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# Languishing in BCS LOOP

## Govt jobseekers see crucial years eaten up by long-drawn-out process

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Imam Hossein had applied for the 41st Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exams in November 2019, just months after completing his master's from Jagannath University.

He prepared himself well and passed the MCQ-based preliminary test, held in March 2021. He also came out successful in the written test held later that year, and started waiting for the viva. The viva, held two years later in 2023, went well and he passed the final examination.

But Imam, who studied political science, could not make it to the cadre service, one of the most coveted jobs in the country. He

was recommended for a non-cadre post instead. But he could not get one, as jobs in non-cadre posts are subject to requisitions from different ministries.

"The long delay took a heavy toll on me. It cost me more than four years of my life. I cannot apply for a government job anymore because I have crossed the 30-year age limit by this time," said Imam, who recently joined a primary school after waiting for several months for a non-cadre post.

Such long delays at every stage of BCS exams -- starting from the circular to gazette notification -- are not isolated incidents.

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**CELEBRATING MOTHERHOOD ...** Since her daughter was just six months old, Shefali Begum, 35, has been bringing her bundle of joy to work with her every day as there is no one at home to look after her. After she and her day-labourer husband set out for duty every morning, Shefali carries Sohana, now just over a year old, in one arm and uses the other to row a boat and help people cross a canal near the Kirtankhola river. The photo was taken near Barishal city's Rasulpur area yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Won't approve unnecessary projects: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday made it clear that she would not approve any unnecessary projects, which are taken just for the sake of construction without calculating their benefits for the country and its people.

"There must not be any construction just for the sake of construction. This is my request. If I see any unnecessary project, I will not approve it," she said.

The PM made the comment while



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## TIMELINE OF FIVE EXAMS

The 42nd exam was a special one held in February 2021 only for the doctors to tackle the medical emergency during the Covid-19 pandemic.

BCS	CIRCULAR	PRELIMINARY	WRITTEN	VIVA	FINAL RESULT	GAZETTE
41st	Nov 2019	Mar 2021	Nov-Dec 2021	Mar-Jun 2023	Aug 2023	Mar 2024
43rd	Nov 2020	Oct 2021	Jul-Aug 2022	Oct-Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Not yet published
44th	Nov 2021	May 2022	Dec 2022-Jan 2023	May-Jul 2024	Not yet published	N/A
45th	Nov 2022	May 2023	Jan 2024	Not yet held	Not yet published	N/A
46th	Nov 2023	Apr 2024	Not yet held	N/A	N/A	N/A

## 'Govt meddling in airlines monitoring'

### ICAO finds during inspection

ZYMA ISLAM

The inspection and monitoring of flight operations of carriers, especially Biman, is hindered by "government involvement", the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has found during a recent inspection.

The global civil aviation watchdog provided training to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) on March 10-21 as part of its Southeast Asia-specific programme that focuses on developing airworthiness of these



countries.

The training aimed to help CAAB in preparation to an audit by ICAO scheduled for later this year.

The ICAO audit assesses the aviation safety and aviation security oversight capacities of its member states, and rates them according to how compliant they are. Bangladesh's last audit was carried out in 2017.

Inspecting the civil aviation department, the training team found

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## Of true grit and a mother's love from 6,000km away

NILIMA JAHAN

As the sun sets every evening in the Mauritian capital of Port Louis, Monoara reaches her workplace, a tuna processing company, and disconnects from the world by switching off her phone's internet.

Her mind, however, wanders some 6,000

kilometers away in Dhaka, with her son Md Yasin, 20-years-old and suffering from intellectual disabilities; 24-year old daughter Sultana Akter, who takes care of her brother; and her elderly

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MOTHER'S DAY



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MY DHAKA



PHOTO: TOUHID HASAN REAN

# GLASS BANGLES make a fashionable comeback

**RBR**  
There is an undeniable charm associated with glass bangles, particularly during events like Pahela Baishakh. Traditionally sold by churiwalis, the craze for these colourful glass bangles died down in recent years as fashion changed. Nowadays, most people opt for metallic bangles for their durability and design. However, there is an almost magical feeling when one puts on a dozen glass bangles, which chime and tinkle as you walk wearing them. Catering to the demands of those looking for the romantic and nostalgic experience of wearing glass bangles, Dhaka now has a shop that exclusively sells glass bangles. This is one niche business that not many have ventured

into. Kacher Churi is a bangle shop that started in 2018. Touhid Hasan Rean initially launched the venture online while he was a first year student of Software Engineering. "Glass bangles are such a gift that it does not burden your wallet and at the same time perks up your mood instantly. At Kacher Churi, 60 percent of my buyers are men! They come to get gifts for their significant others and friends. I have special gift boxes on offer for them. A dozen glass bangles can sell for anywhere between Tk 49 and Tk 380," says Touhid, Founder and CEO of Kacher Churi, which now has three outlets in Khilgaon, Banasree, and Mirpur. This unusual venture began with a visit to Chawk Bazar in Old Dhaka,

when colourful glass bangles caught Touhid's eyes. This led to him deciding to sell them online. He bought 120 dozen reshami churis or single colour glass bangles with Tk 1,650 only. "Throughout my university days, I was stuck sitting in front of my computer, juggling the business of selling glass bangles and studying. However, my business really took off during the COVID-19 days. Initially, during the lockdown, everyone was doing some sort of online business. Many of my peers started selling glass bangles at steep prices, making the market unstable. During the first six months, I stayed away. Then, when their half-hearted efforts withered away, I entered the domain again, this time with both online and offline presence," Touhid explained.

Touhid now buys his exclusive collection from Delhi, Mumbai, and other cities as each Indian state has their unique bangle design. The reason he brings glass bangles from India is because Bangladeshi bangles are not up to the same quality. "I buy them from a third party and clear my customs and VAT obligations. For me, selling bangles is a part of my emotional attachment. I wanted to do something on my own and I have taken loans to expand my business," he says. Baishakh is usually when Touhid's sales experience a boost. Additionally, for the upcoming festivals, he has 60 new designs on offer. Kacher Churi is a must-visit, especially for men looking for a perfect gift for their partners.

## MV Abdullah likely to reach Bangladeshi waters by May 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

The Bangladeshi-flagged vessel, MV Abdullah, which was released by Somali pirates on April 14, is expected to reach Bangladeshi waters with 23 sailors and crewmembers by May 14. The sailors and crewmembers of the ship were held captive by pirates for around 33 days. Meherul Karim, chief executive officer (CEO) of the ship's owning firm, SR Shipping Limited, told The Daily Star that the ship, which is on the way to Chattogram from UAE, was around 750 nautical miles away from Kutubdia around 1:00pm yesterday. At its current speed, the ship is likely to reach Kutubdia on Monday (May 13) night or the following morning, he said. After loading 56,000 tonnes of limestone, the ship left the UAE port of Mina Saqr in the early hours of April 30 and then went to a nearby port to refuel before heading for Chattogram. The ship came under attack by Somali pirates on March 12, when it was carrying 55,000 tonnes of coal from the Maputo port of Mozambique to Al Hamriyah port in the UAE. The pirates released the ship in the early hours of April 14 after reportedly receiving a ransom.

## Rohingya man shot dead in Teknaf camp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya man was shot dead in a refugee camp under Hnila union of Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar last morning. The incident took place at Mochni registered Rohingya camp in the union around 8:30am, said Teknaf Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Osman Gani. The deceased Mohammad Alam, 48, was a resident of E-Block of Mochni Rohingya camp. According to the locals and police, Alam was stopped by five to six miscreants in the morning while going to a local arbitration meeting. They picked up Alam and took him to an area near a local school. He was later shot in the head, killing him on the spot, the OC said. "We are suspecting that previous enmity might be the reason behind the killing. We are trying to arrest those involved in the incident." The body has been sent to Cox's Bazar District Sadar Hospital's morgue for autopsy.

## Languishing in BCS LOOP

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The Public Service Commission (PSC) took four years and four months to complete the 41st BCS exams. The 42nd exams were a special one held in February 2021 only for the doctors to tackle the medical emergency during the Covid-19 pandemic. From circular to gazette notification, it was completed within one year. Nearly 4,000 doctors were appointed through that special BCS. The 43rd BCS took three years and one month to publish the final results. The public administration ministry is yet to publish the gazette notification of this exam. As per PSC's Annual Report 2020, the constitutional body prepared a roadmap to complete the whole process in a year, but the roadmap remains on paper. Meantime, government jobseekers continue to lose up to four years of their career. PSC Chairman Sohorab Hossain evaded a direct reply about the delay, and said, "We tried to complete the process within a year, but we couldn't do it."

According to the roadmap, it is possible to complete all the work from publishing the advertisements to the final recommendations in 12 months, he said. However, successful candidates too face delays even after publication of the final results. They need to go through medical tests and security clearance from various agencies, including the police. It takes nearly one year before publication of the gazette. **WHY THE DELAY** PSC members say they have a limited workforce. As a result, they rely on others to carry out the bulk of their work, including preparing and printing question papers, evaluating answer scripts and holding viva. "One reason for the delay is late submission of the answer scripts by the examiners [university teachers and bureaucrats]. Also, a significant number of scripts go to third examiners, causing further delay in the publication of the written test results," a PSC member told The Daily Star. The PSC introduced the provision for double examiners in 2018 to ensure "transparency" in assessing the answer scripts. The provision requires each answer sheet to be examined by two teachers of public universities. The system took effect from the 38th BCS exam. The following year, the PSC introduced another system, requiring a third examiner to evaluate the

scripts in case there is a 20 percent difference in the marks awarded by the two examiners. In the case of the 44th BCS, more than 9,000 exam papers out of the 15,708 were evaluated by third examiners because of such differences in the marks awarded by the first two examiners, PSC members said. "Despite our request for timely submission of the answer sheets, many examiners do not do so citing various excuses. Since they are respected people, we cannot take any strict action.... PSC is in trouble because of these examiners," one PSC member said. Apart from public university teachers, some bureaucrats are also involved in evaluating the answer scripts. They examine the current affairs section only. Three teachers of two public universities who evaluated BCS answer scripts over the years said public university teachers are already very busy with their regular lectures, examinations and exam paper evaluations. Many of them also have administrative roles. As a result, they neither have the time nor the motivation to evaluate the BCS exam papers. Also, the remuneration that the PSC offers for the job is so low that teachers show little interest in evaluating the papers, they added. On average, each teacher gets 100-120 papers. **IN A FIX** The Daily Star spoke to 15 candidates recommended in various cadres in the 43rd BCS. Each of them said the exams involve considerable expenses, including for coaching, accommodation, food and travel. The long delay only adds to the financial pressure and puts them in a fix as they cannot make a decision about their career until the process completes. "I cannot suddenly change course and look for other jobs even though the PSC is taking a long time. If the results came out faster, I could have made a final decision," said Mahmudul Hasan, a jobseeker in the 43rd BCS. As his wait continues, both his house rent and food cost have gone up. "I cannot leave the mess either, as it would hamper my studies. It is difficult to cover the cost with my earnings from private tuition," said Mahmudul. **WHAT TO DO** Ali Imam Mazumder, a former cabinet secretary, said the introduction of the provision for double examiners, especially when there is a shortage

of qualified examiners in public universities, is a big factor behind the backlog. According to him, the provision is "apparently justified" but only a few public universities have teachers qualified enough to evaluate BCS answer scripts. The time taken for police verifications and medical examinations is also way too long, he said. Currently, it takes about a year to complete police verifications and medical examinations. "It can be done in two to three months. It used to be like that. That system should be restored. All that is required is to verify whether the candidate is facing a criminal case," the former secretary said. According to him, the current verification also unnecessarily includes background checks and political affiliations of the relatives of the candidates. Also, many recommended candidates even get rejected because of the political affiliations of their relatives and family members. "In India, candidates are offered jobs upon recommendation while the verification continues. Moreover, they do not focus on other things [political affiliations of relatives]," he said.

## Iran conservatives tighten grip in parliament vote

AFP, Tehran

Iran's conservatives and ultra-conservatives clinched more seats in a partial rerun of the country's parliamentary elections, official results showed yesterday, tightening their hold on the chamber. Voters had been called to cast ballots again on Friday in regions where candidates failed to gain enough votes in the March 1 election, which saw the lowest turnout -- 41 percent -- since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Candidates categorised as conservative or ultra-conservative on pre-election lists won the majority of the 45 remaining seats up for grabs in the vote held in 15 of Iran's 31 provinces, according to local media. For the first time in the country, voting on Friday was a completely electronic process at eight of the 22 constituencies in Tehran and the cities of Tabriz in the northwest and Shiraz in the south, state TV said.

## Of true grit and a mother's love

FROM PAGE 1

mother-in-law. When Monoara gets her dinner break, she anxiously switches her internet back on and checks her phone. "Every missed call from my daughter, or any Bangladeshi number, makes me anxious. Before calling back, I fear the worst -- 'did something happen to my son?' But once I hear they're okay, I can breathe again," said the 39-year-old migrant worker. Monoara has been working in Mauritius for the past 16 years. "Sometimes they fall asleep by the time I can call back but my worries don't go away until my shift ends at 5:00am Mauritius time [7:00am Dhaka time]." When Monoara went to Mauritius in 2008, she had no clue her husband had secretly married for the third time and was spending the remittance she had been sending. When she returned six years later, she discovered that her husband already had a child with his new wife. Upon Monoara's disapproval, he abandoned her, their children and even his own mother. Thus began Monoara's journey as a single mother. In these 16 years, she was able to visit her children only twice -- in 2014 and 2023. She has been working at the tuna company for a decade, alongside other female migrant workers from different countries. They toil for nearly 10 hours with a target of cleaning and deboning 50 plates of large boiled and peeled tuna fish with knives. "Our hands get quite bloody in the process. Yet, even after meeting our target, we push for more work to earn some extra money. This way, I make around Tk 23,000, which is still not enough to meet my family's needs." Monoara's children live in a two-room house in Bamoil Bazar of Demra in the capital. They need at least Tk 17,000 to cover rent, food, and other essentials. Meanwhile, her son requires medication and her mother-in-law, who has suffered two strokes, needs routine medical care. With no healthy guardian present, Monoara had no choice but to marry off her daughter at an early age. Her daughter, who still lives in the Bamoil Bazar house, also needs Monoara's support with her husband facing financial difficulties. Back in Port Louis, once Monoara freshens up from her night job, she goes from home to home for part-time cleaning jobs. She tries to make time to speak to her children while going from one house to the other. Every day, she works in at least three houses, where she cleans the floors and garages, wipes the furniture and



Monoara

does the laundry for local families. With this, she adds another Tk 20,000 to her monthly income. Wrapping up her cleaning job around noon, she heads back to her living quarters, shared by nine other Bangladeshi women. After preparing her food and showering, she gets a brief window to rest her eyes, before gearing up to get back to her night job. When Monoara parted with her children, Sultana was just eight years old and Yasin was five. "Due to financial struggles, I had to leave them when they needed me the most. My thoughts are always with my children and I'll continue to work to support them for as long as I'm physically able." Today, Monoara can see her children through WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger video calls. But earlier, it was not so simple to keep in touch. "When smartphones weren't available, I used to call them from button phones. Just one call would finish up a MUR 300 Mauritian recharging card... When I yearned to see them, I would contact the local computer shop in Bamoil Bazar to speak to them on Skype. But often, we couldn't speak a single word. We would just see each other and cry. "There were many moments I felt like going back to my children for good, like when my son broke his hand or when my daughter cried because other parents would accompany her friends to the SSC exam hall but she had no one." With tears in her eyes, she continued, "Even now when I get to know that my children are in a stressful situation, I feel the urge to go back to them. But then I remind and ask myself, 'Who will provide for them if I don't?'" With no family in Mauritius, Eid or special occasions are lonely affairs for Monoara. "I don't eat special foods on these days because I can't do it without my children. I sometimes feel like flying to them to cook them special food and take them out for Eid... Maybe one day I'll finally be able to." One of the houses Monoara does

her part-time cleaning job at belongs to Aukburally Leila Shaheen, a research executive. Speaking about Monoara, Shaheen spoke highly of her dedication towards her children, saying it was a representation of a mother's true love and grit. "She works through the night, then returns to work at people's houses in the morning and catches a few hours of sleep after that. She sends every penny she earns to her children in Dhaka. This level of determination is something only a mother possesses." When Shaheen asked why she does not remarry, Monoara responded with, "My children are my whole life." Speaking to The Daily Star, Monoara's daughter Sultana, said, "Every mother is special to their children, but there are some who make profound sacrifices. Since we were young, we've been witnessing our mother dedicating her life solely to us. She sacrificed her own comfort, desires and even her personal life for us."

## Won't approve unnecessary projects: PM

FROM PAGE 1

inaugurating the 61st Convention of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) at its premises in the city. "We have to look into the return from any project. How much the people will be benefited, what will be its return and whether the project will be useful for the country. We have to make these calculations," she said. She requested the engineers undertake any plan or project, considering its impact on the environment, sustainability and cost-effectiveness. "That is our aim, and it has to be done, we face drought, flood, tidal surge every moment, so we have to prepare our plan keeping that in mind." The prime minister also asked engineers not to plan any development projects that require filling large waterbodies and emphasised the importance of preserving rainwater during the monsoon season so that it can be used later in the dry season. "So, we must not fill up our water reservoirs; we have to protect those." IEB President Engineer Md Abdus Sabur, General Secretary Engr SM Monjurul Haque Monju, Dhaka Centre Chairman Engr Mohammad Hossain, and its Dhaka Centre General Secretary Engr Md Nazrul Islam, also spoke at the function.



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'Govt sitting  
on people's  
shoulders like  
Sinbad's giant'

Alleges GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The current government has grown to be like the giant in Sinbad's tale, and is sitting on the shoulders of the people, said Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader yesterday.

The opposition leader said this at a views-exchange meeting at the party chairman's Banani office in Dhaka.

Many people are struggling to support their families due to inflation, he said.

The JP chairman mentioned that the government's response to the dollar crisis has resulted in reduced imports, causing factory closures and unemployment.

He also noted the widening gap between the rich and the poor is fueling frustration among the people.

GM Quader said although the Liberation War was the greatest achievement of the nation, people of the country don't have any real freedom now.



## 7 MORE LIVES LOST IN 24 HOURS



## Dreams shattered on road

3 members of a family including father, son die as truck hits bike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajbari

Malaysian expat Kashem Sheikh, 40, from Maksudpur of Gopalganj, wanted to make his elder son Mursalin Sheikh, 8, a "hafez", a person who memorises the Quran.

As there is no suitable madrasa in his village, he planned to have Mursalin admitted to one in Faridpur.

Accompanied by his younger brother, Nazmul Sheikh, 35, Kashem embarked on a motorcycle journey with his

son towards Faridpur around 9:30am yesterday, aiming to fulfill this dream.

But tragedy struck when a brick-laden truck collided with their motorcycle near Hamirdi Bus Stand on Dhaka-Barishal highway around 11:00am, said SI Abdullah Al Baki of Bhanga Highway Police Station.

Mursalin died while being taken to Bhanga Upazila Health Complex, said the SI, adding that Kashem and Nazmul died while being taken to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib

Medical College Hospital from the health complex.

Abu Bakkar, an uncle of Mursalin, said Kashem had returned from Malaysia two months ago.

Masud Sheikh, brother of Kashem Sheikh, said, "The truck claimed the lives of my two brothers and nephew. Our family has been shattered. We demand justice."

The SI said they have seized the truck, but its driver managed to flee. Legal proceedings were underway, he added.

## Singer Pial killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Two people were killed and three injured as a bus and a microbus collided head-on in Panchadhana area of Narsingdi early yesterday.

Microbus driver Abdus Salam, 43, from Mymensingh; and Ahasan Tanvir Pial, 23, singer of musical band Odd Signature, died on the spot, said SI Md Elias Hossain, in-charge of Itakhola Highway Police Station.

The injured -- Sakibul



Islam, 19, from Habiganj; Amit Saha, 22, from Chattogram; and Ahora Akib, 24 -- were sent to Dhaka for treatment.

Police said the Dhaka-bound Hanif Paribahan bus was coming from Chattogram while the microbus was going to Sylhet from Dhaka.

Firefighters sent the bodies to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

SSC results  
today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The results of Secondary School Certificate and equivalent examinations of 2024 will be published today.

Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, along with ministry officials and board chairmen, is expected to hand over the results to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the morning.

The education minister is scheduled to publish the details of the results at a press conference at the Secretariat around 12:30pm, said MA Khair, public relations officer of education ministry.

## Lack of awareness to blame

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lack of awareness among public is the main reason behind the alarming number of road accidents across the country, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said yesterday.

"As far as I can see, the main reason for road accidents is lack of awareness," he told a programme marking the 9th general assembly of

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## Two killed as lorry ploughs into tea shop

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Two people were killed when a tanker lorry ploughed into a roadside shop at Kauga intersection in Dinajpur Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The deceased are Azhar Ali, 60, a security guard from Biswanathpur village, and Rana, 25, of Kauga village in the same upazila.

Rana was having tea at the stall at the time of the accident.

The accident took place around 5:15am when the lorry



ploughed into a tea shop after its driver lost control, leaving one dead on the spot and another injured, said Farid Hossain, in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

The injured was taken to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital where he died of his injuries.

Police arrested the driver of the lorry and his helper.



## Not AL, 'invisible power' rules the country: Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Instead of the Awami League government, an "invisible power" is ruling the country, depriving people of their democratic and economic rights, alleged BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday.

Awami League claims they are running the country. But are they really running it? They are not. An invisible power is ruling the country, and by their direction, AL government has taken away the rights of peoples," he said while addressing a rally at Nayapaltan in the capital.

He accused the current government of politicising all state institutions, including the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



## 'People are source of AL's power' Quader says it's in country's interest to keep friendship with India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The source of the Awami League's strength is the people, said AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday.

"India is our friend and we are not subservient to anyone...We want friendship from India. Because it is necessary for our interest. We have incurred losses for 21 years because of enmity with India. We don't want to go back to that situation," he added.

Quader, also the road, transport and bridges minister, came up with the remarks in response to BNP's allegation that Awami League is in power at the mercy of India.

He alleged that the bilateral relationship

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## 'We must address the rising wealth inequality'

Hossain Zillur Rahman tells book launch event

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The social and economic disparity continues to rise in the country and this has to be addressed before things get out of control, said noted economist Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday.

"In our country, there was always a culture of solidarity. But slowly, with the widening economic disparity, social disparity is also increasing rapidly," he said.

He was speaking at the launch of the book "My Golden Bengal: Views and Voices from Civil Society", a collection of introspective interviews of eminent civil society members of Bangladesh, taken by René Holenstein, a former Swiss ambassador to Bangladesh.

The University Press Ltd launched the book at its office in the capital.

Zillur, former adviser to a caretaker government, said the people close to power structure have a similar kind of thought process and movement in the society, and there is a sense of arrogance in them.

"On the other hand, those who are not close to the power structure, are helpless. It is regrettable that the elite class is least bothered about the low-income people and their struggles," he said.

New elite psychology of arrogance

is related to being in power without competition, said Zillur, adding, "We need to be alarmed about it."

Many of the elites no longer have their homes, health, and education in the country, but know the channels of being in the power structure.

"Such a situation, if continued, will frustrate the youths. In fact, many of the youths are opting to leave the country," he said.

René Holenstein, who was ambassador here from 2017 to 2020, said Bangladesh had a dream of becoming a socialist democratic country and now the question is where it is proceeding now.

In the book, he tried to break the stereotype about Bangladesh that it is a poor and natural disaster-prone country. The book published earlier in 2021 in Germany will also give foreign readers a true picture of this country.

At the event, lawmaker Arama Dutta said globally the space for not only civil societies but also political actors is shrinking, and there is a rise of fundamentalist and nationalist forces..

Current Swiss Ambassador to Bangladesh, Reto Renggli, said civil society plays a critical role in the development of Bangladesh.

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## This is what we dump in our canals!

Wastes recovered from waterbodies put on display to raise awareness



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ananya Halder works for a private firm in Gulshan 1. She came to the Dhaka North City Corporation for personal work. She was in a hurry but an exhibition in front of DNCC Nagar Bhaban caught her attention.

"I have attended so many exhibitions, but this was the first time I attended an exhibition,

where waste was exhibited," Ananya said.

DNCC yesterday kicked-off a three-day exhibition showcasing wastes accumulated in canals, drains and open spaces, in order to create public awareness. It is open to all.

A bathtub recovered by DNCC cleaners from Gulshan lake was on display among others.

The wastes also include abandoned quilts, mattresses, sofas, luggage, beds, cables, tyres,

flower tubs, rickshaw parts, tables, chairs, basins, bags and plastic utensils among others.

Speaking at the event, DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam said, "This exhibition has been organised with the waste recovered from different canals in our DNCC area. I want to show the city dwellers what kind of waste they are dumping on the canals. This is a public awareness exhibition."



## 'Lalon belongs to all'

Speakers tell Udichi rally

DU CORRESPONDENT

Singing Lalon songs, a group of singers protested yesterday at Shahbagh over the arrest of a young man for posting lyrics from a Lalon song on social media.

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi organised the protest rally. At the rally, speakers said arresting someone for sharing excerpts of Lalon's song is an insult to our culture. Lalon wanted to unite people through his songs, but fundamentalists will not understand that, the speakers added.

Sanjoy Rakhit, 40, a goldsmith from Shariatpur, was arrested on April 29.

Police booked him under Section 54 of Code of Criminal Procedure, which allows police to arrest, without a warrant, someone they suspect to be linked to an offence.

He soon secured bail from a Shariatpur court.

Amit Ranjan Dey, general secretary of Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi, and its assistant general secretary Sangita Imam spoke at the rally, among others.



Despite a footbridge just a few yards away, many people, including students, ignore it while crossing the busy Airport Road in the capital. With a lot of traffic rushing towards them, some are even signalling the vehicles to slow down and give them the chance to cross. Such endeavours pose serious risks of accidents. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

TAKING TK 9 LAKH BRIBE FOR POLICE JOB

## Suspended, cops now blame each other

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Ratan Das, 22, was an employee of a cosmetic shop in Madaripur.

During a visit to the shop in December 2022, Tanjila Akter, a constable, offered him a job in the force.

As Ratan agreed, Tanjila asked him to apply for the post of constable. Ratan stood third in the physical test but failed in the written.

But Tanjila and her colleague Shahidul Islam assured Ratan of handing him the job in exchange for bribes.

Ratan's father Robi Das told The Daily Star, "Tanjila and Shahidul first took Tk 50,000 and then Tk 8.5 lakh more in

phases. I had to sell our only land for Tk 6 lakh and took a loan of Tk 3 lakh more."

"But they did not provide any job to my son. For this, I had to submit a complaint to the SP office," Robi said.

When asked why he paid the money, Robi replied, "Tanjila and Shahidul acted like expert professionals, they visited our house three times in the name of verification, and took notes on a register. It all seemed legitimate. So, I just arranged the money, for a better future for my son."

"I have the footage of providing money," he claimed.

Upon receiving the written complaint, the Madaripur district police suspended Tanjila and

Shahidul on May 9.

Md Masud Alam, superintendent of Madaripur police, told The Daily Star yesterday, "We have suspended the constables as we found evidence of financial transactions between the constables and the complainant."

Asked about the figure, he said they were yet to get the actual figure. "The constables first assured the victim of the job in 2022, but failed. Then they assured him of getting the job done in the next exam, but failed again," he said.

"A departmental case will be filed against the constables now. Details can be known after further investigation," said the SP.

Contacted, Constable Shahidul said, "I am not involved with

the embezzlement. I have been working in the district for the last six years and was on leave during the time of the incident."

"Tanjila is my batchmate and she once took a Tk 20,000 loan from me. As I put pressure on her to return the money, she just involved my name in the crime. I am innocent," he said.

In response, Constable Tanjila said Shahidul knows everything about the crime.

"Shahidul invested a fortune on different sectors in Dubai and was involved with many other things. So he needed the money. He is now shifting the blame on my shoulder by spending all the money," she added. Tanjila also claimed that she is innocent.

## No visa

FROM PAGE 5

(Hajj Wing) of Religious Affairs Ministry Matuli Islam told The Daily Star.

The ministry on Friday wrote to the Saudi Hajj and Umrah Ministry to increase the deadline for applying for visa, he said, adding, "But we are yet to get any reply from the Saudi authorities in this regard."

"However, the positive side is the Saudi authorities have still kept their server open for receiving hajj applications from Bangladesh end."

Officials of the ministry said the Saudi authorities have already increased the deadline twice following requests from the Bangladesh government.

The Saudi Hajj and Umrah Ministry on May 7 extended the deadline for the second time for applying for visas to May 11.

Contacted, President of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB) M Shahadat Hossain Taslim said they have instructed respective private hajj agencies to complete the visa process of hajj pilgrims within yesterday's deadline.

## People are source

FROM PAGE 3

between Bangladesh and India did not improve as BNP created enmity with India. "Before 1996, the ruling parties including the BNP fostered enmity with neighbouring India, failing to realise any rights. However, upon Awami League assuming power, Sheikh Hasina has broken the wall of mistrust," said Quader while speaking as the chief guest at a peace rally at Ghaznavi Road in the

capital's Mohammadpur. Referring to the various agreements made with India, Quader said, "It was Sheikh Hasina who brought the Ganga water. Who made the water distribution treaty? Who made the agreement on the border problem? Sheikh Hasina and prime minister of India."

He also criticised BNP leader Gayeshwar Chandra Roy for labelling AL as an Indian agent.

"Where have you (Gayeshwar) been for so long? Where did you come from? Where have you been hiding? In India?" questioned Quader.

He said such labels were previously given to AL by Ayub Khan and Yahya.

## Not AL

FROM PAGE 3

police, law enforcers, administration and judicial system.

Addressing AL, he said, "The movement to restore democracy cannot be stopped by repression, enforced disappearances, killings and murders."

"Bangladesh became independent 53 years ago. But the people have not become independent. They are deprived of voting rights. Since 2008, they have not been able to vote impartially," Fakhru also said.

Fakhru said people are being denied both democratic and economic rights as commodity prices keep soaring amid economic mismanagement.

"When people go to markets, they cannot buy anything -- rice, lentils, onions, and garlic. Prices of almost every daily essential are increasing. Electricity, gas, train and bus fares are rising," he said.

"Ask rickshaw-pullers how they are running families. They eat one meal, not two. Even middle-class families changed their food menus," he added.

Fakhru also alleged that the government was favouring bank loan defaulters through new rules after "finishing the looting of banks".



Dignitaries at the launch of "My Golden Bengal: Views and Voices from Civil Society", a collection of introspective interviews of eminent civil society members of Bangladesh.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Lack of awareness to blame

FROM PAGE 3

Nirapad Sarak Chai (Nischa) at Shilpakala Academy auditorium in the capital.

The minister identified various key reasons for road accidents, including using mobile phones while driving, over-speeding, lack of overhead bridges, violations of traffic laws, and negligence of traffic police.

Unauthorised vehicles and reckless driving are other major causes, he said.

"Road accidents are a global phenomenon resulting in deaths and injuries," he said, adding, "We are working to lower the number of such accidents in our country."

He said the authorities want to ensure that only skilled drivers operate vehicles.

Citing recent police data, he said, "Most of the road accidents in last 15 days were related to unfit vehicles. We

are keeping an eye on it."

He also shared his personal experience of being involved in a road crash after the Liberation War. "I had an accident too. After the war, I had hopes. But the road accident shattered all my hopes. Allah closed one path and opened the way to enter politics for me," he said.

Speaking at the event, Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary ABM Aminul Ullah Nuri said daily road crash deaths highlight the urgent need for united public awareness efforts.

"People died due to Corona. We become cautious during the dengue season. But everyday people are dying in road accidents," he said.

He said all, not just the police, need to be proactive in raising awareness about road safety and rules.

Nuri said various campaigns were undertaken to raise awareness, but "now we have to stand on the road and make people aware".

Nischa Chairman Ilias Kanchan said if the goal of reducing the number of road crashes is not achieved, they will have to change their strategy for the awareness drive.

## Former UP

FROM PAGE 5

10:30pm, they said.

As the news spread, his supporters attacked a rival group, leaving two injured. One of them sustained a bullet wound, they said.

Kanchan Kumar Ray, officer-in-charge of Lohagara Police Station, said they took the two injured into custody as suspects in the murder of the UP chairman.

## Cops foil

FROM PAGE 5

At one stage, the law enforcers removed them from the road and detained several protesters.

Shariful Hasan, coordinator of the movement, claimed that police detained 15-20 demonstrators from the spot.

Mostazirur Rahman, in-charge of Shahbag Police Station, did not comment about the detention.

Sources at the police station said police took 13 protesters to the police station.

Recently, the Ministry of Education proposed increasing the age ceiling for entering government service from 30 to 35 years. Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury recently forwarded a letter to the Ministry of Public Administration outlining the proposal.

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**PRAYER TIMING**  
MAY 12

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
4:10	12:45	5:00	6:36	8:00	
JAMAAT	4:45	1:15	5:15	6:40	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



## Lightning strikes claim five lives

STAR REPORT

Five people were killed and seven others injured in lightning strikes in three districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondent and a news agency.

In Bagerhat, two people were killed and six injured by lightning strike in the Sarankhola area, reports our local correspondent.

The deceased are day laborers Sheikh Milon, 40, and Mustafa, 55.

AHM Kamruzzaman Khan, officer-in-charge of Sarankhola Police Station, said the incident occurred at Bandakata canal around 10:30am.

The two were on a trawler on the canal, and the injured were in an adjacent shop when the incident happened, he said.

According to UNB, at least three people died from lightning strikes in Chuadanga and Cumilla.

In Chuadanga, two farmers died, and another was injured after lightning struck them in separate places of Damurhuda and Darshana upazilas.

The deceased are Ahmed Mallik, 65, from Patachhora village in Damurhuda; and Rubel, 28, from Jhajri village in Darshana.

Mallik was working in the field around 9:00am. When a thunderstorm started, he got injured by lightning on his way home from the field.

In Cumilla, a 13-year-old boy died after a lightning struck him while he was playing football in a field near his house in Muradnagar upazila around 9:30am.

TK 1.24CR KODALIA-TEZROL ROAD WORK

## The asphalt didn't even last 10 days!



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

It was only around 10 days that the Kodalía-Tezrol road in Jashore Sadar upazila was reopened after development work.

And yet, the bitumen cover is coming off!

Aggrieved local residents have submitted a complaint to the concerned department, bringing allegations of poor quality of road work and use of sub-standard materials.

However, the contractor claimed there was no irregularity in the road construction work.

The 1.24-kilometre stretch of

the road was recently renovated between Kodalía Bazar and Tezrol areas of Lebutala union under the Important Rural Infrastructure Development Project-3 (IRIDP-3) at a cost of Tk 1.24 crore.

Noor Islam, a contractor from Barandipara of Jashore town, got the contract for the project. Later, Mehedi Hasan Ramun, another contractor from Khajura area of Sadar upazila, took over the work and completed it recently.

Barely 10 days after the road was opened to vehicles, the pitch at different places on the road has been coming off.

The locals even showed

journalists that the asphalt could be pulled off even by hand.

"If this is what happens just after 10 days of completing road work, imagine what will be the road's condition after the monsoon?" said Al Amin, an easy-bike driver.

"Even as we walk, the pitch is coming off and sticking to our shoe soles," said Solaiman Hossain, a resident of Kodalía village.

Local residents have sent a written complaint to the deputy commissioner of Jashore and the Local Government Engineering Department office of the district in this regard, said Zakir Hossain,

a local union parishad member.

Since the beginning of the road work, the contractor had been using low-quality bricks, clay, pebbles and bitumen, he alleged.

Contacted, Mehedi Hasan Ramun denied the allegations.

"No sub-standard materials were used. LGED assistant engineer Azizul Haque and sub-assistant engineer MA Raihan supervised the work," he claimed.

Azizul Haque said they will investigate the matter and action will be taken if the allegations are found to be true.

MA Raihan declined to comment over phone.

## No visa for 24,000 pilgrims yet

Application deadline ends, govt requests for another extension

RASHIDUL HASAN

Despite the deadline for visa application ending yesterday, around 24,000 intended pilgrims registered under private hajj management are yet to get visas.

Top officials of religious affairs ministry said despite repeated warnings, private hajj agencies are dilly-dallying in ensuring visas for pilgrims.

As of yesterday, the visa process of around 60,000 hajj pilgrims has been completed.

This year, 85,257 Bangladeshis are scheduled to go to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj, of which, 42,629 will be carried by Biman, while two Saudi airlines will carry the rest.

Of the total hajj pilgrims, 80,838 are scheduled to perform hajj under private management and the rest under government management.

"If any intended hajj pilgrims fail to get visa due to negligence of private agencies, they will have to be held accountable for this," Additional Secretary

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## AGE LIMIT FOR GOVT JOB Cops foil students' demo at Shahbagh

DU CORRESPONDENT

Police foiled a demonstration by students and job seekers at Shahbagh intersection in Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

The protesters staged the demonstration demanding that the government increase the age limit to apply for government jobs to 35 years from the existing 30.

Around 10:30am, 50 to 60 job seekers started the programme in front of the Raju sculpture on the Dhaka University campus.

Later, they marched towards the Shahbagh intersection around 3:30pm.

Witnesses said when the agitating students blocked the road at Shahbagh intersection around 3:45pm and stopped the moving vehicles to press home their demand, police started dispersing them.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8



Palm trees have started to bear fruit in Barishal and life has become busier for Md Shamim, 45. Every day, he goes from house to house and climbs up the trees to collect the fruit. He pays Tk 1,000-1,200 to owners for the fruits in each tree. Shamim then sells those in the city for Tk 15-20 per piece. The photo was taken in Korapur area recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Former UP chairman shot dead in Narail

STAR REPORT

A former Union Parishad chairman was shot dead in Narail's Lohagara upazila on Friday night.

The deceased is Sikder Mostafa Kamal, a two-time chairman of Mallikpur Union Parishad.

Mostafa Kamal, also a leader of the upazila unit of Awami League, came under attack around 7:30pm while returning home from Lohagara Bazar on a motorcycle.

According to police and locals, several miscreants stopped his motorcycle near the Kundashi area and shot him before fleeing.

With bullet wounds in his chest, he was taken to Lohagara Upazila Health Complex. He died on the way to Dhaka around

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## Lichi cultivation a success in Pirojpur

KM HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

In the recent years, many farmers in Pirojpur district switched from paddy cultivation to growing different varieties of seasonal fruits.

The farmers said they found it hard to retain their production costs in paddy cultivation whereas fruit cultivation has been a successful initiative to many of them.

"We can cultivate paddy only a year as our lands are very low lying and remain inundated for most of the time of the year. As such, paddy cultivation was not beneficial for us. So, many farmers are now cultivating different seasonal fruits including jujube, mango, guava



upazila, said, "I began lichi cultivation first in our area. Later on, many others followed me to grow the delicious fruit. At present, I am waiting to harvest lichi from around 500 trees in my orchard."

Mentioning that the recent hot spell was a concern to the growers in the area, Hansapati said rainfall ahead of the harvest will help the fruit mature well and enhance yield.

Md Khalid Hossain Sajal, chairman of Shakhrikathi union in the upazila, said cultivation of fruits including lichi has been playing an important role in the local economy.

After meeting local demand, farmers can transport lichi to other areas of the country, he added.

Pankaj Kumer Boral, sub-assistant agriculture officer in Nazirpur, said this year, lichi has been cultivated in 55 hectares of land in Pirojpur, and a good yield is expected.

and lichi," said Manmatho and Mujaffarpuri and China-3 varieties of lichi successfully.

"Lichi is a highly valued and popular fruit, so we don't face any trouble to sell our harvest to buyers from different areas profitably," Manmatho added.

Hansapati Mistry from Tarabuniya village under the

in particular, lichi cultivation has become quite popular among growers in Pirojpur. Many are cultivating

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## ROCK N' RHYTHM 4 Mired in chaos, overcome with emotion

PHOTOS: SHAHBAZ NAHIAN, THABIT AL BASHAR, AND KHALAD BIN WALID

**On a day when the rain gods smiled favourably upon the hopes of about 10 thousand people, barricades were broken, a stampede nearly ensued, and some logistical issues nearly ruined the experience for those holding general tickets at "Rock N' Rhythm 4.0" in the capital's International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB). However, for five men who have dedicated their entire lives to music, none of this could dampen the emotional reunion of Black's original lineup.**

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Organised by Adventor Communications, this was a dream concert on paper for music lovers: Black's original lineup performing after two decades, the return of the prodigal Oni Hasan to Bangladesh after a long hiatus, Cryptic Fate's consistently impressive performance, Recall's return, Popeye and Farooque Bhai jamming with a local audience, and Old School enchanting everyone with their unique set.

As someone accustomed to media passes and backstage entry, it is easy to ignore the hassles faced by those with general passes. However, upon entering, it was immediately obvious that the audience with general passes got the short end of the stick. The protruding sound booth, smack dab in the middle of the Expo Zone, blocked the view for those standing in the middle of the field.

While I did not encounter any sound issues in the general section, the lack of a proper monitor meant that people not blessed with height, i.e., myself, would have a difficult time following the action from that far off. Later, during the concert, hooliganism ran rampant as many tackled the barricades to gain entry to the venue without tickets, and it is perhaps a matter of luck that no fatal incidents occurred during the entire show.

These issues are not specific, however, to Adventor Communications, as ICCB is infamous for being targeted by various hooligan groups during large concerts, and what can be larger than the reunion of Bangladesh's most renowned rock bands? Organisers need to be very careful when planning the reunion of a

fan-favourite act, since emotions are involved and some would resort to anything to catch a glimpse.

Oni Hasan set the stage for the headliners with his own amazing outing, featuring an all-star vocal crew of Jamshed Chowdhury and Mizan Rahman. Despite both vocalists being powerhouses in their own right, nobody could outshine Oni on this night. The former Vibe and Warfaze guitarist exuded pure joy as he played each note flawlessly, paying tribute to both his former bands. The

Tony, and the five members standing together at a major concert, a sight many thought would not be possible.

The concert comes 19 years after a fateful accident that took the life of their sound engineer Ahmed Chowdhury Mobin and crippled their morale. As a fan, I am admittedly ecstatic and slightly



highlight of his performance was Mizan and him giving a tribute to the late great Ayub Bachchu with a guitar chorus of *Shei Tumi*, seamlessly transitioning into Warfaze's epic *Purnota*.

Black sent their current lineup to open for the OG, and things went as expected. While the current lineup is insanely talented, this night was not for them, and the audience let it be known with a lukewarm reception. As soon as Tahsan Khan, Jon Kabir, Mahmudul Kabir Meraz, Khademul Jahan, and Mehmood Afridi Tony hit the stage, it was a different ball game.

The crowd devoured every single song they performed, including not only crowd favourites like *Aamra*, *Ekhono*, *Blues n' Roud*, *Obhiman*, and *Amar Prithibi*, but also underrated ones that are deeply personal to the members.

Iconic moments included Jon and Tahsan hugging in the middle of the stage, Jon approaching the drums to shake hands with

perhaps because of sheer nostalgia. However, the truth is, this amalgamation should have been a solo concert from the very start. The band is planning a full-scale solo concert with this lineup, and I would much rather have my first taste of original Black in that setting.

Should the organisers have taken more time to prepare for this concert with better logistics and security? Could they have done a better job with logistics? With Sun Silk being the main sponsor for the programme, it is safe to assume that funding could not have been an issue. As someone who has attended hundreds of concerts and organised some myself, I can say that regardless of the effort one puts in, on the day of the event itself, lots can go horribly wrong.

Unfortunately, in this case, it did, only to be saved by the fact that Bangladeshi rock royalty played their hearts out in arguably the performance of a lifetime.

The author is the Editor of Arts & Entertainment at The Daily Star.

## 'Moyurakkhi' confirms Eid release date with second poster



The second poster for director Rashid Polash's film *Moyurakkhi* has been released, featuring Sudip Biswas Deep, and Eamin Haque Bobby. With this poster, the makers have officially revealed their plan to release the movie this Eid-ul-Azha.

The poster depicts the figure of two protagonists, Deep and Bobby, shrouded in lush greenery, with a plane in the background. At the end of the poster, the detailed title *Moyurakkhi: The Story of a Deceitful Bird* is curiously printed.

Rashid Polash expressed confidence to The Daily Star stating that amidst the flurry of Eid releases, audiences will still choose to watch his film. "I am not daunted by the fierce competition this Eid," he added.

"Each poster for my directed movies symbolises a theme. Inspired by true events, my upcoming film delves into the complexities of relationships in showbiz, promising audiences a distinctive cinematic journey," shared the director.

Written by Golam Rabbani, the film also features Sadia Mahi, Sumit Sengupta, Farzana Chobi, and others.

## Shakib Khan and Mimi Chakraborty sizzle in official 'Toofan' poster

Last week, Raihan Rafi stirred up a storm on social media with the release of the first teaser for the Shakib Khan starrer *Toofan*. Shakib's intense portrayal as a gangster and his powerful dialogue delivery captured the attention of netizens.

On Saturday (May 11), the director unveiled an official poster of *Toofan*, showcasing Shakib Khan and Mimi Chakraborty in a sizzlingly captivating look.

On the poster, Shakib Khan maintains a nonchalant expression, clad in a stylish grey suit paired with a white shirt. Meanwhile, Mimi Chakraborty exudes glamour in a deep purple sequined dress, emanating a scintillating presence. Their first look together hints that audiences will admire the chemistry of this new on-screen pair.

This Raihan Rafi directorial film is set to release on Eid-ul-Azha. It features Masooma Nabila, Misha Swadagar, Jisshu Sengupta, and more.

# 'What my mother means to me'



PHOTOS: COLLECTED  
Ferdous with his mother (L) and his mother-in-law (R).



Bidya Sinha Mim and her mother



Azmeri Haque Badhan and her mother



Hridi Huq and her mother Lucky Enam.

**SHAH ALAM SHAZU**  
Celebrities who have reached the pinnacle of success often credit their mothers for their care, love, and sacrifice. The unwavering support and encouragement from their mothers motivated them to pursue their dreams in showbiz, ultimately enamouring audiences' hearts with their heartfelt performances.

**I have two mothers: Ferdous**  
Renowned actor and Member of Parliament (MP) Ferdous Ahmed shares a profound bond with his mother, whom he holds in high regard.

"I am fortunate to experience my mother's love every moment. Her prayers and unwavering care have been pivotal in my

life. The love and affection of a mother are invaluable—it's the greatest treasure in life," remarked the actor.

For Ferdous, both his mother and mother-in-law have played pivotal roles in his life.

"I am truly fortunate to have two mothers in my life—one who gave birth to me and another who has helped me grow as an individual after my marriage. Words fall short when I try to express their contributions to my life."

**She means everything to me: Bidya Sinha Mim**

Bidya Sinha Mim's close bond with her mother is evident through their sweet and strong connection. She has consistently highlighted her mother's significant role in her showbiz career, and how she was her

biggest supporter.

As she spoke about her mother she had to mention that her mother played a huge role in her career. "Even though my father supported me, *maa* played a major role in building up my career alongside making me who I am today. My mother is everything to me."

The actress shared that whenever she had shoots, she was accompanied by her mother and that she still takes care of everything that Mim would need. "She taught me to remain positive and make my dream come true. She inspired me a lot during the entire journey," the actress added.

**My mother gave me everything: Azmeri Haque Badhan**

Azmeri Haque Badhan, who herself fought a brave battle to win full guardianship of her

daughter, spoke highly of her mother who inspired her to dream big.

"Like all mothers out there, my mom also raised me with love and support. I have received everything I could want from my mother. I feel truly blessed to have been brought up with love and respect by my parents," said the actress.

Badhan feels that her mother now plays an even bigger role in her life as she takes care of her child.

"If it weren't for my mother's support, I wouldn't have been able to pursue my career. My mother has done a tremendous amount for me. Now, she is doing everything she can for my daughter. No child can fully articulate the contributions of their mother in words,"

said Badhan.

**I strive to be like her: Hridi Huq**

Hridi Huq's mother is Lucky Enam, an Ekushey Padak-winning actress, who, along with her father Enamul Haque, played a significant role in her pursuit of acting.

"Let me just say, my mother is a remarkable person—a talented artiste and an exceptional mother. She possesses numerous qualities that I admire greatly. I can never match up to her."

"My mother balances her time between family and work commitments. She excels in both roles, which is why I believe she's the best mother and incomparable to anyone else. I strive to emulate her in every way. It's truly heartwarming to witness the love and respect people have for my mother," added the actress.



## PANDEMIC TALKS

## No deal as deadline passes

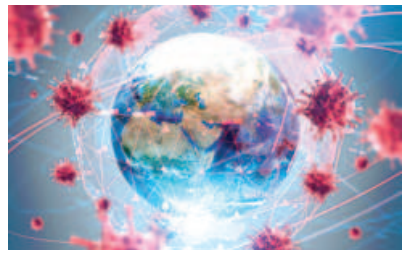
AFP, Geneva

Countries trying to strike a landmark global agreement on handling future pandemics decided to keep negotiating for another fortnight after their deadline passed on Friday.

Scarred by the devastation caused by Covid-19 – which killed millions, shredded economies and crippled health systems – the World Health Organization's 194 member states have spent two years trying to hammer out binding commitments on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

The process was aimed at getting a deal finalised by the WHO's annual assembly which opens on May 27.

A final talks session in March got nowhere near consensus, so an additional fortnight of talks was crammed in. However, despite progress on several fronts, the talks



broke up on Friday without sealing a deal.

Despite a showing desire for commitments aimed at preventing another Covid-style disaster, big differences have emerged between country blocs on how to achieve them.

The talks were held behind closed doors at the WHO headquarters in Geneva.

The main disputes revolve around access and equity: access to pathogens detected within countries and to pandemic-fighting products such as vaccines produced from that knowledge; and equitable distribution of counter-pandemic tests, treatments and jabs, along with the means to produce them.



Palestinian boys injured in an Israeli air attack react in the yard of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on May 11, 2024.

PHOTO: AFP

## Afghan floods kill over 300

Many remain missing; thousands of houses destroyed

AFP, Laqay

More than 300 people were killed in flash floods that ripped through multiple Afghan provinces, the World Food Programme said yesterday, as authorities declared a state of emergency and rushed to rescue the injured.

Heavy rains on Friday sent roaring rivers of water and mud crashing through villages and across agricultural land in several provinces.

Survivors yesterday picked through muddy, debris littered streets and damaged buildings, an AFP journalist saw, as authorities and non-governmental groups deployed rescue workers and aid, warning that some areas had been cut off by the flooding.

Northern Baghlan province was one of the hardest hit, with more than 300 people killed there alone, and thousands of houses destroyed or damaged, according to WFP.

"On current information: in Baghlan province there are 311 fatalities, 2,011 houses destroyed and 2,800 houses damaged," Rana Deraz, a communications officer for the UN agency in Afghanistan, told AFP.

There were disparities between the death tolls provided by the government and humanitarian agencies.

The UN migration agency, the International Organization for Migration, said there were 218 deaths in Baghlan.

Abdul Mateen Qani, spokesman for the interior ministry, told AFP that 131 people had been killed in Baghlan, but that the government toll could rise.

"Many people are still missing," he said. Another 20 people were reported dead in northern Takhar province and two in neighbouring Badakhshan, he added.

Government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said, "Hundreds of our fellow citizens have succumbed to these calamitous floods", in a statement posted to X earlier yesterday.

"Moreover, the deluge has wrought extensive devastation upon residential properties, resulting in significant financial losses," he added.

Rains on Friday caused heavy damage in Baghlan, Takhar and Badakhshan, as well as western Ghor and Herat provinces, officials said, in a country wracked by poverty and heavily dependent on agriculture.

Emergency personnel were rushing to rescue injured and stranded people, according to the defence ministry.

The air force said it had started evacuation operations as the weather cleared yesterday, adding that more than a hundred injured people had been transferred to hospital, without specifying from which provinces.

Since mid-April, flash flooding and other floods had left about 100 people dead in 10 of Afghanistan's provinces, with no region entirely spared, according to authorities.

## Iraq calls for UN mission's departure

AFP, United Nations

The government of Iraq has asked the UN to end its decades-long political mission to the country by 2025, stating that the force is no longer necessary, according to a letter seen by AFP Friday.

In the document sent to the Security Council, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani described what he said were "positive developments and the achievements" by successive Iraqi governments as well as fulfillment of the UN mission's mandate.

The United Nations Assistance

Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in existence since 2003, has overcome "great and varied challenges," he said, concluding that "the grounds for having a political mission in Iraq" no longer exist.

Calling for an end date of December 31, 2025, al-Sudani specified that the mission in the meantime should focus only on issues pertaining to "economic reform, service provision, sustainable development, climate change and other development sectors."

UNAMI was established in 2003 by a UN Security Council resolution at

the request of the Iraqi government before being expanded four years later. It is renewed every year.

The mission also advises the government on political dialogue and reconciliation, as well as helping with elections and security sector reform.

The Security Council next week will debate renewal of the mission since the current mandate terminates at the end of the month.

During the mission's last renewal in May 2023, the Council asked the secretary-general to launch a strategic review, which was overseen by German diplomat Volker Perthes.

## City dwellers suffer after morning rain

FROM PAGE 12

Meteorological Department (BMD) told The Daily Star yesterday.

Many low-lying areas in the capital, including Mirpur, Mouchak, Dhanmondi 27, Azimpur, New Market, Moghbazar, Modhubagh, Badda, Rampura, and DIT project area, were submerged, causing immense suffering to its residents.

Recounting her morning ordeal, Mirpur resident Farjana Jahan said, "I stepped out this morning to go to work, only to find the street in front of my house completely flooded. I had to wait 30 minutes before I could find

also transport, which made me late for work."

Similarly, other office-goers and school students struggled to find public transport in the flooded Mirpur-10 area.

Nazmul Islam, a private company employee, said it felt like he was commuting by waterway while sharing his experience of riding a rickshaw from Kalabagan to Farmgate through knee-deep water on Green Road.

He added that the situation was even worse for others who had to wade across the murky waters to reach their destinations.

Residents of Dhanmondi-6

also experienced similar waterlogging in their area.

Alimur Rahman, a resident of Bangshal area, said, "We are so used to waterlogging, we know it's going to happen whenever it rains."

Speaking to this newspaper, DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam said, "The issue of severe waterlogging after heavy rain has been largely addressed. In the past, major roads would be flooded for days. This is no longer the case. However, brief waterlogging persists in some areas due to clogged drains."

Contacted, DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said, "Since Dhaka is an

unplanned city, it continues to battle the persistent waterlogging issue, but we've managed to achieve a 20 percent reduction in its prevalence."

A regular Met office bulletin yesterday said rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind are likely to occur at many places over Chattogram division; at a few places over Dhaka, Khulna, Barishal, and Sylhet divisions; and at one or two places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, and Mymensingh divisions with hails at isolated places in the next three days.

## Withdrawals put BASIC Bank

FROM PAGE 12

Jamuna Fertilizer Company Limited, and Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company deposit money with the bank, officials say.

The bank can no longer borrow from the central bank as it lacks the required securities, reads the letter.

If the situation persists, there is a risk that the bank will fail to give money to the depositors, in which case, the clients will lose confidence in the bank.

BASIC's employees even fear that they may not get paid because of the crisis, adds the letter signed by Anisur Rahman, the managing director.

Anisur neither responded to text messages nor answered his phone as this correspondent tried to reach him.

Abul Hashem, the chairman, refused to make comments on the matter.

After the merger decision was made public, Abu Md Molazzal, the

deputy managing director, said several government institutions and other entities were withdrawing their funds. The bank on April 17 wrote to the finance ministry seeking advice on how to cope with the situation.

The merger was decided at a meeting between the central bank governor and the managing directors and the chairman of City Bank.

The central bank claimed the merger was voluntary, but BASIC Bank

managers said the decision was forced.

BASIC was once a reputed state-run bank. In 2014, an investigation found the involvement of its chairman Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu in the embezzlement of Tk 4,500 crore. The bank's condition has been going downhill since.

As of December 2023, the bank's bad loans stood at Tk 8,204 crore, accounting for 64 percent of its total loans disbursed.

## Family still awaits closure

FROM PAGE 12

his way to work. His sister was with him at the time.

Banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) claimed responsibility for the killing.

The next day, Ananta's brother Ratneswar Das filed a murder case with Airport Police Station accusing unnamed individuals.

On October 18 2016, Arman Ali, an inspector of the Criminal Investigation

Department pressed charges. As the court ordered a reinvestigation, the CID in May 2017 filed a supplementary charge sheet.

It pressed charges against Shafiqur Rahman Farabi, Mannan Yahya who goes by the alias Mannan Raht, Abul Khaer Rashid Ahmed, Abul Hossain, Harunur Rashid, and Faisal Ahmed.

Of them, only Yahya confessed to killing Ananta.

He died on November 2, 2017, after falling ill at Dhaka Central Jail.

In 2022, Judge Nurul Amin Biplol sentenced Khaer, Hossain, Harunur and Faisal to death and acquitted Farabi. Only Khaer is in jail now.

Prosecutor Muminur Rahman Titu said, "After the verdict, we appealed against Farabi's acquittal. The appeal and death reference are pending with the Supreme

Court."

Debasish Debu, a spokesperson of Ganajagan Mancha in Sylhet, said, "The killing of Ananta was a sign of the rise of militants in Bangladesh. The government and the Supreme Court should prioritise the case to set an example of the state's stand against militancy."

Ananta's friends will hold a vigil at 11:00am today at the place where he was killed.

## 'Govt meddling in airlines monitoring'

FROM PAGE 1

that "oversight of operators, especially Biman, is hindered by government involvement and various exemptions".

"While there are gaps, the first step is to recognise them, accept them, and then change them for the better," Captain Gabriele Ascenzo, an airlines safety expert from ICAO, said in a letter to the CAAB chairman.

ICAO flagged an engine-exceedance incident on a Biman flight on February 1, 2022, as an "operational anomaly of Biman and a safety concern". In that incident, a pilot put the aircraft engines on emergency mode and burned those.

Flight BG601 was flying from Dhaka to Sylhet with

71 passengers, and the pilot in command was Capt Ali Rubyat Chowdhury.

"Flight data capture did not appear post flight. It may have been tampered with and/or erased," noted ICAO.

"Repairing the engines cost Biman Tk 16.5 crore since the damage of the engines was solely the pilots' fault."

"The above indicates a systemic failure of the management, flight operations, flight safety and the training department," added ICAO.

Though the ICAO pointed out that the engine exceedance event was the pilots' fault and the flight data recorder (FDR) data was either erased or tampered with, the civil aviation ministry

submitted a report to the High Court on March 12 denying that there was a cover-up.

The High Court in August last year had ordered the ministry to launch an investigation into the anomalies in Biman.

The ministry report, prepared on orders from the court, claimed that the pilots did not realise that the plane's engines had gone into emergency mode. This was in a direct contradiction to the ICAO's findings.

The aviation watchdog also flagged what it termed anomalies in recruitment. "The current shortage of pilots stems from the non-transparent recruitment policy and the present expansion to new destinations with a deficit

of 60 flight crew members as per the rostering process," it said.

The ICAO mentioned the recruitment of 14 pilots in 2022 as "wasted resources", where the chief of the training department was given the responsibility to recruit pilots despite his wife being a candidate.

It quoted the chief of planning and scheduling, Capt Ishiaque Hossain, as saying, "We could not respect the flight duty limitations as Biman started four new destinations with the same number of pilots."

The ICAO found that there are insufficient qualified flight operation inspectors. CAAB has a total of seven such inspectors.

There is also a lack of monitoring and oversight

of designated examiners, it added.

Also, the ICAO inspection cited the recruitment anomalies in their report, but Biman Bangladesh Airlines submitted a report to the HC on May 8 claiming that they had done everything by the book.

The ICAO audit will be carried out in September. Bangladesh had shown considerable progress in the last ICAO audit of 2017.

"We hope the hard work undertaken by the [ICAO] inspectorate is appreciated at the highest levels of the government. This should be recognised as the means to bring the aviation industry in Bangladesh back to the previous high standards [...]," said Captain Gabriele in the ICAO report.

## Call for Proposals (CfP)

The Nagorikata Civic Engagement Fund (CEF) invites project proposals from Civil Society Organisations registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau and/or the Department of Social Services. However, we strongly encourage registered CSOs to form partnerships or coalitions with grassroots organisations for the implementation of the projects that are presented in their proposals. Switzerland, USAID and Global Affairs Canada, in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh have launched the CEF to empower all Bangladeshis, particularly women, girls, and marginalised people, by amplifying their voices and ensuring their rights to equality, freedom of expression, involvement in decision-making, and access to information. The CEF promotes gender equality aligned to SDG 5, and peace, justice and stronger institutions aligned to SDG 16.

**CfP Documents:** The Call for Proposals (CfP) documents are available for download at the following link. [<https://rb.gov/muk238>]

**Submission Deadline:** The deadline for the submission of proposals is **June 27, 2024, by 5:00 PM** (Bangladesh time)





## The air is so bad it is killing us

Govt can reduce the toxicity through decisive steps

Air pollution has been a major source of ill health for Dhaka's dwellers for many years, with its air ranked as one of the worst globally more times than perhaps we can count. Now a study, as per a report by this paper, has found that the concentration of carcinogenic elements such as arsenic, lead and cadmium in Dhaka's air is almost double the limit set by the World Health Organization (WHO). There are also high concentrations of cancer-causing cobalt there. This is quite frightening, to say the least.

The WHO estimates that by 2050 the number of cancer patients may more than double. Lung cancer is one of the most common forms of the disease in the country, and we can understand from the above study that Dhaka's toxic air has been a major contributing factor behind this. These carcinogenic elements come from lead-acid battery and e-waste recycling industries, coal-fired brick kilns, as well as high-emitting unfit vehicles. The blood lead levels in children particularly are very high, with around 35 million children in Bangladesh being affected. We can assume that for the children in Dhaka and other areas where industrial processes are concentrated and traffic is heavy, the health risks will be quite high.

We have seen the air quality in Dhaka and other busy hubs deteriorate in front of our own eyes. This paper, for example, has constantly reported on industries and vehicle emissions that have contributed to this disastrous situation. But what has the government done to prevent it? Why do we still see so many unfit vehicles spewing out black smoke into the faces of adults and children while they navigate the horrific traffic? Why do we still have so many brick kilns near schools and residential settlements? Why are there so many battery-operated three-wheelers everywhere, despite the obvious threats they pose?

When contacted, the concerned minister said they would look into the findings of the report. It is surprising that so little has been done in terms of enforcing environmental laws to stop the air from being so polluted in the first place. The government should realise that this is an emergency situation, and that drastic steps have to be taken to address it. This includes closing environmentally harmful brick kilns, especially those operating near residential areas and schools, managing e-waste safely, reducing the number of battery-operated three-wheelers, and properly enforcing fitness and traffic laws for all vehicles.

In a densely populated city such as Dhaka, these steps are challenging but not impossible to implement. It requires the relevant government agencies to get serious about protecting the air in the first place. With the lives of both adults and children at stake because of its toxic air, they must do everything necessary to protect them.

## A symbolic gesture of support for Palestine

The US must shed its pro-Israel bias to welcome peace

As the world tries to process the continued horrors and injustices facing the Palestinians, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on Friday voted overwhelmingly to grant them additional rights in the global body and backed their drive for full membership. We commend UNGA members for their effort. However, it's important to remember that this is only a symbolic gesture as the UNGA cannot enforce membership decisions. Therefore, it has suggested that the UN Security Council (UNSC), which has the authority in this regard, considers the matter "favourably".

Unfortunately, this is where the celebration ends. For as long as the United States—one of five veto-holding members on the Security Council and Israel's closest ally—resists Palestine's admittance as a state, any resolution will remain incomplete. On Friday, 143 UNGA members voted in favour of the resolution, but they remain powerless against the US, which recently vetoed another Palestinian bid for full membership. This is nothing new. The US has always turned down pro-Palestine proposals at UNSC, and this "diplomatic doom loop," as stated by an analyst, has been going on for a long time.

Against this backdrop, the latest UNGA vote should be seen more as a gesture of support for the Palestinians' quest for peace and self-determination amid a devastating war by Israel. The global outpouring of support and mass protests in favour of Palestine all point to the fact that nations are no longer buying Israel's narrative. "We want peace, we want freedom," Palestinian UN Ambassador Riyad Mansour told the General Assembly before the vote. Under the founding UN Charter, membership is open to "peace-loving states." It's ironic that a number of full members are facilitating wars, with Israel committing war crimes and genocide, and yet little is being done to make them accountable.

More than 34,000 have been killed during Israel's brutal seven-month-long war on Gaza. It has recently started its ground invasion in Rafah, in another potentially bloody campaign. Unless the US government acknowledges that it is actively facilitating this genocide, changes its stance, and stops vetoing pro-Palestine resolutions, Palestinians may see no peace. We hope that the increasing support across the globe—with several European countries planning to recognise a Palestinian state—forces the superpower to do just that, before Israel wipes out any semblance of this long-persecuted community.

New Message

To: \_\_\_\_\_  
Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Facing issues in your area? Want your opinions about events around you to be published in *The Daily Star*? Send us a short letter with your name and city!

Write to us: [letters@thedailystar.net](mailto:letters@thedailystar.net)

# Without effective measures, there is no saving the poor



Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha is a professor at the department of economics at the University of Dhaka. She is also a research director at SANEM.

SAYEMA HAQUE BIDISHA

For the last couple of years, the rate of inflation projected by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has hovered within the range between 8.5 to 9.5 percent. This soaring inflation has further accentuated the agony of people following the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had serious negative implications on the livelihoods of people, thereby affecting the consistent poverty reduction effort of the government.

To accommodate inflationary pressure, households are reducing expenditure on food and non-food items, changing their patterns of food consumption, acquiring second jobs, drawing from their savings, and borrowing from formal and informal sources, among other emergency measures. It is therefore not surprising that inflationary pressure may push some "vulnerable" households below the poverty line.

In this context, the recent Macro Poverty Outlook of the World Bank estimated that between fiscal year 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, price hikes may have pushed as many as five lakh Bangladeshis into extreme poverty, defined as sustenance on less than \$2.15 a day (purchasing power adjusted), also known as the international poverty line. It was also projected that 8.4 lakh people will become moderately poor, living on less than \$3.65 a day (purchasing power adjusted). According to the World Bank, both inflation and foreign exchange crises, on one hand, will contain private demand and on the other hand, will constrain private investment and job creation. Both are expected to put pressure on low-income people, leading to a higher rate of poverty.

A close analysis of the poverty statistics of the BBS shows a consistent reduction in poverty over the years with a fall in upper poverty

rate from 24.3 percent in 2016 (lower poverty rate 12.9 percent) to 18.7 percent in 2022 (lower poverty rate 5.6 percent), despite the effect of the pandemic. Besides, the fall in the rural poverty rate was a bit steeper from 26.4 percent to 20.5 percent for the upper poverty line in comparison to a moderate decline in the urban poverty rate from 18.9 percent to 14.7 percent. A survey conducted by the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling in collaboration with the University of Manchester, however, found that between 2018 and 2023, though there has been a marginal reduction in upper poverty from 21.6 percent to 20.7 percent (lower poverty rate fell from 9.4 percent to 7.9 percent), there has been a rise in the upper poverty rate in urban areas,

**While understanding the impact of inflationary pressure on household-level poverty, it is noteworthy that as people from low-income groups tend to spend a greater proportion of their income on food items, in the face of high food inflation, they could be the worst sufferers.**

from 16.3 percent to 18.7 percent. The study also shows that, as part of their major coping strategy in the face of inflation, as many as 31 percent households changed their food habits, 24 percent drew savings,

and 15 percent reduced non-food expenditure. The survey revealed that, in comparison to the earlier part of 2023 (April 2023), food insecurity has deteriorated in the later part of the year (October-November 2023), with urban households being in a worse position than their rural counterparts. The findings from this survey therefore strengthen the

down, putting more pressure on those households with potential job applicants. The government in this case can incentivise the private sector through small tax rebates to safeguard the interests of the existing workers through programs including monthly rations and subsidised midday-meals.

The safety net program of the government needs to be expanded by



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

prediction about the deterioration of the country's poverty scenario.

While understanding the impact of inflationary pressure on household-level poverty, it is noteworthy that as people from low-income groups tend to spend a greater proportion of their income on food items, in the face of high food inflation, they could be the worst sufferers. As a consequence, their level of deprivation can worsen while some non-poor might fall below the poverty line. The current food inflation rate of 9.87 percent in March (non-food inflation rate being 9.64 percent) with the urban food inflation of 9.98 percent and rural 9.86 percent, therefore indicates that poor households in urban areas could be the worst victims of high inflation.

With the twin macro concerns of the government, that is, the depletion of foreign exchange reserve and the falling value of taka over US dollar, the central bank has taken different contractionary policy stances to tame the soaring inflation rate. As a result, the pace of job creation has slowed

several folds to comfort not only those at the bottom of the distribution but also the middle-income households. In this regard, the number of trucks for Open Market Sales needs to be increased by a significant margin and the sale price should be further subsidised. Besides, initiatives like rationing and fair-price shops need to be introduced and operated in both rural and urban areas.

The regular safety net allowances for those at the grassroots need to be expanded to urban areas too with a higher amount for per capita allocation. Besides, there is no denying that for countries like Bangladesh, efficient market management to have smooth operation along the supply chain can play a crucial role in maintaining a stable market-driven price level. Finally, in order to contain the inflationary pressure at the household level, particularly that generated by high import prices, it is extremely crucial to correct the macro scenario through effective fiscal and monetary policy tools.

# Next budget should push for clean and secure energy



Shafiqul Alam is lead energy analyst for Bangladesh at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA).

SHAFIQU ALAM

Bangladesh's drive to fulfil energy demand, riding on quick-fix strategies and relying on imports, has helped in the short-run but exacerbated the country's financial health. While fixing the problems will require long-term efforts, the upcoming national budget, to be unveiled in June 2024, will provide an opportunity to address some of the key challenges of the energy and power sectors.

The forthcoming national budget could create a renewable energy fund to further stimulate the renewable energy sector's progress, which has seen increased interest on the back of high energy prices and energy security concerns. Additionally, the budget may allocate more to the energy sector, to explore domestic gas resources and reduce reliance on imported liquefied natural gas (LNG).

With fiscal challenges eroding the country's capacity to clear full payments against imported fossil fuels and electricity produced by private power producers in the last couple of years, investment in clean energy is taking centre stage. Other factors, such as high and volatile fossil fuel prices and concerns about energy security, tempted the government to sign contracts with private investors for renewable energy projects of several thousand megawatts (MW) capacity in the last two years.

However, prior experience points to a gloomy picture. Although new renewable energy projects have come online in the last two years, the pace and scale seem slow and inadequate. Difficulty arranging expensive land,

where ownership is fragmented, limits the country's accelerated deployment of renewable energy. Furthermore, private project developers shoulder the cost of long transmission lines, increasing the overall project cost.

Against this backdrop, the Bangladesh government may create a dedicated fund to turbo-charge the renewable energy sector amid the country's heightened exposure to the international fossil fuel market. Allocating through the fiscal year (FY) 2024-25 budget, the government may aim to support at least three areas of renewable energy.

It may cover the transmission costs of selected renewable energy projects. Likewise, it may allocate land to some renewable energy projects through the renewable energy fund, which can support land acquisition costs. Shouldering such costs, the government may introduce reverse auctions in carefully selected projects to reduce tariffs. The government can further utilise the fund to pilot renewable energy projects with battery energy storage systems.

Bangladesh can take inspiration from its past support for private-public partnership (PPP) projects to create such a fund. Notably, the country allocated Tk 25 billion (\$27.5 million) to PPP projects in FY2009-10 to bridge the infrastructure investment gap. This fund included PPP technical assistance worth Tk 1 billion (\$9.1 million), a viability gap funding of Tk 3 billion (\$27.3 million) and an Infrastructure Investment Fund of Tk 21 billion (\$191.1 million).

A similarly bold and landmark ambition, if translated through a budgetary allocation, will help transform the country's energy sector while containing costs and improving reliability.

The Annual Development Plan (ADP) 2023-24 already considered that nine renewable energy projects planned within its framework were "insufficient". Therefore, the ADP, in the upcoming fiscal year, may strategically take up more renewable energy projects. This will be pragmatic as some of the power plants commissioned in the last year or so have not received sufficient gas to operate at their optimum capacities.

As new nuclear facilities will likely be online during FY 2024-25, Bangladesh will have significant baseload capacity. Based on allocation in the forthcoming national budget, the ADP may turn the tide towards renewable energy.

However, Bangladesh continues to allocate more of its budget to the power sector instead of the energy sector. For instance, the Power Division, which takes care of the power sector's development, received around 90 percent of the total budget allocated for Energy and Power Divisions from FY 2016-17 to FY 2022-23. Notably, it received a massive 97.1 percent of the allocated Tk 348.2 billion (\$3.17 billion) in FY 2023-24, leaving the Energy Division with a paltry Tk 9.9 billion (\$89.5 million).

A decade ago, Bangladesh's lagging power system capacity influenced massive investment in power infrastructure, but the need and outlook appear quite different now. Allocations of hefty budgets to the power sector on a yearly basis have already thrown up several challenges for the Energy and Mineral Resources Division, which has become increasingly import-dependent.

The national budget may consider allocating more funds to the latter to strengthen Bangladesh Petroleum and Exploration Company (BAPEX),

to enhance the company's ongoing onshore gas exploration efforts and limit the reliance on imported LNG.

An important step in driving Bangladesh away from fossil fuels towards a renewable energy future is the rationalisation of duties on electric vehicles and renewable energy. Following approval of the budget of FY 2023-24, any individual willing to buy a second personal transport—be it an electric vehicle (EV) or an internal combustion engine (ICE) based one—needs to pay an environmental surcharge ranging from Tk 25,000 (\$228) to Tk 3,50,000 (\$3,187). As EVs are environment-friendly, and interested buyers may already have an ICE car, the government should waive this environmental surcharge on EVs.

Furthermore, total tax incidences on EVs at the import stage are 89.2 percent, including a supplementary duty of 20 percent. A similar supplementary duty is also applicable for hybrid cars. As the government envisages reducing 3.39 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from the transport sector by 2030, such import duties on EVs will limit the country's ambition. Instead, the government may increase the duties for second ICE cars and channel part of the revenue to build charging stations for electric and hybrid vehicles.

Additionally, rooftop solar accessories are subject to import duties ranging from 11.2 to 58.6 percent. As rooftop solar can help generate clean energy without affecting land, the government may revisit the tax structure and bring it down.

The current reality reinforces the urgency of frontloading efforts for renewables, creating a conducive ecosystem for EVs and reducing demand growth in imported fuels like LNG. By creating a renewable energy fund and increasing budgetary allocation to the energy sector, the upcoming budget can help attract more private capital and improve Bangladesh's overall energy security.



MOTHER'S DAY

# The devaluation of the sacrificial mother

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ALIZA RAHMAN

The image of the sacrificial mother has become a central tenet in our culture, and other cultures similar to ours. It pops up in speeches and advertisements, whether political or commercial, and places the mother on a pedestal so high, it runs the risk of a violent crash to the bottom at the slightest hint of not conforming to the ideal.

The ideal mother is often a housewife, her priority being her children, and it is usually children because a single child is often deigned as not enough. However, even as she is glorified, her work is devalued.

The relational category of mother, or more accurately the ideal one, is not just limited to children, it is closely attached to "wife" and "daughter-in-law". It is a frequent statement by husbands that their wives "do not work", and jokes shared by certain members of the older generation. She is grumpy, lazy, nonsensical, and ridiculous. These also reveal the stereotypical behaviour we expect women to have: to give without complaint and to give with a smile, for days on end without set time limits, until she is old enough to be replaced by a younger woman handling the responsibilities she had.

The responsibilities, of course, vary, especially so in the modern age. As women enter the workforce, many are experiencing what has been called the Second Shift, and the notion of "having it all" is ringing hollow to many struggling to find economic security while maintaining physical and mental health at breakneck workplaces. It ranges from doing extra housework after paid work even if the woman works the same hours as her husband, and it involves repeatedly making decisions for children

as fathers take a backseat. It is what causes mental breakdowns in the present age, and what caused the mental breakdowns in mid-century America as noted by Betty Friedan while documenting the "problem which had no name" among groups of women

happiness a mother has to feel. An image making the rounds on the internet during the height of the pandemic included a Bangladeshi mother cooking while attached to oxygen support. It rightfully received criticism, with the

The ideal mother is a reductive image, but the fervour with which it is defended frequently makes discussion impossible. This monolithic idea does not take into account the various situations under which mothers have to raise vulnerable humans for whom

because her poverty forces her to work in households not her own. For mothers who are disenfranchised to the extreme, there is no amount of herculean maternal instinct that will feed her children if she can't gather the money to pay for resources. There is no chance for her to save her children if they are stuck inside a factory making juice for more privileged children when a fire breaks out, or if a building is turned to rubble by some accident.

The ideal mother is therefore an image meant to console us. It indoctrinates us into taking a mother's love for granted even when we proclaim that we can never repay them for their sacrifices. Should a mother admit she prefers work outside rather than staying at home, the reactions are often negative.

The sacrificial mother image is what allows one to be aware of what women who are mothers aren't allowed to have or be: flawed, human, needing alone time, a purpose outside the family, disabled, destitute, sick. In increasingly atomised societies, there is a further risk of shame in asking for help. Flippant remarks can follow the sharing of a struggle with raising children, even as we continue to live in a society that pushes having children as the ultimate ideal, regardless of the kind of person an individual is.

In such circumstances, we need to ask who is served by the glorification of the sacrificial mother. The need for community support and social systems providing assistance for mothers, like paid maternity leave, reliable childcare, and well-designed cities with parks and other necessities for children's wellbeing, is essential. It's essential not only for the betterment of future generations, but also because not helping mothers makes days like Mother's Day a cheap holiday and mere lip service, existing more as an outlet for our guilt as we reap their labour, and pacifying mothers feeling the stirrings of revolt.



VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

who would be considered privileged even by today's standards.

Exacerbating the situation of so many mothers is the shame of having any negative feelings toward motherhood at all. It is what causes mothers with post-partum depression to suffer in silence, because it is so at odds with the dominant image of the unblemished

criticism directed at both the individual who posted that image and the culture that encourages such behaviour. In a gender stratified society such as ours, the realm of the home is still the responsibility of the housewife, even as she suffers from a health condition where the physical action of breathing must be assisted.

they are almost entirely responsible.

In the case of Bangladesh, as with many other countries, we also have to ask which mother we are speaking of. Often, it is the more privileged woman able to offload work to another woman who is either delaying her own motherhood or being away from her children, in some cases for months on end,

# Daniel Kahneman and his influence on our policymaking



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

Dr Abdullah Shibli is an economist and works for Change Healthcare, Inc., an information technology company. He also serves as senior research fellow at the US-based International Sustainable Development Institute (ISDI).

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

I recently wrote on the worrisome situation in higher education with new graduates facing very limited job opportunities in the country. Obviously, the next question to ask is, can we not steer the job-seekers to the jobs that are available? Or, have them take a crash course in skills they did not acquire during their college days—"soft skills",

and blockchain at the advanced level.

But the project is off to a very slow start. While AI and blockchain are very much state-of-the-art technologies, employers in Bangladesh are also voicing their concern about the absence of other soft skills, including communication, teamwork, and adaptability. A Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) online skills assessment survey of graduates showed that the highest average score was obtained for "creativity", whereas the lowest average scores were recorded in "Communication, English language skill, Numeracy, and Mathematics."

One cannot deny that economic policymaking for a developing country like Bangladesh can be very tricky. Sometimes a political shift, or just a change of heart among bureaucrats at other times, can overturn the cart. Just look at our environmental policies.

Status quo bias is the phenomenon (backed up by some significant evidence) that humans have an objectively non-rational preference for the status quo. A 2009 paper published by the US National Academy of Sciences found that when faced with difficult choices, people are more likely to choose the status quo. In addition, the study also noted that these choices were frequently not the "best ones" but that the difficulty of making the decision was a factor in driving people to stick with the familiar.

Like economists, agricultural scientists have often been baffled by the flawed choices people sometimes make. For them, the question is: "Why isn't there a faster adoption of agricultural innovation that has obvious benefits?"

Richard Thaler, another behavioural economist who followed Kahneman's path, provides a clue. In his 2017 Nobel speech, he said, "We humans are absent-minded, a bit overweight, we procrastinate about saving for retirement, and—crucially—we are influenced by many supposedly irrelevant factors: how questions are phrased, what happened yesterday, what's the default."

Another example is the slow progress towards diversifying our manufacturing non-RMG sectors. Is it simply because of status quo bias or lack of policy support? That's a discussion topic for another day.

As Kahneman might have said, "policymaking is not for the faint-hearted".

One of my favourite economists, Daniel Kahneman passed away a few weeks ago, on March 27. He won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2002 even though he had never taught economics or taken an economics course. Known as the "grandfather of behavioural economics" and listed as one of the seven most influential economists in the world by the Economist in 2015, he was a professor in both psychology and public affairs since 1993 at Princeton University. Kahneman died in New York.

Kahneman influenced generations of economists by upending the basic tenet of economics. Adam Smith proposed that a "consumer" is a rational decision-maker. Kahneman and his fellow researcher Amos Tversky discovered "anomalies" in human behaviour. In pioneering experiments, the duo validated many departures from our pristine "rationality" model, including



Daniel Kahneman (March 5, 1934 – March 27, 2024)

PHOTO: REUTERS

**One cannot deny that economic policymaking for a developing country like Bangladesh can be very tricky. Sometimes a political shift, or just a change of heart among bureaucrats at other times, can overturn the cart. Just look at our environmental policies.**

status quo bias, endowment effect, scope sensitivity, and loss aversion.

Let us take an example. If you lower the price of a good or offer a discount, people buy more of it. "Not so simple", they said. Their experiments demonstrated various cognitive biases. They showed, for instance, that many more people were willing to make a 20-minute trip to save Tk 20 on the price of a Tk 120 train ticket than to

make the same trip to save Tk 20 on a Tk 300 train ticket—an example of what is known as the framing effect.

The recent bout of inflation and RMG wage negotiations that followed are also illustrations of how behavioural economists have validated an old concept known as the "Money Illusion." Economists Eldar Shafir and Peter Diamond and psychologist Tversky found that in periods of high inflation, employers can get away with giving workers raises that amount to substantial wage cuts on an inflation-adjusted basis.

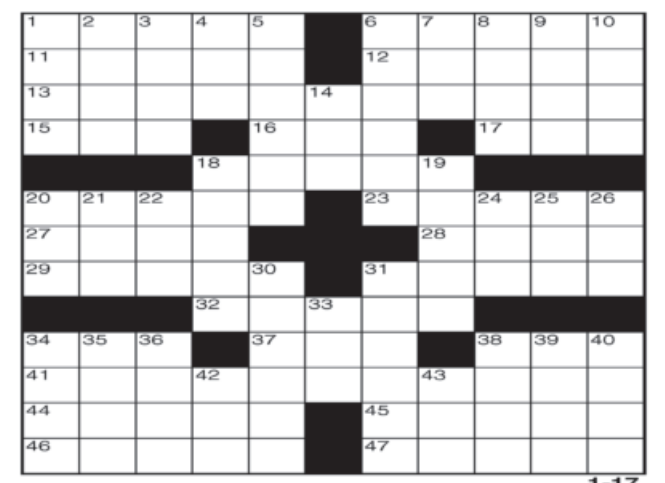
Suppose inflation rises at a 10 percent annual rate, and you get a five percent raise. You've just received a real wage cut. If there's no inflation, and your wage is cut by three percent, you've also gotten a wage cut—but you've lost less money than in the case of high inflation. What's odd is that workers tend to view the bigger real wage cuts as fairer.

technology skills, or even language courses? The answers to these questions are not clear-cut. Kahneman and others confirmed experimentally that new graduates often have to overcome their risk aversion and status quo bias. More on that later.

I will pause for a second and acknowledge all the skills training programmes that the government has initiated in the last 15 years. We borrowed hundreds of millions of dollars from foreign multilateral development banks and government agencies for skills training, some for vocational and technical skills, and others for so-called manpower development. The EDGE project aims to train 80,000 students in three phases. Of them, 50,000 will get training on fundamental issues at the foundational level, 20,000 on more complex issues at the intermediate level, and 10,000 on frontier technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, robotics

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Syrup source
- 6 Warms up
- 11 Starry hunter
- 12 Houston player
- 13 Heading to sea
- 15 Utter
- 16 Bit of humor
- 17 Buck's mate
- 18 Plentiful
- 20 Spanish resort isle
- 23 Superfluous
- 27 Blowgun ammo
- 28 Lowly worker
- 29 Start
- 31 Female donkey
- 32 Polite
- 34 TV spots
- 37 Quarterback Marino
- 38 Sack
- 41 Job for a judge
- 44 Deeply impressed
- 45 Singer Ronstadt
- 46 Famed fur tycoon
- 47 Finished
- DOWN
- 1 Forest growth
- 2 Region
- 3 Feel sorry for
- 4 Auction buy
- 5 Puzzle
- 6 Negotiate a price
- 7 Snaky shape
- 8 Slightly
- 9 Half a sextet
- 10 Foot part
- 14 Afternoon break
- 18 Early Mexican
- 19 Kick out
- 20 Wedding words
- 21 Prohibit
- 22 Form 1040 org.
- 24 Toe count
- 25 Director Howard
- 26 One or more
- 30 More neat
- 31 Commercial song
- 33 Mover's truck
- 34 China setting
- 35 Bears' lairs
- 36 Sports figure
- 38 Rock group
- 39 Staff member
- 40 Delighted
- 42 Binary base
- 43 Storage site



FRIDAY'S ANSWERS



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## Navigating life with chronic fatigue syndrome

Living with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) can present significant challenges, but adopting certain strategies can make coping easier.



**1. Understanding Relapses and Remission:** ME/CFS often follows a pattern of relapses and remissions. Recognising this cycle can help you manage your energy levels effectively.

**2. Managing Daily Activities:** During relapses, simple tasks like showering may feel overwhelming. Allocate extra time for challenging activities and prioritise rest during remission to avoid overexertion.

**3. Balanced Exercise:** Exercise is crucial for overall health, but individuals with ME/CFS must approach it cautiously. Work with healthcare professionals to establish personalised exercise limits and pace yourself to prevent post-exertional malaise.

**4. Nutritional Strategies:** Adopting a balanced diet, such as the Mediterranean Diet, rich in healthy fats and avoiding triggers like sugar and caffeine, can help manage symptoms. Eating small, frequent meals can maintain energy levels and alleviate nausea.

**5. Memory Support:** Memory loss is common in ME/CFS. Utilise tools like day planners, smartphone reminders, and mental exercises to support cognitive function and manage daily tasks effectively.

**6. Work Accommodations:** If you are employed, you may qualify for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Flexible schedules, designated rest areas, and job instructions can help mitigate the impact of symptoms on work performance.

**7. Disability Benefits:** If your condition prevents you from working, you may be eligible for disability benefits through private insurance or Social Security.

**8. Navigating Relationships:** Educating friends, family, and coworkers about ME/CFS can foster understanding and support. Chronic fatigue can strain personal relationships, so open communication and empathy are essential for maintaining healthy connections despite the challenges posed by the condition.

By implementing these strategies and seeking support from healthcare professionals and loved ones, individuals with ME/CFS can navigate the complexities of the condition more effectively and enhance their overall quality of life.

## HEALTH ACHIEVEMENTS

# Calls for a concerted drive towards SDGs

### STAR HEALTH DESK

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Results Report 2023, the most comprehensive to date, showcases the achievement of key public health milestones, even amid greater global humanitarian health needs driven by conflict, climate change, and disease outbreaks.

The report is released ahead of the 2024 Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly, which runs from May 27 to June 1, 2024. WHO's revised programme budget for 2022-2023 was US\$ 6726.1 million, incorporating lessons learned from the pandemic response and addressing emerging health priorities.

**Triple-billion targets:** The report shows advancements in several key areas, including healthier populations, universal health coverage (UHC), and health emergency protection.

In terms of UHC, 30% of countries are moving ahead in coverage of essential health services and providing financial protection. This is largely due to increased HIV service coverage.

Regarding emergency protection, though the coverage of vaccinations for high-priority pathogens shows improvement relative to the COVID-19 pandemic-related disruptions in 2020-2021, it has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. The Pandemic Fund's first disbursements totaled US\$ 338 million in 2023, supporting 37 countries with financing to strengthen prevention, preparedness, and response capacities.

**Prominent points:** The world's first malaria vaccine, RTS,S/AS01, was administered to more than two million children in Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi during the biennium, reducing mortality by 13% among children eligible for vaccination. WHO's prequalification of a second vaccine, R21/Matrix-M, is expected to further boost malaria control efforts.

Elsewhere, 14 countries eliminated at least one neglected tropical

disease from 2022-2023. Bangladesh eliminated 2.

The first-ever all-oral treatment regimens for multidrug resistant tuberculosis were made available in 2022, allowing the highest number of people with tuberculosis to get treatment since monitoring began almost 30 years ago.

More than 75% of people living with HIV are receiving antiretroviral therapy, with most achieving viral suppression, meaning they cannot infect others. WHO's guidance and support have helped countries like Botswana achieve significant progress

launched the initiative in 2020.

### The way forward:

The report acknowledges significant disparities in health outcomes, disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and that persistent health workforce shortages require investments in education and employment.

Looking ahead, WHO's Programme Budget for 2024-2025 aims to balance investment in the Organisation's normative functions with the need to strengthen country offices. It aims to fund 80% of the planned budget of high-priority items,



in controlling HIV transmission.

Tobacco use is declining in 150 countries, 56 of which are on track to achieve the global target for reducing tobacco use by 2025.

An additional 29 countries developed multisectoral national action plans on antimicrobial resistance during the biennium 2022-2023, bringing the total to 178 countries.

Following the Director-General's call to eliminate cervical cancer, another 25 countries have introduced the human papillomavirus vaccine, bringing the total to 58 that have introduced the vaccine since WHO

thereby accelerating progress towards meeting the triple billion targets of GPW 13 (the current WHO strategy for the period 2019-2023).

### Commitment to global health:

Thanks to the launch of the World Health Data Hub, Member States access to health data and clearances of national estimates were streamlined.

WHO will work with existing and new donors and other partners through an inclusive engagement process that will culminate in a high-level financing event in the fourth quarter of 2024.

Source: World Health Organisation



## RETHINKING HAPPINESS

# Strategies for cultivating joy

In contemporary psychology, the age-old adage suggesting that happiness is as elusive as a butterfly is being met with skepticism. While Henry David Thoreau's sentiment resonates with the notion of contentment being a fleeting pursuit, a growing body of research argues that happiness is not solely determined by chance but can be actively pursued and achieved through intentional efforts.

While genetics may influence an individual's baseline level of happiness, studies suggest that approximately 40% of happiness is within our control, influenced by our thoughts, behaviours, and relationships. This suggests that individuals can elevate their happiness levels by actively managing their emotions, thoughts, and interactions with others.

Practical strategies for enhancing happiness include cultivating gratitude through daily reflection on positive aspects of life, fostering forgiveness to reduce bitterness and resentment, countering negative thoughts through cognitive restructuring and mindfulness practices, and engaging in meaningful activities that promote a state of "flow" and align with personal values.

Contrary to the belief that material possessions lead to happiness, studies show that lasting joy stems from strong social connections, close friendships, and engaging in activities that challenge and fulfil us.

Ultimately, while some people may have a genetic predisposition to happiness, cultivating a positive mindset and nurturing meaningful relationships can lead to a more fulfilling and joyful life, challenging the idea that fate alone determines happiness.

# Unveiling the secrets to global health success

In a recent study published in PLOS Global Public Health, Dr Nadia Akseer and her colleagues at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health shed light on what drives success in public health across various countries. They focused on exceptional cases where health interventions have shown remarkable results, even in countries with limited economic resources.

Their research involved analysing 31 previous studies from the Exemplars in Global Health (EGH) programme, covering topics like child mortality, vaccine delivery, and COVID-19 response. These studies spanned 19 countries across Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean. The aim was to identify common factors contributing to the success of these health programmes.

They identified eight key themes that appeared frequently among the positive outliers:

**1. Efficient data systems:** Countries with effective health programmes often had robust systems in place for collecting and analysing health data, allowing them to track progress and make informed decisions.

**2. Effective leadership:** Strong leadership played a crucial role in guiding and implementing successful health interventions.

**3. Effective stakeholder coordination:** Collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and communities, was essential for programme success.

**4. A capacitated workforce:** Having trained and motivated healthcare workers was vital for delivering quality health services.

**5. Intentional women's empowerment:** Empowering and involving women in decision-making processes proved beneficial for improving health outcomes.

**6. A conducive national policy environment:** Countries with supportive policies and regulations for health programmes were more likely to succeed.

**7. Sustainable financing:** To sustain long-term health interventions, adequate and stable funding was necessary.

**8. Outreach:** Successful programmes often include proactive outreach efforts to reach vulnerable populations and ensure they receive essential health services.

These themes are consistent with previous efforts to understand what drives improvements in global health and align with the World Health Organisation's Health Systems Framework.

The researchers believe that these findings can inform national health policies and strategies. By understanding the common factors behind successful health programmes, policymakers, funders, and other stakeholders can better allocate resources and maximise impact.



Dr Akseer emphasised that countries achieving significant progress in public health often prioritise similar strategies. By sharing key lessons learned from these success stories, the hope is to assist country leaders, funders, and global partners in developing evidence-based policies that can enhance health outcomes worldwide.

This research essentially emphasises that the delivery and support of effective public health interventions are just as important as the interventions themselves. By focusing on these common drivers of success, we can work towards better health outcomes for everyone, regardless of economic status.

## Ensuring effective governance for pandemic preparedness

### STAR HEALTH REPORT

In an urgent letter addressed to the Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body Bureau, the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005), and WHO Member States, concerns have been raised regarding the governance of the proposed Pandemic Agreement. As negotiations continue, it is imperative to emphasise principles of leadership and accountability, ensuring that governance arrangements are robust and enduring.

The proposed establishment of a Conference of the Parties (COP) akin to climate agreements is commendable, providing a platform for sustained focus on pandemic preparedness and response. However, it is urged that heads of state and government participate regularly, not solely during extraordinary meetings, given the ever-present threat of pandemics. Additionally, annual meetings of the COP are advocated for, rather than the proposed five-year interval, to maintain vigilance against evolving pandemic threats.

Furthermore, the letter highlights the necessity of regular reporting, preferably annually, to address potential gaps in preparedness promptly. An independent Secretariat hosted by WHO is recommended to ensure transparency and accountability, fostering inclusive participation of civil society stakeholders.

Ultimately, the governance of the Pandemic Agreement must be steadfast and adaptable, laying a foundation for long-term effectiveness. Decisions made now will shape the trajectory of pandemic preparedness for decades to come, underscoring the urgency of robust governance arrangements.

## RESPIRATORY MEDICINE & CHEST DISEASE

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# History-makers Kings playing a different ball-game

ATIQUÉ ANAM

After referee Symoon Hasan Sunny blew the final whistle following Bashundhara Kings' 2-1 win against Mohammedan in Mymensingh yesterday, ensuring the Kings' historic fifth consecutive title of the Bangladesh Premier League, two-goal hero Dorielton Gomes sunk to his knees before laying on the ground, thanking the heavens for what they had just achieved.

It was an unprecedented achievement in Bangladesh's top-tier football, beating the feat of Dhaka Wanderers who had won four consecutive league titles in the 1950s, but there was not much overt expression of joy, neither from Dorielton nor from his teammates. It almost felt like business as usual for the modern-day powerhouse of Bangladesh football for they have turned the Bangladesh Premier League into an almost one-horse race since making debut in the 2018-19 season.

Later the players and club officials celebrated the victory at the Rafiqe Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium wearing blue jerseys, with the word 'Champions' emblazoned in bold letters on the front of the shirts, reflecting the conviction and the determination of the team to win the title at the home ground of their nearest rivals Mohammedan, the only team that had beaten Kings the whole season.

"We could come here today to fight for just a draw and knowing that one more point next week would be enough, but we were clear that we were here to win," Oscar Bruzon, the chief architect of all five of Kings' league



PHOTO: STAR

titles, relayed this sentiment while talking to reporters after the victory.

This winning mentality and professionalism are what perhaps set Kings apart from the rest of the clubs in Bangladesh's top-flight football.

Kings, arguably the most financially solvent club of the country, set a few benchmarks in the country's football even outside of the football field. Since the beginning when Kings plied in the Bangladesh Championship for one season, the club tried to follow the path of elite clubs in the world, setting up their own dormitories and gym facilities for the players.

Gradually the club set up their own practice ground and their own stadium – a novelty in

Bangladesh's sports fraternity – to further stamp their mark on domestic football.

There are other clubs though that may rival Kings on financial front, namely, Abahani, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel, but those clubs have fallen by the wayside in recent years despite splurging a good amount on player recruitment.

Sanat Babla, a veteran sports journalist of the country currently leading the sports team in Shokalskhondha.com, has followed the club's activities and performances from very close. He feels

"Credit must be given to the club for managing the players so well, taking care of their health as well as their finances. I haven't

heard of any payment issues about Kings, something which is not uncommon in our football. They also take the best care of their players in terms of medical issues and fitness, opting to not field a player even in a crucial match if there is slight issue with his fitness," the journalist told The Daily Star.

Bashundhara Kings' president Imrul Hasan feels discipline is the key factor that keeps the team united and forges the path to continued success.

"A lot of clubs can have good teams. But we are always very strict in maintaining discipline, which keeps the players physically and mentally fit and committed for the club," Hasan told The Daily Star last night. "In the first one or two seasons, we did not have that great a team since we were new in this field and did not have the proper insight into

transfer market. We did not have an outright target of winning the title, yet ended up as winners because of the discipline and the commitment of the management."

The club had already set a unique example last year when it suspended three key players for various terms over a serious breach of discipline and monetarily fining two others.

**Five-time champions of the BPL is very important for the club. Guys, lets now go and fight for the Federation Cup.**

CAPTAIN ROBSON ROBINHO

While similar digressions by players had previously been swept under the carpet by other clubs, Kings took a no-compromise policy, even at the risk of jeopardising the club's prospects in domestic and international competitions.

While Kings may seem unparalleled when it comes to domestic football, they tend to fall short on the international stage, having been eliminated from the group stages of the AFC Cup four times in a row.

That is one area the club might have to shift focus on with better planning next season while their immediate focus shifts to the Federation Cup, where they are two wins away from regaining the title and becoming only the second club to clinch a domestic treble.

**After winning five consecutive trophies, I'm absolutely satisfied with this enjoyable season. Having lost only one game in domestic competitions is a big achievement. Winning five titles in a row is something that is not in the hands of everybody. So all praise to our players.**

COACH OSCAR BRUZON

## End of an era as Anderson retires in July

REUTERS, LONDON

England star James Anderson believes the "time is right" to end his Test career after revealing on Saturday that the first Test against the West Indies at Lord's on July 10 will be his final appearance in the five-day format which will bring an end to a 21-year career in which he became the most successful ever fast bowler.



Having made his Test debut against Zimbabwe at Lord's in 2003, Anderson, who has played 187 Tests, is set to finish his career with 188 caps, second to only Sachin Tendulkar who has played 200, the most by any player.

The 41-year-old sits third, with 700 wickets, in the list of most scalps in Tests after Muttiah Muralitharan (800) and Shane Warne (708). He has 32 five-wicket hauls to his name in the format - the second-most by a pacer after Sir Richard Hadlee (36) - and has taken 10 wickets in a match on three occasions.

Anderson has taken 1114 wickets in first-class cricket having claimed his 1,000th while playing for Lancashire at Old Trafford in 2021.

He won the Ashes in 2009 and came into his own in the 2010-11 series in Australia where he took a series-leading 24 wickets as England won their first Ashes in Australia for 24 years.

## 'Type of cricket' biggest concern for Tigers

NABID YEASIN

There was a lot of scepticism regarding Bangladesh's home T20I series against Zimbabwe, especially with it being viewed as an opportunity for the Tigers to gauge their mettle before leaving for the USA and the West Indies for the ICC T20 World Cup in June.

Questions were raised as to what good can come of playing a five-match T20I series against a side that could not make it to the mega event, losing to Uganda and Namibia in the qualifiers in November last year.

The scepticism and queries over the team's preparation were not at all surprising, considering how poorly the Tigers have fared in the last two T20 World Cups - only winning over low-ranked Netherlands and Zimbabwe in 2022 while suffering a humiliating loss to Scotland the year before in the previous edition.

But once the series started, there remained no point in mulling over what opposition the team was lining up against - especially for the players. Then, it became a matter of how well the given opportunity could be utilised to tune up in the best possible way for the T20 World Cup as it boils down to what type of cricket the team is trying to play and with what approach.

"More important than winning or the opponent we are winning against is what type of cricket we are playing and how much we can improve from here on," Soumya Sarkar, who scored a 34-ball 41 despite some initial jitters in Bangladesh's slender win in the fourth T20I in Mirpur yesterday, said after the game.

Soumya, however, also mentioned that it is important to develop a "winning habit" going into a World Cup - a notion that backfired for Bangladesh in the 2021 ICC T20 World Cup where home series wins over Australia and New Zealand before the tournament did little for the team in the actual event.

Soumya's initial comment about the "type of cricket" sounded logical and appropriate but when analysing the four T20Is played so far this series, there are nothing but worrying signs to take

away for the Tigers.

The eight-wicket win in the first match conceals how Clive Madande and Wellington Masakadza staged a record eighth-wicket stand for Zimbabwe, and the second-best in T20Is overall, to undo the brilliant initial effort from Bangladesh bowlers that had reduced the visitors to 41 for seven, threatening of setting the record for the lowest-ever collection by the Zimbabweans.

The second T20I was about how the bowlers sort of repeated the script from the first game - taking wickets initially but letting Zimbabwe's lower-order batters flourish and put up a mediocre score - and the top-order batters coming up with dialed down performances as the Tigers' middle-order had to come in rescue to complete a regulation 139-run chase.

Meanwhile, things got alarmingly close in the last two T20Is, with Bangladesh prevailing by nine runs in the third match and by just five runs in the fourth one on Friday.

In the last match, Bangladesh's heavily unsteady batting line-up was exposed. In a rare instance, the fresh opening pair of Soumya, replacing out-of-form Liton Das, and Tanzid Tamim managed to put up a 101-run opening stand at a brisk pace. But instead of capitalising on the start and converting it to a daunting total, Bangladesh lost their last nine wickets for just 42 runs and were bundled out for 143.

This only proves that at times when even scores north of 270 are a probability - considering how things are unfolding in the ongoing Indian Premier League - Bangladesh batters' threshold remains what was the norm about a decade ago in the shortest format.

While Soumya's remarks on focusing on "type of cricket" might have sounded good, the cricket put on display by the Tigers would only add to the worries ahead of the T20 mega event. And even a 5-0 sweep of a low-ranked Zimbabwe, which could be materialised in the final T20I on Sunday, will not be enough to diminish it in any way.



**Josko Gvardiol struck twice and one goal each from Phil Foden and Julian Alvarez saw Manchester City rout Fulham 4-0 at Craven Cottage yesterday, propelling the Citizens to the top of the league. The win opened up a two-point lead for the reigning champions over Arsenal who sit second with 83 points. The Gunners will play away at Manchester United today as the title race comes down to the wire.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Mbappe to leave PSG at end of season

AFP, Paris



Kylian Mbappe confirmed on Friday that he will leave French champions Paris Saint-Germain at the end of the season, with Real Madrid widely expected to be his next destination.

The announcement brings an end to a prolific association with his hometown team, which began when he signed from Monaco in 2017 in a deal worth 180 million euros (\$194 million).

"I wanted to announce to you all that it's my last year at Paris Saint-Germain. I will not extend and the adventure will come to an end in a few weeks," Mbappe, 25, said in a video posted on social media.

"I will play my last game at the Parc des Princes on Sunday."

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## City dwellers suffer after morning rain

DIPAN NANDY

The pre-monsoon showers have yet again exposed the persistent drainage problems in the capital as last morning's heavy downpour left many Dhaka streets submerged and residents struggling to navigate the knee- to waist-deep murky waters.

Office-goers and school students were among the worst sufferers.

On April 17, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said there would be no waterlogging in the capital during the upcoming rainy season.

However, last morning the waterlogging situation in Dhaka North was worse than in Dhaka South.

Thousands of residents in Mirpur and surrounding areas faced major disruptions to their daily lives as the streets were flooded with waist-deep water.

Dhaka experienced 87 millimetres of rainfall and a thunderstorm [nor'wester] at 52 km/h between 6:00am and 9:00am, Omar Faruq, a meteorologist at the Bangladesh

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A student wades through ankle-deep murky waters on her way to school. Due to poor drainage, the street in front of her house quickly got waterlogged after the morning rain and remained under water until the afternoon. The photo was taken around 10:30am yesterday near Outer Circle Road in the capital's Mouchak area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



## Rano, a doyen of Marxist politics, passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prominent leftist leader and Marxist theorist Haider Akbar Khan Rano breathed his last early yesterday.

Rano, 81, was suffering from chronic lung disease for several years and was admitted to Health and Hope Hospital in the capital on May 6, his niece Ananya Laboni told The Daily Star.

He was known for his steadfast role in the Liberation struggle and in efforts to uphold the ideals of non-communalism, democracy and socialism in the country.

Under the banner of Co-

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## Withdrawals put BASIC Bank in liquidity crisis

MD MEHEDI HASAN

BASIC Bank is experiencing a deep liquidity crunch as depositors have been withdrawing money for weeks following news that the state-run lender is going to be acquired by a private commercial bank.

A commercial bank has to maintain 13 percent of its deposits as the Statutory Liquidity Ratio, which is the reserve requirement that banks are expected to keep to be able to offer loans. BASIC currently falls short of meeting the requirement by Tk 1,800 crore.

Amid the crisis, BASIC's management wrote to the Financial Institutions Division of the finance ministry on May 7, requesting that government agencies be ordered to deposit money with the bank at low interest rates.

In a letter, the management also requested that the government clarify its position on the decision to merge BASIC with City Bank.

BASIC had previously incurred losses due to high levels of bad loans and high interest-bearing deposits, but it had never faced an SLR shortfall, said the letter.

Since the decision to merge the two banks was made in early April, BASIC has been facing an unusually high withdrawal of deposits, six officials of the bank told The Daily Star.

As of Thursday, depositors had withdrawn around Tk 2,500 crore, according to data from the bank.

Government institutions like Bangladesh Power Development Board, different agencies under the power ministry, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation, Shahjalal Fertilizer Company Limited,

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

- » Faces Tk 1,800cr in SLR shortfall
- » Depositors withdraw Tk 2,500cr
- » Has no collateral to borrow from BB
- » Uncertainty over paying employees

## BLOGGER ANANTA MURDER Family still awaits closure

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

The ageing mother of slain blog writer Ananta Bijoy Das, who was killed by Islamist militants nine years ago, is still waiting for closure.

An Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal in Sylhet sentenced four militants to death on March 30, 2022, and acquitted an accused in the case.

But three of the convicts are still on the run.

However, officials say hearing on the death references and an appeal filed by the state may take a few more years.

Ananta's mother Pijush Rani Das, aged around 70, has different illnesses and his father Rabindra Kumar Das died in 2019, when the trial proceedings were going on.

Ananta's brother-in-law Somor Bijoy Shee, a lawyer, said, "All we can do is to wait for justice to be served. We hope his mother gets to see it."

Ananta was a banker and the editor of a magazine called Jukti, which was known for promoting freethinking.

In the morning of May 12, 2015, the 31-year-old was hacked to death near his home in Subidbazar area while on

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## Israel expands Rafah evacuation order

Fear of imminent attack forces tens of thousands to flee; US report criticizes Israel but does not block arms

AGENCIES

Israeli strikes yesterday hit parts of Gaza including Rafah where Israel expanded an evacuation order and the UN warned of "epic" disaster if an outright invasion of the crowded city occurs.

AFP journalists, medics and witnesses reported strikes across the coastal territory, where the UN says humanitarian relief is blocked after Israeli troops defied international opposition and entered eastern Rafah this week, effectively shutting a key aid crossing and suspending traffic through another.

At least 21 people were killed during strikes in central Gaza and taken to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah city, a hospital statement said.

Bodies covered in white lay on the ground in a courtyard of the facility. A man in a baseball cap leaned over one body bag, clasping a dust-covered hand that protruded.

The feet of another corpse poked from under a blanket bearing the picture of a large teddy bear.

In Rafah, witnesses reported intense air strikes near the crossing with Egypt, and AFP images showed smoke rising over the city.

Other strikes occurred in north Gaza, witnesses said.

Israeli troops on Tuesday seized and closed the Palestinian side of the

Rafah crossing -- through which all fuel passes into Gaza -- after ordering residents of eastern Rafah to evacuate.

The army yesterday said troops were engaged in "operational activity" at the crossing, where they fought against "armed terrorists" and found "numerous underground tunnel shafts".

- » UN chief warns of 'epic disaster'
- » UNSC seeks enquiry into mass graves in Gaza
- » Death toll in the Palestinian enclave now 34,971

The development came a day after the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to grant the Palestinians additional rights in the global body and backed their drive for full membership, vetoed by Washington at the Security Council.

While mediation efforts towards a truce and hostage release appear to stall, Hamas's armed wing released a video of a captive seen alive in Gaza -- the third such footage released in less than a month.

The man is seen speaking in the 11-second clip, which is superimposed with text in Arabic and Hebrew that reads: "Time is running out."

The new evacuation order for eastern Rafah, posted on social media platform X by military spokesman Avichay Adraee, said the designated areas had "witnessed Hamas terrorist activities in recent days and weeks".

Since October 7 last year, Israel's offensive has killed at least 34,971 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's health ministry.

A US State Department report on Friday said it was "reasonable to assess" that Israel violated norms on international law in its use of weapons from the United States but it did not find enough evidence to block shipments.

The State Department submitted its report two days after President Joe Biden publicly threatened to withhold certain bombs and artillery shells if Israel goes ahead with an all-out assault on Rafah, where the United Nations said 1.4 million had been sheltering.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged to "eliminate" Hamas battalions in Rafah, after the army in January said it had dismantled the Hamas command structure in northern Gaza.

## UAE hits out at Netanyahu for saying it could help run Gaza

REUTERS, Cairo/Dubai

The United Arab Emirates hit out at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday after the Israeli leader said the Gulf state could be involved in aiding a future government in Gaza after the war.

The prominent and influential Gulf state, is one of few Arab states with official diplomatic ties to Israel, which it has maintained through Israel's more than six-month war in Gaza, although relations appear to have become frayed.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan rebuked Netanyahu in an early morning post on X, saying Abu Dhabi denounced the Israeli leader's comments.

"The UAE stresses that the Israeli prime minister does not have any legal capacity to take this step, and the UAE refuses to be drawn into any plan aimed at providing cover for the Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip," he said in an Arabic post.

Sheikh Abdullah said the UAE would be prepared to support a Palestinian government that met the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people, which he said included independence.

In an interview that aired this week, Netanyahu said the UAE, Saudi Arabia and other countries could possibly assist a civilian government with Gazans in the enclave after the war.

## Nasa creates visualisation of falling in black hole

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

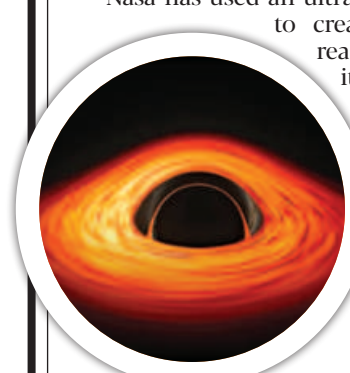
Nasa has used an ultra-powerful supercomputer to create what it claims is a realistic visualisation of what it would look like to be sucked into a black hole.

Scientists at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland produced the simulation to see how the universe would appear once beyond the event horizon of a supermassive black hole.

The project took five days to run on the US space agency's Discover supercomputer, producing around 10 terabytes of data.

"People often ask about this, and simulating these difficult-to-imagine processes helps me connect the mathematics of relativity to actual consequences in the real universe," said Jeremy Schnittman, an astrophysicist at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center, who created the visualisations.

"So I simulated two different scenarios, one where a camera -- a stand-in for a daring astronaut -- just misses the event horizon and slingshots back out, and one where it crosses the boundary, sealing its fate."



Northern lights or aurora borealis illuminate the night sky north of San Francisco, California. The most powerful solar storm in more than two decades struck Earth, triggering spectacular celestial light shows from Tasmania to Britain and threatening possible disruptions to satellites and power grids as it persists into the weekend.

PHOTO: AFP