



Remittance dips 21.5pc in August

Last month's receipts mark steepest drop since April 2020

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Remittance saw its steepest decline since the depths of the pandemic in August as expatriate Bangladeshis eschew the official channels to send money home thanks to the wide difference in the official and kerb market exchange rates.

Last month, migrant workers sent \$1.59 billion, down 21.5 percent year-on-year, in what has been the sharpest drop since April 2020, when the inflows plummeted 25 percent, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

August's receipts are the lowest in six months and 19 percent lower than in the previous month.

The development signals a further blow to the country's strained dollar stockpile, which stood at \$23.06 billion on August 30 and is projected to slip below the \$23 billion mark this week after a \$1.20 billion payment to the Asian Clearing Union for imports from eight Asian countries.

"[August's remittance] is \$1 billion lower than the usual situation -- this is bad news for our economy," said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

He sees a parallel with Pakistan's contracting remittance inflows.

In July, Pakistan's remittance inflows were 19.3 percent lower at \$2 billion, while its inflows in fiscal 2022-23 were 13.7 percent lower at \$27 billion, according to data from the State Bank of Pakistan.

"Pakistan used to get remittance of \$12 billion and that dried up to only \$3 billion -- it is very difficult to turn around from the situation," said Mansur, who served as the International Monetary Fund's senior resident representative to Pakistan during 1998-01.

The remittance earnings are not increasing despite a record number of workers going abroad due to the huge gap between the formal and informal exchange rates, said Mustafa K Mujeri, executive director of the Institute for Inclusive Finance and Development.

In fiscal 2022-23, Bangladesh sent a record 11,44,993 workers abroad, up 15.8 percent from a year earlier, according to data from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training.

Remitters usually send money through the channel offering them the highest rate, he said.

The Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association

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Najmul Hossain Shanto embraces Mehedi Hasan Miraz as the latter, who plays as a bowling all-rounder, defied the odds to score his second ODI century after being promoted to operate as a makeshift opener against Afghanistan in yesterday's Asia Cup fixture in Lahore. Courtesy of Miraz's 112 off 119 balls and Shanto's 105-ball 104, the Tigers cruised to a formidable 334 for five and eventually won by 89 runs.

PHOTO: AFP

Tigers ensure Asia Cup Super 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh confirmed the Super Four stage of the Asia Cup by bouncing back with a comprehensive 89-run win over Afghanistan in their final group-stage game in Lahore yesterday.

Bangladesh's chances of qualifying looked meek coming into yesterday's contest at the Gaddafi Stadium, having seen their net run-rate take a huge dip following a massive five-wicket defeat to Sri Lanka, with 11 overs to spare, in their first game.

The Tigers turned things around completely on Sunday, boosting their net run-rate to 0.373 by bundling out Afghanistan for just 245 in 44.3 overs after posting a mammoth 334 for five -- thanks to centuries from Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Najmul Hossain Shanto.

As things stand, Bangladesh have now confirmed their Super Four spot. Just a win for Sri Lanka against Afghanistan tomorrow in their final group game will see the co-hosts through along with Bangladesh.

However, for Afghanistan to have a chance, they would need to win against Sri Lanka by a huge margin and recover from their net run-rate of -1.780 in order to be among the top two in the group alongside the Tigers.

If Afghanistan manage to win by a big margin against Sri Lanka, it will impact the net run-rate of the Lankans and see it take a plunge. Afghanistan might go on to

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DHAKA INT'L AIRPORT 55kg gold vanishes from customs godown

Authorities suspect involvement of several revenue officers

MOHAMMAD SUMAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Approximately 55.5kg gold bars and jewellery worth around Tk 47 crore have been stolen from a customs warehouse at Dhaka airport, officials say.

Dhaka Customs House filed a case late last night with Airport Police Station, mentioning in the complaint that four of its assistant revenue officers (ARO) and four guards "failed to give satisfactory answers" over the matter.

The individuals named in the complaint -- AROs Shahidul Islam, Akram Sheikh, Saidul Islam Shahed, and Masum Rana and guards Rezaul Karim, Mozammel Haq, Alzal Hossain, and Niamat Hawlader -- were in charge of the warehouse, customs officials said.

None of the AROs could be contacted last night as the investigators seized their phones.

The stolen valuables were seized between 2020 and last month from people arriving at the airport with more gold than the law allows.

According to sources in the customs, gold bars, jewellery, and other illegally imported



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items are stored in two warehouses at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Contacted, AKM Nurul Huda Azad, customs commissioner, said one of the warehouses was supposed to contain 200 kg gold. But officers on Saturday found only around 145 kg.

"We have sought assistance from the police and intelligence agencies after learning about the matter," he added.

As per the Customs Act 1969, intelligence officers or law enforcers are required to submit seized gold bars or jewellery to their nearest customs house within 24 hours.

The customs must deposit the gold

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FIRST DAY ON EXPRESSWAY Commuters mostly elated

Some irked by bottlenecks at a few points including Banani

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Azad Hossain, an employee at a private company, is beside himself with joy. He finds it difficult to process that the travails of his daily travel to his office have forever changed.

A resident of airport area, he travels in his car to his Farmgate office every morning on weekdays, a journey that usually takes him more than an hour. But as he took the elevated expressway yesterday morning, it took him only 10 minutes to reach Farmgate.

"I took the elevated expressway at 10:04 in the morning. I reached Indira Road by the time my clock struck 10:14 am. Who would have thought it would be possible to cover 11 kilometres in just 10 minutes?"

Rasel Ahmed, a businessman from Uttara, also travels to Farmgate on a regular basis for work-related meetings. He sounded equally excited about his experience of the country's first elevated expressway.

"Just two days ago, it took me nearly two hours to reach Farmgate from Uttara. But yesterday afternoon, riding in my private car, I left for Farmgate at 1:49 pm. I drove up the elevated expressway and arrived there at 1:57 pm," said Hossain.

A 11.5 km section of the 19.73 km elevated expressway was formally opened to the public yesterday morning, ushering in a new era of vehicular movement in the traffic choked capital city. The section that

PHOTO ON PAGE 12

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Over 2,800 BNP men sued over clash with cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajbari

A total of 2,816 BNP leaders and activists have been sued over Saturday's clash with police during the party's procession marking its founding anniversary.

Sohel Rana, sub-inspector of Rajbari Sadar Police Station, filed one of the cases against 111 named and 2,000-2,200 unnamed people on Saturday night.

Meanwhile, Bidhan Chandra Mollik, sub-inspector of Rajbari Railway Police Station, filed another case against five people and 450-500 unnamed others the same night.

According to locals, Ali Newaz Mahmud Khayyam, former Rajbari lawmaker and former president of

When the procession reached the court gate intersection, police intercepted it, triggering the clash.

district unit BNP, led a procession with thousands of leaders and activists on the occasion of BNP's 45th founding anniversary from his residence around noon on Saturday.

When the procession reached the court gate intersection, police intercepted it, triggering the clash. The police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to bring the situation under control.

Three policemen and 15-17 BNP activists were injured at the time.

Afterwards, some of the dispersed BNP men moved to Rajbari Railway Station, adjacent to the railway platform, around 1:30pm.

The police asked the men to keep a calm and orderly situation at the place, however, at one point, the BNP activists allegedly attacked the police.

Somnath Basu, officer-in-charge of Rajbari Railway Police Station, confirmed that a case was filed over the incident and added that no one was arrested yet.

Contacted, Mohammad Sahadat, officer-in-charge of Rajbari Police Station, said, "A case has been filed on charges of sabotage, attack on police, obstruction of government work, vandalism, and causing public suffering."

"28 people have been arrested in the case. Attempts are being made to arrest the other accused. All the arrestees were sent to jail via court orders," Kamrul Hasan, sub-inspector of Rajbari Sadar Police Station, told this newspaper.

Meanwhile, BNP leader Ali Newaz said, "I have not received a copy of the case statement. I will speak on the matter after receiving the copy."



EAT LIKE A KING for less than Tk 100 at Hakim Chatter

RBR

A quarter of a boiled egg stuffed inside a tiny handful of spicy potato mash – this deep-fried breaded croquette is just Tk 10. You could easily gobble up at least six of these egg chops, as the soft yolk gets addictive with that hint of burnt dry chilli.

A similar mix of chicken with half a plate of khichuri is Tk 35 and a glass of chilled lassi, kaacha aam, or papaya juice, to gulp it all down with, is just Tk 25.

The menu also boasts a clever fusion of chicken sandwich, fried in a savoury French toast style, and a small bowl of haleem for Tk 40. These items make for lunch or snacks – all under Tk 100 – for Dhaka University students at the famous Hakim Chatter.

A small makeshift cart-styled canteen under the canopy of large trees, Hakim Chatter is situated at a prime location, just beside the DU library premises. There is no seating arrangement except for a wooden log placed on some brick steps, and yet, morning, noon or night, the place is buzzing with animated chatter and banter from students gathered there during breaks.

"Every day, we cook about 20 kgs of khichuri. We use the best quality rice grains, mixed lentils and spices; this is one of our popular items."

We also serve 10 kgs of steamed rice and approximately 8 kgs of haleem [a thick mixed pulses broth with beef]. We do this every day and all year round," said Shaheen, a cheerful youth, who has worked as a server at the canteen for the last 9 years. A group of 12 to 14 youths work as either cooks, servers, or manager, from 8:00AM to 10:00PM.

"We make a decent sale on a daily basis, leaving aside the dues many students have with us. It is so crowded that at times we also forget the faces of who ate what. It's a student area after all, and we have to keep that in mind. We will suffer losses, but then there are profits too," said Delwar Hossain, the current owner of the



stall. As the story goes, two friends, Hakim and Nannu Miah, started selling tea at this corner some 40 odd years ago. They were so amiable with the students and DU staffers that after Hakim, who was fondly called chacha or uncle, passed away, they named the place Hakim Chatter to honour his memories.

Now, Delwar Hossain, son of

Nannu Miah, took over the reign in 2001. He took a 99-year lease from the university authorities and stated selling food since 2003.

"Students didn't have any place to have quality food around the campus. They had to go to Shahbagh or Old Dhaka for lunch. On that note, the authority gave us a lease with the condition that we will sell good food and maintain quality standards. We don't sell leftovers. In fact, whatever we make is sold out that very day. We insist on changing the frying oil every day. We too eat this food along with the students, so quality control is very important to us," said Delwar.

After paying the lease rent of Tk 18,000, and the staffers' salaries, Delwar has a profit of around Tk 25,000 to Tk 30,000.

"The profit varies according to the season. During winter, students want warm food, so sales spike. During monsoon and summer however, business suffers a bit."

Students are always strapped for money. For them, a lunch at Hakim Chatter under Tk 100, where quality is maintained, is the best possible option. And this place is not just crowded by students or teachers, but ex-students as well, who often visit the place for a cup of tea or lassi for nostalgia's sake.

Hakim Chatter is one of Dhaka's best hunts for inexpensive quality food; and everyone is welcome to it. So, the next time you are in the vicinity, definitely give the haleem, khichuri, or the dim chop a shot.

Remittance dips 21.5pc in August

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and the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh fix the dollar rate for collecting remittances as per the unofficial directive of the central bank.

Last Thursday, the two bodies set Tk 109.5 for a dollar from September 3 from Tk 109 previously.

But the exchange rate prevailing at the korb market is Tk 117 to Tk 118.

Remittance inflows through the banking channels have shrunk due to inappropriate policies by the central bank, said two chief executives of private banks who asked not to be named to speak candidly on the issue.

"How can we get remittance at Tk 109.50 a dollar? And we can't even

offer more to remitters due to the central bank's order," said one of them.

The inflows continue to contract for the fixed exchange rate, said the other bank CEO.

"Our exchange rate is not sustainable and that is why a large number of Bangladeshi expatriates are sending remittance through informal channels like hundi and other online systems," Mujeri said.

Now, there are a host of online channels for sending remittance smoothly other than the banking channels, he said, adding that the terms and conditions will have to be easier in banking channels.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead

economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, echoed the same.

The remittance inflow decreased due to the exchange rate premium between the formal and informal exchange rates.

The difference in the exchange rate between the formal and informal markets is called the premium.

A World Bank study found remittance inflows through the formal channels decrease by 3.5 percent if the premium offered by the informal market exchange rate increases by 1 percent, he said.

BB spokesman Md Mezbaul Haque declined to comment on the matter.

"We will analyse why the remittance inflow decreased."

Commuters mostly elated

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was opened stretches from the airport to Farmgate.

Mostly private cars were seen plying through the expressway all day long. Public buses operated on their regular routes.

At some entry and exit points, however, city dwellers experienced traffic gridlocks on the first day of public movement on the elevated expressway.

In Banani, vehicles coming off the expressway added to existing tailbacks on the thoroughfare below. The closure of a ramp near Banani Police Outpost further worsened the situation. Passengers in some other areas including Mohakhali, Moghbazar and Bijoy Sarani also complained about hour-long delays.

Touhidul Islam, a private car driver who was headed to Moghbazar from Banani, said, "I saw a tailback as soon as I left home. I thought the roads might be empty today. But no local bus used the expressway."

Didar Hossain, another private car driver who travelled to Mohakhali from the airport area, said, "It took me 15 minutes on the expressway. But after driving down on the street, I got stuck for 30 minutes due to traffic."

Talking to journalists, Abu Saleh Md Raihan, joint commissioner of traffic (north) at Dhaka Metropolitan Police, yesterday said, "Traffic congestion was seen at the exit points in Farmgate, Mohakhali, Kakoli, and Kawla areas due to heavy pressure of vehicles that used the elevated expressway. As today is the first day, commuters on the city streets faced some inconveniences."

Kawsar Hossain, who travelled to Mohakhali from Moghbazar, was riding on a Balaka Paribahan bus. He said, "I got on at 8:00 am but was stuck in traffic for almost two hours."

About why buses were not seen on the elevated expressway, bus owners said public buses make multiple stops to pick up passengers

along their usual routes. This is not possible on the controlled-access expressway. That's why they are avoiding the expressway and sticking to the streets, they added.

Along the 11-km section of the expressway, buses pick up passengers from Khilgaon, Kuril, Kurmitola, and the Army Stadium areas.

Commenting on the issue, Adil Mohammad Khan, executive director of the Institute for Planning and Development, said, "Public buses not using the expressway means congestion on streets won't go down."

According to project sources, in the 15 hours between 6:00 am and 9:00pm yesterday, a total of 16,384 vehicles used the expressway.

The maximum traffic was seen entering from the airport end, with 9,052 vehicles getting on the expressway from this point.

In terms of revenue generation, over Tk 13, 30,160 was collected during the first 15 hours of operations.

55kg gold vanishes from customs godown

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permanently or temporarily to Bangladesh Bank within seven days, says the law.

Asked why gold was stored in a godown with other items, Azad said owners were supposed to take the items after paying fines and taxes. "That's why these were not deposited to Bangladesh Bank."

"It seems the gold was stolen in phases. Usually, two AROs, each with a set of keys, are assigned to oversee these two godowns," he said.

When taking charge of the godowns on November 10, last year, the AROs, now under investigation, were officially handed over the inventory, he said.

"If they signed the papers without physically checking what's in there, then it is their responsibility," he

added.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

On August 14, senior officials found six gold bars in a comparatively less secure place in a godown.

Officials then launched a thorough examination into the items that had arrived since 2020. Goldsmiths were called in to measure how much gold was there.

But in the early hours of Saturday, during the inventory examination, two AROs informed senior officials that a godown appeared to have been broken in, according to sources.

Customs officers then contacted law enforcers.

"After conducting a forensic investigation, law enforcers found no evidence of unauthorised entry into the godown and suggested that there

might be involvement of insiders," said a senior police officer involved in the investigation.

Customs officials at the scene first told cops that the thief might have entered the godown through a broken tin window of a toilet.

"But it appeared that the tin was cut earlier. And it is not possible for someone to enter through the tiny space," the officer told The Daily Star, adding that there was no security camera there.

"Customs personnel responsible for security could have been involved in the theft," said the officer, requesting anonymity.

Of the missing gold, around eight kg was seized on August 13 this year, and 47kg was seized at different times since 2020, they said.

Tigers ensure Asia Cup

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have a better net run-rate than Bangladesh but in no scenario, both Afghanistan and Sri Lanka will be able to have a better net run-rate than Bangladesh, which essentially sees the Tigers through to the next stage of the tournament.

Yesterday, Bangladesh looked a totally different side than the one that played in Kandy against Sri Lanka in the first game. Needing a win to stay alive in the continental championship, the Tigers came up with a spirited batting display on a batting-friendly surface.

In an attempt to tackle the long-standing opening slot issues, Miraz was promoted over the batting order as he paired with Mohammad Naim. The duo did a commendable job, giving Bangladesh a solid start with a 60-run stand – the first time in over a year that the Tigers saw a fifty-plus opening stand in ODIs.

Naim was dismissed after a 32-ball 28, but Miraz continued to pick up his second ODI hundred. During

a 119-ball 112, laced with seven boundaries and three maximums, Miraz also starred in a 194-run unbroken stand with Shanto for the third wicket before having to retire hurt in the 43rd over due to a cramp. Their partnership is now the best ever for any wicket for Bangladesh in the tournament.

Shanto, meanwhile, continued his purple patch, following up his 89 in the previous game with a 104-run knock off 105 deliveries yesterday. Shanto, who also scored his second ODI ton, dominated a strong Afghan bowling line-up, comprising the likes of Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, and Fazalhaq Farooqi.

The efforts of Shanto and Miraz were aptly complemented by the bowlers, with pace spearhead Taskin Ahmed claiming a total of four wickets in 8.3 overs while giving away 44 runs.

Young seamer Shoriful Islam gave the Tigers the much-needed breakthroughs, getting rid of the dangerous Rahmanullah Gurbaz in the second over. Shoriful also removed a

well-set Afghan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi at 51 off 60 deliveries before claiming the wicket of Gulbadin Naib at the latter stage of the innings.

Fakhrul, Rizvi

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out the charges to them. Before that, the magistrate dismissed petitions submitted to discharge them of the charges in the case.

The magistrate fixed September 20 for the start of the case trial.

According to the case statement, a group of BNP leaders and activists led by Fakhrul and Rizvi torched a garbage truck at Bijoy Nagar in Paltan around 7:00pm on December 9, 2012, when the driver was going to Mutual landfill.

Later, a case was filed against Fakhrul, Rizvi, and 20 others with Paltan Model Police Station in this regard.

After an investigation, police on October 13, 2017, submitted a charge sheet against the eight accused.

Bangladeshi man killed in BSF firing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead allegedly by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at Rowmari border in Kurigram in the early hours of yesterday.

The incident took place at Behular Char border of Shoulmari union near the Border Pillar 1062-25 at around 1:00am, said police.

The deceased, Manik Mia, 35, of Behular Char village of Rowmari upazila, was reportedly involved in cow smuggling.

According to police and locals, 10-12 members of a cattle smuggling gang went to Behular Char border to bring in Indian cows at around 1:00am.

At that time, BSF members of Kuchnimara camp of the 45 Battalion, who were patrolling the border, opened fire on them.

Manik Mia was shot in the chest and died on the spot. Later, his associates recovered the body, police said.

When they attempted to secretly bury the body in the Banchar Char area in the afternoon, Rowmari police went to the spot on information, recovered Manik's body and brought it to the police station.

2 missing persons found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Police recovered two bodies in Jamalpur's Sarishabari and Dewanganj upazilas yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Aminul Islam, 22, of Sabujpur village in Dewanganj upazila, and Johura Khatun, 80, of Pothiarpar village in Sarishabari upazila.

Johura went missing on Saturday, and Aminul went missing last morning.

Mohabbat Kabir, officer-in-charge of Sarishabari Police Station, said Johura Khatun went missing after leaving her house Saturday morning.

Later, locals yesterday found her body floating in a ditch close to her house.

The police handed over the body to her family as there was no complaint.

In Dewanganj, Aminul went missing in the morning when he went fishing in a local river, said Biplob Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Dewanganj Police Station.

After three hours, firefighters recovered his body.

Later, police handed over the body to his family without autopsy.

N Korea stages tactical nuclear attack drill

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea conducted a simulated tactical nuclear attack drill that included two long-range cruise missiles in an exercise to "warn enemies" the country would be prepared in case of nuclear war, the KCNA state news agency said yesterday.

KCNA said the drill was successfully carried out on Saturday and two cruise missiles carrying mock nuclear warheads were fired towards the West Sea of the Korean peninsula and flew 1,500 km (930 miles) at a pre-set altitude of 150 meters.

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We maintain friendly ties with all: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Bangladesh has been maintaining a friendly relationship equally with all, focusing on improving the people's socio-economic condition.

Stressing that Bangladesh has been moving forward following the "Friendship to all, malice towards none" policy, which was incorporated by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the foreign policy, the PM said, "We've a very good relationship with every country. Since we're following the policy the Father of the Nation had

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Motorbikers wait at the closed City Filling Station on Satrasta in the capital for refuelling yesterday. (Inset) Oil tankers pictured inside the Jamuna Oil Depot in Fatullah, Naranganj. Thousands of people suffered yesterday as a faction of petrol pump owners and workers in the fuel distribution went on strike.

Fuel strike postponed till Sept 30

16-hour supply disruption makes people suffer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fuel strike, that caused immense public suffering, was postponed yesterday till September 30.

The 16-hour strike was called by a faction of the Bangladesh Petrol Pump Owners' Association (BPPOA).

Syed Sajjadul Karim Kabul, president of the faction, announced the postponement of the strike in a press conference after a meeting with Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation officials.

"As the talks went well, we postponed the nationwide strike," said Kabul, adding the government assured them that their demands would be met by September 30.

The strike was called with a three-point demand — fixing the sales commission for pump owners at 7.5 percent per litre, setting the tank-lorry economic life to 50 years, and issuing a gazette notification recognising the pump owners as "commission agents".

Before the announcement, the energy division yesterday issued a gazette notification recognising pump owners as agents of BPC.

Meanwhile, the strike caught people off guard. Long queues of vehicles were seen at fuel pumps across the country.

In the capital, most fuel stations were open in the morning and people could get fuel. But many of the stations ran dry as the day progressed.

Mohammad Nazmul Haque, president of another faction of BPPOA, said the situation arose because strikers were preventing fuel trucks from leaving the fuel depots across the country.

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Jails have 34,337 more prisoners than capacity

Home boss tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Against the capacity of accommodating 42,866 prisoners, 77,203 inmates are staying at 68 jails across the country, said Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Replying to a query of ruling AL MP M Abdul Latif from Chattogram-II, he said among them, 40,937 are men and 1,929 are women.

Kamal said all the jails except for Jashore, Sylhet, Dinajpur, Feni, Pirojpur, and Madaripur have more prisoners than their capacity. He said expansion of Mymensingh, Cumilla, Khulna, Narsingdi, and Jamalpur prisons is in progress. Once the work is completed, they will accommodate 5,000 more prisoners.

Childhood lost in dandy addiction

Hardware shops, shoemakers sell them the adhesive glue, claim street children

DIPAN NANDY and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

It was around 10:30am on Sunday.

A ten-year-old kid was seen standing in front of the Jahir Raihan Cultural Complex in Sutrapur, clutching a worn-out polythene bag in his hands.

When the correspondent asked what was in his hand, the boy casually replied, "I am having Dandy."

"I feel better when I have this, it takes my hunger away. I do not have any family, I live alone," the boy added.

He says that he collects dandy from two primary sources — hardware shops and shoemakers.

"I frequently visit various hardware shops in the Sutrapur vicinity, and buy a small pot of glue for Tk 70 to Tk 80, although

its actual price is Tk 60," he said.

"A single glue pot can be sniffled three times for three to four hours each time," he said.



Glue-sniffing has emerged as a prevalent and alarming practice among street children.

Commonly referred to as "dandy," the adhesive glue used by shoe repairers contains toluene, a sweet-smelling and intoxicating hydrocarbon. Abandoned by family and looked down upon by society, these children, mainly

aged between 10-16, usually consume dandy to satisfy their hunger and get temporary relief from harsh realities of their life.

Upon information from Arman, these correspondents visited a number of hardware shop owners in the Sutrapur about the sale of these glue pots.

"We do not sell dandies to street children. Because we know they are addicted," Ismail, a salesman at Mukti Traders, one of the hardware shops in the area, told this newspaper.

However, Russell (pseudonym), a salesman at Khaja Traders, admitted, "When our owner isn't around, we sell glue pots to street children for some extra income."

"Not only us, but other shops also do the same," he added.

Contacted, Rashed Hasan, the

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Navy Chief Nazmul Hassan promoted to Admiral

UNB, Dhaka

Chief of Naval Staff M Nazmul Hassan has been promoted to the rank of Admiral.

The navy chief was conferred the new rank in the presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday, said a press release.

He was adorned with the new rank badge by Lt Gen Ataul Hakim Sarwar Hasan, acting chief of army staff, and Air Chief Marshal Shaikh Abdul Hannan.

PM's Security Affairs Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique; PM's Principal Secretary M Tofazzel Hossain Miah; Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Lt Gen Waker-Uz Zaman; and Senior Secretary of Defence Ministry Golam Md Hashibul Alam were present on the occasion.

It's for govt's own interest Say Ganatantra Mancha leaders on CSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The people of Bangladesh will fight for their civic rights like 1971 to bring down the current government, said leaders of Ganatantra Mancha yesterday.

The government is trying to curb people's rights by implementing acts like the Cyber Security Act 2023, they said at a discussion titled "Cyber Security Act: A New Tool to Suppress Freedom of Speech" at the Jatiya Press Club.

Addressing the programme, Nagorik Oikyo President Mahmudur Rahman Manna expressed concern over the lack of specific definitions within the law, which leaves scopes for misinterpretation and misuse.

"Law enforcement agencies will define it at their will, which could be very dangerous," he said.

Hasnat Kaiyum, chief coordinator of Rastra Sangskar Andolon, pointed out the sacrifices made by millions of Bangladeshis during the 1971 Liberation War, and voiced opposition to the current government's actions.

"The current government is curbing our freedom of expression through the implementation of such laws [CSA]. This must not continue, and we will fight against it..."

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Japan to consider increasing aid to Rohingyas

National Diet delegation set to visit Cox's Bazar camps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Japan will consider increasing its humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh, a prominent Japanese lawmaker said yesterday.

"We are planning to visit Cox's Bazar tomorrow. We would like to see the situation and provide some humanitarian assistance based on the actual needs there," said Nakanishi Yusuke, director of the committee on general affairs, House of Councillors at the National Diet.

A three-member delegation of Japanese parliamentarians headed by Nakanishi is currently visiting Bangladesh.

Nakanishi told this while talking with reporters after a meeting with Planning Minister MA Mannan at his office in the capital.

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Iwama Kiminori, among others, accompanied the Japanese delegation.

Planning Minister Mannan said he has urged Japan to extend its support for the safe and dignified repatriation of the Rohingyas to Myanmar.

Both Japan and Myanmar are good friends of Bangladesh, he said.

Meanwhile, responding to a query on reported dissatisfaction of Japanese businesspersons in Bangladesh, Nakanishi said they are planning to have a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Maisha, a resident of the capital's Mirpur-11, is battling dengue for the last 11 days. The a five-year-old is currently being treated at Shishu Hospital. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

BR workers' demo halt train services for 5hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Temporary workers of Bangladesh Railway yesterday staged a sit-in at Malibagh level crossing in Dhaka, demanding job regularisation.

The protest led to a halt in train services between Dhaka and the rest of the country for more than five hours, starting at 10:00am at Malibagh.

The services resumed after police intervened and dispersed the protesting workers by charging batons around 2:15pm.

Superintendent of Dhaka Railway Police, Anwar Hossain, confirmed that seven individuals were detained during the operation.

"We have long been petitioning with the authorities concerned for their permanent job status. However, despite engaging with Director General and Secretary of Bangladesh Railways, the issue remains

IGP Mamun given senior secy status

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

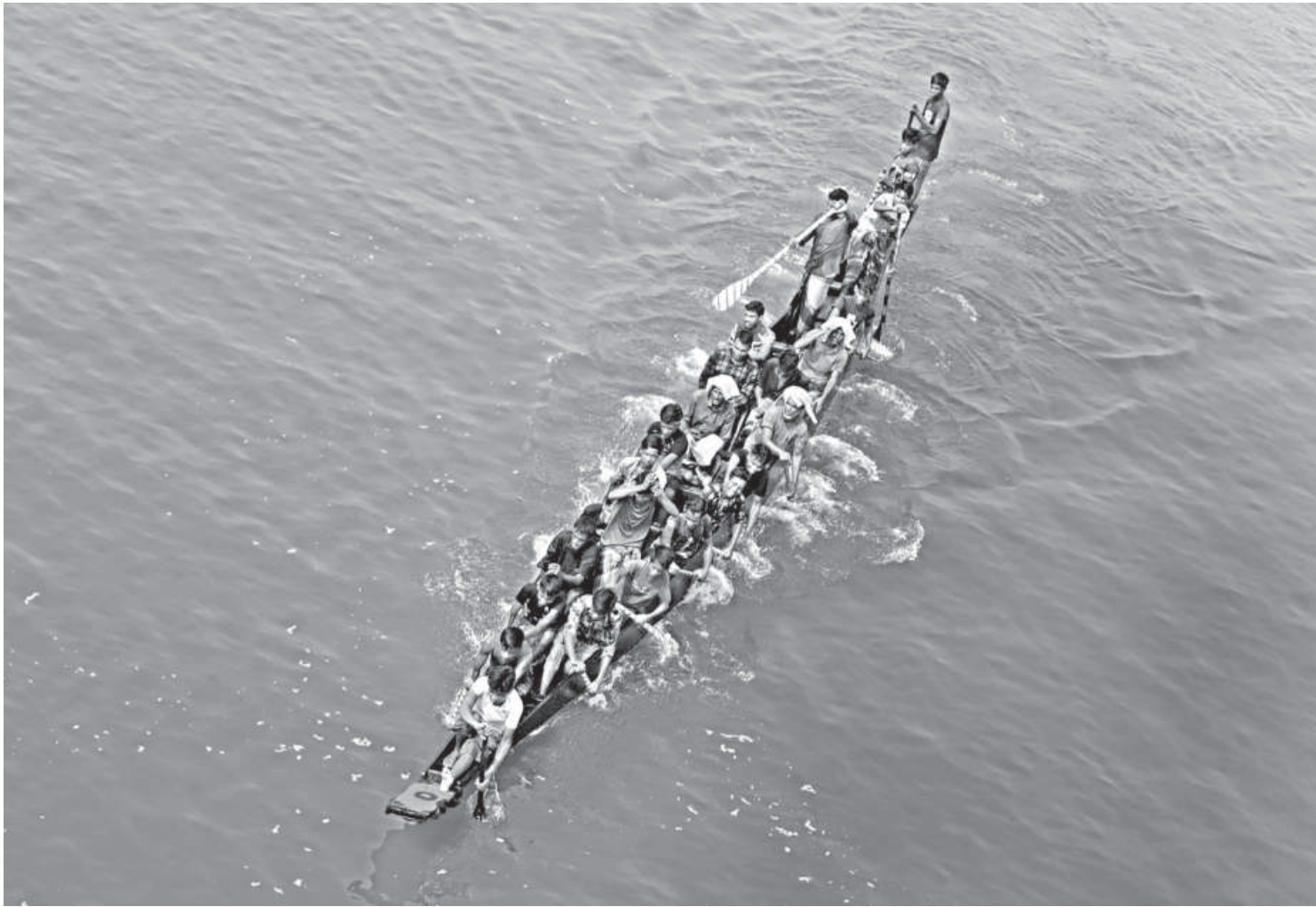
Inspector General of Police (IGP) Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun has been awarded the status of senior secretary.

The public administration ministry issued a notification in this regard yesterday.

Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun is serving as IGP on a one-and-a-half-year contract at the end of his service period. He will serve as IGP till July 11, 2024.

According to the notification, Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun has been given the senior secretary status for a total period of one-and-a-half-year from January 12, 2023 to July 11, 2024 after revising the notification issued on January 9 regarding the contract-based appointment.

BSS adds, Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun took the charge as the country's 31st IGP on 30 September, 2022.



Holding tight onto the paddles, young boatmen try their best to outrun others as the race on the Piyain River in Sylhet's Gowainghat yesterday. Every monsoon, boat races are organised around the district.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

EMBANKMENT COLLAPSE IN RUPSHA

40,000 exposed to erosion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An embankment on the mighty Rupsha River collapsed in Amirpur union under Khulna's Batiaghata upazila, leaving residents gripped with panic and uncertainty.

Around seven-kilometre stretch of the river bank along Amirpur union, from Rupsha railway bridge to Birat area, has been eroding for over 20 years.

With the recent collapse of the part of embankment build by Water Development Board, residents of Amirpur, Kariavita, Hasimpur, Dattapara, Narayankhali, and

Talapara village are having sleepless nights.

They urged authorities concerned to step up immediately and dump stone-cement blocks on the river bank to prevent erosion.

If the 10-kilometre-long dam collapses further, it will affect 40,000 people of the three unions.

Visiting the area recently, this correspondent saw WDB embankment of Rupsha bridge (Khanjahan Ali Bridge) has eroded at many places, particularly severely in the northern part. WDB has been repairing the dam using sand bags, while erosion already damaged

many places including Jabusa area of Rupsha upazila, and Kariya, Boro Kariya areas of Batiaghata upazila.

"We are very worried about the erosion as our land lays lower than river bed. If river water intrudes into our area, it won't be able to drain out," said Ismail Hossain of Boro Kariya village.

Besides, saline water will gravely affect the agricultural land and homesteads, he added.

Tobarok Hossain a resident of Karerton village said he lost five bighas of land in last eight years, while rest of his two bighas of land

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Separate land body for indigenous people demanded

DU CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Adivasi Parishad yesterday reiterated its demand for a separate land commission for the indigenous people.

The demand came at a rally in the capital's Shahbagh, marking the Parishad's three decades.

The speakers said that before the previous national election, the Awami League government promised that if the AL went to power, they would meet their demands, but to no avail.

They urged the government to meet the demand immediately; otherwise, they will wage a tougher programme, they said.

The indigenous communities of the country's plain land and hilly areas have long demanded their constitutional recognition as "Adivasi".

Their other demands include a five percent quota in jobs and higher education and implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord.

PIROJPUR-1, 2 Demarcation legal: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday declared legal the Election Commission's decision to demarcate the constituencies of Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim (Pirojpur-1) and former minister Anwar Hossain Manju (Pirojpur-2).

The court also rejected a writ petition filed by five voters from the two constituencies challenging the legality of the EC's decision.

The bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Muhammad Mahbub-Ul Islam delivered the verdict after holding hearing of the rule issued earlier over the matter.

The court said there was no breach of law in the EC's decision regarding demarcation of Pirojpur 1 and 2 constituencies.

Following the writ petition, the HC bench on July 30 this year issued the rule questioning the legality of the EC's decision to demarcate the two constituencies in Pirojpur.

The EC issued a gazette notification on June 1 demarcating the two constituencies.

Indurkani upazila of Pirojpur-2 constituency has been included in Pirojpur-1 and Nesarabad upazila of Pirojpur-1 has been included in Pirojpur-2, according to the notification.

Kuet observes 20th founding anniv


OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) has celebrated its 20th founding anniversary with much enthusiasm and festivity.


Kuet was established on September 1, 2003.

Acting Chairman (Additional) of the University Grant Commission, Prof Muhammed Alamgir, along with Kuet Vice-Chancellor Prof Mihir Ranjan Halder, inaugurated the programme on Friday.

After that, a colourful rally started in front of the administrative building of the university, went around Fulbari Gate, and ended on the campus. Students, teachers, officials, and employees of the university, along with guests, joined the rally.



Dhaka North City Corporation
Office of the Executive Engineer
Engineering Department, Electrical Circle
Gulshan Center Point, level-9, Plot-23-26,
Road-90, Gulshan-2, Dhaka.



শেখ হাসিনার মুদ্রাধীন
গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

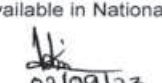
Memo No. 46.10.0000.121.14.44.23-112
Date-03/09/2023

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of

Sl. No.	Tender ID No./ Package No. & Reference No.	Name of the Works	Tender Publishing Date & Time	Tender Closing/Opening Date & Time
01.	868813, e-GP/46.10.0000.121.14.44.23 dt:30.05.2023	Development of Electrical Wiring, light fittings and related indoor electrical materials works at Mohammadpur (Zonal Office) under Zone-5.	31-Aug-2023 20:00	17-Sep-2023 14:00

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 e-GP registered banks' branches. Further information and guidelines are available in National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


 ০৩/০৯/২৩
(Md. Abdur Rahim Miah)
 Executive Engineer (addl.charge)
 Electrical Circle
 Dhaka North City Corporation.
 Phone : 02-222264778
 e-mail : ee_elec@dncc.gov.bd

GD-1343

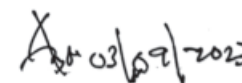
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Rajshahi PWD Division-2, Rajshahi
Phone: 0247-812276; Fax: 772279

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works:

e-Tender ID No.	Name of the work	Last time for tender security submission	Tender/proposal closing date and time
870134	Construction of 3 Storied Building with 3 Storied Foundation of Bagmara Upazila Model Masjid in the District of Rajshahi under the project of Establishment of 560 Model Masjid and Islamic Cultural Centers in Zilla and Upazilla of Bangladesh	02-Oct-2023, 11:00	02-Oct-2023, 12:00

This is 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 (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any e-GP 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).


 ০৩/০৯/২৩
A.B.M Humayun Kabir
 Executive Engineer
 Rajshahi PWD Division-2, Rajshahi
 Email: ee_raj2@pwd.gov.bd

GD-1350

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


Memo No: CMCH/Tender/2023-2024/Non-MSR (Non-Diet)/10366
Date: 03-09-2023.

e-GP Tender Notice (OTM)

This is an online tender, where only e-tenders will accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/ hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details, please contact support desk contract numbers. e-Tender are invited in e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Brigadier General Md. Shamim Ahsan, Director, Chittagong Medical College Hospital, Chattogram for the Procurement of:

SL. No.	Tender Id	Name of Goods	Tender/ Proposal Last Selling Date & Time	Tender/ Proposal Closing Date & Time	Tender/ Proposal Opening Date & Time
1	869582	Procurement of Lighting and Banner for the Fiscal Year 2023-2024	17-Sep-2023 15:00	18-Sep-2023 14:00	18-Sep-2023 14:00
2	869584	Procurement of Hospital Waste Management for the Fiscal Year 2023-2024	17-Sep-2023 15:00	18-Sep-2023 14:00	18-Sep-2023 14:00
3	869588	Procurement of Broadband Internet Services and Hosting for Website for the Fiscal Year 2023-2024	17-Sep-2023 15:00	18-Sep-2023 14:00	18-Sep-2023 14:00
4	869603	Procurement of Washing Dirty Linen Items & Ironing for the Fiscal Year 2023-2024	17-Sep-2023 15:00	18-Sep-2023 14:00	18-Sep-2023 14:00

For pursuer e-Tender details can be downloaded on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). e-tender will be accepted only as stated in above list, accepted tenders will be opened online as stated in above list.


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

GD-1342

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer
Sylhet Sadar, Sylhet
www.lged.gov.bd

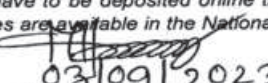
Memo No. 46.02.9162.000.07.006.2022- 452
Dated: 03/09/2023

e-tender Notice No: 01/2023-2024 Open Tender Method:(OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following works:

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Name of Work	Tender Closing Date & Time
1	864403	e-Tender/PEDP4 /SYL/SAD/2022-23/W14-02765	Construction of Boundary Wall & Gate of Dupagul GPS,Debpur GPS,Chatal GPS under Upazila- Sylhet Sadar, Dist: Sylhet.(2 nd Call)	17-Sep-2023 15:00
2	864264	e-Tender/PEDP4 /SYL/SAD/2022-23/W14-02768	Construction of Boundary Wall and Gate of Khasherbari-GPS,Kazi Jalaluddin Girls GPS,Jalopara GPS,Jangail GPS Under Upazila-Sylhet Sadar, Dist: Sylhet.(2 nd Call)	17-Sep-2023 15:00
3	864306	e-Tender/PEDP4 /SYL/SAD/2022-23/W14-02769	Construction of Boundary Wall and Gate of Shahjalalbaraz GPS,Satar GPS,Sheik Para GPS Under Upazila-Sylhet Sadar, Dist: Sylhet.(2 nd Call)	17-Sep-2023 15:00
	864401	e-Tender/PEDP4 /SYL/SAD/2022-23/W14-2766	Construction of Boundary Wall and Gate of Baistila GPS, Amberkhana Coloni GPS, Amberkhana Dhargagate GPS, Lougul GPS Under Upazila-Sylhet Sadar, Dist: Sylhet.(2 nd Call)	17-Sep-2023 15:00
	864402	e-Tender/PEDP4 /SYL/SAD/2022-23/W14-2767	Construction of Boundary Wall and Gate of Medeni Mahal GPS, Mokambari GPS, Nowagow Shajalal GPS, Ramkrishno GPS Under Upazila-Sylhet Sadar, Dist: Sylhet.(2 nd Call)	17-Sep-2023 15:00

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 (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks' branches up to 17/09/2023,14:00. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


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(Md. Hasanuzzaman)
 Upazila Engineer,
 LGED
 Sylhet, Sadar, Sylhet
 Mobile: 01708-161696
 E-mail: ue.sylhet-s@lged.gov.b

GD- 1347

ENTERTAINMENT'S RISING STARS

Dance and dreams have no gender: MOFASSAL AL ALIF

Fuelled by his inclination towards global dance forms, nurtured by his love for Bollywood films, the talented artiste enrolled in a two-year dance programme at Terrence Lewis Training Institute in Mumbai in 2018.

ANTARA RAISA

"When I was little, I remember humming tunes and dancing in front of a mirror by myself," said Mofassal Al Alif with a smile tugging at his lips. "Despite living in a village where music and dance schools were a distant dream, the fire of dance burned vigorously within me."

Within only six years, Alif has established himself as one of the emerging dancers and choreographers in the country. He is also the founder of Alifia Dance Atelier, an academy where dancers are empowered to explore various international dance forms, including Bollywood, hip-hop, jazz, and contemporary.

Alif first stepped into the arena of dance under the guidance of his guru MR Wasek, after



Fuelled by his inclination towards global dance forms, nurtured by his love for Bollywood films, the talented artiste enrolled in a two-year dance programme at Terrence Lewis Training Institute in Mumbai in 2018.

Upon completion of his training, he returned home in 2020. Alifia Dance Atelier emerged the following year in June, providing a platform for young dancers.

"There is no doubt that the traditional dance forms prevalent here are rich. However, a dedicated contemporary dance industry, akin to Bollywood or the West, is still a distant dream," added Alif, who has been tirelessly working to fill this void through various initiatives.

Creating magic on stage, Alif and his crew, Alifia Dance Squad, are now a popular name, performing and choreographing hundreds of corporate shows and events.

Stressing the need for more trainers in global dance forms, he said, "While the contemporary dance market in Bangladesh may be small, it offers ample opportunities for growth. However, without trainers, this transition would stop and the industry would fail to flourish."

Being a performer, a mentor, and a freelance choreographer, he also emphasised the role of motivation for young dancers.

"Initiatives, such as reality shows, would provide them the recognition they deserve. Also, instead of just putting the spotlight on legends or celebrities, ensuring that each (background) dancer is utilised as per their capacity would also inspire many to work harder and improve," he added.

Alif is determined to kindle a passion for dance amongst the youth. "I have seen that most young people do not want to learn dance or lack consistency. However, there is no substitute for training. Alifia Dance Atelier, provides scholarships to such dancers so that they can access free training," he shared.

"Don't let others dictate your path. Dance and dreams have no gender, and art knows no bounds," Alif concluded.



he moved to the capital to pursue academics at Jahangirnagar University.

"I didn't face much criticism from my parents for choosing to become a professional dancer.

However, they preferred that I choose a traditional career path, as dancing might not have been financially lucrative," he mentioned.

Yet, his journey was full of challenges. "I had to repeatedly listen to taunts from the neighbours as they all believed that dancing was definitely not for men."



PHOTOS: NAZMUL HOSSEN



'Antarjal' steps back as 'Jawan' arrives in Bangladesh.

Film enthusiasts had been eagerly anticipating the much-talked about blockbuster battle between Atlee's *Jawan* and Dipankar Dey's *Antarjal*. However, the makers of *Antarjal* decided to withdraw from the race and postponed the film for the third time this year.

Sources close to the movie have confirmed this news to The Daily Star, announcing that the film will now be released on September 22.

Previously, the film, starring Siam Ahmed, Bidya Sinha Mim, ABM Sumon, and Sunerah Binte Kamal, faced delays in theatres due to technical issues and delayed censor certification. *Antarjal* was originally scheduled for release on September 8.

Five Bangladeshi films to enthrall the Netherlands



Five short films by talented Bangladeshi filmmakers are set to grace the screens of the Netherlands. This exhibition, titled *Best of Bangladesh*, has been organised by the Bangladesh Embassy in the Netherlands and is scheduled to light up the screens today and tomorrow.

Nuhash Humayun's *Moshari*, Mahde Hasan's *I Am Time* and *Photograph of a School Teacher*, Golam Rabbani's *Surot*, and Fuaduzzaman Fuad's *Salvation of Tree* will be screened during this two-day special film exhibition.

The event's primary goal is to introduce European cinephiles to the rich history of Bangladesh's cinema and culture. Lead by the dynamic young filmmaker Arifur Rahman, this cinematic extravaganza promises to be a visual treat.

COUNTRYWIDE

Punjee people opting for alternative livelihood

MINTU DESHWARA

Sixty-year-old Suján Dolo, a resident of Balukona Punjee, indigenous village, in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila, used to be solely involved in cultivating betel leaves for a living.

However, due to different problematic reasons like land grabbing, fall in prices of betel leaves and its vulnerability to various plant diseases in recent years, he had to face continuous losses for long.

But, after being listed as one of the ultra-poor indigenous persons, he got a call from the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) in December 2020, and started a new venture in the form of cattle rearing.

In the past few years, Suján has gradually developed a deep affection for the cow and it proved to be a profitable investment.

The cow gave birth to two calves and he recently sold one of the young bullocks for Tk 50,000.

In addition, he has been selling milk throughout the year.

Now, Suján has found a more profitable and sustainable source of income, compared to relying on betel leaves cultivation.

Not only Suján, but many others living at different punjees in Sylhet region are now gradually opting for alternative professions.

While talking, Subimol Lindokiri, assistant public prosecutor (APP) at

Moulvibazar Judge Court, said about 60 indigenous families, living at Berenga Punjee in Barlekha upazila, have been bearing the brunt since 3,000 betel leaf plants and 60 betel nut trees on several jhum fields were chopped down in May this year.

Such incidents have been occurring quite often in an attempt to occupy the land belonging to indigenous people, but nothing has been done so far to end the harassment, he added.

Dr Mithun Sarkar, livestock officer at Kulaura Department of Livestock Services (DLS), said in order to increase the financial capacity, savings and work skills of the indigenous families living in the plain lands the government has distributed a total of 74 calves in 2020-2021, 618 sheep in 2021-2022 and 77 bullocks in 2022-2023 among as many indigenous families.

Dr Ashim Kumar Das, project director of Tribal/Ethnic Community Development Project, DLS, MOFL, said, under the initiatives of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, DLS has taken a project titled "Integrated livestock development project aimed at improving the socio-economic and living standards of the backward minority groups living in the plain land," to be implemented in 210 upazilas under 29 districts across the country.

This project started in July 2019 and will continue till June 2024, he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Teesta water sharing to be on agenda

FROM PAGE 12

the Teesta water sharing issue."

In 2011, Bangladesh and India failed to sign the Teesta water sharing agreement due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute opposition during the Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka. The issue remains unresolved as of today.

Dhaka and Delhi then stepped towards a new deal on six small rivers and the optimum use of the Ganges water treaty. The six rivers are Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar.

Rohingya, security issues

FROM PAGE 12

Delhi, and Paris are working to finalise the schedules.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY According to a US Embassy note, the civilian-led security dialogue will include discussions on Indo-Pacific regional issues, security and human rights, military cooperation, peacekeeping, security assistance, and counterterrorism, among other topics.

It is to follow the bilateral defence dialogue held in Dhaka on August 23-24. "The US and Bangladesh have a strong security partnership and share many interests in the Indo-Pacific region... Both countries share a vision to ensure the Indo-Pacific region is free, open, peaceful, and secure," the note said.

The US has been seeking to sign two defence agreements — the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement, which are foundational agreements for a closer defence relationship. In 2021, Washington

On a follow-up discussion on the UN 2023 Water Conference, the foreign secretary said there is a general feeling that Bangladesh has abundance of water and there is not much to worry about.

However, there is much to worry about water in the next 10-20 years. The Himalayan glaciers are melting fast, which has short, mid and long-term implications.

"So, we will have to work on this based on scientific data," Masud said.

There has to be a lot of public awareness on this — how to better utilise the water and mobilise resources for better use of the climate-

related fund, he added.

The meeting also discussed excavation of canals across the country and preservation of water. The issue of transboundary rivers was also discussed but not so detail as it is a bilateral issue, he said.

Water Resources Ministry Secretary Nazmul Ahsan said the government is working to implement the Delta Plan 2100. Under it, a number of projects have been implemented and protection of about 80km of the Jamuna river is one of them.

"We are also doing such protection work for the Padma. Thus, we are

ensuring flow of the river. We will be implementing more projects in the days to come," he added.

Meanwhile, the schedule of bilateral meeting between Hasina and Modi has yet to be finalised. Initially, it was slated for September 11, after the G20 summit on September 9-10.

In another development, French President Emmanuel Macron is likely to arrive in Dhaka on September 10.

"In that case, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to return home on September 10 to welcome the French president," a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star.

A trip to Germany

FROM PAGE 12

director of disease control unit at the Directorate General of Health Services.

He added that fogger machines are used to destroy culex mosquitoes. So entomologists could have contributed better if they were trained.

Contacted, Pintu Bepary, who signed the office order, said, "I just issued the letter upon instructions. So, I am unable to comment on the matter."

At least 16 dengue patients died, eight of them in Dhaka, in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, according to health department data.

Selim Reza, Chief Executive Officer of DNCC, declined to comment on the rationale behind sending bureaucrats for the training.

Meanwhile, at least 16 dengue patients died, eight of them in Dhaka, in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, according to health department data.

With this, the total death toll from dengue rose to 634, of which 464 were from outside Dhaka.

Some 2,608 dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours at different hospitals across the country, 892 of whom were in Dhaka.

With the new cases, the total number of dengue patients rose to 1,30,302. Of them, 60,484 are in Dhaka.

Currently, 8,845 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at different hospitals across the country, of whom 3,928 are in Dhaka.

passed a draft agreement of GSOMIA, which Dhaka was examining, officials concerned said.

ROHINGYA AND ROOPUR POWER PLANT Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov will hold a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and make a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Officials of the ministry concerned said Dhaka would urge Moscow to help solve the Rohingya crisis, as it has strong relations with Myanmar.

Moscow is a major arms supplier to Myanmar, which faces a myriad of sanctions from Washington for its military takeover and oppression of the civilians fighting for democracy.

"The Russia-Ukraine war is affecting us all badly. We will call for ending the war and going for negotiations," a foreign ministry official said.

Last week, Momen said Dhaka would request

Moscow to ensure the timely implementation of the Russia-funded Roopur Nuclear Power Plant project. The project faced challenges because of US sanctions against Russia.

Dhaka will also discuss the possibility of Moscow employing Bangladeshi workers in Russia's shipbuilding sector, an official said.

PARIS EAGER TO DEEPEN TIES During his visit, French President Macron will hold bilateral meetings with PM Hasina.

Foreign ministry officials said Dhaka will seek increased trade and investment from France, while France wants to enhance its cooperation in the areas of aerospace, defence, trade, and climate change.

In November 2021, the two countries signed a letter of intent on defence cooperation as France is paying attention to improving relations with the Indo-Pacific countries. Bangladesh's first-ever

satellite, Bangabandhu-1, was made by the French company Thales. Paris made a fresh proposal to sell another satellite — Bangabandhu-2 — which Dhaka is considering.

France showed eagerness to set up a satellite manufacturing plant in Bangladesh. There were also talks about the country providing Rafale aircraft to Bangladesh.

Foreign Minister Momen said Bangladesh too wants to buy 10 planes, including two cargo planes, from Airbus — a European plane manufacturer.

These issues will be discussed during Macron's meeting with Hasina in Dhaka.

Momen added Dhaka will ask the French President to help solve the Rohingya crisis and support Bangladesh in mitigating climate change impacts. France took the Loss and Damage Initiative, but its fund is not operational yet.

"We would ask the French President to make it operational and help rehabilitate Bangladeshis displaced by climate change."

Rethink priorities for 21st century

Modi urges UN

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on the United Nations to reform in line with 21st century realities to ensure the representation of voices that matter, according to an interview published yesterday.

A "mid-20th century approach cannot serve the world in the 21st century", Modi, who will host a summit of the Group of 20 big economies from next weekend, told the Press Trust of India news agency.

Modi, leader of the world's most populous country and aspirant to become a permanent member of UNSC, is seeking to boost India's status and promote its causes, such as relief for unsustainable debt, using global pulpit of G20 summit starting September 9.

He reiterated his support in the interview for the African Union (AU) to become a full member of the G20.



Farmer Kleantith Raptis, 56, walks next to debris in his sheepfold as a wildfire burns at the Dadia National Park in the region of Evros, Greece yesterday. While the Greek government has been quick to blame global warming for the summer's devastating wildfires, some experts argue that poor planning is at least as much to blame.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Medvedev: Japan's 'militarisation' complicates situation

REUTERS

Japan's "militarisation" complicates the situation in the Asia-Pacific region, the deputy chair of the Russian Security Council and former President Dmitry Medvedev said yesterday. Russia and Japan have complex relations marked by decades of territorial dispute over a handful of small, Russian-held islands off Hokkaido that Moscow calls the southern Kurils but Japan claims as its Northern Territories. The dispute over the area has prevented Tokyo and Moscow from reaching a peace treaty formally ending hostilities.

Iran sentences two women journo to jail time

AFP, Tehran

Two female Iranian journalists will spend around a month behind bars as part of a three-year partly suspended prison sentence for "conspiracy" and "collusion", local media reported yesterday. Under the sentence, Negin Bagheri and Elnaz Mohammadi will serve one-fourth of the term, or less than a month, in prison, their lawyer Amir Raisian told the reformist Ham Mihan daily newspaper, where Mohammadi works.

Cambodian ex-leader Hun Sen back on Facebook

THE STRAITS TIME ONLINE

Cambodia's former leader Hun Sen returned to Facebook yesterday, claiming the social media giant had "rendered justice" to him by refusing to suspend his account after he posted violent threats on the platform. In a post, Mr Hun Sen said Facebook had rejected a recommendation from its Oversight Board to suspend his account after he had posted a video threatening to beat up his rivals. It is the latest twist in a months-long row that has seen the prolific user quit Cambodia's most-popular social media site, deactivate his account, and threaten to ban the platform. "I have decided to use Facebook again... after Facebook rejected recommendations of a group of bad people and rendered justice to me," he wrote yesterday, referencing the Oversight Board. Hun Sen's hugely popular page - which has around 14 million followers - was reactivated in July, but his social media assistant claimed to be running it in his place at the time.

THE ENGLISH CHANNEL Migrant crossings hit new daily high for 2023: UK govt



AFP, London

The number of migrants crossing the Channel in small boats from northern France to Britain hit a new daily high for 2023, UK government statistics released yesterday showed.

Some 872 migrants aboard 15 different vessels made the perilous journey across one of the world's busiest shipping lanes on Saturday, beating this year's previous 24-hour high of 756 on August 10.

It brings the total number to have arrived on the shores of southeast England so far in 2023 to more than 21,000.

That is less than the levels seen at this point last year, but still presents a major political and practical headache for the UK government.

London promised tighter border controls after the country left the European Union, and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has made "stopping the boats" a key priority.

His Conservative government has branded the cross-Channel route "illegal" and passed legislation blocking asylum applications from anyone arriving without prior authorisation.

It also wants to send migrants to Rwanda for processing and resettlement there, but both policies are on hold amid a legal challenge to the African relocation plans.

More than 100,000 migrants have crossed the Channel on small boats from France to southeast England since Britain began publicly recording the arrivals in 2018.

Russian drone attack targets Odesa region

Danube River port infrastructure hit; Ukraine shoots down 22 of 25 Shahed drones

REUTERS

Russia launched a drone attack on southern parts of the Odesa region yesterday, hitting Danube River port infrastructure and injuring at least two people, Ukrainian officials said.

Ukraine's air defence systems shot down 22 of the 25 Iranian-made Shahed drones that Russia launched on the Odesa region in the early hours, the Air Force said on the Telegram messaging app.

The Danube has become Ukraine's main route for exporting grain since the collapse of a UN-brokered deal in July that had allowed Kyiv to ship its grain via the Black Sea.

"Russian terrorists continue to attack port infrastructure in the hope of provoking a food crisis and famine in the world," the Ukrainian president's chief of staff Andriy Yermak wrote on Telegram. He posted a photo of a firefighter directing water at the burning ruins of concrete structures.

Officials did not give details of which port facility was hit. The military said a fire that resulted from the attack at the facility was quickly extinguished.

Some Ukrainian media reported blasts in the Reni port, one of the two major ports on the Danube that Ukraine operates.

There was no immediate comment from Russia. Reni and Izmail, Ukraine's two largest ports on the Danube River, have been repeatedly attacked by Russian drones in recent weeks.

Some 280,000 people have signed

up so far this year for professional service with Russia's military, the deputy chair of the Russian Security Council, former President Dmitry Medvedev, said yesterday.

Visiting Russia's Far East, Medvedev said he was meeting local officials to work on efforts to beef up the armed forces.

"According to the Ministry of Defence, since January 1, about 280,000 people have been accepted into the ranks of the Armed Forces on a contract basis," including reservists, state news agency TASS quoted Medvedev as saying.

Last year Russia announced a plan to expand its combat personnel more than 30 percent to 1.5 million, an ambitious task made harder by its heavy but undisclosed casualties in Moscow's war against Ukraine.

Some Russian lawmakers suggested Russia needs a professional army 7-million strong to ensure the country's security - a move that would require a huge budget allowance.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian court ordered tycoon Ihor Kolomoisky to be held in custody for two months on suspicion of fraud and money laundering on Saturday, a striking move against one of the country's most powerful businessmen.

The detention of Kolomoisky, who is under US sanctions and is a one-time supporter of President Volodymyr Zelensky whose election he backed in 2019, comes as Kyiv is trying to signal progress during a wartime crackdown on corruption.



Typhoon Haikui batters Taiwan

AFP, Taitung

Typhoon Haikui made landfall on eastern Taiwan yesterday, unleashing torrential downpours, whipping winds and plunging thousands of households into darkness as the first major storm to directly hit the island in four years.

Nearly 4,000 people were evacuated from high-risk areas, hundreds of flights cancelled and businesses closed in preparation for storm.

Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau said the typhoon was "at our doorstep".



Sudanese queue outside a passport office in Gedaref yesterday, following an announcement by the authorities of the resumption of issuing passports in war-torn Sudan.

PHOTO: AFP

INDIA bloc 'hates Hinduism'

India's home minister slams opposition

NDTV ONLINE

The remark on Sanatana Dharma by DMK chief MK Stalin's minister son shows that the Opposition bloc INDIA "hates Hinduism" and is "an attack on our heritage", India's Union Home Minister Amit Shah said yesterday.

Shah was speaking at Durgapur in poll-bound Rajasthan at the launch of BJP's Parivartan Yatra.

The BJP is pushing hard to defeat the ruling Congress and return to power in the upcoming state polls.

The home minister alleged that the remarks by Udhayanidhi Stalin, son of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, are part of INDIA bloc's "vote bank politics" and "appeasement" tactic.

Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited
(A State Owned Organization)
116, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1205
www.bscl.gov.bd

Invitation for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for Services

01. Ministry/Division	Posts and Telecommunications Division, Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology	
02. Agency	Bangladesh Communication Satellite Company Limited	
03. Name of procuring entity	Dr. Shahjahan Mahmood, Chairman and CEO	
04. Title of service	Selection of individual consultants	
05. Procuring entity district	Dhaka	
06. Expression of Interest for Selection of	1 Consultant (Data Analyst), 1 Junior Consultant (Data Analyst) and 2 Junior Consultant (Hardware & Software)	
07. EOI Reference No.	14.39.0000.012.07.004.22.517	
08. Date	31/08/2023	
KEY INFORMATION		
09. Procurement sub-method	Individual Consultant Selection (ICS)	
FUNDING INFORMATION		
10. Budget and source of funds	Revenue Budget	Own funds
11. Development partner (if applicable)	N/A	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
12. Project/programme code	N/A	
13. Project/programme name	N/A	
14. EOI closing date and time	17 September 2023	12:05pm
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT		
15. Brief description of the assignment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Consultant (Data Analyst): Analyze statistical data, Prepare statistical report, Report analysis and Data visualization. • 1 Junior Consultant (Data Analyst): Analyze statistical data, Prepare statistical report, Report analysis and Data visualization. • 2 Junior Consultant (Hardware & Software): Software/Module development and upgradation, Database handling, Collaborate with dev team (R&D) and installation team 	
16. Basic Qualification and Experience (Detailed described in SRF):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Consultant (Data Analyst): BSc (Honors) in Statistics/Applied Statistics/Data Science from any recognized university with minimum CGPA of 3.00 with min. 5 years' professional experience on statistical data analysis, data visualization tools, R/Python language. Age: Not more than 37 years as of the date of this Publication. • 1 Junior Consultant (Data Analyst): BSc (Honors) in Statistics/Applied Statistics/Data Science from any recognized university with minimum CGPA of 3.00 with min. 3 years' professional experience with statistical data analysis, data visualization tools, R/Python language. Age: Not more than 32 years as of the date of this Publication. • 2 Junior Consultant (Hardware & Software): BSc in CSE, min. 3 years' Practical experience on MySQL, JavaScript, python, php/Laravel. Age: Not more than 32 years as of the date of this Publication. 	
Other Details:		
i) Detailed Scope of Work is available on BSCL's website: www.bscl.com.bd		
ii) Short listing will be made in accordance with the "Rule-115 of Public Procurement Rule (PPR)-2008"		
iii) EOI as well as attached forms/supporting documents shall be written in English.		
iv) EOI shall consist of the following documents:		
(a) Expression of Interest (EOI)		
(b) Updated Curriculum Vitae		
(c) Experience Certificate(s)		
(d) Photocopies of all educational certificates		
v) EOI notice and forms of Expression of Interest (if applicable) are posted on BSCL website: www.bscl.com.bd and hard copy of the same are available from the office in the address given below.		
vi) Three (3) signed copies of EOI along with 1 (one) original shall be submitted in a sealed envelope mentioning "Selection of Individual Consultants of BSCL" on top of the sealed envelope and shall be submitted to the following address before abovementioned date and time.		
EOIs submitted by consultants will be screened and consultants will be shortlisted. Only short-listed Consultants will be invited to submit proposals. Interested applicants may obtain further information from the office mentioned below during the office hours (9:00 to 16:00 hours BST).		
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
17. Name of the official inviting EOI	Dr. Shahjahan Mahmood	
18. Designation of the official inviting EOI	Chairman and CEO, Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited (BSCL)	
19. Address of the official inviting EOI	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited, SEL Rose-N-Dale, Level: 7 & 8, 116 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000.	
20. Contact details of the official inviting EOI	Phone: +88 02 41030091-92 E-mail: info@bscl.com.bd , procurement@bscl.com.bd	
The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or rejects all EOIs.		
		(Signed) Dr. Shahjahan Mahmood Chairman and CEO Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited (BSCL)

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Bangladesh can be the region's voice of reason

Our foreign policy should focus on friendly relations and no external interference

In recent years, the Indo-Pacific region has become a major focus in international politics, especially in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war and the increasingly complicated relations between China and the West. The entire South Asia region is now no stranger to the political struggles of the three major powers, with one US-based foreign policy expert recently describing it as their "battleground" in a seminar in Dhaka.

Bangladesh's geographic location, its growing importance in regional connectivity and relations, and the crucial role it plays as the host to over a million Rohingya refugees, means we are now finding ourselves in more challenging diplomatic situations. While we have managed to play a delicate balancing act and maintain relations with all the major actors so far, experts have warned that if faced with a significant global event that strongly pits Russia or China against the US and its allies, Bangladesh could face unprecedented pressure to pick a side.

In a world that is becoming more and more polarised every day, it is now even more crucial for Bangladesh to maintain its simple yet effective foreign policy position: "Friendship to all, malice to none." This foreign policy dictum, first put forward by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the Cold War era, has guided our country through decades of political upheaval and sensitive diplomatic situations, while also enforcing our right to carve our own path without caving in to external pressures. Given the growing engagement with South Asian countries from Washington, Beijing and Moscow, it is imperative that we now take a stronger stance in exerting our independence to choose what is best for us as a nation.

History has taught us that smaller countries are always at risk of becoming pawns in a much larger political game. We have also seen how such power struggles ultimately benefit no one, and as the world moves from crisis to crisis, human rights and global cohesion end up taking a back seat. In such situations, countries like Bangladesh can play a crucial role in being the voice of reason and emphasising the importance of regional and international cooperation instead. Bangladesh is already an important actor in global climate leadership; we must continue to strengthen partnerships with countries in similar positions and urge major powers to move away from militarisation and focus on the most critical need of the hour: human rights and socioeconomic development in the era of the climate emergency.

What about human development?

Progress does not depend on megaprojects only

We laud the astute observations of the state of our economy by noted economist Wahiduddin Mahmud at a discussion with journalists, organised by the Economic Reporters' Forum on Saturday. He pointed out that megaprojects alone cannot bring about development unless it is accompanied by development in human resources. We echo this perspective that treats development as an overall enhancement of economic and social progress in a country, rather than a narrow definition that extols the benefits of only modern, impressive infrastructure.

The noted economist has aptly pointed out that if the traffic were managed better – which would include making sure buses stopped at the designated stops – it would ease the traffic congestion a great deal. Thus, before megaprojects were initiated, the basic traffic governance should have been prioritised. In fact, we would like to add that if the authorities had enforced discipline on the roads, made sure that unfit buses could not operate and footpaths and parts of our roads were not encroached upon, much of the gridlocks we face could have been avoided.

Megaprojects are financed with huge foreign loans, and these put a big debt burden on Bangladesh. In the last three years, Bangladesh's foreign loans have doubled to \$100 billion, and within the next three to four years, the country will have to repay \$5 billion every year. Meanwhile, only \$1 billion in FDI has come in despite all the megaprojects being implemented. At a time when the economy is facing high inflation, depleting forex reserves and current account deficit, in addition to the severe impacts of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the government cannot afford to solely focus on implementing megaprojects. It is vital for the government to take heed to the anomalies pointed out by the economist and adopt the recommendations given.

We would like to emphasise that the government must enforce proper governance of the financial sector and stop the default culture that has bled dry many of our banks. Those who have taken out thousands of crores of taka in loans and laundered the money abroad with no intention of repayment must be brought to book and the funds brought back to the country. The government must also overhaul the education system and focus on the quality of education from primary to tertiary levels, developing more polytechnic institutes to ensure skilled human resources.

While megaprojects can bring about great connectivity and a boost in commerce, the government must also prioritise the basic requirements of human resource development, which includes good health, affordable prices of essentials, safe roads, quality education, relevant technical skills, and decent employment. All this will require strategic planning, investment and political will.

A faulty tax policy equals a dehydrated housing sector



OPEN SKY

Dr Birupaksha Paul is a professor of economics at the State University of New York at Cortland in the US.

BIRUPAKSHA PAUL

The housing sector in Bangladesh faces one of the biggest debacles in the country's history in the wake of the doubling of tax rate on urban property registration. Apart from the intricate details, it can be roughly said that the tax rate has been raised from four percent to eight percent on the deed value of the housing property, flats and land plots in the latest budget, without an understanding of what grave consequences this faulty policy may have. It will hurt fixed-earning households and the middle class by favouring wealthy buyers, bribe takers, and the corrupt. When high inflation has already eroded savings and purchasing power in the country, this additional tax burden on home buyers has added fuel to the flame quite mercilessly.

The art of designing tax rates warrants more economics than straight-line accounting in it. It is not simple high school arithmetic where we learnt that the total volume of tax doubles when the tax rate is doubled. It is more of macroeconomics, public finance, and finally welfare economics, factors that were largely missing in many tax rates of the previous budgets. The proposal of taxing Tk 2,000 for anyone holding a tax file number is testament to how ignorant the ministry was to the state of the poor. Moreover, no remarkable tax hike on the superrich is an example of how the affluent were favoured by public policy.

Economist Arthur Laffer, adviser to US President Ronald Reagan, showed that simply raising tax rates does not necessarily guarantee a higher amount of revenue. Rather, lower rates can eventually generate higher revenue collection. Thus, there is an optimal rate above which any tax rate hike will be detrimental to the economy. This idea later created the theory of the Laffer curve. Laffer himself credited this concept to the 14th century Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun. Hence, some economists jocularly call it the "Khaldun curve." Some historians later used Khaldun's concept to claim that the drastic fall of many empires, including the Roman one, is attributable to exploitative tax rates.



ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

High taxes led to tax evasion, financial corruption, shrinkage in the revenue base, and public discontent – which triggered the rapid fall of the extractive empires. The wisdom related to these anecdotes and theories advocate that designing tax rates is not a simple exercise of arithmetics or accounting – it is more of economics and ethics.

By following Laffer's advice, the Reagan administration gradually lowered the marginal tax rate from some 70 percent to 28 percent, and its revenue collection ultimately increased by almost 40 percent. This was termed the tool of supply-side economics, which the Republicans seized as their success mantra, while the Democrats mainly stuck to Keynesian demand-side economics. Although fight between the two sides continues, one consensus has been achieved in that a mindless increase in tax rates – which the consumers will be tortured to pay – will eventually be detrimental to both revenue collection and economic growth. That is exactly what is happening now in Bangladesh's economy, where the urban middle class is increasingly becoming powerless to buy real estates and the housing

sector has suddenly turned dehydrated. As REHAB reports, thousands of flats remain unsold in Dhaka alone, dampening their profitability and survival. A report by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) divulged that tax collection from property registration in July this year was Tk 32 crore against Tk 101 crore in July last year, evidencing

almost a 70 percent decrease. The partial August figure runs short of last year's August figure by Tk 50 crore. In the FY2023-24 budget, the target for registration tax has been set at Tk 4,700 crore; the achievement so far is less than three percent, suggesting that the higher tax rate for urban property registration is highly exploitative and self-destructive. Sheer accounting without any cultivation of economics proved faulty and damaging for both builders and buyers of the real estate sector. One of the country's top developers, interviewed by *The Daily Star* in June, asserted that the property registration cost was 15 percent of the value before, which was already a painful burden for buyers. The FY24 budget raised it to as high as 19 percent. Thus, a flat priced at Tk 1 crore would cost an additional Tk 20 lakh even if it was a second-hand property. The developer also claimed that property registration cost in Bangladesh is too high compared to India, Pakistan, Malaysia and Thailand, where the fee ranges between four and six percent. Is Bangladesh more developed than countries like Malaysia or Thailand

ownership as part of the development fundamentals the regime is pursuing.

As another daily reported in July, under the Income Tax Act, 2023, the "gain" tax on plots, flats and commercial establishments in all parts of the country has doubled and redoubled. The report asserts that the source related to the housing sector said the registration cost has increased 24 times in some areas due to revenue loopholes. Additional duty has been imposed on at least 12-13 products including cement, stone, tiles, lifts, ceramics, glass, switches, sockets, cables, and kitchenware. The developers assert that these additional taxes will raise prices of flats further up, and buyers will have to pay that eventually.

Construction and transportation sectors together now occupy more than 16 percent of Bangladesh's GDP – bigger than the share of the whole agriculture sector, ensuring a rising trend of employment. But the tax rate poses a serious threat to the growth of the industry. The tax rate should go down to as low as two to three percent to help the middle class, stimulate the housing sector, and thus contribute to employment and economic growth.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN BANGLADESH

Navigating biases, power dynamics and media integrity



Meer Ahsan Habib is an IJVP and Hubert Humphrey fellow. His X handle is @meeriayadh

MEER AHSAN HABIB

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right that holds immense importance in any democratic society. It serves as a platform for individuals to voice their opinions, share their thoughts and ideas, and engage in meaningful discussions and debates. However, the extent to which freedom of expression is upheld and practised varies from one country to another. In Bangladesh's case, although freedom of expression is enshrined in the constitution, its implementation faces significant challenges.

At first glance, it may appear that people in Bangladesh enjoy the freedom to express themselves without fear of persecution. The media also seems relatively free to report on matters of public interest. However, a closer examination reveals the existence of substantial limitations to this freedom.

One of the serious issues with freedom of expression in Bangladesh is its heavy bias towards certain individuals and groups. While some individuals, particularly those who are part of the ruling elite or possess political influence, can freely criticise the government and its policies, others

do not have the same privilege. Those who lack political connections or are not part of the ruling elite face restrictions in expressing their opinions. They often become targets of persecution when they dare to speak out against the government or its policies.

Furthermore, freedom of expression is confined to specific topics in the country. People are allowed to discuss issues that do not directly affect the larger population, but they are prohibited from being critical of the government's failures or the shortcomings of its institutions. To achieve this, the government employs various tactics such as intimidation, harassment, imprisonment, and even violence. The media is not immune to such suppression, as journalists are frequently targeted and attacked for reporting on sensitive issues. Such restrictions do not align with the principles of democracy.

In Bangladesh, a unique style has emerged, favouring those who have political connections or are part of the ruling elite. This creates a significant power imbalance, silencing the voices of the majority while allowing the

minority with access to power to dominate the conversation.

How did the country arrive at this point? Is it solely due to the efforts of successive governments to silence dissidents, or have the institutions tasked with protecting the rights of the people also succumbed to vested interests?

While it is valid to discuss the failure of institutions, a sizable portion of the blame falls on the media in Bangladesh as well. Impartial and unbiased journalism is increasingly limited in the country – not only due to informal embargoes and formal legal restrictions but also due to other factors. One crucial factor is the prevalence of media and journalists being aligned with partisan politics. While journalists having political alignments is not inherently wrong, it becomes problematic when they forget the fundamental principle of journalism: presenting the facts. Journalists with political biases or perceived biases often manipulate or distort information to support a specific political agenda or gain personal advantages. They tend to align themselves with the political party in power, compromising the freedom of expression that is crucial in a democratic society.

Another concerning trend in Bangladesh is the influence of businesses or business conglomerates that own media outlets. These entities often leverage their media ownership to protect their business interests by eliminating competitors or evading accountability for crimes and

wrongdoing. In such cases, the media outlets tend to align closely with the power structure, serving the interests of those in power, rather than speaking up for the people.

Even in the presence of formal and informal restrictions imposed by the state, journalists should be able to report freely on matters of public interest. This freedom is essential for the press to remain relevant and create a platform for open dialogue among the people, their representatives, and public institutions. By doing so, the press can uphold the citizens' right to freedom of expression.

Journalists and media organisations in Bangladesh must reaffirm their commitment to impartiality, independence, and the presentation of facts. By adhering to these principles, they can counteract the influence of partisan politics and business interests on journalism and contribute to the preservation of press freedom in the country. Additionally, efforts should be made to foster a media environment that encourages diverse perspectives and safeguards the integrity of journalism.

In a democracy, freedom of expression encompasses the right to criticise the government and its policies, and the press is expected to be free from bias. If Bangladesh aims to progress towards a more democratic society, it must ensure that freedom of expression is guaranteed to all its citizens, irrespective of their political affiliations or social status. But the question remains: how can the country do so?



Dhaka is a city for the rich, built on the backs of the working class.

PHOTO: ALIM AL RAZI

How this city kills its people

Sarrah Yeasmin is a Boston-based Bangladeshi writer. She works at Harvard Kennedy School and is currently pursuing a micro-master's in data and economics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

SARZAH YEASMIN

I've been living away from my family for the past 10 years, and just like many migrants in the Bangladeshi diaspora, one of the largest in the world, I have borne the brunt of living away in search of a sustainable livelihood. When I arrived in Dhaka on July 7 of this year, I was still unaware of the fact that my little brother, Roycellus Arya Shafat Rahman, had passed away a week before my landing. He died on the Friday after Eid-ul-Azha at the tender age of 26. There are no words I can use to eulogise my brother, because the sufferings he endured, and the love and lessons he has left behind for us, are immeasurable.

During his lifetime, Shafat carried the many burdens of our dysfunctional families and societies, two vital elements that have the power to perpetuate systemic injustices. Loneliness, anxiety, depression – these have all intricately seeped into the very core of how we live in this city. And so Shafat wanted to leave Dhaka and go to a place where he could breathe in fresh air, eat unadulterated fruits, enjoy clean lakesides, where the sunlight would pour through his window, where he would receive proper medical care, a city where he could live with dignity. I have to call all these “amenities,” because to access these basic elements for

life energy are stifled by corporate greed, unplanned urbanisation, a flailing education system, and the superficial societal fabric. But from one senseless tragedy we move on to the next one. We cannot complain or explicate when we have decimated the opportunities to fix the broken system the elites benefit from. The post-mortem report of my brother includes all the societal culprits responsible for paving the path to his demise. Even on his last day, he was frantically looking for a job, an opportunity to utilise his brilliant

all this for granted for so long that they have become Dhaka's character traits.

Research after research has shown that if you are born rich, you will probably end your life as a richer person. Not only that, if you are wealthy, you have a higher life expectancy and better access to institutions that help in preserving the status quo. The reason why lower-middle class families move to Dhaka is because mobility and development are selective, exclusionary and city-centric. Meanwhile, youngsters from



Shafat in Chicago during his time as a Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES).

PHOTO: COURTESY

mind. Many youths survive in Dhaka just like this, with the patience to achieve their dreams, just like my brother.

When our system fails to nurture and accommodate us, we look for a way out. The love for this city is related to how much social capital we have to navigate the hurdles. And so, Dhaka's lower-middle class families have no escape. This is a scathing remark for the place where my life began, the city whose foul air filled my growing lungs, where my brother suffered. Many of our parents grew up with much less in the countryside. But they had clean air, lakes to swim and catch fish in, and open green fields that stretched through horizons.

Shafat and I grew up in a flat in Dhanmondi, where we could barely see the sun, where evenings were full of the odour of insecticides. Every road in the area was dotted with restaurants and shopping malls, serving those with the means to pay up. But how would we burn those extra calories? Where could we walk? Today, we struggle to find an open space to breathe in fresh air, while children now flock to apartment-turned-schools. We have increasingly become a society dependent on cars, because of the dilapidated and often overlooked public transit system. Along with that, we have an abundance of corruption booty leading to skyrocketing purchasing power of the top echelon. We have taken

these families get pulled into a wave of toxic number-based meritocracy as we continue to venerate educational institutions that are merely churning out machines. We pay with our lives for the ambitions we harbour.

Why don't we point our fingers at these institutions? We cannot talk about mental health, addictive inclinations, and weakening familial ties without pointing out how our societal, educational and economic systems are leading to this crisis. While I hold a grave sense of personal responsibility for my brother's passing, something I will be reckoning with for the rest of my life, Shafat's death is revealing of a larger story of struggle and injustice that cannot be ignored.

While my brother's dreams had been shattered, he was the best of dreamers. Shafat was extraordinarily brilliant and futuristic. He loved to break and build things from scratch and knew the ins and outs of what he studied. My brother was analytical, thoughtful, kind, giving, patient and organised to perfection. The world will never come to know of the inventions that Shafat would have made, or the discoveries he would stumble upon, or the grand journeys he would embark on. So now, I'm doing what I can, speaking about the systems of inequality that cut his journey short. Unfortunately, this is not going to be the last time someone loses their brother to this city.

Los Alamos during and after the Manhattan Project



Dr Quamrul Haider is professor emeritus at Fordham University in New York, US.

QUAMRUL HAIDER

Anyone who has watched Christopher Nolan's epic *Oppenheimer* has gotten a glimpse of the life, legacy, rise and subsequent fall of the “American Prometheus” J Robert Oppenheimer, leader of the Manhattan Project – the code name of the top-secret atomic-bomb-making effort at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory in New Mexico, US. While the film captured the involvement of many famous scientists who changed the course of the world's history, the role of some prominent female scientists, particularly Maria Goeppert Mayer, was conspicuously absent. Moreover, except for Oppenheimer's house, outdoor scenes

protected the perimeter of the lab. To access the classified areas of the lab, employees had to go through multiple security checkpoints.

Employees were sequestered away from the outside world. They were not allowed to tell their spouses and children what they were working on. Any chance encounter with people not working at the lab had to be reported to the security office. The security team warned the residents to cancel all magazine subscriptions and cautioned the scientists to never use their real names. Accordingly, Enrico Fermi was “Henry Farmer” and Neils Bohr was “Nicholas Baker.” The

degrees cluster in such high numbers that anyone with a master's degree can feel like a second-class citizen of Los Alamos.

During my stint at the lab, we had to go through most of the security protocols of the Manhattan Project days. We were fingerprinted, photographed and told that the “security badge” cannot be used as an identification card outside the lab. For our safety, we were advised not to display anything in public, especially outside New Mexico, that would indicate that we work at the lab. In case of foreign travel, we were required to submit a copy of the itinerary to the DOE at least a week before departure.

As for life in the 1980s, it was decidedly predictable; imagination and zest were overcome by boring routine. Diversity in life was essentially nonexistent and the pace of change was snail-like. The town's character and conservative nature was accentuated by the bunker mentality among the population. So deeply



Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory in 1944.

PHOTO: LANL ATOMIC HERITAGE

were shot at Ghost Ranch in the nearby village of Abiquiú. Hence, the movie did not show what life in Los Alamos was like in those days.

I lived in Los Alamos and worked at the lab in the mid-1980s and was a visiting scientist during the summer months between 1990 and 2006. Los Alamos is located in an obscure corner at the southwestern edge of the Rocky Mountains atop the 2,250-metre high Pajarito Plateau, a volcanic region of mesas and canyons. Before 1943, it was unknown to the world. Between 1943 and the end of World War II, one mailbox – PO Box 1663 in Santa Fe – was the mailing address for the entire town. Its existence, nevertheless, remained secret.

During the Manhattan Project, Los Alamos was a ramshackle town of temporary buildings housing thousands of scientists, engineers, technicians, military personnel and their families. Faculty quarters of the Los Alamos Ranch School on The Bathub Row, aptly named as they had bathtubs instead of showers, were allocated to the senior scientists, including Oppenheimer. The school was converted into the research centre of the lab. It is now a museum, containing, among other historical exhibits, unclassified documents and pictures that bring to life the thought process behind fabricating a world-changing weapon of mass destruction.

Secrecy was paramount at the lab. Everyone living in Los Alamos – children aged six and above, too – needed security clearance. Along with barbed wire fences, armed guards

word physicist was forbidden; everyone was an engineer. Quite appropriately, Edward Teller described Los Alamos as a “wildlife reserve for physicists.”

Recreational facilities were few and far between. Until 1945, there was only one telephone line, one radio station and one commissary (a military-operated supermarket) where residents did their grocery shopping.

In those days, Los Alamos could only be accessed by narrow, twisty, dirt roads that turned into a muddy mess during the rainy season. Now, roads are paved and have multiple lanes, but there are no commercial flights or train service. For employees of the lab, the US Department of Energy (DOE) operates flights to and from Albuquerque.

After the war ended, the word “Scientific” in the name of the lab was changed to “National.” Also, the town's shroud of secrecy was lifted. However, the Manhattan Project sites are still off-limits to the public. They can see references to the project everywhere though, with names such as “Atomic City” Transit, “Oppenheimer” Drive and “Trinity” Street.

Although developing and maintaining the nuclear weapons arsenal of the US remains the lab's primary mission, it is now one of the world's premier institutes for doing cutting-edge research at the frontier of science and engineering, as well as finding innovative solutions to fight climate change. More than 6,000 of the world's leading scientists with the highest level of education presently work in the lab. People with doctorate

entrenched were the residents in their status as a protected community that they feared that people from the outside world would bring a crime wave.

Social life was rather tame. There was only one movie house, a golf course, limited shopping, a few restaurants and a couple of bars. By 8pm, even on a weekend, the town became deserted.

Today, Los Alamos is a quaint tight-knit community with the best education system in the state. Part of the town is toxic because of the “legacy waste” and carcinogenic remnants of chromium that were flushed into a nearby canyon between 1956 and 1972.

With high-paying research jobs, Los Alamos has more millionaires per capita than any other town in the US. Their playground is the culturally and gastronomically alluring Santa Fe – the capital city.

Outdoor recreation in Los Alamos is available beyond everyone's doorstep. The Jemez Mountains, with an average elevation of 3,500 metres, offer a fantastic base for hiking, camping, rafting, skiing, and many more. Besides, the beauty of the landscape, enhanced by dramatic changes in terrain and elevation, is a treat for nature lovers. Compared to a comfortable yet mundane life in Los Alamos today, during the Manhattan Project years, it was chaotic, pen-like, and marked by hardships. As noted by Oppenheimer, despite leading a Spartan life, these “heroes of today will be criticised for what you have done here.”

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

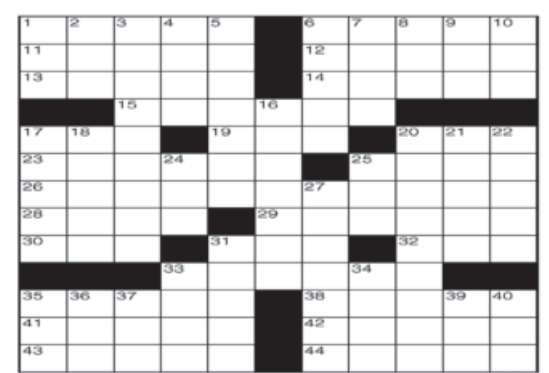
- 1 African nation
- 6 Singer Nick
- 11 City on the Mohawk River
- 12 Rust, for one
- 13 Intended
- 14 Train stop
- 15 Prologue
- 17 Crude abode
- 19 Sheltered side
- 20 Contrived
- 23 Perfect place
- 25 Royal address
- 26 Phalanges
- 28 Pooch pest
- 29 Mum
- 30 “For sure!”
- 31 Service reward
- 32 Coral island
- 33 City on the Rio Grande

- 35 Take it easy
- 38 Twist, e.g.
- 41 Blow away
- 42 Group of top players
- 43 Some sculptures
- 44 Endures

DOWN

- 1 Total
- 2 Salt Lake City player
- 3 Phone sounds
- 4 Skin woe
- 5 Merchant of music
- 6 Foster of film
- 7 Plow pullers
- 8 Tiny taste
- 9 Commotion
- 10 Harden

- 16 Old letter opener
- 17 Peeved and showing it
- 18 Practical
- 20 They're found among needles
- 21 Game spot
- 22 Irritable
- 24 Links org.
- 25 Musical note
- 27 Like humans
- 31 Government income
- 33 Take it easy
- 34 Poll numbers
- 35 Galloped
- 36 Down Under bird
- 37 Young fellow
- 39 Manx, e.g.
- 40 Print units



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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Reflecting on 'Amar Dekha Rajnitir Ponchash Bochor'

Ahmad's final verdict on the constitution is that it needs to be democratic. He wrote, "While the constitution of Pakistan was being created, I stressed ensuring the safekeeping of democracy in Pakistan instead of upholding Islam. Democracy will guarantee the upholding of religion automatically. In the case of Bangladesh's constitution, I said, in Bangladesh, society at large is not in danger—instead, democracy is under a lot of threat. Keep democracy free of all obstacles, society in general will flourish."

AKBAR ALI KHAN

As I delved into the autobiographical works of Abul Mansur Ahmad, it became evident that he had a penchant for plain speaking, avoiding embellishments. While crafting the first volume of my own biography, "Purono Shei Diner Kotha," I studied several Bangla autobiographies, including Ahmad's. I highly recommend it to anyone contemplating writing their autobiography, as his writing offers valuable lessons.

For a larger-than-life individual like Ahmad, writing autobiography is undoubtedly a daunting endeavor. He was simultaneously a journalist, an author, a lawyer, and a politician. These four unique characteristics were perfectly blended into his personality. Although he was a politician and a lawyer, he wasn't really a power-hungry person. He believed in lawful politics. As a politician, he considered it his duty to establish the rule of law.

T.S. Eliot observed a conflict between literature and journalism, but Ahmad saw it differently. As far as I can remember, Eliot wrote, "Journalists are busy with moments; they have no headache regarding the past and the future." However, he did not consider satirical literature, which is based on the present but, based on the need, can also become a part of the perpetuating future. Undoubtedly, Abul Mansur Ahmad is one of the most powerful satirical authors in Bengali literature. We see an eclectic mix of journalistic and literary elements in his satirical writings. If others can replicate his style, I believe Bengali literature will benefit immensely.

The book 'Amar Dekha Rajnitir Ponchash Bochor' has two unique features. In the book, he talked about politics as he saw it with his own eyes. He did not claim that others cannot have differing views. In fact, he did not even claim that only he was right; other people's political analysis is wrong. Instead, he mentioned that conflicting anecdotes help, rather than hinder the revelation of truth. I consider the book incomplete. It can be depicted



Abul Mansur Ahmad during a factory visit in his ministerial role.

transferring the capital from Karachi to Islamabad, etc. His writings are unique in a way that he could very easily address the bitter truths of life. I truly doubt if anyone else can replicate this particular style. I will provide two examples here. The first one concerns Mahatma Gandhi. Ahmad held great respect for Gandhi, and he most certainly despised Gandhi's assassins. While expressing this hatred, he wrote, "Mahatma Gandhi was such a saintly person that even if he roamed around the African jungles in minimal attire, no wild animals or reptiles would cause him harm. It is unthinkable to cause harm to such an extraordinary person. To kill him, one could only find a follower of the Hindu religion. This proves that Hindus are the worst among humanity. At the same time, it was also proved that in today's era, Mahatma ji is the greatest and most illustrious human being. I believe this because Allah must have sent the saintliest of human beings to the worst of mankind so that they can get better."

Only Abul Mansur Ahmad could render such string criticism. At the same time, the words he used are not communal at all. He could criticize in this manner simply because he was a hundred percent non-communal at heart. The second example concerns political hypocrisy and deception. He brutally criticized both of these attributes of politics. He also vilified his own 'guru' Suhrawardi. And not only that, he also raised complaints of hypocrisy against himself, Sher-e-Bangla, Bangabandhu, as well as most other politicians. However, here I only quote his evaluation of Suhrawardi. He wrote, "Back in 1947, when he was a leader for East Bengal, I would get really sad to see him making the same child-like mistakes for 10 to 11 years straight. Amid such sadness, once I jokingly told him, 'Sir, thank the lord! You don't have a wife.' He

politicians try to gain favors by sacrificing their ethics, which is an impediment to the establishment of a democratic process. Whenever he saw politicians violating their moral values, he vehemently condemned them.

The most fascinating part of this book is his discussion of the role of a minister. He himself went through two stints of ministership—9 days as the regional minister and another tenure of federal ministership during the period from September 6, 1956, to October 8, 1958. He jotted down his experiences, from which we can discern that during that era, Pakistan's federal government was mostly being run by diplomats. The parliament members were elected mostly for show. In one chapter, he mentioned that during his tenure as a minister, he wanted to know the total amount of ammunition produced by Pakistan's military factories, but that information was not given to him. Even Prime Minister Suhrawardi did not have access to this information.

Ahmad named this ruling system as "Sikandary Khel (Sikandar's Play)." Then he went ahead and gave an illustrious description of how this 'play' created a divide between the eastern and western wings of Pakistan. He also eloquently portrayed how the head of state and the chief of staff were knee-deep in corruption.

Ahmad's political knowledge was not solely derived from books and journals. A significant part of this knowledge came from experience. He joined active politics as a supporter of the Indian National Congress during the Khilafat Movement. Congress was friendly with the feudal lords, who held some enmity towards the subjects. He organized the Krishak Praja Party in Mymensingh, which later flourished as a political party. Later on, he joined the Muslim League under Jinnah's leadership. Bengal had no importance in the Muslim League's sphere. But Abul Mansur Ahmad was a Bengali by heart and soul. Thus, after Pakistan's establishment, he became an integral part of the Awami League's formation procedure. Although he became inactive during the later periods of the 1960s, we can see from "Amar Dekha Rajnitir Ponchash Bochor" that he continued advising the Awami League until his last breath. He gave speeches supporting the federal ruling system within Pakistan's political structure and a two-tiered parliamentary system. He supported a combined election instead of separate elections. In most cases, his suggestions were ignored. However, he kept on speaking relentlessly.

Abul Mansur Ahmad was satisfied with the fact that the Lahore Resolution was materialized through the formation of Bangladesh. However, this statement can come under dispute. Because, there was no mention of two Pakistans in the resolution. Theoretically, there can be two or even more Pakistans based on the Lahore resolution. Will it be like that, or will the India stay undivided in the unforeseeable future—none of that can be determined right now. Apparently, he did not write much on this topic. But he left behind this question for us, and we should give it some thought. Ahmad's discussion makes one thing clear, which is, Bangladesh is not an upstart country. In this context, I am adding some information. In 1950, the world had 38 nations. The same figure increased to 138 and 203 in 1961 and 2015, respectively. Since the birth of Bangladesh, 58 new countries have come into being, and we are not sure whether more are on the way or not.

The reason is, thanks to the overall global transformation, different sects are coming out with nationalistic claims. It is not certain that the nations of the world will stay fixed at 203; the number may very well increase.

Ahmad discussed Bangladesh's constitution in this book. He raised two types of questions. Firstly, he asked about the usage of the Bengali language in the constitution. He opines that the Bengali language used in writing the constitution should be maintained. Otherwise, building a rich stock of Bengali words will not be deemed possible. I am totally aligned with Ahmad that each and every foreign term need not be translated into Bengali. If we can write an English word in Bengali while keeping its original pronunciation intact, then there really is no need for inventing a different Bengali word for it. If this can be done, only then can we truly establish Bengali as the national language. Now we observe Ekushay February, we shed crocodile tears in remembrance of the martyrs, but none of us are truly doing anything for the Bengali language. How many foreign books are actually being translated in Bangladesh? How many books on economics, politics, international relations are getting translated? There are hundreds of such topics, and hundreds of books are getting published in the international arena. If we truly love Bengali and want to implement the Bengali language in all echelons of our daily life, then we have to translate all of these books. Who will translate them? Those who are supposed to translate them know neither English nor Bengali. Thus, translations are not happening, and we are lagging behind. In the current era, we need to eliminate the complexities of translation. As an example, we can maintain the legal word 'writ' and write it as 'রিট' in Bengali instead of coining a new term. We can maintain the English terms for physics, chemistry, etc., and write the definitions in Bengali. If this is done, we can advance quite fast. I totally support this argument of Ahmad.

Ahmad's final verdict on the constitution is that it needs to be democratic. He wrote, "While the constitution of Pakistan was being created, I stressed ensuring the safekeeping of democracy in Pakistan instead of upholding Islam. Democracy will guarantee the upholding of religion automatically. In the case of Bangladesh's constitution, I said, in Bangladesh, society at large is not in danger—instead, democracy is under a lot of threat. Keep democracy free of all obstacles, society in general will flourish." He wrote some more on this, and I fully agree with his opinions.

I must say, I became a bit surprised because I have been speaking these same words for quite some time, and suddenly I realized that basically, I am relaying whatever Abul Mansur Ahmad has already mentioned. Our constitution has four pillars: nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism. My point is, if democracy does not exist in a country, it cannot establish secularism on a permanent basis. Thus, true secularism is only possible when democracy is firmly established.

Secondly, socialism. If we want to establish people's opinion-based socialism, there, too, democracy is required. Socialism void of democracy is something that is forcibly imposed upon the populace, which may not be sustainable. Thus, socialism also needs democracy. Thirdly, nationalism. Bangladesh's

nationalism has been nurtured, curated, and developed under the tutelage of democracy. Nationalism has no existence in Bangladesh without democratic movements. Thus, in order to reach the objectives of Bangladesh, only one thing is required, which is the establishment of democracy. However, there are many obstacles on this path.

Throughout his life, Ahmad fought for democracy. Establishing democracy is no walk in the park. Even in some developed nations, democracy is in dire straits. Voters need to stay vigilant to establish their voting rights. The voting system needs to be reformed. Democracy lovers need to maintain relentless research efforts. The ruling system needs to be changed. Many states in the world are changing their constitutional and democratic processes. Bangladesh needs to learn good practices from other nations. We all need to pay attention to five issues in this regard.

1. Choosing the people's representatives based on the voting ratio instead of the majority. If the government is formed solely on the basis of the majority, then it may turn into a dictatorship. Such an incident happened in Bangladesh before 2008. The European and Australian systems have already gone through such transformations. If this gets implemented, it will de-emphasize party-based political activities, and everyone will learn to work together towards a common goal. We need to conduct research on this from our country's perspective.

2. Ahmad wrote about a two-layered electoral system. In such a system, changes from election to election are often subtle and ensure uninterrupted social harmony. He talked about this in the context of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

3. Strengthening the local government. Ahmad opined that this feat cannot be achieved overnight. At least 10 to 15 years of experimentation are required for this to see the light of the day.

4. Passive democracy needs to be transformed, where a certain group consolidates all power. In this aspect, three kinds of reforms are necessary. Firstly, a referendum system. No new regimental regulations are required for this. England and Scotland organized such referendums. In order to achieve this, the constitution doesn't need to be reformed, and no new law is needed either. As the public is voting, and decisions will be taken on the basis of votes, such referendums can be enacted in Bangladesh. For cases where Bangladeshi laws are not acceptable or for determining which laws to enact, we can organize referendums. We need to work out the selection criteria for referendum topics, too. As an example, it can be the case that if 25 percent of the people want a referendum, the election commission becomes honor bound to organize it. We need to give this more thought. Secondly, we can have a provision to democratically remove public representatives (upon certain grounds) through referendums. But this may be a far cry in Bangladesh's perspective. At best, this may be implemented at the local government level. Thirdly, the tenure of public representatives should be reduced to a couple of years instead of five years. But this may cause some unrest. We can consider the USA's example here. America's House of Representatives goes through a two-year election cycle. Senate elections take place once every six years. Thus, there are no overnight, major changes. If we can implement the two-layered election process, then we may think about enforcing the two-year tenure.

5. The legislative, executive, and judicial bodies should be given independence. At the moment, all state-related issues are under the control of the executive body. If the executive body has such dominance, the possibility of maintaining a liberal democracy dies a sad death. We should not allow this to happen.

Bangladesh's history is a combination of a number of great, enlightened individuals' personal histories. Abul Mansur Ahmad is one such glorious individual. May his thoughts, works, writings, and efforts live forever.

This is a translation of the speech delivered by the eminent educationist and bureaucrat Akbar Ali Khan at an event organized by Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad on September 1, 2022. The speech was transcribed by Mohammad Abu Said and Enran Mahfuz, and translated by Mohammed Ishiaque Khan.



Abul Mansur Ahmad working on his autobiography "Attokotha".

as highlights of a few eras. During its publication, Ahmad mostly focused on the years 1948 to 1967—basically, 20 years. He despised the militant ruler Ayub Khan, but he did not overlook his contributions to Pakistani history, either. As a journalist, he never reached a verdict without considering all aspects.

He would consider the good and bad in every issue. He didn't simply favor the things that he preferred. For this reason, his friends would jokingly call him 'fifty-fifty Abul Mansur Ahmad.' Needless to say, this moniker refers to his habit of looking at both sides of the coin. For the same reason, journalists can also refer to Abul Mansur Ahmad's writings as testaments to neutrality. Let me give you an example regarding Ayub Khan. Ahmad wrote that Ayub Khan abolished the feudal system in West Pakistan. He effectively made monogamy compulsory. He acknowledged the financial inequality that existed in Pakistan. He also relocated several key offices of the Nikhil Pakistani Board to Dhaka.

I have been hating Ayub since my student life, and I believed he was only capable of doing evil deeds. Abul Mansur Ahmad opposed Ayub Khan's brand of politics, but at the same time, he also wholeheartedly acknowledged that he also did some good deeds. He also wrote about his misdeeds—he annihilated democracy, established dictatorship, broke down a federal state, and gave it a unitary form, broke apart the building blocks of Pakistan's formation, and injected military influence into politics by



was surprised and asked me, 'Why do you say so?' I replied, 'She would have given you 'talaq' by now. There is a hadith which states that if a Muslim is tricked thrice in the same manner, his wife gets divorced automatically. I am not sure whether this hadith is Sahih or Da'if, but it contains cautionary advice and some bitter truth in it.' At first, the leader laughed out loudly, but then he became somber and replied, 'One doesn't have to win all the time; they should lose occasionally too.' Listen, sometimes losses bring more greatness than wins do.' Undoubtedly, opportunist

Shakib lauds 'all-round' show from his troops



Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed celebrates with his teammates after removing Afghanistan's last batter Rashid Khan during their Asia Cup encounter at the Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

SPORTS REPORTER

Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mehedi Hasan Miraz laid the platform for a huge score before the bowlers turned up with a spirited display to allow Bangladesh confirm their Asia Cup Super Four spot with an 89-run win over Afghanistan on a batting friendly wicket at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium yesterday.

The Tigers needed to tick a few boxes in their crucial last group game to overcome the five-wicket loss to Sri Lanka in their campaign opener. Their plans looked awkward in the first game but they passed the Afghan test with flying colours.

The Tigers' net-run rate has climbed to 0.373, meaning the outcome of the Sri Lanka-Afghanistan game on Tuesday will have no impact on their Super Four qualification.

Miraz, not a regular opener, was asked to do the job up top and he answered the team management's call. Skipper Shakib Al Hasan said they "played very well all-round".

"He [Miraz] got his chance up the order and proved himself, we always knew he had the ability. We executed our plans really well; the fast bowlers, especially, bowled their hearts out. This wasn't an easy wicket to bowl on," Shakib said at the post-

match ceremony following the win.

They needed to revamp their batting plan which crumbled so easily in the last game against Sri Lanka. Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Ur Rahman were a big threat in that regard but Miraz and Shanto notched 112 not out and 104, respectively, to ensure a score of 334 for five.

The Tigers also needed a big win and the bowlers carried out the plan. Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam bowled with fire early with the latter getting one to tail in to catch Rahmanullah Gurbaz out leg before for one. Yet, three fifty partnerships had seen Afghanistan threaten to make a game out of it but Taskin and Shoriful snuffed out the chances, bagging four and three wickets each, to bowl Afghans out for 245 in 44.3 overs.

"Actually, the wicket was very good for batting and the margin [of error] was really small for the bowlers. Always tried to mix up the length, slightly fuller or back of a length short ball. Good thing is that if I can bowl well on such a surface, it will boost my confidence," Taskin said.

"The length is the key in any surface. My strength is the length ball with some seam movement. Today the wicket was very flat and only the length ball may not work so I mixed it up. Overall, our team performance was very satisfying."



Miraz brings his versatility to opening slot

SPORTS REPORTER

Mehedi Hasan Miraz made it count in just his second appearance as an opener in one-day cricket with an authoritative century against Afghanistan in the Asia Cup in Lahore yesterday.

The Bangladesh team management were all at sea after a disastrous batting display in the first game against Sri Lanka, and as has often recently been the case, Miraz turned up during a crisis. The team management could not keep faith on Tanzid Hasan Tamim after just one game, giving away the frailty of their usual plans but in Miraz they found a



saviour. The determination was once again at display. After an innings that lasted just two minutes short of three hours, Miraz came away, retired hurt on 112 after a hand cramp. During that knock he showed the flexibility he can provide in his roles because his role has transitioned drastically.

Earlier he may have been asked to avert crisis scenarios down the order, as he did

against Afghanistan last year during the highest seventh-wicket partnership for Bangladesh with Afif Hossain. This time the crisis was at the top simply because of the lack of stability in the opening slot. The last time a Bangladesh opener had struck a ton was 27 matches ago when Liton Das dictated proceedings in Chattogram with a 136-run knock. In the last series at home, when Liton's bat did not talk as much, the Tigers fell to a 2-1 loss against Afghanistan. It was apparent that he was the only option that worked recently in countering Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Rashid Khan's threat while Fazalhaq Farooqi terrorised the top order.

Without Liton, Bangladesh needed a right-hander to counter Mujeeb's early spells given that the Afghan spinner is a brilliant matchup against lefties. Instead of picking Anamul Haque -- a specialist opener -- the team management preferred Miraz's all-round capabilities.

The pitch was a flat one, but the Afghan bowlers recently have had an edge over the Bangladesh batters. Miraz played well within himself, which is one of his key abilities as a batter. He understood the role of being able to see off Mujeeb and stick it out till the 30th over. Miraz never overreached.

He played with the straight face of the bat when required, and as Farooqi sprayed it around during a wayward spell, Miraz punished. Soon the glorious cover drive against Mujeeb showed that he didn't need to force the issue. The glides, the cuts and drives soon came into view as Miraz got in with the acceleration from the Powerplay, already having a telling impact on the team. He came down the crease to hit Mohammad Nabi for a six, then waited for Rashid's delivery to glide one through backward point.

The inside-out drive for six off Mujeeb, having secured his second ODI ton, was probably the best of the lot. Miraz now has his second ODI ton along with as many fifties but most importantly, he gives Bangladesh an option at the top -- one they can rely on. Miraz's ability to be that versatile adds a different dimension to the team, and the launchpad he enacted with Najmul Hossain Shanto let Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim play freely. The move also opened up slots for Shamim Hossain and Afif Hossain's inclusion at seven and eight.

More importantly, as Shanto -- his partner during a massive unbroken 194-run stand -- put it, "Coming into the top of the order wasn't easy but he showed his character."

That character of taking on a challenge was once again on view.



Streak joins THE ANGELS

REUTERS

Former Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak has died of colon and liver cancer at the age of 49 on Sunday. Streak was the all-time leading Test wicket taker for his country, bagging 216 wickets and scoring 1,990 runs in 65 Tests between 1993-2005.

He had been undergoing treatment in Johannesburg.

"In the early hours of this morning, Sunday the 3rd of September 2023, the greatest love of my life and the father of my beautiful children, was carried to be with the Angels from his home where he wished to spend his last days surrounded by his family and closest loved ones," his wife, Nadine, wrote on social media.

Streak was appointed Zimbabwe's bowling coach after his retirement, followed by spells with Bangladesh and twice Indian Premier League champions Kolkata Knight Riders. He returned to coach Zimbabwe in 2016 but resigned after his team failed to qualify for the 2019 World Cup.

In 2021, Streak was given an eight-year ban from cricket after admitting breaches of the International Cricket Council's anti-corruption code. He took "full responsibility" for his actions but said he was never involved in any attempts to fix matches.

"This is a very sad day for Zimbabwe and a sad day for cricket," Zimbabwe Cricket chairman Tavengwa Mukuhlani said in a statement.

Must-win for India, Nepal as rain looms

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asia Cup Group A game between India and Nepal in Pallekele today is a do-or-die contest for both sides. A win for either of the teams today will see them join Pakistan in the Super Four stage of the six-nation tournament.

However, rain could once again play spoilsport in Kandy today, just like it did two days ago when the blockbuster India-Pakistan clash was washed out after just one innings of play.

With chances of precipitation of up to 80 percent, the India-Nepal game is also at risk of being washed out. If that happens, it will confirm a Super Four place for the Rohit Sharma-led India, who already shared points with Pakistan in their first game.

Meanwhile, Asia Cup debutants Nepal, who received a drubbing by Pakistan in their previous game, will definitely like to take their chances by playing it out on the field despite it being their first encounter against mighty India and only their fifth ODI against a full-member nation.

The Indian top order was rattled by Shaheen Shah Afridi and Co in the first game, and the record seven-time champions of Asia will look to get some runs and boost their confidence ahead of the business end of the tournament.

SPORTS REPORTER

An hour after the end of Bangladesh's FIFA Friendly against Afghanistan at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday, a group of supporters formed a large chain, with their hands on each other's shoulders, and continued to scream for Bangladesh even as the match ended in a goalless draw.

They kept the environment a vibrant one throughout the match and backed the men in red and green from the galleries by waving the national flag, beating drums and dancing in the stands. It was the first international match at the Kings Arena, country's first-ever private stadium, and the festive mood that the spectators created was reciprocated by the men in red and with smiles and wave of hands following the final whistle.

Bangladesh coach Javier Cabrera was elated to see the support for the home team.

"Especially in the second half under the lights, the support was very good and hopefully we can get this type of support every time we play at home," said the Spaniard, who saw the performance in a positive light.

In the residential area behind the eastern side of the stadium, there were a few national flags hoisted on the buildings and people



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

from those buildings watched the match from the rooftop as the occasion gripped the entire region.

With the spectators cheering on, the charges of Cabrera continued their momentum from the SAFF Championship even though they were unfortunate not to register a second ever victory over the central Asian nation since the 1980 Asian Cup Qualifiers.

"Definitely we kept the same spirit after two months following a few training sessions. We competed against a good opponent who have high quality players. They were physically stronger than us. I think this kind of scenario was quite difficult to achieve but today we were able to create chances and defend also," said Cabrera.

The Spaniard fielded the same playing eleven that played against Kuwait in the

semifinal of SAFF Championship in Bengaluru two months ago. The two forwards -- Rakib Hossain and Sheikh Morsalin -- played with much purpose but also wasted the two easiest chances of the match to deprive Bangladesh from a rare victory against the Afghans.

However, Cabrera felt it was a good performance against Afghanistan, who are 32 places ahead of Bangladesh in FIFA ranking.

"It was a positive performance. We played a strong side today and dominated for almost half of the time as we were able to play in the opposite half," said Cabrera. "Afghanistan did well with defensive blocks but we were able to connect inside the box which we wanted, but they adjusted defending much better in latter parts."

Afghanistan coach Abdullah Al Mutairi, however, was upset with the outcome but was happy with the performance of his side, which saw a number of players making their international debuts.

"Today we did not just play against 11 players but also played against the fans because it is not our home ground," said Almutairi.

"The most important thing was that the two teams were very good, which I expected," added the Kuwaiti.



3 HIGH-PROFILE VISITS

Rohingya, security issues to figure prominently

US deputy assistant secy flies in today; Lavrov due Sept 7, Macron next week

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka will see three high-level visits from the US, France, and Russia this week and the next, and much of those will feature discussions on the Rohingya crisis, and security and defence cooperation.

The visits are considered significant because of the geopolitical competition among the global powers, which has intensified further since the Russia-Ukraine war and also ahead of Bangladesh's national polls.

Mira Resnick, deputy assistant secretary of the US Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, will arrive today and hold the ninth annual US-Bangladesh Bilateral Security Dialogue tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will be visiting on September 7-8, just before joining the September 9-10 G20 summit in New Delhi. This will be the first visit by any Russian foreign minister to Bangladesh.

On the other hand, French President Emmanuel Macron will be visiting Dhaka after the G20 summit — either on September 10-11 or September 11-12.

Foreign ministry officials of Bangladesh in Dhaka, New

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Vehicles plying the long-awaited Dhaka Elevated Expressway after it was opened to the public from 6:00am yesterday. The photo was taken near the Kakoli intersection on Airport Road.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

HASINA-MODI TALKS

Teesta water sharing to be on agenda

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka would raise the issue of Teesta water-sharing deal and renewal of the Ganges Water Treaty, which will expire in 2026, during the bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi next week.

"The prime minister will definitely raise the Teesta issue. Other issues are there. We have 54 common rivers," Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen told journalists at the foreign ministry after a follow-up discussion on Bangladesh's 10 commitments made at the UN 2023 Water Conference.

He said the Ganges water treaty of 1996 will expire and the Joint River Commission continues to discuss the matter. "At the highest political level, we continue to discuss

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THE BUSINESS

Not many takers for bank, NBFIs stocks

Investors are hardly showing any interest to buy stocks of banks as the sector's key indicators are portraying a gloomy outlook.

Stocks of eight banks have remained below their face value of Tk 10 for the last couple of months amidst the scarcity of buyers.

The scenario is almost the same for stocks of eight non-bank financial institutions.

"The intrinsic value of the banks and NBFIs is below their par value, if we calculate, so their share price also remains low," said Prof Mohammad Musa, a stock market analyst.

STORY ON BI

A trip to Germany to learn fogging!

Questions raised as none of the 'trainees' involved in anti-mosquito drives

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Experts have raised questions about a recent foreign trip by four government officials and a ward councillor to Germany to acquire skills in operating mosquito fogging machines.

These officials and the ward councillor from Dhaka North City Corporation visited Germany from August 17-23 for a training at PulseFog, a prominent thermal fogger manufacturer, although they are not directly involved in anti-mosquito drives.

The travel cost was borne by the German company, according to an office order by the LGD ministry.

Recently, the DNCC bought 100 fogging machines from PulseFog, a DNCC official said.

Sources said the objective of the trip was to train the people involved in DNCC's anti-mosquito drives and the operation of the newly procured fogger machines.

The officials who were sent for the training are Md Nura Alam, LGD's Deputy Secretary; Ramendra Nath Biswas, Deputy Secretary and DNCC's Chief Store and Purchase Officer; Md Ziaur Rahman, Deputy Secretary and DNCC's Zonal Executive Officer (Zone 2); Mutakabbir

Ahmed, Deputy Secretary and DNCC's Zonal Executive Officer (Zone 5); and Md Ahsan Habib, Sprayman Supervisor in Zone 3 of DNCC. DNCC's ward-32 Councillor Syed Hasan Nur Islam accompanied the officials, according to the office order signed by LGD ministry Deputy Secretary Pintu Bepari.

Of them, only Ahsan Habib is directly involved in anti-mosquito drives.

The foreign training comes at a time when the country has been grappling with a record-breaking surge in Aedes mosquito-borne dengue outbreaks.

"Sending bureaucrats for the training makes no sense. The training could have been conducted in Dhaka rather than in Germany," Kabirul Bashar, a renowned entomologist and professor at Jahangirnagar University told The Daily Star yesterday.

A more logical choice would have been to send individuals directly involved in mosquito control efforts, including fogger operators, entomologists, and health officials from the DNCC, for the training, he added.

"This should never have happened. Entomologists should have been sent for the training," said Dr Be-nazir Ahmed, former

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"Sending bureaucrats for the training makes no sense. The training could have been conducted in Dhaka rather than in Germany."

Kabirul Bashar
Entomologist and professor at
Jahangirnagar University

12KG LPG CYLINDER Households have to pay Tk 144 more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The price of a 12kg LPG cylinder has been hiked to Tk 1,284 — an increase of Tk 144 from last month.

Per kg liquefied petroleum gas now costs Tk 107.01, up from Tk 94.96, and per litre "auto gas" (LPG used for motor vehicles) costs Tk 58.87, up from Tk 52.17. Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) announced this month's prices of the key fuel during a press briefing yesterday at its office in the capital.

The new price came into effect yesterday at 6:00pm, said Md Nurul Amin, chairman of BERC.

The prices of other LPG cylinders — from 5.5kg to 45kg — will go up accordingly, he said.

Two days prior to the price hike, this newspaper published a report about consumers buying LPG cylinders at a higher price due to non-compliance by importers, distributors, and retailers.

On August 2, the BERC 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 12kg 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.

Low water levels reveal 110m-yr-old dinosaur tracks

CNN ONLINE

As Texas baked in record-breaking heat this summer and a growing drought pushed water levels down, a group of volunteers uncovered something sort of magnificent: new giant dinosaur tracks that are believed to be from around 110 million years ago.



Paul Baker, the retail manager at Dinosaur Valley State Park, told CNN he has "never seen this many dinosaur tracks" before.

"It's exciting to see something that nobody else has seen; it's almost like a treasure hunt, in a way," said Baker, who helps clean up and map dinosaur tracks at the park. "I thought I'd seen every dinosaur track there is, but within the last two years with the droughts we've had and the hard work by our volunteers, it's just an amazing sight."

Dinosaur Valley State Park, around an hour and a half south of Dallas, is home to a large number of dinosaur tracks imprinted by saurpods and theropods that lived in the area roughly 113 million years ago. It is a hotspot for dinosaur enthusiasts and tourists who typically flock the now-dry Paluxy River to fish, swim and kayak.

As water levels got lower this summer, more ancient history was revealed. A brutal dry spell has spread across parts of Texas since June, with extreme drought now covering more than a third of the state, the US Drought Monitor reported Thursday.

Fakhrul, Rizvi indicted in arson case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and seven others in a case filed over torching a garbage truck of Dhaka South City Corporation in the city's Paltan area in 2012.

The seven others are BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed, Jamaat-e-Islami South City Secretary General Shafiqul Islam Masud, BNP Information and Research Secretary Azizul Bari Helal, former Jubo Dal president Saiful Alam Nirob, BNP activists Moazzem Hossain Babu, Kazi Rezaul Haque Babu, and Khondaker Enamul Haque Enam.

Fakhrul, Rizvi, and six others, now on bail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Tojazzal Hossain read

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Passengers at the Kamalapur Railway Station had to wait for hours for their trains, as temporary rail workers yesterday held a sit-in, demanding job regularisation, at the Malibagh level crossing. Due to the agitation, which lasted around four hours from 10:00am, railway tracks were blocked and many scheduled trains were delayed.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SUDAN CONFLICT 20 killed in air strike on Khartoum

AFP, Wad Madani

Residents of Khartoum awoke to artillery and rocket fire yesterday, hours after an air strike in the city's south killed at least 20 civilians including two children, according to Sudanese activists.

"The death toll from the aerial bombardment" in southern Khartoum "has risen to 20 civilian fatalities," according to a statement by the neighbourhood's resistance committee. They are among many volunteer groups that used to organise pro-democracy demonstrations and now provide assistance to families caught in the crossfire between the army and paramilitary fighters.

In an earlier statement, they said the victims included two children, and warned that more fatalities went unrecorded, as "their bodies could not be moved to the hospital because they were severely burned or torn to pieces in the bombing".

Since war began between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces on April 15, around 5,000 people have been killed, according to estimates from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

The Sudanese Armed Forces control the skies and have carried out regular air strikes while RSF fighters dominate the streets of the capital.

Western countries have accused the paramilitaries and allied militias of killings based on ethnicity in the western Darfur region, and the International Criminal Court has opened a new probe into alleged war crimes.