



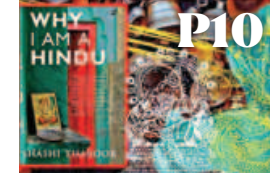
**P9** The future is female, but so was the past



**P7** Taiwan warns against China flight path change



**P11** 'Mid-range BPL needs local talents in its core'



**P10** An exploration of Hinduism and its honest interpretation

## Amid gas crisis, 2 gas-run power plants firing up

Electricity from the stations to be added to nat'l grid this month

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Capacity payments, the scourge of the rapid rise in Bangladesh's power generation capacity, are set to get higher this year.

At least five more gas-fired plants with a combined capacity of 2,482 megawatts (MW) will get the green light to start commercial operation this year – when about two-thirds of the capacity of existing gas-fired power plants are sitting idle for the ongoing gas crisis.

Once the commercial operation date (COD) is approved, the

In its last three terms, the Awami League government has paid at least Tk 1.04 lakh crore to 82 independent power producers (IPPs) and 32 rental power plants as capacity charge and rental payments, Nasrul Hamid, the state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, told the parliament on September 5 last year.

Any day now, the 584MW Unique Meghnaghat power plant and the 583MW Summit Meghnaghat II power plant will get their CODs, according to officials of the Bangladesh Power



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

**THE COST OF COLOUR ...** Chemical dyes being released into the Buriganga, a river already choking on pollution from various factories in the capital's Shyampur area. According to studies, at least 200 tonnes of water is used for dyeing a tonne of fabric in the textile industry. The wastewater from these factories contains residual dyes and chemicals that are highly hazardous for both humans and aquatic life. The photo was taken recently.

## Injustice built into many sectors

Says Prof Rehman Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

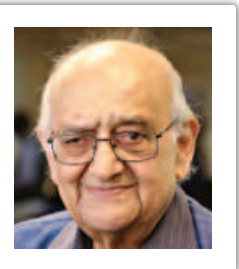
There is a built-in element of injustice in many sectors, including environment, education, and governance, which needs to be addressed, said renowned economist Prof Rehman Sobhan yesterday.

"Unless you actually have a system of governance, which is contingent on the freely given vote of its citizens and is then accountable to them at all times, then there is always, in each of these areas, a scope for malfunctions....," he said.

Prof Rehman made these remarks while participating in a discussion on the Abdul Ghafur Memorial Lecture, 2024, at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

Economist Nazrul Islam, a visiting professor from the Asian Growth Institute in Japan and former chief of Development Research at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, presented the lecture on "Ten Tasks for Future Bangladesh".

The 10 interventions Nazrul spoke about



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## Locals nervy as fighting goes on in Myanmar

MONG SING HAI MARMA and MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Residents of Ghumdhum border area in Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila have been passing sleepless nights for the last few days as they feel insecure due to fighting between Myanmar security forces and rebel group Arakan Army across the border.

"We are not feeling safe here as we hear sounds of mortar shells exploding and gunfire every night. Around 2:00pm on Tuesday, we heard gunshots," said Mohammad Shafi, a resident of Ghumdhum Bazar area.

He said a mortar shell from Myanmar landed on arable land near the Tumbru border on Tuesday night.

Kanta Kumar Sen, a resident of Tumbru area, said they never heard mortar shells explosions like this before.

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## Imran's hope for another stint as PM fades

The ex-Pak PM, wife jailed for 14 years for illegally selling state gifts

- Conviction bars Imran from contesting polls for 10 years
- Second conviction for ex-Pak PM in two days ahead of Feb 8 polls
- Political opponents say verdict 'karma'



REUTERS, Islamabad

A Pakistani anti-graft court jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Khan for 14 years each on charges of illegally selling state gifts, his party and lawyers said yesterday, just over a week before a national election.

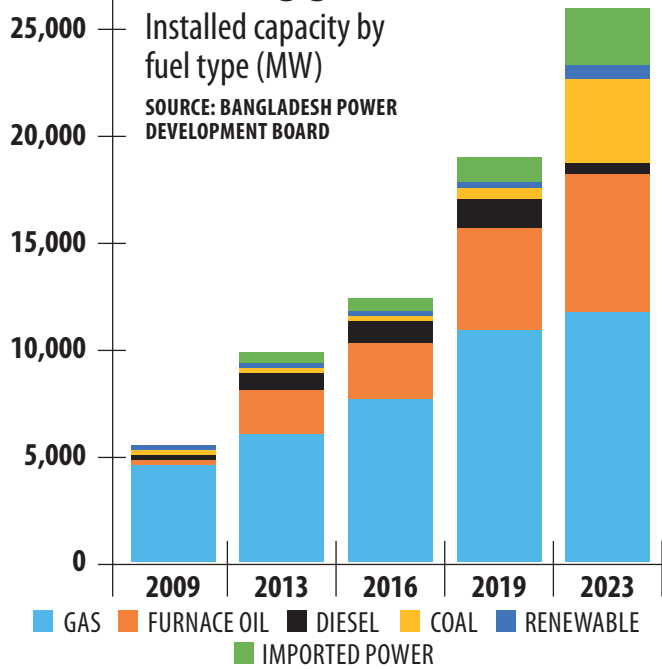
The verdict, which marked the third conviction handed down to the embattled ex-cricketer star in the last few months, also included a 10-year disqualification from holding public office, his party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), said.

Bushra Khan, commonly known as Bushra Bibi, gave herself up for arrest shortly after the verdict, PTI added.

The 14-year imprisonment is harsher than the 10-year sentence given to Khan on Tuesday on charges of revealing state secrets, and comes as

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## Power gen capacity up, boosting gas demand



power plants will get a minimum payment whether they produce any electricity or not, which is known as capacity payment.

Of the five plants, two will be awarded the COD this month, raising concerns about whether those plants would largely be sitting idle and racking up capacity charges.

At least three Padma bridges could be built with the capacity payments that were made to the 114 power plants since 2009.

Development Board (PDB), the state agency that purchases the electricity produced by the power stations.

Nearby the two plants is another 718MW gas-fired power plant that is being set up by India's Reliance Power and Japan's JERA. That plant will also get its COD soon.

All three plants in Narayanganj's Meghnaghat – which was once a rural backwater of fishing hamlets

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## Some justice for injured child worker

HC orders workshop owner to pay Tk 30 lakh compensation for boy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice was finally served after over three years as a High Court bench yesterday ordered the owner of a workshop to pay a compensation of Tk 30 lakh to a child worker who lost his right arm while on duty.

The bench also directed Yakub Hossain, the owner of Noor Engineering Workshop in Bhairab, to pay the victim, Md Naim Hasan Nahid, Tk 7,000 every month for his education expenses till he passes HSC exams.

Nahid, now 14, and his family, who were all present at the courtroom, felt a wave of joy and relief after the HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque passed the order.



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Nasir, 27, had no other means of earning other than his beloved fuchka cart. He had borrowed Tk 20,000 to set it up near the National Museum in the capital. However, as these carts are illegal, a DSCC mobile court yesterday conducted a raid in the area. As Nasir tried to leave with his belongings, the team followed him to Aziz Supermarket area, where this photograph was taken, and demolished his cart. Broken down completely, Nasir now does not know how he will repay his loans.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## AS OUR RIVERS LAY DYING

Rivers don't live anymore, they merely exist. They exist as relics of their halcyon days when rivers were truly wild, mysterious, free – or as a character in their own story, as told through poetry and music. Now they exist in inherited nostalgia. The High Court in a 2019 verdict granted rivers the legal status of "living entities". But in reality, almost all the country's rivers are struggling to survive due to encroachment, pollution and sand lifting. In today's Page 3, we look into the current state of Halda (Chattogram), Mayur (Khulna), Sonai (Sylhet) and Louhajang (Tangail) rivers and how the once majestic rivers are being held hostage to greed and negligence.

