

Another \$1b budget support expected this year

ADB leading the climate-centric co-financing arrangement

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh is expecting another \$1 billion in budget support towards the end of the year in a financing arrangement led by the Asian Development Bank.

Of the \$1 billion, the Manila-based lender would be providing \$400 million; Japan International Cooperation Agency, the China led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and other donors would be providing the rest.

The funding is to support the country's efforts towards climate change mitigation and/or adaptation and low-carbon development, following in the leads of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which earlier provided \$500 million and \$1.4 billion respectively.

"A low-lying, densely populated country with a high poverty rate, Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change," the ADB said in a project document.

Bangladesh is also a country highly vulnerable to climate risk, ranked seventh on the Global Climate Risk Index 2021, it said.

Subsequently, the Manila-based lender has taken the initiative to support Bangladesh's climate risk mitigation and adaptation (including renewable energy, energy efficiency and green transportation sector).

For Bangladesh, the \$1 billion would go some way towards propping up its strained dollar stockpile, which stood at \$23.2 billion as of August 23, according to data from the central bank.

Last week, the ADB team met with officials of the finance ministry and the ministry of environment, forest and climate change to work out the conditions for the funding. The Daily Star has learnt from officials involved with the proceedings.

One of the conditions pertains to arresting pollution of the water bodies.

An enforcement guideline must be drafted for the polluters complete with an environment court and penalty for pollution.

Similarly, a multisectoral action plan must be drafted to control air pollution.

The government will also have to come up with a green energy policy.

"Rapid economic development has significantly increased power consumption and greenhouse gas emission (GHG) in Bangladesh. The carbon dioxide (CO2) emission per capita has grown from 0.2 tons in 2000 to 0.64 tons in 2020," the ADB said.

In 2021, 60.2 percent of the country's power generation came from liquefied natural gas, 22.5 percent from heavy fuel oil and 6.2 percent from coal.

Besides increased CO2 emissions and other pollutions, high reliance on imported fossil fuels drains public and private resources and exposes the country to energy security issues, the ADB said.

Renewable energy accounts for 3 percent of power generation, far short of the government target of 10 percent.

Bangladesh has committed to the implementation of the Paris Agreement under the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), setting an ambitious goal of a 6.73 percent reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 (15.12 percent conditional reduction in GHG emissions with support from the international community) versus the business-as-usual scenario.

To achieve these targets, sizeable investments will be required, with the appropriate policy, and regulatory and institutional support, the ADB said.

The state-owned enterprises will also have to adopt a climate-related policy and the government will have to come up with a solid action plan for implementation of its Delta Plan 2100.

The General Economic Division will have a Delta wing and will monitor whether environment-friendly projects are being onboarded by the ministries and divisions.

The local government division will also have a cell for environmental risk identification and mitigation.



Shop owners and vegetable vendors of a market struggling to work in almost knee-deep water in Chattogram's Chawk Bazar, as the city's low-lying areas have been waterlogged yet again due to overnight rain. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Toddler goes missing while playing

Family fears he fell into roadside drain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An 18-month-old child has been missing since yesterday afternoon; family and locals fear he might have fallen into an open drain near their house in Agrabad's Rongi Para in the port city.

However, no one saw it happening.

Locals said the toddler, Yasin, the only child of Saddam Hussain, a private car driver, and Nasrin Akter, a homemaker, might have fallen into the drain while playing on the road behind their house around 4:30pm, adding that the drain was full to the brim due to overnight torrential rain.

Yasin's uncle Md Rashid said, "His mother fed him lunch and went to another room for a while. They live on the bottom floor and though the front door was locked, the back door

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DENGUE OUTBREAK August cases surpass all of 2022

Experts blame city corporations' 'casual approach'; 11 more die



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With four days shy of the month-end, August has seen a higher number of dengue cases than all of last year.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, 2,327 new dengue cases were reported yesterday, taking the month's tally of recorded cases to 62,679.

The number of dengue cases throughout last year was 62,382.

Adding to that, the number of fatalities in August so far - 297 - also surpassed that of last year's - 281.

Meanwhile, the number of dengue deaths from January till yesterday stands at 548, while the number of patients rose

to 1,14,511.

Experts meanwhile reiterate that necessary measures should be taken to kill Aedes mosquitoes and bring the situation under control.

They blame the casual approach of the authorities concerned for the rise in the numbers of cases and deaths this year.

Entomologist GM Sairul Rahman said, "The city corporations' casual approach early in the season contributed to increased breeding of the Aedes population - carrier of the dengue virus."

"When the Aedes population declined after October last year, no initiative was taken to contain the rest, for which it has

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Parts of port city go under water again

Heavy rain forces authorities to delay HSC exams by an hour

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

Waterlogging caused by overnight downpour has disrupted the lives of residents in Chattogram and forced the authorities to delay the HSC exams by an hour yesterday.

The exams started at 11:00am, instead of 10:00am, so that students commuting through flooded streets do not miss the tests, officials said.

The Met office recorded 118 mm of rain in 24 hours till 9:00am yesterday, officials said.

HSC student Gazi Tasnim Hasan Muhi said she left her home in Halishahar Shyamoli around 7:45am to reach his exam centre 9km away.

"Many students were waiting for vehicles in knee-deep water. But there was nothing on the road," she said.

After she waited for an hour to find transport, her father arranged a vehicle to take her to the examination centre.

At Kapasgola City Corporation School and College, there was waist-high water in the exam halls on the ground floor. Over 700 students from six colleges were scheduled to sit for examinations there.

Principal Nur Banu Chowdhury said three students were absent yesterday.

The ground floors of most buildings were inundated in the Muradpur, Bahaddarhat, Badurtola, Kapasgola, Sholashahar, Probortok, Agrabad, Halishahar, Chawk Bazar, Chaktai, and Khatunganj areas and on KB Aman Ali Road and DC Road.

RECURRING WATERLOGGING

Waterlogging is a perennial problem in the port city. The Chattogram Development Authority has been implementing a project worth Tk 5,617 crore to address waterlogging since 2017.

Lt Col Shah Ali, the project director, told reporters on May 2 that physical work made 76.26 percent progress.

Experts say the project is not benefiting the city dwellers yet.



Liton-less Tigers land in Colombo

SPORTS REPORTER

With the aim of making a mark as a team at the global stage, Bangladesh national cricket team reached Sri Lanka yesterday to take part in the Asia Cup.

The Tigers will begin their campaign against Sri Lanka on Thursday, a day after the tournament kicks off, before heading to Pakistan for their second and final Group B match against Afghanistan on September 3.

There was some bad news, though, for the men in red and green, who had to leave behind opening batter Liton Das due to high fever.

Although Liton tested negative for dengue, there are concerns whether he will be able to recover from

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Ten-year-old Sajedur's mother keeps checking her son's temperature with a thermometer to make sure his condition is not getting worse. He was admitted to Mugda Medical College Hospital after being diagnosed with dengue 10 days ago. However, a few days in, the child contracted typhoid as well. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

FLOOD IN NORTH

1 lakh people affected in four districts

Teesta likely to see its water level fall from tomorrow

STAR REPORT

The water level in the Teesta may begin to fall tomorrow while the swelling Jamuna may cause floods in vast areas of Sirajganj, officials said.

Floods caused by the Teesta are currently affecting almost 1 lakh people in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Rangpur districts, they added.

This is the fourth time the Teesta has flooded villages on its banks this year.

If the Teesta water does not recede in a day or two, Aman paddy cultivated near the banks in the districts may get damaged, said Biplab Kumar Mohanta, deputy director at the Department of Agricultural Extension in Kurigram.

Rahmat Ullah, 70, of Gobardhan area of Aditmari in Lalmonirhat, yesterday said he and his family members have only eaten pulled rice, molasses and bread since Friday night, when part of his house and his kitchen got inundated, making it impossible to cook.

Another farmer named Nabir Hossain, 65, of Rajahar upazila of Kurigram, said he left his flooded home on Saturday and took shelter in a hut made of plastic sheet on an embankment.

Administration officials said they were distributing

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Railway staff defer strike for 10 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railway staffers, including loco-masters, postponed their scheduled strike from early today for 10 working days.

"We have decided to postpone our work abstention for 10 working days following the assurance of the Prime Minister's Office," Mujibur Rahman, chief convener of Bangladesh Railway Running Staff Oikya Parishad, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said they will have a meeting with the principal secretary of the prime minister on August 29 over the issue and will take the next step accordingly.

Running staffers — officials including loco masters, assistant loco masters, guards and travelling ticket examiner (TTE) — on August 1 announced to go for work abstention from 12:01am of August 28 demanding reinstatement of their post-

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina waves at the crowd at Dhaka airport upon returning from Johannesburg, South Africa yesterday. The premier arrived home after attending the BRICS Summit.

PHOTO: PIU

'365 days of injustice'

Students, eminent citizens seek Khadiza's immediate release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a programme yesterday demanded the immediate release of Jagannath University student Khadijatul Kubra, who has been in jail since August 27 of last year in two separate cases filed under the Digital Security Act.

The DSA has now been converted into the Cyber Security Act (CSA).

Criticising the CSA, Dhaka University Professor Tanjim Uddin Khan said, "Such laws were enacted so that none can criticise the ruler, and by enacting such laws, they (the rulers) have not only ensured their stay in power but also ensured the safety of those who are their associates."

Professor Tanjim made these remarks while addressing a programme titled '365 Days of Injustice' organised by students from different universities on the one-year anniversary of Khadijatul Kubra's detention, held at the Dhaka University Teachers Students Centre.

"This law targets not just persons like Khadijatul, but also others who criticise and speak out about the government's wrongdoings. They will be watched by the government, their voices will be muffled, and they will finally be imprisoned and die in jail day one day," he added.

Dhaka University Prof Samina Lutfa stated, "Whenever elections approach, the names of these laws are changed, but the laws and their clauses have remained the same. In some cases, these laws have become even more oppressive than their previous versions."

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Ex-minister Motiur Rahman dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran Awami League politician and former religious affairs minister, Principal Motiur Rahman, passed away yesterday due to old-age complications. He was 81 years old.

Motiur, a valiant freedom fighter and recipient of the Ekushey Padak award, breathed his last at 11:00pm while undergoing treatment at Nexus Hospital in Mymensingh.

His elder brother, Zia Uddin Ahmed, confirmed this to The Daily Star.

He is survived by his wife, a son, and three daughters.

Born in 1942 in Akua village in Mymensingh Sadar upazila, he served as a member of the advisory committee of the Bangladesh Awami League

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GOPLAGANJ SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIV

Academic activities in peril

Teacher shortage, lack of infrastructure to blame

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Academic activities at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University in Gopalganj are being severely hampered due to a shortage of basic infrastructure and teachers.

Established in 2011, the BSMRSTU currently has only 284 teachers for a total of 10,845 students enrolled across 34 departments. The university with its student-to-teacher ratio of 38:1 falls short of meeting the University Grants Commission's recommended ratio of 16:1 for science universities.

In several departments, the ratio is far higher than the average of one teacher for every 38 students. Departments like Architecture, Botany, History, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Food and Agro Process Engineering, Fisheries and Marine Bioscience,



and Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, have less than five teachers each.

"We don't have enough teachers for such a high number of students. Students in many departments are deprived of the required number of lectures and sessional classes as a result," said Dr Kamruzzaman, former president of BSMRSTU

Teachers' Association.

We have urged the university administration to recruit more experienced teachers to address the issue, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star, Jamal Uddin, assistant professor of Computer Science and Engineering Department, said he

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MARSHAL AGROVET BTI pesticide tested effective

DIPAN NANDY

Following two tests, Bacillus Thuringiensis Israelensis (BTI) pesticide, imported from China by Dhaka North City Corporation's blacklisted company Marshal Agrovet, has proved to be effective.

The tests were conducted by Plant Protection Wing (PPW) of Department of Agriculture Extension, and Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research. Both organisations sent their reports to DNCC yesterday.

While DNCC is still firm in their choice to use BTI to combat Aedes breeding, their decision regarding the use of Marshal Agrovet's imported pesticide remains unclear.

Acknowledging the pesticide's efficacy, DNCC Chief Executive Officer Selim Reza said, "Both the organisations, in their reports, said Marshal's BTI is effective for killing Aedes larvae. However, we are yet to decide if we will use it."

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DENGUE OUTBREAK

Tk 50,000 spent per patient

Claims health minister; Unicef to provide \$2.2m

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government has already spent Tk 400 crore for the treatment of dengue patients in public hospitals across the country.

This expenditure translates to approximately Tk 50,000 per dengue patient, the minister said at a roundtable in Dhaka which discussed the ways to tackle the dengue crisis.

"Around 70 percent of the dengue patients receive treatment from public hospitals while the remaining 30 percent from private hospitals," the minister said, adding that the patients receive treatment at public hospitals free of cost.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) organised the roundtable where high-ups from the development partners, UN agencies, two city corporations in Dhaka, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, and business organisations attended.

Representatives from different local, private and government organisations at the roundtable highlighted that they have been doing their best to tackle the dengue outbreak.

Prof Ahmedul Kabir, additional director general (Planning and Development) of the DGHS said, despite all the efforts, the mosquito menace

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NATIONAL POLLS EC may allow journos to use motorbikes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal yesterday hinted that the Election Commission might change its decision on banning journalists using motorcycles during elections.

On April 12, the EC issued a guideline for media workers that banned journalists using motorcycles when they are covering the polls.

After a meeting with British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke at the Nirbachan Bhaban, Habibur told reporters that they discussed the media guidelines.

The UK envoy wanted to know whether media personnel needed permission to enter a polling station. "We said that there is no permission required," said Awal.

Journalists said that it would be difficult for them to cover election activities without motorcycles, which is justified.

"That's why we said we've put it [new guideline] under review," he added.

Meanwhile, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke said after the meeting that the UK is encouraging free, fair, participatory and peaceful elections in Bangladesh.

"So that, citizens of Bangladesh can exercise their democratic rights," she said.

"This was my first meeting with the CEC and his team. We had a very constructive introductory discussion," the envoy said.

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Holding onto a moving human hauler, a boy on roller skates glides along the busy Khamarbari roundabout while a passenger and an underaged helper, standing on bumpers, somehow hold onto the vehicle. Such careless actions not only defy traffic rules but also exacerbate the risks of accidents. The photo was taken yesterday near Ispahani Eye Hospital in the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Khaleda's health not satisfactory Says her personal physician

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's health condition was "not satisfactory" even after 18 days of hospitalisation, her personal physician Prof AZM Zahid Hossain said yesterday.

Khaleda was admitted to Evercare Hospital on August 9 but her condition was improving very slowly, Zahid told The Daily Star.

"Had her condition improved faster, she would have been released from the hospital," the doctor said.

It is uncertain how many days she needs to stay in hospital, he said.

The physician said Khaleda was under close observation and her treatment plan was being changed constantly.

"New medicines are being prescribed ... and some are being dropped," he said.

"She should be taken abroad urgently for proper treatment," Zahid said.

ROHINGYA CRISIS

Mount pressure on Myanmar with sanctions

Suggests AIBS policy brief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Targeted sanctions, diplomatic pressures, and similar mechanisms are needed to hold Myanmar accountable and ensure justice for the Rohingya people...

May 2023 that served as the basis for this policy brief. During the symposium, the experts also emphasised the importance of international attention and commitment to finding a just and durable solution to the crisis...

perpetrating such human rights violations in the future, said the brief, mentioning how the international community dealt with Syria could be used to address the human rights violations in Myanmar.

365 days of injustice

Referring to the denial of bail to Khadija six times, Prof Samina questioned, "Has she committed any heinous crime that warranted the court to reject her bail six times?"

that contradict the will of the people and attempts to enforce them, then citizens are not obliged to comply with such laws. He added that Khadija is being kept behind bars, while the government has failed to deliver justice in cases like Sagar Runi, Toki, and many others for years.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

police pressed charges against her in the two cases, filed by New Market and Kalabagan police themselves on October 11 and October 19, 2020.

We are starving

female tea worker in the garden, said, "We have no rice or anything, and our children are crying for food. We are falling sick with many diseases, but there is no doctor or good medicine in the garden either."

fight for them. We want the government to acquire this garden." Bangladesh Tea Workers Union Vice President Pankaj Kanda said that the owner of Hosnabad Tea Garden has been irregular in paying wages to the workers for many years.

BTI pesticide Tk 50,000 spent per patient

FROM PAGE 3 Meanwhile, DNCC is trying to import BTI from authentic sources, added Reza.

FROM PAGE 3 has remained uncontrolled. "I think mosquitoes are smarter than our people working at the local government organisations," he said, urging for an innovative approach to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.

Representative to Bangladesh, said that they will provide USD 2.2 million to support Bangladesh in tackling this year's outbreak.

IEDCR sent their report to DNCC after testing the pesticide for nine days. According to their report, the supplied BTI is effective and safe for public health. PPW's report echoed the same, said Faridul Hassan, acting director of PPW.

The fund will be utilised for communication and community engagement, said Unicef officials. Dr Bardan Jung Rana, Country representative of the World Health Organisation said the dengue situation in the country has been under their radar since the massive outbreak in 2019.

Determining the dengue situation as disastrous, Zannatul Bakiya Keka, senior staff correspondent at Channel I, held the authorities responsible for the failure to control the outbreak.

Earlier, DNCC blacklisted Marshal Agrovet and cancelled its purchase order with the company for importing BTI from Chinese company Shandong Ganon Agrochemical although it claimed to have imported the chemicals from Singaporean company Best Chemical Co (S) Pte Ltd.

He said, "Government organisations consistently face shortages in essential logistics, and there are ongoing efforts to bridge this gap. Without timely mosquito control and widespread community involvement, the prevention of dengue infections and fatalities will be challenging." Sheldon Yett, UNICEF

He said that the health ministry has been working to ensure treatment for the patients at the hospital. "The shortage of medical equipment is not as severe as portrayed in the media," he said.

EC may allow

"We discussed the vital role of strong democratic, independent institutions, the role of the media and the civil society," she said, adding, "We also discussed roles of independent observers." She, however, did not take any questions from the reporters.

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Furniture: 7 (Seven) Apartments fully furnished with solid Mahogany wood, VRF AC.
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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer PWD E/M MIS Division-2 Purta Bhaban, Segunbagicha, Dhaka

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NCC Bank NATIONAL CREDIT AND COMMERCE BANK LIMITED COMMON SERVICES DIVISION Head Office: NCC Bank Bhaban, 13/1-2, Toyenbee Circular Road

University

FROM PAGE 5 a used the online messaging application "Discord" to establish contact with the girls, he said. Through this app, he convinced them to send him their nude photos, he added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer DPHE, Lalmonirhat District, Lalmonirhat. Invitation for e-Tender notice

Ex-minister

FROM PAGE 3 until his death. Motiur was elected as a member of parliament from Mymensingh-4 in 1986, 1996, and 2008. In 2014, he was appointed as the minister of religious affairs.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় হাইওয়ে পুলিশ বগুড়া রিজিয়ন বগুড়া

Railway staff

FROM PAGE 3 retirement benefits. On April 13 last year, the running staffers went for a work abstention suspending the operation of all trains to press home the same demand.

CITY

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES
University student
sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A university student has been sent to jail on pornography charges for collecting nude images of an American underage girl.

Police arrested the 19-year-old Md Samir on August 21 from his Sonadanga house in Khulna. When produced before a court, he was placed on a two-day remand. He was sent to jail after the remand period on Saturday.

Saiful Islam, additional deputy commissioner (transnational crime) of the CTTC, said on July 26, an official of the US Embassy in Dhaka filed a general diary with the Gulshan police station after the mother of the 13-year-old filed a complaint with Homeland Security Investigations about the incident.

The US authorities notified the US Embassy in Dhaka prompting it to file the GD.

According to the GD, a Bangladeshi "potential sex predator" collected child sexual abuse material (CSAM) or child pornography material from the child.

Acting on the GD, the ADC said police found 164 photos of at least 30 girls from three North American countries from the youth's laptop and cellphone. Samir, a student of computer science department at a university in Rajshahi,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



With no alternative employment opportunities in the region, around 27,000 stone crushers at Burimari land port in Lalmonirhat continue to risk their lives on a regular basis in exchange of meager wages. PHOTO: STAR

'We are starving'

Hosnabad tea garden workers continue strike for arrears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Around 470 tea workers from Hosnabad tea garden in Srimangal upazila of Moulvibazar district are continuing to strike and protest for the 10th day, pushing their demands for arrears and rations.

Malek Mia, general secretary of Hosnabad Tea Garden Panchayat, said the weekly wage and rations are paid to the workers every Thursday, but the payments have now been halted for two Thursdays in a row. "We are starving," he said.

"We wanted to protest in Sreemangal town today(yesterday). However, we wanted to give the authorities concerned more time. But if our demands are not met, we will take a position on the road," he added.

Lakshmi Karmakar, a SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 28
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-30 12-45 4-45 6-33 8-00
JAMAT 5-05 1-15 5-00 6-36 8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Working hard, risking wellbeing... all for Tk 400

Daily struggles of stone crushers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Despite going through the arduous task of stone crushing, along with loading and unloading, about 40,000 labourers at Lalmonirhat's Burimari and Kurigram's Sonahat land ports are deprived of fair wages.

Talking to The Daily Star, some workers said they receive a wage of Tk 400 for a day's work from 9:00am to 5:00pm. Their earnings are insufficient to provide for their families, contribute to their children's education, and meet other basic needs. On days when the work is stopped, they either have to starve

or borrow from others. Also, they do not get any additional benefits aside from their wages.

Sources from the Sangjukta Sramik Federation disclosed that the Burimari land port in Patigram upazila hosts 27,000 labourers engaged in stone crushing, while the Sonahat land port in Bhurungamari upazila employs 13,000 workers. At least 20 percent of these workers are women.

Monir Hossain, a 50-year-old labourer at Sonahat, told The Daily Star that they are toiling hard amid constant risk of "silicosis" disease.

"If there had been other job alternatives in the area, I would

not have worked here," he added.

Nazrul Islam, another labourer at the Burimari land port, echoed Monir, saying, "Stone dust enters our lungs through the nose and mouth while working, and it causes deadly silicosis among the workers."

"Many of our coworkers already died from silicosis, and many others are still fighting for their lives. Machine owners never help us financially with our treatment, and they ignore us when we demand fair wages," he added.

Nur Islam, owner of a stone-crushing machine at Burimari land port, said the number of workers in the region is higher

than the demand. As there is no alternative employment, they work there at low wages. More than 2,000 stone-crushing machines are operated there, each employing 12-25 workers.

"If other machine owners raise the wages, I will also do the same," he said.

Moniruzzaman Monir, general secretary of Sangjukta Sramik Federation in Lalmonirhat, said they are trying to unite stone-crushing workers on a platform in order to press home their demand for a daily wage of Tk 700.

If the demands are not met, the platform will launch a movement, he added.

2 die from electrocution in Munshiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Two electrical workers died from electrocution while cleaning electricity poles in Munshiganj yesterday.

Deceased Tula Mia (41) was the son of Gani Mia of Baudar village in Mymensingh, and Palash (40) was the son of late Sheetal Mia of Jalchatra village in Tangail.

The incident took place at a housing company called Nimtola Housing Ltd. in the Mirzakanda area of Kayin Union

around 5 pm. Kayin UP Chairman Ashraf Ali said that the two victims had been working at Nimtola Housing Company for about 5 years. They got electrocuted while cleaning an electricity pole on Sunday afternoon.

Later, they died on the way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Officer-in-Charge of Sirajdikhan Police Station, Md. Mujahidul Islam, said, "We will take legal action after talking to the family of the deceased."

BTRC official held over 'rape, blackmail'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested a deputy director of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) after a woman filed a case against him alleging rape and blackmail.

BTRC Deputy Director Sunjib Kumer Singha was arrested on Friday night in connection with the case filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, said Parvez Islam, officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station.

Sunjib was taken to court on Saturday with a remand petition, and the court permitted police to question him in jail for one day.

Sunjib lives in Dhaka's Dhanmondi area and worked for the BTRC's Legal and Licensing division.

According to the case statement, Sunjib had an intimate relationship with the complainant since 2013.

The victim alleged that the accused recorded some of their intimate moments without consent.

He blackmailed her with those videos and photos when she wanted to end the relationship, the case statement further reads.

Sunjib then raped her several times and tortured her, reads the case statement.

On August 15, Sunjib called the woman to his Dhanmondi home and hit her with a bottle with an intention to kill her, it added.

The woman managed to leave the house and filed a case with the Dhanmondi Police Station.

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দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি
তারিখ: ২৭/০৮/২০২৩খ্রিঃ
পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ মোতাবেক ২০২৩-২০২৪ অর্থ বছরের ২য় কোয়ার্টার (অক্টোবর, নভেম্বর ও ডিসেম্বর/২০২৩ইং পর্যন্ত) ০৩ (তিন) মাসের জন্য মতর ডাল, সয়াবিন তেল ও চিনি ক্রয়ের নিমিত্তে প্রকৃত অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন যোগানদার/সরবরাহকারী/মিল মালিক ও ক্রয়কারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরযুক্ত বামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। দরপত্রের বিবরণ/শর্তাবলী নিম্নরূপ: অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী সিডিউলে বর্ণিত আছে।
১ মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ: খরপুত্র মন্ত্রণালয়/জননিরাপত্তা বিভাগ।
২ সংস্থা: বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।
৩ দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী প্রধান: পুলিশ সুপার, পঞ্চগড়।
৪ কি করণে দরপত্র আহ্বান: জেলা পুলিশের রেশন সামগ্রী ক্রয়।
৫ দরপত্র সূত্র নং: পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার নম্বর নং-৪৪-০১,০০০০,০৪৩৬,০১০,২/৪৩(১৪৩) তারিখ: ২৪/০২/২০২৩ এবং ৪৪-০১,০০০০,০৪৩৬,০১,০১,২/২৬৫(১৪৪) তারিখ: ০৯/০৫/২০২৩।
কাজের বিবরণ:
৬ দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি: উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র।
৭ আবেদনের উৎস: রাজস্ব খাত।
৮ দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ: ৩০/০৮/২০২৩ইং।
৯ দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ: ১৯/০৯/২০২৩ইং।
১০ দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়: ২০/০৯/২০২৩ইং সময়-১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১১ দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়: ২০/০৯/২০২৩ইং সময়-১২.৩০ ঘটিকা।
অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা:
১২ দরপত্র ডকুমেন্ট/সিডিউল বিক্রয়কারী অফিস: ১। ডিআইজি, রংপুর রেঞ্জ বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ রংপুর এর কার্যালয়, পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় ঠাকুরগাঁও ও পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় পঞ্চগড়।
দরপত্র গ্রহণকারী/অফিস: পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, পঞ্চগড়।
দরপত্র খোলার স্থান: পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, পঞ্চগড়।
১৩ প্রি টেন্ডার সভার স্থান, তারিখ, সময়: পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, পঞ্চগড় তারিখ: ১৯/০৯/২০২৩ইং, সময়: ১০.৩০ ঘটিকা।
১৪ দরপত্রের যোগ্যতা: (ক) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র (খ) হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স সনদপত্র (গ) ২০২৩-২০২৪ অর্থ বছরের আয়ের সনদপত্র (ঘ) ভাটি রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদপত্র (ঙ) অভিজ্ঞতা সনদপত্র (চ) বিগত ০৩ (তিন) মাসের ব্যালেন্স শিটস/ব্যাংক স্টেটমেন্ট (ছ) ১৯/০৮/২০২৩ইং পর্যন্ত ব্যালেন্স শিটস/ব্যাংক স্টেটমেন্ট (জ) ২০,০০,০০০/০০ (বিশ লক্ষ টাকা) লিখিত মানি ফ্রিড ব্যালেন্স হতে (ঙ) বিগত ০১ (এক) বছরের পুলিশ বাহিনীর মালামাল সরবরাহের অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র (ঝ) ছবিসহ ফর্মের মালিকানা হস্তক্ষমতার কপি এবং প্রতিনির্দিষ্ট ক্ষেত্রে ছবিসহ ১ম শ্রেণীর ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট/সোর্টারী পাবলিক কর্তৃক প্রদেয় ক্ষমতা পত্র।
১৫ মাল্যমানের বিবরণ:
ক্রম নং: আইটেমের: পরিমাণ: সিডিউলের মূল্য: টেন্ডার নিকিউরিটি মানি: কাজের সময়সীমা:
১ মতর ডাল: ২০,০০০ কেজি: ১০০০/-: ১,৫০,০০০/-: ০১/১০/২০২৩ইং হইতে ৩১/১২/২০২৩ইং পর্যন্ত
২ সয়াবিন তেল: ২০,০০০ কেজি: ১০০০/-: ১,৫০,০০০/-: ই
৩ চিনি: ১৪,০০০ কেজি: ১০০০/-: ৫০,০০০/-: ই
দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারীর বিবরণ:
১৬ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম: জনাব এস. এম. সিরাজুল হুদা, পিপিএম।
১৭ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবী: পুলিশ সুপার, পঞ্চগড়।
১৮ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার ঠিকানা: পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, পঞ্চগড়।
১৯ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার সাথে যোগাযোগের মাধ্যম: অফিস টেলিফোন- ০২৫৮-৯৯৪২০৭০, ফ্যাক্স-০২৫৮৯৯৪২০৩০।
২০ বিশেষ শর্তাবলী:
ক) নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের পর আর কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।
খ) কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
গ) দরপত্র উন্মুক্ত হতে কোন আইটেমের পরিমাণ চাহিদা মোতাবেক ক্রয়ের বিধায়ে কর্তৃপক্ষের ক্ষমতা রয়েছে।
ঘ) পিপিআর/২০০৮ মোতাবেক সকল শর্তাবলী কার্যকর হবে।
ঙ) উন্নতমানের দেশী চিনি মতর ডাল ২ কেজি, ৩.৫ কেজি, ৪ কেজি ও ৫.৫ কেজি স্বচ্ছ পলিপ্যাডিক প্যাকেটজাত সরবরাহ করতে হবে।
চ) উন্নতমানের দেশী চিনি ৫০ কেজির বস্তাজাত করে সরবরাহ করতে হবে।
ছ) সয়াবিন তেল (BSTI কর্তৃক অনুমোদিত) অবাধি কোয়েস্টেশন ও ফ্যাট মূল্য এবং ভিটামিন "এ" যুক্ত হতে হবে ভোজ্য সয়াবিন তেল ০.৫/২/৫ লিটার প্রাস্টিক ক্যানের সরবরাহ করতে হবে।
জ) আইটেম হিসেবে ভোজ্য সয়াবিন তেল, মতরের ডাল ও চিনি ক্ষেত্রে দরপত্র সিডিউল দাখিলের সময় নমুনা দাখিল করতে হবে। নমুনা পরীক্ষার জন্য ল্যাবরেটরিতে প্রেরণ করা হলে এ সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় ব্যয় দরদাতাকে বহন করতে হবে।
এস. এম. সিরাজুল হুদা, পিপিএম
পিপি-৮০০৮১২১৬৩
পুলিশ সুপার
পঞ্চগড়
ফোন-০২৫৮-৯৯৪২০৭০, ফ্যাক্স-৯৯৪২০৭০
ই-মেইল: sppanchagarh@police.gov.bd
জিডি-১৩০১

The beauty of 'char' amazed me: RUNA KHAN

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National Film Award-winning actress Runa Khan has graced both silver screen and theatre stage with her exceptional talent for years. The actress is currently busy shooting for her upcoming film **Bok: The Soul of Nature**, in the picturesque Lalpur char of Ashuganj in Brahmanbaria.

In a candid conversation with The Daily Star, Runa delved into her experiences of shooting for the new movie and shared insights into her aspirations.

You are shooting for your new film on Meghna 'char'. Tell us more about the project.

You're right! **Bok: The Soul of Nature** is directed by Masud Pathik. It marks my first collaboration with him as a director. In this film, I portray Sobita, whose husband is a Heron hunter. Through this movie, we aim to narrate a tale that encompasses life, nature, and the lives of coast dwellers.

Is the film's script inspired by Jibananda Das' poem?

Most certainly. Das' poetry is well-known among Bengali readers, and this film's script is inspired by his cherished poem **Aat Bochor Ager Ekdin**.

Through this production, we intend to capture the essence of Bengal, the unique charm of the char, and the beauty of the rivers.

How challenging is it to shoot in a 'char' area? Char areas have their own set of challenges. Accommodation is scarce, and boats are the only means of transportation.

Interestingly, the weather has also played its part. Sudden drizzles during the shoot made the sequences authentic without the need for artificial intervention.

At times, we would shoot under the scorching sun and other times, we would drench in downpours.

For this film, I had to shoot without makeup

and the experience was quite unique. Sunburn on my skin for the first few days were a little difficult to cope with. However, I got used to the environment with time.

Any particular scene that you found challenging during the shoot?

A river scene which took around six hours and numerous takes. We started at around 9:00 am with a team of some forty individuals. A part of the team would be ashore while another had to be on boats, which exacerbated the challenges.

It was quite an endeavor as we had to stay at local homesteads and I must say, people here are incredibly warm and welcoming. Their hospitality has been overwhelming, with gestures like offering guavas or homemade meals.

Despite limitations, the beauty of the char and a genuine connection with its people truly made this experience memorable.

What aspires you as an artiste?

As long as I am healthy and alive, my passion for acting will continue to burn brightly. My aspiration as an artiste is to embody various characters that challenge and inspire me. The thrill lies in exploring a diverse range of roles which pushes my boundaries and capabilities to new heights.



PHOTOS: SHEKHI MEHEDI MORSHED

SULTAN at Birth Centenary: Committee formed to honour the artist's works

To commemorate the 100th birth anniversary of SM Sultan, a new committee has been formed recently, titled "Sultan at Birth Centenary: National and International Celebration Committee".



The committee, led by esteemed artist Shahabuddin Ahmed (adviser), distinguished artist Monirul Islam (convener), and acclaimed portrait photographer Nasir Ali Mamun as the member secretary, have set forth an ambitious plan to celebrate Sultan's centenary.

Over the next two years, a series of events will unfold, offering a comprehensive tribute to the artist's life and work.

Amitabh, SRK to reunite on-screen after 17 years

Bollywood's legendary actors Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan are all set to reunite on-screen after 17 years.

According to Indian media, the mega stars will appear in a project which is yet to be revealed. Fans are hoping that both the actors will make a cameo appearance in **Don 3**.

Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan have previously gifted blockbuster movies including **Mohabbatein**, **Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham** and **Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna**, among others.



NEWS

3 cops killed as train hits police car

FROM PAGE 12
Eskandar Ali Molla of Bagerhat, and Mizanur Rahman of Gopalganj.

Sub-inspector Sujan Sharma and constable Shamar Shah, who was the driver of the vehicle, were undergoing treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH). Sujan, who sustained a serious head injury, had an operation.

Police said gatekeeper Shabriar Mahmud Dipu is on the run.

Sources at Bangladesh Railway said Dipu was not a permanent employee of the railway. He was working on a contract.

The level crossing is an authorised one and under the jurisdiction of the railway, they added.

Md Tofayel Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Model Police Station, told The Daily Star, "The police team led by SI Sujan Sharma was going to arrest an accused in a case filed under the women and

children repression prevention act."

He said the team took Shahadat Hossain, a member of Salimpur Union Parishad, with it to arrest the accused. When the police car went onto the level crossing around noon, the Chattogram-bound Sonar Bangla train hit the vehicle, the OC said, quoting witnesses.

Shahadat, who was also wounded in the accident, was taking treatment at CMCH.

Witness Md Tarek, a vegetable vendor, said, "Amid the heavy rain, we tried to alert the police car after hearing the whistle of the running train. The vehicle was crossing the rail track slowly. At that time, the bar at the gate was not lowered."

"I rescued the SI, three constables and sent them to the hospital."

The deceased were in the back seats, Tarek added.

This newspaper could not find any railway official on the spot till

5:00pm.

Quoting gateman Dipu, Tarek and two other locals said Dipu did not get his wage for over three months.

Tarek said, "Dipu told me that he was unpaid for a few months. Dipu also said he went to senior officials of the railway, but to no avail."

Dipu used to come to the workplace around 9:00am in the morning and leave after several hours, said roadside shopkeepers and vendors.

Contacted, Abidur Rahman, divisional railway manager of East Zone, told The Daily Star, "We have sacked the gateman and formed a four-member committee to investigate the incident."

About the gateman's wage, he said, "The gateman works under a contractor and submitted his bill to a BR section that does not deal with it, creating the complexity over his payment."

34 eminent personalities

FROM PAGE 12
different forms from various levels of the government. Considering all these factors, we believe the criminal case against him in the Labour Court is driven by ulterior motives. This deeply concerns us," it reads.

According to the statement, Professor Yunus has earned global respect for his efforts to uplift the conditions of the impoverished and marginalised people.

It says he has brought prestige to Bangladesh by achieving numerous medals and awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize, the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Congressional Gold Medal.

Using various harassment tactics against him under the guise of legal and administrative proceedings is detrimental to his work and it conveys a negative message to the international community.

"We urge the government to stop all forms of harassment and biased hostilities against Dr Yunus," it reads.

On September 9, 2021, Labour Inspector (general) SM Arifuzzaman of the Inspection for Factories and Establishments Department filed a

labour law violation case against four people, including Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, with the Third Labour Court of Dhaka.

According to the case documents, officials of the Inspection for Factories and Establishments Department on August 16, 2021, inspected the office of Grameen Telecom in the capital's Mirpur and found several violations of labour laws.

On June 6 this year, the court framed charges against the accused - including Prof Yunus - in the case. The case trial began on August 22.

The signatories include: Educationist Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque; former adviser to the caretaker government Hafiz Uddin Khan; human rights activist Hameeda Hossain; former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder; economist Debapriya Bhattacharya; Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik editor Badiul Alam Majumdar; legal expert Dr Shahdeen Malik; human rights activist Sharmin Murshid; environmental lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan; Prof Ali Riaz; Prof Asif Nazrul; photographer Shahidul Alam; Prof CR Abrar; Prof Parveen Hasan; Prof Firdaus Azim; and human rights activist Shirin Haque.

Liton-less Tigers land in Colombo

FROM PAGE 1
fever before Bangladesh's opening match. Pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib, who also missed the flight due to technical issues, is however expected to join the side today.

Chandika Hathurusingha's charges are expected to begin their training from today where the team management might want to figure out probable backup options for the opening slot.

Pacer Taskin Ahmed, meanwhile, was hopeful about the team's chances, hoping they could at least reach the final.

"Our main aim is to play in the final of the Asia Cup. I will be personally very happy if we can reach the final playing as a team," Taskin told the media before boarding the flight for Colombo.

"Obviously we wish to become champions, but the main thing is to play good cricket since we have a World Cup coming up shortly. If we can play our best cricket, it's possible to become champions," the pacer added.

HC can't order surrender to lower court

FROM PAGE 12
Syed Ashfaqul Haque and his wife Tania Khondoker to surrender before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Court in Dhaka in six weeks in a case involving the fall of a girl from their seventh-floor apartment.

The HC also directed law enforcers not to arrest them during this period. In compliance with the HC directive, Ashfaqul and Tania surrendered before the CMM Court in Dhaka on August 21 and sought bail, which the court granted till September 25.

Yesterday, the apex court scrapped the orders of the HC and the CMM court and directed them to surrender before the CMM court with a fresh bail petition.

The SC also asked the CMM court to consider their bail petition on the merit of the case, said Senior Advocate Md Motaheer Hossain Sazu, the lawyer for Ashfaqul and Tania.

He said the SC observations and directives will be applicable to all similar cases in which the HC has directed the accused to surrender before the lower courts and asked the law enforcers not to arrest them for a certain period.

Deputy Attorney General Sarwar Hossain Bappi also said the Appellate Division's directive and observations will be binding on all courts.

The case was filed against Ashfaqul, Tania, and Asma Akhter Shilpi after a seven-year-old girl who was sheltered at Ashfaqul's house jumped off the couple's apartment in the capital's Mohammadpur on August 4, three days after her arrival.

The girl's mother Josna Begum filed the case with Mohammadpur Police Station on August 6.

The girl survived the fall with minor injuries, but has since fully recovered and is now living with her mother. In her statements before the court, she told the magistrate that she wanted to go home and so jumped off the building.

Yesterday, while moving the leave-to-appeal petition, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin read out from the first information report of the case before the SC.

He also cited from a judgement delivered by the Appellate Division on June 6, 2010, which prohibited the HC from directing any accused to surrender before lower court and law enforcers not to arrest the accused.

Lawyer Motaheer Hossain opposed the petition, saying his clients are innocent, and they have not committed any offence in any manner.

He argued that the Appellate Division's directive and observations, cited by the attorney general, had

come from a murder case and is therefore not applicable to his clients.

The state's leave to appeal has become ineffective after Ashfaqul Haque and Tania Khondoker surrendered before the CMM Court in Dhaka on August 21 in compliance with the HC directive, and secured bail in the case against them, Motaheer argued.

Obama pens a letter of support for Prof Yunus

FROM PAGE 12
potential you invested in, and those of us who care about a more equitable economic future for all, are thinking of you, and I hope that you continue to have the freedom to do your important work."

Obama is thought to wield tremendous influence within the ranks of the Democrat party in particular, and US politics in general.

On August 20, a full bench of the Appellate Division cleared the way for a criminal case to continue against Dr Yunus and his co-defendants, by rejecting a petition to prevent the case from proceeding. The trial commenced two days later.

Imran admits to misplacing

FROM PAGE 12
prime minister in the jail, media reports said.

FIA sources said a six-member joint investigation team, led by FIA Deputy Director Ayaz Khan, met Khan in the office of the Attock Jail's deputy superintendent and interrogated him for over an hour, the Dawn newspaper reported.

During interrogation, Khan admitted to losing the cypher, saying he couldn't recall where he kept it, The News newspaper reported. Khan also denied that the paper he waved at a public gathering last year, days before the ouster of his government, as proof of the conspiracy was the diplomatic cable.

"The paper I gestured in the public were Cabinet meeting minutes and not cypher," the paper quoted Khan as saying.

The investigation agency had registered the case against Khan and PTT vice chairman and former foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, after ascertaining their deliberate involvement in misusing the cypher and its misplacement following a probe.

The FIR also stated that the role of the former prime minister's principal secretary, Azam Khan, ex-planning minister Asad Umar, and other associates involved would be determined during the investigation.

Qureshi, a close aide of Khan, was arrested by police from his house on August 19, and during Saturday's interrogation, Khan was questioned about the former's revelations.

Citing the cypher, Khan has been alleging the US of hatching a conspiracy to topple his government. The US has time and again denied

such allegations, terming them "categorically false".

The purported cypher contained an account of a meeting between US State Department officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu and then Pakistani envoy Asad Majeed Khan.

The cricketer-turned-politician came under increased scrutiny following the publication of a purported copy of the secret cable by the US media outlet The Intercept, with many in the previous government led by Shehbaz Sharif pointing fingers at the PTI chief for being the source of the leak.

Former interior minister Rana Sanaullah has said that if Khan had indeed lost the copy of the cypher provided to him, it would constitute a crime under the Official Secrets Act.

RACIAL HATE

Gunman kills 3 black people in Florida

AFP, Washington

A white man driven by racial hatred shot dead three Black people in a Florida discount store Saturday before taking his own life after a standoff with police, authorities said.

"He targeted a certain group of people and that's Black people. That's what he said he wanted to kill. And that's very clear," Jacksonville Sheriff TK Waters told a news conference about gunman, who was in his early 20s.

According to the sheriff's office, the shooter, who has not yet been identified, entered a Dollar General store wearing a tactical vest, armed with an AR-style rifle and a handgun.

Manifestos discovered by the gunman's family shortly before the attack "detail the shooter's disgusting ideology of hate," Waters said.

Iran files legal case against singer urging veil removal

AFP, Tehran

Authorities in Iran have begun legal proceedings against a prominent pop singer over his latest song urging women to take off their mandatory headscarves, the judiciary said yesterday.

The action against Mehdi Yarrahi comes almost a year after the death in custody of Iranian Kurd Mahsa Amini, 22, triggered months of protests around the country.

Amini had been arrested for alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress code requiring that a woman's head and neck be covered.

Yarrahi, 41, on Friday released a song called "Roosarito", which means "Your Headscarf" in Farsi, expressing support for last year's protest movement.

"A legal case was filed against Mehdi Yarrahi following the release of an illegal song which defies the morals and customs of the Islamic society," the judiciary's Mizan Online website said.

It was not immediately clear what the formal charges were. Yarrahi was not in custody.

Yarrahi's three-minute video clip incorporated the protest movement's slogan, "Woman, life, freedom."



Protesters carry mock coffins covered with the Palestinian flag as they demand the return of the bodies of their slain relatives held by Israeli forces, during a rally in Nablus city in the occupied West Bank yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Russia downs two Ukrainian drones

One killed near border; Ukraine destroys four cruise missiles during Russian air strike; second ship departs Odesa port after grain deal collapse

AGENCIES

Russia said it downed two Ukrainian drones flying over border regions yesterday, after the governor of Belgorod region said a drone carrying explosives had killed a man.

Russia and the Moscow-annexed Crimean peninsula have been hit by a wave of attacks in the past month, since Kyiv warned in July it aimed to "return" the conflict to Russian territory.

"(During) the night and morning hours... Two unmanned aerial vehicles were detected and destroyed in flight over the territory of the Bryansk and Kursk regions," Moscow's defence ministry said.

The governor of Russia's Kursk region, which lies next to the Ukrainian border, said a drone had crashed into an apartment building in Kursk city overnight, blowing out windows on several floors.

It was not clear whether this was one of the drones reportedly shot down by the defence ministry earlier.

"There were no fires, none of the residents were injured," governor Roman Starovoi said on social media, sharing an image of what appeared to be a charred mark on a tower block.

The attack came a day after the

governor of Russia's neighbouring Belgorod region said a drone attack killed a man in the village of Shchetinovka, less than one mile (about two kilometres) from the Ukrainian border, reports AFP.

"The Ukrainian armed forces dropped an explosive device from a drone when the man was on his dacha plot cutting grass," governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said Saturday evening, announcing the man died from shrapnel wounds.



The Ukrainian military destroyed four cruise missiles over northern and central Ukraine during an overnight Russian air strike, Kyiv's air force reported early yesterday.

It said Ukrainian forces had detected up to eight airborne targets but that there were no immediate reports of strikes, adding that the rest of the targets were "probably false".

Meanwhile, three Ukrainian

military pilots including a "mega talent" who yearned to fly F-16s were killed on Friday when two L-39 combat training aircraft collided over a region west of Kyiv on Friday, the air force said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is counting on swift training of crews to fly up to 61 F-16 fighter jets promised by his Western allies, said in his nightly video address that the three men included Andriy Pilshchikov, callsign Juice, "a Ukrainian officer, one of those who greatly helped our state."

Air force spokesperson Yuriy Ilnat described Pilshchikov -- who was fluent in English and aged 29 when Reuters interviewed him in December -- as a "mega talent" and leader of reforms.

"You can't even imagine how much he wanted to fly an F-16," Ilnat wrote on his Facebook page. "But now that American planes are actually on the horizon, he will not fly them."

Ukraine's prosecutor general's office announced a criminal investigation had been opened into whether flight preparation rules were violated.

The second vessel blocked by Russia's withdrawal last month from a UN-brokered deal allowing the safe passage of grain through the Black Sea has left Ukraine's Odesa port, a senior Ukrainian government official said yesterday.

WEST BENGAL 8 killed, 5 hurt in blast at firecracker factory

TNN, New Delhi

At least 8 people were killed and five others injured after a massive blast was reported at an illegal firecracker factory in North 24 Paraganas's Duttapukur, barely 3 km away from West Bengal State University.

The explosion happened at around 10:00 am yesterday when several people were working at the factory in Nilgunj's Moshpole in Duttapukur police station area, around 30 km north of Kolkata, police said.

According to sources, the roof of the building was completely blown away, and charred and dismembered bodies of the victims landed on roads. Those injured have been admitted to Barasat Hospital for treatment.

A huge contingent of police and personnel of the disaster management department are also at the spot, they added. Twelve people were killed in a similar explosion at an illegal firecracker factory in Purba Medinipur district's Egra in May.

Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari of the BJP alleged that the state has turned into the storehouse of powder kegs.

FUKUSHIMA DISCHARGE Japan reports wave of Chinese phone harassment

AFP, Tokyo

Tokyo has urged Beijing to "ensure the safety of Japanese residents in China" after a wave of telephone harassment targeting businesses in Japan sparked by the controversial discharge of Fukushima wastewater.

While Japan insists the release of the treated water is safe -- a view backed by the UN's nuclear watchdog -- China has staunchly opposed it and banned all Japanese seafood imports, saying it contaminates the ocean.

The Japanese government yesterday published new data showing waters off Fukushima continued to post radioactivity levels well within safe limits.

Calls from China began flooding Japanese businesses from Thursday, when operator TEPCO started releasing water used to cool the stricken nuclear reactors at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

Japanese businesses and groups, ranging from a concert hall in Tokyo to an aquarium in northern Iwate, reported that they had started receiving so many calls from Chinese speakers that they had difficulty conducting normal operations.

Hiroiyuki Namazu, a senior Japanese diplomat in charge of Asian and Oceanian affairs, voiced his regret about the calls and told senior officials at the Chinese embassy in Tokyo to call for calm in China, the Japanese foreign ministry said in a statement late Saturday.

Similar incidents have also occurred in China against Japanese facilities, Namazu told Chinese embassy officials, according to the statement.

Myanmar expels top E Timor diplomat

AFP, Bangkok

Myanmar's junta yesterday ordered the expulsion of East Timor's top diplomat in the country over a meeting his government held with a banned shadow administration. The Southeast Asian nation has been locked in crisis since the military seized power in February 2021. The military has designated the shadow administration known as the National Unity Government (NUG) -- dominated by exiled lawmakers -- as a terror organisation. Last month, East Timor's President Jose Ramos Horta met with NUG foreign minister Zin Mar Aung in the capital Dili. Yesterday, Myanmar's ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the "irresponsible actions" of East Timor, ordering the country's Charge d'Affaires in Yangon "to leave no later than 1 September 2023".

AIRCRAFT CRASH 3 US Marines die in Australia

REUTERS, Sydney

Three US Marines died in an aircraft crash off the coast of northern Australia yesterday while transporting troops during a routine military exercise, officials said. Five others were "transported to Royal Darwin Hospital in serious condition", Marine Rotation Force - Darwin said in a press release. They were among 23 Marines on the MV-22B Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft when it crashed, the statement said, adding the cause of the crash was being investigated. The crash occurred on the remote Tiwi Islands at approximately 9:30 am, the statement said. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called the incident "tragic".



Academic activities in peril

FROM PAGE 3

was made the chairman of Food and Agro Process Engineering as there was no senior teacher in that department.

There are only four lecturers in the department.

On the other hand, the Jessore University of Science and Technology, established in 2007, has a student-to-teacher ratio of 12:1 and the Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, established in 1999, has a ratio of 22:1.

Inadequate number of teachers is not the only issue plaguing the BSMRSTU. The dearth of experienced teachers is also acute, directly affecting the quality of education at the science university.

The university's teaching staff has only 40 teachers who hold MPhil or PhD, with only two professors -- Prof Dr M Shahjahan of Physics (tenured) and Prof Sheikh Ashiqurrahman Prince of Management Studies (contractual) -- and 14 associate professors.

The lack of experienced teachers affects the quality of education, said Prof Kamruzzaman, also an associate professor of Applied Chemistry and Chemical Engineering.

He said, "Science and technology universities are different from

public universities and require special lectures along with hands-on training in labs. That's why we need experienced teachers to enhance the quality of education here."

While teachers struggle to complete their courses, they often face barriers due to the shortage of classrooms and labs.

In addition to an administrative building, only two academic buildings with around 85 classrooms have been built.

At least five departments, including Civil Engineering, Tourism and Hospitality Management and Sheikh Hasina IT Institute, have to hold classes at the administrative building while students of the History Department have to attend their classes in a tin-shed room, according to university sources.

Many departments do not have any laboratories. Among other departments, Civil Engineering, Environmental Science and Disaster Management, Psychology, Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine especially lack proper lab facilities.

This further disrupts the students' learning experience and adds to the burden on the faculty, said Nazmul Hossain, chairman of Animal Science and Veterinary

Medicine department.

"We have only one classroom for our 200 students. We can hold classes of one batch at a time. It takes more time to complete their courses, which is an extra burden both to us and the students," he said.

Besides, the departments, especially those which have more practical and sessional courses, should have at least one laboratory each, he added.

Only 2,000 students stay in five dormitories at the university. However, facilities in the dormitories are insufficient, as there are no reading rooms or library facilities there.

Ujjal Mondol, a student of Law Department, stays in a rented flat outside of the campus. He said house rent and other living costs near the university areas are much higher in Gopalganj. It's becoming increasingly difficult for his family to bear the costs, he added.

Another student Sanjana Rahman of Agriculture Department said there is a concern about security, especially for the female students, as there were several incidents where students came under attack by locals.

Students and teachers held many demonstrations demanding immediate attention to these issues.

According to university sources, such demonstrations have become a regular occurrence, diverting students' attention from their studies. However, they said the bigger problem is that at least 70 students were attacked by local goons while staging demonstrations.

Talking about the shortage of infrastructure and teachers, former BSMRSTU Registrar Md Morad Hossain claimed the previous administration is largely responsible for the current state of affairs at the university.

When former vice-chancellor Khondoker Md Nasiruddin took charge in 2015, the number of departments was 20 and the number of seats was 1,430. But when he left in 2019, the number of departments and seats increased to 34 and 2,905 respectively, according to sources with knowledge of the university's academic activities.

The former vice-chancellor was subsequently removed in 2019 due to his involvement in many irregularities, they said.

This correspondent made repeated attempts to reach the former vice-chancellor but he did not respond to any of the calls made or text messages sent to him.

Asked about the initiatives the current administration has taken to

address the issues, Vice-Chancellor Prof AQM Mahub said the number of seats has been reduced since the 2020-21 academic year.

Talking about security issues, he said more dormitories are needed to accommodate all the students. "We have a plan to build two 10-storey halls."

As for the quality of education, he said so many departments are not required in a science and technology university but it is not possible to close the new departments that have already been opened. That's why we are trying to recruit more teachers, especially experienced teachers to address the high student-to-teacher ratio.

"The University Grants Commission has already given us approval to recruit senior teachers from renowned universities on a temporary basis, so that our students get quality education," Prof Mahub added.

This newspaper talked to several educationists about the issues encountered by the students at the BSMRSTU.

Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique expressed his concern about the establishment of new universities without having built basic infrastructure.

He said the lack of resources

serves as an obstacle to providing quality education to students, ultimately jeopardising their future.

As the Gopalganj BSMRSTU is a new institution, it may not attract professors or associate professors. Therefore, he explained, at the initial stage the university should consider appointing young teachers, such as assistant professors.

As for providing guidance to the young teachers, he suggested appointing visiting professors who can share their experiences and collaborate with the regular faculty to enhance the quality of teaching and better educate the students.

But it is the responsibility of the UGC to address these issues and ensure that new universities are fully equipped to function effectively, Prof Siddique added.

Commenting on this, Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said when students are deprived of the required facilities during their academic journey, the educational institution fails to achieve its intended goals.

About resolving the issues, he said the UGC has to take the responsibility to address them.

"The government should think more and work more before establishing new universities," he added.

The pattern of violence must stop

The ruling party must adopt a more mature and restrained strategy

The spate of violence that we are seeing as the general election approaches gives the impression that the ruling party has no intention of allowing its main political rival to hold any programme without coming under attack. Unfortunately, the ruling party activists are taking full advantage of having police and administration on its side. These are ominous signs and create a sense of unease among the people.

The recent incident in Cumilla has left 15 BNP members injured, two with gunshot wounds. According to witnesses interviewed by this daily, the BNP was holding a committee meeting when Awami League and Jubo League men swooped on them. It is frightening that guns were involved and that two BNP members were wounded. Surprisingly, police have claimed that they did not find any evidence of gunshots being fired. And, as usual, the AL rejected all the allegations raised by the BNP, claiming that it was the latter who had attacked the former's peaceful rally.

But why is it that various wings of the AL have to hold "peaceful rallies" every time the BNP has a programme? That, in itself, can easily lead to confrontations. Over the last one year, we have witnessed time and again how activists associated with the AL and its wings have scheduled their rallies and processions on the same day as those of the BNP. Meanwhile, law enforcers have arrested thousands of BNP activists and supporters after rallies. Last month alone, about 11,000 leaders and activists of the BNP and its front organisations were sued in 16 cases filed in Dhaka and seven other districts over clashes between supporters of the opposition party, and the Awami League men and police personnel.

Is this going to be the pattern of our politics in the next few months? Will the main opposition party continue to be attacked or incarcerated every time it holds a political programme? Is it the government's responsibility to ensure the safety of all its citizens – even those who are their political rivals. That is how a democracy works, with the ruling party, which yields all the governing power, morally and constitutionally obliged to exercise maximum restraint when it comes to dealing with the opposition parties. By allowing its affiliated organisations to create a volatile situation while using its state machineries to legally constrain the opposition, it is hard to see how the ruling party is creating a level playing field in the run-up to the election. Can the general people then be blamed if they have misgivings about how fair or free the upcoming election will be?

Teesta flooding a wake-up call

Bangladesh must push India to sign the treaty without any further delay

The recent flash flood in the Teesta basin in Bangladesh makes us wonder how much worse the situation must get for our farmers and communities living in the area before we revisit the unfulfilled promise of the Teesta agreement. It has been 12 years of futile reassurances from India in signing the Teesta water-sharing treaty, and decades of continuous havoc on the environment and millions of people in Bangladesh. Now, with the increasing threat of climate change, it is more important than ever for Bangladesh to go beyond stated goodwill to finally resort to international policy frameworks and laws to ensure that transboundary rivers are shared equitably.

As of August 27, 2023, hundreds of chars and villages in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat are flooded, millions are stranded, scores of houses, schools, dams and roads are destroyed, and vast agricultural lands and countless livestock are lost. On August 24, India reportedly opened all floodgates at the Gajaldoba barrage following heavy rains in the upstream region, which is the primary cause of the scale and rapid intensity of this flood. Since the construction of the Teesta barrage, the river remains dried up on the Bangladesh side almost throughout the year, which fuels a vicious cycle of stored sediments, accumulation of silts and chars, encroachments, and ultimately erosions caused by flash floods when the floodgates are opened. Dams, barrages and other disruptions to the natural flow of the river in West Bengal, and also Sikkim, have thus directly been affecting millions of people and a vast riverbank in our country.

Despite Bangladesh's persistent push for a mutually beneficial water treaty, and India's repeated reassurances, the obvious step towards a solution has been put aside, mostly by the Indian side. Earlier this year, there were reports of West Bengal's push for two more canals under the Teesta Barrage project, which can further deteriorate the already dire situation on our end. While the recommendation from an Indian parliamentary committee to its government to "initiate meaningful dialogue with Bangladesh on a regular basis" comes as a welcome move, we can't help but question the actual goodwill for a solution in the near future, given that Dhaka is yet to even receive an answer to its query about the canals.

It's time for the Bangladesh government to finally put its foot down regarding the Teesta. And overall, Bangladesh should consider signing and advocating the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses as an international common ground to seek its fair share of water in Teesta and other transboundary rivers it shares with India.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Check dengue

This year's dengue outbreak has yet to end, and already it has proven to be the worst bout in the recent history of Bangladesh. We have seen several outbreaks of dengue in the country before, so the authorities concerned should have been able to figure out how to contain it already. Competent people must be employed to deal with this crisis.

Ameena Rahman
Uttara, Dhaka

NON-PERFORMING LOANS

Are we aware of the real picture?



Dr Md Main Uddin is professor and former chairman of the Department of Banking and Insurance at the University of Dhaka. He can be reached at mainuddin@du.ac.bd.

MD MAIN UDDIN

Based on repayment performance, a loan can be categorised as unclassified or classified. If a loan is paid back on time with interest, it is termed an unclassified or performing loan. When a loan is not repaid in full, it is called a classified or non-performing loan (NPL). NPLs can in turn be termed as sub-standard (SS), doubtful (DF) or bad/loss (BL), depending on the period for which it remains due. When a performing loan turns into an NPL, it is termed as SS, then to DF and lastly to BL, as the non-payment situation deteriorates. Hence, in a pool of classified loans, it is better to have a higher number of SS loans than DF or BL ones.

Managing NPLs in a country like Bangladesh is crucial because most financial assets are owned by commercial banks, and the country's economic growth is largely dependent on the flow of funds from the banking system. While NPL rates should not be more than two to three percent for a sustainable banking system, they are unusually high in Bangladesh. In 1991, the NPL rate stood at about 25 percent, which increased to nearly 35 percent in 2000 (*State, Market and Society in an Emerging Economy*, Chapter 10, Routledge). However, over the following two decades, the rate declined quite significantly. The NPL rate was 8.06 percent in 2020. Then it slightly reduced to 7.9 percent in 2021 before rising finally to nine percent in 2022. State-owned commercial banks (SCBs) and specialised banks (SBs) are mainly liable for such high NPL rates. For instance, against the overall NPL rate of nine percent in 2022, the rates were about 22 percent and 12 percent for SCBs and SBs, respectively. The volume of NPLs reached Tk 120,649 crore in 2022 without considering other distressed assets, according to the Bangladesh Bank.

The data on NPLs show that SS and DF loans declined over the 1994-2021 period, while the BL kept on rising, indicating that the quality of NPLs worsened. Of the total classified loans, the SS ones were 19 percent and DFs were 18 percent against the BLs of 63 percent in 1994. The rates of SS and DF loans declined dramatically to five percent and six percent, respectively, in 2000, whereas the BL loans increased abnormally to 89 percent. However, the SS and DF loans increased to 13 percent and eight percent, respectively, in 2010 with the corresponding fall of



VISUAL: STAR

BL to 78 percent. In 2020, the SS and DF loans decreased noticeably to eight percent and five percent, respectively, with a corresponding rise of BL loans unusually to 87 percent. In 2021, the share of BLs in classified loans increased to 88 percent. SS and DF loans constituted about eight percent and four percent, respectively. The long-run increase of BL loans indicates that a major portion of the NPLs has not been performing for long. A question may naturally arise as to the destination of these BL loans.

The BL loans are buried under the technical name of loan write-off – meaning that a loan is no longer counted as an asset by the bank. Loans are written off to clear up the banks' balance sheets. Although loan write-off does not deny banks the right to recover money from the borrowers, the probability of collecting these loans is meagre.

In Bangladesh, a bank can write off a loan that has a minimum chance of recovery and has been classified as BL for at least three years. The bank must maintain 100 percent provision against that loan and has to file a lawsuit against the borrower. Available data shows that the amount of loan write-offs has been on a continuous rise over the 2003-2022 period. It was only Tk 3,700 crore in 2003, which jumped to Tk 17,400 crore in 2010.

The figure again soared to Tk 43,200 crore in 2020, and finally leaped to Tk 60,400 crore in 2022.

The share of loan write-offs by bank types gives different pictures. The SCBs had the share of 31 percent in loan write-offs in 2003, which increased to 41 percent in 2010 and then rose largely to about 56 percent in 2015. It reduced to nearly 38 percent in 2022, however. The contribution of private

commercial banks (PCBs) to loan write-offs was 34 percent in 2003, which increased to 40 percent in 2010. It rose marginally to 41 percent in 2015 and profoundly to about 60 percent in 2022. The SBs and foreign commercial banks (FCBs) had smaller contributions to the loan write-offs.

By combining non-performing and written-off loans, the actual picture of the overall NPLs will become fairly evident. In 2003, for instance, the non-performing and written-off loan rates produced a combined rate of about 27 percent. This rate dropped to about 17 percent and 15 percent in 2009 and 2015, respectively. The NPL rate of only eight percent with nearly four percent of written-off loans produced the actual NPL rate of 12 percent in 2020. The NPL rate was nine percent in 2022. If the loan write-offs of about five percent is added to this, the real NPL rate becomes 14 percent.

This is not the complete picture of NPLs in our banking sector, because there are some other loans that also qualify as NPLs. The NPL rate will be much higher if all such loans are taken into account. Such an estimate was made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2019 considering the loans rescheduled, restructured, written off and stuck in the money loan courts. It took defaulted loans of Tk 112,400 crore, rescheduled loans of

statistics on risky loans, which may be treated as non-performing assets, too. They are the NPLs of Tk 120,649 crore, rescheduled loans of Tk 212,780 crore and written-off loans of Tk 44,493 crore. They produced the NPL equivalent of Tk 377,922 crore, which is 27.23 percent of the total outstanding loans of Tk 13.88 lakh crore.

With NPLs only increasing, banks in Bangladesh have been facing tremendous pressure in terms of provision maintenance. There was a shortfall in maintaining provision almost every year between 1997 and 2022. Although there were ups and downs in the provision maintenance ratio, on average it increased over time.

It is necessary to get an appropriate estimate of NPLs so that the actual performance of the banking sector can be understood. If there is an underestimation, it will have multiple effects. Asset quality will be falsely high and the capital maintained against risk-weighted assets will be lower than what's required. Consequently, an imbalance will be created between asset quality and capital maintenance. Bank profits will be artificially high as they will have to maintain less provision that comes from profits. Some banks will be viable on paper only, and their vulnerability cannot be realised before they go bankrupt.

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Let's stake our claim to outer space

Nadia Islam Nody and Shadab Bin Ashraf are lecturers at the Department of Law of the Bangladesh Army International University of Science and Technology (BAIUST).

NADIA ISLAM NODY and SHADAB BIN ASHRAF

Space is beyond the jurisdiction of any one nation. But it has always been occupied by the developed nations due to their advancements in aviation and aerospace. There are five treaties on outer space that have been forged in the United Nations: Outer Space Treaty 1967, Rescue Agreement 1968, Liability Convention 1972, Registration Convention 1975, and Moon Agreement 1979. Among them, only the Outer Space Treaty has been ratified on a large scale – by 113 UN member-states. The Moon Agreement has been signed by only four states – France, India, Guatemala, and Romania; around 18 major space-faring countries have become party to the treaty, but did not ratify.

Though the Outer Space Treaty specifies space as a global common resource, it does not mean that the space is public property. Rather, it gives directions on private ownership over the space, as only a handful of entities can send satellites and other resources into orbit. The objective of the Outer Space Treaty has been to ban and limit the use of nuclear weapons

and prohibit any military activity in space. Article VI of the treaty only creates international responsibility of the state parties for all national space activities, whether carried out by governmental or non-governmental entities. So, countries like Bangladesh and any other state which are a party to this treaty may utilise the resources brought from outer space, but they cannot send or do any space activities without the permission from other state parties. The UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) provides only a forum for discussion and development. No "body" has been created to monitor or regulate the activities of space explorers in outer space and the orbit of Earth.

The commercialisation of space was initialised with the growing need of entertainment and telecommunication broadcasting. While the treaty highlights aspects regarding uses, exploration benefits and risks, it also covers resource-sharing with the developing countries. The Space Benefits Declaration,

adopted by the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), ensures that space exploration is carried out for the benefit of all countries, with an emphasis on the needs of developing countries. In conformity with international laws, such as the UN Charter and the Outer Space

efficient transportation, peacekeeping, security, and humanitarian aid.

Being a soon-to-be developing country, Bangladesh complies with space law and joined the Outer Space Treaty in 1986. With the launch of Bangabandhu-1 Satellite in 2018, Bangladesh became the 57th country and the fourth in South Asia to own a satellite, marking a significant advancement in the country's space research efforts. The nation also has the Space Research and Remote Sensing Organisation (SPARRSO), which collaborates on environmental and meteorological research with Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Nasa, and the European Space Agency (ESA). Using American and Japanese satellites, SPARRSO keeps an eye on Bangladesh's water resources and agro-climatic conditions.

Owning a satellite and utilising the remote sensing technologies under the Outer Space Treaty makes Bangladesh more relevant to the commercialisation scope of space. The business industry surrounding space exploration was once a public agenda, but the absence of effective regulatory mechanisms leaves narrow scope for countries like Bangladesh to access and utilise the benefits of space exploration. Developing countries like ours must come forth to ratify all the five treaties to protect their rights over the benefits presented by space exploration.

Though the Outer Space Treaty specifies space as a global common resource, it does not mean that the space is public property. Rather, it gives directions on private ownership over space, as only a handful of entities can send satellites and other resources into orbit.

Treaty, the declaration emphasises worldwide cooperation in peaceful space exploration, utilising space benefits through several policy sectors, including monitoring of the climate and weather, access to healthcare, water management,



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

US credit rating downgrade: Is all the commotion justified?

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M KABIR HASSAN and JOSÉ ANTONIO PÉREZ AMUEDO

The US debt has long been regarded as one of the most secure investments one could contemplate. The highly improbable chance of default by the United States, coupled with the supremacy of the US dollar, leads investors to view US Treasury bonds as an appealing investment option, especially for those who are highly risk-averse. Nevertheless, a significant event occurred when Fitch, one of the foremost credit rating agencies, downgraded the US government's treasuries from AAA to AA+ grade. This action has sparked concerns among many individuals, raising doubts about the stability of the US economy.

The downgrade occurred after President Joe Biden and the Congress came close to being unable to meet the debt obligations due to the substantial amount of debt the US holds. Consequently, it appears that this downgrade exposes certain vulnerabilities of the nation, impacting its global reputation and inciting panic among investors.

The significance of the US debt in the global economy is crucial, as it frequently serves as a benchmark for returns on stocks and other bonds. As US bonds are generally regarded as nearly risk-free assets, investors usually seek higher yields on alternative securities. If this

US establishment should continue as is. Furthermore, the other major credit rating agency, Moody's, still assigns the highest credit rating to US debt. Therefore, the "erosion of governance" in the US with respect to other major economies mentioned by Fitch is not a perspective shared by everyone in the industry.

Meanwhile, officials from the Biden administration and Treasury Secretary

Janet Yellen have expressed their dissatisfaction over Fitch's decision. They argue that the rating change is founded on outdated data and lay blame on the Trump administration. In particular, they have pointed out that Fitch highlighted the incident that occurred in January 2021, when Trump's followers converged on the Capitol Hill.

Numerous experts suggest that this downgrade has occurred not due to the country's economics, but due to politics. They contend that while the US may have become slightly riskier, it remains the safest place to invest your money.

Continuing along the same line, numerous experts suggest that this downgrade has occurred not due to the country's economics, but due to politics. They contend that while the

US' ability to repay its debt. Dimon maintains that the US economy is the most substantial economy the world has ever witnessed and that it will not be influenced by a rating agency. He argues that the market is the ultimate decision-maker. If investors continue to place their trust in the American economy, the rating for US debt should remain at its highest possible level. Furthermore, Dimon concurs with concerns about politics and believes that the issue of the debt ceiling should be addressed.

We believe that all this commotion is the characteristic of every economic cycle, and just as it emerged, it will eventually dissipate. As most experts argue, the US remains the foremost global economy, earning the trust and respect of nations worldwide. It seems rather illogical that countries boasting higher credit ratings than the US would be investing in its bonds. It is true that there are many issues that should be addressed and rectified within the nation. As mentioned earlier, the debt ceiling is one of them. The US should formulate a plan or agenda that tackles this problem. While it is true that as long as countries continue to trust in the US as a robust economy, the US will never exhaust its borrowing power – everything does have a limit. Perhaps a more precise tax treatment can assist, along with controlling the import-export deficit.

INDIAN SUPREME COURT'S HANDBOOK

A glimmer of hope for gender justice



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ANUPOMA JOYEETA JOYEE

Recently, when I introduced myself to a male lawyer, he proceeded to give me some unsolicited advice, saying that the type of cases I am interested in wouldn't bring me success because I am a woman. Within minutes of introduction, he told me that female lawyers at his chambers are irregular and undependable because they get married and have kids. He then went on to suggest that I get married as well. This was a caricature of a conversation that I believe every woman in our country goes through.

In such situations, I do a mental calculation to determine whether it's worth educating such individuals right there and then. Most days, my brain tells me no. I was there for a specific business and a 10-minute speech would hardly sanitise years of social conditioning out of that man. But it took me years of soul-searching before I could finally forgive myself for not speaking out in these situations. Honestly, as women, we are tired of educating and raising men to be better, especially when the entire social structure is designed to promote stereotypes like my conversation above. We would love it if, for a change, this burden was taken up by the system instead of each woman. And the Supreme Court of India has just shown us how to go about it in a system that is plagued by antiquated ideas about women.

When I finished the *Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes*, a 30-page booklet published by the Supreme Court of India, a peculiar blend of joy and sadness washed over me. India's Chief Justice Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud's groundbreaking initiative of endorsing a gender-just judiciary breathed life into the transformative mission of creating the handbook. Throughout this booklet, which is primarily meant to be read by lawyers and judges, India's apex court has provided an exhaustive list of stereotype-promoting language that should be replaced by alternative language. For example, lawyers and judges are encouraged to replace words like "harlot," "career woman," "whore," "woman of loose morals/easy virtue," "promiscuous/wanton woman" with the plain and simple term of "woman." The objective is to ensure that legal reasoning and

writing is free of assumptions and damaging notions about women.

I cannot help but feel immense joy that the highest court of our neighbouring country has taken such a spectacular, historic step forward, and I hope that their legislature will soon show support in its favour. I wonder when our judiciary might be brave enough to take such a progressive step forward. In Bangladesh, the humiliating and unscientific two-finger test was only abolished recently, and until the Evidence Act was amended in 2022, lawyers could cross-examine rape victims about their previous sexual history to reduce their credibility.

The handbook takes up only two pages to provide the list of alternative/preferred language; the rest of it is filled with excellent commentary on what stereotypes are, and how they can influence lawyers and judges to distort the application of law, among other issues. It also provides lists of stereotypes and compares them with a version of "reality" so that lawyers and judges can ascertain the difference and avoid applying these prejudices when they build, defend and judge a case.

Aside from these black letter laws, there are countless patriarchal assumptions about women that find their way into courtrooms, jeopardising the scope for justice. Lawyers and judges regularly partake in endorsing these harmful notions. For example, in the headline-grabbing Narsingdi assault case of 2022, the judge implied that Bangladesh is too "civilised" for women to be wearing non-traditional clothes in rural

areas, and a perpetrator has the right to protect the culture and heritage of the country by inciting violence against women who wear non-traditional clothes.

Words have power. Why do we say "child prostitute" and perpetuate the idea that it is children who decide to engage in sex work, when in reality they are victims of trafficking? For decades, our system has okayed these harmful phrases.

The handbook takes up only two pages to provide the list of alternative/preferred language; the rest of it is filled with excellent commentary on what stereotypes are, and how they can influence lawyers and judges to distort the application of law, among other issues. It also provides lists of stereotypes and compares them with a version of "reality" so that lawyers and judges can ascertain the difference and avoid applying these prejudices when they build, defend and judge a case. For example, the handbook encourages unlearning stereotypes such as "women should do all the household chores," and puts forward, "people of all genders are equally capable of doing house chores. Men are often conditioned to believe that only women do household chores."

Women are exhausted from fighting these stereotypes on a daily basis, be it with our fathers, husbands, friends, employers, colleagues or even a random person they just met. As a woman of the subcontinent constantly confronting similar stereotypes, seeing all the "reality" versions in a booklet created by the Supreme Court of India makes me feel profoundly understood. It should be noted that the use of alternative/preferred language is merely "encouraged" and not made mandatory – perhaps a smart move to sensitise the professionals first to what we can all agree is a momentous step forward for India.

Considering that judiciary is the last resort for anyone who has faced injustice, if the lawyers and judges internalise preconceived and problematic notions, how will justice ever prevail for women? I can sit here and fill the newspapers trying to raise awareness against these stereotypes, but this powerful advocacy coming straight from the Supreme Court, targeting lawyers and judges, will have unparalleled positive impact on ensuring a gender-just judicial system. As a female lawyer who is both on the receiving end of being stereotyped and who has the power to use the gender-just language in legal documents, I sincerely hope that the Indian Supreme Court's handbook will become an exemplary piece of document that the judiciary of Bangladesh and even the legislature could endorse.



As most experts argue, the US remains the foremost global economy, earning the trust and respect of nations worldwide.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

downgrade implies that US debt is no longer risk-free, its benchmarking attribute might also be impacted.

However, not many investors believe that the downgrade by Fitch will have consequences in the short run. Similar to what occurred 12 years ago when another credit rating agency, Standard & Poor's, decided to downgrade US bonds, there is no reason to think that the US economy will experience a decline. Thus, the

US may have become slightly riskier, it remains the safest place to invest your money. This is the case even though other economies such as Norway or Singapore boast a higher credit rating.

Jamie Dimon, chief executive of JPMorgan Chase, mentioned that the Fitch downgrade is somewhat irrelevant. He explained that the downgrade should not significantly impact investors' opinion of the

aside differences and work together.

Although all of these issues combined could become a serious problem for any nation, the reality is that the US is made to be virtually bulletproof. It takes more than that to erode America's supremacy, mainly because there is no other nation capable of assuming that position. Just as the Roman Empire wasn't built in a day, the US nation will not crumble in a single day either.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

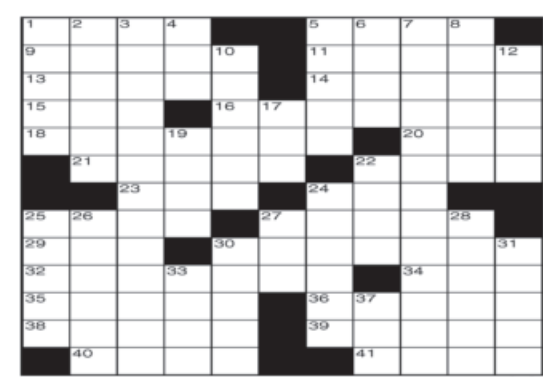
- 1 Sweeping story
- 5 Endure
- 9 Ship staffs
- 11 Is heedful
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- 15 Cereal grain
- 16 Soviet symbol
- 18 Election year event
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- 23 Belly
- 24 Costume part
- 25 Asian language
- 27 Lot choice

- 29 Galley tool
- 30 Explain to death
- 32 Was behind
- 34 Whopper
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- 36 Make blank
- 38 Places last
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DOWN

- 1 Reporter's hope
- 2 Five-time Derby winner
- 3 Good worker's dream
- 4 Really impress
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- Jean
- 27 Spot
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- 30 Sanctify
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- 33 Like some tea
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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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The Portrayal and Relevance of Women in Kazi Nazrul Islam's Novels

Nazrul Islam was able to give his women a voice that they had been denied and that is generally associated with Roquia Sakhawat Hossein. They reveal the female renaissance that was taking place in the early years of the 20th century.

NAZ ZAMAN

Kazi Nazrul Islam is our National Poet, but, in addition to writing poetry and composing songs, he also wrote fiction. In fact, Nazrul's first publication was not poetry, but the short story "Baundeler Atmakahini" (The Autobiography of a Vagabond), published in *Saogat* in May 1919. One of his most powerful short stories is "Rakshushi," the personal narrative of a woman who has killed her husband. Nazrul also wrote three novels: *Bandhon Hara* (Unfettered), *Mrityukshudha* (Deathly Hunger/Hunger for Death; translated as *Love and Death in Krishnanagar*) and *Kuhelika* (The Enigma; translated as *The Revolutionary*). While love forms a strong focus in all three novels – all three having a triangular love story – if readers read these novels only for their love story, they will miss out on the social comments that Nazrul makes in them as well as his exploration of a woman's psyche.

Surprisingly, for a man so young – he was only about 21 when *Bandhon Hara* started being serialized in *Moslem Bharat* from mid-April 1920 – he was able to enter the recesses of a woman's mind and heart. Though Nazrul's experiences as a soldier inspired him to write *Bandhon Hara*, this epistolary novel – perhaps the first such novel written in Bangla – also provides details of the lives of Muslim women in the early years of the twentieth century. In addition to the Muslim women, there is also

misinterpreted. She laments to her friend that the inner quarter where women reside is claustrophobic. It is a place where even the sun may not enter. She cries, "But... we are not criminals. We are entitled to some freedoms, for are we not human beings? Are we not made of flesh and blood, don't we have feelings? Do we not possess a soul?" In her essay "Subah Sadek" (Early Dawn), Roquia Sakhawat Hossein (1880-1932) exhorted women to proclaim aloud, "Amra manush." We are human beings. In *Aborodhbashini* (The Secluded Ones), published in 1931, several years after *Bandhon Hara*, she described the claustrophobic, unhealthy and often fatal conditions of extreme purdah.

By using letters for the characters, Nazrul Islam was able to give his women a voice that they had been denied and that is generally associated with Roquia Sakhawat Hossein. They reveal the female renaissance that was taking place in the early years of the 20th century. Though it is the Brahmo Shahoshika who is free to teach in a school, there is hope that Khuki, the young daughter of Rabeya and Robiul, will be able to go to school one day.

Mrityukshudha, Kazi Nazrul Islam's second novel, began to be serialized in *Saogat* from November 1927. Published as a book in 1930, it is similar to his other two novels in having a rebel hero and a triangular love affair. Initially, the focus of the book is on the poverty that Nazrul witnessed in Krishnanagar where he had moved with his family in 1926. The narrative describes the conditions of the household of Gajaler Ma, whose three sons have passed away, leaving behind their widows and their orphaned children, and only one brother to somehow earn a living for all. The daughters-in-law do not have names but are known by their position in the order: Boro Bou, Mejo Bou, Shejo Bou.

In chapter fifteen Nazrul introduces the Bolshevik Ansar who speaks about the rights and freedom of coolies, sweepers, carters etc. However, Ansar is also a frustrated lover, whose beloved, Ruby, was forced to marry someone else. Through Ruby, Nazrul criticizes the strictures that society places upon love. In *Bandhon Hara*, Kazi Nazrul Islam had described women's desires through Rabeya's letter to Mahbuba but also noted how they were obliged to restrain their feelings. In *Mrityukshudha*, however, he shows a woman who defies all religious and societal proprieties when she learns that the man she loves is dying. In a



Kazi Nazrul Islam in Sitakunda, Chittagong District in 1929.

of two Christian missionaries with medicine for the ailing Shejo Bou, the widow of her younger brother-in-law, acts as a catalyst to change her life. The missionaries offer education and freedom.

Mejo Bou takes the Christian name Helen after being baptized. Nazrul seems to suggest that conservative Muslim society does not recognize a woman's individual identity. It is only by converting that Mejo Bou becomes an individual. Speaking to a group of other Christian women at Barishal where she had been sent, she explains, that she did not come to become a *mem saheb*, but a human being. "We are deprived of light and air. That is why I escaped like a caged bird which bites through the ribs of its cage. I will not say I have not benefited. Whatever I have learned here will enable me to stand on my feet, support myself."

Kuhelika, which started being serialized in 1927 and was published as a book in 1931, was advertised as a novel about a revolutionary. The late Professor Kabir Chowdhury, who

these acts of violence literature would not have been possible: "Would the *Ramayana* exist if Sita had not been abducted by Ravana? We have been blessed with the great gift of the *Mahabharata* only because the Kauravas dragged Draupadi into the court by her hair." This violence is also to be seen in *Kuhelika* when Jahangir rapes Tahmina, Haroon's sister, one night.

Nazrul depicts the complexity of sexual attraction and repulsion. Jahangir is perhaps the first man Tahmina – or Bhuni is she is often called – has seen and she is attracted to him. She sees Jahangir bathing in a village – and is mesmerized. After Jahangir has finished bathing, her eyes fall on him again. "Standing there he looked like a marble statue carved by some Greek sculptor. Primitive man on seeing the first sunrise must have looked on the red and gold sky with a similar astonishment." Jahangir's mother is anxious to get Jahangir married and, when she learns that Tahmina's mad

gets deeply involved in revolutionary activities against the British. He meets other revolutionaries including a female revolutionary and her daughter Champa. When the older woman is killed while attempting to carry out a terrorist act, Jahangir is given the task of delivering weapons. He is accompanied by Champa. As they journey by train, he expresses his feelings for Champa. However, when he had first seen Champa, he had thought immediately of Tahmina and that, like her, Champa too was an enchantress, someone who beguiled men and led them astray.

Unlike Tahmina, Champa has the strength to resist Jahangir. Champa and Jahangir cannot carry out their mission. Jahangir is captured and sentenced to life imprisonment on the dreaded Andaman Islands. As he is led away, he tells his mother that she should give most of his wealth to Champa to feed hungry mothers and their children. One-fourth of his property should be given to Tahmina, the woman he has wronged. As he is taken away, Jahangir repeats the words of Haroon, "Woman is an enigma." Tahmina responds by murmuring "You are really cruel."

In his discussion of the novel, the late Professor Kabir Chowdhury elides the circumstances of Jahangir's birth, his rape of Tahmina and his attempted seduction of Champa. He thus ignores the psychological aspects of the novel. In her *Asiatic* review of the translation, Nandini Bhattacharya objects to the translators' describing the sexual encounter between Jahangir and Tahmina as rape. She stresses that it is a "consensual consummation of desire and not rape."

Nandini Bhattacharya admires this last scene, stressing that it is "a celebratory and symbolic moment even in its tragic dimensions. There is a Muslim man, a Hindu woman and both have crossed barriers and prejudices of jaat (community), dharma, (religion) and linga (gender) in sacrificing their lives for the nation." She ignores the complexities of Jahangir's character and actions as she ignores the complexity of Tahmina's relationship with him.

Kuhelika deserves a much closer reading than any reader or scholar has done so far. In fact, no Nazrul critic seems to have explored the psychological dimensions of the novel – perhaps because it is difficult to justify rape or associate it with a hero. However, it is only a psychological reading of the novel that can explain the duality in human beings, that one can be a revolutionary and also a rapist.

While Nazrul's novels and short



Kuhelika deserves a much closer reading than any reader or scholar has done so far. In fact, no Nazrul critic seems to have explored the psychological dimensions of the novel – perhaps because it is difficult to justify rape or associate it with a hero.

a Brahmo woman in the novel, one of whose functions is to show the contrast between the lives of Muslim women and the freer Brahmo woman.

Bandhon Hara consists of eighteen letters, five of them written by the protagonist Nurul Huda, familiarly known as Nuru. The narrative that emerges through the letters is about Nuru's love for two women – Mahbuba and Sophie – and theirs for him. Though it is not clear whom Nuru is fonder of, a marriage is arranged between him and Mahbuba. However, he is unwilling to barter his freedom for love and escapes the bondage of marriage by enlisting in the army. Mahbuba and Sophie are both married off. Sophie falls seriously ill immediately after her wedding. Mahbuba is married to a rich old man, who dies soon after their marriage, leaving her a widow.

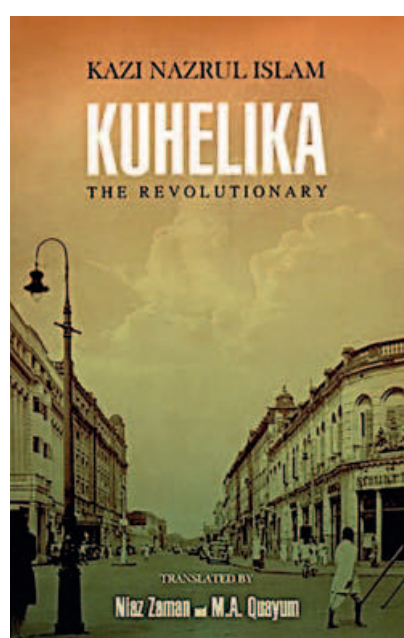
While the letters of Sophie, Mahbuba, Shahoshika, Ma, Rabeya, and Ayesha develop the love story, they also provide vivid details of the purdah world of Muslim women. The letters describe women as victims of a conservative society, social conventions and patriarchal prejudices, but they also reveal that women are individuals with hopes, aspirations, and desires. For example, in her letter to Mahbuba, Rabeya, the wife of Robiul, Nuru's friend, describes how she fell in love with the man who would later become her husband. She stresses that even women, locked up in the inner parts of the home, have feelings and emotions. The only reason that the world does not know is because women are obliged to conceal these feelings.

Mahbuba's letter to Sophie describes how religion and society deprive and subdue women. Religion itself has been perverted and



passage, perhaps unequalled in the Bangla novels of the 1930's, Ruby describes her relationship to Ansar in a letter to Latifa, her cousin. "He could not get enough of me. I started to cry, not for myself – for him. This overwhelming hunger was not just my death – it was also his death. He was seriously ill. Did he have the strength to devour me and live? I knew that the great enemy of his disease was giving in to desire. Otherwise, that self-control of Ansar's, harsher than the discipline of an ascetic, why did it succumb to this *mrityukshudha*, this death-wish?"

While the story of Ansar and Ruby juxtaposes the love element with the revolutionary theme, the story of Mejo Bou, who also falls in love with Ansar, shows the plight of an uneducated, impoverished Muslim woman and reveals how she attempts to rise above her lot in life. The arrival



first translated the novel into English – retaining the Bangla title for the translation – also stressed the story of the revolutionary: "It is among the pioneering political novels in Bengali and the first one to have a Bengali [Muslim] youth as its revolutionary hero."

However, the novel opens with a group of young men in a boarding house discussing women. Are women enigmas? Muses? Do they mould themselves into the expectations the world has of them? The novels by Tagore and Sarat Chandra were very much in Nazrul's mind when he has Jahangir ask Haroon, his friend, "Woman has inspired so many novels such as *Chokher Bali*, *Ghare Baire*, *Grihadaha* and *Charitraheen*. How many have you read, poet?"

The beauty of women and the rapacity of men are stressed by Haroon who believes that without



mother has pledged her daughter to Jahangir, visits Haroon's family with a formal proposal. Everything seems perfect. Then one night, while Jahangir is sitting alone, Tahmina looks at him from the door of the house for a long time. She finally tries to close the door but there is a noise. Jahangir looks up and sees her. They talk and, at one point, Jahangir laughs loudly at something that she has said. She again tries to shut the door of her room, but accidentally hurts herself. Jahangir attempts to soothe her bruised finger by kissing it.

Frightened of her own feelings and of what Jahangir is doing, she asks him to release her. However, she is helpless before the sexually aroused young man who succeeds in overpowering her. The godly prince has turned into a bloodthirsty beast. Leaving Tahmina behind, Jahangir



fiction deserve to be read for the perspective they provide of the times, they are also relevant today. The problems of Nazrul's fictional women a hundred years ago have not been solved. How free are women today? And not just in Bangladesh or Pakistan or Iran? Issues of identity, rape, consensual sex are still very contemporary.

Niaz Zaman, Professor and Advisor, Department of English and Modern Languages, Independent University, Bangladesh, is Advisor, Kazi Nazrul Islam and Abbasuddin Ahmed Research and Study Centre, Independent University, Bangladesh.

All three of Kazi Nazrul Islam's novels have been translated into English and published by Nympha Publication. In 1994, the late Professor Kabir Chowdhury translated *Kuhelika*, retaining the original Bangla title.

Bangladesh captain Jamal Bhuiyan made his debut for Argentine third-tier club Sol de Mayo against Germinal at the Estadio Sol de Mayo yesterday. Having lately received his clearance from the BFF, the midfielder donned the captain's armband for the Argentine club on his much-hyped debut appearance.



PHOTO: FACEBOOK

'FOLLOWING INSTINCTS' now key for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Liton Das' illness at the last minute came as a huge blow for Bangladesh, who are set to begin their Asia Cup campaign against Sri Lanka on August 31 in Kandy.

Liton, suffering from a high fever, missed the Tigers' scheduled flight to Colombo yesterday.

Although Liton tested negative for dengue, the 28-year-old is not in the best of shapes to catch the flight today. As things stand, chances are that the opener could well miss Bangladesh's tournament opener against Sri Lanka.

This Asia Cup is being considered as an ideal platform for selectors to fine-tune the squad ahead of the ODI World Cup in India in October-November, but now the selectors face a serious time crunch in order to prepare back-up options to get by in the continental showpiece event.

It will be important for the selectors to find the perfect balance in the squad, and Liton's illness at such a moment surely hampers the plan of the selectors, who had to deal with Ebadot Hossain's injury just a few days ago by adding young pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib to the Asia Cup

squad.

Selector Habibur Bashar did seem concerned regarding the Liton issue but the former Bangladesh captain informed that the Tigers will need to cope with the situation and keep their confidence in the rest of the players in the Tigers' camp.

"Look, this is exactly the reason we have formed a bigger pool of players. But, obviously, it would have been great if Liton was fully fit but if he is unable to recover on time, we have to accept as it is what it is. But since it's a viral fever, we expect Liton to recover quickly. Let's see whether he is able to play the first game or not," Bashar told The Daily Star.

Bashar put faith in the younger players to step up.

"We are willing to have our faith in the likes of Tanzid Hasan Tamim, but, obviously, it would have been easier for him if he had someone like Liton alongside him. Since we are already without Tamim Iqbal, it won't be easy for the youngsters to cope immediately but they are capable," Bashar added.

The bilateral series against New Zealand after the Asia Cup will be the



final platform to prepare backup options in the squad. The Tigers, however, will have experienced opener Tamim back for the series.

Meanwhile, prominent coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim still remains optimistic and is ready to bet on the aggressive mentality of the young guns.

"I think this young lot of cricketers has got that strong backbone and the winning mentality which makes me optimistic. They play with a lot of aggression. If I talk about junior Tamim, Towhid Hridoy, or even Shamim Hossain, who is still not established in the team, they can go out and play their game," Fahim said.

Fahim also added: "I think the mindset is very important and someone like Tamim, he will not change his style of batting. Hridoy's approach also helped to bring the change in the mentality of the team and they are now willing to win matches for Bangladesh."

According to the mentor to many stalwarts of Bangladesh cricket, it will be important that the youngsters do not alter their style of play.

"No doubt the youngsters like Tanzid Tamim and others will face tougher challenges compared to what they faced in the past and it will be a different ball game. But it's important they are allowed to express themselves and yes there is not enough time for them. But at times, it's good not to have enough time and follow the instincts," he added.

Najibullah returns for Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

Middle-order batter Najibullah Zadran returned to Afghanistan's 17-man squad on Sunday ahead of the Asia Cup after recovering from a knee injury.

The 30-year-old left-hander had to miss the three-match series against Pakistan which Afghanistan lost 3-0 in Colombo on Saturday.

Afghanistan will face Bangladesh in Lahore on September 3 before rounding off the group stage of the Asia Cup with a game against Sri Lanka at the same venue two days later.

Allrounder Azmatullah Omarzai has been ruled out of the competition due to a side strain while Gulbadin Naib and Karim Janat have been added to the team.

Squad: Hashmatullah Shahidi (captain), Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ikram Alikhil, Ibrahim Zadran, Riaz Hassan, Rahmat Shah, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Karim Janat, Gulbadin Naib, Rashid Khan, Abdul Rahman, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Mohammad Saleem Safi, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Sharafuddin Ashraf (travelling reserve).



Usyk retains world heavyweight titles

AFP, Wroclaw

Oleksandr Usyk of Ukraine retained his world heavyweight titles with a ninth-round knockout of Britain's Daniel Dubois in Wroclaw, Poland on Saturday.

Victory meant Usyk kept hold of the World Boxing Association, World Boxing Organisation and International Boxing Federation belts.

It also extended his perfect professional record to 21 wins from 21 bouts.

Dubois, however, claimed he had been "cheated" out of victory after referee Luis Pabon ruled he had struck Usyk with a low blow in the fifth round, which led to a lengthy delay.

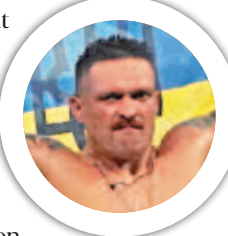
But former World Boxing Council super-middleweight champion Richie Woodhall, commentating at ringside, described his fellow Briton's punch as a "borderline shot".

Usyk recovered to drop Dubois down on one knee in the eighth round after landing with several punches to the head.

Dubois just beat the count before the bell sounded for the end of the round.

But the fight was all over in the next, with Usyk sending Dubois onto the canvas.

This time the challenger was unable to get back to his feet before the referee counted to 10. "I'm grateful for my country and the Ukrainian army. Thank you so much," said Usyk.



Djokovic, Alcaraz poised for US Open collision

AFP, NEW YORK

Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz are on a US Open collision course as the final Grand Slam tournament of season gets under way on Monday with American teenager Coco Gauff chasing a breakthrough first major title.

A little more than six weeks after world number one Alcaraz defeated Djokovic in an enthralling finale to the Wimbledon championships, the two men could meet again at Flushing Meadows if the seedings go to play over the next fortnight.

Djokovic and Alcaraz whetted the world's appetite for another blockbuster showdown at the Cincinnati Open last week, with 23-time Grand Slam singles winner Djokovic downing the 20-year-old Spaniard in a four-hour classic.

Djokovic, 36, is making a long-awaited return to the US Open this year after his refusal to be vaccinated against Covid-19 meant he was unable to gain entry to the United States.

In Djokovic's absence at last year's tournament, Alcaraz announced his arrival on the world stage with a brilliant run to his first US Open crown.

Second seed Djokovic, who opens

his campaign on the Arthur Ashe main arena against France's Alexandre Muller on Monday, says Alcaraz's relentless, swashbuckling style is reminiscent of Rafael Nadal, the 22-time Grand Slam singles champion who misses this year's US Open due to injury.

"Each point is a hustle. Each point is a battle. You feel like you're not going to get maybe in total five free points in the entire match," Djokovic said of Alcaraz.

"You've got to basically earn every single point, every single shot, regardless of the conditions."

Alcaraz, who faces Germany's Dominik Koepfer in the first round on Tuesday, said he is flattered by the Nadal comparison.

"It's great that he knows that every time he's going to play against me, it reminds him playing against Rafa or against the best ones because that means we are in a good path," he said.

Djokovic will reclaim the world number one ranking with a victory over Muller on Monday, regardless of how Alcaraz performs in the tournament.

The Spaniard, meanwhile, must navigate a tricky route to the final that could include 2021 US Open champion Daniil Medvedev and Italy's Jannik Sinner.



In the women's tournament meanwhile, all eyes will be on the in-form 19-year-old Gauff, who is chasing a first Grand Slam title that would make her only the fifth Black woman in the open era to win the US Open. After struggling in the early part of the season, Gauff felt she had hit rock bottom after exiting in the first round at Wimbledon. But the addition of veteran guru Brad Gilbert to her coaching team has sparked a transformation in her form and fortunes. She won the Washington Open in early August, reached the quarter-finals of the Canadian Open in Montreal and then scored a superb victory in the Cincinnati Open -- her first WTA 1000 title. The win in Cincinnati included a morale-boosting first ever victory over world number one Iga Swiatek, the defending US Open champion. Gauff, who could face Swiatek in the quarter-finals in New York, says her late season resurgence is the result of a shift in mindset.

Lamichhane heads to Asia Cup

AFP, Kathmandu

The rape trial of Nepal's cricket star Sandeep Lamichhane was postponed Sunday, allowing him to join teammates in Pakistan for the upcoming Asia Cup, his lawyer Saroj Ghimire said.

Spin bowler Lamichhane, 23, once the poster boy for the rise of cricket in Nepal, is accused of raping a 17-year-old girl in a Kathmandu hotel room in August last year. Lamichhane denies all charges.

The latest hearing on Sunday was deferred until September 7. "Sandeep will now fly to Pakistan to play," Ghimire told AFP.

The six-nation ODI Asia Cup opens Wednesday in Multan, Pakistan, where the hosts will clash with debutants Nepal.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Manchester City striker Erling Haaland finally got off the mark with a well-taken close-range header following a cross from Jack Grealish during a dramatic 2-1 victory over Sheffield United yesterday. And as he ran off to celebrate, a fan jumped from the stands onto the pitch. It was, however, Rodri who scored a late winner to secure City's third win of the season.



Noah Lyles gestures with three fingers as he races to the finish line ahead of the others to anchor USA to a 4x100m relay gold, thereby securing three gold medals in the World Athletics Championship just as he had predicted, at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest on Saturday night. Olympic champions Italy, with Tokyo 100m gold medalist Marcell Jacobs on the second leg, claimed silver while Jamaica took bronze.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'We want Messi!'

AGENCIES

More than what was happening out there on the field at the Red Bull Arena on Sunday, fans were concerned about just one thing -- at least till the 60th minute of the game between Inter Miami and hosts New York Red Bulls.

Chants of "We want Messi!" swept across the ground in the fifth, seventh, and 10th minutes with rising intensity, then several more times in the first half. Even after Diego Gomez's well-taken goal in the 36th minute, which might have tempted Inter Miami coach Tata Martino to sit on the lead and give his star the rest his 36-year-old body most likely needs, the calls for the World Cup hero persisted.

Messi, who started for Inter Miami in eight games at a stretch and scored 10 times to guide the MLS side to the final of the US Open Cup and also clinch the Leagues Cup, was deservedly given some rest.

Coach Martino defended his decision to start his 36-year-old compatriot on the bench despite the hopes of the crowd. "I understand the desire of the people who want him to play, this will happen everywhere we go," he said.

"But as the coach, I cannot be guided by those fans' desires. My job is to make sure Leo takes care of himself," he said.

Despite Messi being in the US for over

a couple of months, even his Inter Miami teammates anticipated the fan craze that comes with the Argentine. "When we found out that he wouldn't be starting, I expected there was going to be a couple angry fans," Miami right-back DeAndre Yedlin said after Saturday's game against the New York Red Bulls. "But if I was a kid or a fan and I came,

I would want to see the greatest to ever play the game, as well, so I can't blame them."

When Messi rose from his seat on the Miami bench two minutes into the second half, the crowd went into a frenzy as he made his way to the corner to begin warming up. The roars only intensified when he entered the match in the 60th minute along with his longtime Barcelona teammate Sergio Busquets.

Messi had limited involvement but made his mark on his regular season debut with an 89th-minute goal.

Jordi Alba acrobatically hooked the ball into the box to Messi who twisted and turned then slipped a sublime pass

with the outside of his foot to Benjamin Cremaschi whose low first-time cross was tapped in by the seven-times Ballon d'Or winner.

Messi has now scored 11 goals in nine appearances in all competitions since joining Inter Miami.





3 cops killed as train hits police car

Bar at level crossing not lowered; gateman quit coming to work for not getting wage



FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN and MOHAMMED SUMAN, Ctg

Three police constables were killed and two others injured as a train hit a police car at an unmanned level crossing in Chattogram's Sitakunda upazila yesterday.

Locals and witnesses said the vehicle went onto the level crossing at Fakirpara as the bar at the gate was not lowered. The gateman remained absent from work for the last two days, they added.

The deceased are Mohammed Hossain of Cox's Bazar, SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



A big chunk of earth from a hill fell on a thatched hut at IW Railway Colony near Chattogram city's Sholoshahar Railway Station yesterday morning. Heavy downpours triggered the landslide that killed a man and his seven-month-old daughter.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Father, daughter die in Ctg landslide

STAR REPORT

When Sharifa Begum composed herself, there was not much she could say.

"What would I live for now?" she said.

Surrounded by relatives at her home in the port city's Sholashar Railway colony, the 28 year woman looked all pale. When asked why she and her family chose to live on the slope of a hill, she mumbled a few words before saying, "Poverty forced us to live here ..."

Evidently, she had more to say by way of explanation but she fainted before she could finish.

Earlier in the day, around 6:00am, her husband and seven-month-old daughter were killed in a landslide triggered by incessant rain early morning yesterday.

The deceased were Mohammad Sohel, 35, and his seven-month-old SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

CASE AGAINST PROF YUNUS

34 eminent personalities voice worry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-four eminent citizens have expressed concern over the case filed against Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus and three others on charge of labour law violation.

In a statement issued yesterday, they said ulterior motives are driving the case against him in the Labour Court.

Referring to Dr Yunus's lawyers, the statement says despite the civil nature of the allegations, the government has filed a criminal case. The role of the government in disposing of this case at a rapid pace is noticeable, it reads.

In the past, Dr Yunus faced harassment from various government institutions under the pretext of audits, investigations, and interrogations, the statement says.

"He continues to experience hostility in SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

FLOODS IN BANDARBAN, COX'S BAZAR

Heavy rain, urban sprawl to blame

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

The floods that hit Bandarban, Cox's Bazar and parts of southern Chattogram early this month left a trail of destruction in their wake.

Experts, locals and government officials have said excessive rainfall combined with several man-made factors caused the flood and took it to extreme levels.

Professor Alak Paul of geography and environmental studies department at Chittagong University and unplanned urbanisation are two major causes of the recent floods in the Chattogram division.

There was heavy rainfall at the beginning of August that coincided with a time of high tide, which hindered the rivers from carrying the floodwater into the Bay of Bengal.

Emdadul Haque, assistant meteorologist of Bandarban, said from August 1 to August 7 their office recorded 936 mm rainfall in Bandarban, which was around one and a half times as much as the expected rainfall in the region.

Following the rainfall, the flood inundated vast areas of the region from August 7 and continued till August 11.

"Influenced by the full moon on August

3, the level of water in the Bay of Bengal rose excessively for the following few days during the high tide, slowing down the receding of the floodwater in the region. Water could not flow out during the high tide, flooding thousands of households," said Dr Tanjir Saif Ahmed, executive engineer of Cox's Bazar Water Development Board.

Floodwater in the region recedes through three main rivers -- Sangu, Matamuhuri and Dalu -- all of which flow into the Bay of Bengal, he said.

Excessive rainfall combined with several man-made factors caused the flood and took it to extreme levels.

He added that the river Matamuhuri flowing through Chakaria upazila in Cox's Bazar has lost its navigability as its excavation was done a long time ago.

The channel capacity of the Matamuhuri river is 1,000 to 1,500 cubic metres per second, whereas the flow of recent flood water was around 2,200 cubic metres per second, which led to inundation, he said.

Water resource and climate change specialist Dr Ainun Nishat said these types of calamities will happen more frequently in the coming days. Navigability of the rivers can be raised by dredging or excavation to increase their water draining capacity as a short-term solution.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

HC can't order surrender to lower court

Neither can it order cops not to arrest, says SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday said the High Court Division cannot direct any accused in a criminal case to surrender before the lower court or ask law enforcers not to arrest the accused.

Instead, the HC can grant anticipatory bail to the accused or reject their bail petition, a four-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Justice Obaidul Hassan said during a hearing on a leave-to-appeal petition.

The three other judges of the bench were Justice M Enayetur Rahim, Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Md Abu Zafor Siddique.

Anticipatory bail is a pre-arrest bail, and the High Court usually grants such bail for a certain period if the accused has fear of being harassed or arrested, senior Supreme Court lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

In this case, however, the accused must surrender to the lower court within that period, and in the meantime law enforcers cannot arrest them, he added.

The leave to appeal was filed by the state challenging an HC order that on August 8 directed Executive Editor of The Daily Star

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Mysterious dark spot detected on Neptune

CNN ONLINE

Astronomers have spotted a large and mysterious dark spot within Neptune's atmosphere, and it has an unexpectedly bright companion.

The observation was made using the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in Chile.

Space-based observatories such as the Hubble Space Telescope have observed vortex-like storms -- which appear as dark spots -- swirling in the blue planet's atmosphere before, but it's the first time an Earth-based telescope has seen one on Neptune.

These new observations are shedding more light on the phenomenon, according to new research published Thursday in the journal Nature Astronomy.

"Since the first discovery of a dark spot, I've always wondered what these short-lived and elusive dark features are," said lead study author Patrick Irwin, professor of planetary physics at the University of Oxford, in a statement.

Giant gaseous planets in our solar system, including Neptune, are known for the dark spots that appear in their atmospheres, such as Jupiter's Great Red Spot, a centuries-old storm.

Neptune, an ice giant, has had multiple storms observed by Hubble over the years. The storms all seem to follow a pattern of appearing and disappearing over the course of two years, making them difficult to study.

Obama pens a letter of support for Prof Yunus

UNB, Dhaka

Ex-US President Barack Obama has written a letter of support for Prof Muhammad Yunus, expressing his hope that the Nobel Peace Prize-winning economist can continue to do his "important work".

Prof Yunus, the founder of Grameen Bank, shared an image of the letter signed by Obama on his verified Facebook page yesterday.

"I have long been inspired by your efforts to empower people through offering them the means to lift their families and communities out of poverty. As I said when having the opportunity to meet you in the White House in 2009, your work has inspired millions to imagine their own potential," said the letter.

"During this period, I hope it gives you strength to know that many whose SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



People walk across the street and climb over median barriers disrupting traffic at the capital's Farmgate where there are multiple footbridges in close proximity. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

MISSING CYPHER CASE

Imran admits to misplacing confidential cable

NDTV ONLINE

Jailed former Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan admitted to misplacing a confidential diplomatic cable as he was interrogated by Pakistan's top investigative agency at the Attock Jail in a case filed under the Official Secrets Act for wrongful use of the classified document, according to media reports yesterday.

Khan, 70, is currently serving a three-year jail term after he was sentenced by a court in a corruption case earlier this month.

The cable in question was the same document Khan had for long mentioned as evidence of a US-backed conspiracy to remove him as the prime minister last year.

Khan had waved a document at a rally days before his ouster as prime minister in April 2022, saying it was proof of foreign conspiracy.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman's interrogation in the matter comes days after he was booked under the Official Secrets Act for making the content of a confidential diplomatic cable from the country's embassy in the US public.

The counter-terrorism wing (CTW) of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Saturday visited the former SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

