

PROPELLING
NATION'S
PROGRESS

FROM AIRPORT TO FARMGATE, NOW IN JUST 10 MINUTES!

The Dhaka Elevated Expressway, constructed using the lion's share of rods from BSRM, is now open.



Dhaka's Expressway DREAM COMES TRUE

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

When the World Bank released an analysis of Dhaka city's traffic conditions in 2017, the total number of registered vehicles was 11.82 lakh. In its analysis, the WB stated that the average traffic speed had dropped from 21 km to 7 km per hour, only slightly above the average walking speed. It also pointed out that congestion in Dhaka consumes 3.2 million working hours per day.

Over the last five and a half years, an additional 8.47 lakh registered vehicles have flooded the streets of the capital, not to mention the many unregistered vehicles, making the traffic situation nightmarish. When city dwellers have to spend hours on the streets, they see a ray of hope in the partially open metro rail.

Now, they are about to get a little more relief as the authorities are set to partially open the long-awaited Dhaka Elevated Expressway today. The 11.5km section from the Airport to Farmgate is going to be inaugurated today, serving as an alternative route to and from the airport road, one of the busiest in the city.

Once this section opens, it will take less than 10 minutes to reach Farmgate from the Airport, a journey that would normally take more than one hour on regular roads, officials have stated.

"I think people in Dhaka will be happy to be able to use the expressway for easy traveling. It will be faster," said Bhaskon Khannabha, Managing Director of First Dhaka Elevated Expressway Company Ltd, the private partner of the PPP Project.

In addition to the 11.50km main line, 13 ramps for accessing and exiting the expressway will also be opened to help vehicles avoid traffic-choked crossings and roads, thus bypassing traffic congestion, they said.

Transport experts also believe that the partial opening will benefit some private car users, but people will have to wait until the full 19.73km expressway from the Airport to Kutubkhali on the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway is opened to get its full benefits.

Prof. Hadiuzzaman of BUET's Civil Engineering Department stated that the purpose of the two expressways, including the Dhaka Elevated Expressway, was to create a 'vertical bypass' for vehicles, particularly heavy vehicles, inside Dhaka city.

Another expressway, namely the Dhaka Ashulia Elevated Expressway, will be connected with the Dhaka Elevated Expressway near the airport area after coming from the Dhaka EPZ area via Ashulia and Abdullahpur. The 20km expressway

is also under construction with a deadline of June 2026.

"So, people will not fully benefit from the expressway after partially opening one expressway," he told The Daily Star recently. "However, it would provide relief to some private car users because people will be able to avoid two congestion-prone areas—Banani and Farmgate," he added.

He also emphasized that the benefit from the half-way expressway will depend on the proper management of the ramps.

Hadiuzzaman, also the former director of the Accident Research Institute at BUET, said that once the construction of both expressways is fully completed, people will experience the actual benefits of the expressway.

He explained that heavy vehicles, including trucks, which are banned from operating within the city during the daytime, and long-haul

from the Airport to Gazipur, and the Dhaka Elevated Expressway, aiming to reduce traffic congestion in the capital and its adjacent areas.

The government decided to implement the Dhaka Elevated Expressway under the Public-Private Partnership model. This is the first project in the transport sector being implemented under the PPP model with foreign investment.

The expressway's construction was inaugurated twice, first by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in April 2011, with completion expected by mid-2014, and once again by Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader in August 2015. However, the formal construction commencement date is January 1, 2020, marking the beginning of the 25-year concession era, including a three-and-a-half-year construction period.

In January 2011, the Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) signed a deal with the Italian-Thai Development Public Company to build the expressway at a cost of Tk 8,703 crore. The deal was later revised and inked again in December 2013, with the cost adjusted to Tk 8,940 crore after several changes were made to the design. The government is set to provide Tk 2,413 crore (27 percent) as viability gap funding, while the private partner will cover the remainder.

Additionally, the government will allocate Tk 4,917.57 crore for land acquisition, resettlement, and relocation of utility service lines, making the total project cost Tk 13,857.57 crore.

However, the project faced multiple setbacks over the years, primarily due to the private investor, Italian-Thai, struggling to secure funds for the project and encountering issues related to land acquisition, according to officials involved in the project.

The financial crisis was eventually resolved when Italian-Thai transferred 49 percent of its shares to two Chinese companies—China Shandong International Economic and Technical Corporation Group (34 percent) and Sino Hydro Corporation Ltd (15 percent) in 2020.

The project authorities revealed that land acquisition, aligning the route, obtaining approvals, relocating utilities, and managing finances with the private partners consumed time and contributed to project delays.

"We had planned and expect to complete the entire project by June next year, provided there are no obstructions. We have successfully overcome all the challenges. Work is progressing for the remaining part of the expressway," stated Bhaskon Khannabha.

The partial opening will benefit some private car users, but people will have to wait until the full 19.73km expressway from the Airport to Kutubkhali on the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway is opened to get its full benefits.

buses, will be able to bypass the city using the expressways. When a significant number of vehicles use the expressway, it will reduce the number of vehicles on the existing roads, thereby cutting traffic congestion and creating opportunities for proper public transport facilities, he added.

However, Bhaskon Khannabha said that people will experience the expected benefits even from the partial opening of the expressway.

He also mentioned that the partial opening will help educate the public on how to use the expressway, including lanes and both manual and electronic toll payment systems.

In 2005, the government approved the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for Dhaka city, which recommended the construction of three metro rail lines, three Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines, and the Dhaka Elevated Expressway. However, the STP was revised in 2016.

Following the transport masterplan, the government initiated three major projects: Mass Rapid Transit (metro rail) Line-6, BRT



A Boon to Business and Economy



REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

A massive transformation is set to occur in the transportation of goods and passengers with the opening of the country's first elevated expressway in Dhaka. Economists and businesses have said that this mega-infrastructure project will significantly reduce both the time and cost of doing business.

According to a study by the Accident Research Institute of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in 2018, Bangladesh loses Tk 37,000 crore and five million working hours annually due to heavy traffic congestion in Dhaka. The operations of the expressway are expected to address these losses to a great extent, businesses have stated.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the Airport-Farmgate section of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway on 2 September. This expressway will ease traffic congestion and shorten the lead time for export and import activities, as goods-laden trucks and covered vans will encounter less congestion.

For instance, if a cargo-laden covered van needs to travel from Farmgate to

Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), it will now take only 10 minutes, whereas it currently takes up more than an hour due to traffic congestion.

This reduction in lead time is of significant importance for the export and import of goods, especially in the apparel trade, due to fierce competition in the global supply chain. International clothing retailers and brands have shortened lead times to 45 to 60 days, and sometimes even to 30 days, to ensure quick delivery of goods.

As a result, local businesses opt for expensive air shipments to meet the strict lead-time requirements set by international trading partners, necessitating faster movement of vehicles.

However, local exporters have been voicing complaints about poor road connectivity and inadequate facilities at HSIA for exporting goods. Many have missed flights because covered vans cannot reach HSIA in a timely manner due to hours-long traffic congestion on the roads leading to the airport in Dhaka.

In the post-LDC era, shorter lead times, improved infrastructure, and better logistics services are crucial for

competitiveness, especially with the erosion of preferential trade facilities. In such circumstances, businesses must strive to be competitive by saving time, reducing lead times, and lowering the cost of doing business through enhanced road and port connectivity.

The operation of the elevated expressway is expected to contribute to the improvement of the global logistics index, as Bangladesh has recently performed strongly in this vital ranking for the construction of mega infrastructures.

For instance, Bangladesh's ranking in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (LPI) for 2023 has risen by 12 places, indicating an improvement in the country's trade and business skills.

According to the report released in April this year, Bangladesh's rank in the index, which assesses 139 countries, has climbed from 100 in 2018 to 88. Bangladesh achieved a score of 2.6 on a 5-point scale, securing third place among the five South Asian nations evaluated by the World Bank.

The expressway will accelerate the movement of goods-laden trucks and covered vans, a critical need in Dhaka where vehicle speeds are currently less

than 10 kilometers (km) per hour due to severe traffic congestion, as stated by M Masrur Reaz, Chairman and Founder of Policy Exchange Bangladesh, a private think tank.

Reaz added that the expressway will help address the losses incurred due to traffic congestion. Furthermore, it will connect major industrial belts such as Savar, Gazipur, Narsingdi, and Narayanganj.

Additionally, the expressway will link to the proposed multimodal transport hub at Dhirashram in Gazipur, enhancing road connectivity and generating more economic activities, leading to employment opportunities and contributions to the economy.

However, Reaz suggested that the entry and exit points of the expressway should be kept open to prevent vehicles from experiencing long waiting times due to traffic congestion. Slow transport and labor movement incur economic costs, and the expressway is expected to alleviate these problems significantly.

Syed Ershad Ahmed, President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham), also emphasized that the expressway will have a positive impact on the economy by saving working hours and improving the country's image. Foreign investors seek efficient communication and time savings, and the expressway will reduce congestion on common roads leading to the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), facilitating the transportation of goods.

Faruque Hassan, President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), expressed that the expressway will undoubtedly benefit the apparel sector, which relies on timely deliveries. Delays in shipments often result in order cancellations or significant discounts demanded by international retailers and brands from local suppliers. The expressway is expected to mitigate such challenges in the garment business.

Moreover, alongside the elevated expressway, other infrastructure projects such as the metro rail and the third terminal at HSIA will further enhance business operations and improve the country's image. For example, the opening of the metro rail up to the commercial district Motijheel

will significantly alleviate traffic congestion and boost business activities in major business hubs. Additionally, the expressway will facilitate smoother goods transportation between Dhaka and Chattogram port for export and import purposes.

S.M. Jahangir Hossain, President of the Bangladesh Fruits, Vegetables & Allied Product Exporter's Association, stated that not only will the export and import sectors benefit from the expressway, but also other industries.

Vegetable and other perishable goods exporters sometimes complain about missing flights due to delays in reaching Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) caused by heavy traffic congestion on the roads leading to the airport.

Kabir Ahmed, President of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association (BAFFA), also noted that the elevated expressway will streamline their operations at the airport by saving time.

Md. Amin Helaly, Senior Vice-President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), the country's apex trade body, highlighted the obvious positive impact of the expressway. He mentioned that it currently takes more than two hours to travel from Uttara to Farmgate, but through the expressway, it will take less than half an hour. Therefore, the expressway will increase working hours for businesses.

Helaly also pointed out that in 2009, Bangladesh's GDP was \$90 billion, and now it has reached \$471 billion, indicating robust economic growth in the country. The reduction in time and cost of doing business from the operation of the expressway will lead to faster business turnover.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, during a press briefing last week, announced that an 11.50km section from Kawla in the airport area to Farmgate will be opened first. He also mentioned that the highest speed limit for vehicles on the expressway would be 60 km/h, and it would take around 10 minutes to reach Farmgate from the airport area.

However, three-wheelers, motorcycles, bicycles, and pedestrians will not be allowed on the expressway, which was constructed under a public-private partnership.

DHAKA ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY AT A GLANCE

KEY FEATURES

- >> **Project cost: Tk 8,940cr**
- >> **Connecting 22 Areas of Dhaka City**
- >> **Main Line Length: 19.73 km** (Airport to Kutubkhali)
- >> **Total length with ramps: 46.73 km**
- >> **Number of ramps 31** (15 on ramps, 16 off ramps)
- >> **Permitted top speed: 60 km/h**
- >> **Currently completed: 64.44% of total project**
- >> **Once implemented, around 80,000 vehicles will ply the expressway daily**
- >> **Expected completion date: June 2024**

FIRST PPP PROJECT IN TRANSPORT SECTOR WITH FOREIGN INVESTMENT

- > Company name: First Dhaka Elevated Expressway Company Ltd.
- > The government of Bangladesh invests **Tk 2413 crore** as VGF (viability gap funding) (27% of the estimated expenditure)
- > Land acquisition, resettlement costs **Tk 4,917.57**; provided by The government of Bangladesh
- > 1st Phase implementation: Italian Thai Development Public Company Ltd (Thailand)
- > 2nd and 3rd Phase implementation: China Shandong International Economic and Technical Co-operation Group (CSI) and Sinohydro Corporation Ltd
- > These companies will build, operate and collect toll for 25 years since 2020 to 2044
- > After 25 years, the project will be handed over to the government of Bangladesh

ADVANCED FEATURES



Electronic Toll System (ETC)



24/7 CCTV (Surveillance Monitoring from Central Control Building)



Emergency Response Team and Patrol Team



Weight Station



ELECTRONIC TOLL SYSTEM (ETC)

*Pay toll by Electronic Toll System (ETC)
It's a wireless system that collects toll charges automatically. It is a faster alternative as drivers do not need to stop when crossing the toll booth.



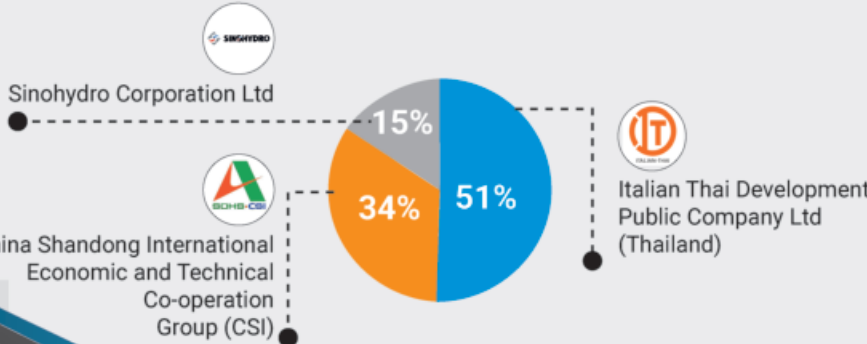
USAGE OF ETC DEVICE

Collect prepaid card top-up from Toll Surveillance Building and pay tolls easily.
Bring your vehicle to Toll Surveillance Building to collect ETC card
Insert the ETC card into the ETC device and go!

HOW TO TOP-UP

- > At toll plaza
- > Toll Surveillance Building
- > Mobile Financial Services (to be advertised in future)

PROJECT SHAREHOLDERS





“The Dhaka Elevated Expressway introduces a unique feature with its ramps and main structure built adjacent to the road”

In conversation with Dr. Md. Shamsul Hoque, Professor at the Department of Civil Engineering, BUET.

Dhaka Elevated Expressway would be especially advantageous for commuters traveling between Motijheel and Uttara, as well as for trucks engaged in vital economic activities.

The Daily Star (TDS): How does the strategic vision behind the Dhaka Elevated Expressway project align with the broader goals of improving public transport and mitigating congestion in the city?

Shamsul Hoque (SH): When the government embarked on this initiative, it had a multidimensional and strategic purpose in mind. As part of the strategic transport plan recommended for Dhaka’s public transport system, three BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) and three Metro lines were planned for operation. The primary objective of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway was to divert traffic and alleviate congestion in these large-scale urban areas. Additionally, there was a concept that constructing a new roadway on available land, separate from our existing roads, could provide substantial relief. This roadway would be especially advantageous for commuters traveling between Motijheel and Uttara, as well as for trucks engaged in vital economic activities. Consequently, the plan was conceived to enable these trucks to bypass vertically rather than horizontally, ensuring that both the industrial sector and local passengers traveling from Motijheel to Uttara could do so effortlessly.

With the ongoing development of residential areas like Purbachal, Uttara, and Uttara 3rd phase in these specific zones, envisioning a scenario where passengers utilize the upper level of the road would create a win-win situation, facilitating smooth travel without the burden of traffic jams.

TDS: What were the strategic considerations that led the government to utilize railway lands for the Dhaka Elevated Expressway project?

SH: The underlying strategy of this plan was exceptionally strategic, as the government opted to utilize railway lands, given the limited scope for new road construction in Dhaka.



Consider the possibility of obtaining the right of way from the railways without disrupting their existing routes. Railways often lack the right of way in their areas. Therefore, if the Elevated Expressway could be constructed on two pillars in an area where railways have relinquished their right of way, it would secure a permanent claim to this land. This, in turn, would indirectly benefit the railway system.

The Dhaka Elevated Expressway project was meticulously designed to safeguard the railway’s land rights. However, the current reality differs for various reasons. Delays in project implementation have been substantial, making it untimely to assess the project’s impact at this juncture. While a partial opening is set to commence, the original plan aimed to create a vertical bypass for Dhaka. Initially, few would utilize it, and movement would primarily be local. Hence, it is premature to evaluate its effectiveness.

Suppose this Expressway can eventually connect from Kutubkhali to the Airport and ultimately to Ashulia. In that scenario, both passengers and trucks could leverage the Expressway, offering the potential for positive outcomes. If individuals receive services in exchange for a fee, they would undoubtedly explore this option, representing the potential of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway.

TDS: What factors contributed to the significant delays in completing this project?

SH: This project operated under the PPP (Public-Private Partnership) model, which was relatively new for us, lacking the necessary experience and mindset. Executing PPP projects involves a complex process that often requires foreign direct investment (FDI), along with the temperament and support from various levels of stakeholders, which we initially underestimated. PPP projects also come with strict time constraints since their

funding relies on banks. Time and finances are closely intertwined.

Regarding the Dhaka Elevated Expressway Project, it was anticipated that land issues would be free of encumbrances, as it was believed that the Railways solely owned the land. However, the presence of numerous ramps added complexity. Initially, the government had substantial interest in the project until 2013, ranking it as the second priority after the Padma Bridge. But changes occurred after the formation of a separate Railway ministry, which raised questions about the project’s use of railway land.

We were unaware of the stringent 42-month completion timeline, which was tied to bank equity. In contrast, Indonesia completed its 20 Km Expressway in 2013, featuring 5 km of underground sections, demonstrating the challenges of constructing underground infrastructure in a live traffic environment.

TDS: What distinguishable features does the Dhaka Elevated Expressway bring to the city’s infrastructure?

SH: The Dhaka Elevated Expressway introduces a unique feature with its ramps and main structure built adjacent to the road, a novel approach in design. While it embraces modern technology, it requires additional measures for ramp management. Our configurations have been well thought out, aiming to minimize disruption to existing roads. While the Expressway doesn’t physically encroach upon the streets, its operational conditions could attract more traffic, raising concerns about congestion and pedestrian safety.

Moreover, the effectiveness of the tolling system is critical. A digital tolling system is essential to prevent potential delays. Traditional toll collection methods are time-consuming and could lead to long vehicle queues at the toll collection points, potentially creating congestion hotspots on the Dhaka Elevated Expressway.

The interview was conducted by Priyam Paul.

“Managing ramp connections is pivotal to mitigate traffic congestion”

In conversation with Dr. Adil Mohammed Khan, Professor at Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Jahangirnagar University

The Daily Star (TDS): How will the introduction of the elevated expressway impact the urban living experience in Dhaka?

Adil Mohammed Khan (ADM): The Dhaka elevated expressway was primarily constructed to provide a route for larger vehicles to circumvent the city. However, there is also contemplation about its potential utilization within the city. Its integration within Dhaka could prove beneficial, as it enables faster travel for car owners. Nevertheless, it poses limitations for motorcycles and CNG vehicles, affecting the middle-class segment. Essentially, it adds a new layer to the existing road infrastructure, with vehicles using ramps to access or exit the expressway. Consequently, this could lead to increased congestion on the road beneath the expressway, impacting the middle-class population who may not have access to it.

The expressway’s coverage is limited to specific parts of Dhaka and isn’t primarily designed to alleviate traffic congestion within the city. It may not see extensive use for short trips. Instead, its role as a bypass helps alleviate the burden of large vehicles on city roads, aligning with its primary objective. It’s possible that its integration within the city was considered to make toll collection feasible. This approach would allow vehicles traveling within Dhaka to use the expressway, albeit incurring toll charges. However, its construction over Dhaka’s existing rail network has introduced substantial complexities. For instance, plans for establishing a commuter rail on this network faced significant hurdles.

TDS: How does this elevated expressway influence Dhaka’s socio-economic landscape?

ADM: The introduction of the elevated expressway is unlikely to stimulate the emergence of major new businesses within Dhaka. However, the construction of ramps for this expressway could potentially create opportunities for small roadside businesses in proximity. Nevertheless, these changes are not expected to have a significant impact on the city’s overall economy.

Nonetheless, the use of this elevated expressway is anticipated to result in time savings for commuters. Reduced travel times could benefit existing businesses by potentially increasing their profits, as less time spent on transportation can translate into higher productivity. Furthermore, as a bypass road, the expressway has the potential to efficiently redirect vehicles from northern Bangladesh, allowing them to bypass Dhaka and reach their destinations more swiftly. This reduction in transportation time could have a positive ripple effect on the country’s overall economy.

However, concerns arise for ordinary middle-class individuals who heavily rely on public bus services. The extent to which these individuals will benefit from time savings remains uncertain, particularly if public buses do not utilize the expressway. Consider a scenario where a bus travels from Jatrabari to Tejgaon using the expressway. In this case, passengers may not have the opportunity to disembark at intermediate points along the route, as the expressway currently lacks provisions for passenger stops. Therefore, it remains unclear whether local buses will adopt this route or continue their existing operations.

TDS: Will the accessibility of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway (DEE) be equitable for individuals across various income levels, considering the varied tolls for different vehicle types?

ADM: The utilization of toll-based expressways can present a barrier, as not everyone is inclined to pay each time they use the road. Typically, toll roads are preferred for emergency situations, while most people favor toll-free roads or flyovers. Additionally, toll charges have the potential to elevate bus fares, which could burden the middle class. It’s crucial to acknowledge that our country’s income levels are significantly lower than those of developed nations that employ toll systems.

Prioritizing the enhancement of roads beneath flyovers and expressways should have taken precedence, rather than focusing solely on expressway construction. While large-scale projects like expressways and metros have their merits, greater investment in regular roads would benefit the general populace. The current expressway project, with its toll system, may inadvertently exclude many individuals, raising concerns about fairness. If the government had heavily invested in road improvements, fairness would not have been a contentious issue. The introduction of franchise bus services could offer a solution. The government should undertake both substantial projects and simpler initiatives that directly assist the common people.

TDS: Are all the ongoing projects in Dhaka, such as the Dhaka Elevated Expressway, the Metrorail, and the flyovers, effectively coordinated to alleviate traffic congestion and enhance urban development, or are these projects being pursued independently without sufficient consideration for their synergy?

ADM: In Bangladesh, a prominent challenge across various project types is the lack of effective coordination, and this issue extends to transportation projects. The government often initiates multiple projects through different agencies, resulting in a lack of harmony and inadequate monitoring or supervision.

Coordination, particularly in the realms of planning and implementation, is conspicuously absent in Dhaka’s transportation efforts. Effective coordination is essential for both project execution and alignment with land use. Economic hubs typically emerge around these projects, underlining the importance of coordination with land authorities. The deficiency in coordination, as exemplified by the elevated expressway project, can restrict the potential impact of other projects.

Presently, uncertainty looms over the circular railway in Dhaka due to conflicting projects, such as the elevated expressway being constructed on railway land. Furthermore, the lack of coordination in feasibility studies results in wasted resources. Insufficient communication, as seen in the case of the metro and subway projects, detrimentally affects Dhaka’s livability.

Moreover, the Transport Coordination Authority’s role appears weak, leading to conflicts with mayors and project stakeholders. Even the expressway project itself appears to suffer from inadequate communication with local mayors.

Ultimately, the full impact of these projects will only be realized upon their completion. Managing ramp connections is pivotal to mitigate traffic congestion. Striking a balance between large-scale projects and pragmatic solutions should be a central focus.

The interview was taken by Md Fozlay Rabby Ansary

Project Implemented By

First Dhaka Elevated Expressway Company Ltd.

Current Implementation Status

Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Tejgaon

> Main line length: 11.5 km

> Total ramps: 16

> Total length including ramps: 22.5 km

Ramps Locations

Location	Entry	Exit
Airport	1	1
Kuril	2	1
Banani	2	2
Moakhali	1	2
Bijaysarani	3	0
Tejgaon	0	1

Phase 1

Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Banani Rail Station
7.45 km

Phase 2

Banani Rail Station to Mogbazar level crossing
5.85 km

Phase 3

Mogbazar level crossing to Kutubkhali
6.43 km

Timeline

19 January 2011:

Agreement signing

April 2011:

First inauguration by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

15 December 2013:

Revised agreement signing

1 January 2020:

Formal Construction Commencement Date (CCD)

August 2023:

Soft launching

2 September 2023:

Official inauguration of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Tejgaon section

30 June 2024:

Expected date of completion:





WR1

A testimony to earliest sculpting techniques of Bengal



P9

Witnessing the price hike parody



P6

Russia to block G20 declaration if its views ignored



P5

Rema-Kalenga's vulture population flourishes

BNP doesn't want election

PM tells huge BCL rally, asks all to stay alert, thwart plot against the country's progress

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the BNP doesn't want to take part in elections, rather it wants to play with people's voting rights once again.

"Election is not on their [BNP's] mind ... The BNP doesn't want the country's welfare. They want to destroy it," she told a Chhatra League rally at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan.

In the 2008 national election, the BNP-led 20-party alliance got only 30 seats in parliament, the PM said, asking the BCL activists to remind people about this.

Urging people to stay alert, the AL president said the BNP is trying to destroy the electoral system.

Hasina asked the leaders and activists of the pro-Awami League student body to remain vigilant against plots to hinder the country's progress.

"My Chhatra League boys and girls will be the leaders of the Smart Bangladesh 2041. I expect that from you. No one can stop Bangladesh's



The long-anticipated Dhaka Elevated Expressway is scheduled to be inaugurated today by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. In the first phase, the 11.5km airport-Farmgate section of the 19.73km expressway will be opened to traffic tomorrow. The expressway is expected to ease the city's chronic traffic congestion. The photo was recently taken in Kawla area near the Dhaka airport.

PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

DHAKA'S FIRST ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY

All set for grand opening

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The long-awaited Dhaka Elevated Expressway is set to be inaugurated today partially, bringing new hope for easing the perennial traffic woes in the capital.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will open the 11.5km airport-Farmgate section of the 19.73km expressway, the first one in the country, in the afternoon.

Once the structure is opened to traffic tomorrow, it would take around 10 minutes for vehicles to reach Farmgate from the airport, around 50 minutes less than what it takes now.

The partial opening of the expressway is taking place more than a decade after the project was taken up to ease the city's traffic jams.

This is the first project in the transport sector being implemented under the public-private partnership (PPP) with foreign investment.

The entire expressway is expected to be opened to vehicles next year.

"We have completed all preparations for the opening of the expressway by the prime minister," Bridges Division Secretary Monjur Hossain told The Daily Star on Thursday.

The PM's car will enter the expressway from the north end in Kawla area near the Hazrat

Shahjalal International Airport and will pay toll at the toll plaza there, Monjur said.

Hasina will get off the expressway in Tejgaon area to join a civic rally at the old trade fare ground in Agargaon around 4:00pm.

The premier will inaugurate the expressway there, said Monjur, also the executive director of Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA).

Meanwhile, the authorities have already decorated the expressway with placards and flags. However, those will be removed before the opening of the structure to traffic at 6:00am tomorrow, sources said.

The project authorities said they have set up a control centre in Kuril area for smooth movement of traffic. Chinese firm China Shandong International Economic and Technical Corporation, one of the three private partners of the PPP project, will operate the control centre, they said.

The airport-Farmgate section via Kuril, Banani, Mohakhali and Tejgaon will serve as an alternative route to and from the airport, one of the busiest in the city.

This section with 15 ramps will help vehicles avoid traffic-choked crossings and roads. Thirteen of the ramps will be opened tomorrow.

The expressway will be off-limits to three-

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

This govt has to step down

Says BNP on founding anniv

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League government would be forced to step down through a peaceful movement, BNP standing committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan said yesterday.

"The Awami League talks about democracy, but in reality, it does not believe in democracy. We will restore democracy in the country after forcing the government to quit," he said while addressing a rally in front of Nayapaltan party office to observe its 45th founding anniversary.

Speaking as the chief guest, Moyeen said, "The Awami League government has established an autocracy in the country. It wants to cling to power by oppressing people. But the people will not let it happen."

A large number of BNP leaders and activists were seen on the street from Nightingale intersection to Notre Dame College intersection and nearby areas to join the rally that had begun at 3:00pm, halting traffic in the area.

They arrived at the rally venue with small processions. They wore colourful caps, carried placards and posters bearing anti-government slogans.

The day's programme started with BNP leaders paying homage to party founder and president Ziaur Rahman's grave at the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the morning.

Remarking on the party's key principles, BNP standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said the party was formed to restore democracy and people's voting rights, which are now under threat again.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Sri Lanka pays back Bangladesh \$100m more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sri Lanka on Thursday paid back another \$100 million of the \$200 million it took from Bangladesh in a currency swap agreement two years ago, a top official of Bangladesh Bank said yesterday.

With the latest instalment, the Island nation paid back a total of \$150 million, according to Md Mezbaul Haque, the central bank's spokesman.

The repayment comes more than a year and a half after the original agreed date. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh entered into currency swap agreements in August 2021.

Sri Lanka repaid \$50 million as the first instalment on August 17.

"We are hopeful that the rest of the amount will be cleared by September," said Haque.

When the currency swap deal was agreed, Sri Lanka was supposed to repay

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Bangladesh Chhatra League leaders and activists at a rally addressed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital. The pro-Awami League student body organised the event yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

BNP'S NATIONWIDE PROGRAMMES

Over 100 hurt in AL-BNP clashes

13 cops among them; BNP alleges obstruction in six districts

STAR REPORT

Over 100 people, including 13 police personnel, were injured as activists of Awami League and BNP clashed in Netrakona, Patuakhali, Magura, Gaibandha and Bogura yesterday.

BNP leaders alleged they were obstructed by AL activists and police from holding their party's founding anniversary programmes.

In Netrakona's Kalmakanda, 50 people, including four police personnel, were wounded.

Locals said BNP activists started gathering in front of their party office in Paschim Marcas area around noon. Around the same time, AL men took out a procession in the same area and attempted to stop BNP activists from joining their programme, which led to a clash.

MA Khair, convener of Kalmakanda upazila BNP, said, "Awami League men attacked us, and police opened fire on our procession, leaving 20 activists injured."

Abul Kalam, officer-in-charge of Kalmakanda Police Station, said, "BNP activists were causing chaos by torching tyres, prompting police to intervene. They threw brick chunks at police, injuring four police personnel."

In Patuakhali, 13 people, including three police personnel, were injured in Dashmina upazila.

Shah Alam Shanu, general secretary of Dashmina upazila BNP, said, "Police attacked our procession at Pujakhala without any provocation, leaving 10 activists wounded."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE Heat records topple across sweltering Asia

AFP, Bangkok

Temperature records are being toppled across Asia, from India's summer to Australia's winter, authorities said yesterday, in fresh evidence of the impact of climate change.

The sweltering temperatures match longstanding warnings from climate scientists and come as countries from Greece to Canada battle record heat and deadly wildfires.

In India, the world's most populous country, officials said this August was the hottest and driest since national records began more than a century ago.

The month falls in the middle of India's annual monsoon, which usually brings up to 80 percent of the country's yearly rainfall.

But despite heavy downpours that caused deadly floods in the country's north earlier this month, overall rainfall has been far below average.

August saw an average of just 161.7 millimetres (6.4 inches), 30.1 mm lower than the previous August record in 2005, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

That has left the country baking in unrelenting heat. "The large rainfall deficiency and weak monsoon condition is the main reason," the IMD said.

Authorities in Japan also said yesterday that the country had experienced its hottest summer since records began in 1898.

Temperatures from June to August were "considerably higher" than average across the north, east and west of the country, the weather agency said.

In many locations "not only maximum temperatures but also minimum temperatures" reached record highs, it added.

And in Australia this winter was the warmest on record, with an average temperature of 16.75 degrees Celsius (62.15 Fahrenheit) for the season running from June to August.

That is a hair above a record set in 1996, and the highest average winter temperature since the country's records began in 1910, the Bureau of Meteorology said.

Climate change has fuelled searing temperatures across the globe already this year, with July the hottest month ever recorded on Earth.

Scientists have long warned that climate change produces heatwaves that are hotter, longer and more frequent.

And the warming El Nino weather pattern could turbocharge the heat further, though its effects are likely to become more apparent later in the year as it strengthens.

Heatwaves are among the deadliest natural hazards, with hundreds of thousands of people dying from preventable heat-related causes each year.

In developed countries, adaptations including air conditioning can help mitigate the impact.

But even in wealthy Japan, authorities said at least 53 people died of heatstroke in July, with almost 50,000 needing emergency medical attention.

The effects of heat are unevenly distributed, with small children and the elderly less able to regulate their body temperatures and thus more vulnerable. Those who have to work outside are also particularly at risk.

Even a healthy young person will die after enduring six hours of 35 degree Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) warmth coupled with 100 percent humidity.

But extreme heat does not need to be anywhere near that level to kill people, experts warn.

‘With this honour, comes more responsibility’

Korvi Rakshand, the founder of JAAGO foundation, has won the 2023 Ramon Magsaysay Award in the emergent leadership category. Rakshand talked to The Daily Star's Sadi Muhammad Alok over the phone after the announcement on Wednesday, and gave his reaction about the honour and spoke about JAAGO foundation in detail.

The Daily Star (DS): Today we came to know that you are one of the four winners of this year's Ramon Magsaysay Award. We congratulate you. How are you feeling after hearing this news?

Korvi Rakshand (KR): Thanks. While continuing my work, I never gave thought to winning such a prestigious award. We kept on working. Ramon Magsaysay authority told us that they have been monitoring JAAGO foundation's and my work for almost five years. We were very surprised to know this. We had no clue. During this long period, they conducted research and collected information on us through various means.

Needless to say, winning this award brings us a lot of delight. In the past, people like Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, and from our country, Fazle Hasan Abed sir, Prof Muhammad Yunus won it. As our name has now been included in that coveted list, our responsibilities have also increased. At the same time, winning such an award opens many new avenues. Previously we might have wanted to work inside the country. Now we may extend our successful model to other countries. In that case, it will be a source of pride for Bangladesh, too.

DS: JAAGO does voluntary work. However, many people don't have a clear idea about the foundation's work to be honest. Can you tell us a bit about your activities?

KR: JAAGO started its journey in 2007 with the voluntary work of teaching English to some underprivileged children. We had some spare time on our hands and, as students, wanted to help the children. This is how it started. It is always easier to help the children because elders wouldn't listen to us. Thus, we started our work with 17 children. Soon, the students started asking "When will we get promoted?", and we realised that in their imagination, we were running a school. Then we set up a school in Rayerbazar slum. After that, we thought we should start another school in Karail slum. After a few years, we realised that many entities are doing similar work in Dhaka—we should venture outside as well.

Eventually, when we went to other cities, we faced a major constraint. We found that no matter how noble our cause is, we could not replicate the positive outcome that we've received from the Dhaka children.

The main reason was a dearth of competent teachers. It was then that we brought in the online school concept where teachers could teach students from Dhaka through videos. During the Covid pandemic, people saw that it was very much feasible. However, when we started it way back in 2011, people laughed us off!

Many young individuals contacted us asking to work as volunteers for these efforts. While working with them, I found out that even though I, as a person or JAAGO as a foundation, wanted to work with only children and their education,



these young and enthusiastic individuals also wanted to work on youth development, women empowerment, and several other issues. A variety of ideas started pouring in. Then, we thought that we could not manage so many ideas and kickstarted a small platform named "Volunteer for Bangladesh".

The idea behind this platform was that it would bring active individuals together, who would act as a group and get things done. When we shared this on May 2, 2011, we saw that youths from Chattogram, Rajshahi, and Sylhet were saying, "Brother, we have nothing here. We want to work, too." From there till now, a total of 50,000 young individuals spanning all 64 districts are working on different objectives under the platform. A common question to us is, how are we managing these 50,000 people. Actually, we don't. Each district's youths conduct their own election to select the leadership. The winners decide which objective should be worked out in which district. This is how our journey is continuing for years.

DS: JAAGO foundation is no longer a volunteer organisation, right?

KR: Yes, you are right. We received an NGO license in 2020. Since then, we have been working with many

international organisations too. Before that, all activities of the foundation revolved around the people of this country, their money and their dreams inside the country.

DS: So, after getting an NGO license, you are getting external aid?

KR: After getting the NGO license, large-scale donors like UNICEF, USAID, and SSPO are working with us. As we did not have this licence before, we could not work with such a big fund. Now we can do it.

Now we are educating 13,500 children in Bandarban with the help of UNICEF. We brought back students who dropped out of school during the Covid pandemic. Currently, we are running a training programme funded by USAID for 55,000 young individuals who either dropped out, couldn't finish their education or are currently jobless. Our objective is to teach them relevant skills that can help them get employed.

We are also working with female students. Our journey consists of 16 years, and thus, those who started from playgroup are now heading towards the universities. We noticed that the number of female students dropped significantly at the university level, due to lack of support. JAAGO Women Scholarship was initiated last year. Through this scheme, we helped some meritorious female students who got the opportunity to study in public universities but couldn't continue due to financial constraints. Last year we awarded the scholarship to 100 such women. This year, 160 women received it. Recipients will get the amount each year during their four-year graduation course. Every year, we would like to award this scholarship to a new batch of girls.

DS: Now people from various walks of life are getting the opportunity to admit their children into JAAGO Foundation's schools. However, initially, we would see that some young individuals were collecting money or selling things on the Dhaka roads wearing yellow T-shirts donning the JAAGO logo. It seemed that they belonged to the privileged part of society and were mostly English medium students.

KR: It's true. Initially, we started with our friends and family. I studied at Scholastica. My friends also came from there. The scene you described was part of the initiative we took to celebrate World Children's Day.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

12 fishermen hurt in gas cylinder blast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Some 12 fishermen suffered critical burn injuries when a gas cylinder exploded in a boat in Cox's Bazar town last morning.

The incident occurred around 8:00am, just a couple of hours after the fishermen anchored the boat to the Bakkhali river's jetty no 6 to begin selling the fish they caught from the Bay.

Police, however, could not immediately determine what caused the gas cylinder to explode, said Md Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Cox's Bazar Police Sadar Station.

Of the victims, 10 fishermen were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital with 70 percent burn injuries, said Ashiquur Rahman, resident medical officer (RMO) of Cox's Bazar General Hospital.

They are Aiyub, 31, Dil Mohammad, 30, Rafique, 25, Monir, 26, Shofiquil, 26, Arman, 20, Rahim, 37, Rahimullah, 30, Shaheen, 35, and Osman, 19.

The remaining two – Ali Akhbor, 50, and Dulal Majhi, 47, were undergoing treatment at Cox's Bazar General Hospital with 30 percent burns.

Missing college student found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A college student was found dead yesterday morning, 20 hours after he went missing while swimming in the Rowmari canal in Jamalpur's Melandah upazila.

Shofiquil Islam, 24, of Sherpur's Sreebordi upazila, was a third-year honours student at Dr Sekender Ali College in Sherpur.

Firefighters recovered his body from the canal around 11:30am.

Shofiquil drowned after going swimming in the Rowmari canal on Thursday around 4:00pm.

Divers from the district fire service unit started a rescue operation around 5:30pm but were unable to locate him that night, said Melandah Police Station Officer-in-Charge Delwar Hossain.

Two killed in clash over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Two people were killed and at least five others were injured in a clash over a land dispute in Cumilla's Barura upazila last morning.

The deceased were identified as Khorshed Alam, 32, and Abdus Sattar, 55, of Jalgaon village of the upazila.

Witnesses said there was a longstanding dispute between Khorshed and Sattar over a piece of land in the village. The clash took place as Abdus Sattar and his men went to plough that land in the morning.

Hearing the news, Khorshed and his men hurried to the scene to halt his rival group, resulting in a clash, they said.

Khorshed and Sattar were killed in the clash, while five other injured were receiving treatment at Cumilla Medical College Hospital and District Sadar Hospital, said Firoz Hossain, officer-in-charge of Barura Police Station.

Additional police forces were deployed in the village to prevent further untoward incidents, he said.

30 homes gone All set for grand opening

FROM PAGE 12

of a 1km-long flood control embankment in the village are moving their homes and livestock to higher ground out of fear that the dam will collapse, said UP Chairman Rasheduzzaman Rasel.

The Jamuna River was flowing 16cm above the danger level at Mothurapara point of Sariakandi upazila yesterday at 3:00pm, according to officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (WDB).

Contacted, Nazmul Haque, executive engineer of the Water Development Board in Bogura, said they were working to prevent the erosion.

"Around 13,000 families have been marooned by the recent flood. The government is distributing relief materials among the victims," said Golam Kibria, the District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO).

Meanwhile, the flood situation continues to deteriorate in other northern districts, namely Sirajganj, Kurigram, and Jamalpur.

In Sirajganj, vast low-lying areas have gone underwater after the Jamuna overflowed its banks, marooning around 100,000 people in five upazilas, said locals and people's representatives there.

Jamuna was flowing 13cm above the danger level at the Hard Point and 7cm above the danger level at the Kazipur Point yesterday at 6:00pm, according to WDB.

"The water level is increasing rapidly in the Jamuna due to onrush water from upstream India, further deteriorating the flood in the district. The situation is expected to remain unchanged in the next couple of days," said Ranajit Kumar, sub divisional engineer of the district WDB.

In Kurigram, the Brahmaputra has been swelling since Thursday due to onrush water from upstream India.

However, the water level was still below the danger mark, local WDB officials said yesterday.

"Houses and croplands in our union have been submerged," said Sohrab Hossain, chairman of Ashtamir Char Union Parishad in Chilmari upazila.

FROM PAGE 1

wheelers and motorcycles. Other vehicles will run on the structure at a maximum speed of 60km per hour at the beginning, according to sources.

The Dhaka Elevated Expressway is one of the two expressways now being built to reduce traffic congestion in the city.

The 20km Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway is being built on the Dhaka EPZ-Kawla route. At Kawla, it will be connected with the Dhaka Elevated Expressway which will link the Dhaka-Chattogram Expressway at Kutubkhali.

Experts said people will have to wait until the opening of both the expressways to get the full benefit of the structures.

Once the two expressways are operational, people from the

country's northern, western and south-western regions will be able to avoid the capital's perennial traffic jams while travelling via Dhaka.

Trucks and lorries, which are now barred from entering the city during the day, will also use the expressways. The deadline of the Ashulia Elevated Expressway is June 2026.

PARTIAL OPENING AT LONG LAST

In January 2011, the BBA signed a deal with Italian-Thai Development Public Company to build the Dhaka Elevated Expressway at a cost of Tk 8,703 crore.

The agreement was revised and inked again in December 2013 with a revised cost of Tk 8,940 crore after bringing several changes to the design. According to the deal, the government will provide Tk 2,413

upazila.

Sarwar Alam, joint secretary of Borhanuddin upazila BNP, brought the allegation at a press conference.

Monir Hossain Mia, OC of Borhanuddin Police Station, told The Daily Star that activists of BNP and AL brought out processions at the same time. Police had to disperse them as tension ran high when the processions came close to each other at the intersection near the police station.

A chase and counter-chase took place between the activists of BNP and AL in Bogura's Nandigram upazila, leaving seven people injured.

Alauddin Sarkar, president of Nandigram upazila BNP, told this newspaper that AL men, led by its leader Anwar Hossain Rana, attacked their programme at their temporary party office near Nandigram Filling Station.

He said their seven activists were wounded in the attack.

crore (27 percent) as "viability gap funding" while the private partner will bear the remaining cost.

Besides, the government is to spend Tk 4917.57 crore on land acquisition, resettlement and relocation of utility service lines, meaning the total cost of the project is Tk 13,857.57 crore.

But the scheme faltered time and again over the years mainly due to the failure of Italian-Thai to manage funds and problems related to land acquisition, said officials involved in the project.

However, the fund-related crisis was resolved after Italian-Thai handed over 49 percent of its share to two Chinese companies – China Shandong International Economic and Technical Corporation Group (34 percent) and Sino Hydro Corporation Ltd (15 percent) – in 2020.

Denying the allegation, Anwar claimed that BNP men threw brick chips at them when their peace rally was passing by the BNP office. Their two party activists were injured.

On the other hand, traffic came to a halt in Park Road area of Gaibandha town following a clash between BNP men and police.

Mahmudun Nabi Tutul, general secretary of Gaibandha BNP, said their 20 activists were injured in the attack and police detained four party leaders.

Police attacked their rally without any provocation, he alleged.

Masud Rana, OC of Gaibandha Sadar Police Station, told this paper that BNP men tried to vandalise some shops. Police brought the situation under control by firing teargas shells and detaining two.

[Our correspondents from Mymensingh, Bogura, Barishal, Jhenaidah and Patuakhali contributed to this report]

BNP doesn't want election

FROM PAGE 1

the loan for the Padma Bridge would not be given unless the MD was allowed to stay in his post. Hillary Clinton herself gave the order to stop the Padma Bridge funding.

"Then I said, 'We will build the Padma Bridge with our own money.' We have done exactly that, and shown it to the world. Bangladesh can, the people of Bangladesh can."

Addressing the activists, Hasina said, "Keep your educational institutions clean.... Encourage people with uncultivated land to grow crop If anyone pays attention to production, we will not have to beg from others."

She then asked them to encourage people to register for the pension scheme.

The event started around 3:00pm. Carrying festoons, banners and placards, hundreds of thousands of BCL members from across the country started arriving at the venue in the

morning.

Within hours, the venue and its adjoining areas turned into a human sea.

In her speech, the PM said, "I provided my children with one thing: education. They took out loans to continue their studies. Wealth and money are of no use. Everyone realised that during the coronavirus pandemic. I want our sons and daughters to grow up skilled and qualified."

The names of Chhatra League activists can be found on the list of martyrs of the Liberation War. "When I was arrested in 2007, it was the Chhatra League that took to the streets."

BCL President Saddam Hossain presided over the massive rally while General Secretary Sheikh Wali Ashif Inan moderated it.

Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader also addressed the rally.

This govt has to step down

FROM PAGE 1

"We again wage a movement to bring back democracy," he said.

Accusing the police of obstructing the BNP's movement, he said, "The movement would continue although our party activists are being arrested and false cases are being filed."

Presiding over the rally, Dhaka South city unit BNP convener Abdus Salam called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to resign and hold the next national election under a caretaker government. "Otherwise, the government will be forced to quit through a mass movement."

After the rally, the BNP took out a large procession from its Nayapalton central office. The procession ended

near Rajdhani Super Market at 6:30pm after marching through different streets.

A good number of law enforcers were deployed in Nayapalton and its adjacent areas to avert any untoward situation.

Sri Lanka pays back

FROM PAGE 1

the amount within three months.

Bangladesh lent the money to Sri Lanka in three instalments in 2021 – the first tranche of \$50 million was sent on August 19, the second instalment of \$100 million 11 days later and another \$50 million in September – the first loan given by Bangladesh to any country.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON AND PRABIR DAS

(Clockwise from top left) Female Bangladesh Chhatra League activists march through Dhaka University campus ahead of a rally in the capital yesterday; activists hold Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's cut-out and a boat, the party's symbol, near a Suhrawardy Udyan entrance; a BNP activists pose with the party's symbol in front of their office in Naya Paltan; and heavy tailback is seen on the opposite side of the road of Notre Dame College as BNP activists march to Shapla Chhattar from Arambagh.

POLITICAL RALLIES Gridlocks make people suffer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka city residents experienced significant hardships yesterday as two major political parties held rallies in the metropolis on the public holiday.

Bangladesh Chhatra League organised a rally to commemorate National Mourning Day, while BNP's processions were held marking the party's 45th founding anniversary.

The events, which attracted VIPs and numerous leaders and activists from various parts of Dhaka and the country, led to the closure of some major roads. This situation placed additional stress on the surrounding alternative roads and bypasses.

BCL's rally at Suhrawardy Udyan commenced at 3:00pm, with the prime minister attending as chief guest. Meanwhile, BNP's programmes, including a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

DENGUE DEATHS 2023

597 and counting

Reinfections, late hospitalisations adding to the toll

HELEMUL ALAM

With four new deaths recorded yesterday, dengue fatalities this year rose to 597, which is more than double compared to the previous record since the mosquito-borne disease's first official outbreak in 2000.

To put this into perspective, the previous highest annual death toll was 281, recorded last year.

Moreover, the total number of dengue cases this year rose to 125,342, eclipsing the previous record of 101,354 cases in 2019.

Besides, the daily dengue bulletin from Directorate General of Health Services relies on data from only 57 public and private hospitals in Dhaka, and 81 district and divisional-level hospitals.

However, there are approximately 16,000 public and private hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centers, and blood banks across the country providing dengue care, suggesting that the actual number of cases and fatalities may be significantly underreported.

Dengue is a reportable disease in other countries, meaning data on every single dengue patient must be recorded, according to experts.

Apart from negligence of the authorities concerned, experts attribute this year's unusually high death toll to delayed hospitalisation, reinfections, coinfection and presence of Den-2 and Den-3 serotypes among the infected.

Dengue exists as four distinct serotypes (closely related forms of



the virus).

Immunity from infection with one serotype may provide lifelong protection from that serotype but is only partially protective against the others. A second-time infection with a different serotype increases the infection's severity which can lead to fatality, explained the experts.

IEDCR Director Prof Dr Tahmina Shirin said, as dengue has been active in Bangladesh for the last 23 years, many have been infected with different serotypes, increasing the chances of reinfection. This is one of the main causes of this year's high death rate.

Besides, the country's temperature remains favourable for breeding of Aedes mosquitoes.

Climate change, resulting in warm temperatures and intermittent rain have also contributed to increased transmission of dengue over the last

decade, stressed experts, including Prof Shirin.

However, early detection and immediate hospitalisation can help lower the risks significantly.

"Consulting a doctor and taking necessary medication are essential if a patient is diagnosed with fever. Patients should take in enough fluids," advised prof Shirin.

She suggested intake of coconut water, saline and home-made fruit juices to keep the patients hydrated as these fluids will ensure a supply of necessary vitamins and minerals needed for a speedy recovery.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, stressed the need of immediately hospitalisation if the patients experience severe stomach aches, breathing difficulties, weakness, bleeding from gums or nose, and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

EXPRESSWAY OPENING

Roads to avoid today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vehicular movement around the city's old international trade fair ground in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar will be restricted today for the inauguration programme of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) in an announcement yesterday advised all types of vehicles except for those carrying stickers and banners (issued for joining the programme) to take alternative roads from 11:00am to 6:00pm.

The following roads will be under restriction: from Shyamoli to Rokeya Sarani via Shishu Mela Crossing, 60 feet and Agargaon Light Crossing, from Love Road East end to Gono Bhaban Crossing via Bijoy Sarani Crossing-Aeroplane Crossing and Crescent Lake, from Arong Crossing to Farmgate via Manik Mia Avenue, Bangabandhu Chattar and Indira Road, from road up to Taltala, Agargaon Light Crossing, BICC Crossing and Biman Crossing on Rokeya Sarani, and from Shyamoli to end of Manik Mia Avenue (Arong Crossing) on Mirpur Road.

However, vehicles carrying patients and other important services will be out of the purview of the restrictions.

A 'clear threat' to judiciary

Say 170 eminent citizens over open letter on Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 170 eminent citizens yesterday expressed concern over a letter by global figures calling for the suspension of judicial proceedings against Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus.

In a joint statement signed by eminent artist Nisar Hossain, they said recently it came to their sight that an open letter seeking attention of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been issued by Nobel Laureates, politicians, businesspersons and civil society members of different countries.

"The open letter's words look like a 'clear threat' to Bangladesh's sovereignty and an independent judiciary," they said in the joint statement.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Online gambling ring busted in Dhaka, Sirajganj

Six arrested, kingpin still at large

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department has arrested six persons in Dhaka and Sirajganj on charges of running online gambling platforms like Mel Bet, 1x Bet and Bet Winner.

CID's Cyber Intelligence and Risk Management team conducted the raid on Thursday after it noticed that a large number of Bangladeshi citizens were using these online platforms, said CID sources yesterday.

Rezaul Karim, Saikat Rahman, Sadiqul Islam, Nazmul Ahsan, Towhid Hossain and Zakir Hossain

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

BIMAN RECRUITMENT

Candidates boycott exams at a centre

They bring question leak allegations, authorities deny

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Job candidates applying for positions at Bangladesh Biman boycotted a recruitment exam at a centre in Uttara, amid allegations of a question paper leak.

The exam, intended for 33,000 candidates vying for roles in ground handling, technician, and helpers, was scheduled at 10 different centres across the city.

Candidates at Uttara High School and College claimed that their exam was delayed by an hour, raising suspicions of a potential question paper leak.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Uttara Zone under Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) told The Daily Star that the exam was set to begin at 3.00pm, but, it started around 4.00pm.

"As a result, candidates came out and started to protest. Additional police forces were needed to bring the situation under control at around 5.00pm," he added.

Quoting locals, police estimated that there might be around 3,000 candidates at the centre.

According to Shafiul Azim, CEO of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, the exam delay was due to rain and Friday prayers. It was also announced two and a half hours before the scheduled time. However, some centres received the exam materials on time and conducted the exam at 3.00 pm. Few candidates at Uttara High School and College used this situation to create chaos.

"We will investigate the matter. We are yet to decide on whether fresh exams will be taken or not," he added.



Ignoring safety, a group of women and children get on a minibus at a starting point of Mayor Hanif flyover. A few of them further expose themselves to accidents as they stop a CNG-run three-wheeler to reach their destination. The photo was taken in the capital's Jatra Bari yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

No one is above the law in Bangladesh: Anisul

BSS, Brahmanbaria

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said propaganda against the judicial process in Bangladesh would not be tolerated.

"No one is above the law in Bangladesh. Law will run at its own pace. Everyone has to respect the court's order," he said while addressing a function to distribute keys to the homes of Ashrayan project at Kutu union under Kasba upazila in Brahmanbaria.

Urging all to re-elect Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the law minister said people are witnessing enormous development work in the country.

"To keep the development going, we need Sheikh Hasina as prime minister once again," he added.

The law minister at the function handed over keys to the newly built houses among 52 homeless families.

34mm rain floods Khulna city

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

Just 34 millimetres of rainfall was enough to inundate two-third of Khulna city, effectively washing away the tall claims of monsoon preparedness by the authorities.

The rainfall was recorded from 1:00pm to 2:30pm, said Amirul Azad, senior meteorological officer.

The status quo caused immense sufferings to city dwellers, who were seen wading through ankle- to knee-deep water to reach their destinations.

Many were stranded in different mosques of the city following Friday prayers.

They blamed lack of proper drainage system for the perennial menace of waterlogging.

Besides, unabated encroachment and pollution over the years has filled up the local canals, contributing to the existing misery, they added.

City dwellers alleged that their sufferings are persisting due to authorities' indifference.

This correspondent observed knee-deep water in many areas of the city, including Abu Naser Hospital area,

BNS road, Sonadanga Muigunni road, Khulna Jashore Highway, Sheikhpara, Moilapota, KDA Avenue, Khanjahan Ali Road, Lower Jashore Road, Rupsha Strand Road, Polytechnic College Road, Sher-e-Bagla Road, Iqbalnagar, and Gallamary.

Rainwater also flooded Bastuhara Kitchen Market, Chittrali Market, Bastuhara Colony, Boyra, Royer Mahal, Gallamary, Khalishpur BIDC Road and Crescent Jute Mill area. Many human hauliers and battery-run three-wheelers were found stranded on waterlogged roads while many commuters were seen struggling to find transports to reach homes.

According to Asaduzzaman Rokon, a trader in Muigunni Park, after an hour of rain, the entire area was submerged.

He alleged that the Conservancy Department of KCC does not clean drains regularly. Besides, KCC workers use traditional methods to clean these drains instead of modern technology.

"The situation has been particularly worse for the last couple of years. Meanwhile, encroachment of water bodies has added to the

menace," he added.

A narrow drain behind his shops almost filled with garbage validated his claims. Mujibar Rahman, who lives in ward no -6, echoed the same.

"Our road becomes like a canal after a little rain. Today, roads were inundated within an hour," he added.

Anisur Rahman, conservancy officer of KCC, told The Daily Star that they regularly clean the drains. However, he admitted to having a shortage of manpower and equipment.

Aminul Islam Munna, panel mayor -1, told this newspaper that works to repair and construct drains as well as excavate 22 canals at a cost of Tk 823 crore are underway. After completing these projects, city dwellers will be benefited.

According to KCC, the total length of the city's drainage network is 651.50km. Of it, 291.23km is concrete, 55km half concrete and 305km earthen. Khulna city was once blessed with over 50 canals. Now, more than half of those water bodies are dead, while the remaining 22 are struggling for survival.



Unaware of the risks of drowning, unsupervised children opt to enjoy fishing at a water body at Shahjalal University of Science & Technology in Sylhet. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Vulture population 597 and counting

FROM PAGE 5

flock of vultures was seen in the field of Atghar village adjacent to Dighirpar Bazar of Moulvibazar Sadar upazila. These vultures may come from the Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary in Habiganj. Apart from this, there are vulture shelters in Deorachhara, Kalachhara, Madhabpur and Karimpur in Moulvibazar.

According to an IUCN 2016 survey, there are about 100 Bengal vultures in the greater Sylhet region. This could be a sign of the

vulture's return to nature.

In the greater Sylhet region, vultures are still doing well. In order to sustain these cleaners of nature, the sale of banned painkillers for livestock must be stopped altogether. Tall trees in various places and tea gardens should not be cut down. Only then, the number of these birds can return to previous levels, said Md Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, former Sylhet Divisional Forest Officer of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department.

FROM PAGE 3

vomiting. "If a patient is not hospitalised within 48 hours of showing these symptoms, they may go into dengue shock syndrome," said Nazmul.

There are two types of dengue shocks – compensated shocks and decompensated shocks.

"If a patient is hospitalised immediately after their compensated shock, they won't reach decompensated shock – during which chances of recovery are only 50 percent," he added.

Patients suffering from cancer or heart, kidney, and liver complications have to be taken under special supervision, said Nazmul.

Death rate is also high among patients of high-risk groups, like obese and aged people, pregnant women, infants and comorbidity patients, he added.

Co-infection is also increasing the risk of deaths. For instance, a person infected with

dengue and typhoid at the same time increases the chance of mortality, he said.

Highlighting the importance of understanding serotype sequences, Nazmul emphasised that identifying the variant requires tests in RT-PCR labs.

However, he noted that these facilities can be quite costly.

Severity in dengue cases depends on several factors, including serotyping, genotyping, and the sequence of cross infection.

"Serotype sequence is crucial in determining the severity, but we haven't conducted a comprehensive study on a larger scale yet," he explained.

This year, serotype-2 and serotype-3 have been identified, with serotype-2 being the most prevalent. Among the four serotypes, serotype-2 and serotype-3 are associated with higher severity, with serotype-2 being particularly dangerous.

Online gambling ring busted in Dhaka

FROM PAGE 3

were arrested in the capital's Mohammadpur, Banasree and Agargaon, as well as Shahjapur in Sirajganj.

Seventeen mobile phones, 21 SIM cards, four laptops, seven desktop and two tablet computers, and Tk 4 lakh in cash were recovered from them. A case was filed under the Digital Security Act with Paltan Model Police Station yesterday.

These gambling websites are mainly controlled from Russia, but managers are appointed in different countries to control the local activities. The managers then hire their trusted people as agents, who appoint technologically skilled people to manage all these apps, said a CID press release.

During the primary

interrogation, arrestees told CID that Motiur Rahman of Shariatpur, who is staying in Moscow, is the kingpin behind these three gambling sites in Bangladesh. Ashikur Rahman of Jessore is his accomplice.

over Bangladesh using Mobile Financial Service (MFS) agent SIM every month. They transact several crores of taka through MFS and various banks.

As a commission, they get a small part of the

press release.

The CID also said arrestee Rezaul was running gambling activity using an IT lab at his house, comprising of seven desktop computers and four laptops. MFS agents Sadikul and Zakir joined his team and were responsible for transacting the gambling money.

Nazmul and Towhid, who worked with MFS distribution houses, would collect agents' SIMs used for the transactions.

These gambling websites are mainly controlled from Russia, but managers are appointed in different countries to control the local activities. The managers then hire their trusted people as agents, who appoint technologically skilled people to manage all these apps.

These two, along with arrestees Saikat and Rezaul, control the betting sites in Bangladesh.

Gambling agents collect money from gamblers all

money collected from gamblers, while a major portion of the amount is sent to site operators through hundi or using cryptocurrency, added the

Hilsa brings hope

FROM PAGE 5

the sea to catch hilsa but returned to the shore empty-handed due to rough weather. However, all the fishermen are being able to catch hilsa in good numbers once the weather got better," said fisherman Abdul Malek Khan.

"I managed to catch 60 maunds of hilsa which was sold for Tk 20 lakh," he added.

Kalapara Upazila Senior Fisheries Officer Apu Saha said the fishermen are satisfied as they are getting good price for hilsa this time.

Each piece of hilsa weighing up to 300-400 grammes is being sold at Tk 700-800 per kg, 500-600 grammes is being sold at Tk 900-1,000 per kg, 700-900g Tk 1,200 per kg, and 1-1.5kg sized hilsa is being sold at Tk 1,300-1,600 per kg, said Apu Saha.

The price of hilsa this year is at least Tk 500 higher compared to that of the last year, he added.

Raju Ahmed Raja, general secretary of Mahipur Fishery Owners Association, said the catch of hilsa is fairly good as each fisher is returning with an average of 20-25 maunds of hilsa. This has brought relief among fishermen, traders and trawler owners, and other

professions in Patuakhali's Kalapara.

"As we are also trying to develop our hilsa resources..., it is also important to raise awareness among sea-bound fishermen to prevent sea and coastal pollution. The Bay of Bengal especially needs to be saved from plastic pollution," said Ansar Uddin Molla, president of Alipur Fishery Wholesalers Cooperative Society.

Patuakhali District Fisheries Officer and hilsa researcher Kamrul Islam said the hilsa harvest is on the rise following implementation of various plans, including mother hilsa conservation, jatka (hilsa fry) preservation, special operations to remove illegal nets, and above all the 65-day ban on fishing in the sea.

It has appeared that lack of timely rainfall due to climate change delayed hilsa harvest, he added.

Son hacks

FROM PAGE 5

Initially, the family members said that Badshah was killed by robbers.

Later, Enamul Haque confessed to killing his father in the face of police questioning.

Meanwhile, Assistant Superintendent of Anwara Circle Police Kamrul Hasan and Banshkhali Police visited the spot in the afternoon.

According to the police, the family is preparing to file a murder case.

কর্মশীল স্পেস বিজয়
মহাবিল লিঙ্গপুর ইউনিওন দ্বিতীয় সেক্টরে ৮
তালি ৭০০০ বর্গফুট ও ১৫ টি কার পার্কিংসহ
একটি কার্মশীল স্পেস বিক্রয় করা হবে।
01712021072

AIT Alumni Association-Bangladesh
Office: IAT, BUET

Notice of Annual General Meeting (AGM)-2023

Notice is hereby given to the members of AITAA-B that Annual General Meeting (AGM)-2023 of Asian Institute of Technology Alumni Association, Bangladesh Chapter (AITAA-B) will be held on 15th September, 2023 (Friday) at 5:00 pm. Registration will start at 4:00 pm

Venue: Hotel Amari, Dhaka, Eden Ball Room, 47, Road No. 41, Gulshan-2, Dhaka-1212

Prime Agenda
Formation of a new executive committee of AIT Alumni Association, Bangladesh Chapter (AITAA-B)

For Pre-registration & participation in the AGM-2023, and for membership of the association contact the under mentioned addresses.

Professor Dr. Md. Kamal Uddin
President
AIT Alumni Association, Bangladesh Chapter (AITAA-B)
E-mail: <pdrikamal@gmail.com>
Tel. +8801819117956
Whatsapp group page: 'AIT Alumni Association BD'
Dr. Razaque: Tel. 01711570461

Gridlocks make people suffer

FROM PAGE 3

rally, started around the same time. The rally started from the party's central office in Nayapaltan, then passed through Fakirapul Intersection, Notre Dame College, Shapla Chattar, and Ittefaq Intersection, finally ended in Tikatuli's Rajdhani Market. The march resulted in massive gridlocks and long tailbacks along these routes.

Additionally, vehicular movement was completely suspended from Matsya Bhaban Intersection to Shahbagh, as processions, led by BCL leaders and activists, crowded the road.

DMP's traffic division closed 11 access points around the Suhrawardy Udyan area, resulting in severe traffic congestion on nearby alternative routes.

By late afternoon, the

congestion affected several key roads in the capital, particularly the stretches from Dhanmondi 32 to Azimpur and Jatrabari to Paltan.

Drivers were left stranded for extended periods while irritation mounted among commuters, a significant portion of whom restored to walking. Many others had to wait hours on the streets as they failed to access any form of transportation to reach their destinations.

Pedestrians were also not spared, as they had to navigate through crowded streets.

"Headed towards Farmgate from Jatrabari, I had to walk the entire distance. Having to undergo such distress on a public holiday is disappointing," said Aminur Rashid, a Jatrabari

resident.

Sirajul Islam, a Dhaka University student who had to reach Green Road area for tuition, shared a similar experience.

"Despite knowing of the situation, I had to make it to the area as my student's exam is approaching," said Sirajul who covered the entire distance on foot.

During the BCL rally, the university area became a "bus depot", reports UNB quoting students and locals.

Sohel Rana, additional deputy commissioner of Ramna traffic zone, said, "Generally, there isn't much traffic on the roads during a holiday. However, some traffic congestion occurred around the rally areas. Traffic conditions on other roads remained normal."

A 'clear threat' to judiciary

FROM PAGE 3

The open letter calls to suspend the ongoing judicial proceedings against Prof Yunus which is an 'unnecessary interference' to Bangladesh's judicial system, they added.

In the open letter to PM Hasina on Monday, 104 Nobel Laureates and 79 other global figures expressed concern about the safety and freedom of Prof Yunus.

They urged PM Hasina to "immediately suspend the current judicial proceedings against Prof Yunus", followed by a review of the charges by a panel of impartial judges drawn from within Bangladesh with some role for internationally recognised legal experts.

Prof Yunus is one of only seven people to receive the Nobel Peace Prize,

the US Congressional Gold Medal, and the US Presidential Medal of Freedom.

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 Prof Yunus, with the Third Labour Court of Dhaka.

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

In the joint statement, the eminent citizens said words of the open letter are contradictory to workers' rights guaranteed by Bangladesh's constitution and the International Labour Organisation.

The open letter's call for a review of the charges by

a panel of impartial judges looks like demeaning Bangladesh's judicial system, they added.

The eminent citizens include former chairman of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh Prof Nazrul Islam, social-scientist Prof Anupam Sen, former governor of Bangladesh Bank Atiur Rahman, artist Hashem Khan, social-scientist Prof Bulbon Osman, artist Rafiqun Nabi, former vice-chancellor of National University Bangladesh Prof Harun-or-Rashid, former president of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh Prof Mahfuza Khanam, economist Prof Abul Barkat, historian Prof Syed Anwar Hossain, and cultural and theatre personalities Hasan Imam, Ramendu Majumdar, Nasiruddin Yousuff and Mamunur Rashid.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District-Rangpur.
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.8500.000.07.108.23-2910 Date: 31.8.23.

Invitation for Tender (Works)
e-Tender Notice No. 05/2023-2024

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works, details are given below.

Sl No	Tender ID No	Package No	Description of work	Tender Document Last Selling (Date & Time)
1	867970	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-08	Periodic Maintenance of Bannir Bazar RHD-Muchirhat via Gupinapur UP Road from Ch. 3550-4740m & 8350-9550m, ID 185033002 [Badarganj] [LTM]	17/09/2023 16.00 PM
2	868005	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-09	Rehabilitation of Haragach UP Office-Ekatar Bazar via Mora Tista River Road from Ch. 3665m-4065m, ID. 185423015 [Kaunia] [LTM]	
3	868022	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-10	Rehabilitation (Widening) of Haragach R&H (Degree College) – Haragach UP Office via Jay Bangla Bazar Road from Ch. 00m-1045m, ID. 185583029 [Mithapukur] [LTM]	
4	868025	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/CW-01	Rehabilitation of Double Vent 3.00mX3.00m RCC Box Culvert on Sathbari NHW – Balamashimpur UP Office (Morahatti) via Dabra Road at Ch. 1420m, ID. 185582007 [Mithapukur] [LTM]	
5	868030	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/CW-02	Rehabilitation of Double Vent 3.00mX3.00m RCC Box culvert on Jaigirhat (Auto Rice mill) – Balarhat UP Via Miarhat Road at Ch. 3450.00m, ID. 185583029 [Mithapukur] [LTM]	
6	868043	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-18	Periodic Maintenance of Pirgacha UZHO – Jaigirhat GC via Gopalgonj Ghat Road from Ch. 00m-2900m, ID. 185732004 [Pirgacha] [OTM]	24/09/2023 16.00 PM
7	868089	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-19	Periodic Maintenance of Bamon Dighi-Parghat Via Dangirhat Road From Ch. 2400m-6300m, ID. 185922003 [Taraganj] [OTM]	
8	868110	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-20	Periodic Maintenance of Badarganj-Mondolerhat Via Kalupara Basdha Bil Road from Ch.00m-6000m & 8980-11780m, ID. 185033018 [Badarganj] [OTM]	
9	868125	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-21	Periodic Maintenance of Emadpur UP office (Tatalia) – Paddapukur Hat (Jonidpur Madrasa) Road from Ch.00m-5700m, ID. 185583050 [Mithapukur] [OTM]	
10	868130	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-22	Periodic Maintenance of Balushat Mor To Nagerhat Via Borobela Road [Mithapukur Part] from Ch.00m – 3855m, ID. 185582003 [Mithapukur] [OTM]	
11	868166	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-23	Rehabilitation (Widening) of Shyampur GC – Keranirhat GC Road from Ch. 3000m-6200m, ID. 1854922007 [Rangpur-S] [OTM]	
12	868181	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-24	Rehabilitation (Widening) of Khalashpir hat –Gopalpurhat via Tukuria U.P. Road from Ch. 00m – 2708m, ID. 185762013 [Pirganj] [OTM]	
13	868134	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-25	Rehabilitation (Widening) of Khalashpir hat-Gopalpurhat via Tukuria U.P. Road from Ch. 6870m – 8900m, ID. 185762013 [Pirganj] [OTM]	
14	868151	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-26	Rehabilitation (Widening) of Hariswar Kaunia GC (Topikohat) – Tapamadhupur GC via Kaunia Bus Stand Road from Ch. 00m-1970m, ID. 185422001 [Kaunia] [OTM]	
15	868186	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-27	Rehabilitation (Widening) of Burirhat GC – Kakina RHD Road (Gangachara Part) from Ch. 5900m-7068m, ID. 185272012 [Gangachara] [OTM]	
16	868152	e-Tender/LGED/ Rang/GOBM/2023-24/RW-28	Rehabilitation (Widening) of Burirhat GC – Kakina RHD Road (Gangachara Part) from Ch. 7918m-10720m, ID. 185272012 [Gangachara] [OTM]	

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)


(Mohammad Shahjahan Ali)
Executive Engineer
LGED, Rangpur
Ph: 02589-962730
E-mail: xen.rangpur@lged.gov.bd

GD-1333



Two-third of Khulna city was inundated, following only 34 mm rain. While the waterlogging resulted in the breakdown of several vehicles, locals also had to suffer as the filing of the nearby canals prevented prevent the water to recede. This photo was taken yesterday. Story on page 4.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Man arrested with firearms, liquor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Bangladesh Coast Guard officials yesterday arrested a man with foreign liquor and firearms from a BRTC bus at Barguna's Patharghata.

The arrestee as identified as Sheikh Mominul Islam, 32, of Magurabhang in Satkhira, confirmed Lt M Hasan Mehdi, staff officer (operation) of Coastguard South Zone.

Five airguns, one mechanised 9mm foreign pistol, five bullets and a bottle of foreign liquor were also seized from him, said coastguard officials.

Following a tip off, the officials searched a BRTC bus bound for Patharghata and arrested Mominul from Munsirhat on Patharghata-Mathbaria road. The illegal items were found hidden inside a bag in a box kept under Mominul's seat.

Mominul confessed that he planned to take these weapons to Dhaka via Patharghata.

Earlier, he had also worked as an arms smuggler, said Lt Mehdi.

When asked where the firearms were brought from, Lt Mehdi said they believe it was procured from neighbouring countries.

Mominul was handed over to Patharghata Police Station in a case filed under the arms and drugs acts.

REMA-KALENGA FOREST Vulture population sees 15.4pc surge

MINTU DESHWARA

Since 1990, the number of vultures in the subcontinent has been rapidly declining. According to the Forest Department, there were 1,972 vultures in the country in 2008. In the last census conducted in 2015, that number fell to 260.

Researchers say that vultures are on the way to extinction due to adverse environments, lack of preservation measures and food shortage. Around 99.9 percent of the subcontinent's Bengal vulture is now extinct and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has declared the species as "critically endangered" around the world.

In recent years, while the reproduction rate of vultures has remained steady throughout the country, there has been a notable uptick in the Rema-Kalenga forest of Habiganj. The development has sparked optimism among those working to conserve vultures.

Notably, the fertility rate in vultures of this region rose from 57 percent in 2014 to a promising 72.4 percent.

The IUCN has been working with the Sufal Project of Forest Department, specifically on vulture care, in the country since 2014.

IUCN project director Sarwar

Alam said there are around 260 vultures in Bangladesh. Once there were seven types of vultures in the country. Now, only the Bengal vulture is seen. Only two places are known as safe habitats for this vulture – one is the Rema-Kalenga forest, the country's second largest forest area at Chunarughat upazila in Habiganj; and the other is the

to the environment as they are the nature's most efficient scavengers. All the stale and rotting dead bodies in nature are eaten and cleaned by them, keeping society free from numerous diseases.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Habiganj chapter, said vultures live in



Sundarbans in Khulna.

In Bangladesh, vultures population has come close to becoming extinct, due to the extensive use of drugs like Diclofenac and Ketoprofen on livestock. When vultures eat the carcass of an animal treated with these drugs, they end up dying within an hour or two. Thankfully, the government banned these drugs in veterinary medicine in 2021.

The vulture is beneficial

trees and raise their chicks there. Cutting down big trees, religious superstitions, and lack of food are also pushing these birds closer to extinction.

"To keep our environment healthy, beautiful and liveable, we feel that common people should be more aware of protecting vultures," he added.

Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Officer Mirza Mehedhi Sorowar said recently a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Hilsa brings hope to fishers

Record Tk 444cr worth of fish sold in August

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At the beginning of the season after a 65-day ban on fishing ended, fishermen in Patuakhali were having gloomy days in the sea as they were not catching enough hilsa and other fishes.

However, now the fishermen are elated as they are returning with huge cache of hilsa as well as other varieties from the sea, which are being sold at good prices.

According to Patuakhali District Fisheries Office, fishes worth Tk 444 crore were sold in August at Alipur and Mahipur landing centres on south and north banks of the river Shibbaria in Patuakhali's Kuakata, surpassing all previous records. Of this, hilsa was worth Tk 356 crore while other fishes were worth Tk 88 crore.

The fisheries office also revealed that a total of 4,450 tonnes of hilsa have been sold at an average price of Tk 800 per kg, while 2,200 tonnes of other fish varieties were sold at an average price of Tk 400 per kg.



Talking to The Daily Star, fishermen said the sea is full of hilsa now and they are getting a plenty of catch each time.

On August 27, Abul Khair, a fisherman from Ramgati in Laxmipur, caught 170 maunds of hilsa in a single try, which was sold for Tk 54.54 lakh at "Mithun Fish" shop in Mahipur fish market. Local fishermen said this was the largest quantity of fish ever caught in a single fishing net on the coast.

Earlier on August 17, Salahuddin's trawler in Ramgati also caught 96 maunds of hilsa in a single try, which was sold in Mahipur market for Tk 35 lakh.

Md Yunus, the operator of a fishing trawler, said this time the size of hilsa is also good, ranging from 800 grammes to more than 1 kilogramme each.

"Since we are getting good prices, hopefully we will be able to repay our loans," he said.

"After the 65-day ban on catching hilsa ended on July 23, the fishermen went to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

A tragic journey home

Man dies while returning with body of grandmother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A banker, who was returning home with the dead body of his grandmother in a freezer car, was killed in a road accident yesterday morning in Ghoraghat upazila of Dinajpur.

Hridoy Mahin Alvee, 27, son of Meftahul Rahman of Dinajpur Municipality, worked as an officer at Al-Arafa Islami Bank in Dhaka.

Police said Alvee was bringing his grandmother's body, who had passed away in Dhaka on Thursday, back to Dinajpur. He was sitting in the front cabin of the vehicle when the accident took place as they approached Nurjahanpur village in Ghoraghat upazila around 7:30am.

Tragedy struck when the vehicle collided with a parked truck, resulting in severe injuries to both Alvee and the driver, Mithu Mia, 37. Fire fighters transported the injured victims to Ghoraghat Upazila Health Complex. But, Alvee succumbed to his injuries.

Asaduzzaman Asad, officer-in-charge of Ghoraghat Police Station, confirmed that the injured driver, Mithun Mia, was transferred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for further medical care.

Son hacks father to death in Ctg

UNB, Chattogram

A young man hacked his father to death over a family feud at East Puichhori Maizpara village of Banshkhal Upazila in the district on Thursday night.

The deceased Mohammad Badshah, 56, used to run a decorator business in Shahadat Market in the village.

Sudhanshu Shekhar Halder, Inspector (Investigation) of Banshkhal Police Station, said Badshah's son Enamul Haque recently bought a mobile phone by taking money from cash box.

Enamul was also putting pressure on his father to marry his girlfriend. On Thursday night, Badshah locked into a quarrel with his son over these things.

Following the altercation, Enamul hacked his father with a sharp weapon indiscriminately at any time of Thursday night, leaving him dead on the spot.

"We recovered Badshah's body yesterday morning after being informed by family members," added the police officer.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

bdnews24 inaccessible

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Online news portal bdnews24.com was inaccessible for over 10 hours till filing this report till 10:30pm yesterday.

Suman Mahmud, chief reporter of bdnews24.com, told The Daily Star that they were trying to figure out what actually happened to their site.

We are working to resolve the issue, he said.

However, the higher-ups of the news portal suspect that it might have been hacked.

Meanwhile, bdnews24.com, on their official Facebook page, wrote, "For reasons beyond our control, we are unable to serve our audience through our news portal. We apologize unreservedly to all for the inconvenience caused. We vow to fight back to regain the means to restore the website."

BETEL LEAF CULTIVATION

A lifeline for Khasi women

MINTU DESHWARA

Alongside its tea estates, one thing that tourists also look to relish while visiting Sylhet is the local betel leaf cultivated there, also known as Khasi Paan.

Grown by the Khasis, an indigenous community living in the suburbs of Habiganj and Moulvibazar districts, the leaves are mostly cultivated in hilly areas near the homes of the community, locally known as punjee.

Khasi betel leaf, which is distinct in its taste and shape from other betel leaf varieties, serves as a natural remedy for minor injuries.

This product has turned into a unique cash crop and a symbol of self-sufficiency for Khasi women.

According to the Khasi Social Council, betel leaf cultivation is a major means of livelihood for 13 Khasi punjees – three in Habiganj and 65 in Moulvibazar.

"Khasi people are matriarchal, so women hold significant status within their families," said Ram Papang from Lutijuri punjee in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila.

Despite being independent, there are many challenges faced by around 40,000 Khasi women living in the



PHOTO: STAR

division, said Flora Bably Talang, general secretary of Kubraj, an inter-punjee development organisation.

"Khasi women mostly sell betel leaves to Bengali buyers visiting their villages although they can get better profits if

they directly go to the local markets to sell their produce. Though some Khasi women visit Sylhet's Jaintapur market, the ones in Moulvibazar often prefer selling the produce to local wholesale traders and tourists for lesser prices as

they are often maltreated by market syndicates," she added.

Flora claimed that Khasi women often face gender-based discrimination. Besides, it's a constant struggle for them to keep their gardens safe from miscreants who often steal their crops or damage them, said Flora.

Khasi sellers get around Tk 800-1,000 for a bundle of 2,880 leaves if they make the sales from home. However, the same bundle is sold for Tk 2,000-2,200 in the local bazars, mentioned Saju Marchiang, a cultivator from

According to the Khasi Social Council, betel leaf cultivation is a major means of livelihood for 13 Khasi punjees – three in Habiganj and 65 in Moulvibazar.

Lawachhara punjee.

"Despite working hard, we have to sell the leaves from homes for less than half the market prices," he said.

Furthermore, inadequate rains during dry seasons and intermittent

floods in the area during monsoons also sometimes damage the crop, he added.

Last year, key betel leaf markets in Sylhet and Sunamganj faced prolonged flooding that caused massive problems during harvest, he added.

"Inadequate rain can lead to cultivation delays, affecting the production volume. As cultivating betel leaves is the community's sole means of income, any fluctuation highly impacts them," said Gdision Pradhan Suchiang, president of Khasi Social Council and head of Magurchhara punjee.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent saw hundreds of Khasi women invested in betel plantations – plucking, cleaning and packing them. While some said they would sell off their produce to local markets, others were adamant.

Contacted, Musharraf Hussain Khan, additional director of Department of Agriculture Extension in Sylhet, said betel leaf farming is more profitable in the region than many other crops if correctly produced.

As the crop is not recognised as a priority crop, DAE has limitations when it comes to experimenting with its farming techniques and managing crisis situations, he added.

Cop dies after being hit by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A police constable died after being hit by a local train at Piyarpur railway station in Jamalpur Sadar upazila yesterday.

Shariful Islam, 46, was a police constable, working in Mymensingh police line.

Golzarg Hossain, OC of Jamalpur Railway Police Station (GRP) said Chittagong-bound Six down train hit Shariful while he was crossing the Piyarpur Railway Station, leaving him critically injured.

Later, the locals took him to Jamalpur General Hospital. He was declared dead by the on duty doctor there.

No complaint was filed in this regard. The body was handed over to the family, police said.

Casualties caused by train accidents are common in Bangladesh.

‘Will contest together as far as possible’

India’s opposition bloc passes resolution to fight 2024 polls

NDTV ONLINE

The opposition’s INDIA alliance will contest the 2024 Lok Sabha election “together as far as possible”, the bloc said yesterday, the final day of its meeting in Mumbai.

The wording of the INDIA alliance’s resolution, however, has raised eyebrows and spawned questions, specifically of the kind the grouping was meant to answer - just how united is the opposition as it bids to prevent Prime Minister Narendra Modi claiming an unprecedented third term.

The parties resolved to “coordinate respective communications and media strategies and campaigns with the theme “Judega Bharat, Jiteega



India” in different languages.

The resolution after INDIA’s third meeting also refers to seat-sharing arrangements, noting these will be “initiated immediately and concluded... in a collaborative spirit of give-and-take”.

The mega opposition meet - hailed by its members as the definitive weapon with which to take on the Bharatiya Janata Party - concluded with the release of resolutions, and some drama after ex-Congress leader Kapil Sibal made a surprise entry.

Another moment of apparent discord was struck by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who opposed the political resolution because it included calls for a caste-based census. Bihar’s ruling Janata Dal (United) and Rashtriya Janata Dal, as well as Samajwadi Party from Uttar Pradesh, backed the inclusion of caste census in the resolution.

In more positive news though, the alliance announced a 14-member cross party “coordination committee” to work out issues and challenges like a possible Common Minimum Programme and the thorny problem of seat-sharing across the country.



First graders sing national anthem during a ceremony to mark the start of the new school year, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

G20 SUMMIT IN NEW DELHI

Russia to block declaration if its views ignored: FM

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia will block the final declaration of this month’s G20 summit unless it reflects Moscow’s position on Ukraine and other crises, leaving participants to issue a non-binding or partial communique, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday.

Lavrov, who has served as President Vladimir Putin’s foreign minister since 2004, is due to represent Russia at the September 9-10 meeting of the Group of 20 leading industrialised and developing countries in New Delhi.

Putin is not known to have travelled abroad since the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for him in March on suspicion of war crimes in Ukraine.

“There will be no general declaration on behalf of all members if our position is not reflected,” Lavrov told students at the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International



Relations.

The Kremlin casts the Ukraine war, which began when Russia invaded in February 2022, as an existential battle with an arrogant West that Putin says wants to dismantle Russia and take control of its vast natural resources.

The West denies any such intentions but says it wants Ukraine to defeat Russia on the battlefield and has imposed several rounds of sweeping economic sanctions in response to the invasion, which Russia calls a “special military operation”.

Other leading powers such as China, India and Brazil have called for peace but also reserved

the right to determine their own relationship with Moscow. China has accused the West of fanning the war by supplying Ukraine with weapons.

Lavrov said the West had raised Ukraine in meetings preparing for the summit, to which Russia had replied that “the issue is closed for us”.

He accused the West of undermining international institutions by pushing its own agenda and suggested that, if consensus could not be reached at the G20 meeting, a non-binding communique could be issued by the G20 presidency.

“Another option is to adopt a document that focuses on specific decisions in the sphere of G20 competences, and let everyone say the rest on their own behalf,” Lavrov said.

About 130,000 security officers will be deployed as India hosts the world’s most powerful leaders at the summit, a showcase for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the country’s growing presence on the world stage.

SUICIDE BLAST

Nine soldiers killed in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Nine soldiers were killed in a restive western region of Pakistan on Thursday after a suicide bomber rammed his motorbike into their military convoy and detonated, army and officials said.

Pakistan has witnessed a dramatic uptick in militancy since the Taliban returned to power in neighbouring Afghanistan two years ago, with attacks spiking along border regions.

“The suicide bomber was riding a motorcycle and he rammed his bike into a truck in a military convoy,” provincial minister Feroze Jamal Shah said.

The army said a further five soldiers were injured in the attack near the town of Jani Khel, however Shah put the figure at 20.

Thai king cuts ex-PM’s jail term to one year: govt

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand’s jailed former premier Thaksin Shinawatra had his prison sentence cut from eight years to one by the king yesterday, just days after he returned from 15 years in exile. The move came a day after the billionaire ex-prime minister, 74, applied for a royal pardon over graft and abuse of office convictions amid widespread speculation about a backroom deal to allow him clemency. Thaksin, twice elected PM and ousted in a 2006 military coup, was sent to prison last week immediately after returning to the kingdom for the first time since 2008. The partial pardon from King Maha Vajiralongkorn was confirmed by the official Royal Gazette, with the announcement pointing to his service to the country as prime minister. “He is loyal to the institution of monarchy. When prosecuted, he respected the justice system,” the statement said, noting that Thaksin also suffers numerous health problems. “His Majesty the King has granted him amnesty and reduced the sentence on Thaksin Shinawatra, the prisoner, to one year in prison, so that he could use his expertise and experience to develop the country further.” Thaksin is one of the most influential but divisive figures in modern Thai history.

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

Syrians rally in south against President Assad

REUTERS, Beirut

Hundreds gathered in southern Syria yesterday urging President Bashar al-Assad to step down, capping nearly two weeks of demonstrations that erupted over poor living conditions but have spiralled into renewed calls for political change. “Bashar out, Syria free!” shouted a large crowd in the southern Druze city of Sweida. “Syria is not a farm, we are not sheep,” read another poster. Syria is in a deep economic crisis that saw its currency plunge to a record 15,500 Syrian pounds to the dollar last month in a rapidly accelerating free-fall. It traded at 47 pounds to the dollar at the start of the conflict 12 years ago. Demonstrations broke out in Sweida in August over the removal of fuel subsidies. Home province of most of Syria’s Druze community, Sweida remained in government hands throughout the war and was largely spared the violence seen elsewhere. Open criticism of the government remained rare in the areas it controls but as the economic situation grew worse, the discontent has gone public. Yesterday’s turnout was large despite apparent divisions within the Druze leadership over the demonstrations. Some Druze sheikhs have criticized protesters’ calls for Assad to step down and say that any improvement to the socioeconomic situation must come through dialogue.

Global leaders’ requests

FROM PAGE 12

information officer.

On August 28, the global leaders and Nobel laureates, including former US president Barack Obama, in the open letter expressed concern about the safety of Yunus, stating that he has recently been targeted by what they believe is continuous judicial harassment.

They urged the prime minister to immediately suspend the judicial proceedings against him.

The foreign ministry said the letter is “marked by obvious gap of information and amounts to an affront to Bangladesh’s independent judicial system”.

“It comes as a surprise to the government that the signatories to the letter already reached their own conclusion about the merit of the sub-judice cases as well as the outcome of the judicial proceedings.”

The signatories have also recommended an alternative process of reviewing the charges against Yunus and his aides in a manner that is incompatible with Bangladesh’s established judicial system, the statement said.

It said the Anti-Corruption Commission had filed one such case under specific provisions of the Bangladesh Penal Code and Anti-Money Laundering Act- 2012 based on investigations concerning allegations of misappropriation of profits owed to the workers and employees of Grameen Telecom Ltd.

An ACC investigation found that Yunus, chairman of Grameen Telecom, along with its managing director and other board members “forged settlement agreement to misappropriate and illicitly transfer Tk252 million”, the foreign ministry said.

Further, the Department of Inspection of Factories and Establishments, Dhaka had filed a case under Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 for multiple breaches, including for not setting up Workers’ Contributory Fund and Welfare Fund as well as for not depositing 5 percent

of net profits to the workers’ welfare funds concerned since 2006, it added.

After losing a tax evasion case in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, Yunus filed a petition with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court which rejected the petition. Yunus then paid the overdue tax amount to the National Board of Revenue. A few more tax evasion cases against him are pending trial now, the statement said.

In the cases of depriving the workers of their rightful profit, Yunus moved the highest court on two occasions. The highest court passed judgments affirming that the first case had been properly initiated, and the framing of charges in the second case was legal and correct, it added.

The foreign ministry said this was not the first time that Yunus and his aides resorted to international lobbying over their alleged or proven violation of law. He had decided to sue the government for terminating his contract as the Grameen Bank MD even though he was past the retirement age stipulated in the Grameen Bank Service Rules, 1993.

“...Having evaded corporate and income taxes and having deprived workers over the years, Dr Yunus, a salaried employee of Grameen Bank, invested large sums of supposedly misappropriated and laundered money in commercial ventures.”

The statement said the allegations of persecution or harassment seem to follow a pattern that stems from a “victim mentality using human rights and democracy as an expedient cover”.

It said the signatories to the letter would be well advised to counsel Dr Yunus to operate within the bounds of law instead of making unjustified insinuations about Bangladesh’s democratic and electoral processes.

“The government would like to reiterate that no amount of veiled threats under the pretext of promoting democracy and human rights would detract the people of Bangladesh from upholding the rule of law,” the ministry said.

With this honour, comes more responsibility

FROM PAGE 2

What we did was, the children who used to beg or sell things on the road, we took them to the Wonderland park. On the other hand, we involved children who had more privileged backgrounds to sell things on the street. We did this in order to give them a feel of street-dwelling children’s lives. It started from there. When we gave flowers to people, they gave us money and told us that we were doing a good job. However, we didn’t have the intention to collect money like that. When we saw that people were giving us money, we started our second school. This is how the whole initiative acquired organic growth.

DS: Do the students who get involved with JAAGO Foundation get any benefit in going abroad for studies?

KR: Definitely. For the last five to seven years, universities in other countries have been considering co-curricular activities as a very important aspect. When they consider someone, they look at the result, and then they ask “what else did he/she do?”. A common thought is, “If we award you a scholarship, what

will you do when you go back to your country?” We have a relatively higher level of acceptance in four countries, as we do more work with them. The countries are the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia. Many of those, who want to go to these countries, come to us to do internships or volunteer work. In particular, many individuals are utilising the gap they get after finishing the SSC examination. Not only for scholarships or studying abroad, those who do the internship during their school life also get a feel of the real world which helps them in deciding careers and relevant fields of study.

AS Krishnan could not be reached as he had been abroad.

Talking about the issues, BERC chairman Nurul Amin said, “They [the two companies] are yet to respond to the show-cause notices.”

“We will take action against them as per rule,” he said, adding that they fix the dollar rate based on the rate the companies provide at the meetings.

“All the charges for transportation and taxes are factored in calculating the pricing of the LPG. Yet we don’t understand why they don’t follow it. It’s an ethical issue.”

Asked about the market monitoring, he said, “We need to depend on the consumers’ rights protection directorate and the district administration as we have no executive power. We found that in some areas the fixed rate is not being followed.”

Prof M Shamsul Alam, energy expert and vice president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said the businesses in this sector have a lot of clout, with which they control the market.

“They manipulate the market sometimes by reducing imports, sometimes by stocking excess inventory,” he added.

As a quasi-judicial body, the BERC can take necessary action against

the companies, he said. After a long judicial fight, the pricing authority was awarded to the BERC by the high court in 2020. “They are obliged to ensure the energy justice for consumers. They should force the companies to sell the product at a fixed price.”

Besides, he added, the consumers should come forward to get LPG at a fixed rate. “They should collect the money receipts from the retailers and file complaints at the BERC.”

India

FROM PAGE 12

Pakistan got their campaign off to a solid start with a whopping 238-run win against Nepal on Wednesday.

World number one batter Babar Azam and all-rounder Iftikhar Ahmed scored punishing hundreds as Pakistan posted 342 for six, and later leg-spinner Shadab Khan took four wickets for 27 runs as Nepal were bowled out for 104 in 23.4 overs.

Even though Pakistan are the technical hosts of the tournament, it is being co-hosted by Sri Lanka due to ongoing political issues between India and Pakistan.

However, the excitement surrounding the match could be spoiled due to weather conditions, with forecasts suggesting there could be moderate to heavy rain in Kandy over the weekend.

Govt-fixed prices exist only on paper

FROM PAGE 12

Contacted, Fresh LP Gas Chief Operating Officer Mohammed Nurul Alam said they were following the BERC rate.

“We can control the distributors, but we have no control over the retailers who are increasing the price,” he said.

Asked whether they were selling at a higher rate to the distributors, he said they had reduced the commissions of distributors to keep prices on a par with the BERC rate, adding that they were not responsible for the commission the distributors were taking beyond the fixed price.

Alam, however, highlighted the issue of devaluation of taka against dollar as a major problem in opening LCs.

“The BERC fixes the dollar rate at Tk 111 but we are spending Tk 116 per dollar to open LCs. That’s why we have reduced the volume of our import,” Alam claimed.

Jakaria Jalal, head of division at another importing company Basundhara LP Gas Ltd, said they had reduced LPG import for around 30 percent due to some problems related to the opening of LCs.

This newspaper has collected a cash memo given to a distributor by another LPG importer Beximco LPG. The memo shows a 12-kg cylinder was sold for Tk 285 more and a 20-kg one

The enigmatic TAWSIF

AKHLAKUR RAHMAN

Starting his career with advertisements, Tawsif Mahbub stepped into limelight with the Adnan Al Rajeev directorial telefiction *@18: All Time Dourer Upor* in 2012.

"Before pursuing acting, I used to be a bassist and manager of my musical band Manager. However, things changed when I met Rajeev, who gave me my first break," said the actor, who later went on to become a rather popular face on television.

Since then, Tawsif has been featured in numerous tele-fictions, gaining praise for his performances in projects, such as *Kajoler Dinratri*, *Deyal*, and *The Ring* -- productions directed by *Punorjonmo* famed director Vicky Zahed.

"Vicky was actually looking to cast me in his project *Moments*, but we couldn't connect to each other. However, I called him after I saw the production, and that's how the journey started," reminisced Tawsif.

Of his collaborations with Vicky, one production that still remains in the actor's memories is *Shobdo Prem*, where he portrayed the character of a socially-awkward boy.

"My role in the production was in complete contrast to my real-life persona. Being socially active, it was quite challenging for me to play an introvert," mentioned Tawsif.

Giving his best, Tawsif soon opted for method acting for this role.

"I didn't start off as a theatre artiste. Thus, acting was not easy for me initially, as I lacked both knowledge and experience. However, I learned method acting by watching films mostly, and it worked out quite marvelously."

On his free time, he loves to spend time with his family, who has been a great support to him in his journey.

"My mother and wife have always been by my side -- be it as my manager or my confidante, a n d

that's a blessing," shared Tawsif.

While streaming sites are trending, Tawsif is yet to dribble in the field.

Asked about his thoughts on most artistes transnioning from TV to OTT platforms, he shared, "A vacuum has been created in the tele-arena since most of the bigshots are gearing up for web productions and silver screens."

The actor further teased, "At the moment, it's like scoring goals in an empty field for me."

While Tawsif does look forward to exploring streaming platforms and dreams of making it to the global stage, his current focus is solely on tele-productions.

However, there have been talks regarding his collaboration with Shihab Shaheen in the web-series *Baba Someone Following Me*.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



A way farer's travelogue
September 2-19 | 4-8 pm
Kalakendra, Lalmatia



Break The Circle - Season XI
September 7-10 | 3-10 pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy,
Segun Bagicha



Punnaho (23rd show)
September 8 | 7.30 pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy,
Segun Bagicha



The Myth Bridge Reading
September 9 | 5-8 pm
Bookworm Bangladesh, Gulshan 2

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
The Great Seduction

Hoichoi
Mr Kolketa

Disney+
Aakhri Sach

Deepto Play
Apolap

Amazon Prime
Gen V

STYLE STATEMENT Selena Gomez

In the promo shoot of her latest song, *Single Soon*, pop sensation Selena Gomez dazzled in an orange ensemble. The actress-musician paired her bright orange corset top with an ombré leather jacket.

The sleeves of the jacket finished at a bright fiery red while the collars boasted a bright Yam toned shade. Selena kept the look minimal with a diamond chain and large gold hoops, tied together with her sleek two-part hairstyle.



WHAT'S PLAYING

Hozier- Francesca

Known for his breakout hit *Take Me to Church*, Hozier returns with *Francesca*, one of the debut singles from his latest album *Unreal Unearth*.

Francesca narrates the story of a woman who finds herself in the second circle of Dante's Hell as punishment for crimes of adultery with her lover. The track's allure lies in its

atmospheric quality, with a seductive guitar melody harmonising flawlessly with Hozier's soulful vocals. With soaring crescendos and passion dripping from every verse, the song almost feels overwhelming at points.

With closing line -- "Heaven is not fit to house a love like you and I", the track presents a poignant glimpse into themes of romantic obsession and the enduring power of love.

TV TALKIES

DICKINSON

In this 2019 dramedy, the original 'sad girl' and legendary poet Emily Dickinson comes alive in a satirical and witty re-enactment of her early life. Based loosely, the series explores her relationship with her family and her close companion, Sue Gilbert.

The show finds Emily Dickinson (Hailee Steinfeld) in the 1850s as she struggles to follow her dreams of becoming a poet at a time when female writers were frowned upon. The show proves to be right up *Bridgerton* and *The Great* fans' alley, with wall breaking commentaries and unique portrayals of multidimensional relationships.

With almost accurate period costumes and meta-commentary, the show offers reprieve in the sweltering heat of late August.



Independent judiciary crucial for democracy

It is the right of every Bangladeshi to have access to an impartial justice system

In his farewell speech on Thursday, outgoing Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique spoke of his belief that a strong and independent judiciary is indispensable to a strong democratic system. He argued that the courts should be kept at a safe distance from political ideologies, and warned against outside influences over the judicial process, saying, “It cannot be said that the state and the judiciary are operating in the right way if the laws crush the poor and the rich crush the laws.”

We wholeheartedly agree with these comments, and appreciate his acknowledgment that all is not well in our legal system. However, his words would have been better received had they been followed up with the necessary actions during his term. We cannot in good conscience argue that enough has been done to ensure the independence and impartiality of our legal process.

Article 22 of the constitution says that the state shall ensure the separation of the judiciary from the executive organs of the state. All citizens are equal in front of an independent judiciary, with the right to receive justice for wrongdoings committed against them, even and especially if they are committed by those in or connected to the state. Yet, more and more, we see our legal system being used to advance questionable agendas instead of the rule of law. The continuing denial of bail to harass journalists, rights defenders and even ordinary teenagers accused under the draconian Digital Security Act (DSA) is an example of this.

Incredibly long delays at court, lack of protection for witnesses, outdated legal processes, massive case backlogs, the corruption that has infiltrated our institutions including the law enforcement agencies, and the oversized influence of rich and powerful actors – all of these and more continue to strike at the integrity of our legal system. The terrifying end result of this can only be a loss of faith in justice and the rule of law.

With elections just around the corner, it is now even more imperative for the state to demonstrate its commitment to an efficient legal system, without which we cannot have a functional democracy. At the same time, we urge all the legal actors to uphold their loyalty to the constitution and the rule of law and free themselves from outside influences. Only a fully independent judiciary can fulfil its responsibility as the heart of a people's republic and the protector of every citizen's human rights.

Ensure inspection at all RMG factories

CPD findings a cause for concern for workers' safety

We are gravely concerned to learn that a significant number of ready-made garment (RMG) factories in the country are operating without any kind of safety inspection mechanism. According to the latest findings of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), 856 RMG factories out of a total of 3,752 – nearly 23 percent – are operating outside the purview of the safety inspection bodies that are currently active in Bangladesh. After suffering so many casualties caused by workplace negligence in our RMG sector over the years, this revelation not only comes as a shock, but it also raises the question as to whether workers' safety is losing its due priority in this sector.

According to our report, the uninspected factories are exporting apparel products mainly to non-traditional markets – i.e. not to the United States or the European Union, two biggest markets of Bangladeshi RMG products – through subcontracting. We want to know why and how these factories managed to avoid regular inspections, and who will take responsibility if and when a disaster takes place.

We are also alarmed by the finding that the factories that are being inspected are not being monitored properly either. RMG workers' safety – or the shocking lack thereof – in Bangladesh grabbed global attention after the tragic Rana Plaza collapse in 2013. Since then, through a number of initiatives, our RMG sector made remarkable progress in improving workplace safety, but it is evident that it still lacks sufficient monitoring capacity to look after all the factories. Moreover, there are issues with the way the existing monitoring bodies conduct factory inspections. The number of inspections by the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) in the RMG sector, for example, decreased by almost 43 percent in FY2022, compared to FY2021, with no clear indication as to why the number declined so steeply. Then there are allegations of lack of coordination between the inspection bodies and other government agencies, lack of reliable data, underreporting of incidents, etc.

This is simply unacceptable. Our RMG sector has grown on the back of its workers, whose blood, sweat and tears have earned us billions of dollars. The least we can do is ensure that their safety is guaranteed through timely and thorough inspections of their factories. Given the recent rise in workplace accidents and deaths in our factories, it is more crucial now than ever that all the shortcomings and inefficiencies are sorted out promptly and efficiently, and the inspection bodies are fully equipped to ensure workplace safety in all our RMG factories.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Remove garbage from Rampura canal

The Rampura canal has been a garbage dump for as long as I can remember. Despite there being a garbage station at the entrance of Banasree, all kinds of waste stay piled up beside the canal. When will the authorities address this matter?

Shajed Majumder
Banasree, Dhaka

What history tells us about election-time government



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

KALLOL MUSTAFA

The joint declaration made by the three political alliances on November 19, 1990, more than 32 years ago, noted, “Every past election held under this government has been marred by vote theft, vote-rigging, encroachment of polling stations, looting of ballot boxes, even blatant vote robbery, media coup, and finally publishing pre-determined results through voterless elections. In this situation, no free and fair election is possible under this government.” The statement seems to be taken right from the leaflet of the current opposition parties demanding free and fair election.

That year, at the final stage of the anti-dictatorship movement, the Awami League-led eight-party alliance, BNP-led seven-party alliance, and leftist five-party alliance unitedly expressed the demands and goals of the movement in that declaration, which included free and fair elections, making all state media including radio and television independent and autonomous organisations, ensuring free campaigning opportunities for all competing political parties, protection of fundamental rights of the people, ensuring the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, and repealing all laws contrary to fundamental rights.

Have any of these demands and goals been achieved after more than three decades? If not, is it because of the failure, betrayal or ideological crisis of the political forces that came to power later? Or is it because the kind of change needed in the democratic transformation of Bangladesh was not fully captured in the declaration? Or both?

Fundamentally, these democratic aspirations are in direct conflict with the interests of powerful groups represented by the political forces that have ruled Bangladesh for decades. The ruling political groups and economic elites are mutually dependent on each other. Democratic process, accountability, independent media, judiciary and election system are dangerous for these booty capitalists. That is why, under the movement's pressure, the alliances made various promises but did not build institutional systems to establish the values after coming to power, because these would act as barriers to their own irregularity, corruption and looting.

In the mass movements of the 80s, in addition to the demands for free and fair elections, economic and



Protest for democracy in Dhaka on November 10, 1987.

SOURCE: DINU ALAM/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

political rights of students, workers, farmers, the poor and the middle class were also in discussion. But when the movements came to a stage where everything turned into a “one-point demand,” other crucial goals went out of focus. And although the joint declaration recognised the desire for democratic and constitutional rule, the reforms necessary for enactment were not addressed. For example, reform of Article 70 of the constitution, which prohibits a member of parliament from voting against the party, did not gain importance. In this way, the safeguards through which the economic and political foundation of booty capitalism could be weakened were not installed.

The result – the military dictatorship collapsed, but the “permanent democratic system and way of life” that the joint declaration had aspired towards was not realised. Rather, it gave rise to electoral authoritarianism over time. Even though every element of a democratic system – like parliament, election commission, electoral law, voters' list, and regular elections – is present formally, in practice, there is no guarantee of free and fair elections and democratic accountability.

The political programmes of opposition parties are not banned formally, but all kinds of informal obstacles are created through their localities to prevent them from carrying out regular political activities, and fictitious cases are used to harass them. Leaders, activists and supporters face various obstacles while going to the announced meeting place of opposition parties. Law enforcers set up checkpoints at entry points leading to the rally ground. Social media apps, call lists, SMS and photo galleries of people's phones are searched to identify supporters of opposition party workers. Sometimes, public transport is barred from entering the city where a political programme is set to be held; this is done through law enforcers or transport owners and labour unions affiliated with the ruling party. To implement this, transport organisations call a strike with various demands (undemocratic use of democratic tools). To prevent the activists and supporters from staying near the rally ground in advance, law enforcers carry out special raids and arrests in nearby hotels and messes.

It makes no sense to expect neutrality on election day from a government that conducts anti-democratic activities throughout the year using its institutions. The country's public administration, law enforcement agencies, judiciary and the Election Commission have all

their localities to prevent them from carrying out regular political activities, and fictitious cases are used to harass them.

Leaders, activists and supporters face various obstacles while going to the announced meeting place of opposition parties. Law enforcers set up checkpoints at entry points leading to the rally ground. Social media apps, call lists, SMS and photo galleries of people's phones are searched to identify supporters of opposition party workers. Sometimes, public transport is barred from entering the city where a political programme is set to be held; this is done through law enforcers or transport owners and labour unions affiliated with the ruling party. To implement this, transport organisations call a strike with various demands (undemocratic use of democratic tools). To prevent the activists and supporters from staying near the rally ground in advance, law enforcers carry out special raids and arrests in nearby hotels and messes.

It makes no sense to expect neutrality on election day from a government that conducts anti-democratic activities throughout the year using its institutions. The country's public administration, law enforcement agencies, judiciary and the Election Commission have all

and fair elections are held under the ruling government, institutions have the structure and culture to work independently.

So first, we need to acknowledge this grim reality, arrange several more elections under a non-partisan government, and while doing so, take necessary steps to reform the constitution, dismantle the institutions' yoke to partisanship, ensure freedom of press and expression, and uproot the monopolistic political power structure based on a predatory economy. If we can successfully accomplish these tasks, the necessity to arrange elections under a separate system will automatically disappear. Failure to do so will perpetuate the unaccountable power structure. If a government can stay in power disregarding public opinion, then that government protects vested interests instead of public ones. As a result, the country's economy falls into a crisis and people's livelihoods are disrupted. So, the cart cannot be put before the horse: the institutions have to be fixed first, and then the provision of a non-partisan system can be removed. The consequences of abolishing the system before fixing democratic institutions have become clear in the last two controversial national elections. Any repetition of this will be disastrous for the country.

Climate change and women's deteriorating mental health



Monira Sharmin
is a research student under the
Postgraduate Programme in Disaster
Management (PPDM) at Brunel
University. She can be reached at
monirasharmin111@gmail.com.

MONIRA SHARMIN

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many of us came face to face with the psychological crisis it brought on. The countless deaths, the burial of acquaintances and loved ones left a scar on many people's minds. Everyone was stranded at home; there was no going to the school or office, and life became nerve-racking. However, scores of people started dealing with such psychological distress long ago, due to natural disasters like cyclones and floods.

It has now been widely agreed upon that climate change is one of the most prominent health hazards in the world. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirms that there is no doubt that climate change affects mental health, besides the effects it has on the frequency of heatwaves and proliferation of diseases like Covid-19 and dengue. The frequency and magnitude of weather-related extremes continue to rise every year. More people are seeing their homes and

livelihoods getting damaged, and many are witnessing the loss of their loved ones. These all have persistent impacts on mental health.

Evidently, climate change has severe repercussions regardless of race, ethnicity, sex or income level, but its consequences are not gender-neutral. Due to their economic position in family and society, women are always more vulnerable during disasters than men.

Women have scant access to property, money, education, healthcare, and decision-making opportunities. And so they are more susceptible to suffering from disasters brought on by the climate. Eco-anxiety is defined as an unrelenting dread of environmental catastrophe. This dread emerges when a person knows the seemingly irrevocable effects of climate change and becomes anxious about one's future as well as that of the later generations. Women in the coastal region are the worst sufferers of this condition.

In 2007, weeks after Cyclone Sidr, ActionAid conducted a research which revealed that 25 percent of the 750 survivors had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), with 16 percent also having somatoform disorder (persistent abdominal pain, headaches, joint pain, poor concentration, etc). Fifteen percent had anxiety disorders and 18 percent had significant depression. The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that post-disaster health issues might vary from minor distress to severe mental health conditions. In Bangladesh, between 20-40 percent of those impacted experience mild psychological anguish, and between 50-60 percent face moderate to severe psychological distress.

Take the case of Moriyam Begum for example. The 45-year-old single mother of two and resident of Burigoalini union, has been collecting shrimp fries from *gher* (enclosures) and rivers for more than eight years. Before that, she was a labourer in a crop field nearby. Due to frequent cyclones and changing climate patterns, the field got contaminated with saline water, which made her unemployed. “Following Cyclone Aila, I had no place for shelter after losing my house, possessions, and money. I again started from zero for the sake of my sons. My husband moved to Dhaka in search of work since all the fields were barren, and never returned.” She is now plagued with a reproductive illness as a result of spending at least

five to six hours a day immersed in brackish water. Despite knowing about the health threats, she looked unwilling to leave this work.

According to the findings of a UNDP survey, women are more adversely impacted by natural disasters than men due to gender-based roles and responsibilities. Women who are responsible for taking care of their families confront additional issues, including higher workloads, water scarcity, food insecurity, and social insecurity, as many of their husbands move to the cities to earn a living. These additional social and cultural hurdles, induced by climate change, negatively affect mental health.

SAJJIDA Foundation carried out pilot research in Gabura and Mongla, two southwestern areas that are frequently prone to natural catastrophes like cyclones, storms, floods and waterlogging. When asked whether natural disasters and climate change affect people's mental health, 88 percent of respondents said yes.

Therefore, it is imperative that gender-responsive and women-friendly approaches are adopted for the national disaster risk reduction plan. Facilitating skill development programmes may also significantly contribute to reducing social insecurity among women. Finally, it is crucial to include women's mental health initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns in development projects focusing on coastal areas.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

This road in Bandarban's Thanchi upazila collapsed thanks to a landslide triggered by heavy rains in early August.

What message does the Bandarban flood give us?



Pavel Partha,
an ecology and biodiversity conservation
researcher, is director at Bangladesh
Resource Centre for Indigenous
Knowledge (BARCI). He can be reached
at animistbangla@gmail.com.

PAVEL PARTHA

During the monsoon season in Bangladesh, floods are a usual occurrence in the low-lying areas of northern and northeastern parts of the country. But this year, we witnessed something unusual: the highest parts of the country got inundated during heavy rains. It was so bad that communication among Bandarban's Ruma, Thanchi, Alikadam, Rowangchhari upazilas was snapped, and the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway was submerged. In Bandarban, high-rise buildings got flooded, landslides destroyed *jhum* fields, and mountain runoff ruined croplands on the banks of rivers and streams.

The Bandarban town is surrounded by mountains; when it rains during monsoon, the rainwater flows through the town via streams into the Sangu River. This year, however, the streams could not hold the excess rainwater from days of heavy downpour, which is why the town was flooded.

But why couldn't the streams hold the excess rainwater like before?

Much like Dhaka, Bandarban's development has also been unplanned and not aligned with the local ecosystem. Unplanned infrastructural development has taken place by changing the ecological balance of soil and by cutting hills indiscriminately. Many streams and drains have gotten blocked as a result, which means the natural water flow out of the town is obstructed. The cruel practice of neoliberal profit-driven development is what has caused the flood in Bandarban.

This year's flood and prolonged waterlogging was the worst case of such natural calamity that Bandarban has seen in years. At least 14 people were reportedly killed by landslides and drowning, as of August 9. The amount of loss in terms of livestock and wildlife deaths is anyone's guess. Media coverage of the flood was less than adequate as power and internet connections in Bandarban were disrupted; the plight of Bandarban's people did not get as much attention as those in Sylhet-Sunamganj areas.

It is important to understand the cautionary message that the Bandarban flood sends out. Discussions on this issue require looking into the region's ecosystem, local knowledge of and practices to mitigate natural disasters, and the environmental issues. If the conflict between the local ecology and developmental politics is not resolved, crises like this will intensify in the future.

Tuikling mangmo and the fear of 'Rina'
The Hangor Canal, which the local Mro community calls *Hank-O*, flows through Tongkaboty union in Bandarban Sadar upazila, into the Tongkaboty Canal. On the slopes of its banks, local Indigenous communities grow paddy and seasonal vegetables. During the spell of heavy rain in early August, the overflow of water from the canal flooded the crop beds, destroying the harvest. Croplands in the plainland got washed away too. Landslides caused by constant rain destroyed *jhum*

croplands on the hills. Several hilly villages suffered extensive damage. Local Mros said this crisis surpassed even the suffering during the height of Covid pandemic. This was the worst ecological crisis in the hills since the 2007 "rat flood" (*Kaoingkyang/Kaopaokong* in Mro language), which had created a severe food shortage.

In the Mro language, seasonal floods are called *tuilot*. When streams, canals and rivers swell up during monsoon rains and overflow their banks, flooding the surrounding areas, it is called *tuilot*. But this year's flood was not *tuilot*; to the Mros, it was *tuikling mangmo* – the kind of flood that causes lasting damage to the environment and community. Floods like *tuikling mangmo* causes *tuitungung*, or waterlogging. Mro elders in



A vast area of cropland went under water after heavy rainfall in Bandarban last month.

PHOTO: STAR

dangerous waste – we took them all to the hills. But we never tried to learn the local philosophy and practice of ecology and diversity. Streams, falls, rivers are being killed due to rampant stone extraction. And because of that, these rivers and streams are getting filled up with soil and sediment deposits. The devastating flood right when the local communities started recovering from the effects of the pandemic has dragged them back to square one.

Hills disappearing

Bandarban is home to a number of hills in the country. Numerous streams and falls in the region have originated from these hills. Rampant hill-cutting has disrupted the natural flow of these water bodies, not to mention it raised the frequency of landslides. It is somewhat evident that it is not the local communities, but the Bangalees coming from outside the region, driven by their greed for profits and power, who are mainly involved in hill-cutting. Any hill that has a slope of more than 45 degrees is at risk of landslides. In the Chittagong Hill Tract area as well as in Cox's Bazar, some hills have been cut so steeply that they have a 90-degree slope.

Ecosystem at the hills is in a fragile state. Understanding and learning the Indigenous knowledge of the environment is of utmost importance to protect the hills. To stop hill-cutting and landslides, local environmental knowledge must be incorporated into the country's development plan.

Don't let Bandarban become another Kaptai

In the 60s, hundreds of thousands of people lost their homes due to the Kaptai hydroelectric plant project in Rangamati. That terrible loss left a permanent scar on the collective memory of the Chakma community there. This year's Bandarban flood brought back that painful memory for many. This year's flood has reminded us once again that our development journey in the hills is not aligned with the local ecosystem and cultural diversity. Development activities in the hill areas must be designed in a way that they don't disrupt or harm the natural and cultural diversity. To achieve that, we must learn and adopt local knowledge of the hills' environment, ecosystem, resilient practices, and philosophy. Or else, Bandarban will keep disappearing under floodwater.

Translated from Bangla by Sumaiya Binte Shams.

Witnessing the price hike parody

BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

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

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

As usual, Dhaka is at a standstill with motorcyclists plugging every possible gap between cars and buses, pedestrians attempting to pass through the thick conglomeration of automated mass, and hawkers and beggars pleading for attention to remind you of the eternal drama of stop and go. At a short distance near the intersection stands an all-powerful traffic police officer who is presumably using his mobile phone to find out what's cooking at home. There are two major hospitals nearby. An ambulance is emitting a high-pitched, mechanical wail. Some hobnobs in SUVs with sheathed flag stands announce their presence with legally banned hydraulic hooters. The bosses are running late, so am I. Out here in this intersection, the police sergeant is the king, who is obviously oblivious to our needs. His men on the four corners will not yield unless they receive a signal from him. Stuck in this urban chaos, I witness the drama that is hidden in plain sight.

The characters are many. They come from all walks of life. Their presence is propelled by yet another never-ending gridlock of necessities and the elusive allure of opportunities. Why else would someone risk being in such heavy traffic? The man hours lost here at this traffic signal can be calculated in monetary terms. Feel free to Google if you want.

I catch sight of a man selling green coconuts outside a public hospital. Is it for a patient who needs to rehydrate to regain his strength following a mosquito bite that brought him to his knees? Oh, those pesky mosquitoes! They are so powerful that they can even make fools of those in power. Thank you, city fathers (and our brothers-from-other-fathers), for rearing them, caring for them, and creating awareness about them. Now I know which stripes to avoid. Just yesterday, I saw one of your PR campaigns featuring a line of white-hooded rickshaws with large dummy mosquitoes above them. The rickshaws marched with an annoying buzzing sound. Brilliant. I had tears in my eyes thinking my tax money was well-spent. This is way more subtle than the motorcades and street rallies with foggers, pesticide sprays, and loud music. I hope the mosquitoes will take note of such human efforts and die voluntarily.

But looking at the green coconut, or *dub*, as we call it, I missed a heartbeat. Isn't it ironic that our normal cardiac sounds come in pairs: lub-dub, lub-dub? Oh, I love *dub*, but my missed beat alerted me to the *labh* (profit) that the ruthless businessmen are making off the misfortune of a hapless mass. If I were a "*dub* poet" who used spoken words with reggae beats to make social and political commentary, I would have composed a poem now. But I am rendered speechless. I hear the price of a *dub*, a fruit that is abundant year-round, has doubled because doctors have prescribed fluids as part of a mosquito-inflicted dengue patient's diet. There is no poem that can portray the cruelty and inhumanity that we are witnessing.

Will we hear yet another "eggcellent" proposal to import *dub* in order to force the local market to lower their price? You have cried "import" too frequently to make the threat banal. Onions, green chillies, poultry, eggs, rice, edible oil, lentil beans and pulses, *dub* – what's next? For the local market operators, there are always new consumable

products from which to profit. Why are the hilsas we send to our cousins across the border less expensive than the ones that are sold in this country? The drama has so many subplots. Everyone knows that there is a foreign currency shortage. The threats of importation sound hollow. Where will you get the line of credit? Yet, the prime minister warned last year that there would be a shortage of essentials. She called for austerity measures in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war. Now that our big neighbours, from whom we traditionally import essentials, have banned or limited exports of certain items, what are the measures to stabilise the market? Where is the pep talk on food security when we need it?

The characters in the drama are then all abstract figures. Each represents a distinct strand. Together, they form a theatrical braiding of threads: the businessmen and traders are characterised by their insatiable appetite for profits, and the befuddled bureaucracy and the government they serve by their inefficiency in controlling the market and price hikes. If you allow me to say so, the antagonist in this drama is an elusive syndicate with whom even the commerce minister has to trade delicately.

The ordinary public is left with nothing but recipes and tips on preservation and conservation. There is a limit to the extent to which people with fixed incomes can tighten their budgets, postpone their desires or plans, and skip or compromise their meals. Every uptick in the price of essentials amplifies their struggles. The least they deserve is a bit of sensitivity and sympathy.

Meanwhile, the stock characters in this play are the ordinary public, who are left with nothing but recipes and tips on preservation and conservation. There is a limit to the extent to which people with fixed incomes can tighten their budgets, postpone their desires or plans, and skip or compromise their meals. Every uptick in the price of essentials amplifies their struggles. The least they deserve is a bit of sensitivity and sympathy.

The repeated performances of this ongoing drama played in open air have made all these characters well-known. We seem to know the guys, or their types, from Khatunganj to Nawabganj, who manipulate the kitchen market. We seem to know the types who punch their calculators to assess the export-import game and send money abroad. We seem to know the middlemen who rub their hands together in glee as they charge extra or make extortionary demands while goods are transferred and transported. They form a chorus whose members sing with "Tk" signs dancing in their eyes.

Oh, the phone call of the traffic sergeant has ended. We have been given the go-ahead to move. I need to rush to my class to make my salary *halal*. My curtain calls.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Mist
- 6 Basketball player
- 11 Deeply impressed
- 12 Higher than
- 13 Corrective action
- 15 Commercials
- 16 Gum mass
- 17 Verb for you
- 18 Some square dancers
- 20 Neptune's realm
- 21 Twisty fish
- 22 Witty remark
- 23 Meager
- 26 Accords
- 27 Possum of the comics
- 28 Arrest
- 29 Lifeboat need
- 30

Rejuvenation sites

- 34 Take advantage of
- 35 One, for Juan
- 36 In the past
- 37 Pedometer
- 40 Bother
- 41 Pollute
- 42 Vegas machines
- 43 Leopard features

K2

- 10 Parrots
- 14 Rank above viscount
- 19 Fallon's predecessor
- 22 Sticks with a needle
- 23 Husbands and wives
- 24 Like many resorts
- 25 Sign off on
- 26 Big dividends
- 28 Billionth: Prefix
- 30 Ventilation pipes
- 31 Cookout spot
- 32 Deal maker
- 33 Classifies
- 38 Light touch
- 39 Afternoon break

DOWN

- 1 Parish leader
- 2 Battery end
- 3 Brief rest
- 4 Possess
- 5 Share with followers
- 6 Deck makeup
- 7 Crunch targets
- 8 "You busy?"
- 9 Neighbor of

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



9-6

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



Afghan challenge awaits Tigers in Lahore

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh team were on their way to Lahore yesterday, looking to shake off their defeat against Sri Lanka following a bad day with the bat at Kandy in their Asia Cup opener on Thursday.

The Tigers now face the prospect of a must-win match against Afghanistan on Sunday.

It turned out to be a good toss to lose for the Lankans as the Tigers struggled against the two-paced wicket in their first Asia Cup game at Pallekele.

“Actually, the wicket is always good here but today that was not the case. But these things are not in our hands and we have to play our game well. We expected sporting wicket in this kind of big tournament,” Nazmul Hossain Shanto, who scored the bulk of the team’s 164-run total, told reporters after the game.

The toss may not ultimately play a hand tomorrow at the Gaddafi Stadium, where the Tigers last played an ODI back in the 2008 Asia Cup. The Tigers’ last tour to Pakistan saw them lose the T20I series in Lahore and the lone Test in Rawalpindi in 2020.

The average score for the last three games played at the stadium in Lahore is over 300 with Pakistan successfully chasing down Australia’s 348 for eight with six wickets to spare in the second ODI in 2022.

Shanto felt that they “could have batted better” against Sri Lanka, given that Bangladesh bowlers made their presence felt, picking up five Lankan wickets in defense of a low total.



The onus will be on the batting unit against Afghanistan even though the toss is not a big indicator of having the upper hand in Lahore. Out of 64 ODIs, the split was pretty balanced with 32 games won by teams batting first while 30 were won by teams bowling first.

Despite the plan being to score 250-260 as Shanto had put it, the Tigers fell way short of that score at Kandy. Hence, it would be more important to bat smarter rather than to bat for just 300-plus scores.

Bangladesh will not only have to win but also hope that other results go their way from the group stage. Their opponents Afghanistan had been able to acclimatise more with the conditions, having done their preparation camp in Pakistan.

Given the way mystery spinner Maheesh Theekshana and pacer Matheesha Pathirana dictated terms against Bangladesh in the first game, facing the likes of Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Ur Rahman of Afghanistan would not be an easy prospect. Pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi bagged eight wickets in the last ODI series Bangladesh played at home while Mujeeb and Rashid bagged five and four wickets each in the 2-1 series win.

“Both of our games are going to be tough. But focusing on the Bangladesh game first, we know that they’re going to be desperate to win, obviously, and it’s our job to match their intensity and also the desire to win,” Afghanistan head coach Jonathan Trott said yesterday at the press conference. “So, we all know that if we don’t come with that mindset, matching them, or better mentality and better skills, we’re going to be under pressure.”

The pressure will be felt more by the Tigers as they need to win their last group game to stay in the tournament. The defeat may have set the cat amongst the pigeons with talks of Liton Das’ return being discussed if Bangladesh make it into the Super Four despite the batter already being ruled out.



Fans with their bodies painted as national flags of India and Pakistan hold a cut-out of the Asia cup trophy in Ahmedabad on Friday, ahead of today’s marquee clash of the Asia Cup between the neighbours at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy.

PHOTO: AFP

India to use ‘experience’ to tackle Pak pace threat

AFP, Kandy

India skipper Rohit Sharma on Friday said his team’s experienced batters were unfazed by the threat of Pakistan’s fast bowlers, ahead of the arch-rivals’ blockbuster Asia Cup clash.

Pakistan boast of one of the world’s best pace attacks including Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, and Haris Rauf.

All three made a good start in the opener of the 50-over tournament, a prelude to the upcoming ODI World Cup in India.

Rohit’s side will play their opening match of the tournament against Pakistan on Saturday in Pallekele, the first of three potential clashes between the bitter rivals in Sri Lanka.

The captain praised the Pakistan quicks but said his team was ready for the challenge.

“We don’t have Shaheen, Naseem, and Rauf in the nets,” Rohit joked.

“So we practise with the bowlers that we have. But these three are quality bowlers and have performed well in the last few years.”

“Pakistan have always had quality bowlers,” he added. “Their strength, where they bowl and not bowl, we have seen all that. We will use our years of experience to play against them, as simple as that.”

India have a strong batting unit that includes Rohit, Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, and Hardik Pandya.

Pace ace Jasprit Bumrah has recently returned to the Indian attack after recovering from an injury and joins fellow quicks Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj.

Rohit played down the comparison between the quicks of the two teams.



will execute what we have worked on.”

The two nuclear-armed neighbours play cricket against each other only in international tournaments, due to long-standing political tensions.

India have dominated the limited-overs rivalry in the past



decade but Babar Azam’s Pakistan has got a few T20 victories in the last two years.

“We are not focussing on the past, but looking to do good in the upcoming matches,” said Azam, who remains fresh from his match-winning 151 against Nepal.

“We will try to give our best and carry forward the momentum (from the first win). You know India-Pakistan is always a game of intensity and fans wait for it, so we are also excited for it.”

Rain threat looms large over the hotly anticipated clash, with weather agencies predicting moderate-to-heavy showers in Kandy at the weekend.

Jabeur battles through illness

REUTERS

Tunisia’s Ons Jabeur said she feels like a “zombie” due to an illness she has been dealing with but the fifth seed is determined to soldier on at the U.S. Open after battling past Czech teenager Linda Noskova 7-6(7) 4-6 6-3 on Thursday.

The 29-year-old suffered breathing difficulties during her gritty first-round win over Colombia’s Camila Osorio and was not at her best physically against Noskova, getting through a tough match in a little over two hours.

“I’m a zombie because I have a flu,” said Jabeur, adding that she had taken a break in July following her Wimbledon final defeat to stay fresh for the rest of the season.

Jabeur said she had been struggling for about a week with the illness and was “taking a lot of medicine”.

“I’m doing everything I can with my team trying to recover,” she added. “They have amazing doctors here, so they’ve been helping me. I basically took every medication they have.”

“I’m glad it was two matches, two tests. I was trying to push myself to see what I can do, getting out of the comfort zone. Hopefully I’ll continue in better shape and feel better for the next match.”

Jabeur meets Czech Marie Bouzkova in the next round and is determined to continue her run.



U-23 booters dream big

SPORTS REPORTER

Despite facing a lot of odds including player shortage, Bangladesh under-23 football team have set their sights on the final round of the AFC U-23 Asian Cup.

The men in red and green have been pitted against Thailand, Malaysia and Philippines in Group H, with 11 group winners and four best runners-up teams slated to join hosts Qatar for the 16-team final round to be held in 2024.

Bangladesh will play against Malaysia on September 6 before facing Thailand and Philippines on September 9 and 12 respectively in Chonburi, Thailand.

Ahead of the competition, head coach Zulfiker Mahmud Mintu had only three weeks to prepare his squad, which is missing several key players including Rimon Hossain, Faisal Ahmed Fahim, Mohammad Ridoy, Sheikh Morsalin, Dipok Roy, Mitul Marma and Mojibur Rahman Jonny due to the national team’s matches against Afghanistan.

“We worked mostly those players whose fitness was not up to mark following the completion of the league. Our video analyst analysed videos of Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines who recently played in AFF U-23 Championship. We haven’t noticed any big difference with us except for the understanding level of their players,” Mintu said at an official press conference at the BFF House yesterday.

“It is important for the players to believe that they can compete against them because the game is also mental and psychological. I think if we can avoid silly mistakes, we can produce good results and advance to the next level. However, qualifying for the next stage depends on collection of points in the first match against Malaysia,” said Mintu, who is set to guide an age-group national team for the first time after having previously worked as an assistant coach in the senior national team.

Bangladesh have never qualified for the final round of this competition, having registered only one win in 15 matches so far.

U-16s face India

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will begin their campaign to regain the title of the SAFF U-16 Championship when they take on the might of India in one of two matches of the opening day at Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu today.

The match will start at 3:00pm (BST) before hosts Bhutan take on Pakistan at the same venue.

The boys in red and green got one more day to acclimatise with the chilly weather in Bhutan after the tournament was pushed back by a day. The charges of Saifur Rahman Moni had their final preparation yesterday ahead of the match against India, who beat Bangladesh 2-1 in the semifinals of the last edition in 2022.

“The first match of the tournament is always an important game, not just because of India. So, there will be pressure on the players. I believe the boys will try to do their best tomorrow for a good start,” Moni said in a video message.

Prior to their departure for Bhutan, the coach had said that Bangladesh want to ensure the semifinals first.

Captain Nazmul Huda Faisal is happy to get one more day before the start.



Five sporting clubs of Dhaka, which were under lock and key since the clampdown on casinos on September 22, 2019, opened doors yesterday following long negotiations with law enforcement agencies. However, these clubs including Victoria Sporting and Arambagh MFS, two of the oldest and most storied in the country’s sporting history, are in a dilapidated condition with pools of garbage strewn around and in front of the entrances.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



LPG CYLINDERS Govt-fixed prices exist only on paper

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission fixes price of liquefied petroleum gas every month, but consumers buy the key fuel at a higher price due to non-compliance by importers, distributors, and retailers.

On August 2, the BEREC fixed the retail price of a 12kg LPG cylinder at Tk 1,140. Consumers in different parts of Dhaka, however, said they bought a refilled 12-kg cylinder at no less than Tk 1,400.

The Daily Star talked to at least three LPG distributors and 10 retailers who all said they were buying LPG cylinders at a higher rate than the price fixed by the energy regulatory body.

The retailers blame the distributors while the distributors point fingers at the importers. But importers



lay the blame on shortage of import, volatile foreign exchange rate and challenges in opening letters of credit.

However, market experts and consumer rights defenders have said all these are lame excuses, stressing that the BEREC fixes the rates every month after receiving input from the stakeholders.

They have also stressed that there is a lack of strict monitoring, which only helps the blame game, causing suffering to consumers.

During recent visits to the capital's Kachukhet, Shewrapara, Tejribazar, Karwan Bazar, Bongshal, Banasree and Moghbazar area, The Daily Star found that a 12-kg LPG cylinder was sold even at Tk 1,500 in many places.

Moreover, distributors have mentioned supply shortfall as another factor contributing to LPG high price.

Wishing anonymity, a distributor of importing company Fresh LP Gas said, "This month the company hiked the price of a 12-kg cylinder at least six times, each time by Tk 20-30."

He said he had bought 70 cylinders on August 20 at a rate of Tk 1,197.

"Our van has a capacity to transport around 360 cylinders at a time, costing around Tk 8,000, or Tk 22.23 per cylinder on each trip. But we got only 70 cylinders this time around, which increased the transport cost to Tk 114-115 per cylinder," he said.

Distributors often receive text messages about LPG price updates from the importers, also known as operators. In a message in mid-August, one importer mentioned the rate of a 12-kg cylinder as Tk 1,197, a 33-kg cylinder as Tk 3,067, a 35-kg as Tk 3,246 and a 45-kg cylinder as Tk 4,164.

The company was supposed to sell those cylinders at Tk 1,045, Tk 2,872, Tk 3,047, and Tk 3,916 respectively in compliance with the BEREC-fixed rates.

"We are supposed to take Tk 50 per cylinder as distributor's charge, but we took Tk 100 because of the hassle and increased transport cost," said the dealer.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



Thousands of BNP activists march in a procession on Toyenbee Circular Road in the capital. The party observed its 45th founding anniversary with day-long events yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

No 'peace' until regions freed

Says Ukraine's Zelensky; Russia's Lavrov says UN meetings on peace formula 'unacceptable'

REUTERS

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday said there cannot be "sustainable peace" in Ukraine unless the country regains control of Crimea, Donbas and other territories occupied by Russia.

He also said he never had any doubts about Italy's support for Kyiv after the Russian invasion.

"We want to thank Italy for the political support it has given us and also the EU for supporting our candidacy (to join the bloc) and commitments to ensure the security of our country," Zelensky told the European House Ambrosetti business forum in Italy via a video link.

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday that he told United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres that online meetings held on Zelensky's peace formula in August were "unacceptable".

He also accused the West of undermining international institutions by pushing its own agenda. President Vladimir Putin told pupils at the start

of the school year yesterday that it was impossible to defeat Russia.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's military intelligence said yesterday that a recent drone attack on an airport in northwestern Russia which damaged

The attack this week on Pskov airport some 700 kilometres from Ukraine marked the latest strike to rock Russian territory since Kyiv vowed to "return" the conflict to Russia in July.

several transport planes was carried out from within Russian territory.

The attack this week on Pskov airport some 700 kilometres from Ukraine marked the latest strike to rock Russian territory since Kyiv vowed to "return" the conflict to Russia in July.

CASES AGAINST PROF YUNUS
Global leaders' requests to suspend trial regrettable

Says foreign ministry

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry has regretted that global leaders and Nobel laureates in an open letter requested the prime minister to "exercise extra-judicial authorities" to suspend the sub-judice cases against Prof Muhammad Yunus.

The ministry said Yunus and his aides have "resorted to international lobbying" in the face of legal consequences for their alleged or proven violation of law.

"It is unacceptable for a citizen of a sovereign country to repeatedly seek external interventions presumably based on his perception of being above the law of the land," said the ministry yesterday in a statement signed by Muhammad Mohsin Reza, deputy principal

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

'Mystery' ducts found near biblical relics in Jerusalem

REUTERS, Jerusalem



An almost three millennia-old network of hewn-rock ducts unearthed in Jerusalem has baffled archaeologists, given the lack of comparable biblical finds, or obvious links to an ancient Jewish temple and palace that once stood nearby.

The knee-deep channels, dating back 2,800 years, are located outside Jerusalem's walled Old City. They stand in two clusters, which were discovered 10 metres (30 feet) apart.

Forensic testing of the channels found no blood, the Israel Antiquities Authority said - potentially ruling out a role in animal slaughter for banquets or religious sacrifice.

The ducts also do not appear to have engineered a flow in a single direction, or debouched into any basin, suggesting they were not used to sluice out sewage or rainfall, added the authority, whose research partner is Tel Aviv University.

Father, 5-yr-old daughter killed as truck hits motorbike

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Bagerhat

A man and his five-year-old daughter died after a truck hit his motorbike on the Bagerhat Khulna highway in Bagerhat's Fakirhat upazila Thursday night.

The deceased were identified as Sohail Faraji, 37, of Sarankhola upazila and his daughter Nawrin Akhter.

Sohail's wife Mimi Akhter, 32 and their elder daughter Nawsheen, 10, suffered critical injuries.

The accident took place at 9:15pm on Thursday when the couple along with their two children were going to Khulna from Sarankhola on the motorbike, said Sub-Inspector Hasnur Rahman of Katakhal Highway Police Station.

The four persons fell on the road and suffered critical injuries after the truck hit the motorbike. They were rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared Sohail and Nawrin dead, he added.



Siblings Lima Akhter and Joy Islam taking part of the tin roof of their house to safety in Ichamara village of Bogura's Sariaikandi upazila yesterday, a day after the Jamuna gobbled up 30 homes there within about half an hour. Erosion by the river has put about 300 families in the village at risk, who are making their way to safety.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

JAMUNA EROSION 30 homes gone in half an hour Over a hundred become homeless in Bogura's Sariaikandi upazila

STAR REPORT

In mere half an hour, the Jamuna devoured the homes, croplands, and belongings of some 30 families in Ichamara village of Bogura's Sariaikandi. Powerless to do anything, the families watched in horror as everything they owned was swept away, leaving them with nothing.

Just before it happened, a 25-year-old flood control embankment gave way to the strong currents of the Jamuna Thursday afternoon.

The dam stretched for 150 meters and had been protecting the land for decades.

"The families have been living here for years. It was heartbreaking to see them become homeless in a matter of minutes. The poor people! Now, they don't know what to do or where to go," said Helal Ul Alam, a former member of the Kamalpur union parishad who witnessed the travesty firsthand.

"The river was over 100 metres from the homes just a day ago. This is most unsettling," he added.

Local resident Jaheda Begum, 60, said, "We've been living in this village for around 25 years. The river has taken everything I had; I don't even have any spare clothes. I don't know what to do or where to go now."

Another victim, Md Rabbani, 40, said, "Just a few days ago, I spent a lot of money on a new fishing net, which is now lost to the river along with my home and other belongings. I've lost my home as well as my livelihood."

Moreover, another 300 families living on both sides

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

A testimony to earliest sculpting techniques of Bengal

Rare Vishnu statue discovered in Sarail temple



The statue's exceptional quality is its circular shaped back slab. Usually, statues from the ninth and tenth centuries assume this shape.

SHARMIN REZWANA
assistant professor of
archaeology at Cumilla
University

TARUN SARKAR

A rare Vishnu statue has recently been discovered during visits to several archaeological sites in Sarail upazila of Brahmanbaria.

The statue, made of stone, was found inside the Anondomoyee Kali Bari temple, an old temple in Sarail, which is known as the birthplace of Isa Khan, leader of the Baro Bhuiyans, or the zamindars who resisted Mughal expansion in Bengal in the 16th century.

Famously known as a Vishnu statue with dasavatas, which contains ten avatars or incarnations of Vishnu, its back slab is circular. Art theorists and historians say finding a Vishnu statue with dasavatas, which has a circular back, is indeed very rare. This statue exemplifies the initial days of sculpting practices in Bengal, according to researchers.

Experts believe this specific style of sculpting is unique to the eastern regions of Bengal. Talking about the statue's uniqueness, Md Mosharraf Hossain, iconologist and former



The Anondomoyee Kali Bari temple in Sarail upazila of Brahmanbaria.

The Daily Star sent an email to Dr Mevissen, along with photographs of the statue, asking for his opinion on the discovery.

In his reply, Dr Mevissen said, "This image is indeed previously unrecorded."

"... this image is an important addition to the previously known Vishnu images with avatars from Bengal, since it adds the Brahmanbaria district to the regions of the provenance of such images," wrote the acclaimed German scholar whose expertise lies in Indian idols and statues. In his reply, he also mentions "the only image from Brahmanbaria known so far is ... in the Bangladesh National Museum."

Discussing the uniqueness of the dasavatas sculpted on statues, Dr Mevissen in his 2010 article writes, "Numerous sculptures depicting one individual avatars are known from all over India including Bengal. The dasavatas as a group are either represented on independent stone slabs, or lintels and jambs of temple doors and niches."

The Vishnu statue is fixed on the inner wall of the Anondomoyee Kali Temple, where it is being worshipped by devotees. A Kali statue, made of stone, was previously stolen from the temple. To protect the Vishnu statue from thieves, mortar has been used to install it on the temple's western wall, according to locals.

The statue is two feet five inches high and one foot two inches wide. From Vishnu's feet to the tip of the head, the statue is one foot ten and a half inches high.

Based on the images of the lion's face and umbrella on the upper back slab, the statues found in Bangladesh can be divided into two categories – Keertimukh (lion's face) and

techniques. Statues sculpted in this tradition are devoid of unnecessary ornamentation. Chhotromukh statues were usually created in the tenth century or earlier, according to researchers.

On this statue, below the umbrella are two bidyadhors, or angels, and below them are the ten avatars. Two sohodevis, or female associates, are placed below the avatars.

From the statue's waist up, ten miniature statues of Vishnu's avatars appear.

Iconographic researcher Sharmin Rezwana, assistant professor of archaeology at Cumilla University, studied the statue. "From the waist up, on the left side we find statues of Matsya [fish], Varaha [wild boar], Vamana [dwarf], Rama and Buddha, whereas on the right side, we find Kurma [tortoise], Narasimha [man-lion], Balarama [brother of Krishna], Parashurama [Rama with an axe] and Kalkin [the future incarnation]" she said.

"The statue's exceptional quality is its circular shaped back slab. Usually, statues from the ninth and tenth centuries assume this shape," adds Rezwana.

THE KALI TEMPLE AND OTHER VISHNU STATUES

Researchers believe the Dewans of Sarail had founded the Anondomoyee Kali Bari temple. The Dewans are believed to be the direct descendants of Isa Khan.

Researcher and archaeologist Abul Kalam Muhammad Zakaria's books shed light on the different mosques, mazaars and temples built by the Dewans

principal Sheikh Muhammad Abu Hamed tell us that between Afghan rule and the mid-19th century, the Dewans semi-autonomously ruled the Sarail pargana. From the Mughal era till the first phase of British rule, Brahmanbaria was part of Sarail pargana, which had an area of nearly 304 square miles. The first zamindar from the Dewans of Sarail was Majlish Gazi, followed by Mazlish Shahbaz and Nur Muhammad. During the British colonial rule, Sarail's control was taken away from the Dewans and it was added to Brahmanbaria, which was made the new Mahakuma.

Zakaria's book, "Pratnoshampad", also tells us that apart from the Vishnu statue in the Anondomoyee temple, there is another Vishnu statue in Sarail, which is kept in the Basudev temple in Kalikaccha union's Nandipara area. Art theorists believe the Kalikaccha statue is an instance from the later stages of Bengal's sculpting practices – from the eleventh or twelfth century.

While visiting the Basudev temple,



A wall of the Dewanbari which is believed to be four hundred years old.



The recently discovered Vishnu statue with dasavatas and a circular back slab.

According to Banglapaedia, Isa Khan was born in Sarail. During his youth, he became Sarail's zamindar. He declared himself as the ruler of the "Bhati area" in 1581-82 and assumed the title of "Masnad-i-Ala". Afterwards, he shifted his administrative centre to Sonargaon.

PHOTOS:
TARUN SARKAR

director of Bangladesh Archaeology Department, said this was perhaps the first case of finding a Vishnu statue with a circular back slab, as well as dasavatas.

"Anondomoyee Kali Bari's Vishnu statue is a clear indication of the unique sculpting techniques that stemmed from the eastern and southern regions of Bengal," he said.

Commenting on the time when it was created, he said, "The upper portion of the statue's back slab is fully circular. It is believed that such statues were not made in Bengal after the first half of the eighth century. Afterwards, the upper portion of the back slab became more and more angular. The upper part, lower part, circular tip, pedestal, ornamentation and other traits of this statue prove that it was made sometime in the late seventh century. It is an example from the initial days of Bengal's growth in sculpting practices."

In an article titled "Corpus of Vishnu Images with dasavatas, predominantly from Bengal", published in 2010, German iconologist Gerd JR Mevissen listed 77 Vishnu statues with dasavatas; of them, 63 were found in Bengal's southern and eastern regions, five in the western region and three others in the northern region. However, the recently discovered statue with dasavatas was not listed in Dr Mevissen's article.



The entrance to the temple; and the Vishnu statue of the Basudev temple in the Kalikaccha union's Nandipara, Sarail.

Chhotromukh (umbrella). Most statues from Bengal are of the Keertimukh variant. However, the new statue falls into the Chhotromukh category.

The Chhotromukh tradition represents Bengal's own sculpting

of Sarail. Two books by Zakaria – "Cumilla Jelar Itihas" (The History of Cumilla District) and "Bangladesher Pratnoshampad" (The Archaeological Riches of Bangladesh) – and an article written by Sarail College's founder

its priest Dulal Chakraborty and managing committee's general secretary Poritosh Das, and Sarail researcher Sheikh Majlish Fuad told this correspondent that after the statue was recovered from a pond beside the temple, it was restored and set up inside the Rokkhakali temple. Later on, the Basudev temple was built on the terraces of the Rokkhakali temple and the statue was set there accordingly.

Archaeologist and teacher of Jahangirnagar University's archaeology department Prof Mozammel Huq also thinks this is a significant archaeological discovery. "Finding an ancient statue in a temple in Sarail proves that there were highlands in this area situated along the Meghna-Titas river basin and there were human habitations here a long time ago. During the Hindu-Buddha era, a prosperous settlement was established here. Finding a Vishnu statue here supports the claim that Vishnuism was popular in the Sarail area during ancient times," he said.

"The recovered Vishnu statue will play an important part in reframing the area's history", adds Huq.

COSTODIAN OF A MOSQUE AND A TEMPLE
There are two major archaeological

religious establishments in places like Brahmanbaria, Kishoreganj and Habiganj. Starting from the Mughal era to all the way to the British rule, most inhabitants of these areas followed the Hindu religion. The Dewans helped all believers. They built mosques, mausoleums, temples, asylums—all of it."

She lamented that some religious scholars in recent times say the Dewans had committed a sinful act by building a Kali temple. However, according to her, the Dewans built this temple to ensure communal harmony.

"Sarail's Dewans practised secularism for hundreds of years through contributions in political, social and cultural fields", she added.

The locals believe that the Dewans are descendants of Isa Khan. In "Bangladesh District Gazetteers, Comilla District", written by Webster, and Kailash Chandra Singh's book, "Rajmala", Dewans of Sarail are described in this manner.

According to Banglapaedia, Isa Khan was born in Sarail. During his youth, he became Sarail's zamindar. He declared himself as the ruler of the "Bhati area" in 1581-82 and assumed the title of "Masnad-i-Ala". Afterwards, he shifted his administrative centre to Sonargaon.

(Translated from Bangla by Mohammed Ishtiaque Khan)

FICTION

In the sand dunes

MAISHA SYEDA

His face was growing warmer, it seemed as though the intangible entity that was stinging his closed eyes was growing stronger. He forcibly raised a hand in front of his face to shield himself, pressed his eyes shut and tried to embrace the last few moments of his precious slumber. But the sun was adamant not to let him sleep; the heat on his face started to feel as though he was standing over a burning furnace. Groaning, Salim opened his eyes but the sun's rays stung them shut again. He rolled over on his side and covered his face with his blanket, half-afraid that the sunlight would penetrate the flimsy fabric or come through some of the holes that had recently become bigger after getting caught in his fingers and toes while he was asleep. Salim forced himself to sit up. The birds were chirping outside and the vehicles passing by his house on the street honked relentlessly. He looked at the ancient table clock on the floor beside him; it said 7:14 AM. Salim wanted to cover himself with the blanket and play dead.

Trying to force his body out of the charpoy, Salim's trousers caught one of the nails jutting out. He tugged at the cloth as hard as he could and let it tear a little, it came loose. Wishing he did not have to go to school, Salim grabbed his tattered sap green shirt from the floor beside him and walked over to the clay water pot as he tried to do the buttons on his shirt.

"You look a little pale, dear. Are you sure you're alright?" Salim's teacher asked.

Salim nodded his shabby little head and rubbed his eyes, yawning. Mualima Nessrine was a nice lady. These days she would ask Salim if he had eaten and showered, whether he needed anything, if she could help him with anything and if his Khalah had been visiting regularly; she did not even ask to see his homework that often anymore, only asked whether he was studying well. Brushing off the dust and debris



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

off his shirt, Salim's teacher ushered him to take a seat. Her smile was warm and comforting, almost as warm as his mother's was.

It had been three months, five days and a few hours since Salim's mother died. Salim had just turned nine a week before. He had slowly opened the door to his ancient, dingy little house after coming home from school one day, careful not to take it off its hinges, and walked in to find his mother on the floor beside the charpoy, taking shallow breaths. Her whole body had been convulsing violently, as though someone was shaking her by the shoulder, and her eyes had rolled back so far up in her head that only the crescent was still visible. Salim had stood there for an eternity, tears running down his face even though he did not understand why. He finally thought to run next door to call the neighbour.

He went to school about a month after. Everyone said he looked rather white considering his milky pink skin

tone, Salim could not understand why though. He had been feeling all right; his khalah had been staying with him for almost four weeks. She would cook for him and tell him stories about growing up in a small village in Libya and the kind of adventures she and Salim's mother would go on. On some scorching hot summer afternoons, they would go to the nearby lake and play in the water. She and her sister would compete to see who could hold their breaths underwater the longest. They would spend hours splashing around in the cool water before their father would come shouting at them, pulling them out of the lake by the ears. The quests had stopped after some time though, they were each married off to separate villages by the time they turned 17; their father, Salim's grand dad, had said it was to make sure they were safe and alive. However, his khalah had mentioned she could not take Salim home with her right then, her husband did not think it was safe for them or for Salim. "The military troops are keeping

a close eye on everyone", his khal had told her to tell Salim.

Random merchants and shoppers greeted Salim the next time he walked to school, which was a 25-minute walk through the local alkhadruat bazar. He would exchange salam with the ones he remembered talking to his mother; they would pat him on the head from time to time and say, "He is growing up so fast."

Their concerns had now changed. "Are you okay, abn?" one would say; another, an elderly man would usually chime in, "You look so white, almost like a ghost! Is someone looking after you?"

"Does he mean now or like all the time?" Salim pondered on whether he should say yes or no. He would not know what to say; his aunt had already left. It had been a few weeks. Some nights he would be brave, fighting the towering jinns draped in white, shadowy and floating around the room in the darkness. Other nights, he would

tremble under his blanket and recite as many surahs as he knew by heart, grasping the cloth over his head tightly and praying they would not pull him away by his feet. He remembered how his mother always used to say, "You're my brave little boy, there's nothing to be afraid of" and Salim would nod and bid them goodbye.

But he would wonder what made them think he was a ghost. Although, he was feeling rather light and faintish lately. It was proving to be difficult to ration the leftovers from the last time his aunt had brought him food, from which only a small container of lentil stew and rice was now left. Salim groaned thinking khalah would need to come visit him soon or he would have to learn cooking.

The other afternoon he had been lying on his charpoy, drifting off to the sound of his mother's lullaby when he felt a light cool breeze drift in through the window. The hairs on his body stood on their ends as he lazily reached for the blanket but he only felt its tattered fabric brush against his little fingers lightly, like the tip of his fingers caressing the surface of the water from a nearby lake. Salim's eyes opened to see where it was, frowning in his half-conscious state, and fishing for it around him, he realised it was there right beneath his hand. That is, he could almost see the brown and white patchwork of the fabric through the surface of his hand. He blinked his eyes a few times and rubbed them hard. Salim could only make out the faint outline of his arm as the warm afternoon sunlight reflected off the edges. The fleshy part though, where his skin was supposed to be—the part that was supposed to be solid—was transparent and the sun's ray travelled right through. Salim could see his blanket, his bed and everything right through his hand.

This is an excerpt from the short story, "In the Sand Dunes". Read the rest on *The Daily Star* and *Star Literature's* websites.

Maisha Syeda is a writer, painter, and the Sub editor of *Star Books and Literature*.

POETRY

jani dekha hobe

after Meena Alexander

LAGNAJITA MUKHOPADHYAY

that single spot, *shunyo*, a hole that is filled to its circumference, I drive and the sun is bigger than I've ever seen and orange, look directly into it or, i had to write a poem to go along with the first one: the TV on mute, I begged for a sound, recovering from yet another flood, this house never shook
my grandma died when I was back in Nashville, heading out for a fire, thinking of rising into air I try to pour the tears back into my head again
in Bangla, death is a hit to the face, *mara geche*, to deprive, thirsty, a pain that is expected yet empty, and I know, Didai lost someone to drink cha with "it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one," or mistranslate
it was the day of a sudden freeze, three nights that would kill all the buds, cover your flowers, they said, last frost isn't till April and it is too soon when my grandma dies, no one here speaks of blood and i can't tell you because i stopped picking up when you call crying; it's not about you anymore everyone here declares life to be theirs only, not a chain, a whole country that robs us of grief or last rites and a photo of me by the body, dressed in petals, all in white a cancer, a stone inside, and a few days of nothing or so quick, expected until not, and we curse the empty place we inhabit and wish we were home. what have we done?
Set your feet into the broken stones and this red earth and pouring rain. For us there is no exile.
not another poem, but a litany of leaving, or moving, and you haunt me when there are bigger things, as if I have grown used to acceptance, a way to lie and forget these kinds of things call for storm shelters, somewhere to keep the lights on at night, i recall Baba once telling me that he would wake and cry in the dark, who had died then?
she used to bathe me, pour water over my head, and I look outside and it's the first ray of sun in a while, lighting up the pink cherry blossom unaware of the cold we cannot go home now either, and I can't tell you why we stay like I don't know if I loved you, no one lives upstairs anymore, what's the point?
there is no end in sight to this, lost paradise, I drive away again to where I do not have to think, a lamp placed near her head in Kolkata, from the power outage in Nashville



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

meanwhile white folks argue with my skin and feel nothing, *shunyo*, a different emptiness than ours, full of *clean void, masked, a house of souls, a doorway stopped by clouds.*
jani dekha hobe, I know I will see you, they say when they don't really know, not as if we come back as something else or if we feel them in the room still or not at all? why i give it up again and again, to come to another swift end, or hold it too long, longer than i want to, and what is the point, you only pretended like you knew *guddy*, the last person to call me that name, goodbye, what is in the air, they ask, and it must be a vacancy sign and a lengthy distance, or a road full of potholes
silent home, we keep ourselves away, tell me, *choto didai*, what does it mean? what are you saying? small and lump forming in back of throat, furniture sucked through the window
there are no walls between us no longer, the problem is you have never seen war on this soil, you fight yourself. you should see what it looks like to really lose they come here to try again, *abhiman*, an anger for something you love, a sense of disappointment but trust, and not your kind, i never liked your friends, you were cruel to strangers when my grandma died, it was just like another day, another time i could not go back while you walk around and no one tells you that you're wrong, false conjugate time goes on, does not just end when these things happen, nothing, nothing ends the world except the things that do, I just want to speak to her again
time is grief's first denial, not flying through ash but lifting mid-song to meet you, *shunyo* or nothing, *jani dekha hobe*, what will I do with all this time?

Lagnajita Mukhopadhyay is the author of the books *This Is Our War* (Penmanship Press, 2016) and *Everything Is Always Leaving* (M.C. Sarkar & Sons, 2019), and a poetry album *I Don't Know Anyone Here* (2020). She was the first Nashville Youth Poet Laureate, finalist for the first National Youth Poet Laureate, and Pushcart Prize nominee. With a Masters' in Migration and Diaspora at SOAS, she is now a Masters' candidate in Creative Writing at Goldsmiths. Find her work in *Poetry Society of America*, *La Piccioletta Barca*, and *Cream City Review*, among others.

PANDEMIC NOCTURNE 1:

December Dirge

REBECCA HAQUE

Ask me not of Grief.
For I have been burnt by its friendly fire
with blood and bits of oozing mortal flesh
spun flaky and ashen by its biting cold breath.
That was in the past.
Grief dug its teeth into me once more in the Pandemic with my mother gone into hallowed ground
On the tenth of December twenty-twenty.
Those interlinked circles,
those zeroes in the last month of that year
became black holes in my brain
With my mother gone
Without a kiss,
without a last embrace,
without the promise of forgiveness and grace.

Rebecca Haque is a Killam Scholar and independent educator. She is a poet, writer, and translator affiliated with *Multi-Ethnic Literature of the World* [#MELOW], *Asia-Pacific Writers & Translators Association* [#APWT], and *New York Writers Workshop* [#NYWW].



DESIGN: AMREETA LETHE

PAVING THE PATH FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In conversation with

KORVI
RAKSHAND
DHRUBO

2023 Ramon Magsaysay
Award winner



Our achievement lies in the fact that children like Siam, who wanted to be a rickshaw puller, are now studying in top universities in the United States. Last week, our student Tamanna got accepted into UWC Armenia with a US \$90,000 scholarship package.

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Korvi Rakshand Dhrubo, founder and CEO of Jaago Foundation, has recently received the Ramon Magsaysay Award, which recognises individuals with notable contributions to public service, community leadership, and social development.

Since the award's inception in 1957, 13 Bangladeshis have received it. We recently caught up with Korvi, the newest addition to this list, to learn more about Jaago's achievements as well as his journey and experiences.

How does it feel to receive such recognition for your work with the Jaago Foundation?

I am very humbled and grateful to the board of trustees for recognising our work and making us a part of such a prestigious network. It feels surreal to be among the likes of the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, Sir Fazle Hasan Abed and Prof Muhammad Yunus among many others. This award is not just for me but for the entire community of Jaago, including all our students, volunteers, and kind donors.

What inspired you to start Jaago, and what were your initial goals?

I have been involved in charity work since childhood but realised that my efforts were making people lazy and developing dependency on aid. I travelled across Bangladesh to understand the lives of people and met a seven-year-old orphan who wanted to accompany me home. The guilt of being helpless then led me to establish the

Jaago Foundation in 2007.

We began by teaching English to 17 children in a slum. The goal has always been to impact people's lives through education, but our approach has evolved to include these children in mainstream education. While we started as an English medium school, we later changed the curriculum to an English version considering the feasibility and future potential.

How do you see the Ramon Magsaysay Award impacting your organisation?

This award is going to open new doors and avenues for our organisation. With more than 350 awardees, it promises a prestigious networking opportunity where we could learn from social leaders while also presenting ourselves as an example of youth leadership. Jaago Foundation's unique schooling model can be taken to different countries that face similar problems.

Can you highlight some key achievements of Jaago that you're particularly proud of?

Our achievement lies in the fact that children like Siam, who wanted to be a rickshaw puller, are now studying in top universities in the United States. Last week, our student Tamanna got accepted into UWC Armenia with a US \$90,000 scholarship package. Three of our students are presently pursuing their higher education abroad while around 20 students are enrolled in Bangladeshi universities. So far, we have been able to impact 30,000 students as our direct beneficiaries.

Could you elaborate on how the foundation approaches education in a way that sets it apart from other initiatives?

When we started, providing prolonged education was a costly initiative and it was challenging to find donors who would continue to finance projects for years to come. Our Digital School Program is funded by individual sponsors for each child. We have developed a unique model by identifying that individual sponsors are much more sustainable. At Jaago, anyone can sponsor a child's schooling by contributing Tk 2,000 each month.

Can you share some examples of how Jaago has positively influenced the communities it serves?

While working with education, we have also facilitated teachers' training and skill development in the process. Our online model has created several job opportunities for skilled youth and enables them to develop themselves. We founded 'Volunteer for Bangladesh' in 2011, with 40 young people in Dhaka. Presently we have 50,000 young people working as a community of changemakers.

What advice do you have for young individuals who aspire to make a positive difference in their communities?

I would emphasise the importance of teamwork because when you have a good team, the organisation just keeps evolving along the way. If you want to go fast, go alone, but, if you want to go far, walk together. Discuss your ideas with the team and take their feedback. As a founder, you should always keep your mind open to new and young ideas.

JOBS
SPOTLIGHT

1. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh – Knowledge Management Analyst
Deadline: 12 September

Eligibility:

● Demonstrated understanding of ICT and GIS based knowledge management principles

● Needs to have the capacity to deliver knowledge management and/or organisational learning activities based on ICT and GIS platforms

● Experience in information systems design and implementation as well as design and facilitation of learning events

Minimum experience: 2 years (with Master's degree) or 4 years (with Bachelor's degree)

Apply through the Careers section of UNDP Bangladesh's official website.

2. Daraz - Team Lead – Digital (Customer Experiences)
Deadline: 15 September

Eligibility:

● Bachelor's degree in any discipline from any reputed university

● Must possess excellent verbal and written communication skills in both English and Bangla

● Needs to have working knowledge with reporting tools

Minimum experience: 2 years

Apply through Daraz's official LinkedIn page.

3. ShopUp - Area Sales Manager
Deadline: 3 September

Eligibility:


● Bachelor's degree in business from a renowned university

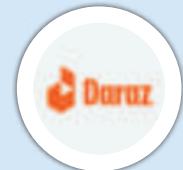
● Hands-on experience in FMCG sales and distribution


● Mandatory experience in the FMCG Industry

Minimum experience: 5 years

Apply through ShopUp's official LinkedIn page.







Surviving and thriving in a fast-paced work environment: A guide

In today's business landscape, the pace is relentless. The need to adapt and excel in a fast-paced work environment is not just a skill but a necessity. While the rapidity can be exhilarating, it can also be overwhelming. So how does one not only survive but excel in such a setting? The answer lies in a combination of understanding your role, effective communication, task prioritisation, time management, adaptability, burnout prevention, employee engagement, focused tasking, and the judicious use of technology.

Understanding your role: The foundation of success

Firstly, understanding your role within the organisation is paramount. This goes beyond merely knowing your job description. It's about understanding how your responsibilities align with the company's values and overarching goals. "When you understand your role, you become a cog in a well-oiled machine. You're not just doing tasks; you're contributing to a larger mission," says Shah Omar Raju, a visual design specialist at an outsourcing firm. When you have a clear understanding of your role, you can make more informed decisions that contribute to the organisation's objectives. This not only makes you an invaluable team member but also provides a sense of purpose and direction in your daily tasks.

The importance of communication

Communication is the linchpin of any successful team, more so in a fast-paced environment where things can get lost in translation. Active listening and clear communication are not just buzzwords; they are essential skills. "In a fast-paced environment, the margin for error is slim. Effective communication can be the difference between success and failure," notes Ahmed Iftekhar, a journalist at a leading national daily. When you actively listen, you're not just waiting for your turn to speak; you're fully engaged in understanding what the other person is saying. This fosters teamwork and ensures that everyone is on the same page, reducing the likelihood of costly mistakes.

Task prioritisation: The art of doing what matters

In a high-speed work setting, tasks can

ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

come at you from all directions. The ability to prioritise these tasks is crucial. Utilising digital planners can help you organise your tasks into immediate, end-of-day, and end-of-week segments. This not only helps you manage your workload but also allows you to allocate resources more efficiently.

Time management: The unsung hero

Surprisingly, only 18% of people have dedicated time management systems, according to studies. Techniques like the Pomodoro Technique, where work is broken down into intervals (traditionally 25 minutes), separated by short breaks, can be particularly effective. This approach helps maintain focus and productivity without leading to burnout.

Burnout prevention: The key to longevity

Burnout is a very real concern in fast-paced work environments. The constant pressure

to perform can take a toll on your mental and physical health. Taking regular breaks and using paid time off to recharge are not signs of weakness; they are essential for long-term success. A burnt-out employee is not only less productive but can also contribute to a toxic work environment.

Employee engagement: The X-factor

Speaking of work environment, employee engagement is not to be overlooked. Companies with high levels of engagement are not only more profitable but also have lower turnover rates. Striving for a positive culture where employees feel valued can make a significant difference in how well your organisation navigates the challenges of a fast-paced environment.

The myth of multi-tasking

While it might be tempting to juggle multiple

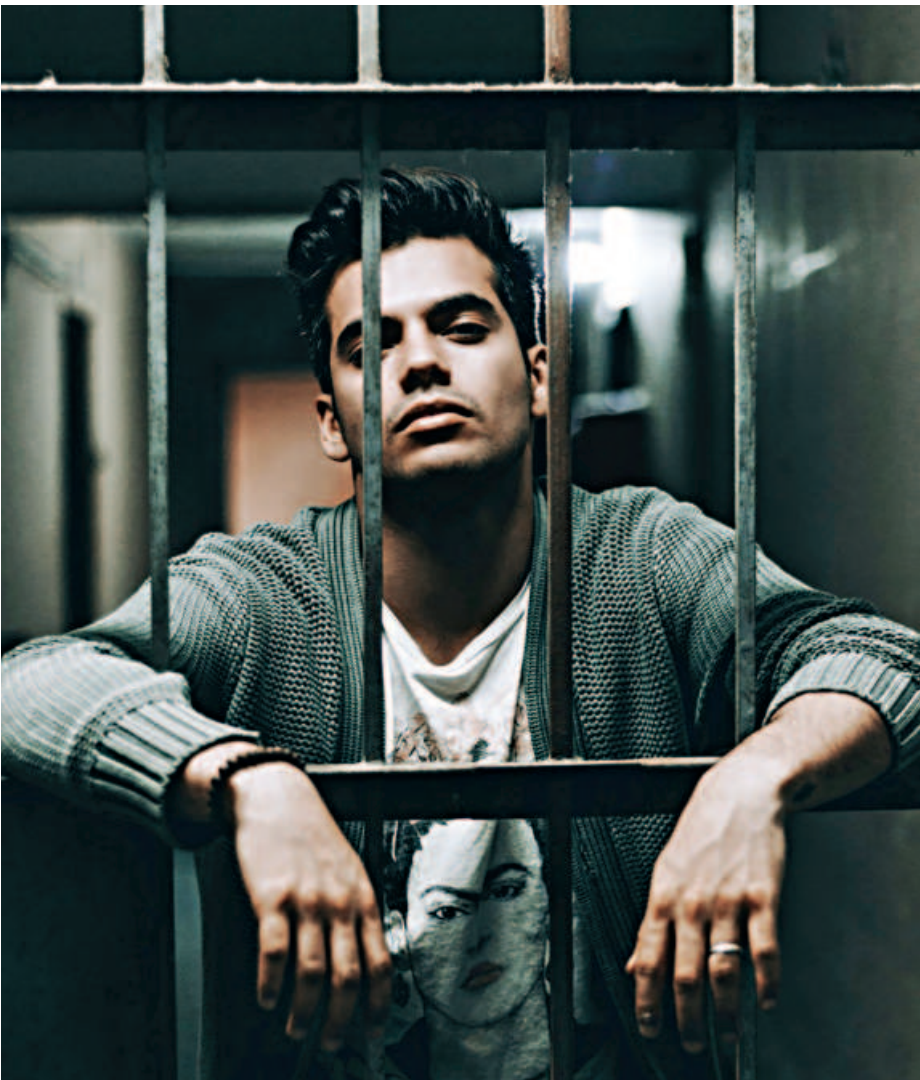
tasks at once, especially when the to-do list seems endless, multi-tasking is not the answer. Multi-tasking can lead to context-switching, which impedes focus and can actually decrease productivity. Prioritising single-tasking whenever possible can significantly improve your efficiency.

Leveraging technology: The digital advantage

Lastly, we live in a digital age where technology can be a boon for productivity, especially in fast-paced settings. Leveraging digital tools like project management software can streamline workflows and enhance efficiency, particularly in teamwork scenarios. These tools can help keep everyone on track and make it easier to adapt to changing schedules and tasks, which is crucial in a fast-paced environment.

Management trainee embraces ‘ownership mindset’, takes home office equipment

Gazi said he was not sure why the management was upset. He did what they had asked. Two weeks prior, Gazi attended an employee training programme arranged by Undue Undergarments to help develop better sales and management skills.



Gazi upset that the police charged him for theft and poor wardrobe choice

Abdul Gazi, an employee of Undue Undergarments, the leading garments retailer in the lower Chittagong area, was charged with theft and discomfort for taking home the three office fans, lights, two computers, seven chairs, one AC, mini refrigerator and paper punch machine.

STEVE TASKS, CRIME & CAREERS

Police have raided his house for the equipment but none was found. The police, unsure what to do next, arrested him anyway, because why not!

Gazi, 27, has now been placed in a soft, two-day remand. “He will admit to something eventually although we cannot use eggs as the prices are crazy,” said OC Haider.

Gazi said he was not sure why the management was upset. He did what they had asked. Two weeks prior, Gazi attended an employee training programme arranged by Undue Undergarments to help develop better sales and management skills. This extensive workshop involved watching several free Youtube videos on building management skills. Employees were provided one shingara per hour.

“The programmes stressed on how to make employees more effective by giving them more authority. We were told to take ownership, so I did. As an owner I felt I needed to sell all of this equipment to raise money to buy a motorbike, as I am now an owner,” said Gazi, saving the OC from using eggs for extracting a confession.

Now the police are further unsure what to do. On one hand, Gazi did what his firm told him to do, sort of. On the other hand, he had sold the office equipment and now other employees of Undue Undergarments are sitting on the floor in a hot room using pen and paper to manage inventory. They are uncomfortable but cannot complain to HR because HR does not have a computer to log the complaint.

Management realises after 15 years employee does not do anything

AN EMPLOYEE

The management of a biscuit factory learned yesterday that an employee who has been working at the head office for the last 15 years has actually done nothing all that time.

The employee, Hashem Kashem, 43, was promoted eight times in that period, company sources said.

Asked what Hashem did, the company said he was the quality assurance manager.

Two years ago, he even got his own personal office, said a member of senior management who wished to remain unnamed, for some reason.

“We are looking into it, and this is very new information. I do not understand how this was possible,” the senior management member said.

Contacted, Hashem Kashem at first denied that he indeed did not do anything. But upon learning that he would be fired anyway, he opened up.

“Listen, it’s very simple, I showed up every day, and attended every meeting. I ended every meeting by summarising what the boss said, and commenting on how that was the only way forward.

“In all these years, I have not inspected a single packet of biscuits. Also, at my work station, I always made sure to be frowning, all the time.”

It was learnt that the company spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on the employee in wages and benefits.

Another senior manager of the company informed that they have decided to form a high-powered committee to investigate the matter.

“No expense will be spared to get to the bottom of it,” he said, adding that other senior managers will be on the committee, that will conduct the investigation during a corporate retreat.

DISCLAIMER

This is a satirical page and should be considered as such. Any resemblance between the published contents here and actual events or individuals, etc. is purely coincidental. The articles and photos published on this page or the views expressed here are the author's own and do not reflect the editorial policy or view of The Daily Star.

Cities that looked like Europe from the sky now looking like the Pacific

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

Once one of the greatest actors of our galaxy compared the cities of Chapasthan with those of Europe. He was so overawed by the celestial appearance of his country's cities that he could not resist rating European cities lower.

“I would invite those foreigners to come and visit us, and dare them to make a city like ours in the coming fifty years,” the actor said at a road rally, while wholeheartedly promoting his all-time blockbuster movie named “Sycophant”.

Emperors of different states of Chapasthan echoed the actor's tales.

“Our country looks like Europe from the sky, I mean aeroplane,” they said.

After hearing all the hype, Europeans became eager to visit Chapasthan, as they were expecting to witness the elegance of “better than Europe”.

They set out for the journey and when they entered Chapasthan airspace, and

heard the pilot announce that their descent was about to begin, they were shocked.

Hearing the panic in the cabin, one of the pilots came out of the cockpit.

A European tourist asked, “How come such a seasoned pilot like you made this mistake? You were supposed to take us to Chapasthan, but look below, where are we now? We are in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, man!”

“We were supposed to enjoy the beauty of Chapasthan, but you tricked us and brought us over the ocean,” another visitor said in despair.

“Sir, we are exactly where we were supposed to be. Check your GPS! This is the sky over Chapasthan,” the pilot assured everyone.

The plane landed and the visitors came out with their cameras so that they could feed their newly-opened YouTube channels. It had rained for just 10 minutes and once out of the airport, they found it

The plane landed and the visitors came out with their cameras so that they could feed their newly-opened YouTube channels. It had rained for just 10 minutes and once out of the airport, they found it to be impossible to cross the road without a boat.

several times and even swam there, but didn't feel as helpless as I do here. This is more like an ocean than a city,” another visitor said after drinking a mouthful of undrinkable water.

One of them talked to a local Chapasthani. When asked how people live here in the water just like small Islanders, Recaaz, a local swimmer, said, “Rain invaded us just like Russia did to Ukraine. I am asking you to spend a few more days here. We are praying for the rain to stop. Once the water is gone, we will welcome you to Chapasthan, better than Europe.”

The visitors also wanted to meet the actor and the emperors, whose words influenced them to come here. Calling the actor, the visitors said, “Sir, we came from Europe to see your Europe. But it looks more like the Pacific now. What were you boasting about?”

The actor, understanding the situation, said, “Sorry, no engles, only European,” and swam away.



PHOTO: NAMUBI

My time on the sidewalk

KOBI DHOKA

The Sun shines, a relentless yellow,
My watch strikes 8:04am,
The little window to escape wasting away
For eternity or till 10:20am,
All around me, people walk beaded in sweat,
Past the open personhole,
Jumping over the muddy puddle,
Craftily sidestepping the pile of yesterday's trash,
To eventually find a 200m stretch
Of recently completed sidewalk,
All decked with tactile paving,
The Krishnachura above casts its calming shade,
Even the blind could walk here,
Or so claims the article printed days ago,
But then the paved road merged into the broken,
And sorry I couldn't travel both,
And be one commuter, long I stood,
And looked down as far as I could,
To where it wasn't as broken.

This is a poem, apparently, that one of our former writers responded with when asked to write something on the city streets. The writer has been so terribly burnt out that she never really recovered, but we used the poem to put out a call for poems from our readers.

We need it, because all our staff writers are either down with some form of flu or a bad case of ulcers because there is so much material out there, but somehow we cannot seem to write about them, not because there is any bar obviously, but we are just miserably unmotivated and didn't sign up for those motivation classes.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN