

No let-up in reserves slide

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves have been falling since September 2021 despite a series of government initiatives to reverse the trend.

As of Wednesday, the gross international reserves (GIR) was \$18.42 billion, just enough to pay for imports over three and a half months.

The period barely meets the International Monetary Fund's minimum benchmark for countries to clear import payments.

According to Bangladesh Bank data, Bangladesh's monthly import bill is around \$5 billion.

The country's net international reserves (NIR) -- the amount after deduction of foreign currency liabilities from gross reserves -- would be \$13 billion, which covers two and half months of import.

The government can use the NIR at an instant, central bank officials say.

For imports, the central bank last week paid \$1.63 billion through the Asian Clearing Union, an arrangement of 10 countries, including India, one of the largest trading partners of Bangladesh, for settling transactions. This caused the reserves to sink a little further.

Against this backdrop, the IMF in its latest review of Bangladesh's performance regarding the conditions for the \$4.7 billion loan lowered the NIR target to \$14.76 billion for June.

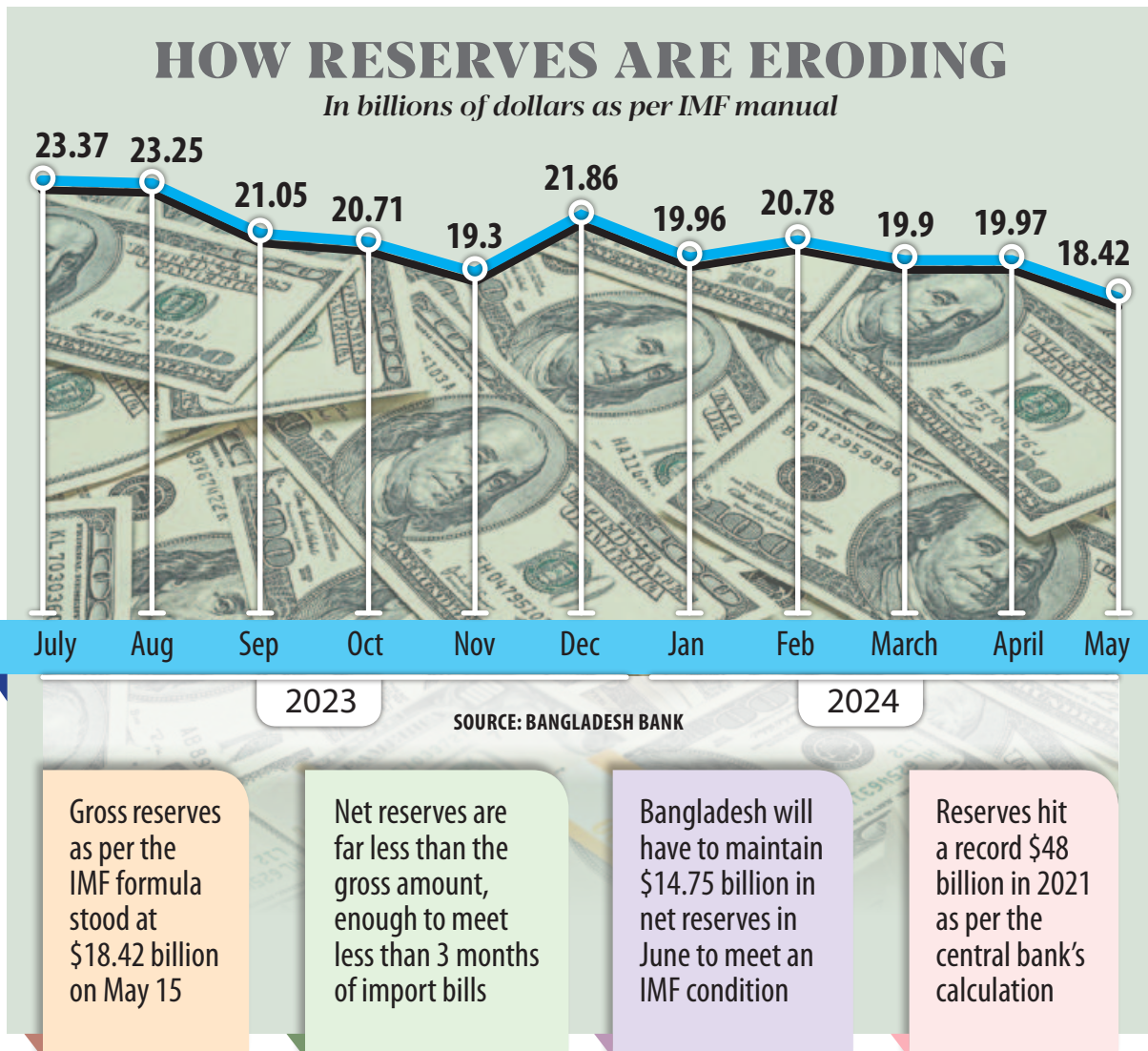
WHY ARE THE RESERVES FALLING?

Amid the coronavirus restrictions, import payments, international travels, and outflow of foreign currency for other purposes fell drastically, and at the same time, inflow of remittance increased, taking the reserves to a record \$48 billion in August 2021.

As import payments started to rise and the economy reopened, the reserves began to fall.

In 2022, the country's forex market became more volatile as supply chain disruptions elevated commodity prices globally amid the Russia-Ukraine war.

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ILLEGAL RICKSHAWS rule Dhaka streets

Lack of monitoring, regulations lead to their number skyrocketing; battery-run rickshaw drivers, owners being extorted

MD ABBAS

The rising number of illegal rickshaws remains one of the major reasons for the capital's traffic getting worse.

Experts say illegal operation of pedal and battery-powered rickshaws is prompting a section of local hoodlums, ruling party leaders, and law enforcers to extort hundreds of crores of taka.

The High Court in 2014 banned battery-run rickshaws in Dhaka and Chattogram. It had issued another directive on December 15, 2021, prohibiting the import of battery-run rickshaws. The number of such three-wheelers in the capital kept going up despite the orders.

Interestingly, the Dhaka north and south city corporations, responsible for registering to pedal rickshaws, have no data on how many rickshaws are on the city streets.

The Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has 30,162 registered rickshaws, while the figure is 1,90,217 for the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

A study carried out by the

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) in 2019 said that Dhaka had over 11 lakh pedal rickshaws, of which only three to

The government can earn good revenue by registering battery-run rickshaws. The money is now pocketed by local politicians, influential people and cops.

ARIFUL ISLAM NADIM
Joint secretary of the Rickshaw Van Easybike Sramik Union

four percent were registered.

Also, there were more than 2 lakh battery-run rickshaws in the city and transforming pedal rickshaws into battery-powered

three-wheelers kept on rising back then, said the report.

It also revealed that a section of ruling party leaders, 25 organisations, and five societies had control of illegal rickshaws.

BILS now puts the number of rickshaws in the capital at more than 15 lakh.

Speaking to The Daily Star, BILS consultant Khandoker Abdus Salam said rickshaw pullers contribute Tk 30,000 crore every year to village economy.

"More than 50 lakh people pull rickshaws across the country to make their living. So, it is very important to bring them under regulation and register them based on zones," he said.

A study by Buet in 2022 found that Dhaka city traffic speed dropped to 4.5km per hour from 21km a decade ago despite the government spending a staggering Tk 28,000 crore to ease congestion.

Visiting different areas in the capital over the last few weeks, The Daily Star found that most of the rickshaws either did not have

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Bangladeshis have \$5.9b in tax havens

Finds EU tax observatory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshis own \$5.91 billion of offshore wealth in tax havens around the world.

Cumulatively, this comes up to 1.3 percent of Bangladesh's Gross Domestic Product.

Of this amount, \$5 billion are in Asian tax havens, while the rest are in European and American tax havens.

This is according to the Atlas of the Offshore World, produced by the European Union Tax Observatory. The estimates are from 2022.

In 2021, the figure of offshore wealth owned by Bangladeshis in tax havens was \$8,145 billion, the highest since the beginning of the millennium. Of this amount, \$7 billion alone was in Asian tax havens including Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong.

The Atlas estimated that \$0.5 billion was lost in taxes as a result of the stashing of wealth offshore.

It found that the total offshore wealth invested in real estate in tax havens comes up to \$0.66 billion or 0.18 percent of Bangladesh's GDP.

Most of this real estate investment happened in Singapore and Dubai, followed by London and Paris.

"Offshore real estate is real estate that is either ultimately owned by an investor in a different country or is owned by residents through complex offshore structures that can obfuscate the identity of the real owner," it said.

A recent investigation by Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) found that 394 Bangladeshis own 641 residential properties in Dubai, whose estimated value is \$225.35 million. OCCRP took the estimates from 2022.

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Govt goes for a slim ADP to fight inflation

Okays Tk 2.65 lakh crore for the next fiscal year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday approved a Tk 2,65,000 crore Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the next fiscal year to address high inflation.

The National Economic Council (NEC) at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved the ADP for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, which shows an increase of only 0.76 percent from the current one.

After the meeting, Senior Secretary of the Planning Division Satyajit Karmaker told reporters that to keep inflation at a tolerable level, the government fund has been reduced in the new ADP, with an aim to ensure coordination between the fiscal and monetary policies.

On the other hand, the foreign fund allocation in the ADP has been increased to a record Tk 1,00,000 crore at a time when the country is under pressure due to the bleeding of reserves.

"Usually, we increase the ADP size by Tk 20,000 crore to Tk 22,000 crore each fiscal year. This time, the increase is only by Tk 2,000 crore," said Satyajit.

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It's one-party rule under a democratic framework

Says Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A one-party authoritarian government system can work well to become a developed nation but at least some areas should be less politicised, said eminent economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud.

He said Bangladesh's government system can be described as a one-party authoritarian rule under a democratic framework.

"This type of government does not necessarily hold fair elections and, so its popularity can't be measured. This type of government usually wants economic development because its validity depends on the development of the economy."

Wahiduddin was speaking at an event yesterday marking the launch of the book titled "Bangladesh's Future Development: Agenda for Reform" authored by Prof Mohammed Farashuddin, a former governor of the Bangladesh Bank.



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Illegal battery-run rickshaws crowd the road near the Bosila bridge in the capital's Mohammadpur around 1:00pm yesterday. Plying of such three-wheelers on city streets and alleys goes on unabated, worsening congestions. Inset, a battery-run rickshaw in Dhaka University area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, AMRAN HOSSAIN

Probe body recommends removal of Sharifa's Tale

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A probe committee, formed by the education ministry, has recommended the removal of the story titled "Sharifa's Tale" from the chapter on human resemblance and difference in the seventh-grade history and social science textbook.

The chapter was prepared in light of the new curriculum to create public awareness about transgender people.

The matter came to the fore after an adjunct faculty member of BRAC University tore the pages of the textbook containing the story at an event. The video of the incident went viral on social media.

On January 24, the education ministry formed a five-member probe committee to review "Sharifa's Tale".

A member of the committee, preferring to remain unnamed, told The Daily Star last night that the committee's report was submitted to the education

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Honorable State Minister for the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Mr. Ahsanul Islam Titu, MP handed over the 'CIP-2022' card to the honorable Director Mr. Md. Zubayer Mondol of Cotton Club (BD) Ltd.

Congratulations & Heartfelt greeting to Mr. Md. Zubayer Mondol, honorable Director of Cotton Club (BD) Ltd. and Mondol Group on receiving this prestigious recognition from the Government for the third time.

All officers and employees
Mondol Group



‘No helmet, no fuel’ goes nationwide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police headquarters has directed all field-level police officers to implement the “no helmet, no fuel” policy to prevent road accidents.

The directive was issued at yesterday’s monthly crime review meeting headed by the Additional Inspector General of Police (Crime and Operations) Md Atiqul Islam.

The instruction came a day after Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader declared that filling stations would not supply fuel to motorcyclists without helmets.

At the meeting, Addl IGP Atiqul also directed the police officials to complete the investigation of the road accident cases properly.

He noted that the ongoing special drives against unfit vehicles would continue.

All metropolitan police commissioners, all range deputy inspector generals and superintendents of police of all districts attended the meeting virtually, while PHQ’s DIG operations and DIG crimes participated in person.

INDIA ELECTION

Dance videos of Modi, rival turn up AI heat

REUTERS, New Delhi

An AI video shows an ecstatic Narendra Modi sporting a trendy jacket and trousers, grooving on a stage to a Bollywood song as the crowd cheers. The Indian prime minister reshared the video on X, saying “such creativity in peak poll season is truly a delight.”

Another video, with the same stage setting, shows Modi’s rival Mamata Banerjee dancing in a saree-like outfit, but the background score is parts of her speech criticizing those who quit her party to join Modi’s. State police have launched an investigation saying the video can “affect law and order”.

The different reactions to videos created using artificial intelligence (AI) tools underscore how the use and abuse of the technology is increasing and creating worries for regulators and security officials as the world’s most populous nation holds a mammoth general election.

India’s Election Commission last week warned political parties against AI use to spread misinformation and shared seven provisions of information technology and other laws that attract jail terms of up to three years for offences including forgery, promoting rumours and enmity.



The mother of Squadron Leader Asim Jawad, who died after a BAF fighter jet crashed in Chattogram, meets Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday. Asim’s daughter is seen on the PM’s lap.

PHOTO: PID

Israel’s tanks push into Jabalia in north Gaza

Pounds Rafah without advancing; 39 more Palestinians killed

REUTERS, Cairo

Israel’s tanks pushed into the heart of Jabalia in northern Gaza yesterday, facing anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs from Hamas members concentrated there, while in the south, its forces pounded Rafah without advancing, Palestinian residents and Hamas said.

The slow progress of Israel’s offensive, more than seven months after it was prompted by Hamas’ deadly cross-border raid, highlighted the difficulty of achieving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s aim of eradicating the group.

Armed wings of Hamas and its ally Islamic Jihad have been able to fight up and down the Gaza Strip, using heavily fortified tunnels to stage attacks in both the north – the focus of Israel’s initial invasion – and new battlegrounds like Rafah.

“The operation in Rafah is still limited in space and in targets,” military spokesperson Lt Col Nadav Shoshani said, adding that its attacks were based on specific intelligence.

At least 35,272 Palestinians have been killed and 79,205 have been wounded in Israel’s military offensive on Gaza since October 7, the Gaza health ministry said in a statement yesterday. The toll includes

at least 39 deaths over the past 24 hours, it said.

Egypt has rejected an Israeli proposal for the two countries to coordinate to re-open the Rafah crossing between Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, and to manage its future operation, two Egyptian security sources said.

- S Africa seeks halt to Israel's Rafah offensive at ICJ
- Egypt rejects Israeli plans for Rafah crossing
- Death toll in enclave rises to 35,272

South Africa yesterday asked the top UN court to order an immediate halt to Israel’s incursion in Rafah, describing it as a “genocidal” operation threatening the “very survival of Palestinians”.

Top lawyers for Pretoria kicked off two days of hearings at the Peace Palace, home of the International Court of Justice

(ICJ), imploring judges to order a ceasefire throughout Gaza. Israel will respond today.

The United States anchored a temporary floating pier to a beach in Gaza yesterday to boost aid deliveries, but it was still unclear how it would be distributed given the challenges that have beset the United Nations and relief groups for months.

Israel declared major operations over in northern Gaza months ago while pledging to return to prevent Hamas regrouping. Israel said yesterday that five of its troops were killed by friendly fire in a Gaza battle.

Yesterday, around a week after they moved back in, Israeli tanks were heavily bombarding the main market in the heart of Jabalia, a decades-old refugee camp, and several stores there caught fire, residents and Hamas media outlets said.

“They are bombing like crazy, destroying the houses and the main market in the camp,” one of the camp’s residents told Reuters via a chat app.

In Gaza City to the south, medical teams and the Civil Emergency services said they were continuing the search for casualties in the suburbs of Zeitoun and Sabra after dozens of bodies were recovered in the wake of a six-day army raid there.

Comilla univ student suspended for ‘hurting religious sentiment’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

The Comilla University authorities yesterday suspended a student for allegedly making derogatory comments against religion on social media.

Acting Registrar Amirul Haque Chowdhury issued the suspension letter to the Physics department student yesterday, confirmed by the university’s Public Relations Officer Emdadul Haque.

On Wednesday, a show-cause letter was sent to the student, which he did not reply to within the stipulated time of 24 hours, said the PRO.

Proctor Kazi Omar Siddique said, “The proctorial body found the allegation against the student to be true.”

Keshabpur upazila chairman, OC sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A case was filed on Wednesday with a Jashore court against three persons including an officer-in-charge (OC) and an upazila chairman over taking lease of land.

Jahangir Alam, a fish farmer from Keshavpur upazila, filed the case against Zahir Uddin, OC of Keshabpur Police Station; Mofizur Rahman Mofiz, the newly elected chairman of the upazila; and one Selimuzzaman Asad of Altapol village.

The district’s Judicial Magistrate Salman Ahmed has taken the case into cognisance and ordered police to investigate the matter and submit a report within seven days, our Benapole correspondent reports.

According to the case, Jahangir took a lease of 450 bighas of land in Madhyakul Mauza for fish farming for five years. The lease agreement was signed with 214 farmers for a total of Tk 1.8 crore.

However, Mofiz, upon being elected chairman, allegedly signed another agreement with 100 farmers among the 214 to cultivate the same land.

Farmer Jahangir alleged that since February 2024, Mofiz and Asad have been threatening him to relinquish his lease and hand over the land to them. When he attempted to lodge a complaint with the Keshabpur Police Station, the officials reportedly refused to register it.

Worker burned to death in Badda fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A worker died in a fire that broke out at a foam factory and spread to the nearby building at Satarkul in the capital’s Badda Wednesday night.

Deceased Mofizul Islam, 37, was a worker of Roxy Foam Limited.

Firefighters recovered his charred body lying on the stairs of a two-storey building adjacent to the factory.

Mofizul’s brother-in-law Noor Alam said the victim along with one of his coworkers used to live in a first-floor room of the building. After his work at the factory, he returned his room around 10:30pm. The factory was closed when it caught fire, he added.

Shafiqul Islam, deputy assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said two fire engines rushed to the spot at 11:20pm and doused the flame after an hour’s effort.

No let-up in reserves slide

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Bankers say, mismanagement in the forex market in Bangladesh, frequent policy changes by the central bank, and the gap between the official exchange rate and the unofficial one are also to blame.

Since August 2021, forex reserves have fallen by \$24 billion.

A chief executive of a private bank, seeking anonymity, says when the exchange rate of US dollar was Tk120 per dollar in the market, the central bank fixed the rate at Tk110. This prompted Bangladeshi expatriates to remit through illegal channels.

At a time when countries devalued their currencies against the dollar, the central bank of Bangladesh upheld the value of its currency, says the executive, adding that this was not a good decision.

Before 2022, the central bank used to fix the dollar vs taka exchange rate. Then the Association of Bankers Bangladesh and Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association fixed

the rate in line with the direction of the central bank.

As the initiatives failed to calm the forex market, the banking regulator last week introduced a crawling peg system. As per the system, the mid-rate of USD is set at Tk117 per dollar.

Since 2021, the BB pumped around \$27 billion to the market from its reserves. The banking regulator is now more cautious when it comes to injecting USD to banks.

IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

Some international credit rating agencies, including Fitch, put Bangladesh on a negative outlook last year because of the depleting reserves and volatile forex market.

Forex reserves is one of the major indicators of economic strength of a country, says Mustafa K Mujeri, former chief economist of the Bangladesh Bank.

When foreign investors and banks want to invest or give loans to a country, they first check its forex reserves, says the executive director of Institute for

Inclusive Finance and Development, adding that the higher a country’s reserves, the better its credit rating.

Every country has a policy of maintaining forex reserves to settle the import bills for at least three months. It is risky if a country does not have one, according to him. If the reserves are not respectable, foreign investors lose confidence in the country.

CENTRAL BANK’S EXPECTATIONS

The central bank expects the reserves to rise after the introduction of the crawling peg system.

BB Deputy Governor Habibur Rahman said curbing forex reserve depletion was a major focus of the central bank.

“We have introduced the new system to this end,” he said, adding that the hike in the exchange rate would help raise export and remittance flow in the coming months.

“Subsequently, the deficit in the financial account will narrow. It will give a boost to the reserves.”

Smooth sailing for hajj pilgrims leaving Dhaka

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still only available at Dhaka airport, and therefore around 3,000 hajj pilgrims who will travel to Saudi Arabia via Chattogram and Sylhet international airports, will not get the facility.

The “Makkah Route Initiative” is one of the Ministry of Interior’s initiatives within the “Pilgrim Experience Program” in seven countries: Bangladesh, Morocco, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and, for the first time, Türkiye and Côte d’Ivoire.

The initiative aims to provide high-quality transportation services for pilgrims from beneficiary countries to Saudi Arabia. The initiative streamlines the hajj process for participants by allowing them to complete key procedures from their home country.

This includes electronic visa issuance, biometric data collection, and airport departure checks after verifying health requirements.

Luggage is coded and sorted based on pre-arranged transportation and

accommodation in Saudi Arabia.

Upon arrival, pilgrims are whisked away on dedicated buses to their residences in Makkah and Madinah, with their luggage delivered by service agencies.

Group Captain Kamrul Islam, executive director at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, said, “The Saudi authorities have set up something like a mini airport inside the Dhaka airport to complete immigration and other necessary formalities of Bangladeshi pilgrims.”

After arriving at the Hajj Camp at the city’s Ashkona, pilgrims only need to obtain a boarding pass and complete Bangladeshi immigration formalities.

Luggage of hajj pilgrims are managed and taken care of by the respective staff of the religious affairs ministry and Dhaka airport.

Pilgrims are then taken to the Dhaka airport by bus, where Saudi immigration formalities are completed.

“Travelling under the Makkah

Route Initiative feels like domestic travel,” Abdul Alim, a hajj pilgrim said at the Ashkona Hajj Camp recently.

In the past, Bangladeshi hajjis had to wait hours on end with all their luggage at the Saudi airport to complete immigration formalities.

“Those days of suffering are now over.”

4,000 PILGRIMS YET TO GET VISA As of yesterday, around 4,000 aspiring hajj pilgrims were yet to get visas to Saudi Arabia, according to the religious affairs ministry.

Additional Secretary Matiul Islam said the ministry has already warned 12 hajj private agencies to complete the visa process for all pilgrims scheduled to perform hajj under their management.

Around 3,000 pilgrims are scheduled to perform hajj under the 12 private agencies.

A total of 20,291 pilgrims have so far travelled to Saudi Arabia on 51 flights of Biman, Saudia and Flynas airlines in the last seven days since May 9.

Illegal rickshaws rule Dhaka streets

FROM PAGE 1

registrations or their registrations had expired.

During the day, battery-run rickshaws mainly ply different alleys of the city, but those invade a large number of streets in the evening, making traffic worse.

Leaders of the Rickshaw Van Easybike Sramik Union said battery-powered rickshaws are operated using tokens or cards issued by local politicians and influential people under the banners of different organisations.

The battery-run rickshaw owners avail the tokens or cards every month for Tk 1,000 to Tk 2,500 for each three-wheeler.

In Jatrabari, Shvampur, Postagola, Wari, Sadarghat, Pallabi, Rupnagar, Bhasantek, Khilgaon, Magda, Manda, Maniknagar, and Kamrangirchar areas, battery-run rickshaws are controlled by different gangs and influential people, said Ariful Islam Nadim, joint secretary of the sramik union.

All these gangs and influential people have police backing, he claimed.

In Dhaka’s posh areas like Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara, DOHS, and Bashundhara Residential Area, rickshaws are controlled by the neighbourhoods concerned, and a rickshaw puller needs to pay Tk 12,000-15,000 to have permission from those neighbourhoods, BLS study said.

Ariful blamed the two city corporations for the high number of illegal rickshaws, saying that they do not register new rickshaws.

“The government can earn good revenue by registering battery-run rickshaws. The money is now pocketed by local politicians, influential people and cops,” he said.

Jabbar Miah, a rickshaw puller from Jatrabari, said he drives a battery-run-rickshaw because it can be driven with less physical labour than a pedal rickshaw.

“I can make about Tk 1,000 a day. But I need to pay Tk 2,000 a month for the token.”

Nazir Amin, another rickshaw puller from Kamrangirchar, said he pays a Tk 2,300 a month to a man who controls the business.

“If police catch my rickshaw, I have to pay them Tk 1,200 to get it back. If a rickshaw puller cannot not pay the amount, his battery-run rickshaw gets

dumped [impounded],” he said.

Transport expert Prof Hadiuzzaman said the increasing number of rickshaws have been worsening traffic in the capital over the years.

“If non-motorised vehicles keep on increasing, it will only aggravate the traffic as the streets are not becoming wider,” he told this correspondent on Wednesday.

Hadiuzzman, also a teacher of civil engineering at Buet, said rickshaws should be given registration numbers after improving the registration system.

“If the rickshaws were registered, the government would earn revenue and widespread extortion of rickshaw pullers would stop.”

He suggested adopting a comprehensive policy for granting route permits and registering rickshaws, and arranging training for the rickshaw pullers.

The expert said steps should be taken to regulate battery-run rickshaws.

“These rickshaws should be allowed to operate on specific routes after registration. Besides, such rickshaws should be modified to make them suitable for certain roads as there are many weaknesses in those, including the braking system,” he said.

He said the BRTA is not capable of registering such a large number of battery-run rickshaws.

DNCC Public Relations Officer (PRO) Mokbul Hossain said they have developed a comprehensive plan to ensure discipline in operating pedal rickshaws in the DNCC area.

“The plan is currently awaiting approval from the Local Government Engineering Department,” he said.

Mokbul said the corporation will issue digital number plates with QR codes to pedal rickshaws to prevent the reuse of previous number plates. He, however, did not mention the time when they would introduce the system.

He could not confirm when they would renew the pedal rickshaw registrations and what actions would be taken against the illegal ones.

The DNCC official said their magistrates carry out drives occasionally against battery-run rickshaws.

DSCC PRO Abu Naser said that they have renewed the registrations of rickshaws recently.

“We have developed an app, which can scan QR codes, to access the

information of registered rickshaws.”

He said the city corporation was carrying out campaigns to make people aware of the risks of battery-run rickshaws, and to discourage them from using those.

Md Monibur Rahman, additional police commissioner (traffic) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they have already freed some major roads from pedal rickshaws to ease congestion.

“We are conducting drives against battery-run rickshaws. Our efforts are underway to bring discipline to the city streets,” he said.

Regarding allegations of some police officers taking bribes to allow battery-run rickshaws on roads, the DMP official said they have taken steps against those involved based on evidence, and they would continue to do so.

BRTA Director Mahbub-E-Rabbani said they are against allowing battery-run rickshaws on the streets as those pose high risks.

“If a pedal rickshaw is converted into a motorised one, it won’t be safe,” he added.

Buet teacher Hadiuzzman recommended making more public transport available on the major roads, including highways.

“If this can be done, the trend of rickshaws on major roads would be down and the accidents involving battery-run rickshaws would decrease significantly,” he said.

Bangladeshis have \$5.9b in tax havens

FROM PAGE 1

OCCRP said that Dubai is popular because of “the emirate’s inconsistent responses to requests from foreign authorities for help arresting and extraditing fugitives.”

Transparency International said in a press release, “It is difficult to understand how high-profile PEPs, including officials that are under investigation or subject to sanctions elsewhere, can purchase and own these properties without being subject to scrutiny. Authorities should be able to identify suspicious cases themselves, and also share intelligence with their foreign counterparts and target assets.”



Homecoming day of Sheikh Hasina today

BSS, Dhaka

Today is the 44th homecoming day of Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

On May 17 in 1981, she returned to the country after a long exile.

Boarding on an aircraft of the Indian Airlines, Hasina reached the then Kurmitola Airport in Dhaka from the Indian capital of New Delhi via Kolkata at 4:30pm on the day.

Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was brutally killed along with most of his family members

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A man tries to squeeze through an open space in this partially damaged guard rail to go to the other side. Despite there being a spot in the background where one can safely cross the road, many opt to such risky methods just to save some time. The photo was taken in front of Azimpur Maternity Hospital yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Despite surplus, cattle smuggling on ahead of Eid

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

There's hardly a month left to celebrate Eid-ul Azha.

The government has already assured that the number of sacrificial animals will be 20 lakh more than the demand. Despite this, cattle smuggling continues unabated through the bordering districts.

The borders along Myanmar are no different, despite the ongoing conflict in the neighbouring country.

Dozens of cattle have entered through Fultali, Lambasia, Bear Khaiya, and Chakdala of Bandarban's Naikhongchhari and Cox's Bazar's Ramu recently, said locals.

Nurul Afsar, chairman of the Naikhongchhari Sadar Union, told The Daily Star, "Cattle are regularly being smuggled from Myanmar to Bangladesh."

"On May 12, a Bangladeshi youth Abul Kalam, 28, was killed while smuggling cattle. Since then, smuggling has stopped [for a while]," Afsar added.

The next day, Amzed Ali, 30, was shot at the Putkhali



Our Bandarban correspondent saw this truck full of cattle from Myanmar entering Chattogram city around 9:00pm last night.

PHOTO: STAR

border in Benapole while smuggling cattle into Bangladesh from India.

On April 27, the Sylhet Metropolitan Police seized 18 Indian cows along with three pickups. Three cattle traders -- Jasim Uddin, 35, Rohish Mia, 39, and Sadek Mia, 42 -- were arrested.

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College classes start from July 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following the completion of the college admissions process on July 25, classes for grade XI students will begin on July 30, according to a notification issued by Dhaka Education Board.

The online application process for college admission will start on May 26 and continue until June 11, it said.

The admission process will be conducted in three phases. After the first phase begins, the authorities will scrutinise the applications from June 12-13 and publish the results on June 23, the notification said.

The second phase will run from June 30 to July 2, and the third phase from July 9-10. Final admissions will be completed between July 15 and July 25.

Applicants can select a minimum of five and a maximum of ten colleges for admission. Students will have to pay a fee of Tk 150 for applying online, according to the guidelines.

Save rivers to save country

Speakers tell event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The rivers should be freed from encroachment and pollution by implementing existing laws, said speakers at an event yesterday.

They said this at a dialogue on the "Role of Media in Stopping River Pollution," organised by Waterkeepers Bangladesh in collaboration with USAID and Counterpart International Bangladesh at Jatiya Press Club.

Addressing the event, former chairman of the National River Conservation Commission, Mujibur Rahman Howlader, said, "Today, when we go to save the Padma, Meghna, and Jamuna, we face threats... It's time to discuss why river laws aren't being enforced. Rivers are public property. It's up to all of us to protect them."

Sharif Jamil, coordinator of Waterkeepers Bangladesh, said the rivers of Dhaka are losing their existence.

"Grabbers are regularly occupying all the rivers... Pollution should be brought under control by installing ETPs at factories that pollute rivers. If we can't protect the country's rivers, we cannot save the country," he added.

Gloria Jharna Sarkar, a former lawmaker for women's reserved seats, said while the government is allocating funds for the river, local public representatives are not fulfilling their responsibilities.

Former lawmaker Shamim Haider Patwary said protecting the river has now become a pressing need. He urged media workers to increase in-depth reporting so that the grabbers can be identified.

Pinaki Roy, chief reporter at The Daily Star, mentioned that Tk 4,000 crore has been allocated for river protection, but the majority of these funds have been used for constructing landing stations and walkways.

Nutrition budget underutilised

Speakers call for coordinated efforts among ministries, down-to-up approach in national action plan



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh does not have a dedicated nutrition budget. On top of that, ministries don't utilise the full funds allocated to them for nutrition related activities, said speakers at an event yesterday.

A recent assessment of government investment in nutrition-related interventions across seven ministries revealed poor utilisation rates.

For example, the education ministry and LGRD ministry could use only 49 percent of the allocation, while the health ministry and the food ministry utilised 62 and 66 percent of their allocations, respectively, according to the National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN) 2016-2025.

Prepared by South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, the findings

of the study, titled "Assessment of Government Investment in Nutrition-related Interventions of Selected Ministries," were presented at an event yesterday.

The event, titled "Study Sharing & Policy Discussion on Assessing Public Expenditure in NPAN-2, 8th five-year plan," was jointly organised by Joint Action for Nutrition Outcome and The Daily Star, supported by CARE Bangladesh.

Dhaka University Professor and Research Director of SANEM, Sayema Haque Bidisha, shared that among the seven projects aligned with the nutritional action plan in the health and family planning ministry, four have been completed, leaving 29 percent of the budget unspent.

Similarly, out of 21 nutrition related projects in the food ministry, 12 are completed, one is ongoing, and eight have shown no progress.

The study also highlighted that Bangladesh's per capita nutrition expenditure was US \$18 in 2016-17, significantly lower than Bhutan's US \$29 for the same period.

As per the study, key obstacles to implementing NPAN2 include inadequate budget allocation, socio-cultural complexities, and a lack of flexible planning and execution.

To address nutritional concerns effectively, the study recommended adopting a "3M" strategy -- multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, and multi-level.

Md Shahidul Alam, director general of Food Planning and Monitoring Unit of food ministry, emphasised the need for increased investment in nutrition.

Mentioning that there is no alternative to awareness about nutrition, he said, "National Dietary

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



COURT CORNER

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

Probe submission deadline extended for 110th time

COURT CORRESPONDENT



A Dhaka court yesterday extended till June 30 the deadline for submitting the probe report of a case filed over the murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi in February 2012.

This is the 110th extension of the deadline for probe report submission.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mahbubul Haque passed the order as Investigation Officer Khondoker Md Shafiqul Alam, also an additional superintendent of police at Rab, failed to submit the report, said a court police.

On April 2, the same court asked Rab to submit the investigation report by yesterday.

Sagar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Runi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012, in their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar.

Nousher Ali Roman, Runi's brother, filed a case with Sher-e-Bangla Police Station the following day.

Salim Prodhan can't contest upazila polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday imposed a fine of Tk 10,000 on alleged casino kingpin Salim Prodhan for wasting its time with a petition to run for chairman in the next Rupganj upazila parishad elections in Narayanganj, despite being convicted in an embezzlement case.

The court further maintained its stay on a High Court directive to the Election Commission, asking it to allot him an election symbol and allow his participation in the polls scheduled for Monday.

An eight-member bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan, passed the order while hearing two petitions filed by the EC and Prodhan's opponent Habibur Rahman, challenging the HC order.

Following this order, Prodhan cannot participate in the Rupganj upazila polls, said Habibur's lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan.

GRAMEEN KALYAN TAX EVASION

Rehearing of two petitions starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday started rehearing of two writ petitions that challenged National Board of Revenue orders over reassessment of around Tk 600 crore as income tax from Grameen Kalyan for different tax years.

Grameen Kalyan is a nonprofitable and charitable organisation founded by Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus.

The bench of Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar and Justice SM Maniruzzaman adjourned the hearing and set July 16 and 25 for further hearing on the matters.

Looking out for strays

Dhaka's young people unite to ensure animal rights

AAQIB HASIB

Since a very young age, Anika Islam has been an avid animal lover.

Eventually, around 2017, she actively began rescuing and protecting animals in her area -- particularly stray cats and dogs.

"These poor animals cannot talk. They cannot communicate with us. If they are feeling discomfort or pain, they cannot tell us. So, of course we should do our best to help them," says Anika.

Since the inception of her journey as an animal rescuer, Anika has found support in online communities, particularly Facebook groups, where she could ask questions or reach out to like-minded individuals.

Seeing the benefit of working in tandem with other animal lovers, Anika began her own Messenger group with those interested.

This group of 15 friends would go on to feed and rescue countless animals in their respective neighbourhoods. They also collaborated with other organisations to spay and neuter dogs in their areas.

Whenever they receive information about



an animal being abused, they try to raise awareness about animal rights and even help turn many people into animal lovers.

However, members of this group were left shaken to their core when a stray dog was mercilessly beaten to death by guards on the premises of a footwear factory in Gazipur in early March this year.

Video footage of the incident went viral on social media.

The Animal Welfare Act 2019 states that

anyone found guilty of abusing or hurting an animal can be sentenced to two years of prison or fined Tk 50,000 or both. Despite this law, animal cruelty continues unabated in the country.

Allegedly, when Anika and numerous others tried to seek justice for the inhumane killing of the dog in Gazipur, they found very few legal solutions. Regardless of the law, the implementation and awareness surrounding the act seems almost non-existent.

Desperate to find some justice, Anika along with her friends and numerous others formed a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club on Friday morning.

Around 25 of them gathered there, equipped with placards and signs. They also handed out leaflets containing the most vital parts of the Animal Welfare Act 2019.

Hazara Synthea Shaoleen, an animal rescuer who attended the protest, said, "We wanted to raise awareness about the issue of animal rights, because not many people know there are laws that protect animals in our country."

Seeing the passion with which Anika and her friends were going about trying to get justice for stray animals that are unjustly killed, Barrister Sheikh Robaiyat Islam also joined their efforts.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Assess its contents to meet international standards: speakers

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday urged the authorities concerned to assess whether the contents of existing vocational education are in line with local development objectives and meet international standards.

They also called for a change in societal perspective on vocational education and urged parents to send children to pursue it.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue organised the event titled “The Role of Local Vocational and Technical Education Institutions in Creating Youth Employment Opportunities”, in collaboration with the European Union, Citizens’ Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, and Eco-Social Development Organization, in Satkhira Sadar upazila.

Towfiqul Islam Khan, senior research fellow at CPD, delivered the keynote presentation at the programme.

Addressing the event, Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow at CPD, said “The societal perspective on vocational education has not evolved yet. This remains a significant issue. Moreover, we need to evaluate whether the curriculum of vocational education programmes aligns with local development needs and international standards.”

The speakers made several recommendations, including raising awareness about vocational education among citizens, establishing minimum wage standards, and facilitating internships for the trainees.

Despite surplus

FROM PAGE 3

Abdul Awal, a livestock farmer in Keraniganj area, said they have sufficient sacrificial animals. “But the price will drop if cattle are smuggled from neighbouring countries. If smuggling is not prevented, then local farmers will count losses,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdur Rahman yesterday said necessary instructions will be issued in the bordering districts to stop cattle smuggling.

The minister came up with the remark after attending the inter-ministerial meeting on demand assessment,

supply, and ensuring easy transportation of sacrificial animals ahead of Eid.

The expected supply of sacrificial animals this year is 129,803,367, which is 444,034 more than last year’s. Additionally, there are 22,779,973 more cattle available than the demand.

Special measures will be taken to ensure that buyers and sellers are not subjected to undue harassment. The minister said that like the previous year, the system of selling sacrificial animals will continue across the country on online platforms. A control room (hot line-16358) will be operated from the Directorate of Livestock.



Preserving heritage

SHEIKH TAJUL ISLAM TAJ

Pottery, a craftsmanship with a heritage of hundreds of years in Bengal, is gradually approaching oblivion.

Once earthenware items were an indispensable part of every household in this region. However, over time, as modern amenities have found their way into our lives through advancement and innovation in usage, pottery items lost their utility, and only continued to exist largely as an art form.

Nowadays, many potters are leaving their ancestral profession due to low demand for their craft.

However, some young students from Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Mymensingh have taken an initiative to preserve this craftsmanship through a project called “LAMATI”.

They aim to equip the potters with modern pottery skills, create employment for them, and

make an earnest effort to save the heritage through an aesthetic revival of the craftsmanship.

Under the initiative, the team arranged a two-month training programme for some potters from Muktagachha to familiarise them with more contemporary tastes and come up with innovative approach to make earthenware items blend seamlessly with the modern lifestyle.

One such item is a clay water preserver with a tap at the bottom of it, giving it a more utilitarian take, while also adding an aesthetic touch to it by incorporating a colourful “rickshaw painting” motif on the exterior, and using a “tepa putul” (clay doll) as its lid.

“Tepa putul, or dolls made from soft clay by pressing with hands, is a traditional pottery heritage of the region. We made the lid with this to connect to our rural heritage,” said Rozalina Khan, co-founder of the team.

“We’ve also used a rickshaw

painting theme using different bright and shiny colours like red, blue, yellow, green, and orange to give it a vibrant presence,” she said.

According to the team, this earthen water preserver can be a healthy as well as effective alternative to plastic jugs and thereby reduce our dependence on plasticware.

One of the trainers, Nabila Khan, said, “We saw that they make beautiful earthenware, which can become more noticeable if they use a combination of different colours following a theme. This also adds extra values to their products. As such, we gave them primary training on colour theory and theme-based paintings.”

“Using a theme to colour something makes people more curious to know about it. For example, we used the theme of Muktagachha’s zamindars [feudal lords] in some of the works,” she added.

‘AL in power to secure foreign lord’s interests’

Alleges Fakhru

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that India has been continuously making efforts to keep Bangladesh under its control instead of resolving the water-sharing issues of common transborder rivers.

Speaking at a discussion on Farakka Long March Day, he criticised the Awami League government for its failure to resolve the water problem with India.

The current regime has been in power solely to secure interests of its foreign lord, he said.

“The root cause of this failure lies in the fact that this is completely a subservient regime. It has consistently failed to take a stand in favour of the people’s interests, as they are extremely feeble in dealing with India,” he added.

Bhasani Anusari Parishad arranged the programme at the Jatiya Press Club.



How does Fakhru know about US stance?: Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Regarding BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir’s comment that the US remains in its previous stance over Bangladesh, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday questioned how Fakhru knows that.

Fakhru’s remarks are worthless after the remarks of Donald Lu, he said.

He said this while speaking at a food distribution event in the capital, marking party President Sheikh Hasina’s homecoming day.

Quader said Hasina has changed the fate of Bangladesh, while the previous governments only changed their own fortune.

AL’s relief and social welfare sub-committee organised the programme.



Homecoming

FROM PAGE 3

on August 15 in 1975 and his two daughters – Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana – luckily escaped as they were abroad. In a national council session of the Awami League on February 14-16, 1981, Hasina was elected party president.

“I have returned to the country not to become a leader of the Awami League, rather to participate in the struggle for freedom by staying beside the people,” she said in a heart touching reception awarded by nearly 1.5 million people at the airport after her return.

On the occasion, various organisations, including the AL and its associate bodies, will arrange different programmes.

Doa and prayers will also be offered at mosques, temples, churches and pagodas to mark the day.

Nutrition budget underutilised

FROM PAGE 3

Intake Guidelines have been prepared in 2020. But the reality is that these guidelines have not reached the common people in the last four years.”

Margherita Capalbi, portfolio manager of European Union, suggested implementing a mandatory nutrition reporting system and strengthening the Bangladesh National Nutrition Council.

Prof AQM Shafiul Azam, director (planning and development) of the Directorate of Secondary & Higher Education, highlighted the importance of coordinated efforts among ministries, emphasising the need for projects to reach the grassroots effectively.

Hasan Shahriar Kabir, former director general of Bangladesh National Nutrition Council, emphasised down-to-up approach for the upcoming nutrition national action plan.

He also stressed the importance of avoiding project overlap, especially in NGO initiatives.

Prof Syed Abdul Hamid of the Institute of Health

Economics at Dhaka University emphasised the need for increased budget allocation and dedicated manpower in the nutrition sector, suggesting the establishment of nutrition offices at district levels.

The event was addressed by CARE Bangladesh Director Aamanur Rahman, BRAC University Professor Sharmind Neelomi, Nutrition International Country Director Saiga Siraj, Institute of Public Health Nutrition Division Chief (Lab) Shyamal Kumar Roy, Democratic Budget Movement Joint Secretary Sekender Ali Mina, BNNC Deputy Director Nusrat Zahan Mithen, Kursha Union Parishad Chairman Md Abdul Moiz, Food and Agriculture Organization Nutrition & Gender Specialist Masuma Chowdhury, FPMU Research Director Md Mahbubur Rahman, WAVE Foundation Assistant Director Aniruddha Roy, BRAC Programme Manager Mohammad Mahmudul Hasan, Action Aid Manager Amit Dey, PLAN International Bangladesh Advisor Syed Md Nuruddin,

SA TV Business Editor Salahuddin Bablu, among others.

Tanjim Ferdous of The Daily Star moderated the event.

Looking out

FROM PAGE 3

Islam was previously involved in the writ petition filed to control unregulated fireworks – particularly in relation to the hazard caused to wildlife.

“A general diary was filed but no action has been taken yet. If this goes to a criminal court, it is unlikely to go anywhere. However, if we file a writ petition with the High Court to implement the existing law, then we might get some results,” said Islam.

“I will try my best to support this cause. Many other people were involved in the initial GD filing, but backed out when we spoke about filing a writ petition. However, Anika and her friends have come forward to take on that responsibility. Hopefully, we can make the Animal Welfare Act 2019 a more solid law that is implemented properly,” he added.

Sixth season of ‘Ispahani Mirzapore Banglabid’ starts



CITY DESK

The sixth season of the premier TV reality show “Ispahani Mirzapore Banglabid” has kicked off, said a press release.

With the motto “Banglai Jagi Bhorpur,” this initiative by the tea brand “Ispahani Mirzapore” has been promoting Bangla traditions since 2017.

Leading the panel is Dr Soumitra Shekhar, vice-chancellor of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, joined by fiction writer Anisul Haque and media personality Tropa Majumdar.

On May 16, a press conference was organised to mark the occasion, attended by Zahida Ispahani and Emaad Ispahani, directors of the Ispahani Group.

Muhammad Nurul Huda, director general of Bangla Academy, was present as the chief guest.

ANTI-CORRUPTION
Investigative Journalism Awards 2024

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BANGLADESH
Social movement against corruption

ANTI-CORRUPTION
Investigative Journalism Awards 2024

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) is inviting submissions of both print, online and electronic media reports for its Anti-Corruption Investigative Journalism Awards 2024. TIB will award the best investigative reports on corruption of all types in four categories selected by an independent committee of judges. Reports published or broadcast between 01 January to 31 December 2023 in print, online and electronic media owned and operated from Bangladesh will be considered for the awards. Reports must meet the basic requirements of investigative journalism to be eligible for assessment. For submission of reports and further details, please visit: <https://ti-bangladesh.org/ija>

Last Date for Submission : 15 July 2024

BIRDEM GENERAL HOSPITAL
(An Enterprise of the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh)
122, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000.

Employment Notice
Applications are invited from the citizen of Bangladesh for the following post:
(1) Professor (Immunology), (2) Associate Professor (Biochemistry/Clinical Chemistry) (3) Consultant (Vascular Surgery), (4) Consultant (Medical Oncology), (5) Consultant (Ophthalmology), (6) Consultant (Thoracic Surgery) (7) Assistant Professor (Biochemistry/Clinical Chemistry), (8) Assistant Professor (Transfusion Medicine & Clinical Haematology), (9) Junior Consultant (Urology), (10) Junior Consultant (Psychiatry), (11) Junior Consultant (Critical Care Medicine), (12) Junior Consultant (Hepatobiliary Pancreatic Surgery & Liver Transplant) (13) Registrar (Radiology & Imaging), (14) Registrar (Orthopaedics), (15) Registrar (Cardiology), (16) Medical Officer (Dental Surgery), (17) Programmer (Computer Unit), (18) Dialysis Engineer, (19) Jr. Officer (Store Accounts), (20) Research Asstt. (Microbiology), (21) Media Maker (Microbiology), (22) Account Assistant (Stores), (23) Endoscopy Attendant.

Academic designations will be conferred to eligible persons. Applications to be submitted in prescribed form, obtainable from Cash Counter # 15 & 22, BIRDEM on all working days (from 9-00 A.M. to 12-30 P.M). For details please visit BIRDEM & BADAS Website: www.birdembd.org & www.dah-bd.org
Last date of Application 13.06.2024.

Director General

Regional Public Administration Training Center
Office of the Deputy Director
Boyra, Khulna

No.: 05.01.4000.002.07.002.24.98 Date: 16.05.2024

e-Tender Notice
e-Tender will be available on 19 May, 2024 in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of Goods mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Tender ID
01	986732

This is the online Tender, where e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and No offline/hard Copy's will be accepted. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-Gp system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@procure.gov.bd)

(Khatune Jannat)

Deputy Director
Tel: 02477702347
e-mail: ddrprackhulna@gmail.com

GD-000

In Remembrance
Faruq Choudhury
1934 - 2017

“To live in the hearts of those who love him is not to die”
From your loving family

Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Chuadanga.
E-mail: eechu@rhd.gov.bd
Phone & Fax: 0761-63539

Memo No.: 35.01.1800.409.05.001.24-1210 Dated: 16/05/2024 Eng.

e-Tender Notice
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of the following works:

Tender ID	Tender No and Description	Last selling Date and Time	Closing Date and Time
986583	e-GP/CHURDI/21/2023-2024. Repair with Seal coat work including partial strengthening at Ch. 52+110 km to Ch. 53+750 km (Total Length=1650m) at Houapur of Amali-Tailupi-Akandanga Road (2-7404) under Road Division, Chuadanga during the year 2023-2024.	26-May-2024 18:00	27-May-2024 11:00

- This is an online Tender. Where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
- To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
- The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any Member of Schedule Banks for e-GP.
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@procure.gov.bd)

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Actress Léa Seydoux shines bright amidst her co-stars at Cannes 2024.



Chris Hemsworth, Anya Taylor-Joy and “Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga” cast members grace Cannes red carpet.



Meryl Streep along with most of the jury members at the 77th edition of Cannes Film Festival.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

CANNES UNFOLDS

Highlights from the 77th opening

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

In the face of the persistent rainy skies of France, the Cannes Film Festival began as per schedule on May 14, with the awarding of an honorary Palme d'Or to Meryl Streep and the introduction of Greta Gerwig's jury—heralding the start of the 77th edition of this renowned event on the French Riviera.

Almost as prestigious as winning the Palme d'Or, the top prize at the Cannes, is serving on the jury that selects the winner. Renowned artists from various fields worldwide are chosen to be part of the jury, with one member appointed as the jury president.

The nine members of the jury for the 77th edition of the festival are— jury president Greta Gerwig, who delivered massive success last year with *Barbie*; Golden Globe winner actress Lily Gladstone, also the first Native American woman to be nominated for an Oscar; Turkish photographer, actor and screenwriter Ebru Ceylan; French actress Eva Green; Spanish director Juan Antonio Bayona, the 12-time winner of Spain's prestigious Goya Awards; Golden Globe, Bafta and Oscar nominated, Lebanese director and screenwriter Nadine Labaki; Italy's most famous actor with a parallel Hollywood career, Pierfrancesco Favino; Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda, who returns as a main competition jury

member after winning best screenplay last year for *Monster*; Cannes veteran, Cesar award-winner and French actor Omar Sy.

Before the ceremony, French singer Zahou de Sagazan performed David Bowie's *Modern Love* in the theatre aisles to pay tribute to Gerwig's black-and-white dance scene in *Frances Ha*. Gerwig sang along and appeared visibly moved by the performance as de Sagazan later joined her on stage to kiss her hand.

When Streep took the stage in a simple white gown and black frame glasses, welcomed by French actress Juliette Binoche to be awarded the honorary Palme d'Or, the audience erupted into a two-minute-long standing ovation.

In her speech, Streep reminisced about a time when she thought her career was winding down at the age of 40. She playfully expressed, "I'm just so grateful that you haven't gotten tired of seeing my face and you haven't jumped off the train. My mother, who is usually right about everything, said to me, 'Meryl, my darling, you'll see. It all goes by so fast. So fast.' And it has, and it does. Except for my speech, which is too long."

Another guest on the red carpet who made heads turn and photos flood online was Messi the dog — the four-legged scene-stealer from last year's Palme d'Or winning film *Anatomy of a Fall*.



Meryl Streep with the honorary Palme d'Or.



Director Adnan Al Rajeev.

Then again, much of this year's behind-the-scenes Cannes drama made most of the headlines. Earlier this year, French actor Judith Godrèche accused two film directors of sexually abusing and raping her during her teenage years. These allegations have brought the French film industry to a pivotal #MeToo moment.

On May 14, Godrèche debuted her short film *Moi Aussi*. When questioned about the #MeToo



Messi the Dog from last year's Palme d'Or winning film "Anatomy of a Fall".



Actress Ashna Habib Bhabna

movement's expansion to France, Gerwig told reporters in Cannes that it signifies progress.

Godrèche's courageous stand against abuse in the film industry adds depth to the festival's narrative. Her passionate call for change resonates as Cannes grapples with misconduct allegations and rumours of a secret list of abusers in the French film community.

As the 77th edition of the Cannes began, excitement for

cinematic excellence was mixed with geopolitical tension. For instance, the abrupt departure of acclaimed Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof from his home country cast a shadow over the event's allure.

The director fled his homeland shortly after receiving an eight-year prison sentence on security charges.

"I'm grateful to my friends, acquaintances, and people who kindly, selflessly, and sometimes by risking their lives, helped me get out of the border and reach a safe place on the difficult and long path of this journey," conveyed Rasoulof on Instagram, whose current location remains unknown.

Rasoulof whose passport was seized in September 2017, criticised Iranian authorities' repression and urged the global cinema community to support filmmakers facing censorship and uphold freedom of speech.

His escape fueled speculation that he might attend the Cannes premiere of his film *The Seed of The Sacred Fig* on Friday (May 17), potentially leading to a confrontation with the Islamic Republic, which had pressured him to withdraw the film.

Global tensions loom over the festival as the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine and the #MeToo movement in France prompt scrutiny of sexual abuse and misconduct in the film industry.

On Wednesday night, The film *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, starring

Chris Hemsworth and Anya Taylor-Joy, premiered at the festival and received an enthusiastic standing ovation lasting seven minutes.

From Bangladesh, actress Ashna Habib Bhabna is attending the Cannes Film Festival for the first time in her career.

She discussed her journey to the festival and her plans until its conclusion in an interview with The Daily Star, over the phone, stating, "I am happy to be here as a South Asian artiste. I came here on my own; I applied, and they sent me the accreditation letter after finding me eligible for the festival. It feels like a dream come true. For me, nothing makes me any more prouder than coming here as an actor."

Acclaimed Bangladeshi filmmaker Adnan Al Rajeev achieves a significant milestone as his co-produced Filipino short film, *Radikals*, earns a coveted nomination for its world premiere at Cannes this year. Collaborating with fellow Bangladeshi filmmaker Tanveer Hossain, Adnan realises his creative vision in this compelling project. Scheduled to debut at the esteemed 63rd Semaine de la Critique of Cannes, the film is directed by Filipino filmmaker Arvin Belarmino, who, alongside co-writer Kyla Romero, has crafted the narrative.

The festival will conclude on May 25 with a final honorary award presented to *Star Wars* creator George Lucas.

NEWS

Govt goes for a slim ADP to fight inflation

FROM PAGE 1

In the new ADP, the government fund will be Tk 1,65,000 crore, down by 2.37 percent, while the foreign fund allocation will rise by 6.38 percent or Tk 6,000 crore.

At the NEC meeting, the prime minister gave directives to make additional efforts while utilising foreign loans in the ADP, said the senior secretary.

She also directed the ministries concerned and the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division to submit reports every three months to the NEC on the utilisation of foreign loans.

The country's inflation has been above nine percent since March last year despite various government efforts to tame it.

Moreover, despite several steps from the government and Bangladesh Bank, forex reserves have been

declining over the past two years.

BB's latest statistics show the country's gross international reserves as per the IMF method came down to \$18.43 billion on May 15.

At a post-meeting briefing, Planning Minister Abdus Salam said a key decision regarding undertaking new projects has been made.

He said that from now on, the government will not undertake any upazila-based small project and will take district-wise projects instead.

Salam added that members of parliament would be engaged in framing the district-wise five-year participatory master plan for the districts, and even the upazila chairmen will be involved in the process.

The minister also said more development operations would be conducted in the areas of rural infrastructure, health, education, and

communication.

He added that filtering in project selection is much stronger now with no unnecessary or meaningless project being taken up.

State Minister for Planning Shahiduzzaman Sarker said the government's project implementations often face problems regarding land acquisition and they have been working to solve such problems.

Senior Secretary Satyajit said the PM has also directed the officials to establish a pool for the project directors and they will be included in the pool after necessary training. She said even if a physician wants to be a project director, they must undergo training.

Besides, she also directed that if any organisation wants to conduct feasibility studies for a project, they have to be registered, he said.

Harassment writ large

FROM PAGE 12

Mahfuzur Rahman, filed the final report on August 8, 2023. He mentioned in the report that no evidence or witnesses were found against the arrestee to substantiate the charges.

Rab-4 Inspector Anowar, also the complainant of the case, mentioned in the FIR that Munshi Iqbal Ahmed, 62, was also arrested at Savar's Rajashan in the case.

He claimed that Iqbal has been involved with Ansar Al Islam for a long time.

The Daily Star was not able to contact Iqbal but the ATU investigator submitted the final report, clearing all suspects including Iqbal.

Jakir Hossain, 50, was also accused in the case but he was not arrested.

Tawohidul Haque, associate professor of the Institute of Social Welfare and Research of Dhaka University, told The Daily Star, "Law enforcers have the legal authority to interrogate any individuals suspected of having involvement in any crime. But there are incidents in which a section of law enforcers have been found to use this authority for personal benefits, or financial gains, and their numbers are not small."

"Who will take the responsibility of the individuals, especially the four who were framed in a militant case...?" he said.

Tawohidul added that such steps by law enforcers to deal with militancy cases would erode people's support and

confidence.

Security analyst Maj Gen (retd) Abdur Rashid, said, "There is no scope for making mistakes by security forces for which people become victims of harassment."

FINAL REPORT

In the final report, IO Mahfuzur of the ATU mentioned the recorded statements of seven witnesses and that each of them said that the Rab-4 team during the arrest of the couple just took their signatures on blank papers. They said they did not know anything about the arrest or collection of evidence.

A witness regarding Iqbal's arrest made a similar statement, read the final report.

The IO analysed digital evidence and phone call records of the arrestees. The final report said the call records and digital footprints did not substantiate that the arrestees were holding secret meetings. The evidence also contradicted the Rab claim about the arrestees' locations, the report said.

Moreover, the forensic analysis of Iqbal's mobile phone did not provide any evidence that he violated the Anti-Terrorism Act, the report read.

ATU SI Mahfuzur declined to give details. "I reported what I found during the probe," he said.

Sadrul Zaman, sub-inspector of Savar Police Station, who was the first assigned investigating officer of the case, told

The Daily Star, "It is the Rab team, who arrested the accused and handed him over to us. I did not even investigate the case for long as it was handed over to the Anti-Terrorism Unit."

FINGERS POINTED TOWARD SENIORS
Inspector Anowar, who is still with Rab-4, told The Daily Star that they did not frame the four in a false case. He said the FIR filed mentioned that evidence they found what they were instructed to do by senior officers.

Anowar, however, did not disclose the "senior officers' name or designation even though he was asked several times.

"I have no personal enmity with the arrestees. I just did what I was told to do," he said.

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

Talking to this newspaper, Mosharraf said, "We [Mosharraf and his wife] were arrested, framed, and then released on bail after languishing in jail for around three and a half months. But we still do not know why we were accused."

"We suffered financially and mentally due to the case. Moreover, my children were distressed when we were in jail," said Mosharraf.

He said he did not even know the accused Iqbal and had met him for the first time in jail.

Asked why he thought he was framed, Mosharraf speculated, "I have some business rivals. It might be a reason but I want the answer... I want justice."

EU probes FB, Instagram over child protection

AFP, Brussels

The EU yesterday opened a formal investigation into Facebook and Instagram on suspicion the platforms owned by Meta are causing addictive behaviour in children.

The probe is under a mammoth law known as the Digital Services Act (DSA) that forces the world's largest tech firms to do more to protect European users online and clamp down on illegal content.

It is the second investigation into Meta. An earlier one was launched by the European Union last month over fears Facebook and Instagram are failing to counter disinformation.

"We are not convinced that it has done enough to comply with the DSA obligations to mitigate the risks of negative effects to the physical and mental health of young Europeans," the EU's internal market commissioner, Thierry Breton, said.

"We are sparing no effort to protect our children," he added.

A Meta spokesperson defended the company's efforts to protect young users.

Not much being done

FROM PAGE 12

are still depending on the results of three surveys, carried out by the health directorate, to take their measures.

Saifur, also an assistant professor at National University, said there is a lack of records of Aedes mosquitos' clusters (hotspots).

"Keeping records of dengue clusters through surveillance is very important, but there is no surveillance system across the country," he said, adding that there is no lab to conduct surveillance and find the trend of dengue virus.

At least 32 dengue patients died and 2,545 were hospitalised across the country as May 15, according to the data of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The numbers were 13 and 2,022 till May last year.

The country recorded 3,21,179 dengue cases last year, including 1,10,008 in Dhaka.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, said a recent survey conducted by the university found high density of Aedes mosquitoes in Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, Chattogram, Barishal, Barguna, Chandpur, and Gazipur.

"If the authorities concerned can take effective measures right now, it is still possible to control the Aedes mosquitoes. Otherwise, there is a possibility of crossing the number of last year's dengue cases," he said.

Brig Gen Imru-al-Quais, chief health officer of DNCC, said they recently set up 20 mosquito-catching traps at five zones of the corporation as part of Aedes mosquito surveillance.

He said they have a plan to set up 200 traps.

"Through this surveillance, we will know some information like density of the Aedes mosquito, its types, and the effectiveness of our measures."

Surveillance is very important before starting any work, Quais said, adding that they are taking measures based on the surveillance.

A US expert team will visit Bangladesh shortly to observe the surveillance of DNCC and give their advice on it, the official said.

Fazle Shamsul Kabir, chief health

officer of DSCC, said they do not have any entomologist, but they are taking measures through their officials and employees to be vigilant in the DSCC areas.

He said they are taking steps based on their previous data and continuous observation of the mosquito control workers and supervisors.

Kabir said they have plans to appoint an entomologist and set up a lab, but that would take time.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Prof Bashar suggested having a proper solid waste management system in place, destroying possible breeding containers, applying an insect growth regulator (IGR) or Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis (Bti) where applicable and conducting extensive drives in and around the houses of dengue patients to kill adult mosquitoes.

He recommended introducing online registration of patients for having accurate data of dengue cases as it is very important to take effective measures.

Saifur stressed the need for conducting surveillance immediately so the hotspots of Aedes mosquitoes and larvae can be identified. "Effective measures will have to be taken to destroy adult mosquitoes and larvae."

Bti or the same kind of insecticide is also needed to be applied at the hotspots, he added.

Probe body

FROM PAGE 1

ministry in the first week of May.

The committee had cited various "errors" as reason for recommending the removal of the story, the member said, adding that the final decision rested with the ministry.

The committee was headed by Prof Abdul Rashid, vice chancellor of the Islamic Arabic University, with four others, namely – Mufti Maulana Kafil Uddin Sarker, governor of the Islamic Foundation; Prof Moshuazzaman, member of the NCTB; Abdul Halim, director of the Institute of Education and Research at Dhaka University; and Prof Mohammad Abdur Rashid, principal of Dhaka Alia Madrasa.

The formation of the committee also sparked criticism, as some academicians and rights activists believed that it went against the spirit of the secular country.

No let-up in reserves slide

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves have been falling since September 2021 despite a series of government initiatives to reverse the trend.

As of Wednesday, the gross international reserves (GIR) was \$18.42 billion, just enough to pay for imports over three and a half months.

The period barely meets the International Monetary Fund's minimum benchmark for countries to clear import payments.

According to Bangladesh Bank data, Bangladesh's monthly import bill is around \$5 billion.

The country's net international reserves (NIR) -- the amount after deduction of foreign currency liabilities from gross reserves -- would be \$13 billion, which covers two and half months of import.

The government can use the NIR at an instant, central bank officials say.

For imports, the central bank last week paid \$1.63 billion through the Asian Clearing Union, an arrangement of 10 countries, including India, one of the largest trading partners of Bangladesh, for settling transactions. This caused the reserves to sink a little further.

Against this backdrop, the IMF in its latest review of Bangladesh's performance regarding the conditions for the \$4.7 billion loan lowered the NIR target to \$14.76 billion for June.

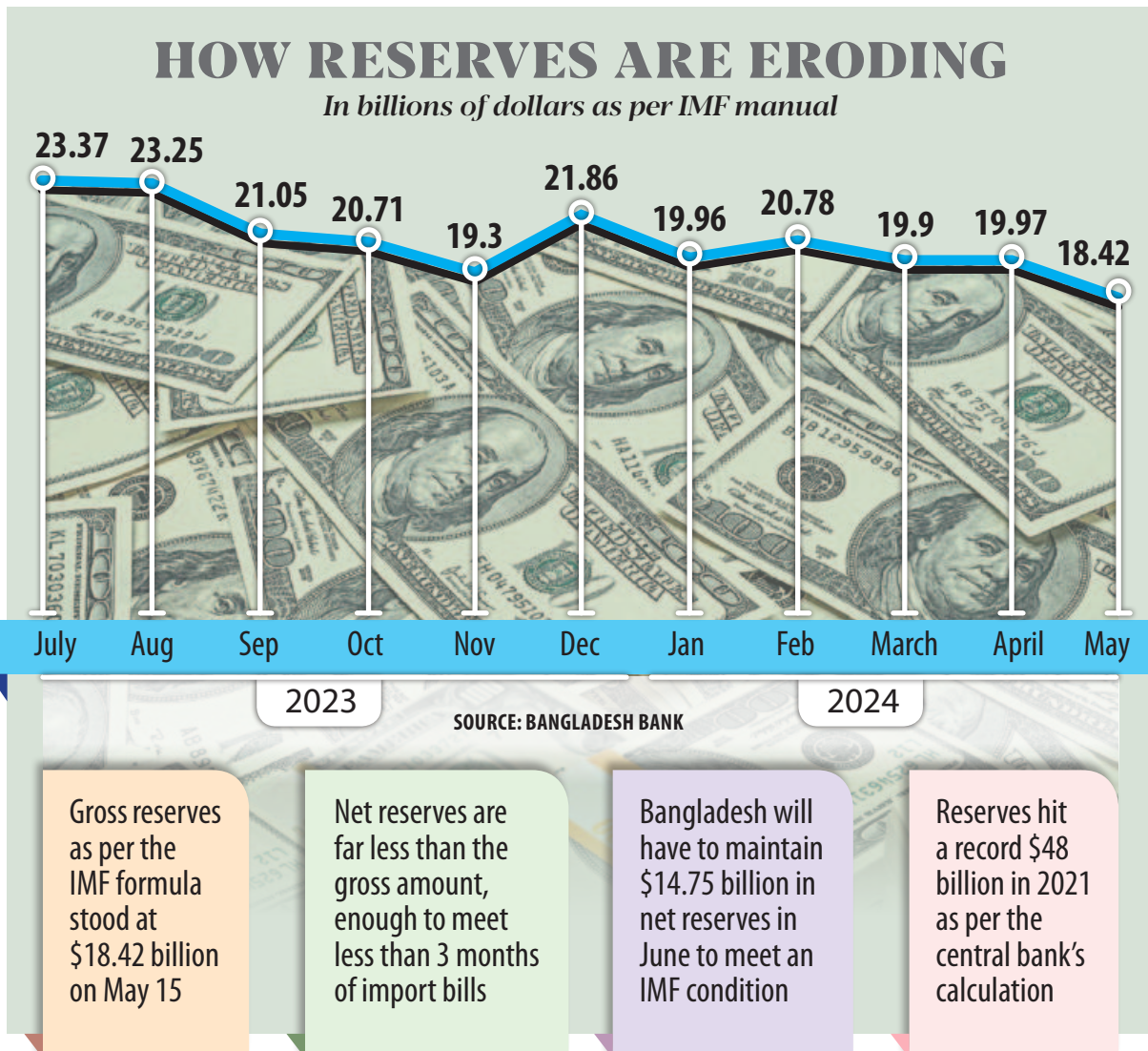
WHY ARE THE RESERVES FALLING?

Amid the coronavirus restrictions, import payments, international travels, and outflow of foreign currency for other purposes fell drastically, and at the same time, inflow of remittance increased, taking the reserves to a record \$48 billion in August 2021.

As import payments started to rise and the economy reopened, the reserves began to fall.

In 2022, the country's forex market became more volatile as supply chain disruptions elevated commodity prices globally amid the Russia-Ukraine war.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



ILLEGAL RICKSHAWS rule Dhaka streets

Lack of monitoring, regulations lead to their number skyrocketing; battery-run rickshaw drivers, owners being extorted

MD ABBAS

The rising number of illegal rickshaws remains one of the major reasons for the capital's traffic getting worse.

Experts say illegal operation of pedal and battery-powered rickshaws is prompting a section of local hoodlums, ruling party leaders, and law enforcers to extort hundreds of crores of taka.

The High Court in 2014 banned battery-run rickshaws in Dhaka and Chattogram. It had issued another directive on December 15, 2021, prohibiting the import of battery-run rickshaws. The number of such three-wheelers in the capital kept going up despite the orders.

Interestingly, the Dhaka north and south city corporations, responsible for registering to pedal rickshaws, have no data on how many rickshaws are on the city streets.

The Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has 30,162 registered rickshaws, while the figure is 1,90,217 for the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

A study carried out by the

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) in 2019 said that Dhaka had over 11 lakh pedal rickshaws, of which only three to

The government can earn good revenue by registering battery-run rickshaws. The money is now pocketed by local politicians, influential people and cops.

ARIFUL ISLAM NADIM
Joint secretary of the Rickshaw Van Easybike Sramik Union

four percent were registered.

Also, there were more than 2 lakh battery-run rickshaws in the city and transforming pedal rickshaws into battery-powered

three-wheelers kept on rising back then, said the report.

It also revealed that a section of ruling party leaders, 25 organisations, and five societies had control of illegal rickshaws.

BILS now puts the number of rickshaws in the capital at more than 15 lakh.

Speaking to The Daily Star, BILS consultant Khandoker Abdus Salam said rickshaw pullers contribute Tk 30,000 crore every year to village economy.

"More than 50 lakh people pull rickshaws across the country to make their living. So, it is very important to bring them under regulation and register them based on zones," he said.

A study by Buet in 2022 found that Dhaka city traffic speed dropped to 4.5km per hour from 21km a decade ago despite the government spending a staggering Tk 28,000 crore to ease congestion.

Visiting different areas in the capital over the last few weeks, The Daily Star found that most of the rickshaws either did not have

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Bangladeshis have \$5.9b in tax havens

Finds EU tax observatory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshis own \$5.91 billion of offshore wealth in tax havens around the world.

Cumulatively, this comes up to 1.3 percent of Bangladesh's Gross Domestic Product.

Of this amount, \$5 billion are in Asian tax havens, while the rest are in European and American tax havens.

This is according to the Atlas of the Offshore World, produced by the European Union Tax Observatory. The estimates are from 2022.

In 2021, the figure of offshore wealth owned by Bangladeshis in tax havens was \$8,145 billion, the highest since the beginning of the millennium. Of this amount, \$7 billion alone was in Asian tax havens including Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong.

The Atlas estimated that \$0.5 billion was lost in taxes as a result of the stashing of wealth offshore.

It found that the total offshore wealth invested in real estate in tax havens comes up to \$0.66 billion or 0.18 percent of Bangladesh's GDP.

Most of this real estate investment happened in Singapore and Dubai, followed by London and Paris.

"Offshore real estate is real estate that is either ultimately owned by an investor in a different country or is owned by residents through complex offshore structures that can obfuscate the identity of the real owner," it said.

A recent investigation by Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) found that 394 Bangladeshis own 641 residential properties in Dubai, whose estimated value is \$225.35 million. OCCRP took the estimates from 2022.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Govt goes for a slim ADP to fight inflation

Okays Tk 2.65 lakh crore for the next fiscal year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday approved a Tk 2,65,000 crore Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the next fiscal year to address high inflation.

The National Economic Council (NEC) at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved the ADP for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, which shows an increase of only 0.76 percent from the current one.

After the meeting, Senior Secretary of the Planning Division Satyajit Karmaker told reporters that to keep inflation at a tolerable level, the government fund has been reduced in the new ADP, with an aim to ensure coordination between the fiscal and monetary policies.

On the other hand, the foreign fund allocation in the ADP has been increased to a record Tk 1,00,000 crore at a time when the country is under pressure due to the bleeding of reserves.

"Usually, we increase the ADP size by Tk 20,000 crore to Tk 22,000 crore each fiscal year. This time, the increase is only by Tk 2,000 crore," said Satyajit.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

It's one-party rule under a democratic framework

Says Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A one-party authoritarian government system can work well to become a developed nation but at least some areas should be less politicised, said eminent economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud.

He said Bangladesh's government system can be described as a one-party authoritarian rule under a democratic framework.

"This type of government does not necessarily hold fair elections and, so its popularity can't be measured. This type of government usually wants economic development because its validity depends on the development of the economy."

Wahiduddin was speaking at an event yesterday marking the launch of the book titled "Bangladesh's Future Development: Agenda for Reform" authored by Prof Mohammed Farashuddin, a former governor of the Bangladesh Bank.



SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



Illegal battery-run rickshaws crowd the road near the Bosila bridge in the capital's Mohammadpur around 1:00pm yesterday. Plying of such three-wheelers on city streets and alleys goes on unabated, worsening congestions. Inset, a battery-run rickshaw in Dhaka University area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, AMRAN HOSSAIN



Probe body recommends removal of Sharifa's Tale

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A probe committee, formed by the education ministry, has recommended the removal of the story titled "Sharifa's Tale" from the chapter on human resemblance and difference in the seventh-grade history and social science textbook.

The chapter was prepared in light of the new curriculum to create public awareness about transgender people.

The matter came to the fore after an adjunct faculty member of BRAC University tore the pages of the textbook containing the story at an event. The video of the incident went viral on social media.

On January 24, the education ministry formed a five-member probe committee to review "Sharifa's Tale".

A member of the committee, preferring to remain unnamed, told The Daily Star last night that the committee's report was submitted to the education

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Honorable State Minister for the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Mr. Ahsanul Islam Titu, MP handed over the 'CIP-2022' card to the honorable Director Mr. Md. Zubayer Mondol of Cotton Club (BD) Ltd.

Congratulations & Heartfelt greeting to Mr. Md. Zubayer Mondol, honorable Director of Cotton Club (BD) Ltd. and Mondol Group on receiving this prestigious recognition from the Government for the third time.

All officers and employees
Mondol Group



Bureaucracy needs a major overhaul

Key reforms being thwarted by bureaucrats’ resistance, political inertia

For the ordinary citizen, navigating Bangladesh’s famously inefficient, opaque, and outdated bureaucratic system can be supremely challenging. The many obstacles and complexities that lie in the way of getting services can leave one not just exhausted, but also bereft of hope. The lack of accountability has also meant that while service-seekers suffered, and redress was delayed or denied, corrupt and often inefficient officials were rewarded. Against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising to know from a report by this daily that at least 16 commissions and committees have recommended reforms to create an efficient, merit-based civil administration since independence, but those have largely been ignored.

It is not difficult to understand the reluctance of the bureaucratic and political leaderships. For civil servants, especially those in high ranking positions, reforms that promote efficiency, meritocracy, and accountability represent a threat to their influence, benefits, and promotional prospects. Political leaders also do not want to embrace change as it is easier to maintain control over a pliable bureaucracy. The result is that Bangladesh’s civil service is still run under the structure recommended by the Enam Commission in 1982, which today is unsuitable to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving socio-economic landscape. Our report highlights several bids to bring changes which have been met with disappointment—except, of course, when it benefitted bureaucrats, such as salary increases or the option of “in situ” promotions, or posed no real threat to the status quo.

It goes without saying that this stagnation of key administrative reforms has had alarming consequences for the country. The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), for example, identified “corruption and unskilled bureaucracy” as the two greatest challenges to national progress in four reports between 2013 and 2021. A recent report by the US administration has identified corruption in Bangladesh as a major deterrent for foreign investors. The banking sector has all but collapsed due to the lack of effective governance. We can cite many such instances where the lack of transparency, accountability, and inefficiency has had disastrous impacts on various sectors.

This has to change. We cannot continue to be held back by the preference for short-term personal and political interests. What we need is a bold commitment to administrative reforms that can transform the civil service into one that best serves today’s Bangladesh and its ambitions. The higher authorities must demonstrate the courage required to bring such reforms, and the formation of an independent reform commission—as proposed but rejected in recent years—can be a critical first step.

Mayor’s claim not backed by facts

DSCC must not fall short again in its dengue prevention efforts

We are surprised to see the mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) claim success in its fight against dengue last year, despite 2023 seeing record numbers of dengue-related cases and deaths. The number of dengue patients in Dhaka, he reportedly said, “halved” last year compared to 2019 because of “proper” mosquito control measures—even though data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) suggests the opposite. According to the DGHS, 1,01,354 people were diagnosed with dengue in the country in 2019. Among them, 51,762 patients were from Dhaka. Four years later, in 2023, a record 3,21,179 patients were diagnosed with the disease in the country, while the number in Dhaka was 1,10,008.

That means, the number of dengue patients in 2023 were actually double that of 2019. Why then would the mayor make such a claim? In so doing, he has neither furnished any data collected by the DSCC nor referred to any other credible source of information. To his credit, however, he did mention that the task of controlling dengue becomes difficult if misleading information is given. But that is exactly what he himself seems to be doing, and the timing couldn’t be more unfortunate. Local experts as well as international bodies like the World Health Organization have warned that like 2023, this year too could see huge numbers of dengue patients unless the authorities take timely and appropriate measures. It is, therefore, essential that the relevant authorities take drastic measures to prevent a repeat of 2023.

The importance of such measures, with the monsoon season not far away, cannot be emphasised enough. Already, a number of people have died of dengue, including three in the 24 hours until Thursday morning, taking this year’s death toll to 32, according to the DGHS. Incidentally, all three were from the DSCC areas. Therefore, we urge our mayor to shun premature celebrations and start taking meaningful steps to make sure that his organisation does not fail in its dengue prevention efforts this year, like it did last year.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



SOURCE: ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA

School segregation outlawed by US Supreme Court

On this day in 1954, lawyer Thurgood Marshall scored a landmark victory as the US Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka* that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

What constitutes hurting religious sentiments?

THE THIRD VIEW



Mahfuz Anam
is the editor and publisher of
The Daily Star.

MAHFUZ ANAM

A recent judgement involving Tithy Sarker, a public university student, on “hurting religious sentiments” has brought the subject back into public discourse. The purpose of this article is not to discuss the case but the issue and the laws that deal with it.

Respect for others’ religious beliefs is one of the fundamental pillars of our present day civilisation. Learning from history, from the incessant religious wars in many parts of the world, especially in Europe, people realised and internalised in their collective consciousness that unless mutual tolerance became the norm, violence and war would never cease and human prosperity could never be achieved. This practice of tolerance began with accepting the norms and practices of the religions of others.

This writer and this newspaper are firmly opposed to anyone hurting religious sentiments. We are, in principle and in practice, totally against anyone, however remotely or indirectly, denigrating the religious feelings of others.

In history, one of the most brutal and protracted religious wars was the First Crusade, initiated by Pope Urban II in 1095 when he called upon the Christians to unite and recapture the city of Jerusalem from the Muslims. The reason I mention this is because it is important to know that the first victims of the First Crusade were not Muslims but the European Jews at the hands of the Roman Catholic Christian army. Thus, from the very beginning, it showed that wars in the name of religion often victimise those who are not the original target. Many vested interest groups enter into play and use the heightened emotion and blind devotion—characteristics of faith-based wars—to achieve their own narrow ends. A lesson that has been proven over and over again throughout history.

The question of “hurting religious sentiments” is hardly comparable to wars. However, one has to be fully aware of where these things can lead to, the examples of which we saw in Bosnia Herzegovina and in many riots that took place, and still does, in South Asia, each of which contains the seed of greater conflagration.

There are two ways of achieving the goal of inculcating religious tolerance: social and legal.

The social measures come through the family, social values and education. Family is where learning of all sorts begins. This is where values about not hurting others’ religious sentiments must be taught. The parents and the larger family have a sacred obligation to create an environment that will instil in every child the obligation to respect their own religion and that of others. In Bangladesh, where the vast majority are Muslims and we are proud of our faith, we need to ensure



ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

that the followers of other religions are allowed to feel the same. Every Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, members of ethnic groups and followers of other religions are proud of their own faiths and, as the majority community, it is our responsibility to ensure an atmosphere of tolerance that allows the followers of all faiths to practise their religions in total freedom and ease. That is the premise on which the whole notion of religious tolerance is based, and one that everyone in society must respect. That is a fundamental principle of our Liberation War, our constitution, and of course democracy. This must start at the family level.

Then comes society, where the above values of religious tolerance must be made the norm. We must be fully aware of the fact that religious

respect and to build a harmonious society where everyone can live in peace. The education policy further states that true knowledge about one’s own religion is vitally important so that no one can misguide them with inappropriate or false interpretation.

The issue of tolerance in general and religious tolerance in particular have become a matter of great concern as we see a global rise in narrow-mindedness, prejudice and hatred based on race, colour, ethnicity, and religion. Ultranationalism is, on occasion, blended with religious beliefs that essentially incorporate hatred for other religions, causing a great disruption to social harmony and creating conditions for future tension, if not outright conflict.

Our final point is the legal construct

to prevent “hurting” the religious sentiments of others. Whenever we try to make a law to prevent such occurrences, we must ensure that the law is clear and unambiguous. This brings us to the discussion of the old Digital Security Act (DSA), about which we have had so many reservations. Yes, journalists have been given some respite in its new incarnation—Cyber Security Act (CSA)—but the vague formulation dealing with hurting religious sentiments still haunts us as it affects journalism directly. It is very broad, too encompassing, and without clear definition as to what constitutes “hurting religious sentiments.”

For a law to be meaningful, it has to be clear and its violations must be specific. A citizen must know where the line is drawn beyond which he/she stands in breach of the law. A vague law can be misused and even weaponised. The CSA says, “If any individual or group, for the purpose of deliberately or knowingly hurting religious values or feelings, or for the purpose of instigating, propagates or broadcasts something through a website or any other electronic device, which hurts religious beliefs or values, then that act will be considered a crime” (translation ours). How does one determine “hurt”? It is so personal and subjective. What may be a legitimate and innocent question may end up hurting another. Will criticising a “Pir” or an imam or a religious scholar or a religious teacher constitute “hurting” religious sentiments? Their ardent followers may feel “hurt” and thus lodge a case. There are many instances of corrupt practices within religious institutions. Will revealing those constitute hurting religious sentiments? If a newspaper exposes the wrong doings in the management of a mosque, madrasa or any religious body, will the paper face a case under CSA? The law is so vague that it can be used for the purpose that it is not meant for.

While we don’t want to see anybody’s religious sentiment hurt, we also don’t want to see this becoming a way of stifling research, legitimate criticism, critical thinking and definitely not a cap on the exposure of wrong doings.

I want to end with one thought of caution in the whole exercise of preventing hurting of religious sentiments. It is usually the sentiments of the majority that gets priority. Hurting the religious sentiments of the minority is not dealt with as much seriousness, urgency or severity as that of the majority. For us to understand it clearly, let us look at present day India. How seriously is hurting Muslim religious sentiments or values likely to see justice vis-a-vis hurting Hindu religious sentiments? This should help us see the play of state power in the reverse and prevent its occurrence here.

Rediscovering self: A note to me



Raffat Binte Rashid
is editor of My Dhaka at
The Daily Star.

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

I just finished reading a short story called “Nearly Departed” by Twinkle Khanna. The deep underlying message of the story resonated with my recent state of mind and I garnered the courage to write this note to myself.

Although her protagonist, an 86-year-old who suffered from a stroke, was seeking euthanasia, a hospital-assisted suicide was not exactly something I support. Still, her story of accepting the responsibilities of others in her life and how one courageous act of staying with her ill father had slowly eroded her made sense to me.

I decided that I needed a bit of madness and foolhardiness in my life. I am tired of being the sensible one. In fact, all of us should be a little footloose in life. We are so bogged down by the pressure of responsibilities and obligations of life that we totally miss being us and suffer silently. Adulthood can be taxing especially if you are the one fending for all your familial dependency. We need to rise for ourselves.

So, if I say, I matter the most to myself, am I being selfish? I want to take care of my wounded wings that were clipped even before I could

take flight. I want to replenish my parched soul that has been battered and bruised with the load of others. If I say I am emotionally exhausted from being selfless and lending all my strength to others, will I be judged?

How do I assess my success and my worth as a being? In fact, who is keeping the tab on my failures and those rare few accomplishments? I realised after passing almost two-thirds of my life that ultimately no one is truly yours. You cannot claim anyone as your own—parents, spouse, children, or friends. None!

It does not matter how cordial your connection is with them; you are always alone in that crowd of dear faces.

My life just zoomed past me fending for others, taking care of everyone’s wishes, whims, and wants. Then one fine morning I realised I had done a rotten job acting all selfless and self-sacrificing. And nobody cares what I did or not did for them. They never asked me to be noble and self-effacing or to be accommodating. So, why am I fretting for their sake?

I learnt in life that to give your 100 percent to any one of your relationships you have to lose more than what you gave to that person, in

regards to any other responsibility.

If you want to be a picture-perfect daughter to your ageing parents you lose almost 50 percent of being a hands on mother. To give full attention to your child, you lose out on being a happy spouse. To be a caring partner, you need to drop more than half of your self-dignity to be

Yes, I am ranting and being sappy because I want to. I want to read aloud this note to myself that it’s ok to be sad; who cares if I am not appreciated or acknowledged for the sacrifices I made! I am true to myself; I did the best I could for my loved ones, and if my best is not good enough then I cannot be blamed. I only had this meagre 100 percent to give.

that “understanding and sacrificing” person in the relationship.

For any kind of misgiving in any one of these relationships, you are blamed black and blue, at least emotionally if not physically. The brunt of the emotional storm you face is a deadly killer, it eats away the small nuances of your good life, your identity, your self-worth and your sanity.

Yes, I am ranting and being sappy

because I want to. I want to read aloud this note to myself that it’s ok to be sad; who cares if I am not appreciated or acknowledged for the sacrifices I made!

I am true to myself; I did the best I could for my loved ones, and if my best is not good enough then I cannot be blamed. I only had this meagre 100 percent to give.

Thus, now I want to live for myself, I want to spoil myself with that forbidden icecream, be that unsocial grouchy old hag, or that madly happy 50-something. I want to drown myself in giddy pleasures society says no to me. Most importantly, I do not want to care.

I want to attain nirvana where nothing matters except for my Zen state of mind. It’s not an easy hike to be able to reach that raised ground of grace and spirituality but once there, I will be sorted. My forever fidgety yin and yang will be synchronised.

The negative, dark, and feminine in me will complement the positive, bright, and masculine also in myself. And I, after crossing the many ditches in my relationships, the deep abyss of grief and sorrow of motherhood and loads of bumps along the way as a woman, realised I have little to no time for myself to be carefree and happy before I die or become someone else’s liability. I do not want that, actually I don’t deserve any more guilt.

Having gone through so much angst and unfortunate faults in my destiny I never want to rely on others for my contentment. I will give myself the love and care I always craved for. I am my own woman; I will still rise as Maya Angelou said.

Planning for Dhaka’s new night



THE GRUDGING URBANIST

Dr Adnan Zillur Morshed
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ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

As the rain keeps coming down intermittently, the heatwave has lost its brutal bite. A couple of days ago, I went to Mirpur around 9:30 pm to feel the social and economic pulse of nighttime Dhaka. On the way, I was intrigued by the brightly illuminated shrine of the 15th-century Sufi saint Shah Ali Baghdadi on Mazar Road. After that, near Mirpur 10 *Gol Chattar*, I had coffee at Coco Café, full of snazzy young people even at these late hours. Pumped up by an espresso, I embarked on a “casual” stroll, even though it was challenging to navigate the Mirpur streets swarming with pedestrians, shoppers, sidewalk vendors, and cantankerous vehicles. The place’s boisterous “happy hour” mood belied the prevailing anxieties over inflation, the Gaza genocide, and the spectre of a looming collapse of the liberal international order. Eateries, with fancy names, were everywhere: The Eatalia; Yellowknife; Supreme Diners; California Fried Chicken; Titanic Rooftop; Roadside Kitchen Rooftop; Kachchi Mahal; and Barcelos, to name a few. Men, women, young, old, different economic classes—all urban constituencies were present and active. Mirpur at night felt like an alternative world, more like a neon utopia.

I experienced similar revelry in front of Mohammadpur Town Hall at night the other day. A vibrant nightlife of street food, informal shopping from roadside pushcarts, and social camaraderie unfolded. Phuchka, chotpoti, khichuri with beef, and firmi seemed to be key culinary attractions. The mobile food carts were flanked by benches that encroached deep into the streets. It was almost 10 pm, and the impression I got from overhearing people’s conversation was that night had just begun!

Old Dhaka’s street markets have traditionally been known as places where night never ends! Foodies and shoppers gravitate to Chawkbazar, Nazirabazar, and Alauddin Road until the wee hours. But this scene of the night is no longer limited to the old city. I have seen intense night activities at Farmgate, Mouchak, Moghbazar, and Uttara. The culinary culture of bhuna khichuri, beef bhuna, biryani and jhalmuri, among other gastronomical attractions, draws people to these thriving places not just from local neighbourhoods, but from across the city.

The cafes in the affluent sections of the metropolis—Gulshan, Banani, and Dhanmondi—are typically abuzz with people until 2 am in the morning. The city’s growing number of social clubs and nightclubs attract an incessant flow of *nouveau riche* flaunting expensive cars and well-dressed companions. In Hatirjheel during the night, people are seen enjoying the water’s edge, the breeze, and the promenade of well-lit bridges.

If you go around at night in Dhaka, you will come across people out dining, shopping, walking in parks, indulging



If you go around at night in Dhaka, you will come across people out dining, shopping, walking in parks, indulging in adda, or simply enjoying themselves with friends and families.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

in *adda*, or simply enjoying themselves with friends and family at different urban venues. Urbanites are comfortable seeking entertainment of different kinds after work at night. Over the past two decades or so, this nighttime culture has become a popular city-wide phenomenon as the city offers a potpourri of entertainment options to people of all economic strata.

So, this is the point. Dhaka has become a nocturnal city, as much as it is a daytime city of grinding work, survival stories, exhaustion, traffic, mobilities, and entrepreneurship. Not the city of the 1990s, the nighttime Dhaka is awash with artificial light, conquering the dark and dangerous night of yore. The South Asian megapolis now boasts a new generation of urban illumination—some super bright, some garish, some artistic—creating new types of after-work spaces for people of all classes to enjoy themselves. What it showcases is a socially liberal night and its metropolitan modernity that our parents may not have seen or experienced.

This is Dhaka’s quintessential nighttime geography—a New Night—characterised by

the liberalisation of social mores, shifting gender dynamics, growing economy, neon signs, and a new cultural attitude towards life after sunset. The New Night is a time to escape from the harsh realities of daily lives, indulge in cappuccino and dum biryani fantasies, and fade into the momentary comfort of a silhouette city and its pixilated illumination. This night helps hide many of our anxieties, flaws, and failures, as we revel during its

Raater Kolkata (Calcutta Nights) explores this theme. So does Ritwik Ghatak’s *Bari Theke Paliye* (1958). Rabindranath Tagore’s poem “The Night has Ended” (1932) encapsulates the night’s dread and despair, and the morning’s optimism: “The night has ended, Put out the light of the lamp ... The great morning which if for all, Appears in the East.” Bangalee ghosts or *bhoot* always appear at night to torment people.

clubs, shopping malls, and cineplexes are now an integral part of a booming nighttime economy as the erstwhile religious and social codes have become flexible.

The night is a new cultural frontier and a robust economic opportunity. How ready are our cities to harness this prospect? How adequate are our urban policies and planning to cultivate this nighttime ecosystem? Are the local governments, city corporations, and municipalities aware of the need to plan and manage nighttime activities? Have the city’s public agencies been able to provide safe and well-lit streets for all, fire safety and adequate support staff to night venues, safe night transportation, and inclusive after-sunset entertainment options for the city people? The great cities of the future must thrive at night. And, as global trends show, the thriving city needs 24-hours-a-day management.

Nighttime planning of cities is an emerging field of urban governance. More than 50 cities around the world—including London, New York, Berlin, Paris, Manchester, and Zurich—have appointed night mayors and managers since Amsterdam pioneered the idea in 2014. One in eight jobs in London is at night. In 2016, London Mayor Sadiq Khan appointed Amy Lamé as London’s first “night czar” to facilitate the city’s night and its £26 billion economy. The following year, London’s independent Nighttime Commission was established. Sadiq Khan wrote, “I want London to be a global leader in the way we plan for life at night. But we face tough competition, with Paris, New York, Berlin, Tokyo, and San Francisco all looking to grow their nighttime offers. Building a vibrant nightscape is a mark of cultural status for a global city. It is also what keeps visitors, workers, students, and businesses flocking to our city ... This isn’t just about pubs and clubs. It’s about a whole range of activities and services, from museums and theatres opening later ... We need positive planning for our nighttime economy.”

How ready are Dhaka and other cities in Bangladesh to be safe and inclusive at night? According to the Road Safety Foundation in Bangladesh, about 40 percent of road accidents in Dhaka occur at night, mainly due to reckless driving by goods-laden heavy vehicles through the city’s main thoroughfares. Speeding in poor visibility, lack of policing and traffic regulations, lack of adequate street lighting, and lack of pedestrian street crossing signals result in high fatalities during the night. Fire tragedies in Dhaka—including those at Bailey Road (2024), Churihatta (2019) of Chawkbazar, and Nimtoli (2010) in Old Dhaka—are often nighttime disasters warranting special planning adaptable to conditions at night. Visibility at night must be seen as a public health infrastructure.

The Bangalee cultural and religious fear of the night as a time of unacceptable, sinful behaviour has been permeated with a new appreciation of nocturnal cosmopolitanism. Although much research is needed to explain this phenomenon, a robust nighttime economy has taken root in Dhaka and other cities. When we talk about planning in Bangladesh, we are generally thinking about the daytime. There must be a paradigm shift. The readiness for cities to be safe, healthy, vibrant, and inclusive at night should be a policy priority.

Will we finally take student suicides seriously?

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ALIZA RAHMAN

Comb through the news after SSC results are published, and you may find amid the pictures of celebrations the reports of students who have died by suicide for not achieving their desired results. This tragic phenomenon, though shocking each time, is unfortunately not new.

Last year saw the much discussed report by the Aachol Foundation, which stated that 513 students had died by suicide in 2023. Out of them, 227 students were school students, meaning that this extremely young demographic accounted for approximately 44 percent of all student suicides.

This warrants our attention, not just in the predictable times for these suicides to occur, such as with SSC results, but in general considering how shockingly high the number is. In addition, there is still a heavy stigma attached to suicides, making discussions a difficult matter. Bangladesh’s own unique kaleidoscope of problematic beliefs regarding suicide involves superstition, religion, education, class positions, lack of support, fear of shunning, and stereotypes about mental illness. Moreover, mental health services and hospitals to assist people who are struggling or have made an attempt are dismal. All these not only prevent one from reaching out for help, but also delays their recognition of their own suffering.

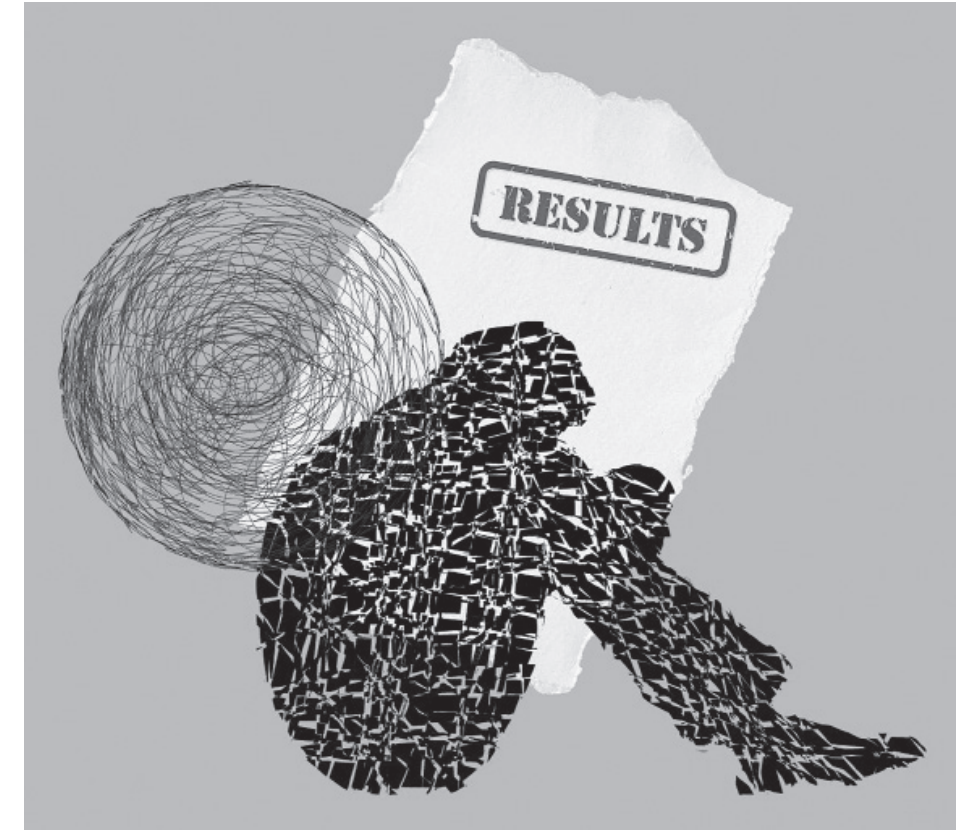
What we seem to be failing to understand repeatedly is just how vulnerable young people are. In a culture that is so hierarchical, speaking up poses more challenges than it may in other countries of the world. Respect towards parents is heavily emphasised. While

this typically includes paying heed to the parent’s words and wishes, it may also mean that making parents uncomfortable with what they may be unfamiliar with evokes sharp reactions. For older generations, this realm of unfamiliarity often involves struggles with mental health, sometimes in association with exams.

Overreactions from parents are a running theme in South Asian social media, one which often portrays the parents as becoming extremely angry at criticism and reacting in such a manner as to make their children silent. While these are played for comedic effect and the situation is not always serious, high expectations along with anger at not performing as expected makes students disinclined from talking freely with parents and other adults. One particularly stressful account mentioned by a student choosing to go anonymous goes like this: following her failure to obtain enough A+ in her JSC exams, her parents refused to speak to her for three months. All this was worsened with the onset of the Covid pandemic, which made matters more difficult. She shared that the pressure became so immense that she might have done “something harsh” had she missed GPA 5 in her SSC results, following which it seemed that her mother embraced her after ages. Now, with the HSC exams, she is experiencing a similar kind of pressure once again.

Such accounts can often be heard of parents withdrawing from their children, giving the silent treatment for extended periods of time, and dismissing the students’ mental health concerns, such as an unhealthy amount of stress or fixation when it comes to exams.

Furthermore, as a recent article discussed, corporal punishment continues to be a severe issue in Bangladesh. A study jointly conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and Unicef titled Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019 found that for children aged from 1 to 14 years, 89 percent suffered corporal



VISUAL: STAR

punishment. The extremely detrimental effects of such punishments seem to be unknown to many parents even today. Considering this, we can see why for SSC candidates, the stress of board exams may be an especially sensitive time as it may reopen wounds from negative experiences of the past.

Exacerbating the situation is our culture’s repeated failure to understand how perceptive young people can be. Young students are frequently aware of the sacrifices made by their parents. The effects of inflation, increasing

competition in public universities, and eventually the difficulties of getting a stable, decently paying job are not lost on them. They also know that should they not gain admission to public universities, private university tuition can be exorbitant, and the thought of burdening their parents weighs heavily on them. At the age of 15-17, this stage of life may seem monumental.

Unintentionally, we often engage in behaviour that adds pressure. For instance, there is a deep-rooted societal insensitivity

to the way we talk about students and their grades. Whether it be grade inflation or auto pass, the manner in which we speak about these often has a tone which implies that students who are taking exams have it easy. This may have a compounding effect on the stress experienced by students who do not perform well. Moreover, the many reasons for why a student may have poor performances is often not explored, further humiliating the students who may in fact just require tailored attention and time.

Looking at the Aachol Foundation study, it may seem as if more intricate trends exist between certain conditions and student suicides. However, the lack of follow-ups along with the scant amount of details in existing reports on them makes it a complicated task to draw conclusions. It is abysmal that to this day, despite so many repeated incidents of student suicides, we remain lacking in many sectors, and a national suicide prevention strategy is still not in place.

We need to recognise that the time of public exam results is an especially sensitive time. The case of Sarbajit Ghosh Ridoy, who took his own life after hearing his results that later turned out to be incorrect, should be seen as a stark reminder of how needless student suicides are.

To the young who may be experiencing a difficult situation for the first time in their lives, it may seem insurmountable, and the lack of experience can prevent them from seeing the possibilities that may come their way in the future. In a state of desperation, death may seem like the sole path left. Students, especially ones who are this young, may lack the capacity to understand that obstacles no matter how massive they seem, can be overcome. That almost half of the students who died suicide last year were school students should alarm us, and it might be time for us to recognise that this may in fact be a public health emergency.

LAW OPINION

A matter of unconvincing Judicial opinions



NAFIZ AHMED

The law schools one sees in Hollywood movies and law schools in Bangladesh have tons of dissimilarities. One thing that both have in common is the strategy to shape the legal minds of the students through the study and analyse of the case laws. A proper legal education in a country that follows the common law tradition would entail reading hundreds, if not thousands, of judicial opinions authored by the appellate court judges while deciding cases. While discussing case laws with students, law teachers do not simply focus on the conclusions of the cases but on the reasons behind those conclusions articulated by the judges. However, at times, the reasons provided in a judicial opinion fail to convince the readers. Being exposed to the practice of reading judgments, lawyers, judges, and academics get accustomed to reading unconvincing judgments. However,

law students who are taught about the binding nature of apex court judgments in the first week of their law school have a harder time digesting the fallibility of the courts. Often, I find intelligent law students struggling to understand how to deal with binding judgments that fail to convince the readers. It does not help that legal academics who author critical scholarship regarding judicial opinions rarely mention the consequences of the unconvincing nature of the judgments they peruse. This short essay tries to address the consequences of unconvincing judicial opinions superficially.

The previous paragraph begs the question—why do judicial opinions need to be convincing? Common law courts delivered judgments orally in their early years and did not pen down judicial opinions. The practice of formally authoring judicial opinions is only a few centuries old. In a modern democracy, the courts occupy an interesting role. In a democratic system, the lawmakers are

elected by the people they govern. Their decisions obtain legitimacy directly from people's votes. The decisions of those who execute these laws (at least the final decision-makers) are also legitimised through the people's votes. Both are accountable to the people, as people have the right to protest against their decisions and not elect them for another term. However, judges, who have the power to overturn decisions of the legislature and executive, are not appointed by the people. People cannot protest against judicial decisions without being exposed to the risk of being punished for contempt. Thus, courts, while delivering judgments, owe the people an explanation. Paul W. Kahn writes, "We are convinced that a legislature should have authority when its members are selected through regular, free, and fair elections. We are convinced that judges should have authority when they have persuaded us that they are applying the law, not exercising arbitrary power." (Making

the Case: The Art of the Judicial Opinion, 2016)

The use of judicial power is considered legitimate because of the judiciary's obligation to decide cases in a principled, reasoned, and intellectually sound manner. The courts make their reasonings publicly available by authoring judicial opinions to maintain their legitimacy. As Kahn rightly points out, a judgment is different from an opinion. A judgment is the declaration of the outcome of a dispute. A judicial opinion is a judgment's companion. A judicial opinion assures the people that the case was not decided arbitrarily. A judicial opinion plays at least two significant roles. Firstly, it can be thought to be addressed to the losing litigant, trying to explain to her the reasons why the case was decided against her interest. Secondly, it is thought to be addressed to future judges and litigants, telling them why the judgment was delivered in favour of a particular argument for its rhetorical use in the future. This, of course, presupposes that the opinion would be convincing.

Thus, when a judicial decision fails to convince its readers, it directly affects the legitimacy of judicial powers. It goes without saying that one or two unpersuasive judicial opinions would

vertical and horizontal. (Thinking Like a Lawyer, 2009) The precedents set by higher courts for subordinate courts are called vertical precedents. Vertical precedents are binding on the subordinate courts. When a precedent is presented to a court of the same jurisdiction, it is a horizontal precedent. Although the *stare decisis* principle creates an obligation for courts to follow horizontal precedents, they also have the power to contradict horizontal precedents if they have good reasons to do so. Thus, if a judicial opinion fails to convince future judges, it may fail to become precedents, as a future court may contradict its reasonings. For instance, in the famous (or infamous, depending on where the reader is from) case of *Dr. Bonham v College of Physicians*, Edward Coke held that the common law courts had the power to judge the validity of the Acts of Parliament. However, it failed to convince English judges, and eventually the case failed to solidify itself as common law in England.

To celebrate the Supreme Court of India's 50th anniversary, the prominent jurists of that time published a book titled "Supreme but Not Infallible". The book's title could be very aptly used to describe all apex courts. We must remember that courts do not

When a judicial decision fails to convince its readers, it directly affects the legitimacy of judicial powers. It goes without saying that one or two unpersuasive judicial opinions would hardly harm the judiciary's legitimacy. However, if the apex court regularly writes unpersuasive opinions, it would affect the people's confidence in the court.

hardly harm the judiciary's legitimacy. However, if the apex court regularly writes unpersuasive opinions, it would affect the people's confidence in the court. Kahn writes, "The courts as an institution must earn our confidence." When a court fails to convince the people that it has decided a dispute judiciously, it fails to satisfy the very standard that gives it legitimacy.

An unconvincing judicial opinion may also fail to become precedents. As Frederick Schauer rightly points out, judicial precedents can be of two types:

operate beyond making mistakes. Invoking examples like the infamous cases of *Plessy v Ferguson*, *Dred Scott v Sanford*, or *Halima Khatun v Bangladesh* may suffice to establish this claim. Thus, we must closely examine the persuasiveness of judicial opinions. If they fail to convince their readers, they may not establish the test of time and fail to foster public's confidence in the judiciary.

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RIGHTS AND RESTRICTIONS

Revisiting the case of SHAMIMA BEGUM

TARAZI MOHAMMED SHEIKH, NOOR AFROSE

In 2015, a 15-year-old British citizen Shamima Begum travelled to Syria to join the ISIS. In 2019, the Home Secretary of the United Kingdom (UK) decided to revoke Shamima Begum's British citizenship on the presumption of her Bangladeshi citizenship, a claim which the government of Bangladesh contradicts. After a series of legal disputes, the Court of Appeal upheld the decision of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) in February 2024 to the effect that the revocation of Begum's citizenship was lawful.

Both under the UK citizenship law (section 40 of the British Nationality Act, 1981) and international law (article 8(1) of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness), the UK government cannot revoke one's citizenship if such deprivation would leave them

stateless. Hence, the revocation of Begum's citizenship is supposed to be dismissed if she is proven *not to be* a citizen of Bangladesh.

The government of Bangladesh denies the assertion of her being a Bangladeshi citizen. A foreign ministry official statement states that Begum is a British citizen by birth and has never applied for dual nationality with Bangladesh; neither has she ever visited Bangladesh in the past despite her parental lineage. Whether Begum is a Bangladeshi citizen, is certainly a contentious legal issue, and requires elaborate exploration, which we hold out for some other time.

Against the backdrop of the official position of Bangladesh, the only viable solution to prevent Begum from becoming stateless was to retain her British citizenship through appeal. However, the SIAC gave the verdict against Begum, leading her case to the Court of Appeals. And the recent ruling by



the Court has further complicated the issue for Begum.

Five arguments were presented in her appeal against the decision of the SIAC, covering various aspects, including the claim that the Secretary of State has failed to recognise a plausible suspicion of trafficking (which would be a violation of article 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights), the potential occurrence of *de facto* statelessness, and procedural unfairness. The Court rejected all the claims and noted that these

obligations, as outlined in article 4, encompass legislative, operational, and investigative responsibilities. The court clarified that there were no violations of the operational duties, and the UK government was not obliged to repatriate Shamima Begum to the UK due to the lack of a causal connection between the alleged breaches in 2015 and the decision to deprive her of citizenship in 2019.

Shifting the focus to investigative requirements, the court ruled that the Secretary of State was not

required to investigate suspected violations of a protective duty aimed at safeguarding potential victims of trafficking from harms. The court justified its position by stating that it would require her presence in the UK for an investigation, which would ultimately contradict previous decisions.

Regarding the contention on *de facto* statelessness, the court, acting similarly to SIAC, rejected the claim made. *De facto* statelessness refers to the situation where an individual may technically hold citizenship

in another country but has no practical place to reside. The court outlined its decision, claiming that the government had considered her circumstances but decided to revoke her British citizenship owing to national security concerns.

Furthermore, while acknowledging the importance of ensuring fair representation in legal matters, the Court concluded that there is no mandatory requirement for representation before depriving an individual of citizenship on national security grounds. Additionally, the court acknowledged that even with legal representation, the outcome would likely have remained unchanged.

The UK Supreme Court, in the case of *State of the Home Department v Al Jeddah* (2013) affirmed that the act of revoking British citizenship is deemed illegal if it renders an individual stateless. However, after 9/11, citizenship has been stripped due to national security concerns on several occasions. Hence, it can be said that this case emphasises the conflict between national security considerations and the right to citizenship, which has been debated in international law for a long time. The broad discretionary power granted to the Secretary of State poses challenges to the concept of citizenship as a paradigmatic right.

The writers are official contributors, Law Desk, The Daily Star.

The UK Supreme Court, in the case of State of the Home Department v Al Jeddah (2013) affirmed that the act of revoking British citizenship is deemed illegal if it renders an individual stateless. However, after the incident of 9/11, citizenship has been stripped due to national security concerns on several occasions.

Chelsea players ‘must fight for Pochettino’

AFP, London

Cole Palmer says Chelsea players “love” under-pressure manager Mauricio Pochettino and must fight for him as they target a European spot after an inconsistent season.

The Argentine boss’s future has been a source of ongoing debate during his first campaign.

But the Blues, who finished a lowly 12th last season, need just a point at home to Bournemouth on the final day of the campaign on Sunday to clinch sixth position.

That would mean they would qualify for either the Europa League or the UEFA Conference League depending on various permutations.

The Blues head into the weekend on the back of Wednesday’s 2-1 win at Brighton, during which in-form attacking midfielder Palmer opened the scoring during Chelsea’s fourth straight victory.

“For it to be in our hands to get sixth place is big for us,” Palmer told Chelsea’s website.

“Hopefully we can do it. Chelsea is a big club, everyone wants to finish higher than sixth but we have to look at where we’ve been at the start of the season, throughout the season.”

The 22-year-old England international added: “We’ve been 13th and 12th this season. Last season was the same, so to get back into Europe is a step in the right direction.

“Big credit to the manager because all the players love him, we’ve got to fight for him. It’s been a good season and hopefully we can get European football at the end of it.”



Bangladesh’s flag flies on the backdrop as the Tigers’ vice-captain for the upcoming T20 World Cup, Taskin Ahmed, makes his way through a mob of fans and media at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the wee hours of Thursday to board the USA-bound flight. The Tigers are scheduled to reach Texas at around 4:00am Bangladesh Time on Friday. Bangladesh will play a three-match T20I series against the USA, beginning on May 21.

PHOTO: BCB

Ederson out for rest of season

REUTERS

Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson will miss the last two games of the season, including the FA Cup final, due to a small fracture of his eye socket, the Premier League club said on Thursday.

Ederson suffered the injury on Tuesday away at Tottenham Hotspur in a collision with defender Cristian Romero in the second half of City’s 2-0 win.

The Brazilian needed lengthy treatment on the pitch and looked groggy before manager Pep Guardiola replaced him with Stefan Ortega.

“He has since undergone scans of the affected area that have revealed a small fracture to the right eye socket,” City said in a statement.

“The injury will prevent Ederson from playing any further part in the remaining games of the 2023-24 season.”

League leaders City host West Ham United on Sunday and victory will guarantee a fourth title in a row before they face Manchester United in the FA Cup final on May 25.

‘You won’t see me for a while’

ICC

Virat Kohli, India’s superstar batter and former captain, has given a hint of his post-retirement plans in an emotional interview.

During a recent gala dinner hosted by Kohli’s Royal Challengers Bangalore team, a significant question was raised to the batting stalwart regarding his retirement plans and the motivations behind his drive to score.

“It’s quite simple,” Kohli told RCB. “I think as a sportsman, we do have an end-date to our careers. So I am just working backwards. I don’t want to finish my career thinking ‘oh, what if I have done this on that particular day’ because I can’t keep going on and on forever.

“So it’s just about not leaving any undone business behind and not have any regrets later, which I am sure I won’t.”

Kohli hinted at taking a break after retiring and expressed his desire to give his best for as long as he continues to play.

“Once I am done, I will be gone, you won’t see me for a while (smiles). So I want to give it everything I have till the time I play, and that’s the only thing that keeps me going,” he said.



Roles expand for Mahmudullah, Shakib

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are going into the upcoming T20 World Cup with quite a few young guns in the squad, led by a young skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto. But it is two of their veterans – Mahmudullah Riyad and Shakib Al Hasan – who could give the side a lift with their experience in the USA and the West Indies.

Mahmudullah’s journey to this World Cup was one of determination. Unable to make the squad in the 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia, Mahmudullah showed the virtue of remaining steadfast in his own plans, staying away from media attention, and being keen on following his own process to earn back his place in the lineup for the 2023 ODI World Cup before he made the cut for the 2024 T20 World Cup.

While many of his veteran colleagues such as Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal, and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza have not been in the T20 picture for a while now, Mahmudullah’s resilience has seen him not only earn his place back in the side but also made him a crucial cog in the Tigers’ machine.

In the last 12 months, Mahmudullah averaged 47.66, the highest among Bangladesh batters who bat in the middle order (from wickets 4-7). His strike rate is also the highest amongst batters in the middle-order who at least played five matches during this period.

Fondly called the ‘silent killer’, Mahmudullah’s steps may have been silent but his impact had been felt by the

team management. Head coach Chandika Hathurusingha said that a change in approach worked for him, and, come the end of the innings, his role would be a crucial one for the Tigers in the shortest format.

“He’s been playing regularly but his come back, I thought, was strong. Lately, if you see, he’s playing his best cricket.



He’s changed his batting approach a lot and is in good form. His role is going to be batting in the middle order, probably be the enforcer in the middle as well as playing the role of a finisher, which he has done remarkably well in all formats and in the domestic matches as well lately,” Hathurusingha said on Wednesday at the press conference during which the World Cup squad was named.

The veteran had also earned the board’s trust and the high-ups have ensured him that they would not push for his retirement after the World Cup. “We haven’t spoken

about these things (his retirement from T20s after the World Cup). I don’t think there is anything like that because he is still playing and the way he is playing now is brilliant,” BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon told reporters following a recent meeting with the player.

Along with Mahmudullah, another experienced campaigner in Shakib’s role will be vital for Bangladesh in crunch moments. In what could be both the stalwarts’ last dance at a World Cup, Shakib, and Mahmudullah would be expected to make an impact not only through their performances but also by spreading their knowledge of the game among a rather inexperienced and young side.

Shakib, who recently returned to the T20I lineup after a 10-month gap, led the side in both the T20 World Cups in Australia and the ODI World Cup in India in 2023. This time, Shakib’s leadership would be spread across a different arc, not related to just on-field decisions.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto did not feign to have knowledge of their retirement plans but felt the younger stars needed to give those two some ‘good memories’ in their final years.

“What we will want is that they spread their experience among the other players so that the small improvements can be made,” Shanto had said about Shakib and Mahmudullah.

The Tigers’ young squad would certainly be looking up to the two veterans’ experience to guide them.

SHORT CORNER

Sprint great Bolt backs West Indies

Eight-time Olympic champion and cricket fan Usain Bolt is backing his home team West Indies to become the first nation to win a hattrick of T20 World Cup titles when the tournament kicks off next month. “I’m always going to go with my home team,” Bolt said on Wednesday. “Because we have some big hitters, if we get it right, then definitely West Indies (can win).”



AFC back Palestine bid to suspend Israel

The Asian Football Confederation gave its backing to Palestine’s proposal to suspend Israel from FIFA due to the ongoing war in Gaza at its congress in Bangkok on Thursday.

Griezmann hattrick fires Atletico into Champions League

Antoine Griezmann secured Champions League qualification for Atletico Madrid with a hattrick in a 3-0 triumph at Getafe on Wednesday in La Liga. Diego Simeone’s side ensured they will finish in the top four and therefore reach Europe’s top competition.

Read full stories on The Daily Star website



In a largely uninspiring final in Rome on Wednesday, Dusan Vlahovic’s only strike saw Juventus clinch a record-extending 15th Coppa Italia with a 1-0 victory over Atalanta 1-0, who were denied a first trophy in six decades.

PHOTO: X

‘The giant that walked amongst men’

AFP, New Delhi

India captain Sunil Chhetri said Thursday he will retire from international football aged 39, ending a record-breaking career for his country spanning two decades.

The attacker has hit 94 goals in 150 appearances for India, behind only Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi in the list of active international goal-scorers.

He is also India’s most-capped player.

In a video message on social media platform X, Chhetri said the 2026 World Cup qualifier against Kuwait on June 6 will be his last international outing.

“It’s not that I was feeling tired, not that I was feeling this or that,” he said.

“When the instinct came that this should be my last game, I thought about it a lot and eventually I came to this decision,” he said.

“Will I be sad after this? Of course...the kid inside me never wants to stop if given a chance to play for his country. It’s time for our country to see the next number nine.”

India are second in qualifying Group A with four points, behind Qatar.

“The game against Kuwait demands pressure, we need the three points to qualify for the next round. It’s hugely important for us,” the skipper said.

“But in a strange way, I don’t feel the pressure because these 15-20 days with the national team and the match against Kuwait is the last,” he added.

Across club and country, Chhetri’s goal tally stands at 252 from 515 appearances, averaging almost a goal every two games.

“He’s going to do it one last time, and we can never be grateful enough for the giant that walked amongst men,” Chhetri’s Indian Super League club Bengaluru FC said on X after the announcement.

Chhetri began his football journey in 2002. It was reported in 2009 that he had signed for

English Championship side Queens Park Rangers, but was unable to take up the contract after being denied a work permit.

He joined Kansas City Wizards in the United States in 2010 and in 2012 signed for Portugal’s Sporting CP, where he played for the reserves in the country’s second division.

In 2022, FIFA honoured Chhetri with a documentary titled “Captain Fantastic”.





Not much being done to stop dengue outbreak

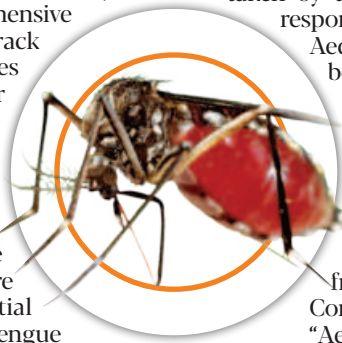
City corporations yet to properly start surveillance despite record deaths last year

HELEMUL ALAM

Despite a record-breaking outbreak last year, with more than 1,705 deaths, the authorities concerned are yet to establish a comprehensive surveillance system to track and control the Aedes mosquitoes, the carrier of the deadly dengue virus.

Experts and public health officials, who have been calling for an effective surveillance system in place, are worried about a potential resurgence of the dengue during the upcoming monsoon season, a time generally sees a spike in dengue cases.

They said it is not possible to control Aedes mosquitoes without a round-the-year-surveillance system to find hotspots



of the mosquitoes and knowing the trend and serotypes of the virus.

Most of the 980 dengue deaths last year were recorded in Dhaka, yet the action taken by the two city corporations, responsible for controlling Aedes mosquitoes, has hardly been seen.

Only this month, Dhaka North City Corporation started surveillance on a small scale by setting up three types of traps at 20 points in DNCC areas. There was no such move from the Dhaka South City Corporation as of now.

"Aedes mosquitoes should be controlled through scientific and systematic ways, but that is still absent," entomologist GM Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star.

He said both the city corporations

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RECIPE FOR DISASTER...Two battery-powered rickshaw vans, carrying schoolchildren, weave dangerously between large buses on the busy Dhaka-Chattogram highway against traffic. Many such vans are regularly seen driving against traffic there, exposing these young students to risks of a life-changing injury or even death. Parents with limited options usually see these vans as a safer alternative. The photo was taken yesterday at Dania in Dhaka's Shanir Akhra.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

China shows off robot 'dogs of war'

AFP, Kampong Chhnang

China's military yesterday showed off its machine gun equipped robot battle "dogs" at the start of its biggest ever drills with Cambodian forces, as the United States frets about Beijing's growing influence in the Southeast Asian country.

The 15-day exercise, dubbed Golden Dragon, also involves 14 warships – three from China – two helicopters and 69 armoured vehicles and tanks, and includes live-fire, anti-terrorism and humanitarian rescue drills.

The hardware on show included the so-called "robot dogs" – remote-controlled four-legged robots with automatic rifles mounted on their backs.

Handlers kept the dogs of war on the leash, demonstrating only their walking capabilities to watching journalists and top brass – not their shooting skills.

Opening the exercises, Cambodian armed forces commander-in-chief Vong Pisen said they would "enhance the capabilities" of the two armies in the fight against terrorism.

Vong Pisen insisted Cambodia would never allow a foreign military base on its territory, echoing previous assertions by Cambodian leaders.



Harassment writ large

Couple arrested by Rab, sent to jail, and now given clean chit by ATU

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Mosharraf Hossain, 48, has been a reconditioned car seller for 30 years and has never been arrested or accused in any criminal case.

Around 3:22am on March 13, 2022, a team from the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-4) knocked on Mosharraf's home in Mirpur.

Without giving any explanations, the Rab team, led by Inspector Anowar Hossain and Sub-inspector Riaz Uddin, arrested Mosharraf, who owns a car showroom in Diabari of Mirpur.

When asked why he was being arrested, the Rab personnel said that their "senior officers will be able to tell".

Around 4:20am, the Rab team conducted another raid at Mosharraf's other home in the same neighbourhood and apprehended his wife Asma Khatun, 42.

Both were later handed over to Savar Police Station. It was only after the arrest that the couple learned they were accused in a case under Anti-Terrorism Act.

The first information report (FIR) stated that the accused were members of Ansar Al Islam and were planning a

“We [Mosharraf and his wife] were arrested, framed, and then released on bail after languishing in jail for around three and a half months. But we still do not know why we were accused.”

Mosharraf Hossain, who was accused in a case under Anti-Terrorism Act

sabotage ahead of March 26 that year.

Mosharraf was sent to jail on March 13 and granted bail on June 28 and his wife the next day.

About two months prior, the case was transferred to the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU).

After over a year, the investigating officer of the case, ATU Sub-Inspector

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Smooth sailing for hajj pilgrims leaving Dhaka

Immigration process for KSA being done here

RASHIDUL HASAN

Hajj pilgrims departing for Saudi Arabia from Dhaka this year have a smoother journey ahead. For the first time, all 82,000 pilgrims can now complete key immigration formalities, which were previously necessary upon arrival in Saudi Arabia, right from Dhaka airport before boarding their flights.

Although this facility has been around since 2019, its scope has been largely limited. Now that the scope of this initiative has been expanded, both officials and hajj pilgrims concerned believe it will significantly reduce the hassle with formalities, including electronic visa issuance and biometric data collection, allowing for a smoother experience through Saudi immigration.

However, this facility is

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Xi, Putin condemn US Pledge closer ties as Russia advances in Ukraine

REUTERS, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday condemned what they cast as increasingly aggressive US behaviour and pledged to deepen their countries' already close defence and military ties.

In a clear snub to Washington, whose top diplomat flew into China last month to try to persuade Beijing to scale back its relationship with Moscow, Xi signalled Beijing and Moscow saw eye to eye on a range of important issues, including on Ukraine, and would resist Western pressure to downgrade their ties.

The China-Russia relationship today is hard-earned, and the two sides need to cherish and nurture it," Xi told Putin. "China is willing to ... jointly achieve the development and rejuvenation of our respective countries, and work together to uphold fairness and justice in the world."

A joint statement spoke of concerns about what were described as US efforts to violate the strategic nuclear balance, about global US missile defence that threatened Russia and China, and about US plans for high precision non-nuclear weapons.

Putin, on his first overseas trip since being inaugurated this month for a new presidential term, described Moscow and Beijing's co-operation in world affairs as one of the main stabilising factors in the international arena.



THE 'ORIGINAL' CHICKEN

A male red junglefowl shows off its shiny, colourful plumage at the Hazarikhil Wildlife Sanctuary in Chattogram's Fatikchhari. Red junglefowls, locally known as "bon morog" and which range across Southeast and South Asia, may seem just like another "chicken", or to some, as a delicacy. But did you know that the common chicken was created when red junglefowls were domesticated for human use around 8,000 years ago? They were once found in almost all forested areas of Bangladesh and now occurs only in the forests of Sylhet, Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Sundarbans. They were also one of three main animals, along with domesticated pigs and dogs, brought by Austronesian people from Maritime Southeast Asia in their voyages to the islands of Oceania, starting around 5,000 years ago. Today, their modern descendants are found throughout the world. While the red junglefowl is common in its range and is listed as "Least Concern" by the IUCN, its populations are still threatened due to deforestation, especially in the hill tracts, and its popularity as a delicacy.

PHOTO: KAMOL DAS



Looking out for the strays

P3



Hezbollah launches rocket barrage at Israeli positions

P7



What constitutes hurting religious sentiments?

P8

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রাজস্ব পরিশোধের সুবিধার্থে সাপ্তাহিক ছুটির দিন শনিবার অফিস খোলা রাখা সংক্রান্ত গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

সন্মানিত করদাতাগণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, হোল্ডিং ট্যাক্স, ট্রেড লাইসেন্স ফি, ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের মালিকানাধীন মার্কেটের দোকান ভাড়া ও সালামী, বিজ্ঞাপন কর ইত্যাদি পরিশোধের সুবিধার্থে সাপ্তাহিক কর্মদিবসের পাশাপাশি ১৮ মে ২০২৪ তারিখ থেকে ৩০ জুন ২০২৪ তারিখ পর্যন্ত সাপ্তাহিক ছুটির দিন প্রতি শনিবার (সরকারি ছুটির দিন ব্যতিত) সকাল ১০.০০ টা থেকে বিকাল ৩.০০ টা পর্যন্ত ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের নগর ভবনস্থ রাজস্ব বিভাগের সকল দপ্তরসহ অঞ্চল পর্যায়ের রাজস্ব বিভাগের সকল দপ্তরসমূহ খোলা থাকবে।

ডিএসসি/পিআরডি/৪৯৯/২০২৩-২০২৪

কর্তৃপক্ষ
ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন