



"A worrisome new arms race is brewing. The number of nuclear weapons could rise for the first time in decades."

UN chief Antonio Guterres

The Daily Star

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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BB moves to stem slide in reserve

Plans some short-term measures ahead of nat'l election

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD MEHEDI HASAN

The Bangladesh Bank will not be making any drastic policy changes ahead of the national election scheduled for January, putting all its focus on tackling the depleting foreign exchange reserves and refraining from printing money to give loans to the government.

But after the polls, the banking regulator will be embarking on its long-term plan to reform reserve management and the banking sector under the new government.

The recommendations were made yesterday by Sadiq Ahmed and Ahsan H Mansur, vice-chairman and executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh respectively.

The banking regulator and finance ministry have started to take opinions from economists and other stakeholders to ride out the twin challenges of a strained dollar stockpile and elevated inflation since last year. Last week, BB met with the Wahiduddin Mahmud, a former adviser to the caretaker government.

"They are basically in agreement with what we said. They also said they cannot do much before the polls, which we understand. But after the election, there has to be a major overhaul -- it is not a choice -- and they want to prepare for that," Mansur told The Daily Star after the meeting.

The immediate tasks are to stem the drop in reserves and to put curbs on government borrowing from the central bank.

At the meeting, Finance Secretary Md. Khairuzzaman Mozumder said the government will not borrow from the central bank and they have already taken initiatives to bring down public expenses.

But stemming the drop in reserves is turning out to be an unwinnable battle.

Despite a series of measures, reserves continue to fall. In the first nine months of the year, gross reserves declined 19 percent, according to estimates by the American credit rating agency Fitch.

As of September 26, which is the latest published data by the BB, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Farmers transporting Aush paddy to their homes by boats in Hathgachha Beel of Jashore's Monirampur upazila. Farmers in Bhabadaha region can grow only one crop a year because the area remains waterlogged for most part of the year due to the authorities' failure to manage water flows from local rivers. The photo was taken yesterday.

Bashundhara seeks to invest in Teletalk

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Struggling state-run mobile operator Teletalk is evaluating a proposal from Bashundhara Group to become its strategic investor, in a move that can shake up the country's mobile landscape.

The proposal, which was submitted to the Post and Telecommunications Division from Bashundhara Telecommunication Limited, outlines a plan to develop the network, enhance customer service and upgrade the systems of Teletalk, which has made losses

in all but the first two years of its 19-year existence.

On Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar's instruction, Teletalk, whose net loss widened 27.2 percent to Tk 223.1 crore in fiscal 2021-22, formed a committee to assess the proposal.

"We are scrutinising the proposal -- some of our officials are looking into it," Nurul Mabud Chowdhury, the operator's managing director (current charge), told The Daily Star.

Chowdhury declined to share details of the proposal and how much Bashundhara intends to invest as the matter is still in the

early stages.

Bashundhara Group's bid to step into Bangladesh's mobile landscape comes when local conglomerates have steered clear due to the capital-intensive nature of the business. Both Banglalink and Robi were founded by local owners, who sold off their businesses to foreign parties with bigger financial muscle in 2004 and 2007 respectively.

For Bashundhara Group, whose concerns range from real estate to construction materials, from fast-moving consumer goods to

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Hasina's birthday today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sheikh Hasina, the longest-serving prime minister of the country and also the Awami League president, turns 77 today.

The eldest among the five children of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, Hasina was born in Tungipara of Gopalganj on September 28, 1947.

After Bangladesh's independence, Bangabandhu along with most of his family members was brutally killed in a coup by some army personnel on August 15, 1975. Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana had been abroad at that time.

The torchbearer for her father's ideals, the AL chief survived many attempts on her life, including the grisly grenade attack on August 21, 2004.

After 1975, when the AL plunged into a crisis due to rifts within the party and a lack of enthusiasm

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan shares a light moment with teammates at the BCB headquarters in Mirpur yesterday afternoon prior to their departure for India to play the World Cup. They will play the first of their two practice matches against Sri Lanka tomorrow in Guwahati.

PHOTO: STAR

Miladunnabi today

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi, marking the anniversary of the birth and demise of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), is being observed across the country today with due religious solemnity.

On this day in 570, the 12th of Rabiul Awal of the Hijri calendar, Prophet Muhammad (SM) was born in Makkah of Saudi Arabia with divine blessings and messages of peace for mankind. He also passed away on the same day in 632.

The day is a public holiday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

'Nasty game, not injury, behind my exclusion'

Says Tamim

AL-AMIN

A day after being excluded from the World Cup squad on fitness grounds, Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal said that a nasty game, not injury concerns, played a key role in his last-minute omission.

In a video statement on his Facebook page, the left-hander also claimed that a lot of lies circulated in the media to obscure the truth. He said that he never declined to play the third one-dayer against New Zealand on Tuesday, nor did he say anything about being available for five World Cup games as reported.

Things were set in motion after a Monday midnight meeting between coach Chandika Hathurusingha and captain Shakib Al Hasan at board president Nazmul Hassan's residence, where Shakib reportedly said he would not captain the side if unfit players were selected.

The Daily Star reached out to the Bangladesh Cricket Board, but nobody wanted to speak on the matter.

In a 12-minute-plus recorded statement, posted after the national team's departure for India at around 4:00pm, Tamim said that nowhere in the latest medical report did it say that he was unfit for the World Cup.

The medical report even detailed Tamim's injury management leading up to the first World Cup game against Afghanistan on October 7, according to Tamim.

The crux of the problem was a telephone conversation with a top board official, during the course of which the left-hander was asked to bat down the order and sit out the first World Cup game.

While baring his soul, the most successful Bangladesh opener said: "In the last two or three days, what has happened and what was written is completely different from what actually happened."

Narrating the events since his return to national team for the New Zealand series, he said: "You all know I announced my retirement (on July 6 this year) and there was a reason for it.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

আল্লাহ সর্বশক্তিমান

জয় বাংলা
জয় বঙ্গবন্ধু

২৮ সেপ্টেম্বর

বঙ্গবন্ধুকন্যা, মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী, সফল রাষ্ট্রনায়ক

জননেত্রী শেখ হাসিনার

৭৭তম জন্মদিনে

শুভেচ্ছা

এ.এইচ.এম খায়রুজ্জামান লিটন

সভাপতিমণ্ডলীর সদস্য, বাংলাদেশ আওয়ামী লীগ
মেয়র, রাজশাহী সিটি কর্পোরেশন

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star office will remain closed today on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladunnabi. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow. Stay tuned to our website for round-the-clock news coverage.



Several villages in Jhenidah and Magura are on the verge of disappearing from the map due to the Madhumati river erosion. Inset, the situation is similar in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat where the Teesta has continued to devour homesteads and arable lands. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Madhumati devours roads, homesteads

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

The erosion of Madhumati river has taken a severe turn in Magura and Jhenidah districts, engulfing roads, crop lands and homesteads.

In Jhenidah, several villages under Shaikupa upazila — Charparia, Moheshpur, Gopalnagar, Harekrishnapur, Armajhi, Raoyupur, Ruijani and Bholanathpur — are fast disappearing from the map due to erosion.

More than two-kilometre stretch of land on the river bank has been lost to erosion already, while many houses, shops and establishments, and crop lands are at risk.

Panic is prevailing among the residents of Gopalnagar, Moheshpur, and Armajhi areas, where enough preventive measures have not been taken.

This correspondent visited the areas recently and found that erosion has

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

LALMONIRHAT, KURIGRAM Teesta erosion worsens

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The Teesta river has continued eroding homesteads and arable lands at 12 places in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts, after water level rose following heavy rains.

At least 50 homesteads and about 150 bighas of arable lands have already been devoured by the river in the last two days, while around 200 more homesteads and about 1,000 bighas of arable lands are under serious threat.

Marjina Begum, 70, a resident of Kalmati village under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, lost her homestead on five decimal lands to the river on Tuesday noon, and has since then been living under the open sky.

"I don't know how I will move on," she said.

Amjad Hossain, 67, of the same village also lost his homestead and two bighas of arable land to erosion on Tuesday morning, and is now facing a similar plight.

"Teesta has left me destitute," he said.

Executive Engineer of WDB Kurigram Abdullah Al Mamun said they have been dumping sand-filled geo bags at vulnerable places to check erosion. Due to a rise in Teesta water level, the erosion has turned severe, he added.

Mashiar Rahman, project implementation officer in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said he visited the erosion-hit areas and prepared a list of affected families, who will be given support from the government.



I lost my homestead and two bighas of arable land to erosion on Tuesday morning. Teesta has left me destitute.

AMJAD HOSSAIN
Resident of Kalmati village in Lalmonirhat

DENGUE TESTS IN NOAKHALI

Tk 50 on paper, up to Tk 1,500 in reality

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Dengue patients are being over-charged by a syndicate at Noakhali General Hospital, capitalising on the shortage of test kits and intravenous (IV) saline.

While the government fixed dengue test kit prices at Tk 50, with private hospitals charging Tk 300, many patients in Noakhali claimed that they were forced to pay up to Tk 1,500 for the test.

A syndicate of hospital staffers, fourth

class employees, Ansar members, and brokers is cashing on the helplessness of the dengue patients by demanding whatever they can from them for the tests or convincing them to conduct dengue tests at private hospitals instead, alleged locals.

Md Selim, 40, who was admitted to the hospital on Monday, said, "Even though this is a public hospital, I was charged Tk 400 for the dengue test."

Meanwhile, Anis Mahmud, 22, said he

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Program on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, and Resilience in Bangladesh (PARTNER-DAM Part)
Department of Agricultural Marketing
Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215.

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)

1. Ministry/Division	: Ministry of Agriculture
2. Agency	: Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM)
3. Name of Procuring Entity	: Agency Program Director, Program on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, and Resilience in Bangladesh (PARTNER-DAM Part), Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM)
4. Invitation for	: Selection of Firm for "Planning, Design, Development, Upgradation, Deployment, Support & Maintenance of Smart Krishi Market System".
5. Invitation Reference	: 12.02.0000.549.43.017.23.49 Date: 27/09/2023
6. EOI Submission Deadline	: EOI shall be submitted on or before 11/10/2023 at 4:00 PM in sealed envelope delivered to the undersigned and be clearly marked on outer envelope "Request for Expression of Interest for Design, Development, Upgradation, Deployment, Support & Maintenance of Smart Krishi Market System".
7. Procurement Method	: Selection under a Fixed Budget Selection (SFB)
8. Budget and Source of Fund	: GOB (Development), IDA (World Bank)
9. Project Code	: 224374700
10. Name and Address of Receiving EOI Document	: Agency Program Director, Program on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, and Resilience in Bangladesh (PARTNER-DAM Part) Room 513, Front Building, 4 th Floor, Department of Agricultural Marketing, Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215.
11. Place of Opening EOI Document	: Room 513, Front Building, 4 th Floor, Department of Agricultural Marketing, Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215.
12. Brief Description of the Assignment	: The proposed Smart Krishi Market System is to be developed high-quality and high-capacity software for an integrated and automated Smart Krishi Market System and implement it in all offices under Department of Agriculture Marketing (DAM), including at the field level. To increase dynamism and transparency in all activities by implementing software called "Smart Krishi Market System" for an integrated Krishi Market Management. The system has the following modules: Portal Development, Wholesale Management, Retail Management, Farmer Profile management, Wholesaler / Buyer Management, Admin /Super admin features, others user management, Product Management, Order Management, Communication Management, Reports and Analytics, Dashboard, Common Module Management, Capacity Development, Support & Maintenance Service.
13. Eligibility of Firms	: 1. Must have 8 years experiences in working experience in software development. 2. Must have Valid RJSC Incorporation Certificate, Updated Trade License, TIN, VAT, BASIS Membership certificate. 3. Must have a minimum turnover of 2 crore in each of last three years financial audit report. 4. Must have project completion certificate of a minimum of 5 (five) projects in last 5 (five) years in the field of web or application development out of which at least 3 (Three) projects must be in digitization/automation of a government service/function where all the design, development, implementation and maintenance support (covers SDLC full cycle) service were provided. 5. Each completed project shall have a minimum value of Tk. 50 (fifty) lacs 6. Must have three web application/software development in government public service delivery sector with completion certificate. 7. Documents demonstrating the management and operational capacity of the firm (Brochure, Company Profile and other documents describing company expertise, strength and experience, core functions, products and services, similar assignment or project experience, availability of relevant professional staff and experience among applicants' staff/resources to carry out this assignment.) 8. List (Name, designation, years of experience, number of projects, expertise) of IT personnel who will be engaged to perform the assignment. 9. The minimum amount of Liquid asset/Line (s) of Credit of the firm shall be Tk. 75 lacs (certificate for proving available liquid asset must be issued 03 (three) Months from the date of tender invitation). 10. ISO 9001/ ISO 27001/CMMI L3/CMMI L5 Certified firms will be given preference. NB: Joint Venture not allowed.
14. Details Information of EOI and Proposal	: Firms are requested to submit 01 (one) original copy of EOI with necessary documents at the Program office between 9.00 a.m-4.00 pm within the deadline. In addition, soft copy of EOI (in zipped folder) must be submitted at partner.dam@gmail.com . The procurement shall be regulated as per PPA-2006 and PPR-2008. For submitting proposal details Terms of Reference (ToR) can be obtained from notice board at www.dam.gov.bd .
15. Name of Official Inviting EOI	: Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Faroque
16. Designation of Official Inviting EOI	: Agency Program Director
17. Address of Official Inviting EOI	: Room No-513, Front Building, 4 th Floor, Department of Agricultural Marketing, Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215.
18. Contact Details of Official Inviting EOI	: Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Faroque Agency Program Director, Telephone: 02-55028448 E-mail: partner.dam@gmail.com
Note	: The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any packages or all EOI.

Signed/-

(Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Faroque)
Agency Program Director
Program on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, and Resilience in Bangladesh (PARTNER-DAM Part)
Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM)
E-mail: partner.dam@gmail.com
Phone: 02-55028448

বাংলাদেশ স্যাটেলাইট কোম্পানি লিমিটেড
(রাষ্ট্রীয় মালিকানাধীন একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান)
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তারিখ: ২৬ সেপ্টেম্বর ২০২৩

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিষয়: স্যাটেলাইট-সিস্টেমের, ২০২৩ সালে আনুষ্ঠানিক পৌর ব্যক্তির এর কারণে বন্ধক স্যাটেলাইট-১ এর সম্প্রদায় কার্যক্রমে সাময়িক বিঘ্ন ঘটা হয়েছে। উপর্যুক্ত বিষয়ের প্রেক্ষিতে জানিয়ে যাচ্ছে যে, পৌর ব্যক্তির (Sun Outage) এর কারণে আনুষ্ঠানিক ৩০ সেপ্টেম্বর, ২০২৩ হতে ০৭ অক্টোবর, ২০২৩ পর্যন্ত নির্দিষ্টকৃত সময় অনুযায়ী বন্ধক স্যাটেলাইট-১ এর সম্প্রদায় কার্যক্রমে সাময়িক বিঘ্ন ঘটতে পারে।

Date	Start time (local)	Stop time (local)	Duration (min)
30-Sep-23	9:33 AM	9:40 AM	7
01-Oct-23	9:31 AM	9:41 AM	10
02-Oct-23	9:30 AM	9:42 AM	12
03-Oct-23	9:29 AM	9:42 AM	13
04-Oct-23	9:29 AM	9:42 AM	13
05-Oct-23	9:29 AM	9:41 AM	12
06-Oct-23	9:30 AM	9:40 AM	10
07-Oct-23	9:31 AM	9:37 AM	6

০২: প্রাকৃতিক কারণে ঘটত এই সাময়িক বিঘ্নের জন্য বাংলাদেশ স্যাটেলাইট কোম্পানি লিমিটেড (বিএসসিএল) আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে দায়বদ্ধ থাকবে। বিঘ্নটি আপনার সময় অপব্যয়/প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের জন্য বিশেষভাবে অনুরোধ করা হলো।

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ইমেইল: managing.director@bscl.com.bd

জিডি: ১৪৯৩

Visa policy imposed for political purposes

Says agriculture minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Agriculture Minister and Awami League presidium member Md Abdur Razaque yesterday said the United States may have imposed the visa policy due to political purposes.

The minister said this while interacting with local journalists, after inaugurating the agricultural fair at Madhupur Upazila Parishad premises in Tangail.

"Sheikh Hasina will be the prime minister during the election period based on our constitution. We don't care about anyone's visa policy. No one can spoil the election with or without visa restriction," the minister said.

Regarding BNP's 48-hour ultimatum, the minister said, "No matter how many ultimatums BNP gives, they will not succeed in anything."

"I feel sad that BNP's movement will fail again and its activists will sink into despair," he further said.

UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA: Applications in prescribed form, obtainable from the office of the Registrar, are invited from Bangladeshi nationals for filling up 04 (four) permanent posts of Lecturer in the Department of English in Pay scale of Tk. 22,000-53,060/- (NPS-2015).

QUALIFICATIONS: Candidates must have a first class/a minimum CGPA 3.50 out of 4.00 both in B.A. (Honors) in English and M.A. in English Literature of Applied Linguistics & ELT with a first division/a minimum GPA 4.25 out of 5.00 in both SSC & HSC examinations. Requirements for either the SSC or HSC examinations may be relaxed for the candidates who have obtained the first position/the highest CGPA in both Bachelor and Master degrees. Candidates having a Ph.D. in the relevant field and research publication(s) in a quality journal may get preference. Relevant notes and conditions apply. (For details, see the Dhaka University website).

Eight copies of application together with attested copies of certificates, testimonials, mark-sheets and proof of experience along with a Pay Order/Bank Draft of the value of Tk. 750/- (seven hundred fifty) only, payable to the Registrar, should reach him on or before 18/10/2023. Applicants already in service must apply through the proper channel.

GD-1496

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Memo No: 87.404.401.08.01.001.2023.122 Date: 26.09.2023

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Name of the Post: Sub-Assistant Engineer-Number of posts 15*.
Required Qualifications: (i) Diploma in Engineering in Electrical Technology-12 posts.
(ii) Diploma in Engineering in Power Technology-03 posts.
Please visit www.dpdc.gov.bd for detail job circular & submit online application by 15.10.2023.
Deputy General Manager, Employee Management (Administration), HR, DPDC

AZAD ABUL KALAM

going strong amidst 3-decade career



ANTARA RAISA

Azad Abul Kalam is not only a seasoned actor, but also a multi-talented individual. With a career spanning over three decades, he has graced the stage, television and silver screen with his exceptional talent, presenting audiences with unforgettable characters. Recently, he portrayed the titular character in the web-series *Puff Daddy*, which captured everyone's attention.

How did the audience respond to 'Puff Daddy'?

The response has been wonderful. People are talking about my character, 'Muri Baba', and it's quite heartwarming. I usually don't take on such roles, which made this experience even more enjoyable.

Given that this isn't your typical genre, how challenging was it?

It was indeed challenging. We filmed the entire series in scorching heat, and I had to wear cloaks with long sleeves. I also sported matted hair, which wasn't comfortable in the sweltering weather. Moreover, the character 'Puff Daddy' is morally ambiguous. Typically, cult leaders are depicted as deceitful, but in this web series, there's a compelling backstory to his actions. It was challenging to portray this complex character.

You've been a part of this industry for three decades. How do you view the changes in the media landscape over time?

The roles and opportunities have become more diverse now. I began my career in theatre and then transitioned to television. With advancements in technology, budgets, and opportunities, we can now experiment more with our roles.

What's your take on the flourishing OTT platforms? OTT platforms are thriving, but I've noticed a trend towards crime-thriller genres. It seems like our content has become somewhat limited in terms of variety.

You once mentioned your desire to become a writer. Is that aspiration still alive?

Absolutely. I've been writing long before my acting career took off. Writing has always been a passion of mine, and I've published my storybooks. While I may not be a professional or write regularly, I'm continually engaged in the process. Acting, directing, and writing—all bring me equal joy. Whenever I'm immersed in any of these, I enjoy them the most.

What are your recent ventures?

Lately, I've directed two plays for Prachyanat, *Achalayatan* and *Agunjatra*. I'm also eagerly awaiting the release of two films, *Jole Tara*, directed by Arun Chowdhury, and another directed by Gias Uddin Selim. I have also directed a short film for Projonmo Wave, which will be released soon.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The roles and opportunities have become more diverse now. I began my career in theatre and then transitioned to television. With advancements in technology, budgets, and opportunities, we can now experiment more with our roles.



International Emmy Awards 2023: Shefali Shah, Vir Das and Jim Sarbh nominated

The nominees for the 2023 International Emmy Awards have been announced, with 56 nominees from 20 countries representing 14 categories. This time, Indian actors Jim Sarbh, Shefali Shah, and Vir Das have made it to the list.

Shefali has been nominated for best actress' performance in the second season of the critically acclaimed series *Delhi Crime* while Jim was nominated for best actor's performance for his role in *Rocket Boys* as nuclear physicist Homi Bhabha. Comedian Vir Das' stand-up special *Landing* has been nominated under the comedy category.

On November 20, the International Emmy Awards will be hosted in New York City. In addition, film producer Ekta R Kapoor will get the Directorate Award for her trailblazing career and impact on the Indian television landscape.

Apurba to debut in Tollywood

Ziaul Faruq Apurba has gained a massive fan base in Kolkata following his popular tele-fictions, including *Boro Chele* and *Batch 27*. Now, the actor is all set to debut in Tollywood with the thriller film, *Chaalchitro*. The film is directed by Pratim D Gupta and has been produced by Friends Communication.



The cast began shooting for the film on Wednesday. The film also stars Tota Roy Choudhury, Shantanu Maheshwari, Raima Sen, and Swastika Dutta, amongst others.

Chaalchitro revolves around the life of four police officers in Kolkata.

NEWS

Some quarters trying to whip up bitterness

FROM PAGE 12
about Bangladesh.

The foreign minister was speaking at a views exchange meeting organised by the Bangabandhu Foundation in New York's Bangladeshi-dominated Jackson Heights on Tuesday.

The foreign minister said, "We have remarkably friendly relations with the United States. America believes in the same principles and values we believe in. Bangladesh is the country where we have fought for democracy. Although we won the popular vote, we were not allowed to form the government in 1971. Rather, genocide was unleashed on us, and then Bangabandhu declared independence."

Momen said Bangladesh declared independence to establish democracy, justice, and human rights.

"Because of this, we had to sacrifice three million lives during the Liberation War. Nowhere in the world have so many people sacrificed themselves for democracy and human rights in such a short period of time. We are the only nation in the world that has made such great sacrifices for democracy and human rights," he added.

Referring to the replacement of the Digital Security Act, he said the government accepted the suggestions provided by the United States as a friendly country.

"The United States expects free

and fair elections, and we are also committed to free and fair elections. But there are some people in our country who want to boycott the elections; they fear elections," the foreign minister said, referring to the opposition, saying that they are trying to thwart the election.

The foreign minister said Bangladesh is now the 35th largest economy in the world.

"If Bangladesh's current economic development continues, we will become the 26th largest economy in a few years. We have 17 crore people, so our own market is huge. That's why many people are interested in our country because our per capita income has increased five times," he said.

Bashundhara seeks to invest in Teletalk

FROM PAGE 1

media, this is its second bid to become a strategic investor in an establishment. In September last year, ABG Limited, a subsidiary of Bashundhara Group, became the strategic partner of the Chittagong Stock Exchange by picking up 25 percent stakes for Tk 240 crore.

"We are neither granting consent nor expressing dissent to the proposal at this time — it is now subject to review," said Telecom Secretary Abu Hena Morshed Zaman, who is the chairman of the Teletalk board.

The committee will evaluate whether the proposal would be beneficial for the government and Teletalk, he added.

Contacted, Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar said: "[Bashundhara Group] has sent a letter expressing their interest to invest in Teletalk, but the letter is not a detailed one. Anyone can have interest, but we have to know what exactly they want."

Since its inception in 2004, Teletalk, whose market share stood at 3.4 percent as of August, has received several investment proposals, mainly from abroad, but the government did not give the green light to any of those pitches.

For instance, in April 2008, the

Emirati carrier Etisalat expressed interest in buying a stake in Bangladesh's state-run mobile operator.

In 2019, Vietnam's Viettel also wanted to invest \$250 million in Teletalk. However, nothing came of it.

A year later, Korean company LGU+ offered a \$1.2 billion loan at 3 percent interest for 25 years and without the need for any sovereign guarantee. Once again, nothing came of it.

In recent years, the government has been pumping huge amounts of money into Teletalk — all to keep pace with the nimble private operators, who have cornered 96.5 percent of the market between them.

A Tk 2,204 crore project began last year to take the operator's 4G network to village levels by setting up about 2,500 towers.

A Tk 519 crore project has been running since March last year to expand Teletalk's haor coverage. The project's money comes from a social obligation fund, whose contributions mostly come from Grameenphone, Robi and Banglalink. The three private operators have to contribute 1 percent of their gross revenue to the fund.

Besides, the government has recently implemented a Tk 520 crore project to expand Teletalk's mobile

broadband network services in the coastal hills and other remote areas.

And yet, Teletalk continues to lose subscribers, while private operators continue to add to their numbers. As of August, which is the latest published data by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, Teletalk's subscriber count stood at 64.5 lakh, down by 2.7 lakh from a year earlier.

At the end of last month, there were about 18.9 crore active mobile connections.

"Any investor can express interest to invest in any company, but Teletalk is not like any other company — it is a state-owned company whose funding comes from the finance ministry," said Abu Saeed Khan, a top telecom expert.

Therefore, before making any decision regarding investment in Teletalk, the parliamentary standing committees for finance and telecom ministries should be consulted.

"Unanimous decisions of the two parliamentary standing committees as well as BIDA should set the guiding principles of such a unique investment proposal in the history of Bangladesh," he added.

Bashundhara Group did not respond to The Daily Star's request for comment.

Records tumble every month since May

FROM PAGE 12
mosquitoes didn't work and thus, we're experiencing higher numbers of cases and deaths every month compared to the last.

"We're now at the mercy of nature. If October doesn't experience as much rainfall [as September], the number of dengue cases will fall."

Asked about a solution, he said, "Our mosquito-control activities need to be successful. However, it's not possible to achieve this overnight."

The monthly death-toll started out with only six in January and the number varied throughout February, April and May, with no deaths recorded in March.

However, in June the number jumped to 34 and then shot up all the way to 204 in July.

According to statistics provided by the Directorate General of Health Services, there has been an average of 2,704 hospitalisations per day this month.

The gravity of the situation is further underscored by recent records. September 26 saw record-

CASES AND DEATHS THIS YEAR

MONTH	CASES	DEATHS
September (Till 27th)	73,023	365
August	71,976	342
July	43,854	204
June	5,956	34
May	1,036	2
April	143	2
March	111	0
February	166	3
January	566	6

SOURCE: DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF HEALTH SERVICES (DGHS)

breaking single-day hospital admissions — 3,123 — across the country, while it was 3,122 on the 17th.

On September 2, the DGHS reported a distressing milestone — the highest number of single-day deaths, which stood at 21.

On September 20, the number was the same.

Meanwhile, at least 15 more people died from dengue in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, with eight of them outside the capital, according to DGHS data.

Around 2,950 dengue patients were hospitalised in the same period. The data also showed 9,697 patients were undergoing treatment at different hospitals across the country, while 1,85,906 people have recovered from the infectious disease so far this year.

Dr Mushtaq Hussain, consultant at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, told The Daily Star, "Normally, the rainfall decreases around this month, but this time there has been rainfall in September. As a result, Aedes mosquitoes are being able to breed, leading to an increase in dengue cases."

"What we have control over is our healthcare system and we have to strengthen it so that we don't face such a dreadful outbreak in the future."



Migrants from Venezuela make their way through the razor wire after crossing the Rio Grande into the United States in Eagle Pass, Texas, US on Tuesday.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Stop exploitation of Barind farmers

Comprehensive measures needed to address region's crippling water crisis

It is distressing to see the continued plight of farmers in parts of the Barind region, known as the "rice bowl" of the country, where rapidly depleting groundwater levels have caused a catastrophic water crisis. A recent report by this daily shows how the distribution of irrigation water, through deep tubewells, has become a tool for individuals with political clout to exploit vulnerable farmers, particularly those from ethnic minority communities. This is what we can call "a crisis within a crisis", its magnitude exemplified by several farmer suicides, which calls for urgent interventions from the authorities.

The roots of the crisis can be traced back to the 1990s when deep tubewells were introduced, enabling farmers to cultivate multiple crops annually and transforming the Northwest into a thriving grain-producing hub. Ironically, it is this very success – on the back of excessive groundwater extraction – that contributed to the water crisis and attendant troubles. Although the Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA), responsible for overseeing irrigation, ceased installing new tubewells in 2012, unregulated private operators have continued to thrive. Today, these operators as well as the ones appointed by the BMDA are primarily responsible for much of the suffering being caused.

According to our report, farmers are supposed to pay a nominal fee for water under the BMDA management, which is Tk 85-125 per hour of irrigation. For context, there are approximately 16,000 government-run and 56,000 privately run deep tubewells in 16 districts of Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions. However, tubewell operators frequently sell water at higher rates to affluent farmers, breaching the "first come, first serve" policy. Marginal farmers are most at risk – sometimes the operators take away their smart cards and force them to enter into direct contracts with them, which means paying 6-28 times more than the government-fixed rate. Often, they are also denied water, leading to suffering and desperation. Despite some attempts to prevent it, however, political connections have continued to enable exploitation.

All this – against a backdrop of climate change and the region's crisis of groundwater, whose levels alarmingly fell by at least two feet over the last year alone – serves as a wake-up call for the authorities. Ridding the water irrigation/distribution process of exploitation, and ensuring equitable access for all farmers, is indeed the priority. Equally important, however, is finding a comprehensive solution that takes the bigger picture into account and addresses the water and livelihood crises in the region.

Stop risky living on hill slopes

Authorities must protect people and hills in Chattogram

Despite the well-documented risks of cutting or compromising the integrity of hills in Chattogram, it is disheartening to see this continuing to happen due to a lack of proper interventions from the authorities. According to a report by this daily, over 3,000 illegal structures have been constructed on nine hills owned by the Bangladesh Railway in various parts of the city. It is well-known that building such structures increases the risk of deadly landslides. Yet, over 5,500 people currently reside on these state-owned hills, while the latter are being subjected to degradation in various ways. Clearly, those enabling and profiting off of this risky venture, including politically connected individuals and corrupt government officials, care little about the danger residents face.

As per a study, some 400 people have been killed in landslides in Chattogram between 2000 and 2017. Subsequent years have seen little improvement in this scenario. The question is: Why are the authorities failing to prevent this? Just last month, two people died in a landslide at the Soloshohor Hill, where people are still living. This is partly because of a general lack of awareness, and partly because of the increasingly high house rent that drove many families to such settlements in landslide-prone areas. Reportedly, several syndicates of powerful individuals in collusion with corrupt government employees are responsible for the construction and maintenance of these buildings, violating relevant laws.

Similarly, land grabbers have been inflicting irreversible damage to the environment and biodiversity of hills under the nose of the local administration. Over the past 40 years, according to an estimate, some 120 hills have been lost in the port city. If the trend continues, we dread to think what will become of this still environmentally rich region. Experts have long blamed corruption and political interference for the lack of effective measures to stop the practice of hill razing. This must stop. We urge the authorities to undertake stern measures, including regular drives, to take down risky structures and rehabilitate residents, and also punish those responsible for this situation.

New Message

Subject

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Switching to renewables is easier than we think



Dr Selim Raihan is professor at the Department of Economics in the University of Dhaka, and executive director at the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem). He can be reached at selim.raihan@gmail.com.

SELIM RAIHAN

Energy produced from natural resources (that is, renewable energy) regenerates over the span of a human's life without depleting the planet's resources. These resources, which include biomass, tides, waves, sunshine, wind, rain, and thermal energy stored in the earth's crust, have the advantage of being accessible in some capacity from almost everywhere. They are practically inexhaustible. More importantly, they don't harm the climate or the ecosystem as much. Renewable energy is gradually becoming more affordable; it is equitable and secure, and has the potential to create jobs.

In contrast, fossil fuels like oil, coal, and natural gas are only found in finite amounts. They eventually run out as we continue to extract them. Even if they are created through natural processes, they are not replenished quickly enough to make up for what is consumed by humans. More emissions are produced by burning fossil fuels than by producing electricity from renewable sources. The key to solving the climate catastrophe is switching from fossil fuels – which now produce the majority of emissions – to renewable energy.

The energy sector in Bangladesh is heavily dependent on fossil fuels. Both domestic and imported fossil fuels play a significant role in our energy production. In 2022, more than 98 percent of all energy production originated from natural gas, oil, diesel, and coal. Less than two percent of the energy mix consisted of renewables. Over the years, the reliance on fossil fuels has intensified. However, the Renewable Energy Policy of Bangladesh, which was introduced in 2008, aimed at harnessing the potential of renewable energy resources and technologies in the country. The policy set a target of meeting five percent of total power demand by 2015 and 10 percent by 2020 using renewable sources. These targets were never met. There are, however, conflicting targets in various governments' policies and plans. The Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCPP) was introduced in 2021 to enhance the nation's resilience against climate change. This plan aims to reach 30 percent renewable energy share by 2030 and at least 40 percent by 2041. In contrast, under the draft Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP), Bangladesh has

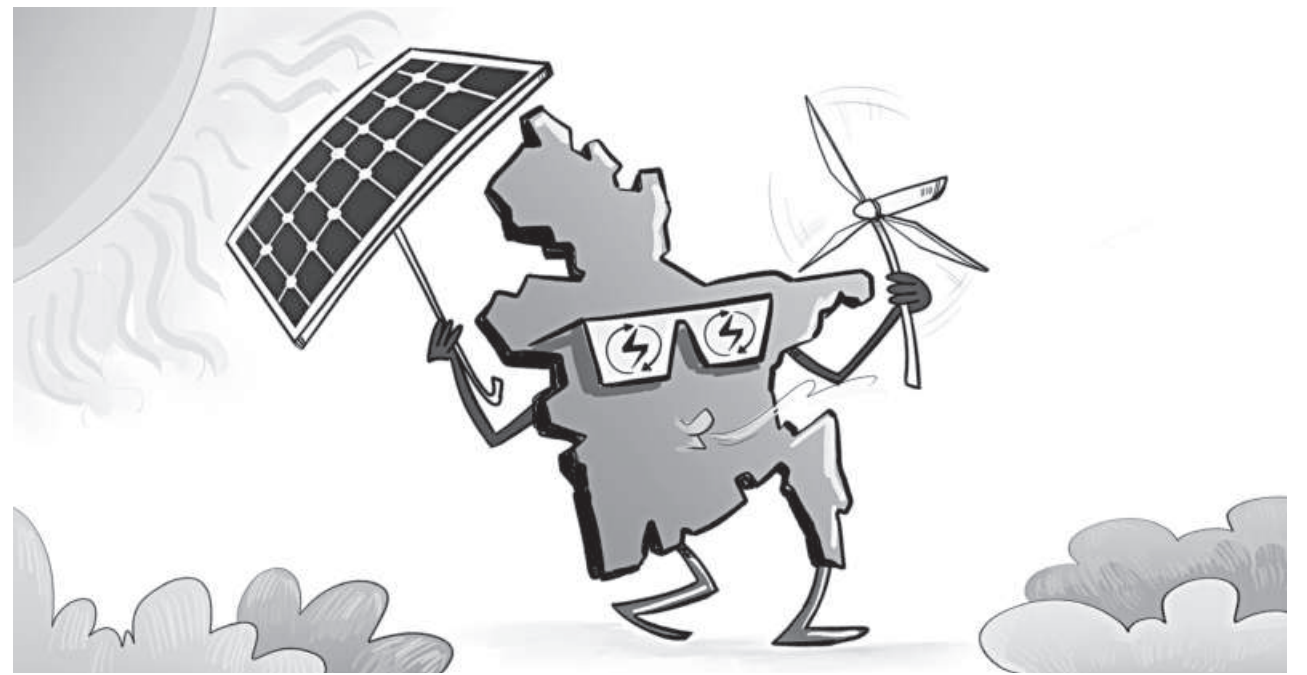


ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

set a clean energy (renewable and nuclear) target of 40 percent by 2041. Also, the government's annual budget documents set different targets. The real picture shows that Bangladesh's progress towards switching to renewable energy has remained slow and uncertain.

There is no denying that the viability of renewable energy in the country will depend on the market price or value of renewable energy, the costs of renewable energy in comparison to those of other energy resources, policies to promote renewable energy, and environmental goals that increase the costs of using fossil fuels and/or subsidise the costs of renewable energy. As such, the wider adoption of renewable energy is hindered by pressure from fossil fuel lobbies, ineffective governmental regulations, outdated infrastructure, expensive initial installation costs, a lack of proper battery storage systems, a lack of knowledge and awareness, and a lack of relevant policies and subsidies.

To transform Bangladesh's energy systems and speed up the shift to renewable energy in the next decade or so, a few critical actions need to be prioritised. In line with the statements of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the following actions can be suggested.

Firstly, there is a need to ensure

easy access to renewable energy. Renewable energy technology needs to be accessible to everyone and not just for the wealthy. Energy from renewable sources, such as solar and wind, can be stored and released whenever people, communities, and businesses need power thanks to technologies such as battery storage

be accelerated by the availability of modern energy transmission infrastructure, clear and strong policies, transparent processes, and public support.

The country needs to switch energy subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy. One of the largest financial obstacles preventing the

country's transition to renewable energy is fossil fuel subsidies. The cost of subsidising the fossil fuel industry alone is enormous and includes direct subsidies, tax benefits, and costs for health and the environment that weren't factored into the pricing of fossil fuels. Subsidies for fossil fuels are unfair and inefficient. Subsidising renewable energy instead reduces emissions and has the potential of fostering sustainable economic growth, job creation, improved public health, and greater equality, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable people.

Secondly, a steady supply of raw materials and components for renewable energy is crucial in order to ensure broader access to all the necessary resources. In addition, the management of renewable energy waste is important in order to create supply chains that safeguard ecosystems.

Thirdly, there is a need to create a level playing field for technologies utilising renewable energy. Domestic policy frameworks need to be quickly changed to streamline and accelerate renewable energy projects and spur private sector investments. Policies and procedures must be put in place to lower market risk, enable investment, and provide incentives – including by streamlining the planning, permitting, and regulatory processes and avoiding bottlenecks and red tape. The adoption of solar and wind energy technologies can

ensure broader access to all the necessary resources. In addition, the management of renewable energy waste is important in order to create supply chains that safeguard ecosystems.

Finally, resources must be shifted between competing industrial sectors and political constituencies as part of a sustainable energy transition. As stakeholders in this process hold varying degrees of political and economic power, understanding how political and economic factors influence the transition to renewable energy is crucial in order to formulate effective policies and facilitate the shift to sustainable energy systems.

Semiconductors can be the new RMG



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MOHAMMED ENAYETUR RAHMAN

With the consistent growth of our IT sector in recent years, Bangladesh's endeavour to become a knowledge-based economy has already gained significant momentum.

While labour-centric sectors like the ready-made garment (RMG) industry remain a key driver in our economy, it is important now to expand the focus to skill-intensive sectors so that we can stay globally competitive and can create employment for the educated masses. The emerging semiconductor industry can play an instrumental role in this regard.

It may sound like an overstatement to say that the semiconductor industry has the potential to gain the same status as the RMG industry in the future. However, in view of the global and local prospects of this booming industry, we can definitely hope to witness such a scenario.

A lifeline for all electronic devices and systems, the global semiconductor industry is set to grow exponentially in the coming decade. According to Precedence Research, the market value of this industry stands at \$664.2 billion at present, and is expected to rise to over \$1.88 trillion by 2032,

reflecting a remarkable compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.28 percent.

Bangladesh currently earns around \$5 million annually from the semiconductor industry, mostly by providing integrated circuit (IC) designing services, while high-end services such as fabrication, packaging, assembly, and testing remain untapped by local semiconductor companies. But our achievement is not negligible either. Virtually non-existent two decades ago, the nascent industry has gained traction rapidly in recent years. If the revenue has been able to reach \$5 million over such a short period, we can definitely set our sights high and hope for the semiconductor industry to catch up with the RMG industry in the long run.

Most importantly, our demographic dividend is already a big advantage for this endeavour. A country with a 28 percent youth population, Bangladesh sees around 20,000 students graduate with computer engineering and electrical and electronic engineering (EEE) degrees every year. If trained properly, they can provide

the necessary fuel for the growth of semiconductor industry.

However, a series of challenges stand in our way of achieving this goal, the biggest being the massive investment required for its development. Like most tech-based sectors, the semiconductor industry is highly capital-intensive, making it extremely challenging for companies to expand operations without the government's support.

Considering the immense potential of this sector, many countries around the world have taken initiatives to grow their respective semiconductor bases. For instance, the Indian government launched a programme named Semicon to promote the production of semiconductors in the country, with an incentive of 76,000 crore rupees. In order to take our industry forward, the Bangladesh government should mull over similar steps for the days to come. It can also accelerate semiconductor expansion by initiating bilateral dialogues with experts such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan.

The lack of an adequately trained workforce is another key challenge for the country's semiconductor industry. Back in 2007, I started Ulkasemi in Bangladesh with only four engineers. Creating a pool of trained professionals in line with our gradual expansion was a Herculean task. The workforce problem mainly stems from the lack of hands-on experience of our engineering students. Their academic knowledge of semiconductors is not sufficient to

meet the professional requirements in the industry. Therefore, rigorous training is necessary to turn them into competent professionals.

The most effective way to overcome this challenge is to strengthen government-academia-industry collaboration. By engaging with academia, semiconductor experts can encourage students to take an interest in the field. It is equally important to include semiconductor-related topics such as advanced-level VLSI courses in the students' academic curriculum so that they can develop their knowledge of IC design, production, packaging and fabrication at an earlier stage.

The government recently declared its ambition to build a \$10 billion semiconductor industry by 2031. If provided with the necessary support, Bangladesh's semiconductor industry could even surpass this target. The kind of support the RMG industry received during the 1980s-1990s, such as subsidies for electricity and gas supply, can lend impetus to our industry.

Currently, over \$40 billion in gross revenue is earned annually by Bangladesh's RMG industry. However, it requires five million workers to generate this revenue, whereas the semiconductor industry could earn the same amount by employing only around 100,000 engineers. It shows the tremendous potential Bangladesh has in this thriving industry. It is high time we started shaping it as our gateway to a knowledge-based economy and a prospective alternative to the long-serving RMG industry.



On September 24, French President Emmanuel Macron said that French troops would be withdrawn from Niger in the next couple of months, in the wake of a coup d'état in the Western African country this summer. PHOTO: AFP

Is this the end of French neo-colonialism in Africa?

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ZOE ALEXANDRA and VIJAY PRASHAD

In Bamako, Mali, on September 16, the governments of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger created the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). On X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, Colonel Assimi Goita, the head of the transitional government of Mali, wrote that the Liptako-Gourma Charter which created the AES would establish "an architecture of collective defense and mutual assistance for the benefit of our populations." The hunger for such regional cooperation goes back to the period when France ended its colonial rule. Between 1958 and 1963, Ghana and Guinea were part of the Union of African States, which was to have been the seed for wider pan-African unity. Mali was a member as well between 1961 and 1963.

But, more recently, these three countries – and others in the Sahel region such as Niger – have struggled with common problems, such as the downward sweep of radical Islamic forces unleashed by the 2011 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato) war on Libya. The anger against the French has been so intense that it has provoked at least seven coups in Africa (two in Burkina Faso, two in Mali, one in Guinea, one in Niger, and one in Gabon) and unleashed mass demonstrations from Algeria to the Congo and most recently in Benin. The depth of frustration with France is such that its troops have been ejected from the Sahel, Mali demoted French from its official language status, and France's ambassador in Niger (Sylvain Itte) was effectively held "hostage" – as French President Emmanuel Macron said – by people deeply upset by French behaviour in the region.

Philippe Toyo Noudjenoume, the President of the West Africa Peoples' Organisation, explained the basis of this cascading anti-French sentiment in the region. French colonialism, he said, "has remained in place since 1960." France holds the revenues of its former colonies in the Banque de France in Paris. The French policy – known as *Françafrique* – included the presence of French military bases from Djibouti to Senegal, from Côte d'Ivoire to Gabon. "Of all the former colonial powers in Africa," Noudjenoume told us, "it is France

that has intervened militarily at least 60 times to overthrow governments, such as [that of] Modibo Keita in Mali (1968), or assassinate patriotic leaders, such as Felix-Roland Moumnie (1960) and Ernest Ouandie (1971) in Cameroon, Sylvanus Olympio in Togo in 1963, Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso in 1987 and others." Between 1997 and 2002, during the presidency of Jacques Chirac, France intervened militarily 33 times on the African continent (by comparison, between 1962 and 1995, France intervened militarily 19 times in African states). France never really suspended its colonial grip or its colonial ambitions.

Breaking the camel's back
Two events in the past decade "broke the camel's back," Noudjenoume said: the Nato war in Libya, led by France, in March 2011, and the French intervention to remove Koudou Gbagbo Laurent from the presidency of Côte d'Ivoire in April 2011. "For years," he said, "these events have forced a strong anti-French sentiment, particularly among young people. It is not just in the Sahel that this feeling has developed but throughout French-speaking Africa. It is true that it is in the Sahel that it is currently expressed most openly. But throughout French-speaking Africa, this feeling is strong."

Mass protest against the French presence is now evident across the former French colonies in Africa. These civilian protests have not been able to result in straight forward civilian transitions of power, largely because the political apparatus in these countries had been eroded by long standing, French-backed kleptocracies (illustrated by the Bongo family, which ruled Gabon from 1967 to 2023, and which leeches the oil wealth of Gabon for their own personal gain; when Omar Bongo died in 2009, French politician Eva Joly said that he ruled on behalf of France and not of his own citizens). Despite the French-backed repression in these countries, trade unions, peasant organisations, and left-wing parties have not been able to drive the upsurge of anti-French patriotism, though they have been able to assert themselves

France intervened militarily in

Mali in 2013 to try to control the forces that it had unleashed with Nato's war in Libya two years previously. These radical Islamist forces captured half of Mali's territory and then, in 2015, proceeded to assault Burkina Faso. France intervened but then sent the soldiers of the armies of these Sahel countries to die against the radical Islamist forces that it had backed in Libya. This created a great deal of animosity among the soldiers, Noudjenoume told us, and that is why patriotic sections of the soldiers rebelled against the governments and overthrew them.

Anti-intervention
After the coup in Niger, the West hoped to send in a proxy force – led by the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) – but the African military leaders demurred. Across the region, people set up solidarity committees to defend the people of Niger from any attack, with the threat provoking "revolt and indignation among the populations," Noudjenoume explained. Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu was even forced to back down from ECOWAS's crusade when his country's Congress rejected the measure and mass protests occurred against militarily intervening in the neighbouring country. As ECOWAS's ultimatums to restore the deposed Nigerian leader Mohamed Bazoum expired, it became clear that its threat was empty.

Meanwhile, not only did it appear that the people of Niger would resist any military intervention, but Burkina Faso and Mali immediately promised to defend Niger against any such intervention. The new AES is a product of this mutual solidarity.

But the AES is not merely a military or security pact. At the signing ceremony, Mali's Defense Minister Abdoulaye Diop told journalists, "This alliance will be a combination of military and economic efforts [among]... the three countries." It will build upon the February 2023 agreement between Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali to collaborate on a fuel and electricity exchange, to build transportation networks, to collaborate on mineral resource sales, to build a regional agricultural development project, and to increase intra-Sahel trade. Whether these countries would be able to develop an economic agenda to benefit their peoples – and therefore guarantee that France would have no means to exert its authority over the region – is to be seen.

This article was produced by Globetrotter.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send us your letters to letters@thedailystar.net

Help eco-friendly products thrive

Bangladesh is experiencing the effects of global warming and climate change, as are other parts of the globe. This issue affects numerous facets of existence including ecological functions, agricultural productivity, food security, infrastructure, water availability, and human health. Affected communities must either expend more resources to adapt to the effects of climate change or relocate to urban centres in pursuit of employment opportunities. Rising sea levels and temperatures

impact Bangladesh annually. Agriculture is the foundation of our economy and a significant source of sustenance and employment for our population. Around 65 percent of the population lives in rural regions. Agriculture is especially susceptible to the effects of climate change. We must cope with a series of disasters brought on by global warming. The government's budget resources to address climate change and natural disasters are currently insufficient. It is up to the relevant

authorities to take necessary steps to facilitate and introduce eco-friendly and durable products like the Sonali Bag. Mubarak Ahmad Khan, a scientist, designed the biodegradable cellulose-based bag. It would be prudent to distribute this product to the general public. They must provide financial support to the entrepreneurs and innovators behind this product and others like it.

Nazmul Islam Joy
North South University

Why solar irrigation pumps are the future of agriculture



Mostafa Shabuj
is a journalist at The Daily Star.

MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Changes in weather patterns over the last few years have become a cause for concern globally – particularly because these changes have led to a decline in food production in many countries, including Bangladesh. The Russia-Ukraine war also disrupted the global food supply chain from Russia and Ukraine. As a result, in Asia, India is under pressure to export crops to many countries. But due to internal political pressure ahead of the upcoming national election, the Indian government decided to stabilise the domestic market and, to this end, suspend the export of staple crops like rice and wheat, and increase export duties on other food items like sugar and onion. As a result, Bangladesh, who depends mostly on India for

12.15 days after waiting for rainfall. Agriculturists say if farmers don't plant their saplings at 22-28 days of age, the production will decrease by three to four maunds of paddy for each bigha of land.

However, an exception has been seen in areas where solar irrigation pumps (SIPs) have been used. Farmers in these areas have managed to plant paddy at the right time and at lower costs, despite having a drought. As a result, they will harvest crops on time, expecting good yields. Though SIPs have many benefits, a very small amount of land is being cultivated using these pumps.

As per data from the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development

paddy said the irrigation cost was almost half of that from fuel- or electricity-powered pumps. The cost of irrigating one bigha of land with a solar pump from the planting stage to the harvesting stage is Tk 1,000-1,500. On the other hand, it takes Tk 3,000-3,500 per bigha for diesel or electricity pumps.

There are multiple benefits of using SIPs for poor farmers. They do not need any capital to install solar pumps privately. Besides, farmers do not need any labour costs to irrigate crops. SIPs have a minimal maintenance cost compared to electricity or oil machines. A solar pump, once installed, can run uninterrupted for at least 20 years. Around 100-150 bighas of land can be cultivated with an SIP of appropriate capacity.

However, SIPs generate electricity round the year, but it is only used for paddy cultivation. The surplus electricity can be supplied to the national grid from these SIPs throughout the year.

SIPs will also greatly help in curbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in the country. According to the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, we import



A solar irrigation pump in Shibganj upazila, Bogura.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

importing rice, pulses, ginger, garlic, onions and sugar, has a reason to be worried.

In light of this situation, the government has allowed import of these food grains from other countries at higher prices, which is putting pressure on our already depleting foreign exchange reserves.

In Bangladesh, the Aman paddy season normally starts in June-July. According to the information provided by the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, the rainfall that occurred in June was 16 percent less than usual, and that in July was 50 percent less.

On August 23, a forecast by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said that rice production in Bangladesh in the 2023-24 marketing year may be 700,000 tonnes less than their previous forecast in March, because of which the country may have to import as much as one million tonnes of rice this year. This is mainly because there has been almost no rain during the Aush season and a drought during the Aman season.

Agricultural experts say the yield in the current Aman season may be lower than expected as farmers have delayed planting of Aman paddy by

An exception has been seen in areas where solar irrigation pumps (SIPs) have been used. Farmers in these areas have managed to plant paddy at the right time and at lower costs, despite having a drought. As a result, they will harvest crops on time, expecting good yields.

Authority (SREDA), solar power contributes 80.4 percent, or about 960 megawatts (MW), of green power in the country. Some 2,877 SIPs installed in the off-grid areas across the country account for 52.29MW so far, contributing to 1,194MW of power generated by renewable energy every year. The Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (IDCOL) has installed 1,523 SIPs, generating 42MW, while the Barind Multipurpose Development Authority has set up 792 units.

Farmers and stakeholders in the areas where SIPs are used to cultivate

about five million tonnes of diesel every year. According to Iwmi data, diesel emissions in agriculture account for about 3.2 million tonnes of carbon annually in the country. The government wants to reduce carbon emissions in the country to meet the NDC target by 30 years. That's why IDCOL, a government agency, wants to install about 10,000 SIPs by 2030, but it has installed only 1,523 so far since 2010.

Now the crucial question is, why isn't the government making progress in this sector?

Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, recently said these kinds of solar panels take up a lot of agricultural land. Therefore, the government is not allowing such projects.

However, farmers say that since the water pipe is extended to crop land underground in the case of SIPs, the amount of land lost to install a solar pump is compensated as there is no need to make any soil-made drainage.

The bottom line is that, considering the impacts of climate change and adverse weather patterns, there is no alternative to SIPs to save our farmers from high production costs, reduce the amount of carbon in the air, and enhance food security for our people.

"শেখ হাসিনার উদ্যোগ, ঘরে ঘরে বিদ্যুৎ"

নর্থ-ওয়েস্ট পাওয়ার জেনারেশন কোম্পানি লিমিটেড
NORTH-WEST POWER GENERATION COMPANY LIMITED
ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 & ISO 45001:2018 Certified
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)
ইউটিসি ভবন, (লেভেল ৩ ও ৪), ০৮ পাছপথ, কাওরান বাজার, ঢাকা-১২১৫।
Phone : 48122117-18, e-mail : info@nwpgcl.gov.bd, web : www.nwpgcl.gov.bd

Office of the Project Director
Rupsha 800 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant Project, NWPGL, Dhaka.
Tel: 02-9145291-92; ext.-301. Fax: N/A. E-mail: pdlnwpgcl@gmail.com

Ref: 27.28.0000.306.07.001.23.596 Date: 12-Sep-2023

eTender Notice

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Description	Publication Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
01.	859728	27.28.0000.306.07.001.23.596	Construction of 4 storied rest house in Rupsha 800MW CCPP Project in Khalishpur, Khulna	27-Sep-2023; 09:00	30-Oct-2023; 14:30

This is online tenders, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (www.helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

26.09.2023
 (Md. Mashur Rahman)
 Project Director (Chief Engineer)
 Rupsha 800 MW CCPP Project
 NWPGL, Dhaka.
 Mob: +8801730066987

OPINION

What you call your own

How reading 'Letters to a Writer of Colour' (Penguin Random House UK, 2023) shows us a possibility for Bangladeshi writers to make it big



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

Interestingly, for the first two decades of my life, this didn't pose many problems for me. My English fluency gave me a good early start to what would become a lifelong career in journalism, and my Bangla was functional enough to navigate my life in Bangladesh.

SABRINA FATMA AHMAD

As an Anglophone writer in Bangladesh, I've frequently faced the rather inane question of why I write in English. I've learned it the hard way that this is a trap meant to engage the writer in a pointless debate about cultural politics, but in his essay, 'On Authenticity', from the anthology *Letters to a Writer of Colour* (Random House, 2023), Indian writer Amitava Kumar says it best, I think, when he says:

"I would say that English has been taught to us as a language in which we had to do our homework; to write fiction or imaginative non-fiction was to find liberation in language. That feeling of freedom is what now seems to make writing most real to me." He continues to say, "Authenticity, or what you call your own or adopt as your own, is to a large extent, based on your education."

My parents put me in an English medium school. During the 80's and 90's, with the exception of Bangla classes, we were expected to only communicate in English while in school. The pros and cons of this

system have subsequently been widely debated, resulting in some reforms, but what I got out of it was first language proficiency in English.

Interestingly, for the first two decades of my life, this didn't pose many problems for me. My English fluency gave me a good early start to what would become a lifelong career in journalism, and my Bangla was functional enough to navigate my life in Bangladesh.

And then I went to creative writing school in North America. Caribbean-American author Tiphonie Yanique has some wise words of advice for writers of colour attempting to do the same, in her essay 'On Character': "The creative writing workshop will destroy you if you are not prepared to stand confidently in your own clarity of thought and talent. And it is also to say that constantly having to prove yourself to people is actually no way to stand in your own clarity of thought and talent. It is emotionally exhausting, for one thing. It can also make it too treacherous for us to experience and communicate our true feelings of vulnerability—a vital and ongoing part of being a fiction writer."

By the time I signed up for my MFA, I had already been a working journalist for over a decade, with a weekly readership numbering in the thousands—I was arrogant enough to assume I was prepared to stand confidently in the clarity of my thought and talent. The next two years would disabuse me of that notion in ways I now realise are so common, I am practically a cliché.

Thrust into a predominantly white classrooms and workshops, I suddenly found myself expending energy having to defend myself against preconceived notions that my peers and professors alike seemed to have about the cultures I was writing about, or overexplaining simple things because my workshop audience was unable—or unwilling—to infer from context. There was of course the struggle of describing untranslatable emotions and scenarios to a different culture. So many translation panels at the Dhaka Lit Fest ask the question, "How do you explain 'obhiman' to a non-Bangali?" But I also began to struggle with my learned aversion to summary and exposition, with my classmates needing more context for the things

that happened in my stories, and my professors repeating "show, don't tell" in their feedback. I wondered how best to incorporate all the cultural, familial and communal histories needed for my story, without resorting to blocks of exposition.

Whatever story I had in mind took a backseat to addressing repeated concerns about mundane details, until it became increasingly tempting to sandpaper over nuance, avoid structural/narrative experimentations, and make the whole text more palatable to minds unaccustomed to BIPOC literature. Things reached peak ridiculousness when a young prof asked me to change the surname of my protagonist from 'Rahman' to "something less reminiscent of ramen, because it is so distracting". I wish I was making this up.

Tahmina Anam describes the dilemma beautifully in her essay 'On Humour':

"Here's the thing no one tells you when you're a POC writer. You are there to serve a purpose, and that purpose is to tell the world about the place you're from, whether it's a small town in Bangladesh or a council flat in East London. You are the representative of your country and your people."

I had witnessed some of the local pushback against Ms Anam's debut novel, *A Golden Age* (John Murray, 2007) when it came out, with her "authenticity" being put on trial by the deshi literati, a phenomenon discussed in detail in Amitava Kumar's essay. One of the things that all the essayists in *Letters to a Writer of Colour* want to emphasise is that just as the "rules" for writing BIPOC fiction need to take into context the colours, flavours and nuances of the cultures that these Anglophone writers come from, the rules for reading these stories by non-white writers are also different. And unless the readers are exposed to a larger variety of non-white writing, they don't necessarily develop a palate for it. Even if the writing is in English, the syntax, the pacing, the very grammar of it is affected by the work of translating these cultural details into that language, and to be able to slide into those voices and worlds is an acquired skill.

"In a world and an industry dominated by whiteness, Anglophone writers of color

make a conscious choice to use a language in which we don't often have the luxury of feeling safe or understood."

- Zeyn Joukhadar

In the last decade or so, the growth of literary fests in formerly colonised countries, international events that draw in writers, publishers, translators, and editors from all around the world have done a better job in service of diversity, by shining a spotlight on the wealth of BIPOC literature, and the nominations for major literary awards are starting to reflect that. But of course, we can do much better—and it starts with our own backyard.

A casual glance at the O' and A' level literature syllabuses for 2024-2026 shows me that the recommended reading list is still dominated by old white men. If we are ever to hope to produce Bangladeshi writers in the calibre of Salman Rushdie or Arundhati Roy, we have to first create a readership with the kind of cultural exposure to a diversity of writing. It's harder to change a syllabus set by a foreign body, but it is perfectly possible to supplement it with recommended reading lists that provide a richer diet of literature. It is perfectly possible to schedule reading events and storytelling sessions inside the classroom and around in the city. Events like the Sister Library sessions at Goethe-Institut, or readings held at The Bookworm Bangladesh, and of course, Dhaka Lit Fest are positive steps in that direction. It is more than possible for anyone—parent, teacher, or casual reader—to pick up a book by an author of colour, read it, and recommend it to someone else. *Letters to a Writer of Colour* came out years after I had managed to survive my MFA, revive some of my confidence as a writer and develop *Sehri Tales* which exposes me to a lot of fresh experimentations in craft by Bangladeshi writers writing in both English and Bangla, but reading the book felt like validation and healing. Careful, concise explanations on issues of storytelling, character growth, translation, and editing by experienced writers, supplemented by a rich variety of recommended reading texts make the collection a must-have for Anglophile writers beginning their journey.

Sabrina Fatma Ahmad is a writer, journalist, and the founder of *Sehri Tales*.

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

Twistier than a jilapir pyatch

Book review of 'A Twisted Love Story' (Berkley, 2023) by Samantha Downing

FARAH GHUZNAVI

It's a truism to say that modern life is complicated, but even a couple of decades ago, it would have been hard to predict the things we are dealing with today. For example, while seeking a partner by meeting a person that someone you know has vouched for—or going out with a person met through circumstance—has always been a fraught issue, it is probably safe to say that romance these days has become increasingly problematic, particularly post-internet! If you don't believe me, ask the distraught parents of rural Bangladesh experiencing the phenomenon whereby their kids are running off and getting married after a Facebook "love affair"...

But even in the classic movie *When Harry Met Sally*, you find two friends entertaining each other with stories of their dating disasters before, thankfully, they figure out their mutual attraction—something that should have been evident to them years ago.

Of course, not all dating experiences result in love. And when they do, not all love stories end well. And that's the case even if your surname is neither Capulet nor Montague.

Take the couple featured in Samantha Downing's new book. Wes and Ivy have known each other for a long time, but somehow they just can't seem to work things out. And yet they are both unable to close the chapter on their relationship and move on. In fact, these two take the

whole "it's complicated" relationship status to a new level. They have one heck of a past, and a present that is deeply problematic, so does their relationship have any future at all?

In some ways, each is the love of the other's life. When the relationship between Ivy and Wes works, it works beautifully. When it doesn't, it is the stuff of nightmares. And where this couple is concerned, that is really no exaggeration.

Which is why they have told each other innumerable times that it is over, only to rescind that decision and find themselves back together again—apparently very happy.

The problem is, their happiness just doesn't last. And the fall-out can be dangerous, as it was on one memorable occasion, many years ago, binding them together in a shared secret of monumental proportions.

With each iteration of their "make-up and break up" process, the stakes get higher, as the levels of toxicity inch inexorably upwards. Both Ivy and Wes are aware of this, to some extent, but they don't seem to be able to prevent themselves from ratcheting things up further. After all, one protagonist is named after a stubbornly-rooted and poisonous plant, while another shares his name with a film director who haunts our nightmares, on Elm Street and elsewhere.

After their most recent falling-out, Ivy decides that it would be "fun" to get Wes's attention by doing something really outrageous. So she reports him as a stalker to a policewoman working in the sex

crimes unit. But this time, Ivy has gone too far, and the consequences will be devastating. As, really, they should be.

Demonstrating the profound unhealthiness of their connection, Wes finds this move on Ivy's part amusing, and it kicks off yet another round of their relationship. The point at which things spiral out of control is when Karen, the policewoman, decides to look into the matter further, on her own initiative. And it turns out, Karen has her own agenda when it comes to cases like these.

Meanwhile, things are also getting more complicated at his end than Wes realises. Bianca, an administrative assistant in his office, also has her own agenda—and an insatiable level of curiosity that is inadvertently activated by the policewoman's visit to Wes's office.

And if all this were not complicated enough, these new developments risk exposing Wes and Ivy's shared secret from the past, which would really set the pigeons.

This is an interesting

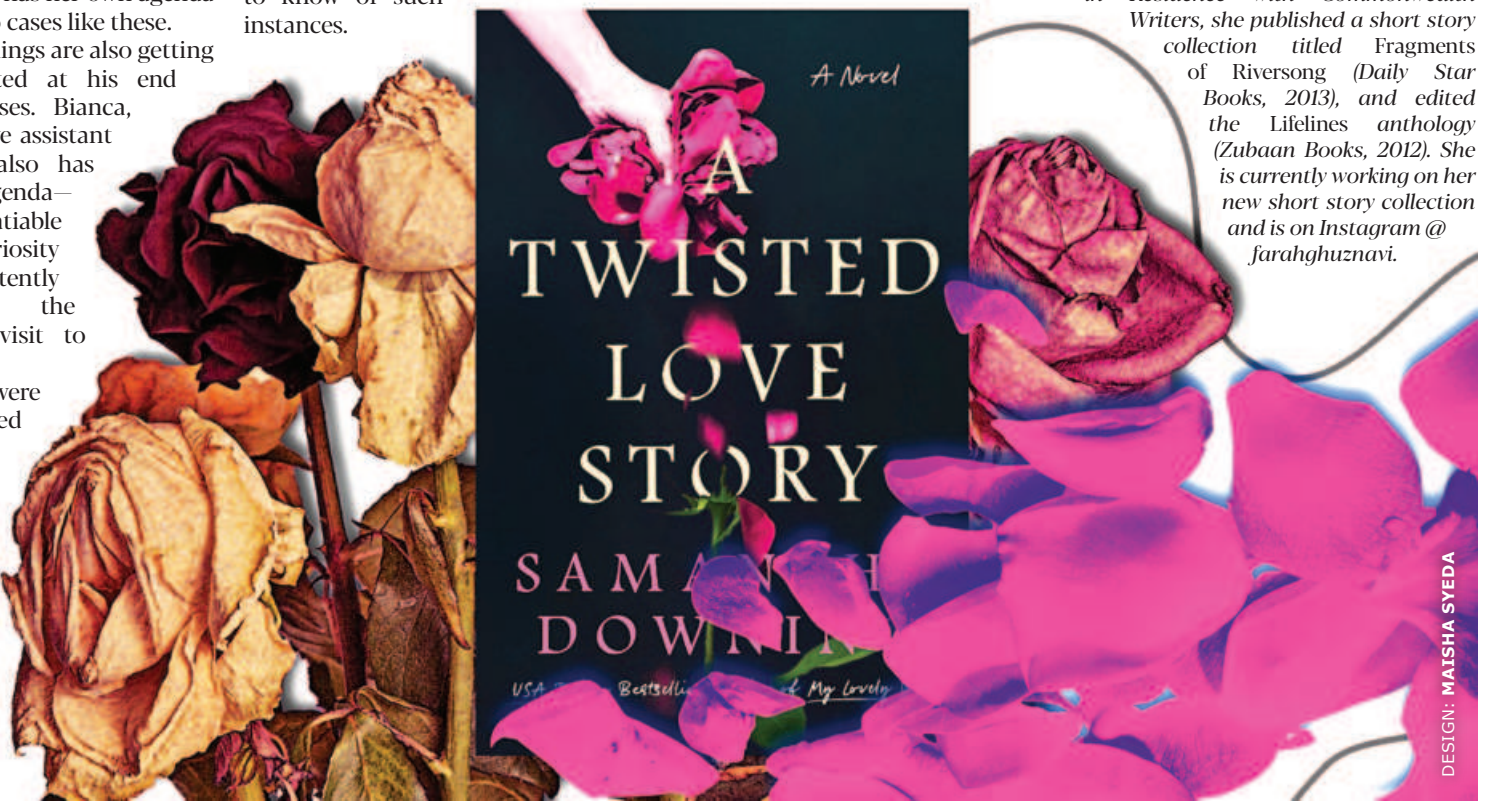
read and well worth your time, especially if you enjoy reading suspenseful stories about complicated relationships. Not least because many couples today justify some pretty bizarre behaviour in the name of love. Most of us will likely know of at least one such case. Many will know of more than one—which may or may not be as extreme as the relationship between Wes and Ivy. Chances are, the younger you are (as adults), the more likely you will be to know of such instances.

Continuing on a serious note, this book works well as a cautionary tale about red flags. Too often, people stay in relationships that are dangerous to their mental health. And it's important to know when enough is enough, and even more important to know when to move on, however attracted or invested a person may be in a relationship. Because, like Ivy and Wes, the fall-out of staying may well be more than you bargained for.

Finally, while Wes and Ivy

undoubtedly have a toxic relationship, Bianca and Karen are pretty strange people too. The story emerges from all four points of view, and is disturbing at multiple levels. I ended up feeling very glad that this was fiction. Because clearly, it's not just the love story that's twisted here!

Farah Ghuznavi is a writer, translator and development worker. Her work has been published in 11 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and the USA. *Writer in Residence* with Commonwealth Writers, she published a short story collection titled *Fragments* of Riversong (Daily Star Books, 2013), and edited the *Lifelines* anthology (Zubaan Books, 2012). She is currently working on her new short story collection and is on Instagram @farahghuznavi.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

Tamim 'felt obstacles in many places'

Tamim Iqbal, through a Facebook video, put forth a shocking revelation yesterday. The country's best ever opening batter stated that his injury concern was not the underlying factor behind his exclusion from Bangladesh's World Cup squad. Following are the excerpts of what he said:

You are all aware that I retired for a reason. Then, at the Prime Minister's request, I returned. I toiled really hard over the last two months to get in shape. Those involved, particularly the physios, would agree that there was not a single session or activity that I was requested to undertake but did not. When the [New Zealand] series approached, I wasn't happy mentally for whatever happened in the last four-five months. But when I resumed playing, I fielded for 30-35 overs. Fortunately, I was able to bat in the second match. After the game, I felt tremendously confident and mentally satisfied. I had forgotten about what had happened in the previous four or five months. I was excited to compete in the World Cup. You should expect some discomfort after recovering from an injury layoff. The same thing happened to me. I told the physio about how I felt after that game. The three selectors arrived in the dressing room at that point. I must clarify to you that not for once did I ever mention that I can't play

more than five matches. I am sure even [chief selector Minhajul Abedin] Nannu cleared this yesterday. This lie was somehow fed to the media. I didn't want to create another controversy, which is why, with full honesty, I told the selectors to keep my injury in mind when selecting me. When I was assessed at the [team] hotel, they saw my pain and assessed me the next day. The most important factor is the physio report. Anyone wanting to challenge me on this, they are most welcome. My condition was described in the

World Cup against Afghanistan]. Afterwards, the incident that happened, I don't think my injury or this lie about the five matches had any contribution for me to not go to the World Cup. I have pain but I don't have an injury. After a day or two, someone from the top level of the board, who stays very involved with us, called me. He said, you are going to the World Cup. We have to manage you. But do one thing, don't play the first match against Afghanistan. I said to him that you are talking about something that's going to happen after

I have never batted at No. 3 or 4. I have no experience of batting in the middle-order. So, naturally, I didn't take this conversation well. I felt that I was being forced to face obstacles in many places. I said if you have this mindset, then don't send me to the World Cup. I don't want to be in this nastiness. Overall, I think, if you really want me, then you should make me mentally free and happy. I am coming out of a very bad three, four months. It was a tough time for me. Perhaps, if all this was presented to me



One more thing, please keep me in mind, everyone. Don't forget me.

differently, maybe I would have reacted differently. Perhaps, I would have accepted it. But suddenly someone calls you and says, don't play, or if they are saying that sending you down the order is the plan, I am not too sure how fair it is. You are seeing a lot of things happening. One story may be an isolated incident, two stories may be a misunderstanding. But if there are seven-eight stories with someone in three-four months, then it is intentional. At the end of the day, I will wish the very best to the fifteen who have gone [to the World Cup]. I hope they will bring success to Bangladesh. One more thing, please keep me in mind, everyone. Don't forget me.

physio report. That I had pain after the first match and after the second match. They said if I rest for the September 26 ODI and play the second practice match before the first [World Cup] match, I would have had two weeks of rehab and complete ten weeks of overall rehab. So, I would have been in a much better position to play the first match [of the

12 or 13 days. I will be in good condition by then. Why won't I be playing? He said that if you play, we are planning that you will bat down the order. You have to consider my mindset at that moment. I had played a good innings. I was happy. Now all this talk suddenly. It was hard for me to take. I have been playing for 17 years in the same position.



Tamim not a team man, implies Shikib

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh ODI captain Shikib Al Hasan gave his opinion regarding Tamim Iqbal's exclusion from the World Cup squad in an exclusive interview with T Sports, aired last night. In a roundabout way, Shikib detailed that the decision to exclude Tamim was part of many processes and facts which he was not part of. He used Mahmudullah Riyad as an example. "Mahmudullah Riyad bhai wasn't there but suddenly he came to the World Cup team. I felt he couldn't do that but his dedication, his responsibility for the team and his urge to play for the team, those things were noticed by all. So there is a difference," Shikib said, indicating that there was a difference in attitude between Mahmudullah and Tamim. Tamim had said in a Facebook video yesterday, posted after the Bangladesh team's departure for India, that a board high-up had approached him to skip the first World Cup game and also bat lower down the order. Shikib denied involvement in such a request being put to Tamim. He, however, likened Tamim's behaviour to a child's antics at the playground. "I have not discussed anything like that so I don't know where the question is coming from...!"

For the good of the team, anyone should be ready to play in any position. It's about team first.

someone made that proposal, is there something wrong with it? Or is it like you can't make a proposal like that? Like you have to tell a particular person that 'you do whatever you want?' It's like a childish behaviour where someone is saying 'it's my bat, only I will play.' "For the good of the team, anyone should be ready to play in any position. It's about team first," he added. Shikib also said why taking Tamim would have been a difficult proposition for him. "When I don't know whether someone is playing the third game or the seventh game and I will only know in the morning of the game, then it's difficult for me to select the team." Shikib also asserted that he was willing to resign from captaincy after the Asia Cup (September 17) but didn't do so on request of BCB high-ups. During the half-hour interview, the ace all-rounder also touched upon his individual plans for future, saying he might hang up his bat soon, with next year's T20 World Cup his last in that format and the 2025 Champions Trophy might be his last outing in ODIs. He said he might give up playing Tests even sooner, even though these are not chalked out yet.



Veteran batter Mahmudullah Riyad hugs captain Shikib Al Hasan as coach Chandika Hathurusingha and the other players look on at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday ahead of Bangladesh team's departure for Guwahati for the World Cup.

PHOTO: STAR

NO COMMENTS FROM BCB

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon did not pick up when The Daily Star repeatedly attempted to contact him over phone to get the board's response over Tamim Iqbal's reaction yesterday. However, BCB cricket operations chairman Jalal Yunus did respond by saying that he could only make a comment after watching Tamim's video but he couldn't be reached over phone afterwards. CEO of BCB Nizamuddin Chowdhury didn't make a comment on the issue either.

Tigers want to move on

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh team yesterday departed for India's Guwahati to play the ICC Cricket World Cup, hoping to put behind the drama that has unfolded back home following the exclusion of veteran opener Tamim Iqbal from the India-bound squad. BCB's lateness in announcing the World Cup squad added to the drama, in fact made more room for it while the midnight meeting between coach Chandika Hathurusingha, skipper Shikib Al Hasan and BCB president Nazmul Hassan added more speculation to the already hyped-up atmosphere. A BCB source told The Daily Star on Tuesday morning, on the very day of the squad announcement that Shikib had communicated to the board that he would not captain the team at the World Cup if there were unfit players in the squad. Following the squad announcement, where Tamim was dropped, plenty of criticism followed. The team also departed for India on the back of a 2-0 series loss against New Zealand at home. Team director Khaled Mahmud, prior to the team's departure for India, told media that what had transpired the day before needed to be left behind. "The team is going today and I believe the boys will be upbeat. We know we haven't performed well in the New

Zealand series and many of the main players from both sides didn't play. But World Cup is a different stage and we are getting some time ahead of the World Cup and we have two practice matches to sort ourselves [before the tournament]," Mahmud told reporters at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. "What has happened, there is nothing to do about it anymore. We have to look forward to tomorrow and that's the hope we are harbouring," he said. "I feel that the dream is certainly alive in the eyes of these 15 [in the squad]. It's important to fulfil that dream. That's why not only the cricketers, but everyone, including the support staff, must be aligned together under one thread," Mahmud added. With many young players like Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Tanzim Hasan Sakib in the squad, Mahmud urged everyone to keep faith in them. "Many will say that the young boys are going; youngsters but they have the ability to do well and so they are going there. We have to believe these 15 cricketers selected were selected because they are the best," he said. Bangladesh will face Sri Lanka and England respectively on September 29 and October 2 in their two warm-up matches before they travel to Dharamshala for their tournament opener against Afghanistan.

Records galore as Nepal make cricket history

AGENCIES

A rampant Nepal rewrote the T20 international cricket record books at the Asian Games on Wednesday. Nepal smashed a series of records on the opening day of the men's cricket competition in a 273-run thumping of bewildered part-timers Mongolia. Nepal bludgeoned 314-3 in 20 overs, beating the previous record of 278-3 by Afghanistan against Ireland in 2019. Teenager Kushal Malla, who played an exceptional knock of 137 in just 50 balls, made the fastest century off 34 balls, suppressing India skipper Rohit Sharma's 35-ball hundred. Dipendra Singh Airee hit a scarcely believable eight sixes in an unbeaten 52 off 10 balls. The powerful 23-year-old raced to his fifty off nine balls, another T20 world record and one that should stand in perpetuity because it is mathematically impossible to reach the landmark any quicker. Former Indian batter Yuvraj Singh earlier achieved the record in 12 balls. Nepal's 26 sixes in the innings was also the best ever.





DHAKA CITY Air pollution rose by 13pc over 3 years

Says CPD citing 2020-2022 data

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Air pollution has increased by almost 13 percent in the capital since 2020, says a study by the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Dhaka's air quality index score rose from 145.1 in 2020 to 163.7 in 2022, adds the study released yesterday.

The study titled Reducing Pollution for Greening Cities says plastic pollution has also risen during the period.

The researchers surveyed 500 households in May and June and interviewed people about their perception of air and plastic pollution and thoughts on how to deal with the crisis.

On an average, each resident spends Tk 4,000 a year for diagnosis and treatment of symptoms thought to have been caused by polluted air.

Seven out of 10 suffer breathing problems, cough, runny nose, sore throat, chest pain and eye irritation. Over 50 percent of those who fall sick are women while 20 percent are children and the elderly.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents believe air pollution has worsened in recent years.

Syed Yusuf Saadat, research fellow at the CPD, told a discussion at the Brac Centre Inn yesterday that due to sickness attributable to air pollution, individuals in Dhaka city took 2,117 days off work last year.

Seventy-seven percent of the respondents blame vehicular emission for air pollution, 10 percent blame construction work, four percent blame brick kilns, and nine percent blame burning of waste.

Thirteen percent of the women and 32 percent of men say they would have preferred public transport over cars if the system was better.

Seventy-three percent of the respondents think plastic pollution worsened in recent years; 57 percent think their neighbourhood has extreme levels of plastic pollution; 43 percent admit that they litter.

The surveyed city dwellers are ready to shun plastic if there is an alternative.

The residents lack knowledge on waste separation at households; 47 percent of the household waste is collected by the informal sector and 44 percent is collected by the city corporation employees.

CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun told the discussion that strict measures like a ban on plastic bags, and penalty for defaulters should be enforced.

She also recommended phasing out single-use plastic by 2028 and establishing a recycling centre.

Begum Habibun Nahar, deputy minister for environment, said everyone must play a role in preventing plastic pollution.



- More plastic pollution in eastern part of Dhaka
- An individual loses 276 hours a year in traffic
- 7 out of 10 suffer breathing problems, coughing
- Each resident spends Tk 4,000 a year for diagnosis and treatment of symptoms caused by polluted air
- Due to sickness related to polluted air, individuals in the city took 2,117 days off work last year
- 13pc of women and 32pc of men say if the public transport was better, they would have preferred it over cars



The Shuvaddya canal in Dakshin Keraniganj has literally been turned into a dumping ground by sweatshops and traders of kitchen markets, leaving no room for water to flow. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

US-BANGLADESH TIES Some quarters trying to whip up bitterness Says Momen

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has described Bangladesh's relationship with the United States as "outstandingly warm and cordial", but noted that some quarters are trying to inject bitterness into this relationship through lies.

The foreign minister said the US believes in democracy and human rights.

"So, there is a similarity in our views and thoughts with the United States. In principle, the two countries have similarities. However, some individuals may not appreciate our development," Momen said, calling upon the Bangladeshi expatriates in the US to be vigilant.

He urged the Bangladeshi diaspora to take a stand, regardless of their political affiliation, to challenge those who lie

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

DENGUE DEATHS, CASES Records tumble every month since May

Experts blame rain, gov't failure to control outbreak

DIPAN NANDY

The dengue death toll has been record-breaking with each passing month since May this year.

While there were 342 deaths throughout August, the number was already higher yesterday with three days till September ends.

This month's number of deaths till 8:00am yesterday stood at 365.

The average daily death rate last month stood at 11.03 percent and has risen this month to 13.51.

The number of cases too has been breaking records each month, with 71,976 people admitted to hospital throughout August and 73,023 patients recorded in 27 days of this month.

According to health experts, the numbers have been rising sharply every month due to the government's failure to control the outbreak, with almost all the measures taken in this regard proving inadequate.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Dr Benazir Ahmed, a former member of the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group of the health ministry, said that due to intense rainfall this month, many Aedes breeding grounds have been created.

"Another reason is the spread of the infection outside Dhaka."

He added, "Along with these, all our efforts to control

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Tree-hugging AI to the rescue of Brazilian Amazon

AFP, Manaus

Small, artificially intelligent boxes tied to tree trunks in the Brazilian Amazon are the latest weapon in the arsenal of scientists and environmentalists battling destructive jungle invaders.

The boxes, named "curupiras" after a folkloric forest creature who preys on hunters and poachers, sport sensors and software trained "to recognize the sounds of chainsaws and tractors, or anything that could cause deforestation," project manager Thiago Almeida told AFP.

"We recorded the sound of chainsaws and tractors in the forest... then, all the collected sounds were passed on to the AI team to train (the program) so that... it would only recognize these sounds and not the characteristic sounds of the forest, such as animals, vegetation and rain," he explained.

Once identified, details of the threat can then be relayed to a central point and agents deployed to deal with it.



ARMED FORCES 23 types of military equipment bought in last five years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 23 types of modern combat equipment have been added to the Bangladesh Armed Forces in five years between 2018 and 2023, Armed Forces Division (AFD) informed a parliamentary watchdog yesterday.

The parliamentary standing committee on the defense ministry was also informed that in light of the Forces Goal-2023, those war equipment have been purchased or added to modernise and enhance the capabilities of the army, navy and air force.

The AFD placed a report containing this information before a meeting of the parliamentary watchdog at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

According to the AFD, those equipment were procured from 12 countries. Also, two types of equipment were made in Bangladesh.

However, the report didn't mention how many pieces of equipment were purchased and how much was spent on it.

Armed Forces Division said 11 types of combat equipment have been added to the army between 2018 and 2023.

These include China's Light Tank, SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A firefighter checks the damage in an event hall following a fatal fire at a wedding celebration, in the district of Hamdaniya in Nineveh province, Iraq yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Over 100 killed in blaze at Iraq wedding party

REUTERS, Mosul

A fire ripped through a packed wedding hall in northern Iraq late on Tuesday, killing more than 100 people in a Christian town that had survived Islamic State occupation as authorities announced an investigation into the blaze.

Fire fighters searched the charred skeleton of the building in Qaraqosh, also known as Hamdaniya, through yesterday morning and bereaved relatives gathered outside a morgue in the nearby city of Mosul, wailing and rocking in distress.

"This was not a wedding. This was hell," said Mariam Khedr, crying and hitting herself as she waited for officials to return the bodies of her daughter Rana Yakoub, 27, and three young grandchildren, the youngest aged just eight months.

Survivors said hundreds of people were at the wedding celebration, which followed an earlier church service, and the fire began about an hour into the event when fireworks ignited a ceiling decoration as the bride and groom danced.

Nineveh province Deputy Governor Hassan al-Allaf told Reuters 113 people had been confirmed dead. The head of the province's Red Crescent branch said the death toll was not final but that it "exceeds hundreds injured and dozens killed".

The fire tore through a large events hall after flares were lit during the celebration, causing a fire in the ceiling, Interior Minister Abdul Amir al-Shammari said, according to state media.