



CLOGGED BEYOND RECOGNITION... Once a vital drainage channel, the Ramchandrapur canal in Mohammadpur now resembles a landfill. Neglect and rampant dumping have turned the waterway into a source of misery for residents facing waterlogging, health risks, and an unbearable stench. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

University enrolment drops to a 4-year-low

Limited scope for employment upon graduation mostly to blame

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

University enrolment, which has historically been lower than the global and the low- and middle-income countries' averages, dropped to a four-year low in 2022 after a small but steady growth for a decade.

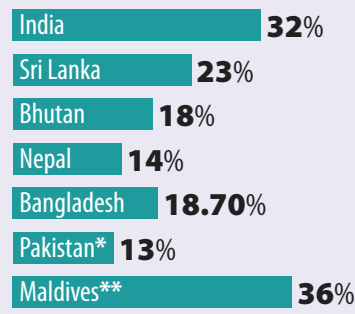
In 2022, which is the latest available data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, admission from higher secondary education to universities came down to 18.66 percent from 20.19 percent in 2021.

The global average for university enrolment was 42 percent in 2022, according to the World Bank. For low- and middle-income countries -- the bracket to which Bangladesh belongs -- the average was 37 percent.

"Education is costly in Bangladesh and it

Univ enrolment in South Asia

*2021 **2019



SOURCE: WB, BANBEIS

is becoming costlier by the day," said AK Azad Choudhury, a former chairman of the University Grant Commission.

One of the reasons for the drop in enrolment could be the increasing out-of-pocket expenditure, he said.

In Bangladesh, households cover about 71 percent of the total cost of education, according to the Unesco Global Education Monitoring Report 2022.

Despite the huge expenses, employment opportunities upon graduation are limited, Chowdhury said.

"We are opening one university after another but these are not operating keeping the employability of their graduates in mind -- there is an absence of academy-industry linkage."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Battle resumes across the border in Myanmar

'Stray bullet' hits autorickshaw in Tambru

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, Cox's Bazar

After a lull for two days, fresh gunfights broke out in Myanmar near Ghumdhum border in Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila yesterday afternoon.

Sounds of gunshots and mortar explosions were heard in the Tambru area from around 3:00pm to 5:00pm, said Sofiqul Islam, a member of Ghumdhum Union Parishad.

People are feeling insecure as gun battles are now taking place during daytime which had usually happened at night over the last few weeks, he said.

Violent clashes between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, an armed rebel group, have been going on since October 27 last year.

People living in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area, stretching from Bandarban's Naikhongchhari to Cox's Bazar's Teknaf, are in constant fear of being affected by violence across the border.

Meanwhile, the windshield of a CNG-run three-wheeler was broken by a bullet,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Funding for another metro confirmed

ADB, S Korea to provide \$4.5b for MRT-5 southern route

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The prospect of having another major metro rail route in Dhaka looks bright as financing for the construction of the southern route of Mass Rapid Transit Line-5 has been confirmed.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide \$3 billion and South Korea \$1.5 billion for the job. The Bangladesh government will give the rest of the funds needed for the project which will cost an estimated \$5.1 billion in total, said officials of finance and planning ministries.

The project aims at easing traffic congestion with metro service between Gabtoli in Dhaka's western part and Dasherbandi in Dhaka's eastern part, a distance of 17.20km. The deadline is 2030.

Over 13km of the lines will be underground and 4.10km elevated. With the confirmation of the

funding, the Road Transport and Bridges Division submitted the detailed project proposal to the planning ministry last month.

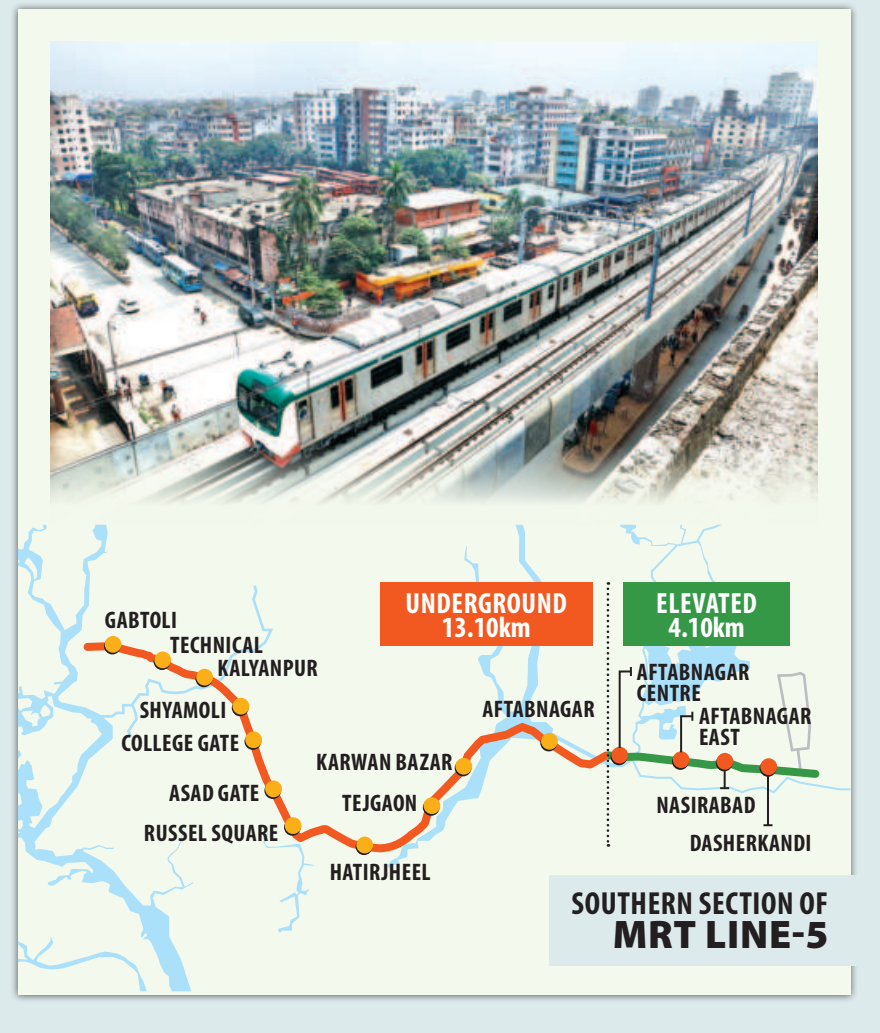
An official requesting anonymity said the ministry's project evaluation committee will examine the proposal first and then it will be placed at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council for approval.

Finance ministry officials said a high-level team of the ADB confirmed the financing while visiting Bangladesh in November last year. The project has been included in ADB's pipeline for this year.

The ADB fund will be a mix of concessional and non-concessional loans, and the repayment period will be 30 years, including a five-year grace period.

The multilateral lender completed the feasibility study, engineering

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



39 killed as US starts strikes in Iraq, Syria

REUTERS, Washington

The United States launched airstrikes in Iraq and Syria against more than 85 targets linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) and militias it backs, reportedly killing nearly 40 people, in retaliation for a deadly attack on US troops.

The strikes, which included the use of long-range B-1 bombers flown from the United States, were the first in response to the attack last weekend in Jordan by Iran-backed militants, and more US military operations are expected in the coming days.

The strikes intensified a conflict that has spread into the region since Israel's offensive in Gaza started on Oct 7.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said in a statement the attacks represented "another adventurous and strategic mistake by the United States that will result only in increased tension and instability".

Iraq summoned the US charge d'affaires in Baghdad to deliver a formal protest. Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, a state security force including Iran-backed groups, said 16 of its members were killed including fighters and medics. The government earlier said civilians were among 16 dead.

In Syria, the strikes killed 23 people who had been guarding the targeted locations, said Rami Abdulrahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which reports on war in Syria.

US Lieutenant General Douglas Sims, the director of the Joint Staff, said the attacks appeared to be successful, triggering large secondary explosions as the bombs hit militant weaponry. He said the strikes were undertaken knowing that there would likely be casualties among those in the facilities.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



AGRI TECH GAINING POPULARITY

With a modern rice transplanter, a farmer transfers Boro seedlings into a piece of cropland. Left, the seedlings ready for transplanting were grown using the tray method. Boro seeds take a month to mature into seedlings. The photos were taken in Barguna's Amtali on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

46th Death Anniversary

(Abul Company) The founder of Abul Khair Group noted industrialist and social worker

Late Janab ABUL KHAIR



Death: 4th February, 1978

In accordance with the will of Almighty Allah the Beneficent, you left this mundane world, leaving us and many of your relations overwhelmed by grief. In our everyday life your bright ideals serve as beacon. You are immortal in your death. We pray to Almighty Allah for the salvation of your departed soul.

May Allah the Beneficent bless you with the eternal bliss of paradise. Ameen.

Your loving Sons, Daughters and Relatives