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Firms to export 3,950 tonnes of hilsa to India



From exile to Europa League



Pathway for Bangladesh's energy transition



Azerbaijan halts Karabakh operation

Market running out of IV saline

Patients hit hard as supply shortages reach new high

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdur Rob, from Khulna's Rupsha, started a frantic search for intravenous (IV) saline after his daughter, aged 13, was admitted to a local private hospital with dengue on Monday.

He did not find even a single bag of the saline, which is essential in dengue treatment, at the hospital's drug store and 14-15 large medicine shops in a wholesale medicine market in the southern city for two days. The desperate father then approached a middleman.

"The broker managed a one-litre saline bag for Tk 210. I tipped him Tk 30," Rob told The Daily Star.

Amid rising dengue cases, a similar shortage of IV saline has been affecting patients in different districts of Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Barishal, Mymensingh, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions. Retail prices have also gone up from Tk 85-89 to Tk 150-300 in different districts, including Dhaka.

Four salespersons of as many drug stores in the capital's Shahbagh said the demand for IV saline has skyrocketed, but supplies from manufacturing companies are inadequate.

In Chattogram, some medicine shops were receiving up to 10 percent of their orders, while it is as low as 5 percent in Barishal in some cases,



"If we place an order for 100 bags, supplying companies provide 20-30 bags. We are buying saline from other sources and wholesale medicine market at Mitford at higher prices."

Dr MH Choudhury Lelin

our correspondents report.

However, government hospital authorities in Dhaka downplayed the crisis.

Ashraful Alam, assistant director at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said demands for IV saline has increased greatly. But so far, they have been able to meet the demand.

But private hospitals and pharmacies in and outside the capital have reported serious dearth of saline, which helps maintain the fluid balance in the body.

Public health expert Dr MH Choudhury Lelin, also chairman of Health and Hope Hospital in the capital, said the hospital has been facing a severe crisis of the item due to supply shortages.

"If we place an order for 100 bags, suppliers provide only 20-30 bags. We are buying saline from the wholesale medicine market at Mitford and other sources at higher prices," he said.

The demand-supply gap has been affecting other patients as well.

Naseema Akhtar of Narayanganj has cancer. Doctors at Narayanganj General Hospital where she is being treated advised that she be injected two litres of saline every day. On Tuesday, Naseema's son Al Amin said he could not find any saline bag even after visiting 10-12 drug stores.

Md Nurul Alam, deputy director of Directorate General of Drug Administration, acknowledged the crisis, but blamed it on the syndicates of hoarders.

The situation did not improve even after the drug administration recently asked the six drug companies to increase saline production. Against this backdrop, the government has decided to import 2 million bags of IV saline, officials said.

Prof Ehsanul Kabir, managing director & CEO, Essential Drugs Company Limited, which supplies saline to government hospitals, said his company placed an order to import 7 lakh bags of saline from India. They received 70,000 bags until Tuesday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Construction of the third terminal of the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport is nearing completion. The terminal is expected to have a soft opening on October 7. Around 16 million passengers will be able to use the airport every year after the third terminal is fully operational by May next year. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

CSA to become a weapon to muzzle press Says Editors' Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If the much-talked-about Cyber Security Act, 2023, comes into force, police, under section 42, will have the power to search, seize, and arrest journalists without a warrant, which the Sampadak Parishad (Editors' Council) rejects.

The Editors' Council expressed grave concern as the CSA has been passed by the Jatiya Sangsad recently amid strong objections.

Through the passage of the law, the concerns expressed by media stakeholders, including the Editors' Council, for so long have been proven justified, it said in a statement yesterday.

Scraping the Digital Security Act, the new law has been enacted by reducing some penalties and amending some sections of the DSA. Apart from packaging, there is no qualitative or significant changes. Many elements that curtail freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press still remain in the CSA, the council said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) yesterday urged Bangladesh to reform the labour law by November as per the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation's technical committee.

The ILO's International Labour Conference will be held in November and that would be the perfect platform for Bangladesh to showcase the progress in its labour law reforms, said Commerce Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh.

Ghosh's comment came at a press briefing after the seventh round of talks on the Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (Ticfa), a negotiation platform for removing trade barriers between Bangladesh and the US. The US sought a quick and fair trial of the murder of Shahidul Islam, who was the president of the Gazipur unit of

This year, the USTR did not ask for reform of the labour law for the export processing zones separately; rather, it sought reforms in the labour law as a whole.

the Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation. He was beaten to death outside Prince Jacquard Sweater in Tongi on June 25.

In response, Md Ehsan E Elahi, labour secretary, informed the USTR that police arrested five suspects.

The USTR called for the filing of the charge sheet soon.

The USTR wanted the minimum percentage of workers' consent needed to form a trade union in a factory to be brought down from 20 percent.

However, it did not suggest any specific percentage like the EU, which wants the threshold to be lowered to 10 percent, said Ghosh, who led the Bangladesh side in the talks.

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SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

SPORT

Tamim back as BD-NZ ODIs kick off today

Tamim Iqbal will play his first match since his 'retirement saga' and stepping down from the captaincy in July-August as Bangladesh begin a three-match ODI series against New Zealand in Mirpur today. The match will get underway at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium at 2:00pm. Having rested majority of their key players ahead of the World Cup, this series will be an opportunity for both sides to make their final calls for the World Cup and help get the out-of-form players get back in form.



Cargo vessels moored in Narayanganj's Tarabo area are putting the walkway on the Shitalakkhya at risk. A makeshift jetty and lines tying the vessels to the shore also obstruct pedestrians. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

MORE ON PAGE 11

DENGUE OUTBREAK This month already deadlier than August

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health experts had termed August the deadliest month in terms of dengue cases and fatalities. But the numbers have climbed even higher this month.

Throughout August, nearly 11 people with confirmed dengue infection died on an average every day. The average in the first 20 days of this month has been 13.7, according to the data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

This month's daily average of new cases is 2,650, up from last month's 2,321.48.

The DGHS yesterday reported the loss of 21 lives in a 24-hour period, which equals the highest deaths in a day since the outbreak began this year.

Ten of those reported dead yesterday were in the capital and the rest were elsewhere. This takes the number of fatalities to 867 this year.

At least 857 people were admitted to hospitals with the mosquito-borne disease in Dhaka yesterday, and 2,158 in different districts.

This year, more than 1.76 lakh people have been admitted to hospitals with dengue. Of them, 75,833 were in Dhaka and 100,977 outside.

As per DGHS data, 281 people died of dengue last year, 105 in 2021, seven in 2020, and 179 in 2019.



More BNP leaders will quit: Hasan

BSS, Dhaka

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud has said it is only a matter of time before many more BNP leaders quit the party.

"It is not going to be only Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury and Taimur Alam Khandaker. Many other BNP leaders will follow suit. Just wait and see," he told journalists at his secretariat office yesterday.

Hasan, also the Awami League joint general secretary, said all politicians will not be in a party which doesn't know how to honour the senior leaders, and also bars its leaders from taking part in elections.

He said BNP is out to create confusion among the people. During 2018 national polls, the party had initially declared that it would not participate in the elections, but later it took part, he added.

The minister said changes in the statements of the BNP leaders within a month give an indication that the party is eager to take part in the next general elections.

Hasan said a political party which stays away from polls for a long time would certainly become isolated from the people.

He said BNP wants a guarantee that it will win the polls, but neither the government nor the Election Commission can give the guarantee. "We want all political parties to participate in the elections."

Criticising a comment of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the AI leader said BNP leaders instigated arson attacks and the government has audio records and other proof. But the BNP leaders are spreading falsehood against the government, he alleged.

About his recent Canada tour, Hasan said he met with Canadian parliament's upper House Human Rights Committee Chair Senator Salma Attaullahjan. She praised Bangladesh's unprecedented development under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the minister added.

Attaullahjan also lauded Hasina for providing shelter to about 13 lakh Rohingyas in Bangladesh, Hasan said.

The information minister also had a meeting with Salma Zahid MP, chairperson of the Canadian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The minister urged Salma to reopen Canadian visa office in Dhaka and include Bangladeshi students to Canada's Student Direct Stream (SDS).



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a meeting with Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe at the bilateral meeting room of the UN headquarters in New York on Tuesday.

PHOTO: PID

PM joins banquet hosted by Biden

Asks world leaders at UN meet to learn from Covid pandemic to prevent another one

UNB, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina joined a banquet hosted by US President Joe Biden in honour of the world leaders attending the ongoing UNGA session in New York.

Biden hosted the banquet at The Metropolitan Museum of Art on Tuesday evening (New York time).

PM's daughter and Thematic Ambassador of the Climate Vulnerable Forum Saima Wazed accompanied the premier.

At the banquet, the PM exchanged pleasantries with the other world leaders.

In another development, Hasina yesterday morning urged the leaders to draw on collective lessons to scale up good practices and avoid past mistakes to face any future pandemic like Covid-19.

"Equity and solidarity must form the core of our efforts," she told a high-level meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response at UN Headquarters.

To achieve that target, she flagged five priorities.

These are concessional international financing for health system strengthening in developing countries; mobilising

resources and expertise for pandemic surveillance, prevention, preparedness, and response in a science-based manner; ensuring equitable and unrestricted access for all to quality, affordable, and effective pandemic products, including vaccines; production diversification of pandemic products through access to technology and know-how; and developing an international cooperation framework for access and benefit sharing among concerned parties, with WHO in the lead.

"To that end, we hope to see fair and concrete outcomes from a pandemic treaty and amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005). Bangladesh will remain constructively engaged with both processes," said Hasina.

She said the pandemic has been a turning point for all.

"We lost many around the world. We realised that nature has its own limits for human intervention. We also experienced unprecedented global solidarity. We admitted that none of us is secure until everyone is."

Hasina mentioned Bangladesh was no exception to the Covid-19 impacts.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Strip 'criminal' Russia of veto power

Says Zelensky at UNSC

AFP, United Nations

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday confronted Russia directly at the UN Security Council, denouncing the Kremlin's invasion of his country as "criminal" and urging the United Nations to strip Moscow of its veto power.

Clad in his trademark military fatigues, Zelensky for the first time since the February 2022 invasion sat in the same room with a Russian official, who responded by scrolling through his smartphone with a look of conspicuous disinterest.

"Most of the world recognises the truth about this war," Zelensky said. "It is a criminal and unprovoked aggression by Russia against our nation aimed at seizing Ukraine's territory and resources."

Zelensky called on the United Nations to vote to end Russia's veto power on the Security Council.

He said the move could be among wide-ranging reforms at the Security Council that would include permanent representation for developing nations -- where support for Ukraine has been lukewarm.

Market running out of IV saline

FROM PAGE 1

"They should be available in retail drug stores in Dhaka and elsewhere in a week," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the local companies have reached their limit amid the rising demand. "This is why we have been instructed to import."

Khairul Bashar, assistant vice-president of Orion Infusion Ltd, one of the six local producers of IV saline, said the firm increased its daily production by up to 1.7 lakh bags.

"But the demand has increased so significantly that we can meet only 90 percent of the demand," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"If the government imports

saline, we will increase supply to retail shops. Government hospitals currently procure 60 percent of our total production," he added.

The five other saline producers are Beximco, Libra, Opsonin, Popular and ACME.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday approved a direct procurement proposal to buy 1.2 million bags of sodium chloride and 800,000 bags of glucose saline.

Among the 11 types of injectable saline, sodium chloride solution is the one most commonly used.

Prof Ahmedul Kabir, additional director general (planning and development) at the Directorate General of Health Services, said civil

surgeons and divisional directors have been instructed to check market manipulations by unscrupulous traders.

The country has seen a huge surge in demand for injectable saline due to the soaring number of dengue patients across the country over the past few months. The mosquito-borne disease has so far claimed at least 867 lives and infected 1,76,810 so far this year, making this the deadliest year since the disease was first reported in Bangladesh in 2000.

(Our district correspondents from Chattogram, Barishal, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Khulna, Noakhali and Narayanganj contributed to the report.)

requested the USTR to ease the registration process and reduce the time and cost needed for Bangladeshi pharmaceutical companies to get the US Food and Drug Administration certification.

Bangladesh will also get US support at the next ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation as it seeks an extension of the transition period for trade benefits afforded to countries graduating from the least-developed country bracket.

Asked what Bangladesh obtained from Tifca that was signed a decade ago, Ghosh said: "It is not bad. Because, 10 years ago Bangladesh's exports to the US was worth \$5 billion and now it is more than \$10 billion." Had the US extended zero-duty facilities to LDCs as per the declaration of the WTO ministerial conference in 2005, the exports would have crossed \$16 billion.

The Editors' Council had been saying that nine sections [8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 43 and 53] of the

PM calls for restructuring int'l financial system

FROM PAGE 1

She said development narratives from countries like Bangladesh demonstrate that "we can do our part".

"It is time for the international financial system to respond to our expectations."

Hasina also put forward five proposals to this end as she said in her first proposal that the MDBs, IFIs, and private lending agencies must realign their priorities and mobilise additional funds for SDG implementation and climate action.

In her second and third proposals, the PM said funds need to be made available for developing countries at low cost, concessional rates, and preferably in higher quantities of grants and all lending instruments should have disaster clauses to allow vulnerable countries to absorb shocks during crises.

"Fourthly, fair and effective debt relief measures need to be given priority based on coordination and transparency among creditors," she

said.

In the fifth proposal, Hasina said instead of quotas, SDR (special drawing rights) borrowing limits should be based on needs and vulnerability, supported by easy lending processes.

She said Bangladesh has long been credited for its sound macroeconomic management.

"Our economy grew by 8.15 percent just before the pandemic. Due to Covid-19 and Ukraine war, our economy was put under stress.

"Despite that, we are still maintaining 6-7pc GDP growth. We are trying to curb inflation, manage the balance of payments, and maintain our development expenditures," the PM added.

Hasina thanked the prime minister of Spain and the president of the European Council for convening the meeting.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Thematic Ambassador of the Climate Vulnerable Forum Saima Wazed were present.

'WOMEN MUST BE IN LEADERSHIP POSITION'

Addressing the Annual Meeting of the UNGA Platform of Women Leaders, Hasina yesterday said that women must be in a leadership position to influence decisions to make positive impacts in the lives of other women.

"We need to elevate our narrative from participation to leadership... And the UN must lead by example. It is regrettable that no woman has so far been appointed as the UN secretary general. Time has come, we will have one soon," she said.

The event was organised on the sidelines of the 78th UNGA at the UN headquarters in New York.

"We must enhance our partnership base to make gender equality a norm across all sectors. The private sector needs to come forward to advance women's participation at a higher level. As leaders, we need to engage with them and encourage them to take bold initiatives in that regard," Hasina said.

political opponents. Keeping the sections by reducing the penalties will leave scope for misuse and arbitrary use of the two sections," according to the statement of the Editors' Council.

"Four sections of the law have been made non-bailable. The maximum punishment for cyber-related cases is 14 years imprisonment and a fine of Tk 1 crore under this law," the statement reads.

"Therefore, the Cyber Security Act cannot be considered anything new other than an oppressive law," the Editors' Council leaders said in the statement.

Toll collection from Padma Bridge crosses Tk 1,000cr

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

The toll collection from vehicles on Padma Bridge has crossed Tk 1,000 crore as of March since its inauguration on June 25 last year.

More than Tk 1,000.31 crore toll has been collected from over 72.96 lakh vehicles till 2:00pm today, said Padma Bridge Site Office Additional Director Amirul Islam Chowdhury yesterday.

"More vehicles than expected crossed the Padma Bridge since its inauguration. As a result, the toll collection has exceeded expectations," Amirul told our Munshiganj correspondent this afternoon.

On the other hand, automated toll collection from moving vehicles, known as the Electric Toll Collection System (ETCS), is yet to be implemented, although its successful trial was completed on July 6.

Amirul Islam Chowdhury said automatic toll collection is still in the piloting stage. Once all the software works are completed and registration numbers of vehicles are put in the system, the toll collection will start, he added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, on June 25 last year, inaugurated the long-cherished bridge, ending the long wait for direct communication between Dhaka and the southwestern districts. The vehicular movement over the bridge started the next day.

Police constable dies after falling off building in Ctg

UNB, Chattogram

A police constable died after falling off the roof of a five-storey building at Dampara police lines hilltop in Chattogram city yesterday afternoon.

Zahidul Islam, son of Abdul Awal of Kautil village in South Keraniganj upazila of Dhaka, was a constable at the Welfare and Force Division of the SAFF Branch of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP).

"CCTV footage shows him standing on the edge of a balcony around 4:20am and brushing his teeth. He died at around 4:22pm after falling from the roof of the building," said Additional Deputy Commissioner (PR) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police Spina Rani Pramanik.

His body was sent to the Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) for autopsy, she said.

22-day ban on hilsa fishing to begin Oct 12

UNB, Dhaka

A 22-day government ban on catching, selling, hoarding and transporting hilsa will come into effect from October 12 to protect mother hilsa, said Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim.

The ban will continue till November 02. The fishing restrictions aim to protect the mother hilsa which lays eggs during the period.

"The government will provide VGF food assistance to the fishermen who will refrain from catching hilsa during the period," said the minister during a meeting at Matsya Bhaban in the capital yesterday.

"Hilsa is not only our national resource; it is a GI-certified asset that carries our unique identity in the global arena. Due to conservation campaigns, Hilsa production has increased breaking all previous records," the minister said.

Bangladesh's over 12.0 per cent fish production comes from hilsa, posting the highest contribution to the country's fish output as a single fish species.

US wants labour law reforms by November

FROM PAGE 1

The visiting delegation, which was led by Brendan Lynch, the USTR acting assistant for South and Central Asia, also requested Bangladesh to update the laws of Intellectual Property Rights so that counterfeit goods are not exported to the US from the country.

The Bangladesh side said intellectual property rights are highly protected during trade. Still, if the affected American company lodges a complaint, the government will take necessary action.

The US also wants easy repatriation of profit made by American companies.

In response, Ghosh said only one company has yet to send back its profit and the Bangladesh Bank is working on it.

The US has assured Ghosh that they will find a way such that

the commerce secretary also

requested the USTR to ease the registration process and reduce the time and cost needed for Bangladeshi pharmaceutical companies to get the US Food and Drug Administration certification.

Bangladesh will also get US support at the next ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation as it seeks an extension of the transition period for trade benefits afforded to countries graduating from the least-developed country bracket.

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Had the US extended zero-duty facilities to LDCs as per the declaration of the WTO ministerial conference in 2005, the exports would have crossed \$16 billion.

The Editors' Council had been saying that nine sections [8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 43 and 53] of the

DSA would cause serious harm to independent journalism and freedom of expression and demanded their amendment.

In the CSA, seven sections of the DSA have been included after changes regarding punishment and bail. "But the definitions of crimes have not been clarified, rather they remain the same."

"The UN Human Rights Office had urged the scrapping of sections 21 and 28 of the Digital Security Act as they were considered, at national and international levels, contradictory to the freedom of expression, misleading, and a tool to harass

political opponents. Keeping the sections by reducing the penalties will leave scope for misuse and arbitrary use of the two sections," according to the statement of the Editors' Council.

REQUIREMENTS



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DATA PROTECTION ACT

It may lead to govt control over personal info: TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The draft Data Protection Act 2023, if enacted, would serve to consolidate government authority over personal data rather than safeguarding it, said Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday.

"The absence of a precise definition of personal data may lead to mistakes, misinterpretations, and potential misuse, rendering the law susceptible to deliberate abuse and manipulation," said TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman.

He was speaking at a press conference held at TIB office in the capital.

He demanded that the draft be revised in light of the definition of personal data proposed in the TIB working paper.

"Secondly, the title of the act should be changed to 'Protection of Personal Data Act 2023,'" Iftekharuzzaman added.

He called for incorporating measures guaranteeing independent and impartial functioning of authorities, free from government influence.

Failure to do so would risk permanent misuse of personal information, he said.

"If the abuser of personal information and the authority to protect personal information are the same, then there will be a conflict of interest."

"Specific provisions should be included in the law to prevent these conflicts of interest," Iftekharuzzaman added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

VOTER LIST UPGRADATION

It will remain under EC's jurisdiction
Says its secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The responsibility of enrolling and updating the voter list will remain under the jurisdiction of the Election Commission, said its secretary Jahangir Alam yesterday.

The secretary said this while talking to reporters at his office in Agargaon.

He also said the operation of the national identity registration is not going to get transferred from the EC to the home ministry for now.

It will remain under the EC until their offices, manpower and other preparations are completed," he added.

He also said the new law on NID registration will come into effect after the government fixes the date of its implementation through a gazette.

Asked if the voter enrolment activity will be handed over to the home ministry following enactment of the new act, he said there is a separate law for voter enrolment.

They [NID and voter enrolment] are two separate issues. The voter list upgradation will remain under the EC and the NID activities will be handed over to the home ministry eventually.

Regarding the NID server remaining shut down, he said, "It [NID server] is a valuable resource. It is being updated regularly. Servers remain closed for a day or two days at many places."

He also said the decision regarding the election schedule has not been finalised.

TACKLING DENGUE
Govt okays purchase of 2 million bags of IV fluids

STAR REPORT

The government yesterday gave the nod to purchase 2 million bags of IV fluids, or injectable saline solution, to address the market shortage of this essential medicine used to treat dengue patients.

The decision was taken at the 21st meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs led by Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal.

Briefing reporters after the meeting virtually, additional secretary Sayeed Mahbub Khan said 1.2 million bags of sodium chloride and 800,000 bags of glucose saline will be purchased from India.



Workers busy weaving satin fabric at a mill in Tarabo area of Narayanganj's Rupganj. Each worker gets Tk 3.5 for weaving a yard of the fabric, making about Tk 4,000 a week, if power supply remains uninterrupted. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Holding an umbrella, a woman walks the streets as rain cools off the city. The umbrella's rainbow shades beam brightly against the gloomy weather. The photo was taken yesterday near TSC, Dhaka University.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

ON-CAMPUS COURSES

National University,
UGC at loggerheads

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The University Grants Commission and the National University authorities are at loggerheads over the latter's decision to introduce undergraduate (honours) programmes at its main campus in Gazipur.

The UGC on Tuesday directed NU officials to halt the admission procedures in four departments at the university's central campus for the 2022-2023 academic year. The UGC has also sought clarification from NU authorities regarding their rationale for admitting students to these on-campus courses.

The law clearly states we can run academic activities at university and colleges. We already offer MPhil and PhD courses with approval. We don't need new approvals from UGC.

PROF MASHIUR RAHMAN
VC of National University

According to UGC authorities, the primary function of NU's main campus is to supervise the operations of its affiliated colleges, offer research at post-graduation level up to MPhil and PhD, and perform similar functions.

NU had not sought UGC's approval for the (honours) programmes. Both public and private universities are required to obtain the commission's approval before offering any courses.

PROF MUHAMMED ALAMGIR
UGC acting chairman

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Meanwhile, NU registrar Molla Mahfuz Al-Hossain yesterday responded to the UGC in a letter stating that their decision to admit students was made in accordance with the National University Act 1992.

UGC acting chairman Prof Muhammed Alamgir and secretary Ferdous Zaman confirmed to this newspaper last evening that they had indeed received the letter from NU.

"We will analyse the legal issues," said Alamgir.

He said the university administration had not sought UGC's approval for the (honours) programmes, and the commission was skeptical of NU's manpower and capacity to conduct on-campus courses. He added that both public and private universities are required to obtain the commission's approval before offering any courses.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

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BNP's Sylhet road march today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP will hold a road march today on the Bhairob-Brahmanbaria-Habiganj-Moulvibazar-Sylhet route, demanding the resignation of the government.

Leaders and activists from five districts will join the march, said party sources.

Gayeshwar Chandra Roy and Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, among others, will join the march. It will start at 10:00am from Bhairob bus stand in Kishoreganj and move towards Sylhet.

Besides, short rallies will be held at Bishwaroad intersection in Brahmanbaria, Shaistaganj in Habiganj, and Sherpur in Moulvibazar.

Sylhet district BNP president Abdul Quiyum Chowdhury said they have taken all sorts of preparations for the events.

Brown univ

FROM PAGE 3
Prime Minister's Deputy Press Secretary Md Noorelahi Mina briefed media afterwards.

The citation conferred on Sheikh Hasina read: "Congratulations to her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the recent recognition by the United Nations of the 'Sheikh Hasina Initiative'."

The prime minister appreciated the initiative and expressed her support to it. She also stressed the need for improving medical and clinical research in Bangladesh.

Man gets life term for raping fifth grader

UNB, Dhaka

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced a man to life term imprisonment for raping a fifth grader in Dhaka's Badda in 2015.

The convict is Nasir Hawlader of Jhalakathi.

Dhaka Women and Children Repression and Prevention-7 Judge Sabera Sultana Khanam handed down the verdict, said the court's Special Public Prosecutor Afroza Farhana Ahmed.

According to the case statement, the accused and the victim's family used to live at the same house as tenants in Badda.

On April 13, 2015, the accused raped the girl.

The victim's mother filed a case accusing Nasir with Badda Police Station on April 15.

Police pressed charges against him on September 13 of the same year.

It may lead to govt

FROM PAGE 3

TIB noted that the present draft incorporates some of their prior recommendations to a limited extent. Nevertheless, they observed that key TIB suggestions pertaining to the elimination of superfluous clauses linked to individual data protection, government surveillance, and globally accepted data protection principles were overlooked.

Furthermore, it expressed concerns that an excessive reliance

on regulations could potentially amplify executive branch interference in the law's execution.

Besides, the anti-graft watchdog emphasised the need to review the draft in accordance with the input from experts and stakeholders, aligning it with internationally recognised practices before its introduction in Parliament, in contrast to the rushed passing of the Cyber Security Act.

We can assist Sierra

FROM PAGE 3

ongoing legal process at the International Court of Justice, for the repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar.

He said the Rohingya crisis is not just Bangladesh's problem, it is a global issue. "We've given them shelter on humanitarian ground. But others also have a responsibility here."

Momen also joined a high-level meeting of the Rohingya Contact Group of OIC and called for resource mobilisation from OIC members to speed up the

process.

The prime minister appreciated the initiative and expressed her support to it. She also stressed the need for improving medical and clinical research in Bangladesh.

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders hereby invited by Prime Bank Limited from reputed companies in the relevant field for providing below items:

Name of Items	Period of Sale		Date of Submission & Opening
	From	To	
Interior Decoration & Furniture works of Jamalpur Branch	24.09.2023	04.10.2023	04.10.2023
Supply and Installation of Hardware Security Module (HSM) for BACH & NIKASH	21.09.2023	17.10.2023	17.10.2023

Details are given on the Prime Bank website.
<http://www.primebank.com.bd/tenders>

Prime Bank

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Upazila Engineer

Sadar, Noakhali
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.7587.000.902.11.23.790

Invitation for Tender (Works)

e-Tender Notice No. 07/2023-2024 (OTM)

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

Sl No.	Package No.	Name of work	Tender last selling (date & time)	Tender closing & opening (date & time)	Tender ID No.
01	e-Tender/PEDP4/NOA/SAD/2023-2024/W14-03108	Construction of Boundary Wall & Gate of CHAR SULLUKIA, NEAZER DOGEE, HARI NARAYANPUR GIRLS, PURBA MAJCHAR BANLA BAZAR GPS under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila, Noakhali.	05-Oct-2023 12:00	05-Oct-2023 14:00	872565
02	e-Tender/PEDP4/NOA/SAD/2023-2024/W14-03109	Construction of Boundary Wall & Gate of HAIDER GONJ, EOJALIA, ABDUL MUNNAN REGISTERED PRIMARY SCHOOL, CHAR KARIMULLA GPS under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila, Noakhali.	05-Oct-2023 12:00	05-Oct-2023 14:00	872566
03	e-Tender/PEDP4/NOA/SAD/2023-2024/W14-03110	Construction of Boundary Wall & Gate of WEST MANDERLAKE FATEMA REGISTERED PRIMARY SCHOOL, KHALIFARHAT, MAIZ CHARA ALI AKBAR REG: PRIMARY SCHOOL, GOURIPUR GPS under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila, Noakhali.	05-Oct-2023 12:00	05-Oct-2023 14:00	872567
04	e-Tender/PEDP4/NOA/SAD/2023-2024/W14-03112	Construction of Boundary Wall & Gate of SREE [IR REG: PRIMARY SCHOOL, EAST BATIR TAK, NEAZPUR H/A, KAZIRTEK GPS under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila, Noakhali.	05-Oct-2023 12:00	05-Oct-2023 14:00	872569
05	e-Tender/PEDP4/NOA/SAD/2023-2024/W14-03113	Construction of Boundary Wall & Gate of FARIDABAD REG: PRIMARY SCHOOL, MUNSHIR TALUK, ASWA DIA GPS under PEDP4 at Noakhali Sadar Upazila, Noakhali.	05-Oct-2023 12:00	05-Oct-2023 14:00	872571

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 12.00pm on 05-Oct-2023. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) or egphelpdesk@lged.gov.bd.

Abul Mansur Ahmed
Upazila Engineer
Sadar, Noakhali
Phone No. 02334433734
ue.noakhali-s@lged.gov.bd

GD-1450



PHOTO: STAR
The tiger cage at the Rangpur zoo remained vacant since February following the demise of Shaon, an 18-year-old tigress. After a long wait, the visitors will now finally be able to see tigers as the zoo welcomes a new pair -- Romeo and Juliet. They were shifted from the Chattogram zoo. The photo was taken recently.

National University

FROM PAGE 3

UGC OBJECTION

The NU administration posted a circular on its website on July 20 regarding student admissions for undergraduate programmes in LLB, BBA, Tourism and Hospitality Management, and Nutrition and Food Science at its Gazipur central campus. However, referring to the NU Act, the UGC on Tuesday said the university's primary mission is to supervise affiliated colleges, enhance curricula at the graduate and postgraduate levels, enhance educational standards, and improve teacher efficiency.

Citing section 8 (1) of the act, NU said colleges, schools, and centres recognised by the university are typically responsible for conducting all teaching activities related to awarding degrees, diplomas, and certificates. This can be done independently or in collaboration with the university itself or with institutions approved by the Academic Council of the university.

"The university's laws and regulations restrict the introduction of courses in fields like medicine and engineering on the central campus, but otherwise, they have the flexibility to introduce various other programmes," he added.

He highlighted that the university had introduced several advanced master's courses at the main NU campus during the 2015-16 academic year.

The circular for enrolling students in on-campus courses, in this context, is a clear violation of the 1992 act, according to the UGC.

NU REPLY

Meanwhile, NU authority in its letter yesterday said according to section 41(1), the admission of students in undergraduate, postgraduate and other courses in university and colleges shall be governed by the rules made by the admission committees appointed by the NU Academic Council.

NU also said the university will perform the duties of

Vandalism

FROM PAGE 3

January to July this year, said the statement quoting media reports.

A case was filed yesterday in connection with vandalism of idols at Faridpur's Tambulkhana Durga temple. The temple management committee's general secretary Bhabesh Das filed the case accusing some 8 to 10 unnamed persons with Faridpur Kotwali Police Station.

On Tuesday, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the perpetrators.

The state then filed a petition with the SC challenging the HC bail order.

RAPE OF 4-YEAR-OLD

SC stays HC bail for accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed a High Court order that granted bail to Meheraj Hossain Tushar in a case filed for raping and killing a four-year-old in Cumilla in 2018.

Justice M Enayetur Rahim, chamber judge of the SC Appellate Division, ordered Meheraj to surrender before the trial court.

The incident took place at Krishnanagar village under Dakhin upazila in Cumilla on December 17, 2018.

Meheraj secured bail from a High Court bench on August 21 and got released from jail on August 24.

Deputy Attorney General Sarwar Hossain Bappy said after getting released from jail, Meheraj threatened the mother of the victim for withdrawing the case. A general diary was filed in this regard.

The state then filed a petition with the SC challenging the HC bail order.

2 held over murder

FROM PAGE 5

Sultana lying on the floor.

Her son filed a murder case with Bhupur Police Station. Later, PBI took over the case's investigation.

PBI tracked down Sultana's phone which was missing and arrested Labu from Sirajganj. Police also recovered the knife used in the murder from his possession. On information from Labu, Al Amin was arrested. PBI said that both Al Amin, the main planner

of the murder, and Labu used to do petty works in Sultana's house.

The two entered the house with knives on the evening of September 13 and remained hidden till around midnight. When Sultana found out about their presence, she started screaming.

Labu and Al Amin then stabbed her to death. They stole Tk 12,000 and two phones from the house and fled.

PRAYER TIMING

SEPTEMBER 21

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-40 12-45 4-30 6-05 7-30

JAMAAT 5-15 1-15 4-45 6-10 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

জামাত

রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

তারিখ: ২০-০৯-২০২৩

রাজশাহী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ভূত্ত ও খনিবিদ্যা বিভাগে নির্মাণ কর্তৃপক্ষ দ্বারা প্রকাশিত পুরস্কৃত পুরস্কৃত জন্য বাংলাদেশী নামেরিকেন্ড নিকট হতে

দরবারত আবেদন করা যাবে।

পদের নাম : সহকর্মী অধ্যাপক/পদে টা : ৩৫,৫০০, ৬৭,০০/-

প্রতিবেদন পদে টা : ২২,০০০ - ৩৫,৬০০/-

প্রতিবেদন পদে টা : ২২,০০০ - ৩৫,৬০০/-

Mother, 2 children die as haystack falls on them in Feni

UNB, Feni

A woman and her two children died as a haystack collapsed on them at Dakkhin Dharmapur village in Fulgazi upazila of Feni district yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as 35-year-old Sumi Akter, wife of Tipu Sultan, a Bangladeshi expatriate in Bahrain, and her two children - Shahid, 5 and Siam, 2.

Abul Hashim, officer-in-charge of Fulgazi Police Station, said Sumi was cutting hay from the haystack for feeding cattle in the morning.

Her two children were also with her at the time.

At one stage, the haystack collapsed on them, leaving them dead on the spot.

Locals took them to Chhagalnaiya Sadar Hospital where doctors declared them brought dead.

TK 1.78CR GRAFT

ACC sues BIWTA employee, wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed two cases against a revenue collector of BIWTA and his wife for acquiring Tk 1,78,40,433 through irregularities and corruption.

ACC Assistant Director Sayed Mohammad Emran filed the cases against Rafikul Islam, BIWTA employee at its Narayanganj office; and his wife Shahida Begum, said Mainul Hasan Rawshani, deputy director at ACC office.

According to a case, Rafikul Islam concealed the information of gaining assets worth Tk 12,50,000 and he amassed assets worth Tk 1,19,61,533 through irregularities.

In another case, his wife Shahida has been accused of hiding information of assets worth Tk 50 lakh and gaining illegal wealth worth Tk 58,78,900.

Earlier, ACC summoned Rafikul Islam on March 29 to investigate the corruption allegations. Currently, Rafikul is on post-retirement leave (PRI). He is also the general secretary of CBA's central committee, sources said.

When contacted, Rafikul refused to comment on the cases.



Water accumulated on "Nazrul Chattar" in the busy Bakery Bazar area in Sylhet city can easily transform into an Aedes breeding ground due to a lack of cleaning by the authorities concerned. Dengue has so far claimed at least 867 lives this year and nearly 1,76,810 were infected, making this the deadliest year since the first recorded outbreak in 2000.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

'No girl should be attacked for participating in sports'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Speakers at a programme yesterday said no girl should be attacked for participating in sports in this country.

Female players are doing well in sports and their participation can play great role in reducing violence against women in the society.

The speakers said this at a programme jointly organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Unicef, highlighting the importance of sports for children, in Batiaghata upazila of Khulna.

The ministry has been providing a special focus on sports for the development of all children, particularly girls in this country, they said.

"Since April 2022, Unicef has been collaborating with the ministry to incorporate sports activities to prevent violence against women and children and for their development using innovative approaches," said Elisa Calpona, manager and chief, Child Protection programme of Unicef Bangladesh.

"According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, violence against children and women affects over 45 million children," she added.

Sports should be equal for all children, said Md Nazrul Islam, additional secretary of the ministry.

"It is wonderful to observe so many children playing and enjoying with their friends and fulfilling their right to play," said Emma Brigham, deputy representative of Unicef.

Don't want trade fair on playground Demand Lalmonirhat residents

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Residents of Lalmonirhat continue to protest against the authorities' decision to organise a trade fair on a playground.

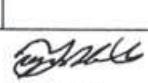
Lalmonirhat Chamber of Commerce and Industry is planning to host the month-long fair at Collectorate Ground from September 26.

"By hosting the fair, the organisers will deprive children of sports activities," said Abu Ahd Khandakar, general secretary of Lalmonirhat District Sports Association.

"The chamber of commerce has very few revenue-generating sectors, and earnings from this fair will subsidise its expenses," said Humayun Kabir, its vice president.

DC Mohammad Ullah said, "Since the commerce and industries ministries approved the fair, the district administration granted them permission."

Female players are doing well in sports and their participation can play a great role in reducing violence against women in the society.

Department of Theoretical and Computational Chemistry University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000.				
তারিখ: ০৪ আবিন, ১৪৩০ বৰাবৰ ১৯ সেপ্টেম্বৰ, ২০২৩ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ				
Sl. No.	Name of Supply	Last date of sale of Tender Documents	Last date of Submission of Tender Documents	Date & time of Opening of Tender Documents
01	Ref No: 01/OTM/TCHEM/2023-2024 Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Computer Workstation at Department of Theoretical and Computational Chemistry, University of Dhaka.	05/10/2023 Up to Office Hour	08/10/2023 Up to Office Hour	09/10/2023 11:30 AM
 Chairman Department of Theoretical and Computational Chemistry University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000.				
GD- 1449				

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মারক নং ৯৫০৩৫৮৫০৩১০০০০২৩-৬৮৯

তারিখ: ১৯/০৯/২০২৩ খ্রি.

এতকাম সর্ব সাধারণের অবস্থির জন্য জানানো যাইতেছে যে, রংপুর সরকারি টেকনিক্যাল স্কুল ও কলেজ, রংপুর এর নবনির্মিত ৫ তলা ভবন দৃশ্যমান করা ও মাঠ তৈরির জন্য ১৭ (সেপ্টেম্বর) মাসে নিমিত্তে সীলনযোগ্যকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাইতেছে।

প্রাক্কেজ নং	নির্মাণের বিবরণ	মুক্তি
০১	নবনির্মিত ৫ তলা ভবন দৃশ্যমান করা ও মাঠ তৈরির জন্য ১৭ (সেপ্টেম্বর) টি পরিযোজক এবং সুরক্ষিত অ্যারো টিমসেড, ১৯৬৫ সনে নির্মিত ১ (এক) টি আটোমোবাইল ওয়ার্কসপ (টিমসেড) ও ১৯৬৫ সনে নির্মিত ১ (এক) টি আটোমোবাইল ওয়ার্কসপ (টিমসেড) এবং অন্যান্য ভবন ভাগ এবং অপসারণ।	১২০০ মাত্র মুক্তি।

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০১.



What BTV meant for me A 90'S KID



Do you remember the iconic series 'Alif Laila', the fantasy drama that transported us to a magical world filled with Jinns, fairies, magic lamps, and flying carpets? Every Friday evening, I would eagerly sit in front of the TV, waiting for the 8 pm news to end on Bangladesh Television (BTV), so I could discover the latest antics of Princess Gulafsha in the new episodes.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

BTV wasn't just a channel for us; it was more like an emotion. During my childhood, it was the primary means through which I connected with the rest of the world. My mornings began with my favourite cartoons, and my nights concluded with my preferred foreign dramas.

Today, the younger generation might not comprehend the allure of this once-popular channel, but for us, the '90s kids, BTV gifted us a treasure trove of brilliant serials that continue to hold a special place in our hearts. Who could forget Baker bhai from *Kothao Keu Nei* or the quirky yet endearing family from *Aaj Robibar*?

Even now, I get goosebumps when I recall Baker bhai's introductory scene. With *Hawa*

Mein Utta Jaye playing in the background, our beloved gangster, sporting oversized black sunglasses, savoured his coffee while sharing a laugh with his two close friends. Baker bhai, portrayed by Asaduzzaman Noor, became a cherished member of our family. I can vividly remember the streets coming to a standstill when Baker Bhai met his fate on screen.

On the other hand, the eccentric psychiatrist Asgor and the love triangle involving Titli, Konka, and the young tenant, Anis, tickled our funny bones. Anis' obsession with memorising math equations and his iconic line, *Meyeta Rege Gelo Keno*, have resurfaced in recent years as a hilarious meme.

While my family was engrossed in Humayun Ahmed dramas, I found solace in the adventures of *Captain Planet*, *Sinbad*, and *Robin Hood*. Every Sunday at 3:30 pm, BTV aired *Woody Woodpecker*, whose zany antics never failed to brighten my day. The channel featured various cartoons scheduled for different days,

including *Godzilla*, *Jumanji*, *Captain Planet*, and *Mogli*, all of which captured my imagination.

Amongst the foreign cartoons, I had a soft spot for the evergreen *Meena*. I always wished for a talking parrot like Mittu and a wonderful friend like Meena, who encouraged me to chase my dreams. The *Murgi Chor* episode, where Meena and the villagers chased a thief, was so comical that I couldn't help but burst into laughter. I remember shouting, 'Go,



look in *Robin Hood* by

growing long hair and sporting a French beard.

During that era, it was trendy to have stickers and pencil boxes adorned with images of your favourite characters. I, for instance, had a *RoboCop* pencil box because I was captivated by his shiny metal armor and laser-beam eyes.

My younger cousins were enamored with *Mr. Bean* and his hilarious adventures. His lifelong companion, Teddy, might be an inanimate object, but their friendship demonstrated that the strongest bonds can form in the most unexpected ways.

Last but certainly not least, Hanif Sanket's *Ityadi* was something I wouldn't miss for anything in the world. I eagerly awaited the skits, featuring foreigners attempting to speak Bengali gingerly and the magical performances by Subir Nandi and Sabina Yasmin. These segments on *Ityadi* were undoubtedly the highlight of the show.

While the glory days of BTV may have faded with time, its presence still resides deep within our hearts. A significant portion of our childhood will forever be grateful to BTV for bringing us one step closer to the outside world.



Arifin Shuvoo shares spotlight with Bollywood stars at 48th TIFF



Bangladeshi sensation Arifin Shuvoo graced the same spotlight as Bollywood luminaries Anil Kapoor, Shehnaz Gill, and Bhumi Pednekar at the prestigious 48th Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), an exciting moment that has gained widespread attention across media. Recently, the photos were shared on the festival's official social media handles.

The premiere of the Bollywood film, *Thank You for Coming*, was a highlight of this year's Toronto International Film Festival. This star-studded occasion brought together celebrities from diverse nations, with Arifin Shuvoo proudly representing Bangladesh.

Expressing his enthusiasm, the acclaimed actor remarked, "I am honoured to have been invited by the festival organisers to participate in this remarkable event. It's a privilege to stand alongside international stars and represent Bangladesh on this global stage."



'Antarjal' to premiere at 150 international multiplexes

The long awaited moment has finally arrived for film enthusiasts as the first cyber-thriller film of Bangladesh, *Antarjal*, is poised to hit the theatres on September 22. The movie is all set for a simultaneous international release in the United States and Canada.

Antarjal is gearing up to set a new milestone as it will be screened at 150 multiplexes just within America and Canada.

COUNTRYWIDE/NEWS

Off-season watermelon shows prospect

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Farmers in Sharankhola upazila are delighted by growing off-season varieties of watermelon, which is usually a summer fruit, thanks to the introduction of a new farming method.

From a distance, it looks like hanging gourd or pumpkin, but when one gets closer, he can see juicy watermelons are hanging from a shed made of nylon threads.

Believe it or not, farmer Bimal Chandra Majhi of Uttar Rajapur-Amtala village in Sharankhola upazila has witness a bumper watermelon production in just four months.

Bimal said as he has no land of his own, he used to cultivate fish and paddy on one acre of land, taking lease from a local farmer.

Off-season watermelon cultivation is quite usual like gourd or pumpkin cultivation.

The seeds are usually planted

after mixing organic fertilizers with the soil, Bimal said, adding that although it does not require much cultivation cost, it needs a lot of take

per kg, he added.

Like Bimal, many farmers in the upazila are now opting for off-season watermelon cultivation due to its good price and easy cultivation process.

According to the upazila agriculture department, about 400 farmers at different villages in the upazila have cultivated off-season watermelons on nearly 41 hectares of land this year.

Moreover, the agriculture department expects more land will be brought under the cultivation in coming years.

Another farmer Asim Kumar said he cultivated watermelon on 33 acres of land and hope to get a good yield as well.

Sharankhola Upazila Agriculture Officer Debobrata Sarkar said farmers are becoming interested in watermelon cultivation as they have been providing necessary training and agricultural inputs in this regard.

Bimal said it he can continue

cultivating the off-season variety for a few more years, he will be able to maintain his family quite well.

Some traders already contacted him and express their desire to buy his watermelon for Tk 60 to Tk 65

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NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Armenian separatist forces surrender

Agree to ceasefire after Azerbaijani offensive; dozens killed, hundreds injured during ops

REUTERS, Yerevan

Armenian separatist forces in Azerbaijan's breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh surrendered and agreed to a ceasefire yesterday, 24 hours after Baku began an offensive to restore full control of its territory.

Under the agreement, confirmed by both sides and effective from 1:00 pm (0900 GMT) yesterday, separatist forces will disband and disarm and talks on the future of the region and the ethnic Armenians who live there will start on Thursday.

Separatists running the self-styled "Republic of Artsakh" said they had been forced to agree to Azerbaijan's terms - relayed by Russian peacekeepers - after Baku's army broke through their lines and seized a number of strategic locations while the world did nothing.

The authorities of the Republic of Artsakh accept the proposal from the command of the Russian peacekeeping



contingent to cease fire," they said in a statement. Azerbaijan confirmed a ceasefire deal had been reached.

The outcome would appear to pave the way for Azerbaijan to integrate around 120,000 ethnic Armenians into its society - a prospect some Armenians say they fear - and to take full control of a mountainous area that has been at the centre of two wars since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union.

Armenia, which says it has no military forces in Karabakh despite Azerbaijani assertions, did not intervene militarily.

It has accused Baku of trying to ethnically cleanse Karabakh, something Azerbaijan has denied.

It was unclear how many ethnic Armenians would opt to stay in Karabakh or whether there would be a large exodus to Armenia.

Azerbaijan's military operation, in which dozens were killed and hundreds injured, faced sharp criticism from the United States and some European countries.



In this handout videogram of a footage taken and released by the Russian Defence Ministry yesterday, Russian peacekeepers help to evacuate refugees from Stepanakert, the capital of Karabakh, after Azerbaijan launched offensive on the region.

PHOTO: AFP

UNGA ADDRESS

Erdogan raises Kashmir issue

PTI, United Nations

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan raised the issue of Kashmir during his address to world leaders at the high-level 78th session of the UN general assembly here. "Another development that will pave the way for regional peace, stability and prosperity in South Asia will be the establishment of a just and lasting peace in Kashmir through dialogue and cooperation between India and Pakistan," Erdogan said in his address to the General Debate Tuesday. "As Turkey, we will continue to support the steps to be taken in this direction," he said. His comment comes weeks after he met PM Narendra Modi on sidelines of G20 Summit in Delhi during which both leaders discussed strengthening relations.

Iran demands US show goodwill

REUTERS, United Nations

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said on Tuesday that the United States should prove its "goodwill and determination" to revive Tehran's 2015 nuclear pact as months of indirect talks between the long-time foes have led nowhere. "By exiting the JCPOA, the United States violated the agreement and the principle of good faith. America should demonstrate its goodwill and determination," Raisi said in a speech at the General Assembly, referring to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Tehran and six world powers. Former president Donald Trump reneged on that deal in 2018, arguing it was too generous, and restored harsh sanctions on Iran.

Lula warns UN of coup risk in Guatemala

REUTERS, United Nations

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva warned world leaders at the United Nations on Tuesday of the prospect of a coup in Guatemala, echoing US concerns about risks to democracy in the Central American country after last month's election. "In Guatemala, there is a risk of a coup, which would impede the inauguration of the winner of democratic elections," Lula told the UN General Assembly. Last week, the top prosecutor's office in Guatemala raided electoral facilities and opened sealed ballots from the election, in which anti-graft President-elect Bernardo Arvelo and his Semilla Party overwhelmingly came out on top.

Climate crisis 'opened the gates to hell'

UN chief tells a summit of leaders at the UNGA

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday told world leaders humanity's addiction to fossil fuels had "opened the gates to hell" as he kicked off a climate meeting where leading polluters China and the United States were conspicuously absent.

Despite increasing extreme weather events and record-shattering global temperatures, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise and oil and gas companies reap handsome profits.

Guterres has thus billed the "Climate Ambition Summit" as a "no nonsense" forum where leaders or cabinet ministers will announce specific actions that deliver on their commitments under the Paris Agreement.

In his opening speech, he evoked 2023's "horrendous heat" and "historic fires," but stressed: "The future is not fixed; it is for leaders like you to write."

"We can still limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees. We can still build a world of clear air, green jobs and affordable clean power for all," he said, referring to the target seen as needed to avoid long-term climate catastrophe.

The bar for the podium was set high, with the UN chief making clear that only leaders who had made concrete plans to

achieve net-zero greenhouse emissions would be allowed to speak.

After receiving more than 100 applications to take part, the UN finally released a list on Tuesday night of 41 speakers which did not include China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan or India.

Several major leaders didn't bother making the trip to New York for this year's UN General Assembly, including President Xi Jinping of China and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak from the United Kingdom, who said he was too busy.

US President Joe Biden, who addressed the General Assembly on Tuesday, sent his climate envoy John Kerry to the meeting although Kerry won't be permitted to speak in the segment reserved for "movers and doers."

"There's no doubt that the absence of so many leaders from the world's biggest economies and emitters will clearly have an impact on the outcomes of the summit," Alden Meyer of climate think tank E3G said.

He blamed competing issues -- from the Ukraine conflict to US-China tensions and rising economic uncertainty -- but also the lobbying power of the fossil fuel industry.

Catherine Abreu, executive director of nonprofit Destination Zero, said it was "perhaps a good news story that we see Biden not being given a speaking slot at

the summit" because the United States is continuing to expand fossil fuel projects even as it makes historic investments in renewables.

"I think about this as being a correction from past summits, where leaders have been given the opportunity to take credit for climate leadership on the global stage, while they continue to pursue plans to develop fossil fuels, and continue driving the climate crisis back at home," she added.

While the United States won't take the rostrum, California will be represented by Governor Gavin Newsom. From Britain, London Mayor Sadiq Khan will also attend.

The event is the biggest climate summit in New York since 2019, when Greta Thunberg stunned the world with her "How Dare You" speech before the UN.

Anger is building among climate activists, particularly younger people, who turned out in thousands last weekend for the "March to End Fossil Fuels" in New York.

Observers are eager however to see what Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and European Union President Ursula von der Leyen say both on their own goals and on financing commitments for the developing world. Advanced economies vowed in 2009 to channel \$100 billion to less developed countries by the year 2020 -- a promise that was broken -- even as much of the funding that was mobilized came in the form of loans.

Meanwhile, a "loss and damage" fund aimed at providing financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by the effects of climate change has still not been operationalized.



Women mourn during the funeral of three Palestinians killed in an Israeli raid on the Jenin camp for Palestinian refugees in the occupied West Bank, in the camp yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

INDIAN PARLIAMENT

MPs approve bill to reserve third of seats for women

REUTERS, New Delhi

Lawmakers in India's lower house of parliament yesterday approved a bill to reserve 33 percent of seats in the lower house and state assemblies for women. The bill would now have to be approved by the upper house and at least half of India's state assemblies before being promulgated as law. While all parties have welcomed the bill and are expected to vote in favour, its implementation depends on a complex drill of population census and boundaries of political constituencies redrawn.

Modi invites Biden to India's Republic Day parade

TNN, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited US President Joe Biden to be the chief guest at the January 26 Republic Day celebrations during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit. America's ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said yesterday. Earlier, sources had said that India is planning to invite the leaders of the Quad countries for the Republic Day celebrations. Besides India and US, the other two members of Quad are Australia and Japan. Notably, India had invited the then US president Donald Trump for the Republic Day parade in 2018.

Air pollution from fires hits poorest hardest: study

AFP, Paris

People in poorer countries are disproportionately suffering from air pollution spewed from the increasing scourge of fires in forests and fields around the world, according to new research published yesterday. Landscape fires include blazes in forests, shrub, grass, pastures and agricultural lands, whether planned or uncontrolled such as the wildfires that have ravaged countries including Algeria, Canada and Greece this year. They generate smoke that can travel up to thousands of kilometres, creating public health risks, including increases in mortality and worsening of heart and lung-related illnesses. Ambient air pollution caused some 4.5 million deaths in 2019, according to a study published in Lancet Planetary Health.

AI both a risk and opportunity for journalism: study

AFP, London

AI is both a threat and an opportunity for journalism, with more than half of those surveyed for a new report saying they had concerns about its ethical implications on their work. While 85 percent of respondents had experimented with generative AI such as ChatGPT or Google Bard for tasks including writing summaries and generating headlines, 60 percent said they also had reservations. The study, carried out by the London School of Economic's JournalismAI initiative, surveyed over 100 news organisations from 46 countries between April and July.

Why this apathy to maternal health?

Health authorities must raise awareness, strengthen public healthcare programmes

The indifference and lack of support still experienced by expectant and new mothers in Bangladesh, especially those from low-income backgrounds, is quite shocking, to say the least. Many pregnant women still do not go to healthcare centres for the necessary prenatal checkups, and when it comes to postnatal care (PNC), the situation is equally worrying. According to a recent *Prothom Alo* story, many rural women are not even aware of this essential service which they can easily get from local healthcare facilities of the government. The result is, they suffer from a variety of serious postpartum health complications, which can lead to deaths.

According to data from the Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics 2022, 156 mothers die due to childbirth-related complications per 100,000 live births in the country. And according to the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS), 20 newborns (from birth to 28 days) die per 1,000 live births. The numbers are quite worrying, more so because they demonstrate that we haven't been able to reduce maternal and child mortality at the expected rate. At a time when the government claims that it has improved healthcare services for expectant and new mothers, such a high number of deaths is unacceptable. This calls for urgent interventions from the relevant authorities.

New mothers are generally suggested to take postnatal services from trained healthcare providers at least four times after childbirth – the first within 24 hours; the second on the second or third day; the third on the fourth/fifth/sixth day; and the last on the 42nd day. But many seldom take these services. This is hard to accept given the fact that hospital deliveries have reportedly increased to 65 percent now from 53 percent in 2017-18. If only new mothers took these four PNC sessions, many life threatening conditions they generally face could have been avoided.

It is, therefore, vital that the authorities take steps to change this situation. What they must first do is raise awareness among the families in low-income groups, especially in the rural areas, about the importance of both prenatal and postnatal healthcare. Local healthcare providers must encourage all expectant and new mothers to take services from nearby healthcare facilities. They should be especially encouraged to take postnatal care which can detect malnutrition, anaemia, high blood pressure, fistula and other complications on time, and lead to proper treatment.

Equally importantly, child marriage must be stopped at all costs. Doing so can significantly decrease maternal mortality caused by childbirth. Experts have also suggested that the PNC services should be linked with the government's existing immunisation programmes in order to encourage women to take these services. With proper approaches and effective interventions, the current situation can indeed be reversed.

Unfinished bridges, unmet promises

A wake-up call for Bangladesh's development planners

The Daily Star's front page picture of a bridge long in the making in Narail's Kalia upazila, as published on September 20, serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges that often plague infrastructure development in Bangladesh. This bridge, its unfinished pillars reaching out like unfinished promises, was supposed to provide passage over the Nabaganga river – a vital line of communication for local residents. Instead, it has become a picture of "development gone wrong" thanks to poor planning, lax quality control, and negligence by officials that typically bedevil our infrastructure projects.

The story behind the incomplete structure is all too familiar: the first deadline for building the Kalia Bridge, as it is called, ended in June 2019, and over four years later, as our photo reveals, it is still nowhere near completion, leaving local residents with no option but to continuously rely on trawlers and ferries for daily commute. Officials have attributed the delay to a design flaw. It is tempting to accept this as business as usual, but we must be critical given how frequently this – the trend of faulty design and flawed feasibility studies – is happening. Building bridges over rivers is a costly business. There are high economic stakes involved, and citizens deserve answers for lofty development promises left unfulfilled. So we must ask: why did the authorities allow the Kalia Bridge problem for so long?

One of the primary concerns highlighted by this incident is the lack of effective project management and oversight. For any infrastructure project to succeed, it requires meticulous planning, rigorous execution, and constant monitoring. When these critical steps are bypassed or compromised, as seems to be the case with the Kalia Bridge, projects inevitably stall, leaving communities in limbo. Furthermore, the bridge serves as a reminder of the necessity for timely and adequate funding, the lack of which often hampers the progress of projects. Besides, corruption, inefficiency and other bureaucratic challenges can also lead to projects being revised and corners being cut, and ultimately, subpar outcomes.

The situation demands a multi-faceted response. But we must first stress the importance of establishing accountability and transparency in the management of development projects. Concerned officials must provide clear and honest explanations for delays, and corrective measures should be taken swiftly to ensure that mistakes are not repeated. If there were a functional checks and balance mechanism in place, there wouldn't be a flawed bridge design in the first place, and any flaw would have been quickly rectified, sparing taxpayers the burden of paying extra for development. We urge the authorities in Narail to quickly finish the Kalia Bridge project.

Pathway for Bangladesh's energy transition



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KHONDAKER GOLAM MOAZZEM

The energy and power sector of Bangladesh can be said to have entered its third phase of development. This phase is widely known as the energy transition phase where the country needs to shift its energy base from fossil fuel towards renewable energy-based infrastructure.

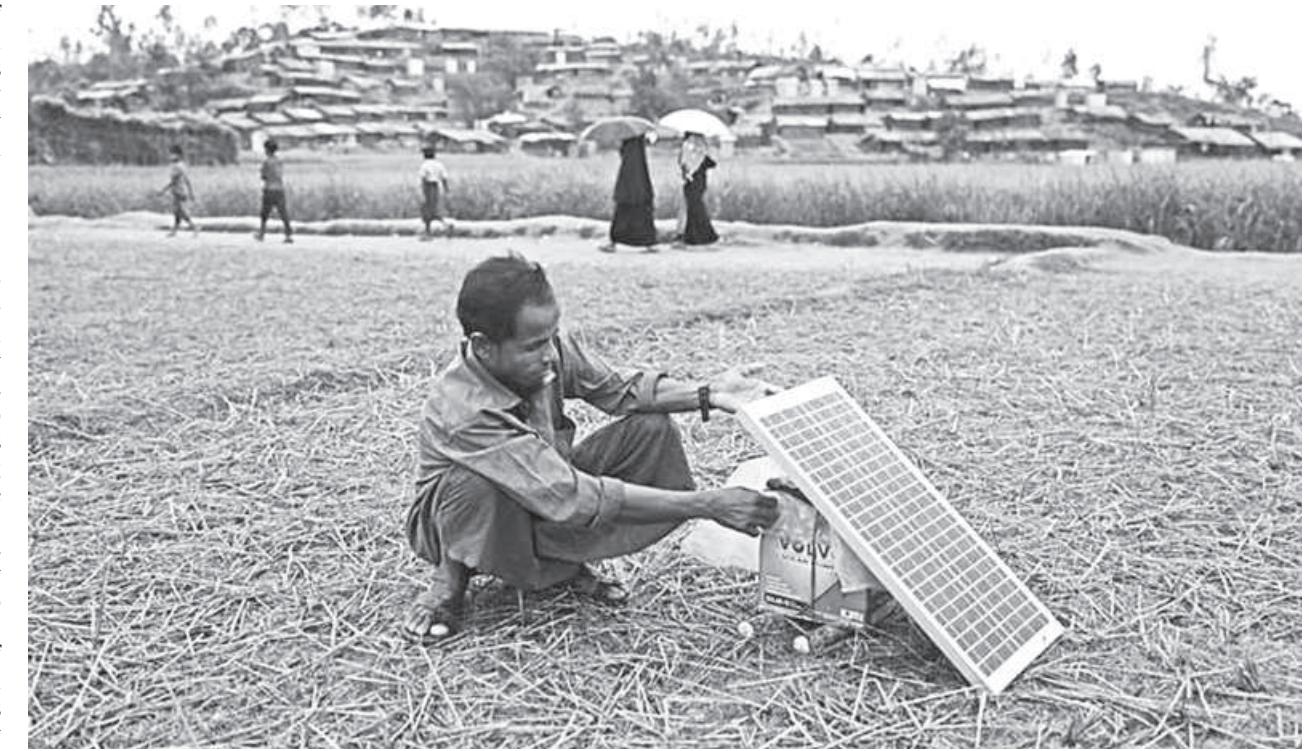
In the first phase, Bangladesh had limited energy and power demand matched by supply constraints. In the second phase, spanning the last one and a half decade, power generation has seen robust growth. Since May 2009, the installed capacity has increased from around 5GW to 27.4GW in May 2023 to meet the needs of the growing economy, including the booming garment and textile sector and the growing domestic and commercial sectors. Bangladesh has seen a sustained decline in the energy poverty of its populace in the last two decades.

Yet, given the graduation of depletion of known reserves which has been pushing the country towards imported fossil fuels to supply energy to the power plants and the industrial sector, a major shift to reduce dependency on domestic natural gas is necessary for Bangladesh. In the last two years, the unstable global energy market has sent shockwaves in the nation's energy and power sector.

It is precisely in such a context that Bangladesh needs to consider the next phase of its energy and power development saga. It needs to make a bid for energy transition and lift the sector from an existing baseline characterised by few fundamental shortcomings, including problems of accessibility, equity, and sustainability.

Bangladesh clearly recognises the need for a transition towards a low-carbon energy and power sector that ensures the needs and rights of ordinary people including workers, women, and vulnerable groups. The country has several plans and commitments that underscore this approach. The Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan 2021 has set the target of generating 40 percent of electricity from renewable sources by 2041.

One key problem is the country's increasing entanglement in coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) infrastructure. Bangladesh has built some new coal-based power plants over the last one decade with a capacity of 3GW and several coal-based power plants are in the pipeline which will add another 6.2GW capacity. A



The country's solar home systems programme could not achieve its desired impact due to lack of grassroots capacity and servicing.

PHOTO: REUTERS

similar rise in capacity will take place through the newly built LNG-based power plants. Consequently, the excess reserve in power generation, which stood at 36 percent in May, 2023, will reach as high as 50 percent by 2025. Such excess reserves mainly through private sector power plants have caused increasing payment of capacity charges, amounting to \$12.12 billion in the 2009-2023 period (considering an average rate of Tk.82.5 per dollar for 2009-2023).

A key plank of Bangladesh's recent energy related developments is the focus on imported LNG, a fuel that has seen extreme price volatility. Heavy investments are required for developing infrastructures for LNG, such as floating storage and regasification units. Furthermore, the recent draft of the integrated plan for energy and power seeks to ramp up LNG imports, which poses serious concerns regarding sustainability. Hence, the power sector is burdened with huge public debt, increasing financial losses and rising retail price of electricity at the consumers' end.

The structural requirement for energy transition

Financing will be a key requirement for energy transitions in Bangladesh.

fossil fuel-based power plants; and new and innovative financing for renewable energy in generation, transmission, distribution and backward and forward-linkage parts of the supply chain.

National policies and incentives must be aligned to facilitate a just energy transition, including the three aspects mentioned above. The policies, guidelines and strategies pertaining to solar power, for example, often present mixed signals and disparate targets. It is important that investors get a clear and unified signal about the government's policy stance and intent on renewable energy development. The fiscal and financial policies should also clearly incentivise just energy transition. The existing 37 percent duty and taxes levied on the import of renewable energy components like solar inverters is a major bottleneck to renewable energy expansion. The central bank could review the existing green financing portfolio of the banking sector to design a more effective financial ecosystem supporting the energy transition.

The transition will also require capacity building of the key stakeholders including government officials, private sector organisations

Equally important will be a compliance and quality assurance infrastructure that ensures that the products and technology used in the energy transition have proper standards. Development of a grid-system which will be compatible with the variable and intermittent supply of energy from the renewable energy-based power plants is also important. Substandard technology can significantly impact the transition towards sustainable energy. In the solar home schemes, low quality batteries reportedly led to customer suffering. Failure to ensure proper quality can erode the confidence and interest of users as well as investors.

As Bangladesh moves towards a middle-income country status, its national development plan also needs to be aligned with its greater profile and larger ambitions. After making vast progress in recent decades, the energy and power sector is now poised to transition towards a more sustainable and inclusive model of development. This model will feature a lower-carbon and more environment-friendly energy mix, and it will also ensure that marginalised social groups have adequate and fair access to energy and socioeconomic opportunities.

When you have Opinion Fatigue Syndrome



Raffat Binte Rashid
is features editor at The Daily Star.

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

Whenever I am asked to give my opinion on something, I cringe. I suffer from an extreme case of Opinion Fatigue Syndrome, a condition where you get a sick feeling of dread every time someone asks for your opinion. Being a journalist adds to the pressure. It is as if I must have the information and facts to pass a comment or give an opinion on every issue under the sky: from the wildfires in Yellowknife in Canada to the green chilli price in Dhaka.

There are people who overhear or pick up from what others say and form their own vague half-baked opinions. Add to that list Facebook journalists, armchair intellectuals, micro-bloggers, and television talk show hosts. These kinds of "knowledgeable personalities" add to the pressure.

My best friend is one such person. She has strong views on every issue and has loads of judgement to pass.

She is tired of my lack of knowledge on local and world affairs. My child calls me braindead and that no one can have a decent intellectual conversation with me, because apparently I am not aware of my surroundings.

Yes, I have no opinion about Delwar Hossain Sayeedi being called *Din er Rahbar* or celebrity blow-ups of Porimoni. Or on bigger issues like why poor lending practices have led banks to a high level of Non-Performing Loans (NPL), how foreign exchange market instability is causing disruption in our daily lives, and why BRT bus stops are on the wrong side of the road.

What impact will my two cents of Facebook status have on these, I wonder. What real value is there in churning out impulsive and ill-conceived opinions for the masses to wolf down?

"I said this and that, I wrote a

blog on it and it is the final word on the subject" – this is the attitude of most people with strong views on social media or television talk shows. People with opinions have the authority to pass a judgement or start a public trial without considering the repercussions.

It's easier to push your opinions on the Internet, regardless of any actual comprehension, because the

I unabashedly say that I know nothing or little on any subject
rocking the net yesterday, today, or tomorrow! Yes, it makes me opinionatedly challenged. For me, it's tiring to act like I know everything or to fake myself as an intellectual.

place is saturated with sentiments, thoughts, and judgements. A breakfast status is mandatory for your online presence – you have to jump on the bandwagon of what's brewing on that particular day to keep up with the times.

The fear of missing out (FOMO) is the reason why we need to chime

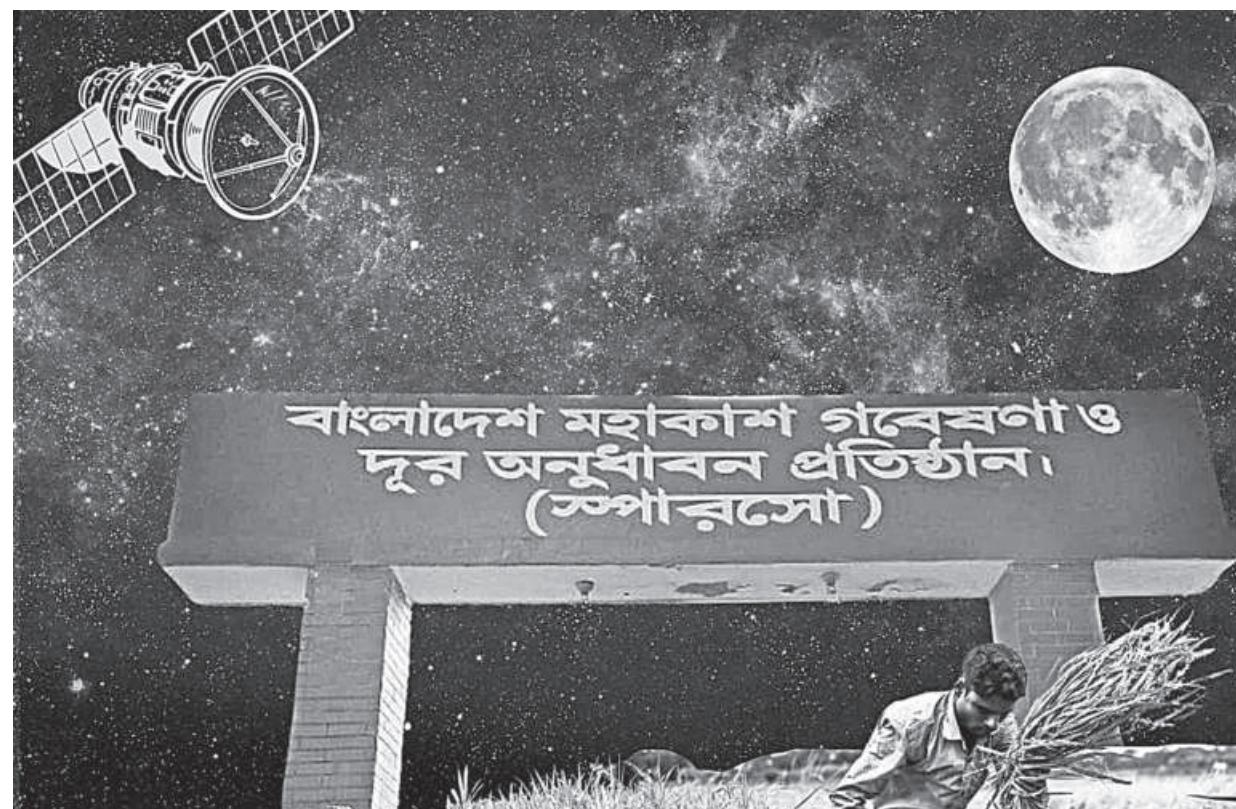
in on a trending newsy topic, be it political drama (of which there is no dearth in our society) or financial fiascos. It does not matter if we do not fully understand the topic of concern.

However, I unabashedly say that I know nothing or little on any subject rocking the net yesterday, today, or tomorrow! Yes, it makes me opinionatedly challenged. For me, it's tiring to act like I know everything or to fake myself as an intellectual. While everyone is thinking something about everything, I am not. I am burnt out from listening to or giving bogus views that make little or no sense to others who pretend to listen. When I strongly believe in an issue, I need time to dig into it and then decide to talk about it.

From the point of my "disability," I clearly see that we have made the Internet or social platforms a mess where we all talk over each other and no one is benefitting or listening.

Opinions are now the definitive truth beyond which the line of reason does not run. But I am afraid of making empty noise; I feel that it makes me look more foolish than having uninformed views about anything and everything.

I suffer from Opinion Fatigue Syndrome and I think it is okay.



VISUAL: STAR

What does our space research organisation really do?

Data processing at the ground station can offer immense benefits



Dr Sayeed Ahmed
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SAYEED AHMED

India's recent moon landing success raised a lot of curiosity and interest in Bangladesh and Pakistan. The question many people raised was: "Why couldn't we achieve something like this?" Bangladesh's Space Research and Remote Sensing Organisation (SPARRSO) came under scathing criticism from netizens.

Intrigued, I decided to find out more about SPARRSO from its website.

Founded in 1968 as the American space programme's Automatic Picture Transmission (APT) ground station, it is supposed to contribute to national development by peacefully applying space science and technology (vision statement). In 1972, when NASA launched its Earth Resources Technology Satellite (ERTS) - later renamed Landsat - SPARRSO continued active collaboration with it and later with Japanese and European space programmes.

That partnership has continued since. In May last year, NASA integrated its satellite data with observations from Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) to enhance the country's ability to forecast extreme weather events. That means SPARRSO is active, but either it is not informing the public of its work or not meeting expectations. According to its website, SPARRSO had only two achievements in over 50 years: 1) NASA Group Achievement Award in 1986 and 2) Bangladesh Independence Award by its chairman in 1998. It offers only five data sets to the citizens, which are 33 years out-of-date (maps and images covering Dhaka, Chattogram, and Bangladesh, published between 1985 and 1990). There are only eight ongoing research programmes with a combined budget of just under Tk 88 lakh (\$80,000 at the current exchange rate). With such a paltry allocation, we cannot expect any earth-shattering (or moon-shattering?) performance.

We, however, must be realistic. SPARRSO's mission is not necessarily sending lunar missions but using space technology for peaceful purposes. As such, it can focus on leveraging this technology and supporting Bangladesh's development journey. A few cases in other countries might clarify this point. In 2012, India launched a programme called KisanMitr (Farmers' Friend) to give farmers free personalised weather forecasts (from satellite data) and agricultural advice via SMS three times a day. Research showed that it increased the use of rainwater as a groundwater or surface irrigation substitute.

forecasts (from satellite data) and agricultural advice via SMS three times a day. Research showed that it led to greater compliance with agro-meteorological advisories in scheduling operations based on crop growth cycle. It also increased the use of rainwater as a groundwater or surface irrigation substitute.

In Brazil, the police hardly ever investigated environmental crimes because locating isolated illegal deforestation was difficult. In 2018, it adopted the online forest monitoring platform Global Forest Watch, which detects areas of tree cover loss using satellite imagery. With this, the police can quickly identify areas of illegal deforestation and combat them more effectively.

Senegalese farmers have improved their yields and reduced losses due to disease by monitoring crop health and identifying areas of crop stress with satellite imagery.

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The programme, in collaboration with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to predict crop yields and enhance food security by guiding the farmers, planning food storage and transport, and helping policymakers focus on the most vulnerable communities.

In 2012, India launched a programme called KisanMitr (Farmers' Friend) to give farmers free personalised weather

farmers optimise their irrigation schedules. It improves crop yields and saves water, reducing the risk of crop failure due to drought. The Directorate of Resource Surveys and Remote Sensing (DRSRS) is working on a national digital programme for a satellite-based AI-powered crop monitoring and yield forecasting system. With it, the farmers will make smart and data-driven farming decisions, and monitor crops. Last year, Kenya joined UNCTAD's CropWatch programme to monitor its crops better and protect them from floods and other hazards. CropWatch uses satellite data to monitor crop conditions and integrates this with other climate-related data on drought, pests, and disease for better farm management.

None of these countries, save India, sent satellites into space but effectively uses data from others' satellites. Essentially, they collect relevant data from various sources, process them to produce useful information, and deliver the products effectively to the end users (e.g., farmers).

Aside from agriculture, there are many other fields where satellite imagery and advanced data processing can offer valuable insights. These include environmental conservation, disaster management, urban planning, infrastructure development, water resources management, public health management, and disease control. Each area can immensely benefit from satellite data but discussing them in a short article is impossible. Using satellite data effectively, Bangladesh can unlock space programmes' transformative potential for a more prosperous and sustainable future.

Here is a case. Landsat satellites cover the earth every 16 days and provide data for free downloading within a few minutes. However, such data are not precise as their pixel size is 30m (i.e., a 30x30m block on the ground becomes one number in the satellite data). These data cannot help in detailed studies that require higher precision. However, commercially available satellites offer accuracy in centimetres, even millimetres. These are expensive and not easily available. SPARRSO can act as a medium to procure such data and disseminate it to government and private users, charging a fee to recover the cost (making it commercially viable).

Bangladesh's space programme can indeed do a lot on the ground. But that needs sustained investment in education, research, joint programmes with universities and research organisations, technology transfer from advanced countries, and a long term vision. Launching satellites is only one part of a space programme; the more significant part remains how the data is processed to glean valuable insights.

Gender equality is the investment we need to make



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GITANJALI SINGH

The SDG Gender Snapshot 2023 report was launched earlier this month. This publication is the latest instalment in the annual series jointly produced by UN Women and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). The report provides a comprehensive analysis of gender equality progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Even with significant progress in certain sectors, as we approach the halfway mark of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, monumental challenges remain.

Let's take a closer look at the progress made towards each goal. Goal 1 of the 17 SDGs is "No poverty." Regarding this, the report forecasts that by 2030, 8 percent of the global female population (approximately 342 million women and girls) will continue to live on less than \$2.15 a day. Only 42 percent of countries have sex-disaggregated poverty data readily available, impeding targeted interventions. For "Goal 2: Zero hunger", the report finds that while progress in narrowing the gender gap in food insecurity has been made, roughly 24 percent of women and girls may still experience

in "Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy," approximately 341 million women and girls could lack access to electricity by 2030, with clean cooking fuels remaining out of reach for many. Universal electricity could elevate 185 million women and girls from poverty by 2050, and modern cookstoves could prevent 6.5 million pollution-related deaths.

As for "Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth," disrupted careers, care responsibilities, and wage discrimination mean women only earn a third of the global income generated by labour. For each dollar men earned in labour income, women earned only 51 cents. The gender wage gap and underrepresentation of women in the labour force continue, indicating the need for policy reforms to ensure equitable opportunities and wages.

When it comes to "Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure," women hold 21 percent of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) jobs and only one in three researchers is a woman. Gender disparities in technology and innovation persist, hindering women's participation in STEM fields and impeding progress in

third of these women and girls could find themselves living in inadequate housing or slums. Moreover, women with disabilities, representing approximately 18 percent of the female population, face heightened challenges. A 2022 study indicated that a mere 27 percent of 190 countries and regions explicitly protected the rights of women with disabilities.

Regarding "Goals 12-15: Responsible production and consumption, climate action, life below water, life on land," up to 158 million more women and girls might find themselves in poverty by mid-century due to worsening conditions fuelled by global warming. This represents 16 million more than their male counterparts. An alarming 236 million more women and girls may experience food insecurity, compared to 131 million men and boys. Despite these numbers, only 55 of the world's national climate action plans include gender-specific adaptation measures, and only 23 recognise the vital role of women as change agents in the fight against climate change.

For "Goal 16: Peace and strong institutions" the snapshot report states that since 2017, the number of women and girls in conflict-affected areas has surged by 50 percent, tallying up to 614 million by 2022. In 2023, those in extremely fragile areas were especially vulnerable, facing higher poverty rates and increased food insecurity. Intimate partner violence is 2.4 times higher in extremely fragile contexts compared to non-fragile settings.



The SDG Gender Snapshot 2023 report forecasts that by 2030, 8 percent of the global female population (approximately 342 million women and girls) will continue to live on less than \$2.15 a day

PHOTO: AFP

moderate to severe food insecurity by 2030. Gender disparities in agriculture persist, with limited access to land, resources, and ownership affecting productivity. Regarding "Goal 3: Good health and well-being" the report finds that while maternal mortality reduced globally from 2000 to 2020, progress has stagnated since 2015. High maternal death rates in sub-Saharan Africa and Central/Southern Asia highlight inequalities in healthcare access and quality.

For "Goal 4: Quality education" the report finds that increases in girls' enrolment in education are commendable, but nearly 110 million girls and young women could remain out of school by 2030 if the progress stalls. Gender gaps in education and training opportunities persist, affecting future earning potential and overall development.

On the other hand, "Goal 5: Gender equality" has witnessed limited progress, with just two of this goal's indicators nearing their targets. No indicator has fully met its aim. Deep-seated biases persist, marked by unequal health access, unequal political representation, economic gaps, and inadequate legal defences. Critical data for monitoring progress is missing in many countries. Furthermore, 28 countries do not recognise women's equal rights in marriage and divorce. Globally, 19 percent of young women are married before age 18, and there is a notable disparity in leadership roles.

Analysing "Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation", the report states that while more women now have access to safe drinking water, around 380 million women and girls live amid high or critical water stress, a number projected to increase to 674 million by 2050 due to climate change. Similarly,

emerging technologies like artificial intelligence. On "Goal 10: Reduced inequalities", gender discrimination comes in many forms and remains commonplace, undermining human rights. According to the

'Goal 5: Gender equality' has witnessed limited progress, with just two of this goal's indicators nearing their targets. No indicator has fully met its aim. Deep-seated biases persist, marked by unequal health access, unequal political representation, economic gaps, and inadequate legal defences. Critical data for monitoring progress is missing in many countries. Furthermore, 28 countries do not recognise women's equal rights in marriage and divorce. Globally, 19 percent of young women are married before age 18.

latest available data, up to 21 percent of people living with HIV reported being denied health care in the past 12 months, and up to 26 percent of women living with HIV reported that their treatment for the virus was conditional on taking contraceptives.

On "Goal 11: Sustainable cities," by 2050, urban areas are expected to house 70 percent of the world's female population, totalling 3.3 billion. Alarming trends suggest a

regarding "Goal 17: Partnerships", a dire need for enhanced financial backing exists in countries where gender equality lags the most. The yearly budget dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective remains low at \$5.7 billion, just 4 percent of total bilateral aid. This minimal support, coupled with the fact that only one in four countries actively tracks gender equality funding, underscores the challenges faced in achieving parity.

The 11 biggest hurdles for women's equality by 2030 are lack of women in leadership, poverty and lack of economic opportunities, workplace discrimination and inequalities, an imbalance in unpaid care work, social norms and cultural practices, inadequate access to education and health care, food insecurity, violence against women and girls, inadequate funding for gender equality initiatives, legal barriers and poorly enforced legislation, and lack of access to clean energy and sanitation.

The SDG Gender Snapshot 2023 report advocates for an integrated, holistic approach to advancing gender equality, involving multi-stakeholder collaboration and sustained financial backing. Neglecting to amplify efforts and invest in gender parity jeopardises the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is evident we are doing even worse than we realised on gender equality. The price tag for SDG 5 - achieving gender equality and women's empowerment - is in. We can afford it, we need to pay for it. We know that an additional \$360 billion per year is needed to achieve gender equality in developing countries across key global goals. This is less than one fifth of the \$2.2 trillion spent globally on military expenditure in 2022.

BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

A modern love story in translation

Review of the Bangla translation of 'Amrita-Imroz: A Love Story' (Penguin, 2006) by Uma Trilok

Uma Trilok, an educationist by profession and a poet, painter, singer, and classical dancer by passion, was a great admirer of Amrita Pritam. Since her childhood, Trilok used to recite and sing Amrita's songs and poems.

ALAM KHORSHED

I became an ardent admirer of Amrita Pritam, the maverick Punjabi author, an outspoken critic of the Indian patriarchy and discriminating social practices, three decades back in New York when I was putting together an anthology of world feminist poems in Bangla translation. While translating one of her fiercely feminist poems for my collection, I came to know more about her exceptionally eventful life, particularly her much-talked-about love life.

Though not a Bangali herself, Amrita Pritam is quite known and, to some extent, popular in contemporary Bangladeshi society, mainly among the intelligentsia. This is mostly because of her bold, beautiful, and multifaceted body of literary oeuvre, and partly because of her rather unconventional yet everlasting relationship with artist Imroz. But only recently, I was fortunate to find a full-fledged book on Amrita, Imroz, and their rather unprecedented relationship, thanks to my translator friend Dilwar Hasan, who took the time and trouble to render the book titled *Amrita Imroz: A Love Story* by Uma Trilok into Bangla titled *Amrita Imroz: Ekti Premkahini* (Baatighar, 2023).

Dilwar Hasan, a longtime Pritam aficionado had been following her for almost four decades, and read many of her own books and books written on her, including the ones by Uma Trilok herself. In his sizeable and informative introduction, Hasan stated that his latest read on Amrita—the book by Uma Trilok—blew him away by its spontaneity, simplicity, and authenticity. Hasan then decided to translate it for the benefit of the wider Bangali readership.

Uma Trilok, an educationist by profession and a poet, painter, singer, and classical dancer by passion, was a great admirer of Amrita Pritam. Since her childhood, Trilok used to recite and sing Amrita's songs and poems. Even after growing up, she harboured a deep fascination for Amrita's literature and lifestyle. She

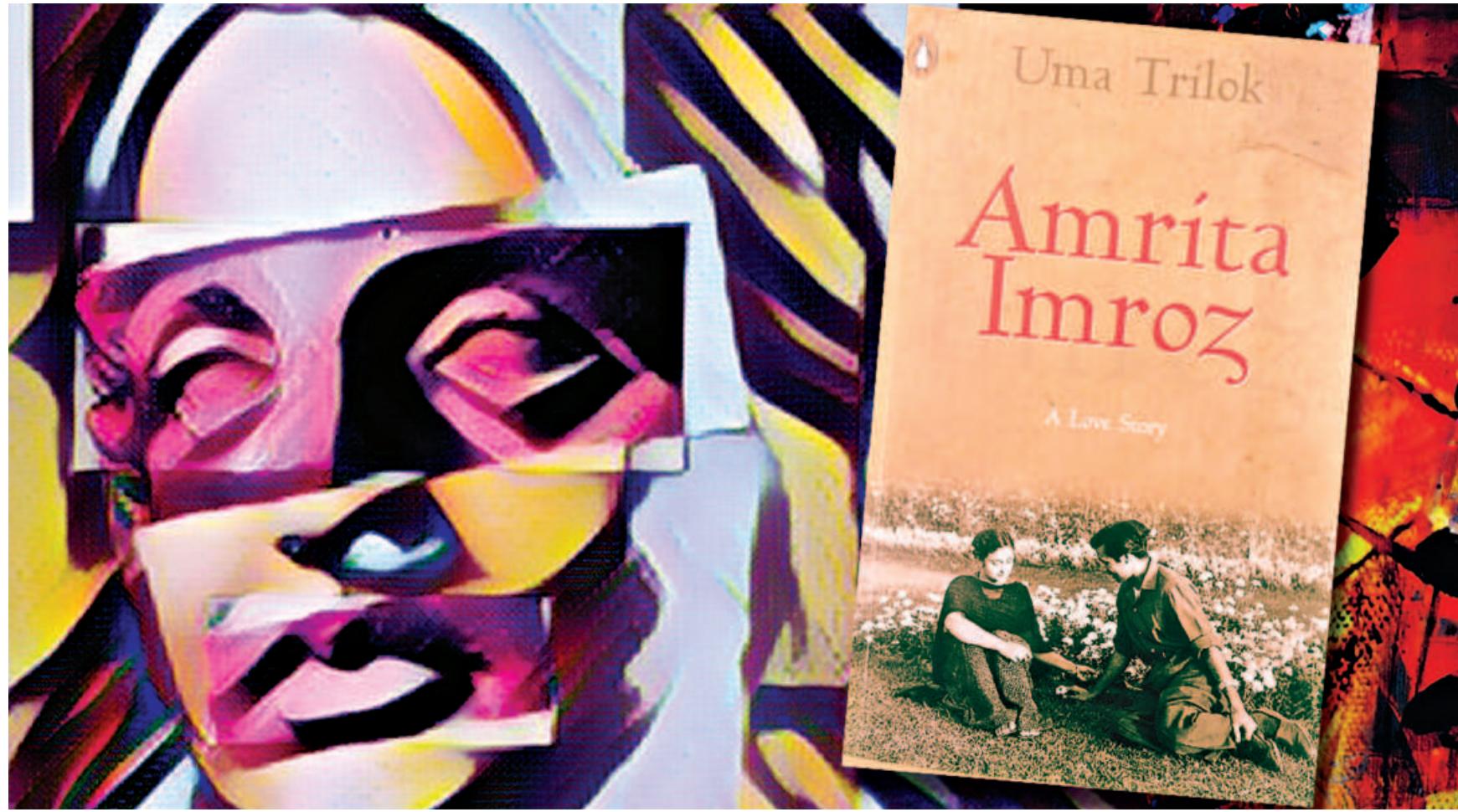


ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

mentions in the very first chapter of the book that in 1996, after reading Amrita's poetry collection in English translation, titled *Sometimes I Tell this Tale to the River* (Hind Pocket Books, 2003), she developed an intense urge to meet Amrita in person. The story takes off from their first meeting and ends with Amrita's demise in 2005. It was published in book format the following year with both popular and critical success.

Trilok discloses in her introduction to the book that this was based on her years of intimacy and close encounters with Amrita and Imroz, but it was not very clear exactly when their first meeting took place. However, we get a feeling that the memoir is only an account of the last few months

of Amrita's life and her beautiful friendship with Trilok.

As the story unfolds, we find Imroz, Amrita's soulmate, taking centre stage and becoming an integral part of the book. Structured into several small and loosely-connected chapters, the book goes beyond the boundary of the trio's personal relationship and sheds light on her childhood and youth—her early marriage with an elderly individual named Pritam Singh; their emigration to India after the bloody and brutal partition of the subcontinent in 1947; her becoming the mother of two children; her troubled and tormented married life and eventual divorce in 1960; her complex emotional relationship with poet Shahid Ludhianvi and Sazzad

Haider; and of course, the subsequent arrival of the painter Imroz in her life.

All these and much more of their lives and thoughts were eloquently captured in the Bangla rendition, painstakingly accomplished by Dilwar Hasan thanks to his absolute command of the languages and mastery of the tricky art of literary translation. Through Hasan's lucid and evocative translation, the readers are able to get easy access to the inner world of Amrita and Imroz, enabling them to understand the true nature and extent of the complexity of their phenomenal love and friendship. However, part memoir, part biography, and part commentary on Arts and Literature, this book never shies away from mentioning Amrita's bold statements

on family, gender, sexuality, society, power, politics, and world affairs.

In conclusion, I strongly recommend this book to those who are curious to know more about the extraordinary life of the writer par excellence Amrita Pritam and her deeply transcendental relationship with Imroz, as well as to those who are interested in understanding the inner workings of the human mind and emotion; the complex chemistry between man and woman; the true definition of love, marriage, and sexuality; and above all, the dynamics of art and creativity.

Alam Khorshed is an Engineer-turned-writer, and is predominantly a literary translator. Author of 25 books, Alam Khorshed received the Bangla Academy award for translation in the year 2022.

ESSAY

RRReading

QAZI ARKA RAHMAN

Even if you are not a film enthusiast, chances are high that you have watched the 2022 Telugu blockbuster *RRR*. At the very least, you should have heard about it. But this piece is neither about that "Naatu Naatu" movie nor films in general. However, it will make use of the title of S S Rajamouli's flick to write about another activity—reading. An oft-ignored trivia is that reading is not a single R activity. Reading should be understood as an amalgamation of RRR—reading, reflection, and re-reading—where the first acts as the umbrella term for all three.

A case can be made about how reading without reflection—and ideally re-reading to ruminate on that reflection—does not do much about intellectual growth. In this case, readers get caught up in the numbers game. The goal becomes reading, and just reading, more and more words, which in turn nudges readers towards short and shorter pieces. Not a surprising thing given that the current entertainment landscape is dominated by reels, tiktoks, tweets, and flash fictions. These bite-sized materials make for tasty treats that can be swallowed in large numbers. But it is not exactly good for your body if you keep on swallowing stuff like a gluttonous gargoyle, right? You need time to digest. After reading, reflection is essential to squeeze out the nutrition from the text you are munching on. Reflection allows you to make your reading useful in more ways than simply swallowing words and being mentally obese.

We have all encountered people who continuously preach about books that have blown them away. If someone is blown away by a book, you would want to know what exactly they have found fascinating about the said book. How many times has this happened that when you ask them, as



ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHE

to why they love a certain book, they try to justify their "blown" mind by saying how the book is *zush*, *josh*, *joss*, or my personal favorite *jussssssssssss*! These Rogan Josh-esque reactions blur any distinctions between books in a brutish manner. What do you think about Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*? It is *zush!* Why do you like Humayun Ahmed's *Nondito Noroke*? He writes *josh!* Why are you blown away by *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens? It is because this Dicky guy tells it *joss!* Any thoughts on Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*? Never heard about it, but is it any *jussssssssssss*? The economy is in crisis, man! How are these people affording

these many S's?

These are the people who would brand anything that they have newly read, as the greatest since their last reading—which they also, unsurprisingly, considered to be the greatest literary achievement of all time! Their obsession with hierarchy does not allow them to understand the beauty/merit of anything unless you attach a placeholder signifier to it. Regarding any book that they have read, they will declare, "It is the best! The best. It is!" First, even literary prizes do not claim that they are awarding it to the 'best book'. The prizes are to acknowledge great works but in no way do they mean that the award-winning

books are the G.O.A.Ts! Second, and this is just to cue in a Seinfeld reference, how is it possible that whatever you are reading is the best? They cannot all be the best. There cannot be these many bests!

Do not get me wrong now. The argument here is not about reading less. I am in favor of reading more and more. My point here is that readers should try to reflect on anything that they have read. Period. Wondering about the meaning of what is written. Questioning the writer's intent and agency. Contemplating on finding connections between written words and readers' lives. Ask yourself: can I remember the basic content of my readings? Did

anything stand out—any interesting information or exciting ways of using language? Was there anything relatable to my life? Could I infer or interpret something to re-use or remix? Thinking anything, really, about the choice of reading. Then, if the need be, re-reading the piece at hand for better conceptualisation and clarity. Now, this might seem like an arduous task. I can hear exasperated readers shouting "Ain't got no time for that!" I can hear myself muttering it as I am penning this piece! It is a valid concern. We are already short-strapped for time as it is. So, why and how do we find time to approach reading as a triple R activity?

The answer to the why has already been answered, I hope. As for how, the solution is pretty basic. The expectation of us reflecting on and re-reading everything is both unrealistic and unsustainable. We cannot RRR everything we read. We chose what reading pieces deserve the triple R treatment. Even then, we probably will not be able to R3 everything that we want to. We might have to settle with R1 (reading) for most, R2 (reading and reflection) for some, and R3 (reading, reflection, and re-reading) for the selected few—the ones that are worthy of our sustained attention. We have to allow ourselves to try and fall short. It is alright. What matters is that we will succeed with some. Then we will have materials that can be retained in our reservoir of knowledge in a way that is nutritious for us. That is how we get any kind of intellectual growth. The next time you read a book, just pause and ponder about the number of R's you need to wonder about what you have read. Trust me. That will pay off. Happy RRReading, folks!

Qazi Arka Rahman is a doctoral candidate at the Department of English, West Virginia University, USA.

Tigers seek IMPACTFUL DISPLAYS

SPORTS REPORTER

In drizzly conditions, Anamul Haque Bijoy came barefooted to the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium turf yesterday afternoon to get a feel of the wicket before the first of three ODIs between Bangladesh and New Zealand, slated to begin today. The weather conditions hindered Bangladesh's practice sessions before the start of the series but, like Anamul, many would look to make their mark.

Ahead of the World Cup, this series provides the perfect platform for a few players to return to some form. One of them is Liton Das, who will be captaining the ODI side for the third time over the course of the previous five series.

"When I was given the responsibility of captaining the side, my first objective was to win matches," Liton said at the press conference yesterday.

Liton, captaining the side in absence of regular skipper and all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, reckons that performing as a batch, with one or two highlight performances, is the way forward for his side.

The pressure ahead of the series is minimal with both teams resting



key players. From Bangladesh's perspective, though, the opening slot would see competition as apart from Liton, who said he was looking to get back into form, there are Tanzid Hasan, Anamul, Soumya Sarkar and Tamim Iqbal available.

Meanwhile, Mahmudullah Riyad and Tamim Iqbal's return are the biggest focus going into the series. The former had been dropped following the series against New Zealand while

Tamim had not played since his retirement saga in the middle of the Afghanistan series. Mahmudullah would have to show both form and fitness in order to stake a claim for the World Cup squad. Tamim, meanwhile, will be looking to gauge his fitness and batting form in the series.

"Having two senior stars helps us in every way ... I don't want to create any pressure on them. When Bangladesh enjoy the game, the possibility of success increases," he felt.

The Tigers have had difficulty in coming up with sound decisions in key phases of certain games. On the batting front, Liton felt the idea would be to score runs as per situation.

"If we lose quick wickets and [Mahmudullah] Riyad goes out to bat with 30-35 overs of game left, he will play his own game. There is nothing to tell him, he is very mature. The same applies to Soumya ... It's not just them, every batter's responsibility is to score runs," Liton said.

With overcast conditions in forecast today as well, the Mirpur wicket is likely to be on the slower side. Thus, playing conditions and lack of practice will add to Bangladesh batters' challenges.



PHOTO: FIRROZ AHMED

Booters look to bounce back

SPORTS REPORTER from Hangzhou

Smarting from a 1-0 defeat at the hands of Myanmar, Bangladesh Olympic football team will hope to bounce against India in their second match of Hangzhou Asian Games at Xiaoshan Sports Complex Stadium today.

The match will get underway at 2:00pm (Bangladesh time).

Before the crucial do-or-die match against neighbouring India, the men in red and green had their final preparation for nearly two hours at Zhenjiang Sci-Tech University Athletics field yesterday, defying heavy showers, as a victory over India will keep Bangladesh in the race for the Round of 16.

Bangladesh played against India three times in the Asian Games in 1978, in 1982 and in 2002 – losing on all three occasions.

"We are ready for tomorrow's match," midfielder Mohammad Ridoy said yesterday. "We are expecting something good if we can implement the plan prepared by the coach."

"Our first target is to not concede any goals against India and then go into attack," the 21-year-old midfielder said. "I think India could not recover after coming to China the day before their match (5-1 defeat) but they are not a bad team. However, we are looking forward to a positive result."

U-19s take on India

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on India in their first match of the SAFF Under-19 Championship in Kathmandu, Nepal today, with the match scheduled to kick off at 1:45pm.

Bangladesh have participated in all four editions of the event, but failed to win any of those occasions, despite making the final the last three times, and it remains the only SAFF trophy missing from Bangladesh's cabinet.

Bangladesh will play their first match against defending champions India on the opening day and play against Bhutan, the other team in Group B, two days later.

"The first match against India is obviously a very tough match. All of our focus is on that match. If we can win the match, we will clearly be in the semifinals. Even if we draw that game, we will have an advantage," Bangladesh coach Rashed Ahmed Pappu had said before leaving for Nepal.

Bangladesh will play against Bhutan in their second match of Group B on September 23 while Group A features Nepal, Pakistan and Maldives. The top two teams from each group will play the semifinals and the final will be held on September 30.



PHOTO: BFF

A Bangladesh player tries to win the ball from two Vietnam players during their first match of the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers in Hanoi yesterday. Bangladesh lost the match 2-0 after Australia thrashed Philippines 6-2 in the first match of Group B. Two teams each from the two groups will qualify for the final round of the competition to be held in Indonesia next year.

'Several challenges' await Tamim

MAZHAR UDDIN

The three-match ODI series between hosts Bangladesh and New Zealand beginning today is set to mark the return of Tamim Iqbal to international cricket following a lot of controversies surrounding the cricketer over the past few months.

A lot has changed for the Tigers since Tamim announced his shock retirement from international cricket in July before taking a U-turn. The 34-year-old, however, went on to step down from the ODI captaincy since he felt that his lingering injury concern might hamper the Tigers' chances in the upcoming World Cup.

The dashing left-hander later underwent treatment and now faces the challenge to transform the team's vulnerable scenario at the top of batting order.

Prominent coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, who was also Tamim's mentor during his developmental years, believes that the veteran campaigner will face "several challenges" after having been away from competitive action.

"There will be an impact from the recent controversies, and he will be under pressure to perform," Fahim told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Even if he didn't play, I'm sure



he worked on certain aspects of his technique, but it will be important to see how well he adapts to how he used to play in the past."

One of the biggest reasons for Tamim's sudden retirement, according to sources, was tied to his deteriorating relationship with head coach Chandika Hathurusingha in recent times.

Fahim, though, considers Tamim an "emotional guy" and believes "a lot of negativities around him could have been self-created" and that he may have gathered doubts about his own batting abilities.

"I think he needs to show that he can perform to those who want to see him fail, so this is additional pressure on him," he explained.

Moreover, Tamim will reunite with the team in a different setting, with Liton Das in charge, while Hathurusingha and regular captain Shakib Al Hasan will be on leave for the series; although the Sri Lankan coach is expected to join the team before the third fixture.

Fahim also stated that Tamim should "play at his own pace initially because it's a fifty-over game," and that the squad should be patient with him.

"Our team must also recognize that when a player returns from injury, it is a gradual process to regain pace [of his game]."

From exile to Europa League

AFP, London

Brighton's "incredible" journey from homeless exiles facing oblivion to their current status as Premier League trendsetters will reach a memorable climax when they host AEK Athens in their first-ever European match on Thursday.

For a generation of Brighton fans, AEK's visit to the Amex Stadium in the Europa League group stage is the kind of occasion that would have been unthinkable in the dark days, when the club appeared set to implode.

Once as decrepit as the fire-ruined West Pier on the south-coast city's pebble beach, Brighton, under coach Roberto De Zerbi, now possess one of the most admired business models in world football.

Clubs seek to emulate Brighton's ability to scour the globe for obscure youngsters such as

Moises Caicedo, Alexis Mac Allister and Marc Cucurella, all developed into assets that commanded huge transfer fees in relation to their initial cost.

The innovative formula helped the Seagulls defy the odds with a sixth place finish in the Premier League last season.

They have made another a strong start this term, including Saturday's 3-1 embarrassment of Manchester United at Old Trafford.

"This has been an incredible project. There is definitely a broader awareness of Brighton now," said Albion chief executive Paul Barber.

"One European club I spoke to takes a feed of all our games, and their coaching staff sit down on Monday mornings and watch them from start to finish."

It is an unprecedented position of strength for a club that 26 years ago came within a whisker of crashing out of the English Football League and did not have a stadium of their own.

When Steve Gritt was hired as Brighton manager in December 1996 the team were languishing 11 points adrift at the bottom of the fourth tier, with a catastrophic relegation to non-league football looming.

They achieved the point they needed to survive but despite their

great escape, Brighton's problems were only just beginning.

The Goldstone Ground, Brighton's stadium for 95 years, was sold for property development in 1997.

Brighton were cast into exile, forced to endure a 150-mile round trip by road for every 'home' fixture as they ground-shared at Gillingham's Priestfield Stadium.

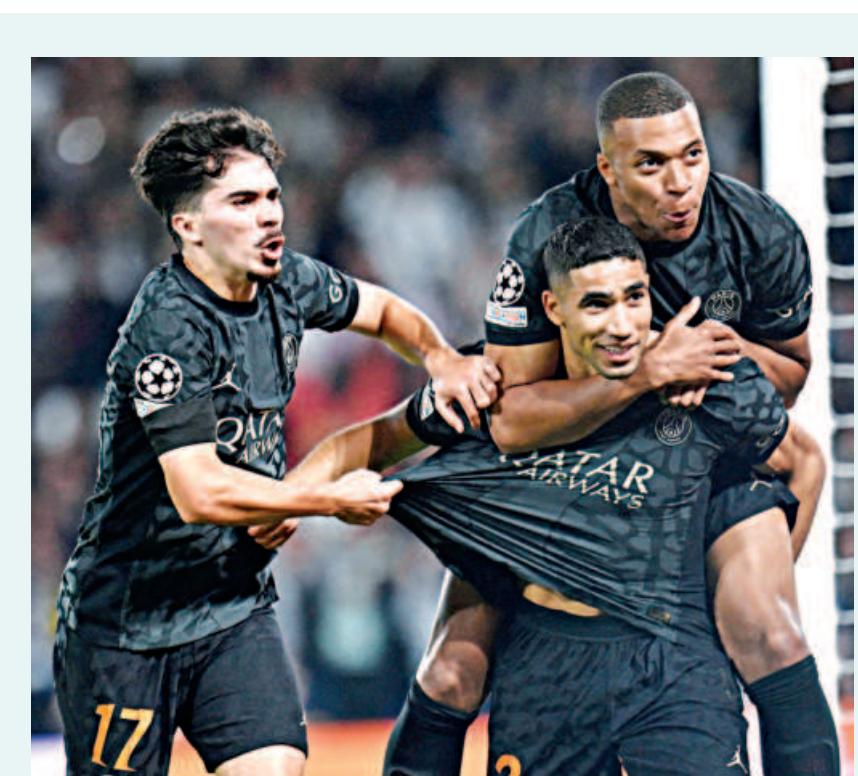
Attendances dropped as low as 1,025 during Brighton's two seasons there and it seemed the club might not survive the wilderness years.

Crucially, in 1999, the club secured a lease to play at the Withdean Stadium, a converted athletics stadium two miles north of the city centre.

With a limited capacity and little covered seating, Withdean was hardly a glamourous setting, but the emotion generated by Brighton's return home allowed the club to rediscover its sense of self.

Professional poker player Tony Bloom bought the club in 2009, betting that a purpose-built new stadium, which opened two years later on the city's outskirts, would fast-track the team's revival.

The gamble paid off handsomely and, after a 34-year absence, Brighton were promoted to the Premier League in 2017.



After Kylian Mbappe gave Paris Saint-Germain the lead early in the second half, Vitinha and Achraf Hakimi combined as the latter doubled the lead in the 58th minute in their 2-0 win at home over Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League on Wednesday. Apart from Hakimi flooring Mats Hummels with a slick move for their second, the goal also ensured a smooth start for the French side in the early weeks of a new era following the departures of Lionel Messi, Neymar, and Marco Verratti, and the arrival of coach Luis Enrique.

PHOTO: AFP





ঢাকার ধরনীতে নতুন গতি
প্রথম ঢাকা এলিভেটেড এক্সপ্রেসওয়ের শুভসূচনা
সিমেন্ট ও রেডিমিস্ট্র কংস্ট্রিউট
অন্যতম নির্মাণ সহযোগী



Turning the page

Tangail youth leaves white-collar job, finds success in farming

MIRZA SHAKIL

After finishing his MBA from a private university in 2017, Habib Khan, 32, landed a job in the garment sector in the same year. After four years in the much-coveted job, he was still struggling to support his family.

It was then he came up with the idea of a farm. Many had discouraged him at the time as it was too risky a venture to pursue, especially when one was beset with a shortage of land and funding.

But Habib put his conviction and leadership skills to work, turning considerable chunks of land in his village in Tangail into a model farm in less than just two years.

Started in 2022 in Kalianpara village under Gajaria union in Tangail's Shakhipur upazila, Khan Agro has grown to be a successful farm that produces a variety of crops including sugarcane, papayas and bananas.

"While working in the apparel sector, I realised my future will remain the same if I don't think of an alternative," Habib said.

"Alongside the job, I decided to farm my ancestral land. So, I began with hybrid papayas and bananas last year. I quit my job at the beginning of this year and returned to my village permanently," he said.

After talking to others and watching several video clips on YouTube, he decided to grow crops that are more profitable than paddy. But despite his conviction, it was not entirely smooth sailing.

The small pieces of his family land were not enough to pursue an ambitious agricultural project. Nor did he have a lot of cash to purchase more lands.



Alongside the job, I decided to farm my ancestral land. So, I began with hybrid papayas and bananas last year. I quit my job at the beginning of this year and returned to my village permanently.



HABIB KHAN

"Some of my relatives supported me financially. Thus, I was able to lease more land from locals for farming. And that's how 'Khan Agro', my agriculture farm, came into being," he said.

After leasing nine more acres of land, Habib started cultivating black sugarcane of a Philippine variety, moringa (locally known as sajne) of hybrid varieties, lemon and other crops. He also started farming fish in a pond.

"I have already started selling my papayas and bananas. But the sugarcane needs more time to be ready for sale," he said.

Habib hopes to make Tk eight lakh from his investment in sugarcane.

For 3,000 banana plants (coloured sugar variety), his production cost, including the lease money, is Tk 7 lakh this year, which he hopes to sell at Tk 12 lakh.

For 1,000 papaya plants (top lady variety), his production cost, including the lease money, is Tk 4 lakh. Just like last year, he expects a good profit from selling papayas this year.

He also hopes to get a good return on the two and a half lakh takas invested in fish.

"This year, I have invested Tk 30 lakh so far and after breaking even, I hope to earn Tk 20 to 25 lakh," he said.

Habib's agro farm is also creating employment opportunities for locals where 18 to 20 agriculture labourers work on a daily payment basis.

"Following modern methods, farming can become a real alternative to white collar jobs," Habib added.

Mamun Haider, a local social activist, said he had visited Habib's agricultural farm and saw how a young man had created an example for others to follow.

The local agriculture officials provided Habib with necessary guidance.

Niyonta Barman, upazila agriculture officer in Shakhipur, said the hilly lands of the upazila are so fertile that almost all kinds of crops grow there.

"If the educated young people give farming a real chance, there will be many more Habibs in our country," she commented.

Habibur new chief of DMP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Additional Inspector General of Police Habibur Rahman has been made the new commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

The home ministry's Public Security Division yesterday issued a circular, signed by Deputy Secretary Sirajum Munira, in this regard.

Habibur, now the chief of Tourist Police, will replace Commissioner Khandker Golam Faruq, as the 36th DMP chief after he retires on September 30, said DMP sources.

This appointment at the DMP top post comes months before the national election.

Born in Gopalganj in 1967, Habibur graduated from Dhaka University. He joined Bangladesh Police as assistant superintendent of police through the 17th BCS in 1998.



The Ramchandrapur canal in Mohammadpur's Adabar area is full to the brim with garbage. A sign placed by the Dhaka North City Corporation right near says, "Let us stop littering our canals, let us make tomorrow's Dhaka more liveable." The photo was taken recently.

MONEY LAUNDERING
Cash, assets worth
\$1.76b seized,
frozen in S'pore

AFP, Singapore

Singapore police have seized or frozen more than \$1.76 billion (S\$2.4 billion) worth of assets in one of the biggest money laundering cases ever uncovered in the city-state, local media reported yesterday.

Authorities had seized assets worth nearly \$750 million in sweeping raids against a suspected international money laundering ring last month.

During the operation, police arrested 10 foreign nationals -- from China, Turkey, Cambodia, Cyprus and Vanuatu -- members of a group suspected to be laundering proceeds from overseas criminal activity including scams and online gambling.

Bank accounts, cash, documents with information on virtual assets, properties, vehicles, and luxury items such as bags and watches were seized during the raids.

Police yesterday said they had conducted additional operations and seized additional assets, bringing the total amount involved to more than S\$2.4 billion (\$1.76 billion), according to local media.

The trove of seized assets now includes bank accounts containing an estimated value of over S\$1.127 billion (\$828 million) and more than \$55.8 million in cash.

It also includes 68 gold bars, 294 luxury bags and 164 luxury watches, jewellery and electronic devices, local broadcaster CNA reported.

More than 110 properties and 62 vehicles with a total estimated value of over S\$1.242 billion have now been issued with the prohibition of disposal orders, CNA reported, meaning they cannot be sold.

Police did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

Singapore is a global financial hub, and has strict laws against laundering illicit funds, which can carry up to 10 years in jail.

JOURNO MURDER
SC stays HC
bail for prime
accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed till November 20 a High Court order that granted bail to a suspended UP chairman accused of killing a journalist in Jamalpur in June.

Mahmudul Alam Babu, who was the chairman of Sadhurpara Union Parishad in Bakshiganj at the time of the crime, and some of his cohorts are accused of killing journalist Golam Rabbani Nadim.

Yesterday, Justice M Enayetur Rahim passed the order following a petition filed by a prosecutor.

Babu cannot be released from jail now, Assistant Attorney General Saiful Alam said.

A leave to appeal petition will be moved before an SC full bench on November 20 against the HC bail order, he added.

Nadim, the Jamalpur correspondent of Banglanews24.com and a reporter of Ekattor TV, was attacked by supporters of Babu on June 14. He died the next day.

On September 18, an HC bench granted bail to Babu.

ROW OVER SIKH LEADER'S MURDER
India tells its citizens in Canada to be cautious

REUTERS, New Delhi

India yesterday urged its nationals in Canada, especially students, to exercise "utmost caution" as ties deteriorate after each nation expelled one of the other's diplomats in an escalating row over the murder of a Sikh separatist leader.

Tension has grown since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday Canada was investigating "credible allegations" about the potential involvement of Indian government agents in the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia in June.

"In view of growing anti-India activities and politically condoned hate crimes and criminal violence in Canada, all Indian nationals there, and those contemplating travel, are urged to exercise utmost caution," India's foreign ministry said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has categorically rejected Canada's suspicions that Indian agents had links to the murder.

"Given the deteriorating security environment in Canada, Indian students in particular are advised to exercise extreme caution and remain vigilant," the ministry added in a statement. New Delhi's advisory followed Ottawa's advisory to Canadian citizens in Indian-ruled Kashmir issued late on Tuesday.

Scientists rediscover small Brazil tree, 185 years on



AFP, Rio De Janeiro

A species of small holly tree that was last seen nearly two centuries ago and was feared extinct has been rediscovered pluckily clinging to life in an urban area in northeastern Brazil, scientists said Tuesday.

The tree, "Ilex sapiformis," was found in the city of Igarassu, in Pernambuco state, by an expedition that spent six days combing the region in hopes of finding it, said the conservation group that backed the project, Rewild, co-founded by Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio.

Better known as the Pernambuco holly, the tree was first documented in Western science by the Scottish biologist George Gardner in 1838.

His collection was the only confirmed sighting -- until March 22, when the new expedition found four of the trees on the bank of a small river in the city of Igarassu, just outside the state capital, Recife.