

## STATE MOURNING TODAY US embassy to fly flag at half-mast today

UNB, Dhaka

The flag of US embassy in Dhaka will be flown at half mast today, the embassy said yesterday referring to an order issued by US Ambassador Peter Haas.

Bangladesh today is observing state mourning for the Palestinians killed in the recent attacks by Israeli forces in different areas of Palestine, including Gaza.

“We mourn civilians of every faith and every nationality who have been killed in the conflict,” said the US embassy, quoting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

## 11 Bangladeshis detained in Malaysia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eleven undocumented Bangladeshi migrant workers were detained in Malaysia during drives on Tuesday and Wednesday, Malaysian English-language daily The Star reported yesterday.

They were among 28 foreigners, including five women, detained by Malaysian immigration officials in the state of Negri for flouting several regulations and entering the country illegally, the report said, quoting the state’s Immigration Director Kenneth Tan Ai Kiang.

Of the 28 detainees, five each are from Indonesia and Myanmar and one each from India and Pakistan, says The Star report, published in its online version.

“The females were all Myanmar nationals,” Tan said, adding that those detained were later taken to the immigration depot in Lenggeng.

Immigration officials conducted inspections at 12 premises, including residential areas, shop lots, mini markets, and houses that were undergoing renovations in three areas.

Tan said that, apart from conducting its own surveillance, the operations were carried out based on public feedback.

In total, officers conducted checks on 122 foreigners.

Tan said the cases were being investigated under Malaysia’s Immigration Act for overstaying and entering the country illegally.



Vehicles cross the Kadamtali area in Old Dhaka. The entire area is covered in dust as around 5km stretch of the Dhaka-Narayanganj (old) road is in a bad state. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## SIKH SEPARATIST MURDER ROW Canada withdraws 41 diplomats from India Suspends in-person consular services

REUTERS, New Delhi

Canada yesterday said it was temporarily suspending in-person operations at consulates in several Indian cities and warned of visa processing delays amid a diplomatic dispute over the murder of a Sikh separatist leader in British Columbia.

The announcements affecting consulates in Bengaluru, Chandigarh and Mumbai came hours after Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said Canada has withdrawn 41 diplomats from India.

Despite the dispute, two senior Indian government sources told Reuters the uproar would not spill into a trade dispute or impact investment, with imports from Canada continuing to flow.

India last month asked Ottawa to reduce its diplomatic presence after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau cited what he said was credible evidence of a potential link between Indian agents and the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

India denies any connection to the shooting outside a Sikh temple in June.

“The Consulates General of Canada in Bengaluru, Chandigarh and Mumbai are temporarily suspending in-person operations,” said a statement from the

Canadian High Commission, or embassy, in New Delhi, adding that services remain normal in the capital.

Canada’s Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) department said it was reducing employee numbers in India to five from 27, with visa processing times likely to be impacted even though the majority were handled abroad.

“Canada has a strong connection with Indian citizens, and will continue to welcome them, whether they wish to come here to visit, work, study, be reunited with loved ones, or live permanently in the country,” it added.

Around two million Canadians, some five percent of the overall population, have Indian heritage. India is also Canada’s largest source of foreign students, roughly 40 percent.

India has dismissed as absurd Trudeau’s suspicions that its agents were linked to the murder of Nijjar, 45, a Canadian citizen whom New Delhi had labelled a terrorist.

The Indian foreign ministry defended its downsizing of Canada’s diplomatic presence and rejected Joly’s statement that it violated the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations.

## Biden comparing Putin with Hamas ‘unacceptable’ Says Kremlin; UN finds new evidence of war crimes in Ukraine against Russia

REUTERS, Moscow, Geneva

The Kremlin said yesterday that remarks by US President Joe Biden comparing Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Palestinian militant group Hamas were “unacceptable”.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters the current moment was a potentially dangerous one, and that the threat to Russian citizens would grow exponentially once Israel started its expected ground operation in Gaza.

In remarks on Thursday, Biden sought to compare Hamas’s actions to those of Putin, whose forces launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

“Hamas and Putin represent different threats, but they share this in common: They both want to annihilate a neighbouring democracy,” he said.

Meanwhile, a United Nations commission of inquiry on Ukraine said yesterday it had found additional evidence that Russian forces had committed “indiscriminate attacks” and war crimes in Ukraine, including rape and the deportation of children to Russia.

## 3-year-old child dies falling into water tank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police yesterday recovered the body of a child from a reserve water tank of an under-construction mosque building in Gazipur.

Jamela Khatun, 3, was the daughter of Baharul Islam, of Boalmari thana in Faridpur, said police.

Sub-Inspector Saruzzaman of Basan Police Station told The Daily Star that the body was recovered from Dighir Chala village in the afternoon.

He said the reserve water tank had no lid, and the child fell into it while playing around noon and died.

SI said that the incident happened due to the negligence of the mosque authorities.

## Justice Enayetur nominated apex court chamber judge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan has nominated Justice M Enayetur Rahim, a judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, as chamber judge of the apex court for disposing of urgent cases, as the court will go into a week-long annual vacation from Sunday.

Justice Enayetur will hold hearings and dispose of the cases from 11:00am on October 23 and 26, according to a notification issued by the Appellate Division Registrar, Mohammad Saifur Rahman, on October 16.

The Appellate and High Court Divisions of the SC will reopen on October 29.

## Two stabbed to death over previous rivalry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two people were stabbed to death by unidentified criminals at Ichamati village in Sadar upazila of Sirajganj.

The deceased are Alamin Khan, 25, and his friend Alamin Sheikh, 28, of village Ichamati of Bagbati union.

Bagbati Union Parishad Chairman Jahangir Alam said there was a long-standing enmity between the two victims and two local influential groups over establishing supremacy in the area.

“In a primary investigation, we learned that the murder took place following a previous enmity,” said Sirajganj Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Sirajul Islam.

“We are investigating the incident,” he added.

The OC said a group of unidentified criminals, equipped with sharp weapons, attacked the two when they were returning home from a local market around 10:00pm on Thursday.

Alamin Khan died on the spot and Alamin Sheikh was sent to a Dhaka hospital, where he died of his injuries Friday morning, OC Sirajul added.

## Illegal sand mining killing Someshwari

FROM PAGE 1

According to the act, it is illegal to use such machines to dredge rivers.

In 2010, the local administration started giving permission for sand mining in the Someshwari, one of the country’s transboundary rivers. This year, the administration leased out four of the five “balu mahals” in the area to Ruhi, said government officials.

Locals said traders have been dredging without regulation since the sand extraction began, threatening river ecology and nearby communities.

On October 18, this correspondent found no government officials at the spots to monitor sand mining activities.

Contacted, Ruhi said, “Swing cutter dredging machines, which are legal, are now being used to extract sand from the river. The illegal dredgers are being removed.

He further said, “No dirt road has been constructed on the river; this is a sand bed. I am not taking any money for this.”

Admitting that sand extraction takes place at night too, he said, “The district administration has

permitted sand extraction round the clock for 365 days.”

**IMPACT ON LOCAL LIFE**

Nayan Mia, 56, a boatman from Babuipara village in Durgapur, said, “I used to happily ply my boat here 10 years ago, but now I only hear the ceaseless noise of sand dredgers.

“There are countless dredgers scattered across the river, mining

**In 2010, the local administration started giving permission for sand mining in the Someshwari, one of the country’s transboundary rivers. This year, the administration leased out four of the five “balu mahals” in the area to Ruhi, said government officials.**

sand 24 hours a day,” he added.

An elderly resident of Bijoypur village said no one challenges Ruhi’s activities out of fear.

“If anyone tries to speak against his sand trade, his men threaten

them,” he alleged.

Besides, trucks carrying wet sand from the extraction sites have badly damaged the Shyamganj Birishiri road, he added.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said, “The unchecked sand mining from the Someshwari river is destroying vital national assets.

“The river has been turned into sand mines, robbing the people of their rightful access. It has just become the private property of the leaseholder,” she added.

Rizwana called for an immediate cancellation of all sand mining leases.

“The current method of sand extraction poses an existential threat to rivers and the surrounding communities.

“Just a decade ago, many of our rivers were healthy. But now, thousands of dredgers mine sand ruthlessly, eroding the river banks,” she said.

“We have to act before our rivers disappear forever.”

**WHAT DO THE AUTHORITIES SAY?**

Abu Said, assistant director at the Department of Environment in Netrakona, said he was unaware of the current status of the Someshwari river but promised to look into the matter.

“Illegal dredgers have a number of negative consequences, including the loss of arable land, erosion, and the change in river course,” he told this newspaper.

Meanwhile, the district administration on October 4 requested Ruhi’s company Ruhi Enterprise to immediately stop the illegal activities.

The authorities sent four letters, asking Ruhi to halt transportation of wet sand and stop operating unauthorised dredgers.

Contacted, Shahed Parvez, deputy commissioner of Netrakona, said, “Mobile courts are being conducted, and a fine of around Tk 19 lakh has been slapped in the last 6 months.

“We will talk to the leaseholders. If they still do not follow the rules, we will take action,” he added.

He, however, did not comment when asked about Ruhi’s claim that the administration had approved dredging round the clock for a year.

## Warner, Marsh star as Australia down Pakistan

FROM PAGE 1

none of the Pakistan bowlers. Marsh’s knock was spiced with ten boundaries and nine sixes.

Their stand – just 23 short of the World Cup opening record of 282 by Sri Lanka’s Upul Tharanga and Tillakaratne Dilshan against Zimbabwe atallekele in 2011 – was helped by a weak performance by Pakistan in the field.

Pakistan next face Afghanistan in Chennai on Monday while Australia’s next opponents are the Netherlands in New Delhi two days later.

## Shakib’s fitness overshadows all concerns

FROM PAGE 1

afternoon as they prepare to take on a wounded South Africa on October 24.

Bangladesh have been on the wrong side of one-sided affairs in their last three outings – the latest being a seven-wicket loss to hosts India on Thursday – where batting continued to remain a major headache. On top of that, the uncertainty over Shakib’s participation has added to the concerns, almost to the point that it eclipsed the rest.

It had been learned that the Bangladesh captain had sustained a Grade-I tear on his left quadriceps during their game against New Zealand in Chennai on October 13, but it is yet to be officially stated.

Moreover, despite Shakib’s second MRI scan report having arrived the night before the India clash, the team management kept everyone in the dark over his availability till the last moment of the match.

Najmul Hossain Shanto, stand-in captain during the India fixture, informed in the post-match presentation on Thursday that Shakib was sidelined as a precautionary measure. However, it seems the vagueness of his fitness status will continue to stretch till the toss occurs on Tuesday.

A source close to Bangladesh Cricket Board, requesting anonymity, told the Daily Star yesterday, “The tear was evident in the second report as well. The nature of injury is such that it needs to be evaluated on a day-to-day basis. Hopefully, a clear picture will emerge on Sunday (October 22).”

The Bangladesh contingent travelled by road from Pune to Mumbai, which took about three hours. Perhaps the scenic splendour along the way will help to relieve Shakib and the troops’ mental anguish.

Will the energy of Mumbai, known for its fast-paced lifestyle and being the hub of the Bollywood film industry, induce the Tigers to play entertaining cricket across all departments and write the script in their favour?

Bangladesh can clearly take a leaf out of the Netherlands’ book, since the Dutch were able to gun down the high-flying Proteas.

However, given how Bangladesh have performed thus far in the ongoing showcase tournament, it is difficult to predict what awaits Chandika Hathurusingha and his charges as the pressure further mounts.

## BNP hesitant to go for hartals, blockades

FROM PAGE 1

The BNP held with like-minded parties, the latter recommended programmes like hartal.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of the Nagorik Oikya, told The Daily Star that tough programmes are such that they shake the foundation of the state machinery. “But public suffering is inevitable in that case.”

The BNP on July 29 held a sit-in at the entry points to Dhaka. But that event faced substantial obstacles from police and ruling party men.

Contacted, BNP standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said it is difficult to say what programmes the party will announce because the nature of the movement will depend on how the government reacts to the demonstrations.

“Our movement is peaceful and it will remain that way. But we have the right to defend ourselves when we are attacked,” he said.

## Rice price on rise

FROM PAGE 1

week ago, but the price has now gone up to Tk 2,500. He now sells the rice for Tk 56 a kg, an increase by Tk 2 from last week.

Habir Mia, a 45-year-old day labourer from the capital’s Mirpur-14, said he cannot buy rice from TCB trucks at subsidised price (Tk 30 per kg) for his family of six as he and his wife, a garment worker, stay away from home during the day.

Habir, a father of four, said even if the rice price increases by Tk 1 a kg, it puts pressure on their daily expenses.

Speaking to The Daily Star on Thursday, wholesalers in Dinaipur town’s Bahadurbazar said millers

started charging them Tk 40 to 50 extra for each 50kg rice sack a couple of days ago citing increased paddy price.

Wholesalers at Bahadurbazar and Rail Bazarhat in the district town said they bought from millers each 50kg sack of BR 28 rice for Tk 2,500 to 2,550, BR 29 Tk 2,300 to 2,350, Gutti Swarna Tk 2,100 and Miniket Tk 2,800 to 2,850 a couple of days ago.

Layek Ali, general secretary of Auto Rice Mill Owners’ Association, said the price of coarse rice has increased due to a shortage of paddy supply.

“But the price of fine rice has not increased that much compared to coarse rice,” he said.

Most of the coarse rice produced

in the country is procured by the government to provide it to different groups of people under several assistance programmes, Layek said.

“That’s why there is a supply dearth of paddy ahead of the Aman harvesting season. This is the main reason behind the increase in rice price,” he added.

Dr Asaduzzaman, former director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, talked about another possible reason.

“People living in cities may be buying more rice now to have a stock amid fears of political unrest in the coming days. This could be a reason for the price hike,” he said.