. It urged the regime to "contribute towards the safety of local and international journalists". The appeal cites several incidents since the July 26 coup which saw foreign and Nigerian reporters targeted at demonstrations or face intimidation and threats.

AI risks repeating mistakes: Microsoft

AFP, New Delhi



Breakneck development of artificial intelligence risked repeating mistakes made by the tech industry at the start of the social media era, Microsoft president Brad Smith told a business forum yesterday. Rapid advancements in AI have stoked global alarm over the technology's potential for disinformation, misuse and upheaval

of the labour market. But Smith suggested these misgivings were not reflected by the developers of the potentially revolutionary technology, whose optimism reminded him of the early years of social media platforms. Back then, the tech industry "became a little too euphoric about all the good things that social media would bring to the world -- and there have been many -- without thinking about the risks as well," he said. "We need to be clear-eyed... And we need to construct the guardrails from the outset," he added.

INDIA'S HIMALAYAS

Global warming link to intense rains: scientists

REUTERS, New Delhi

Torrential rains that have battered India's Himalayas in recent years, killing hundreds of people and causing billions of dollars worth of damage, are becoming more intense due to a clash of weather systems triggered by global warming, scientists said.

At least 240 people have died this year in the mountainous region as landslides and flash floods triggered by heavy rains buried homes and destroyed crops and infrastructure.

Seasonal monsoon showers are vital for India's \$3 trillion economy, bringing nearly 70 percent of the rain the country needs to water farms and refill reservoirs and aquifers. But the monsoon's convergence with a low-pressure weather system in the Himalayas in recent years has caused extremely heavy rains, something that scientists blamed on rising temperatures.

"Think of it as a collision of two forceful systems," said Kuldeep Srivastava, head of the India Meteorological Department's regional centre in New Delhi.

"It causes significant rain, or even cloudbursts ... we are noticing in the last few years, intense spells of rain lasting short durations," he said, adding that this was due climate change driven by global increase in temperatures.

The number of very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall days per decade in Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand increased to 118 between 2011 and 2020 from 74 in the preceding decade.



An aerial photograph taken on Thursday above Gletsch, in the Swiss Alps shows insulating foam covering a part of the Rhone Glacier to prevent it from melting next to a glacial lake due to the ice melting. A leading Swiss glaciologist warned on August 16, 2023 that 2023 was looking "not good" for the country's glaciers, a year after they suffered a record melt.

PHOTO: AFP

ILLEGAL CONTENT

EU brings down the hammer on big tech

AFP, Brussels

The world's major tech titans must crack down on illegal content and keep European users safe online from yesterday, when far-reaching EU rules force digital firms to fall into line.

The landmark Digital Services Act (DSA) compels tech companies to better police content to protect European users against disinformation and hate speech.

And it also demands the firms are more transparent about their services, algorithms and how ads are targeted.

The first phase of the regulation came into force on Friday, affecting 19 "very large" digital platforms including social media networks, websites and online retailers with at least 45 million monthly active users in the European Union.

Investigate sexual violence against RMG workers

Reports of GBV, harassment in factories can no longer be ignored

In any conversation on Bangladesh's development journey, it is a given that the RMG sector will feature heavily. The empowerment of RMG workers, a majority of whom are women, is routinely cited as an economic success story. However, what is often overlooked are the vulnerable and precarious conditions in which they continue to work to this day.

A recent survey on gender-based violence (GBV) in RMG factories, conducted by nine RMG workers' organisations with support from Solidarity Center, only confirms this. Of the 140 workers who participated, 45 percent had experienced sexual violence and harassment. A proportion of the workers were also subjected to psychological harassment (22 percent), verbal abuse (17 percent), economic exploitation (nine percent), and physical violence (seven percent). The majority of these incidents occurred within factories and were perpetrated by co-workers and supervisors, followed by line chiefs and mid-to-senior-level management officials.

The GBV faced by workers is completely unacceptable and in violation of their rights, but what is equally worrying is the implication that the factory management is complicit in either perpetrating the abuse, or allowing it to continue. A shocking 91 percent of respondents shared that the perpetrators held power over them due to their connections to mid-to-senior-level management, or to local influentials and their associates. Half of the workers surveyed said they faced wage deductions or were made to work extra hours without overtime pay by their supervisors or factory management if they did not agree to their sexual advances. Another 48 percent reported a change in their production targets if they filed complaints with the authorities.

This cannot be called anything but exploitation, and needs to be treated as such. In the study, a number of recommendations were provided for the government, employers, trade unions and federations to fight GBV. However, recommendations cannot be put into place if even the authorities refuse to accept it as a serious issue. In 2019, ActionAid Bangladesh published a similar report, where they surveyed 200 RMG workers and found that 80 percent of them had experienced or witnessed abuse at work. At the time, the BGMEA's only response was to reject the report, terming it to be harmful to the global image of the industry.

We would argue that such statements, and the callous disregard of such serious allegations, harm the image of the industry more than the reports themselves. We can no longer continue to dismiss these allegations and brush them under the carpet. The authorities must investigate these allegations and ensure that the rights of women and of workers are no longer violated.

Why do we only pretend to care about rivers?

Save the Kharia River from government apathy and inaction

We are extremely disturbed that yet another river is on the verge of dying because of pure negligence and inaction from all authorities concerned. The Kharia, once a primary support for agriculture, fisheries and transportation in Phulpur upazila, Mymensingh, has now become a seasonal narrow stream, marred with heaps of toxic waste and encroached lands. Despite continuous appeals from journalists, experts and environmental organisations, and numerous directives from the High Court and the government, no effective steps have been taken to save the river, just like many other rivers in this riverine country.

We want to know why, during its 23 years of existence, the Phulpur municipality has failed to develop a proper garbage management system to stop people from dumping waste in the river, or to clear up the waste accumulated for years, and even the garbage that the municipality itself used to dump beside the river. While the locals have been repeatedly accusing powerful and influential individuals of encroaching considerable parts of the 25-km river, the UNO, who is also the authorised local personnel of the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC), says they are still working on the list of encroachments. Here, too, there is little indication of implementing the 17 directives to save rivers, ruled by the High Court back in 2019.

While the government has been expressing satisfaction with their drives to save rivers – for instance, in September 2022, State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury falsely claimed that the BIWTA had cleared 90 percent of the river areas grabbed illegally – cases like the Kharia expose that the dire condition is not only limited to big rivers beside large cities and industrial areas. Besides the Kharia, many rivers in Mymensingh including the Brahmaputra, Khiru, Sutia, and Norosunda are in dreadful conditions because of similar reasons. Ruling party lawmaker and former food minister Kamrul Islam stated last year that the river grabbers and the public representatives who assist them extort benefits from the ruling party. We have also seen instances where river grabbers marked by the NRCC continued to work with Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), both of which are under the shipping ministry. We fear that this culture of inaction, negligence, and allowing influential individuals and companies to keep encroaching on major rivers encourages the local authorities to overlook the bare minimum to save relatively smaller rivers like the Kharia.

Although it seems like a lost battle at this point, we urge the authorities to finally internalise the unparalleled importance of rivers for our country, people, and the environment, and take action accordingly.

The allure of studying abroad



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

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

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

A recent report published in this paper pointed out how the number of Bangladeshi students going abroad has trebled over the last 15 years despite the rise in the number of homegrown universities. The key argument focuses on the lack of quality education at home, prompting those who could afford or find external funding to pursue higher education abroad. The report identifies some push factors, but denies some pull factors behind such mobility.

Destination nations are strategically targeting countries like Bangladesh, which has shown significant economic growth in the last two decades. There is a growing middle class in this eighth-most populous country in the world, where 18.56 percent of the people are in the 15-24 age group. International recruiters have not failed to notice the market determined by demand for education and global career aspirations. As the World Bank points out, "the overall quality of the country's human capital is low," and only four percent of workers have studied beyond their secondary schools, meaning "Bangladesh's workforce of 87 million is largely undereducated."

Shouldn't we then be happy that our students are taking the opportunity to benefit from the education systems abroad? At least such movement among our students promises better opportunities, higher salaries, improved working conditions, or access to advanced research and technology. Students, upon completion of their degrees overseas, can bring back knowledge, skills and networks that benefit their home countries to counterbalance the fear of brain drain. But that is all in theory. The reality is that "student migration is increasingly being taken as a route for long-term emigration, sometimes resulting in irregular migration," according to an official of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Some of the other factors beyond individual decisions to use the education route involve political instability, lack of job opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, and unfavourable economic conditions in



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

the home countries.

The push factors are well-understood. But why is the pull from foreign countries so strong? The simple answer is revenue. In 2020-21, international students pumped 42 billion pounds into the UK economy. Without international students, most UK universities will run on a deficit budget. "International students pay between £10,000 and £38,000 a year – the highest fees in the world – and are in effect super-taxing their own, often poor, countries to cross-subsidize UK students" (*The Guardian*). Against each local student, there are five foreign students in the UK. After Brexit, the flow of European students has plummeted, and there are new initiatives to bring in students from South Asia and Africa, among other places.

On the other side of the pond, nearly one million international students who attended US institutions contributed \$33.8 billion to the country's economy and created more than 335,000 jobs in 2020-21. The same year, international students contributed over 22.3 billion dollars to the Canadian economy

because the return on investment is higher. A typical MBA degree in Canada will cost you 95,000 Canadian dollars, leading to a salary of 100,000 dollars per year. It is an investment for your future as it enhances career opportunities and has the potential for higher earnings. The success of diaspora communities will further influence the decision to study abroad. This feeling is rampant among the elite class, most of whom have studied in English medium schools and feel left out by the mainstream system.

The rosy picture hides the fact that many of these international students are exploited as cheap labour. Not all students going abroad have the means to sustain full fees and living expenses. These students are hired with a minimum or below-par wage. Students often get stuck in a cycle of low-paid work and find it difficult to transition into more stable and better-paying career paths after completing their education. This perpetuates social and economic inequities, as students from disadvantaged backgrounds might be disproportionately affected,

the vicinity of 50,000. The sad reality is that our local institutions are failing to retain some of our better students who are good enough to be enrolled in world-class universities. Apart from a few public and private universities, the quality of higher education is nothing to write home about. So how do we deal with this growing trend where not only our young ones, but also our hard-earned money are going abroad?

There has to be a national strategy. Identify the areas in which we want our human capital to be trained abroad. Introduce a national policy scheme to send our talented individuals to institutions that have gone through a rigorous credential check. We need to protect the outbound students from various predators and visa colleges that exploit them. We need to negotiate with foreign missions to increase scholarships and funding opportunities based on merit. If our counterparts can set their nationalist agenda first, we need to do the same! And, above all, we need to improve the quality of our educational institutions at all levels.

What does the new Covid spike mean for Bangladesh?



ABM Uddin
is a healthcare and IT consultant at
the Florida Agency for Health Care
Administration. Views expressed in this
article are the author's own.

ABM UDDIN

A report published by the World Health Organization (WHO) on August 10 showed that Covid-19 cases had increased by 80 percent over 28 days, from July 10 to August 6, compared to the previous 28 days. The same analysis found that South Korea reported 1.2 million new infections during the same period. In fact, the country's surge of the subvariant of Omicron – EG.5 – alone has driven up the global infection rate. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also reported a 14 percent increase in Covid-19 hospitalisations in the first week of August. However, the actual global infection rate is much higher, as infections are no longer continuously tracked and testing has sharply declined universally. Indeed, this spike bodes for a worldwide surge of Covid-related illnesses in autumn.

But what does this new spike in Covid infections mean for Bangladesh?

As of now, the country has lost 29,476 lives to the pandemic, and experienced more than two million infections. Of course, after the highest number of deaths in June and August of 2021, daily deaths and infections have steadily declined. Despite that, there have been reports of deaths due to Covid throughout 2022 and 2023. On June 28 this year, five died from the virus, and in the current month of August, four deaths have so far been recorded.

Experts contend that Covid has

effectively become a seasonal flu and is not strong enough to create a wave anywhere in the world as of now. They have, in fact, lowered the threat of the virus globally, as they anticipate it to be more of a public health challenge, not a crisis. In the US, the Joe Biden administration has even eliminated the position of the top Covid-19 White House official along with its formal ending of the Covid public health emergency in May this year. The administration does not expect the virus to become a major development in any way that can disrupt public life.

However, of particular note is the view of the Association of Public Health Laboratories CEO Scott Becker, "We never expected variants to just disappear. So, the virus is doing what viruses do. We're watching all of this in order to better be prepared for any fall surge in respiratory diseases."

What is our part that we must do?

The first approach is to maintain and observe best practices to not get the virus in the first place: for example, wearing a mask, maintaining social distance practices, and of course, getting the recommended vaccines and boosters to avoid hospitalisation. Most healthy adults develop some degree of immunity from vaccination, prior to Covid infections, and the overall availability of treatment plans. However, they can well spread the virus to their loved ones and even end up in emergency departments if they are not

vaccinated and boosted.

A new study published by Yale University researchers found a preliminary connection between practising the recommended Covid guidelines and Covid-related deaths. The researchers studied 538,159 registered Democrats and Republicans in Florida and Ohio who died between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2021. They marked May 1, 2021, one month

Alongside adhering to established Covid practices, we must also replenish our stockpiles of vaccines. We must coordinate with vaccine manufacturers, foreign governments and international agencies to ensure enough availability of shots, as they have proven to be the most effective in fighting the disease, per the Yale study.

after Covid vaccines were available to all US adults, as a major milestone. The study aimed to scientifically analyse data to discover if the apathy to observe Covid guidelines has a bearing on the deaths. It found that 43 percent more Republican voters died from Covid than their Democrat counterparts.

Republicans are overwhelmingly conservative and have expressly objected to most Covid regulations, and even vaccine mandates, deeming them to be an obstacle to their freedom of choice and civil liberty. So, from the party leadership, including

former President Donald Trump, to the common supporters, there was strong opposition to most restrictions. By contrast, Democrats overall strongly adhered to the guidelines. Once in the White House, Biden also placed strong Covid measures to curb the pandemic.

In Bangladesh as well as globally, many evoke God's will to skirt recommended practices around health issues. The study above should be a wake-up call to those who readily bank on unproven and unscientific approaches to their health.

Alongside adhering to established Covid practices, we must also replenish our stockpiles of vaccines. We must coordinate with vaccine manufacturers, foreign governments and international agencies to ensure enough availability of shots, as they have proven to be the most effective in fighting the disease, per the Yale study. We must prioritise two high-risk groups in vaccination programmes: the elderly and those with low income. The hospitalisation rate for seniors is significantly higher than that for other age groups. We must ensure that all at-risk populations have their testing and vaccine needs met immediately and adequately.

The new Covid spike should be taken as a clarion call to prepare as we head into the autumn when the cases are expected to surge. Bangladesh may experience a localised spike or a small wave at worst. Even though the virus will pose considerably less danger to public health than it did during the height of the pandemic, it will continue to remain a challenge and claim lives while driving up hospitalisation and even potentially straining our healthcare system. Early preparedness and prevention programmes can make all the difference when the virus will trend up in the winter. It is the time to act now.



This newly constructed school building in Madaripur’s Shibchar upazila was able to withstand the force of the Padma’s current for two weeks before it collapsed into the river, thanks to the erosion. FILE PHOTO: STAR

Why Western approaches can’t prevent river erosion



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research at the United Nations
Department of Economic and
Social Affairs.

S NAZRUL ISLAM

With each passing year, Bangladesh’s land gradually crumbles and washes away due to river erosion. According to researchers, the total amount of land eroded by the Ganges, Jamuna, Padma, and Lower Meghna rivers between 1973 and 2014 was 182,000 hectares, while the accretion amounted to 80,000 hectares, signifying a net erosion of 102,000 hectares – exceeding accretion by 2.3 times. River erosion is devastating for the people who lose their homesteads and lands for cultivation. While a fire leaves some traces and allows people to rebuild in the same place, erosion represents complete annihilation that leaves no trace and no place to rebuild. It literally makes people destitute.

Over time, river erosion has also become costlier for both the affected people and the nation as a whole. With economic development, there are now more capital construction (buildings and structures), both public and private, in the rural areas. All this capital gets washed away by river erosion.

It is true that eroded banks add to the sediment that the rivers ultimately carry to the estuary and, as a result, more land is rising above the sea level. However, this gain in the estuary cannot compensate for the loss suffered inside the country. It takes decades and a lot of new investment to develop the newly risen land to make it comparable in value to the land lost inside the country. Hence, mitigation of river erosion is an important task from both humanitarian and economic

and constructed embankments to cordon off floodplains from rivers. Unfortunately, neither the embankments nor the hard structures have proven to be effective in Bangladesh. In fact, they have

and 404 cubic-kilometres of the Brahmaputra and Ganges rivers, respectively. The contrast is even more striking regarding sediment: the Rhine River carries only about three million tonnes, compared to 1,150 million tonnes carried by the major rivers in Bangladesh. Add to this the fact that about 80 percent of the flows in Bangladeshi rivers is concentrated to only four months of the year, while the water flow of the Rhine is almost evenly distributed across the seasons. Hence, it is not a surprise that in summer, major rivers in Bangladesh turn into seas, a fact

can cope better with the constant pressure for course-shifting by its alluvial rivers.

Also, instead of following the dominant Western advice and methods blindly, the water authorities in Bangladesh should have looked into the country’s own heritage for solutions to the erosion problem. They could then see that, before the Western agencies came with the idea of embankments, people had always kept the floodplains open to rivers so that the monsoon flows could spill over the banks and nurture the floodplains. The spillover lessened

Jamuna River connected with the floodplains on the right-side bank. Such closings have surely increased the pressure on the bank.

Hence, to mitigate the erosion problem, the first thing that Bangladesh needs to do is to shun the Cordon approach and return to the Open approach that is suitable for the country’s special physical conditions, and which the people of this country have been following from time immemorial. This also requires resuscitation of the smaller rivers, rivulets, canals, etc, that used to keep the major rivers connected with the floodplains. In addition to *kata khals*, Bangladesh also needs to revive the old practice of *Ashtomashi bandh*, i.e. temporary dams lasting for eight months of the year. These dams allowed river overflows to be preserved in the floodplains and flow back to the river during the dry season to stabilise the flow across the seasons and keep the riverbed ready for extra bed scouring, rather than bank erosion, needed to hold the summer flow. Unfortunately, the water authorities seem to be heading in the opposite direction. Thus, instead of abandoning the BRHE, which has met its natural death, the authorities, together with the World Bank, have chalked up a new project called the River Bank Improvement Programme (RBIP) to rebuild the BRHE in the form of a four-lane highway, costing about \$1 billion. The past experience shows that this project will only aggravate river erosion and prove to be another huge wastage of Bangladesh’s resources.

Apart from adopting the Open approach, the second thing that Bangladesh needs to do is to better use the potential that geo bag technology has shown in mitigating river erosion. In contrast to the hard structures, the geo bag technology has many features that make it more suitable for the conditions of Bangladesh’s rivers. However, the authorities have so far been more interested in using the geo bag technology to protect *embankments* than to protect *riverbanks*. For example, after some apparent success of the geo bag technology in the protection

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The solid spur embankment at the Meghai point of Jamuna River in Sirjaganj’s Kazipur upazila gave away in face of the river’s strong current as the river swelled with monsoon rains in July this year.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

To control river erosion, the authorities so far have used Western methods that focus on construction of hard structures, such as groynes, spurs, concrete revetments, hardpoints, etc. Also, following Western advice, the authorities adopted the Cordon approach and constructed embankments to cordon off floodplains from rivers. Unfortunately, none of these methods have proven to be effective in Bangladesh.

proven to be a deadly combination instead.

The experience of the Jamuna River provides a good example. The Cordon approach was applied to this river through the construction of the Brahmaputra Right Hand Embankment (BRHE) in the 1960s to cordon off the right-hand-side floodplains from the river. This project was financed largely by the World Bank. Also, numerous hard structures were built to prevent the right-side bank from erosion. Yet, the river eroded its right-side bank and moved westwards by more than 1.5 kilometres on average. The BRHE had to be continually retired and moved back, by more than nine times at some places. As a result, currently only 41 kilometres of the original 180-kilometre embankment remain standing. In many places, the embankment has virtually ceased to exist. The experience with other rivers has been in essence similar to that with the Jamuna River.

The reason why the Western approaches have not succeeded is because rivers in Bangladesh are not the same as those commonly found in Western countries. There, rivers are generally timid, with low volumes of water, very little sediment, and no pronounced seasonal fluctuations. By contrast, the major river systems in Bangladesh have high volumes of water, contain enormous amount of sediment, and are characterised by extreme seasonality. For example, the annual volume of water in the Rhine River in Europe is 75 cubic-kilometres, compared to the 628

that prompted a young Amartya Sen, the future Nobel laureate economist, to ask his father, “Is it really a river?” (*Home in the World*, Pg 20).

Investigating into the problem, Peter Rogers, professor of environmental engineering at Harvard, concluded that the “physical force of Bengal rivers is so great that no amount of engineering works can withstand it.” He also observed that “the search for embankment protection from floods in the great delta is almost certain to lead to waste and disappointment.” Prof Rogers also reminded the Western consultants of the necessity for “awareness of being outsiders” (*Eastern Waters Study*, Pg 73-74). Unfortunately, Prof Rogers proved to be a minority, if not lone, voice among the Western consultants, and his views did not accord well with the material interests of water agencies in Bangladesh as well as Western lending agencies, who are always eager to push for big-budget construction projects. Accordingly, Prof Rogers was shunned.

However, the experience shows clearly that Bangladeshi rivers require a different approach and different methods than those that worked for the rivers in the West. As I have shown in detail in my recent book, *Water Development in Bangladesh – Past, Present, & Future*, Bangladesh requires the Open approach to rivers so that their summer flows can spill over the floodplains and thus create less pressure on the banks. Instead of hard structures, Bangladesh requires soft structures that are malleable and

the pressure on the riverbanks and reduced erosion. People also dug canals, called *kata khal*, at the pressure points so as to both relieve the pressure and let monsoon water



For years, people in Bangladesh have been living with the devastating effects of river erosion, losing their homes and croplands. This photo was taken in Sirajganj.

PHOTO: STAR

viewpoints. The question is, how to achieve this goal?

To control erosion, the authorities so far have used Western methods that focus on construction of hard structures, such as groynes, spurs, concrete revetments, hardpoints, etc. Also, following the Western advice, the authorities adopted the Cordon approach to rivers

penetrate deep into the floodplains. In addition, they used various indigenous vegetation to stabilise the riverbanks. Unfortunately, the water authorities have done just the opposite. For example, by constructing the BRHE, they closed off eight rivers that used to keep the

of the embankments under the Jamuna-Meghna River Erosion Mitigation Project (JMREMP), the authorities have taken up Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Investment Programme (FRERMIP) to make more use of geo bags for the protection of embankments. Some

use of geo bags has been planned under the RBIP too, to protect the new embankment to be built under this project.

Unfortunately, the full potential of the geo bag technology cannot be realised if it is directed at the protection of embankments, because the latter intensify the problem of erosion themselves. Hence, protection of the riverbanks, not protection of embankments, needs to be taken up as the goal. It is only under the Open approach that the potential of geo bag technology for stabilising riverbanks can be better realised. Thus, Bangladesh should abandon the idea of building and protecting embankments and instead focus on riverbank stabilisation using the geo bag technology.

Many are now interested in narrowing the major rivers drastically and conceiving this as a one-shot affair to be carried out immediately. This is a dangerous illusion. First, it is necessary to understand the causes that have led to the widening of the rivers. Once these causes are established, efforts will have to address those causes, so that the efforts at narrowing the rivers can work with nature, rather than against it. Second, just as the widening did not happen overnight, the narrowing cannot be done right away. Instead, it can only be a long drawn process. Third, the first step in this process has to be stabilisation of the riverbanks. Once this goal is achieved, further steps can be taken to reduce the width. The additive property of the geo bag technology can be helpful in this regard.

Thus, a combination of the Open approach and geo bag technology will be necessary to achieve the long-term goal of narrowing the rivers and reclamation of the lost land. The sooner the water authorities accept these lessons, the better it will be for the country.

Jumping from billboards to OTT

SHARMIN JOYA

"I was very passionate about photography, but fate had other plans for me," teased Alia Tabassum Borno, who wowed the audience as Natasha in the latest Hoichoi web-series *Sharey Showlo*, helmed by Yasir Al Haq. The model and actress made a remarkable debut on the silver screen with Abdullah Mohammad Saad's *Maryam Noor (RMN)*.

She dropped by The Daily Star for an exclusive photoshoot, and over a cup of coffee, she spilled the beans on her journey in the industry, her emerging career, and more.

"I became a model by accident," she quipped. "I worked as a photographer's assistant, and all of a sudden I had to face the camera, as the model didn't show up."

Although she was born in Bogura, she grew up in different places due to her father's frequent transfers. "I could hardly make any friends, which would upset me quite often. My father was very concerned about this. So, he kept me engaged in various extra-curricular activities," said the artiste.

From learning the basics of music, painting, and practising in theatre, Borno's passion for acting remained in her heart. She appeared on numerous billboards and TV commercials, catching the attention of Saad's assistant in direction, Yasir Al Haq; who then contacted her and

offered her the role of Annie in *RMN*.

"That was a game changer for me," she said, adding, "It was a great experience for me to have the opportunity to work with Saad bhai."

Borno was also featured in Chorki's web-series *Mercules*, where she donned the role of Anamika. "Natasha and Anamika are two different types of personas. Anamika is an extrovert who loves her friends and enjoys her life to the fullest. On the other hand, Natasha's personality is very complex. She is ambitious and a workaholic."

Borno shared that she had never known anyone like Natasha. Hence, it was tough for her to bring life to the character.

As an emerging actress, Borno gets offers for many projects; however, she shares that she is selective about choosing scripts. "Since I am continuing my career as a model, I can easily balance between acting and modelling," she asserted.

"If I were completely dedicated to visuals, it would be tough for me to survive financially, because my source of income comes from working in the industry."

As for her upcoming ventures, the actress preferred to remain tight-lipped.

"I am in talks for some new projects, including a few silver screen ones. However, I am not in a position to disclose it at the moment," she concluded.



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Barbie High Tea

Date: August 25-26

Time: 5 pm - 7 pm

Venue: Tarius



Comedy Grill

Date: August 27

Time: 8:15 pm

Venue: Grilled



Weekly open sessions (Board Games)

Date: August 26

Time: 4 pm-10 pm

Venue: Panaderia Gulshan

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix Guns & Gulaabs



Bongo BD Case 3040



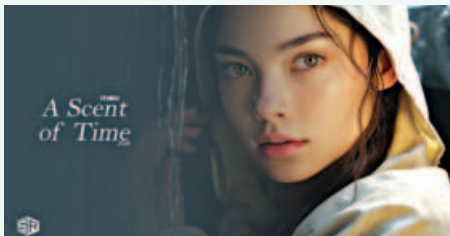
Amazon Prime Harlan Coben's Shelter



Disney + hotstar Dayaa



HBO Max A Scent of Time



The comical tragedy of the innovator's dilemma



Remember a time before iPhones and Androids? BlackBerry was the king of smartphones back then, earning the nickname 'CrackBerry' due to its addictive appeal. It was a must-have for Kim Kardashian and even Barack Obama.

But today, BlackBerry is a relic. Or, as one character puts it in *BlackBerry*, the latest film about the early smartphone empire's rise and fall, it's merely "the thing people used before they used the iPhone."

BlackBerry, directed by Matt Johnson and co-written with Matthew Miller, is grounded in actual history without the need to spice things up with car chases and fantastical storytelling. On the face of it, the rise and fall of Research in Motion's keyboard-equipped smartphone may not seem inherently compelling. But the brilliance of the film is that it makes the BlackBerry's journey feel

like a genuine tragedy.

At its core, the film is a tale of two contrasting personalities—Mike Lazaridis, the introverted engineering genius, and Jim Balsillie, the relentless and fiery businessman. Together, they ruled the mobile industry until the iPhone arrived like a game-changing nuclear bomb. Their dynamic and the clash of genius and business acumen make for compelling viewing.

The film brilliantly portrays the innovator's dilemma, a concept where industry leaders focus on improving existing products while newcomers disrupt with groundbreaking innovations. In this case, it's the iPhone that forever alters the tech landscape.

This fresh, thoughtful comedy is more than just a bleak cautionary tale. It's a story of how tech culture, as we know it today, took root, bloomed, and died on the vine.



‘DEPP V HEARD’ Is media attention trivialising sensitive matters?

The latest Netflix docuseries *Depp v Heard*, which delves into Johnny Depp's 2022 legal battle against Amber Heard, has recently been released on Netflix and is already causing doubt among fans.

While the series has garnered missed reviews from both actors'

fandoms, many are revisiting their own behaviours exhibited online during the highly sensationalised trial.

The documentary does not include expert opinions or context, rather relies heavily on archival footage, trial clips, and social media

reactions, perpetuating the same harmful narratives it aims to criticise. However, many do believe that the aforementioned action works as a mirror, for the fanatics, posing a very important question -- can you win an objective argument based on emotional scrutiny?

Ranveer Singh

A returning guest on this segment, Ranveer Singh never fails to deliver while playing dressup. The actor recently appeared on his Instagram feed, draped in a silk two-piece, exuding regality all over. Ditching his maximalist mode of styling, Ranveer paired the off-white ensemble with dainty jewellery and coiffed hair. The *Don 3* actor sported a sparkling diamond stud on his ear with gold chains and a pair of gold-accented visor sunglasses.



Two Flame Girls Club players try to catch a Laxmibazar Rugby Club player from scoring a try during a game of the Sheikh Kamal U-18 Club Cup (Sevens) Rugby Competition at the Paltan Maidan yesterday. Flame Girls won the match 33-0 to kickstart the campaign and followed up that victory with two more to set up final against SFX Club today. Four clubs are competing in girls' section while seven clubs are competing in boys' section of the two-day competition.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Afghanistan footballers set to land tonight

SPORTS REPORTER

Afghanistan national football team are scheduled to land in Dhaka tonight, around eight days before their first of two FIFA-friendly matches against hosts Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, booters from Bashundhara Kings joined training camp yesterday following their AFC Champions League engagement. The Abahani-affiliated ones, after playing AFC Cup, are set to join on August 27, a couple of days before captain Jamal Bhuiyan reunites with the group.

The majority of Afghanistan's 25-member squad are supposed to arrive first, while their foreign-born players from the Netherlands, Australia, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and others will start reaching the country from Sunday onwards. It has been learnt that two of their players will arrive in Bangladesh on the first match-day.

The visitors are supposed to check in at Amari Hotel in Banani and train either at the Kings Arena or Bangladesh Police ground, subject to availability.

The two FIFA-friendlies are scheduled to be held on September 4 and 7 at Bashundhara Kings Arena. Afterwards, Afghanistan will fly out here on Sept 8 to play another friendly against hosts Philippines on September 12.

Bangladesh-Afghanistan matches will serve as a tune-up for the two sides in their preparation for October's World Cup pre-qualifiers, where Bangladesh will face Maldives and Afghanistan will play against Mongolia.

Under the guidance of Kuwait coach Abdullah Almutairi, Afghanistan recently played two matches in CAFA Nations Cup. There, Afghanistan suffered 3-0 defeat to Kyrgyzstan – a game which saw Afghanistan refuse to play after 97 minutes with Kyrgyzstan leading 1-0 – followed by a 6-1 thrashing by Iran.

Since 2008, Bangladesh could hold Afghanistan to a draw four times but suffered defeats twice: 4-0 in 2015 SAFF Championship and 1-0 in 2021 World Cup Qualifiers.

Budding booters up for BPL AUCTION

SPORTS REPORTER

The upcoming season of Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is all set to mark a new chapter as Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) puts up its budding players from BFF Elite Academy for an auction for BPL outfits ahead of the upcoming season.

The auction of 10 players – Md Asif, Md Azizul Haque Ananta, Sajed Hasan Jummon Nijhum, Md Mirajul Islam, Chandan Roy, Asadul Mollah, Sirajul Islam Rana, Md Rubel Sheikh, Md Imran Khan and Suman Soren – will be held at the InterContinental Hotel this afternoon.

The aforementioned players have been divided into two categories: the base price corresponding to six A category players was fixed at Tk 5 lakh, while the remaining four players were each valued at a minimum Tk 4 lakh.

In the past, BPL outfits usually signed players as per their requirement. However, three top clubs – Mohammedan SC, Sheikh Russel KC and Brothers Union – have expressed their desire to rope in BFF Elite Academy players on loan for the upcoming 2023-24 season before the transfer window opened on August 1.

The clubs also mentioned their desired players and offered prices. However, following the common



demand of individual players, BFF has been forced to put those players on auction. Mohammedan wanted four players, while Sheikh Russel and Brothers sought seven and 10 players, respectively.

Although only three clubs showed their interest in the academy players, BFF invited all BPL outfits to participate in the auction. Apart from Mohammedan, Sheikh Russel and Brothers, a few other clubs are likely to take part in the auction.

Explaining reasons to hold the auction, BFF development committee chairman and vice president, Aatur Rahman Bhuiyan Manik, told The Daily Star, "If the committee distributes players as per the clubs' requirements, there will be questions raised.

"We, therefore, decided to put

the players through an opening process. The club with the highest bid will get a player on loan for a season."

In operation since 2021, BFF Elite Academy products played in the second-tier Bangladesh Championship League (BCL) as a team in the last two seasons and are set to play their third season in 2023-24. The previous BCL edition saw BFF Elite Academy stand second among 11 teams – improving from their position, fourth, in the season prior that had 12 teams.

The last season saw Sheikh Russel show their intention to draw a few academy players in their ranks. BFF, though, did not release the players. However, forward Mirajul Islam was given the clearance to play for Mohammedan for Tk 10 lakh in the 2021-22 season.

Rubiales refuses to resign over kiss scandal

REUTERS

Spanish soccer boss Luis Rubiales refused to quit on Friday for kissing World Cup star Jenni Hermoso on the lips after Spain's World Cup victory, fuelling anger among players and government ministers who decried his actions as unacceptable macho behaviour.

Speaking at an emergency meeting of the Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), Rubiales complained that "false feminists" were "trying to kill me".

"Is a consensual peck going to take me out of here? I won't resign. I will fight until the end," Rubiales said, drawing applause from the predominantly male audience.

The Spanish government confirmed on Friday it will take the incident before a sport tribunal where, if it can be proven the kiss was non-consensual, he could be tried under a sexual violence law introduced by the ruling Socialists last year.

Rubiales, 46, said he asked Hermoso if he could give her "a little peck" and she said "OK".

Borja Iglesias of Real Betis, who last played for Spain's men's team in 2022, announced on X he quits the national side over the issue.

US Open to deploy Video Review system

REUTERS

The U.S. Open will be the first Grand Slam to use a Video Review (VR) system to assist chair umpires when calls are challenged at this year's tournament, with the system already generating positive feedback at various ATP events.

The system will allow players to challenge a range of decisions, such as those relating to double bounces and foul shots, and will use various camera angles to get the best view of an incident, according to a document on the U.S. Open media site.

"The VR official and VR operator will then send the video to a screen on the chair umpire's chair as well as stadium screens when available," the document said.

Chair umpires will review the evidence to determine if the original call has to be overturned or confirmed. If there is no clear evidence to change a call the initial decision stands.

The ATP has had a VR system in place at its Finals, Next Gen Finals and ATP Cup in recent years and a source at the men's governing body said its use was widely considered positive.



Kylian Mbappe was seemingly upbeat in Paris Saint-Germain's practice session on Friday ahead of their Ligue 1 home clash against Lens today despite Carlo Ancelotti ruling out any possibility of Real Madrid signing the French forward this season the day before.

PHOTO: PSG

United seek a lift-off against Forest

AGENCIES

Hope that Manchester United can challenge for their first Premier League title in 11 years has already dwindled after a sloppy 2-0 defeat at Tottenham followed a woeful season-opening performance at home to Wolves, despite escaping with a 1-0 win on that occasion.

Seeking to pick themselves up from a disappointing start, Manchester United play host to Nottingham Forest at Old Trafford on Saturday afternoon.

Erik ten Hag's men have suffered from a lack of cutting edge up front in the absence of new striker Rasmus Hojlund, out with a back injury.

The Dane misses the visit of Nottingham Forest on Saturday, but another injury to Mason Mount may simplify things for Ten Hag.

Fitting captain Bruno Fernandes and Mount, a close-season signing from Chelsea, into the same midfield has proved problematic in the opening weeks of the season.

United lost just two of 25 games in which the trio of Fernandes, Cristian



Eriksen and Casemiro started in midfield last season.

United will also miss Luke Shaw, the starter of their first two games, as a muscle injury is set to sideline the defender for a number of weeks.

Forest, meanwhile, are looking to claim their first top-flight away win since January and end their 29-year wait for a victory over the Red Devils.

The Red Devils will welcome a return to Old Trafford where they have not lost in the top flight since the opening day of last season against Brighton & Hove

Albion, and they will be confident of success against Nottingham Forest on Saturday having won each of their last 10 meetings by an aggregate score of 36-3.

Meanwhile, Mikel Arteta's Arsenal, who have seen off stern challenges from Nottingham Forest and Crystal Palace to join Brighton and Hove Albion and Manchester City on maximum points, will host Fulham in Saturday's London derby.

As was the case in the second half of their opening Premier League encounter with Nottingham Forest, Arsenal struggled to click into gear against a well-drilled Palace defence and had their backs against the wall for the final few moments on Monday night.

On Saturday, however, fans will expect to see a more free-flowing iteration of Arteta's side.

With forward Gabriel Jesus still sidelined, the Gunners are looking for alternative sources of inspiration in attack. Leandro Trossard could come in, having recorded three assists in Arsenal's last meeting with Fulham in March.



Danielle Williams of Jamaica gathers herself as she is interviewed on the track following her shock victory in the women's 100m hurdles final at the World Athletics Championship in Budapest on Thursday. The 30-year-old, who previously won the title in Beijing in 2015, timed 12.43 seconds to edge out Olympic champion Jasmine Camacho-Quinn of Puerto Rico (12.44sec) with Kendra Harrison of the United States taking bronze (12.46). Her victory was even more remarkable as she had only just sneaked into the final as one of the two fastest losers.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Govt resorting to torture to suppress BNP

Alleges the party, brings out processions in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas has alleged that the government has adopted new ways of torturing the party men.

BNP leaders and activists were previously killed through enforced disappearance but now the government is killing them through torture and by putting them behind bars, he said.

Abbas was addressing a rally in front of the BNP's Nayapaltan central office in the capital yesterday afternoon, ahead of a mass procession.

The party's south and north city units organised two mass processions to press home its one-point demand – resignation of the government and general elections under a non-party, neutral government.

The procession of the Dhaka south city BNP started from Nayapaltan intersection and ended at Doyaganj intersection.

Alleging that “ill-educated people” are pushing the country towards destruction, Abbas said, “They don't

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BNP leaders and activists in a procession waving black flags in the capital's Arambagh yesterday as part of the party's one-point movement demanding the resignation of the government and general election under a non-party neutral government.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BNP's black-flag march a mark of its failure

Says Quader at AL peace rally in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the BNP's black-flag march a “mourning procession”, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said it indicates that the party's one-point movement has fallen flat on its face.

“Why did they march with black flags? Has any of their leaders died? They held the procession to lament the failure of their one-point movement,” said Quader while addressing a “peace rally” in front of AL central office in the capital's Gulistan.

Dhaka city (south) AL organised the rally protesting the “terror and anarchy” of the BNP-Jamaat.

Claiming that the BNP's procession failed to attract the general public, Quader said, “How could they call it a mass procession when it did not have the participation of commoners? We will show the BNP what a mass procession is.”

Regarding the BNP's demand for resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, he said, “Why would she resign? Around 70 percent of the people of the country like her and want to vote for her.”

Quader told the BNP not to daydream about going to power.

PHOTO ON PAGE 3

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Mangoes to be exported to Russia for the first time

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

For the first time, a Rajshahi-based farming company is exporting Gourmoti and Katimon varieties of mango to Russia.

An Air Arabia flight is scheduled to leave Dhaka for Russia early today with 200kg of Gourmoti and 75kg of Katimon mangoes, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension.

“This is the first time Bangladeshi mangoes are making an entry to Russia,” said Mafizul Islam, deputy director (export) at the Plant Quarantine Wing of the department.

Mahtab Ali, CEO of MTB Agro and Garden, said a Russian company called National Electric LLC, which worked for the Rooppur power plant, is importing the mangoes.

The mangoes were collected from the orchards of a farmer named Najim Uddin in Nachole upazila of Chapainawabganj, he added.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Weekend trip ends in tragedy

7 people, six of them colleagues, killed as truck hits microbus



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

They wanted to take a short break from their busy professional life in the lush green landscape of some tourist spots in Sylhet.

But the weekend trip which was supposed to rid them of the monotony of daily life cut their lives short.

Six of the seven people – who were killed in a road crash in Ghasirdia area of Narsingdi's Shibpur upazila early yesterday – were colleagues.

They were merchandisers at a company in Ashulia, Savar. They had planned to spend their weekend in Sylhet. The accident took place when a microbus carrying them collided head-on with a sand-laden truck. Four other people were injured in the crash.

The deceased were identified as Sabuj Mia, 32, of Tangail's Delduar upazila; Al Amin Hawlader, 37, of Jhalakathi's Rajapur upazila; Al Amin, 27, of Tangail's Mirzapur upazila; Abdul Awal, 40, of Madaripur's Kalkini upazila; Aryan alias Raihan, 25, of Barishal's Muladi

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

2024 INDIA POLLS

Inflation hurting Modi but he may win

Says India Today magazine survey

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian voters are growing unhappy with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government due to high inflation and unemployment but he is still on track to comfortably win a third term in elections next year due to his personal popularity, a key survey said.

The popularity of main opposition leader Rahul Gandhi has risen and a new, 26-party opposition alliance called “INDIA” is expected to do well, the “Mood of the Nation” survey by India Today magazine said yesterday.

Modi, however, is far ahead of Gandhi with a 36-point lead as the candidate best suited to be India's next prime minister and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will win 287 seats in the 542-member

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2020 ELECTION CASE

Trump gets a mugshot

Spends less than 30 minutes in Georgia jail before release on bond

AFP, Atlanta

Former US president Donald Trump was arrested at a Georgia jail Thursday on racketeering and conspiracy charges and released on a \$200,000 bond after having a historic mug shot taken.

Trump, who is accused of colluding with 18 other defendants to overturn the 2020 election result in the southern state, spent less than 30 minutes inside Atlanta's Fulton County Jail before leaving in a motorcade for the airport.

Like the other defendants in the case who have surrendered so far, the 77-year-old Trump had his mug shot taken during the booking process – a first for any serving or former US president.

In the photograph released by the sheriff's office, he scowled at the camera while dressed in a dark blue suit, white shirt and red tie.

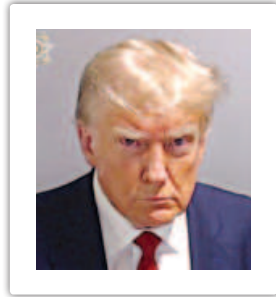
Speaking to reporters after his arrest, Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, said it was a “very sad day for America.”

“What has taken place here is a travesty of justice,” he said. “I did nothing wrong.”

Trump posted the mug shot on his own Truth Social platform with the caption “Election Interference” and a link to his campaign website.

A short while later, he also posted it on X – formerly Twitter,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



HASINA-XI TALKS

It'll give fresh momentum to bilateral ties

Says Chinese envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh, Yao Wen, said the Johannesburg meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Chinese President Xi Jinping would definitely give new momentum to bilateral relations between the two nations.

“It was the first face-to-face meeting between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina since the latter's formal visit to China four years ago. We have long been waiting for this meeting...,” he told UNB in his first interview since his arrival in Dhaka, noting that it is his sacred mission to fully implement the consensus reached by the two leaders to push the “Strategic Partnership of Cooperation” between the two countries to a new level.

He said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Xi Jinping spoke highly of the traditional friendship and good relations between Bangladesh and China “based on mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs”.

They re-assured mutual support on issues of their respective core interests.

Satisfied by joint achievements made under the umbrella of Belt and Road

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Over 4,000-year-old polychrome wall found in Peru

REUTERS, Lima

An ancient polychrome wall discovered in northern Peru is believed to be over 4,000 years old and could have been part of a ceremonial temple, according to archaeologists, offering new insights into the region's historic cultures.

The wall was first stumbled upon by farmers in 2020 during harvesting work, prompting an extended dig and work to determine its origins, said archaeologist Feren Castillo, head of a research project in the coastal region of La Libertad.

“Three years later we started a new procedure whose results showed us its age ... Today we are sure it's a building built during the Pre-ceramic Period (the initial period of the Andean civilizations) between 4,000 and 4,500 years ago,” the expert said this week.

The remains of the ancient building were revealed in the Viru Valley, some 480 km (298 miles) north of Lima.



Since there is no gate to block traffic when trains approach, the gatekeeper ties a rope at the level-crossing in Hyderabad area of Gazipur. Strips of red cloth are attached to the rope to increase visibility. A proper barrier is needed to make the level-crossing on the busy street safer.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Man arrested over death of 1-yr-old son

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Police yesterday arrested a man on charges of killing his one-year-old son in Savar.

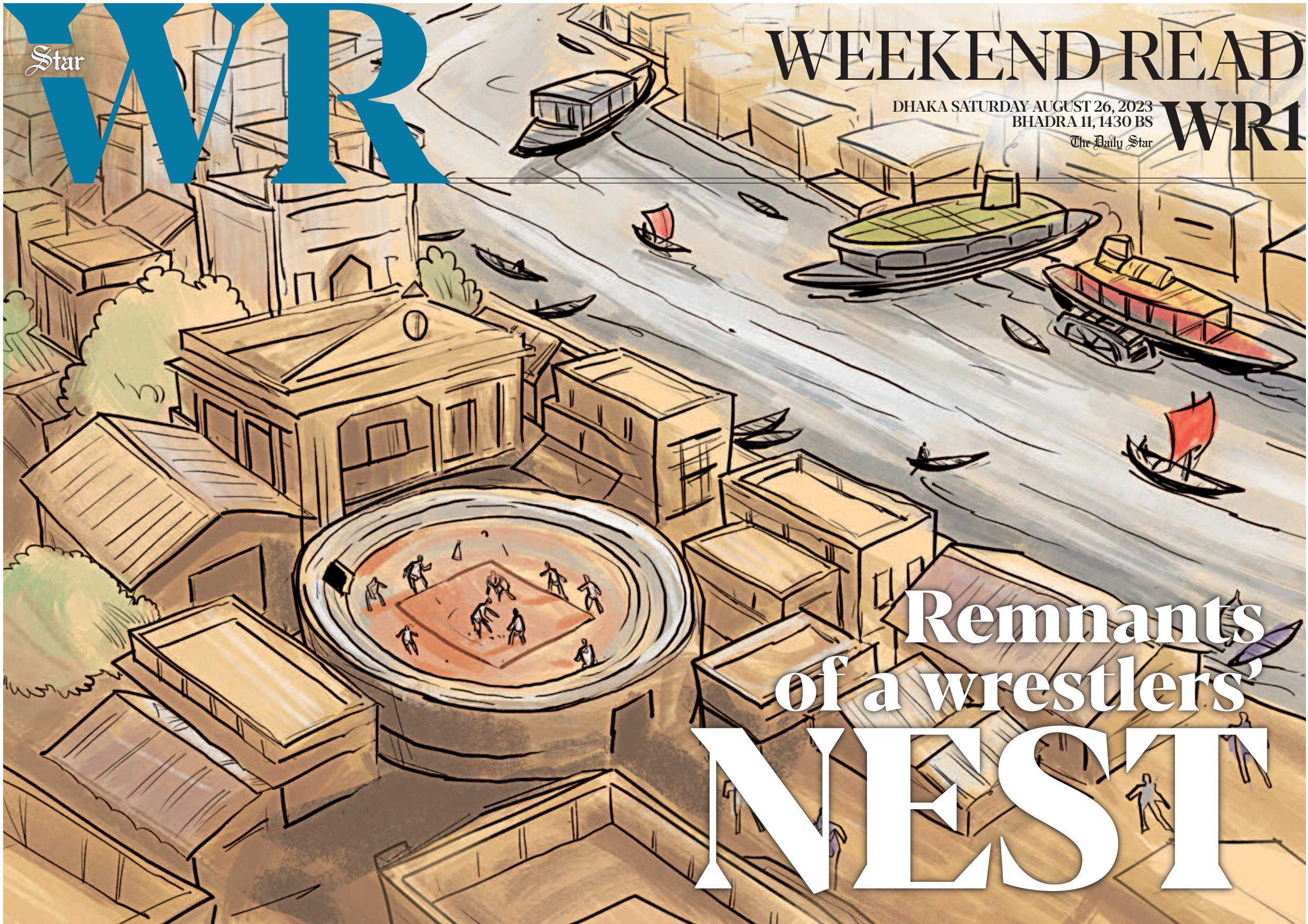
Alamgir Hossain, 29, an ambulance driver, was arrested after the baby's mother Kalpana Akhter, his ex-wife, filed a case with Savar Police Station.

According to the complaint, Alamgir first threw a wooden stick that hit the boy's forehead and then he threw the baby to the floor with an intention to kill, said Dipok Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of the police station.

The baby, named Alif, was pronounced dead when taken to a hospital, he added.

After Alamgir and Kalpana got divorced a few days ago, Kalpana started living in a rented house with the child in Talbagh area.

Late at night on Thursday, Alamgir went there and the two engaged in an argument. At one stage, Alamgir attacked the baby, the OC added.



Remnants of a wrestlers' NEST

Apart from the regular training and practice, various types of kushti competitions were held here throughout the year. Habibur, in Dhaka Pachas Baras Pahle, wrote: "I saw in my childhood that Hindus, Muslims, Armenians, rich or poor, all had more or less passion for exercise and wrestling in Dhaka."

TARUN SARKAR

Kushti, also known as pehlwani, a form of traditional wrestling contested in the sub-continent, was once a popular sport in Dhaka after having originated during the Mughal period.

Not only concerned with the physical aspects, kushti had once played a major role in moral teaching while also garnering significant political attention.

There are some publications which ties Dhaka and kushti in great details, most notably: Hakim Habibur Rahman's *Dhaka Pachas Baras Pahle* (Dhaka Fifty Years Ago), Munshi Rahman Ali Tayesh's *Tawarikhe Dhaka* (History of Dhaka), and Nazir Hossain's *Kingbadantir Dhaka* (Dhaka of legends).

Sadly, it appears that kushti is all set to disappear from the sporting landscape of Dhaka and will only reside in pages of history books.

FLASHBACK TO THRIVING TIMES

According to researchers, the training place of the game was termed as *Akhara* -- derived from the Sanskrit word *Akshabat*, according to historian Sirajul Islam. *Akhara* originally meant marshland or sports ground but later expanded to mean wrestling venues, moral and physical training centres.

Vaishnava music centres and saints also used to build *Akhara* as their abode and centre of spiritual excellence. Swadeshi movement

Sufi said that during the Mughal period, there was a custom of making wrestling training fields in open areas in Dhaka. Also, the end of the British rule saw some wrestling arenas established in different neighbourhoods by the initiative of the revolutionaries. In those places, wrestling boards were installed inside buildings.

Apart from the regular training and practice, various types of kushti competitions were held here throughout the year. Habibur, in *Dhaka Pachas Baras Pahle*, wrote: "I saw in my childhood that Hindus, Muslims, Armenians, rich or poor, all had more or less passion for exercise and wrestling in Dhaka."

During the Pakistan regime, the then Dhaka Municipality built a wrestling stadium and a fitness centre on the banks of the Buriganga River -- adjacent to the north side of the Buckland Dam between Ladies Park and Northbrook Hall -- to keep the environment of sports and art-culture practice and leisure intact.

It is learnt from *Kingbadantir Dhaka*, and researchers including Sufi, that the wrestling stadium and fitness centre, then known as Quaid-e-Azam Physical Training Institute, was built in Sadarghat in 1949. After the independence of Bangladesh, the name was changed to Nabajug Fitness Centre.

Tayesh's book, *Tawarikhe Dhaka*, reveals that back in the day, people were very much interested in kushti and strength training. It is also mentioned, Churihatta, Farashganj, Armanitola, Bakshibazar, Becharam Deuri had great fame for these sports.

Many old Dhaka citizens can still remember the Urdu film *Bhayya*, directed by Kazi Zahir and released in 1966, which was shot at the Sadarghat wrestling stadium during the Pakistan period. The film featured the protagonist, played by Shoukat Akbar, involved in kushti duel.

The main annual festival of kushti in Dhaka took place in the month of Muharram, as displays of various physical feats buzzed in the heart of Old Dhaka throughout the night. It is known that this practice was prevalent even in the last part of the British period.

Haji Ibrahim Tayamia Palawan, a veteran wrestler of Bangshal, said that during the Pakistan era, kushti competitions were held every year on the occasion of Independence Day. Even after the Liberation War, kushti matches were held for a few years.

He told The Daily Star that in the sixties, kushti was practised in Bangshal, Nazirabazar, Suritola, and so on. The main centre of kushti practice in Bangshal was the Millat Gymnasium, located at the Abdullah Sarkar Lane on the northwest side of the Bangshal pond.

The kushti arena in Suritola, next to Bangshal, was also famous. Hamid Palawan managed the arena. Several of Hamid's disciples, including Ibrahim Palawan, rose to fame as wrestlers.

Asiya Khatun, wife of Ibrahim Palawan, witnessed a kushti tradition within her father's and husband's family. In the 1960s, she saw Suritola regularly stage wrestling competitions, which even continued till the early seventies.

Mesbahuddin Azad, organiser of traditional Bangabir fitness centre in old Dhaka, said that the wrestling arena of Chhota Katra was managed by his grandfather Karim Palawan, known as Brinda Palawan, and later by his father Moslehuddin Bagu Palawan. During the Pakistan era, the arena was renamed Gama Wrestling Physical Training School. After the war of liberation, the name was changed again to Bangabir Fitness Centre.

Azad also informed that during

the Pakistan period, a wrestling competition was annually held in the square between Chhota Katra and Buriganga rivers on the occasion of Independence Day.

Afterwards, the venue of the competition was changed. Following the Liberation War, the Midford student hostel staged kushti events and a few years later the Nalagola sand ground, situated on the banks of Buriganga river, did the same.

Azad told The Daily Star that he saw a wrestling competition held in Nalagola on the occasion of Independence Day in the late seventies.

DHAKA NO LONGER A HUB

Dhaka's wrestlers once enjoyed fame across the subcontinent, but currently there is not a single wrestler who grew up in the capital.

To make matters worse, there is hardly any place to practice kushti in

Dhaka after the wrestling arenas, built during British and Pakistan period, vanished from the scene.

Instead, Dhaka South City Corporation built a huge five-storey building on the site of the capital's only wrestling stadium on the banks of Buriganga River in Sadarghat, once the main centre of wrestling practice in Dhaka, and the training and practice space of Nabajug Fitness Centre adjacent to the stadium. Many other traditional wrestling places either became the councillor offices or private properties.

Jahangir Alam, a prominent freedom fighter and a resident of Nandalal Dutta Lane in Old Dhaka, used to exercise regularly at the Nabajug Fitness Centre since the 1960s. Jahangir said the local public had held various events to protest against the decision of demolishing the wrestling stadium and Nabajug fitness centre and constructing a new commercial building instead. However, the city corporation did not pay heed to the public outrage.

Bangladesh Amateur Wrestling Federation general secretary, Tabibur Rahman Palawan, informed about 15 wrestling and bodybuilding centres in existence. A field survey showed that there is no provision for traditional wrestling in any of the institutions.

Various sports institutions in Dhaka do not have a wrestling ground made of red clay or synthetic turf. Basically, bodybuilding and weightlifting are mainly practiced in the aforementioned centres of old Dhaka.

Tabibur further informed that the federation has a synthetic turf for wrestling in Dhaka. Competitions, talent hunt events, played on synthetic turfs, are organised by the federation at various times. In reality, however, there is currently no fixed venue for wrestling in Dhaka after the Sadarghat wrestling stadium was abolished.

Tabibur believed the cancellation of the wrestling stadium and the Nabajug Fitness Center have given a huge blow to Dhaka's wrestling culture "We should have protected it," he said.

Researcher Sufi said, "In order to preserve the tradition [in Dhaka], at least one floor of the newly constructed multipurpose building on the site of the wrestling stadium should be reserved for the practice of various sports, including wrestling."

Akhara is now almost obsolete as a social institution for physical and moral excellence. However, that should not prevent the concerned authority in taking initiatives to preserve one of Dhaka's most traditional sports. For that, the first step should be to make a permanent place for kushti with all the necessary facilities.

KUSHTI'S LEGACY untarnished despite its downfall in Dhaka

While Dhaka's traditional kushti is dying down, the scenario in other parts of the country is not bleak by any means. Many kushti events still take place outside the capital.

The most famous one is the *Jabbarer Bali Khela* (Jabbar's Wrestling Competition) in the Chattogram region. The tradition of community-based wrestling is also alive in the eastern part of the country. The wrestling practice in the north-eastern region is spread across five upazilas of Sunamganj district in Haor area. There, a unique culture of wrestling exists between two villages called *Baiyafi Kusti Kheir*.

In the middle eastern region, kushti is prevalent across the flood

plains of both banks of the Meghna in Nabinagar and Banchamarpur of Brahmanbaria district, Muradnagar, Homna, Meghna, Titas and Daudkandi of Comilla district, Matlab of Chandpur district, Araihaaj and Sonargaon of Narayanganj district, and Ghazaria of Munshiganj district, etc.

In the western part of the country, including Narail, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Dinajpur, and several districts of the south and north-western part, city-based wrestling has recently emerged. Until the 1990's, traditional wrestling was mainly practiced in villages and primarily played by the children of peasant families.



activists and others used this institution extensively during the second decade of the 20th century.

Ideally, the kushti arena -- made with red clay through a special process called *Phalka* -- was lowered from ground level and at least one-and-a-half feet of red soil was laid on it. Oil, *ghee* (clarified butter) and *mathha* (a beverage made with buttermilk or yoghurt) were poured on the area for months.

Hashem Sufi, a researcher and resident of old Dhaka, said that the wrestling stadium in Sadarghat was one such arena during the Mughal period.

ESSAY

Why Nazrul was at loggerheads with language purists



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

His knowledge of Islam and Hinduism parallels the two worlds in his poems like “Bidrohi” (The Rebel) where the winged horse called Buraq meets the seven-headed flying horse called Uchchaihshravas, and Shiva’s horn finds Israfil’s trumpet.

SHAHROZA NAHRIN

I proposed a panel at a North American Bangla literary conference. ‘Is translation itself a form of activism?’ I queried. Or rather, the title was ‘Onubaad-o ki ek dhoroner activism?’ Although I withdrew myself from the conference in the end, the English word in the Bangla title ruffled the feathers of a Toronto-based Bangla literary magazine editor. He insisted that I substitute ‘activism’ with shakriyotabaad. One can mark his chivalric anxiety about safeguarding the chastity of the Bangla language.

But does the Bangla term convey the intended message? Is the audience familiar with it? How many words do we use in our daily speech that are original Bangla? Native Bangla is limited to household tools such as dhecki (paddy

husker), kula, etc. For business and official purposes, we generally use Arabic, Persian, and Urdu words assimilated into Bangla like sugar in milk. Kazi Nazrul Islam, in his time, regularly raised the ire of linguistic purists for using Arabic-Persian words in his writings. To his amusement, he quipped, “Well then, from now on, I may use ‘bicharaloy’ instead of ‘adalat’, but what will I replace ‘nazir’, ‘peshkar’, ‘ukil’ and ‘moktar’ with?”

Like the English word in my panel title, Nazrul infused English expressions like ‘non-violent’, ‘non-co’ or ‘non-cooperators’, and ‘propaganda’, inter alia, into his poetry and prose. ‘Ankora joto non-violent non-co-er dol-o non khushi’ [Nor are the raw non-violent non-co-operators pleased with me], he defended his political position as a poet

in “Amar Kaiiyat” (My Explanation). When he adapted English expressions, did he contaminate Bangla?

Nazrul impregnated Bangla with borrowed words from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, and Urdu. When purists perceive foreign influence as a threat to Bangla’s existence, we can turn to Nazrul to understand how loanwords enrich and embellish a language instead of corrupting it.

Nazrul introduced and invented an avalanche of new words of Persian-Arabic roots; some of them stood the test of time while others perished. Through his writings, abundant borrowings blossomed in the tree of Bangla literature, but only a handful turned into apples. When Nazrul used khosh ilhaan to denote the melodious tune of a nightingale, the borrowing

fits effortlessly in a Bangla poem “subh-e-ummiid” (dawning of hope), ‘Pahari torur shukno shakhay/ Gaathe bulbul khosh ilhaan’ [On the dry bough of a mountain tree/ A nightingale sings a melodious tune].

What fascinates me the most is his wordplay. Later, we find Shibram Chakraborty following in his footsteps, particularly in the use of puns. A workshop on Nazrul organised by the International Mother Language Institute and Kabi Nazrul Institute enumerates his play on words. Phrases like andajikaally or supposedly (rhymes with whimsically); ejidi or cruel mirroring daradi or compassionate; bondhujo echoing atmajou or offspring; and Oman Katoli imitating Roman Catholic, etc. offer a window to his witticism.

FICTION

The Rakshushi by Kazi Nazrul Islam

TRANSLATED by Zerin Alam

‘It’s been two years today, a full two years, and it continues to amaze me that people run for their lives the moment they see me. I keep on wondering why they avoid me like the plague. Even men, who as you know make such a show of strength when they enter the andar mahal, frightening away the small children with their commands and overbearing manners inside the women’s quarters, these very men slink away when they see me. They quickly abandon their hookahs and feel an urgent need to go into the inner quarters. And women! Why, when they spy me, they drop their water pots and flee. Children are terrified. They scamper away till they are at least a thousand yards from me. Then they start yelling, “O God, the mad rakshushi is here! Run, run for your lives! She will eat us up, eat us up!”

‘Why do they act in this way? Whose rice paddy have I destroyed? Whose mouth have I filled with fire? On whose daughter’s bosom have I broken a burning pot? Which innocent children have I devoured? Tell me, Sister, what right do they have to say all sorts of things about me? Whom have I attacked? Killed?’

‘Yes, it is true that I killed my husband. And did I just kill him? I chopped him up with a dao. Why should this upset them so much? It’s not as if I snatched away their husbands from their bosoms or killed their husbands. Why are they

so bothered then? Are they my kith and kin? If they behave like this, I tell you, I will really turn into an ogre. With one blow of my machete, I will separate their husbands’ heads from their bodies. I will cut open the women and take out their hearts and livers and chop them into fine pieces. Then I will really turn into an ogre.

‘Who drove me mad? These very people have driven me mad. I wanted things to be normal. I tried to set up my home and lead a regular life. But these people kept on continuously whispering in every nook and alley, muttering at every gathering, talking about me at the bazaar and at the mosque, constantly saying I was a witch. They gave me dirty looks, frowned and scowled at me, spat at me. They drove me insane. It is these people

Why do they act in this way? Whose rice paddy have I destroyed? Whose mouth have I filled with fire?

who have increased the pain that I had buried deep inside my heart and held it up in front of me. Tell me, whose fault is it that I am mad? Crazy? If you constantly torture someone and the person goes mad, who is to blame—the person who has gone mad or the sane people



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

who pushed her off the edge?

‘I had a husband once, a very simple man, straight as an arrow. He was an honest-to-goodness person with no knowledge of ruses or tricks. He used to work in the fields, and I spent my days catching fish, husking paddy and winnowing rice. If I had not helped out, how would we have managed, Didi? I had three children to take care of. My eldest, a son, was grown up and ready for marriage. The girl too had shot up and the little one, the baby of the family, had just started to talk. I am happy to say, Sister, that even though we were

very ordinary, humble folks at the bottom of society, thanks to all your blessings, we didn’t suffer from poverty. Your Bindi used to be able to get hold of some fish or snails or oysters to go with the vegetables for our everyday meals. My son helped out by earning a little every day. My eldest daughter would go out with the village women and bring back fish and greens. We managed to buy some salt and oil with what we didn’t need. My husband too earned enough so that we never ran out of rice the whole year. Ah, what a happy life I had! The goddess Lakshmi seemed to be smiling at us.

‘And for whom was all this? For my family, wasn’t it? I never cooked more than a seer of rice every day. I didn’t want to spend everything at once lest my children suffered later. I gave my husband and children the rice, while I made do with the water of the boiled rice, the starch that remained. After all, in what does a woman’s happiness lie? We are happy when our children are happy. What more does a woman want? It didn’t matter that we didn’t own land; we never had to beg or steal or starve. I was even able to save some money. I was happy that I could feed my family and

on occasions a number of guests and a few beggars as well. Ah, Didi, these things filled my heart! But the village folk used to call me miserly because I never wasted any money. What did I care? I didn’t give a fig about what they thought. I was a thrifty housewife, and I had to ensure my children’s future. They did not know the responsibilities I had. I had to arrange the weddings of two daughters and a son. This mud hut of mine would become an abode of happiness, a little bit of Heaven if you wish, where I would invite my future sons-in-law and my daughter-in-law. Wouldn’t you say this would cost me a considerable amount? I had to save for the future. If I needed money would anyone have lent me any? I knew that if the serpent of penury had coiled itself around Bindi’s neck, not one of my neighbours would have offered me any help. I understood that the people around us could not stand me. They envied this small happiness I had. They were jealous of my family.

“Rakshushi” was first printed in the anthology *The Demoness: The Best Bangladeshi Stories (1971-2021)*, edited by Niaz Zaman. Read the full translation on *The Daily Star* and *Star Literature’s* website.

Zerin Alam is a professor and current chairperson of the Department of English, University of Dhaka.

Women’s empowerment and equality in the DIGITAL SPACE

In conversation with Sajjad Hasib, Chief Marketing Officer, Grameenphone

Our commitment extends organisation-wide, with women at all levels, including a dedicated ‘Gender Diversity Program’ fostering specialised development. We’re focused on cultivating female leadership, particularly in the technology sector. Moreover, collaboratively promoting successful women entrepreneurs with other leading organisations is helping us form a healthy network of female leaders throughout Bangladesh.

INTERVIEWED BY SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential cornerstones of a just and thriving society. Beyond being a fundamental human right, they profoundly impact the modern workplace. Studies emphasise that promoting gender equality yields economic benefits, enhances productivity, and fosters sustainable development.

The Daily Star recently had a conversation with Sajjad Hasib, Chief Marketing Officer at Grameenphone on gender equality, the empowerment of women, and how these factors influence the telecom industry. Key snippets of the conversation are given below.

Grameenphone’s journey started around 26 years ago through the Village Phone Program. Looking back, how has the company progressed women empowerment over the years?



Our first customer was Laili Begum, to whom we delivered the Polli Phone. Since then, the principle of social empowerment has remained an integral component of our overall vision. Since our inception, we have aimed to foster employment opportunities for women in rural areas.

In the contemporary landscape, our trajectory is marked by a dynamic and accelerated pace of advancement. Having transitioned from conventional voice communications to cutting-edge 4G and 5G technologies, we are committed to the empowerment of women. Our efforts are centred around bridging the digital divide and engendering equitable work environments.

You will be happy to learn about the thriving state of F-commerce in Bangladesh, which boasts over 300,000 Facebook pages. Notably, a majority of 70% is under the stewardship of women. This entrepreneurial cohort operates across diverse geographic regions, giving rise to a robust ecosystem where delivery and logistical services assume importance. The



transformative influence of these women-led enterprises extends to the socioeconomic landscape, significantly amplifying the country’s economic growth.

You have been working for Grameenphone for more than 17 years. Over the period of time, how have you seen Grameenphone deal with empowerment and equality?

Grameenphone’s transformative journey continues as our efforts to empower women persist. Our gender diversity ratio grew from 11% five years ago to now exceeding 19%. Notably, our female staff operates nationwide, even in remote districts. Recognising societal limitations for working women, we’ve provided accommodations and transport at district levels, ensuring secure grassroots work environments.

Our commitment extends organisation-wide, with women at all levels, including a dedicated ‘Gender Diversity Program’ fostering specialised development. We’re focused on cultivating female leadership, particularly in the technology sector. Moreover, collaboratively promoting successful women entrepreneurs with other leading organisations is helping us form a healthy network of female leaders throughout Bangladesh.

We recently heard that Grameenphone is working in 2,000 unions to empower women. Can you tell us a bit about this initiative?

Our initiative, named ‘Internet Er Duniya Shobar’, aligns with this year’s International Women’s Day theme, ‘DigitALL’, which aims to integrate marginalised women into the digital space. This initiative, operating

at the grassroots level, seeks to expedite women’s digital inclusion by educating them nationwide, unveiling the boundless potential of the internet.

Engaging women from rural and semi-rural areas across 2000 unions, we’re facilitating courtyard dialogues to enlighten them about how the Internet can improve their lives and unlock new horizons. These sessions will focus on dispelling taboos and stereotypes surrounding women’s technological use, drawing from real-life examples and connecting participants with inspiring women who exemplify the potential and necessity of women’s digital integration.

What role can the private, public and development sector play in ensuring women’s equality and empowerment?

I believe that we all need to work together to ensure that women are sufficiently empowered in the workplace. We are trying to encourage women to come forward with their success stories and are using the technological solutions at our disposal to enhance their experience. We believe that working with different stakeholders will help us as a community to bring easy solutions for empowering women in the workplace.

We are also working with Meta in a campaign called Boost Up, where around 300 small and medium female business owners participated in in-depth discussions and helped them by providing a specific budget on their Facebook accounts to boost their businesses.

Transcribed by Tanzid Samad Choudhury

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

1. BRAC-Aarong
- Deputy Product Manager, Retail
Deadline: 2 September

Eligibility:
 - ⦿ Bachelors, preferably in Statistics/ Finance
 - ⦿ Must have experience in product category management and retail operation
 - ⦿ Needs to have knowledge of inventory management, supply chain management, and yearly budget preparation**Minimum experience:** 3 years
Apply through BRAC-Aarong’s official LinkedIn page.
2. World Health Organization (WHO) - Executive Assistant, Data Management
Deadline: 5 September

Eligibility:
 - ⦿ Bachelors in Data Management, Statistics, Economics, Computer Science, Mathematics, or related fields
 - ⦿ Must have professional experience in data management, and knowledge of GIS maps and reports, MS Access, SQL, Epi-Info, etc.
 - ⦿ Specialised training in IVD, information management systems, or relevant discipline is desirable**Minimum experience:** 3 years
Apply through WHO’s official LinkedIn page or the Careers section on their website.
3. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh - Programme Associate, Nature, Climate & Energy
Deadline: 4 September

Eligibility:
 - ⦿ Bachelors in Environmental Science/ Studies, Environmental Engineering, Climate Change, Natural Resource Management, etc.
 - ⦿ Must have professional experience in projects/programmes and research-related activities in the environment, climate change, and development sector
 - ⦿ Needs to have knowledge in preparing quality reports, budgeting, maintaining documents, progress monitoring, organising workshops, seminars, training, etc.**Minimum experience:** 4 years
Apply through the Careers section of UNDP Bangladesh’s official website.



The imperative of upskilling: navigating the future of work

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and seismic shifts in the global economy, the modern workplace is undergoing a transformation that is nothing short of revolutionary. Gone are the days when a single skill set could carry one through a lifetime of employment. Today, adaptability, agility and continuous learning are not just buzzwords; they are imperatives for survival.

The rising tide of skill demand

According to recent data, the demand for skills has surged by 25% since 2015 and is projected to double by 2027. This isn’t merely a trend; it’s a tidal wave that threatens to leave behind those who don’t adapt. Businesses are recognising this urgency,

Upskilling is not a mere trend but a critical organisational strategy for employee retention, agility and resilience. The focus has expanded from purely technical skills to a more holistic skill set that includes soft skills like creative thinking and resilience. In a world where the only constant is change, the ability to adapt and learn is the most valuable asset one can have.



aligning their learning and development programmes with overarching strategic goals. The message is clear: upskilling is not an option; it’s a necessity.

Tech sector takes the lead

In the technology sector, where change is the only constant, 81% of managers find upskilling to be effective. The focus areas include software modernisation, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and cyber security. These are not just skills for the tech-savvy; they are becoming essential literacy for the entire workforce.

Learning amid

uncertainty

The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital technologies, leading to a 49% increase in technical learning hours year-over-year. A staggering 58% of the workforce had to reshape their skills to adapt to this new digital landscape. Amid this uncertainty, 52% of employees value learning tech skills, while 39% find that their managers are proactive in skill development.

The role of innovative technologies

Companies are not merely relying on traditional training programmes. The adoption of microlearning, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)

simulations, and personalised learning paths are making skill acquisition more interactive, effective and tailored to individual needs.

Employee retention and the human element

While technical skills are crucial, the human element remains irreplaceable. Almost 70% of employees considered major career changes in 2022, but 94% would stay longer in companies that invest in their development. The core skills for 2023 and beyond include not just technical acumen but also analytical and creative thinking, resilience and motivation.

The strategic alignment

The most forward-thinking companies are integrating their upskilling initiatives into their broader business strategies. This alignment is not just beneficial for the organisation but also for the employees, who find that their newly acquired skills have real-world applications that make their roles more fulfilling and secure.

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As we navigate the complex and dynamic landscape of today’s work environment, the question is not whether we can afford to invest in upskilling. The real question is, can we afford not to?



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

The Space Federation scrapped their plans for the moon race with India after officials realised the country has Uttara, which is exactly like the moon. So we already won.

Comment Warrior Association in disbelief after India’s lunar triumph

“Building toilets is more important than sending unnecessary rockets to the moon, spending money whimsically,” Hudaipechal, a seasoned comment warrior and the president of the association, said in one of his Facebook posts.

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

The netizens of Bangladesh, the epicenter of social media-based intellectuals, stormed the internet once again following India’s historical astronomical leap.

Ever since India’s machine landed on the moon successfully, Bangladesh Comment Warrior Association (BCWA) invaded the comment sections of different social media platforms with its active and reserved forces to remind India about their inability to feed a large number of people and build more toilets.

“Building toilets is more important than sending unnecessary rockets to the moon, spending money whimsically,” Hudaipechal, a seasoned comment warrior and the president of the association, said in one of his Facebook posts.

India has been grasping for the moon for decades, and eventually they succeeded, opening the avenue of a cross-border twist.

Leaked data (we don’t know who did this) showed that the project cost of India’s moon mission was, incredibly, lower than the monetary value of the pain comment warriors felt.

Calling it a scam, Aubishwas, the vice-president of Bangladesh BCWA said, “This is just propaganda. Only one man could go to the moon, that too from Bangladesh back in 2013. Other such claims are nothing but lies!”

Slowman Schucon, the country’s unparalleled jack of all trades, having been blessed with a sea of knowledge, showed hundreds of scintillating reasons in his latest book, written overnight, why India shouldn’t have gone to the moon leaving so many problems unsolved.

“No, India made the greatest mistake of the century,” he said. “I wonder why there was none among the 1.4 billion people to stop the project. They could have at least asked my advice. Had they met me before starting the project, they wouldn’t have to spend so much

money unnecessarily,” he continued.

“What will they bring from the moon? Gold, diamond or platinum? Nothing ... only dust. A functioning brain would never approve a project that costs hundreds of millions of dollars just to bring some dust that they could easily have extracted from their own faces after just a short walk in Dhaka city,” he said.

On the other hand, the astronomical glory could not be celebrated for a long time in India as they discovered such comments on social media. With their eyes opened to reality by the supreme intellectuals, India promptly regretted their mission, and lamented not taking permission and advice from Bangladeshis before setting out for the moon. They keep blaming themselves for ignoring the opportunity cost -- toilets and food.

“Yeah, they are right. A place filling with craters and dust doesn’t deserve to be explored at the cost of a single penny, let alone billions!” one of the lead scientists said, disillusioned.

The story behind Trump’s ‘perfect’ mugshot

The image will be sold on mugs to fund 2024 presidential run, insiders say

MAGA CORRESPONDENT

Former US president Donald J Trump, also someone who “they say” is the current US president, has been honing his “mugshot face” since January 6, 2021 -- the day on which he allegedly instigated an insurrection.

“I have been watching him since that day, standing in front of the mirror, looking down, looking down and suddenly looking up with an expression like he was desperately trying to contain a small lizard in his mouth,” Melania Trump told Satireday yesterday.

Insiders said that to prepare the expression that people have already started calling “perfect”, Trump watched hours of TV, like he did during his first term as president. He then found inspiration in two 1990s pop culture moments.

“It is where Blue Steel from the movie Zoolander met Joey’s headshot technique from Friends,” said Trump’s son Donald Trump Junior.

“Daddy said Ben Stiller’s Blue Steel look was what inspired his serious face over the years. But he had to perfect it. You only get one shot at a mugshot, er yeah, one shot. So anyway, he had to nail the look. So then he, a stable genius with a perfect memory, remembered Joey on Friends advising Chandler, who was posing for a portrait with Monica, to keep looking down until just before the photographer would snap the photo.



PHOTO: AFP

“At that moment, you have to look up with the expression that you want to project, and voila! Daddy spent hours in front of the mirror looking down, but he could not see his shoes. What was I talking about?”

Meanwhile, Rudy Giuliani, who many erroneously suspected was the lizard that Trump was trying to keep in his mouth, revealed that the mugshot was extremely important.

“Trump is a visionary guy. He knew that he didn’t lose the 2020 elections, but the fake media and the fake world in general would not allow him to continue as president. So, he needed a plan.

“He knows the value of a brand, and his face. He likes to call his face a perfect face. And who better to be president than someone who has a perfect face?”

“Knowing that he would be indicted, I mean we all knew, he practised presenting the perfect face. And we have pre-ordered 60,000 mugs to print the mugshot on. As of now, there are already 120,000 orders for the mugshot mugs.”

Trump, meanwhile, has Truthed that he met his future self, and learned that the mugshot mugs helped elect him to the presidency in 2024.

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Panic ensues as woman swings from coconut tree

FATRA NEWS DESK

In a rare sighting, a woman was found swinging from a coconut tree by clutching onto one of its leaves in Dhaka’s Elephant Road area on Saturday morning, creating severe panic among residents of the capital.

The incident caught on tape took social media by storm, eliciting mixed reactions from netizens.

In the video, verified by Fatra News 1, the woman is seen hanging by a leaf from a coconut tree and swinging back and forth while locals, fire service members and law enforcement personnel alike were seen trying to rescue her.

A giant trampoline was set up at the base of the coconut tree, in case the woman tried to jump or lost control of her grip.

Later, firemen using a ladder of a fire engine reached the leaf and lured

her to climb down, using a bowl of stir-fried noodles.

Some netizens likened the woman to being “possessed by a jinn” while some claimed that she was just having “healthy fun”.

Some netizens likened the woman to being “possessed by a jinn” while some claimed that she was just having “healthy fun”.

The incident piqued the interest of social media warriors across the country who have since been vocal online about the need for early diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues and illnesses.

The woman, later identified as (name redacted), 27, has been diagnosed with

early onset dementia and was admitted to Elizabeth Arkham Asylum.

A graduate of University of Conservative Science, she was working as a journalist.

Madhusudan, a witness to the incident, told Fatra News 1, “We were really scared for her. She was just holding onto a leaf and hanging from the tree. Later, when we took a closer look, her eyes seemed open, and she was grinning from ear to ear.”

Another witness, Michael, said, “People were worried sick about her. What if she fell and turned into a scrambled egg? What values is she passing on to our future generation? How is this ethical and how is this professional?”

Firefighter Mike Ali, who rescued the victim, said, “This is just another day for us. There is nothing wrong with her and people should

realise that and leave her alone.”

Asked about using a bowl of noodles as bait, he replied that for children they usually have to use chocolates but adults operate differently. “We try to use fish as bait for cats, but humans are different creatures. Every human being has their own personality.”

When Fatra News 1 reached out for comments, the Arkham Asylum initially did not allow one of its patients to be interviewed.

However, in a letter correspondence, the victim told this correspondent that she simply gave into her intrusive thoughts and it was rather natural for someone to do what she did.



Women try to discover subtle art of getting away from men by climbing high places.

PHOTO: DENYS NEVOZHAI

Email your satire pieces, cartoons, comic strips or whatever tickles your funny bone to starsatireday@gmail.com and you too may have something to show for wasting your time