



"Crimes committed in Gaza must be prosecuted at the highest level, regardless of the perpetrators."

Belgian FM Hadja Labib

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



DHAKA WEDNESDAY MAY 22, 2024

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXIV No. 122

JAISHTHA 8, 1431 BS

www.thedailystar.net

ZILQAD 13, 1445 HJRI

16 PAGES : Tk 15.00

## US slaps sanctions on ex-army chief Aziz, family

Cites 'involvement in significant corruption'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US yesterday imposed sanctions on former Bangladesh army chief General (ret) Aziz Ahmed and his immediate family members for what it said was his involvement in significant corruption.

"This action [imposing sanctions] renders Aziz and his immediate family members generally ineligible for entry into the United States," read a press statement of the US State Department.

It said the actions of Aziz contributed to the undermining of Bangladesh's democratic institutions and the public's faith in public institutions and processes.

"Aziz Ahmed engaged in significant corruption by interfering in public processes while helping his brother evade accountability for criminal activity in Bangladesh.

"Aziz also worked closely with his brother to ensure the improper awarding of military contracts and accepted bribes in exchange for government appointments for his personal benefit."

US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller announced the public designations made under Section 7031(c) of the annual Department of State,

Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act.

A public designation refers to identification and notification regarding individuals complicit in significant corruption or gross violations of human rights.

The press statement said this designation reaffirms the US commitment to strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law in Bangladesh.

"The United States supports anti-corruption efforts in Bangladesh through assistance to make government services more transparent and affordable, improve the business and regulatory environment, and build capacity in investigating and prosecuting money laundering and other financial crimes."

The sanctions came just days after the visit of US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu, who had spoken about supporting Bangladesh in its fight against

corruption.

Speaking to the media at his home in the capital yesterday, Aziz said, "I am surprised."

Refuting the allegations, he said the move could have been made to embarrass

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### ALLEGATIONS

- Undermining Bangladesh's democratic institutions
- Interfering in public processes to help his brother evade accountability for crime committed
- Working with his brother to ensure improper awarding of military contracts



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

WHERE'S THE CANAL? ... Believe it or not, this is a part of the DND Canal that flows from Jatrabari to Kanchpur. Over the past decade, illegal structures and bamboo and timber trades, among others, have eaten up long stretches of the waterbody. Various initiatives by the Water Development Board to stop the encroachments have fallen flat. The photo was taken in Narayanganj's Signboard area a few days ago.

## Fixed expenses to eat up 40pc of next budget

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government has to spend about 40 percent of the next budget on subsidies, interest payments, and salaries and allowances of government employees, which will limit its ability to spend on social safety net, health and education.

According to a finance ministry plan, the government may allocate Tk 3,14,700 crore for the three sectors from the total budget of Tk 7,96,900 crore in fiscal 2024-2025.

Of the allocation, Tk 1,16,000 crore will be spent on interest payments, Tk 1,11,000 crore on subsidies and incentives, and Tk 87,700 crore for paying government employees.

Over the last five years, expenditures on wages, pensions, subsidies, and interest increased faster than the revenue earnings, narrowing the government's fiscal space.

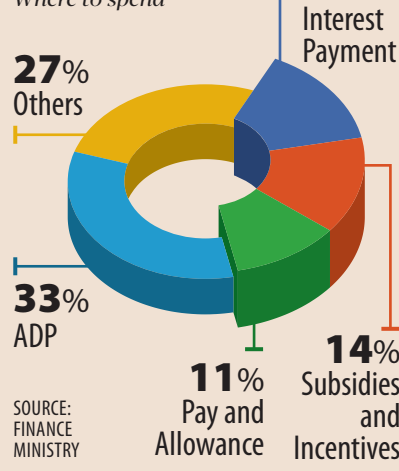
Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said, "If the non-discretionary expenditures eat up most of the budget allocation, then not much is left."

He said they had predicted a sharp rise in expenditures on wages, subsidies, and interest five to seven years ago.

### 2024-25 BUDGET PLAN

TK 7,96,900CR

Where to spend



SOURCE: FINANCE MINISTRY

### KEY POINTS

- The government plans to spend 40% of budget on subsidies, interest payments, and salaries and allowances
- Over the last five years, spending in these three areas increased faster than revenue earnings
- Spending on social protection will be limited

"It took about 10 years for the government to fall into this pit, and it would take another 10 years to get out of it."

However, the country needs to address the problem and for this, a reform initiative is needed, he added.

He suggested bringing down domestic borrowings, subsidies and other unnecessary expenditures, and increasing revenue.

Finance ministry officials

said the government was unable to increase allocation for safety net programmes, healthcare, and education due to resource constraints though it intended to spend more in those sectors.

The government spending on interest payments, both foreign and domestic, has been increasing every year.

Interest payment rates have risen in recent years, and the finance

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## Plot thickens over AL MP Azim going missing

RASHIDUL HASAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Intelligence agencies fear the worst for Awami League MP Anwarul Azim Anar who has gone missing in India, said a source in a local law enforcement agency.

"An Indian security agency has collected the details of four suspects. It also detained one for interrogation," the source told The Daily Star.

Contacted, officials at the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi and the Deputy High Commission in Kolkata yesterday said they were yet to receive any official confirmation from the Indian government about the Jhenaidah-4 lawmaker's status and whereabouts.

Speaking to this newspaper last night, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "We are hopeful we will be able to solve the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## They needed to sanction someone and picked me

### Aziz tells Star

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Former army chief Gen (ret) Aziz Ahmed yesterday rejected the allegations the US authorities made while imposing sanctions against him and his immediate family members.

"I am surprised. Why am I being sanctioned almost three years after retirement? I'm not involved in any kind of politics and business," he told The Daily Star in an interview last night, hours after the US state department announced the sanctions.

The US state department in a release said Aziz's actions contributed to the undermining of Bangladesh's democratic institutions and the people's faith in public institutions and processes; he engaged in significant corruption by interfering in public processes to help his brother evade accountability for criminal activity; he worked closely with his brother to ensure the improper awarding of military contracts; and he accepted bribes in exchange for government appointments for his personal benefit.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## 'Political equations' could be at play

Believe AL leaders

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

A section of top Awami League leaders think there might be some "political equations" behind the US sanctions on former army chief Aziz Ahmed and his immediate family members.

They also expressed concern that similar measures might be on the way for some other incumbent and former officials.

Some leaders believe the latest sanctions indicate that the US stance toward the AL government has not changed much since the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার  
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সওজ  
সড়ক বিভাগ, বরিশাল  
ফোনঃ ০৪৩১-৬৪১৮৫, ফ্যাক্সঃ ০৪৩১-৬১৮৪৪  
e-mail: eebar@rhd.gov.bd  
স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.০৬৫১.৪০৩.৩১.০২৮.২৩-২০১০ তারিখঃ ২০/০৫/২০২৪খ্রিঃ

**গণ-বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, সড়ক পরিবহন ও সেতু মন্ত্রণালয়, সড়ক পরিবহন ও মহাসড়ক বিভাগ, সম্পত্তি শাখার স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.০০০০.০২৩.১৮.০০৯.২৪.১১১, তারিখঃ ১৬/০৫/২০২৪খ্রিঃ এর নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক বরিশাল সড়ক বিভাগাধীন সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তরের জমিতে স্থাপিত রিফুয়েলিং স্টেশনের (প্রবেশপথ সহ) ইজারা এবং ব্যক্তি মালিকানাধীন জমিতে স্থাপিত রিফুয়েলিং স্টেশনে যাতায়াতের প্রবেশপথের জমির ইজারাকৃত যে সকল ইজারাদার ২০২২-২০২৩ পর্যন্ত ইজারা নবায়ন করেননি তাদেরকে জুন, ২০২৪খ্রিঃ এর মধ্যে সকল বকেয়া ইজারা মতল পরিশোধ করে নবায়নের প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

মাসুদ মাহমুদ সুমন  
পরিচিতি নং-৬০২১৬৫  
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ  
সড়ক বিভাগ, বরিশাল

GD-536



### GREETINGS

The Daily Star wishes its valued readers, patrons, well-wishers and advertisers on

### BUDDHA PURNIMA

## Buddha Purnima today

AGENCIES  
Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community, will be celebrated across the country today.

Buddha Purnima marks the birth, enlightenment and death of Gautama Buddha. On this day in 563 BC, Buddha was born as Siddhartha

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Tribute to Al-Hajj Mohammad Shahjahan Khan, former President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Bangladesh Thai Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Barishal Zila Samity; former Managing Director of S.S. Shipping & Trading Ltd., S.S. Shipping & Chartering Ltd. and Fatema Real Estate & Developers Ltd.; and former Chairman of S.S. Builders & Developers Ltd. and prominent social worker.

(19.02.1950 - 22.05.2023)

Tribute from Family Members and All the officers and employees of his organisations



## Need accurate data on dengue patients: Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday requested the DGHS to provide accurate data on dengue patients so that they can take proper action.

"If correct and accurate data on dengue patients is provided, we can ensure more effective and efficient services at the field level," he said while addressing a views exchange meeting at Nagar Bhaban.

The mayor said last year they were told there were a lot of patients in the DSCC area, but they found 9,764 patients after verifying DGHS data till October last year.

"Also, we are getting information on those admitted to the hospital. However, those who leave the hospital from outdoors, are not included in the list."

"We don't want to hold any organisation or institute responsible. We want to control the spread of the Aedes mosquitoes with the assistance of everyone," said Taposh.

He asked the Rajuk representative for the list of under-construction buildings. In response, Rajuk assured to provide the list within 10 days.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a meeting with visiting Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong at her official residence Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

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## CLIMATE CHANGE

### Developed countries fail to deliver on commitments Hasina tells visiting Australian minister

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed frustration over developed countries' failure to fulfill their commitments on issues relating to climate change.

The premier shared this sentiment with visiting Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong during a meeting at Gano Bhaban yesterday, said PM's speech writer M Nazrul Islam.

Hasina said Bangladesh is vulnerable to climate change as it is often hit by cyclones and floods.

"We, however, did not sit idle... we have created our own Climate Trust Fund to save our people," Hasina told Wong.

Hasina said Bangladesh is a densely populated country. "So, we have to

## Clean energy means a sustainable future

Says Peter Haas

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador Peter Haas emphasised the necessity of collaborative efforts from the government, private sector, and civil society to achieve a just energy transition in Bangladesh.

Speaking at the Indo-Pacific Business Forum held at the EMK Center in Dhaka, Haas highlighted the importance of good policies to incentivise smart investments, cross-border electricity trade, privatisation of underperforming state-owned assets, adoption of new technologies, and phasing out the most damaging fossil fuel power generation facilities.

Haas noted that this transition would take years but could be expedited through collective effort and shared knowledge.

He stressed that empowering Bangladesh with clean energy today means securing a brighter, sustainable future for generations to come.

Haas highlighted the importance of harnessing solar, wind, hydro, and hydrogen energy and reiterated the US government's commitment to supporting Bangladesh's clean energy transition.

Haas also mentioned the need for effective decarbonisation, seamless integration of intermittent energy resources, development of cleaner fuels like green hydrogen, access to finance for clean energy technologies, and regional energy trading agreements.

## PVT HEALTH CENTRES IN SAVAR

# 91pc operate without environment clearance

AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH

At least 91 percent of private hospitals and clinics in Savar are running without clearance from the Department of Environment.

Only 10 of the total 115 private hospitals and clinics in the upazila have necessary environmental clearance to run their operations, confirmed DoE sources.

Also, eight of the hospitals and clinics in the upazila are running without approval from Directorate General of Health Services, as per health department.

Since environmental clearance was not mandatory for obtaining a licence from DGHS earlier, most health centres in Savar have long been running without it. They merely had to submit a copy of their respective applications to the DoE seeking clearance to get the licence.

However, the DGHS, at a meeting on March 16 last year, decided that it would neither grant nor renew licences to any private hospital, clinic, diagnostic centre, or blood transfusion centre without an environmental clearance.

Environmental experts have welcomed the move.

Mashura Shammi, professor at Department of Environmental Sciences of Jahangirnagar University, said, "Environmental clearance involves several factors that are largely ignored in Bangladesh. Every day, a lot of waste is generated from the hospitals, but no environmental impact assessment for it has been done."

"Only a small portion of this

huge amount of biomedical, liquid, and hazardous medical waste generated daily is being treated, while the bulk of it is disposed of completely untreated," she added.

Saemul Huda, upazila health and family planning officer in Savar, said, "Earlier, we used to scrutinise and recommend

get a licence only after due vetting from the DoE."

Meanwhile, owners of private hospitals and clinics in the upazila expressed concern that they would face a barrage of complications in obtaining and renewing their license due to this decision.

Contacted, Wakilur Rahman,



There are more than 100 private hospitals and clinics in Savar, most of which don't follow the waste management guidelines. The photo was taken at a temporary garbage station of a private hospital. FILE PHOTO

granting licences only if the hospitals or clinics submitted copies of their applications for environmental clearance along with other necessary documents. From now on, however, it will not be done without updated environmental clearance."

Contacted, Zahirul Islam Talukdar, deputy director of DoE in Dhaka district, said, "We issue environmental clearance only if the hospitals or clinics fully comply with the conditions required to obtain it. They would

owner of Lab Zone Hospital in Savar and also vice-president of Savar's Private Hospital Owners' Association, said obtaining environmental clearance is the most difficult among the necessary licences and approvals.

"However, since it has been made mandatory, I think it will be beneficial for us if the DoE makes it easier for hospitals to get clearances. Otherwise, many hospitals and clinics may struggle to obtain or renew a licence," he added.

## Do not pay anyone for visas, work permits

Says Italian envoy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Italian Ambassador to Bangladesh Antonio Alessandro has advised visa-seekers not to pay anyone for visas, emphasising that the embassy only charges small taxes and processing fees.

"We only take small taxes and processing fees, so applicants should not pay anyone for buying working permits or procuring visas. The services are free except these fees," Alessandro said after meeting with State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Shofiqur Rahman Choudhury at the ministry.

They discussed ways to improve migration to Italy and addressed both regular and irregular flows of migration.

Alessandro said discovery of forged documents, counterfeit working permits, and fraudulent applications, which have slowed down the visa process.

"I want to reassure those who are concerned about the expiration of work permits that they do not need to panic. If they email VFS Global, their working permits will not expire, but it will just take some time before getting a proper appointment."

He also mentioned that they are currently receiving a limited number of applications due to pending ones.

## Form minority commission with judicial power

Demands Nirmul Committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shahriar Kabir, the outgoing president of Ekattor Ghat Dal Nirmul Committee, yesterday said the government's initiative to protect the rights of minorities does not seem sufficient.

"For a long time, we have been demanding the formation of a minority commission. If the government can't do that, we will form the National Minority Commission ourselves," he said.

He made the remarks at the announcement ceremony of the organisation's new executive committee at Jatiya Press Club.

**India, Canada, and Australia have national minority commissions with judicial powers. Although there is a National Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh, it is not empowered.**

SHAMSUDDIN CHOWDHURY MANIK  
Justice

Speaking at the event, Justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik said, "India, Canada, and Australia have national minority commissions with judicial powers. Although there is a National Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh, it is not empowered. We demand a minority commission with judicial powers from the government."

Names of the members of the new 91-member committee have been officially announced after the Eighth National Conference of the organisation.

Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury is president of the newly elected committee, while Asif Munir Tanmoy is the general secretary.

"The Nirmul Committee will not make any compromise in upholding the spirit of the Liberation War and the 1972 constitution," said the newly-elected president.

Muntassir Mamoon, advisor of the committee, also spoke at the event.

## Leak of citizens' data alarming

TIB expresses concern

STAR REPORT

Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday expressed deep concern over the theft and sale of citizens' confidential information online.

They demanded severe punishment for those responsible, reports UNB.

The anti-graft watchdog highlighted the alarming use of law enforcement officials' IDs to steal citizens' sensitive information, including call data records, national identity card details, and mobile numbers from the National Telecommunication Monitoring Center.

This breach violates constitutional commitments to safeguard personal data, it said.

TIB also urged swift enactment of the Personal Data Protection Act, 2024.

The Daily Star published a report yesterday titled "Personal data up for sale online!" showing how crooked government employees are selling information from national database to 789 groups on social media.

The report detailed how the NTMC system was exploited using the IDs of two

law enforcement officers to collect and sell confidential information for financial gain.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said, "Previously, Bangladeshi citizens experienced thefts of various confidential documents such as birth certificates and national identity cards at different times. Recent times have seen a surge in such breaches, with personal data being pilfered by law enforcement organisations tasked with safeguarding it."

The government's process and infrastructure for protecting citizens' sensitive information appear inadequate, raising questions about its integrity and capability, UNB cited Iftekharuzzaman as saying.

The government seems to lack the necessary commitment and investment for robust data protection, making its efforts insufficient and ineffective, he added.

Legal and institutional initiatives for data protection are superficial and risky. While suspending implicated user IDs is a positive step, identifying all involved in data trafficking is crucial, said Iftekharuzzaman.



## CHITTARANJAN DAS the palm tree planter of Jashore

DIPANKAR ROY

When everyone else runs for cover from the scorching sun, 67-year-old Chittaranjan Das can be seen tending to palm trees on his broken bicycle. Neither scorching heat, torrential rains, nor biting cold can deter him from his mission.

For 16 years, he has dedicated his life to greening the roadsides of Jashore.

In 2008, Chittaranjan developed a

passion for planting trees. Since then, he has planted at least 2,88,000 palm trees along 42 roads in the Abhaynagar and Manirampur upazilas, and Nayapara municipal area.

He has also planted 56,000 date palm seeds. His efforts earned him respect and recognition throughout the country.

"It's wonderful to see

people resting in the shade of palm trees, farmers eating rice, or pedestrians seeking shelter during sunny days or storms," Chittaranjan told this newspaper recently.

Every morning, Chittaranjan leaves the house armed with sticks, water bottles, and spades. He removes weeds, adds soil to the base of trees during the rain, and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4





APU MURDER
Verdict on June 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court will deliver a verdict on June 4 regarding appeals in A level student Ashikur Rahman Khan Apu murder case.

Apu was shot dead and his two brothers Arifur Rahman Khan Setu and Atikur Rahman Khan Bappy were injured in a gun attack in front of their house at Wari on May 23, 2008.

Yesterday, a four-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan fixed the date after concluding a hearing on the appeals.

At a stage of the hearing, the chief justice commented that the crime control system should be developed as the nature of crimes in society has been changed. A total of four appeals have been filed with the Appellate Division in connection with the case.

21 more dengue patients hospitalised

UNB, Dhaka

Twenty-one more people were hospitalised with dengue in 24 hours till yesterday.

Of the new patients, six were admitted to hospitals in Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Currently, 134 patients are receiving treatment at several hospitals across the country.

So far, 2,676 dengue cases have been reported since January 1, 2024, said DGHS.

2 years on, water plant still not functional

Habiganj residents grapple with water crisis amid heatwave

MINTU DESHWARA

A groundwater treatment and supply project costing nearly Tk 10 crore in Habiganj has been non-operational for two years since completion, while residents of the municipality grapple with an acute water crisis amid the ongoing hot spell.

The municipality can only supply half the water needed by the townspeople, and many tube wells are now dry due to low groundwater levels. The newly constructed plant could have been a godsend for locals if it was operational.

Lack of power connection and equipment theft are behind the



Islam inaugurated the plant on November 11 last year ahead of the 12th national polls.

However, the Department of Public Health Engineering is yet to hand over the plant to the municipality authorities.

At present, the municipality supplies 1.94 lakh gallons of water daily to 2,300 residential and commercial establishments in the town through a 56-km pipeline from its two operational water treatment plants in Kalibari and Babystand areas.

This only meets around 50 percent of the total demand for water in the municipality.

If the new plant was operational, it would have enabled the municipality to meet 80 percent of the water demand, municipal officials said.

Customers complained that around 25 percent of them do not get water supply to their houses through the existing pipeline.

After a year-long tug of war with numerous letters being exchanged to this end, the municipal authorities finally agreed on pre-paid meters. However, things stalled further as the plant's motor, cables and other equipment worth around Tk 20-22 lakh was stolen. Meanwhile, LGRD Minister Tazul

Mihta Mia, another resident, said, "Many people are largely dependent on tube wells to collect water as the town water supply is unavailable in many areas. However, the tube wells often cannot fetch water as the groundwater has depleted."

Contacted, Abdul Kaddus Shamim, assistant engineer at Water Supply Department of Habiganj municipality, said they are still unsure when the plant will become operational.

Tahmina Tanvin, executive engineer of the Department of Public Health and Engineering in Habiganj, said, "We have asked the contractor to install electricity connections and meters immediately."

"We will also check whether there is any damage to the pipelines due to the ongoing development works of various roads and drains in the municipality. If everything works fine, we will hand over the plant to the municipality."

Manjur Murshed, executive engineer of BPDDB's Habiganj office, said, "The plant's power connections will be installed soon."

Ataur Rahman, mayor of Habiganj municipality, expressed hope that the plant will come into operation soon.

Constable sued for amassing illegal wealth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Anti-Corruption Commission of Rajshahi yesterday sued a police constable for amassing illegal wealth worth over Tk 62 lakh.

Md Mehedi Hasan, 36, is attached to the office of Natore district's superintendent of police.

ACC Assistant Director Md Amir Hossain filed the case with its coordinated office in Rajshahi.

Mehedi was found to have amassed wealth worth Tk 96,84,094 between 2004 and 2023, of which he earned Tk 62,09,030 through illegal means, ACC investigation finds.

Moreover, when asked by ACC, he submitted his wealth statements and documents using 48 non-judicial stamps, which were found counterfeited.

In those documents, he stated that he received Tk 18 lakh by mortgaging his land properties to eight people and taking loans of Tk 33 lakh from eight other individuals, according to ACC.

Police foil Ganosamhati's bid to besiege central bank

UNB, Dhaka

Police foiled the attempt of the leaders and activists of Ganosamhati Andolon to besiege Bangladesh Bank in Dhaka's Motijheel area yesterday.

As part of their scheduled programme, the leaders and activists of the party led by its chief coordinator Zonayed Saki, marched towards Bangladesh Bank around 11:00am yesterday to lay siege to it, demanding the government to publish the list of loan defaulters and money launderers.

When they reached the Shapla Chattar area, a police team obstructed them, said Golam Rahman, assistant commissioner (Motijheel Zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Being obstructed, they later held a brief rally in front of Shapla Chattar's foot overbridge and then left the place.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
ইমপ্লিমেন্টেশন প্রকল্প (ICSETEP)
প্রকল্প ম্যানেজমেন্ট ইউনিট (পিএমইউ)
বাংলাদেশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশন
আগারগাঁও প্রশাসনিক এলাকা, শের-ই-বাংলানগর, ঢাকা-১২০৭।
Ref. No.: UGC/ICSETEP/Advertisement/2024/35
Date: 21-05-2024
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি
শিক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়ের মাধ্যমিক ও উচ্চশিক্ষা বিভাগের অধীনে বাংলাদেশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশন কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়নানীহন ইমপ্লিমেন্টেশন প্রকল্প (ICSETEP)-এর অধীনে ৩ টি প্যাকেজের দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে।

No shortage of rice in country Says agri minister
BSS, Dhaka
Agriculture Minister M Abdus Shahid has said the country has no shortage of rice as its entire rice demand is now being met by internal production.
"The country's rice production has increased more than fourfold in the last 50 years," said Shahid while addressing a ministerial session titled, "Paddies for the Planet and People", at the ongoing 10th World Water Forum held in Bali, Indonesia on Monday.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District: Bagerhat
www.lged.gov.bd
শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গাম শহরের উন্নতি
e-Tender Notice (OTM) : 119/2023-2024
Memo No: 46.02.0100.000.07.002.24-2387
Date: 21-05-2024
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of stated below:
Tender IDs Package Description & No. Last Date & Time of Depositing Document fees
986505 (a) Improvement of Mongla - Chatterhat GC Road at Tatibunia - Burburia School Road By BC from Ch: 00m - 1500m [Road ID: 201584017] [Salvage Cost: 39,73,242 tk.] (b) Improvement of Mongla - Chatterhat GCCR Road at Tatibunia - Mithakhali Bazar Road By BC from Ch: 1000m - 2000m [Road ID: 201584019] [Salvage Cost: 10,22,315 tk.] [Mongla] [Bagerhat] [2nd Call] & Bag/VR-73/FY 2023-24. 09.06.2024
Time: 5:00 PM
986510 (a) Improvement of Haldibunia - Deshekhando Road By BC from Ch: 00m - 1000m [Road ID: 201584050] [Salvage Cost: 29,05,038 tk.] (b) Improvement of Mongla Chatterhat GCCR at Moulkhali - Tatibunia - Dattermatte By BC from Ch: 00m - 1270m [Road ID: 201584013] [Salvage Cost: 11,31,880 tk.] [Mongla] [Bagerhat] [2nd Call] & Bag/VR-74/FY 2023-24. 09.06.2024
Time: 5:00 PM
988494 (a) Improvement of Sattala Bazar Chatakpur High School Road at Ch: 00m - 1570m. [Road ID: 201344019] [Salvage Cost: 13,19,960.00 Tk.] (b) Improvement of Khatakhali to Jaria Madrasa Uttarpara Road at Ch: 00m - 1200m. [Road ID: 201345056] [Salvage Cost: 9,72,162.00 Tk.] [Fakirhat] [Bagerhat] & Bag/VR-10/FY 2023-24. 19.06.2024
Time: 5:00 PM
This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender shall be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies shall be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP 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 registered Banks branches.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd).

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Manikganj PWD Division
Manikganj.
www.pwd.gov.bd
Memo No-1360-
Date : 21/05/2024
e-Tender Notice e-Gp Tender (OTM)
e-Tender is invited in the e-GP System Portal http://www.eprocure.gov.bd
SL. No. Tender ID & Reference No Name of Work Last Selling Date & Time Opening Date & Time
01. 989303 Office of the SE-memo no-1649 date: 16-05-2024 Painting outside the office building under Manikganj Public Works Division, laying tiles in the toilet of the Divisional Accountant including making cabinets in the kitchen of the inspection bungalow with special repairs during the year 2023- 24
04-June-2024 14:00 04-June-2024 15:00
02. 989320 Office of the SE-memo no-1648 date: 16-05-2024 Repair and renewal work with replacement of old tiles including damaged wooden windows and doors, plaster, paint, various types of fittings and fixers of Manikganj Civil Surgeon Office building during the year 2023-24
04-June-2024 14:00 04-June-2024 15:00
This is an online Tender. Where 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 e-GP registered bank's branches within due time.
Further information and guideline are available in the Nationale-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk(helpdesk @ eprocure gov.bd) or (email: ee\_manik@pwd.gov.bd) and call to 02-996610401) Interested person can be communicated with the undersigned during office hours.
(Sharmin Aktar)
Executive Engineer
Manikganj PWD Division
Manikganj.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ এর কার্যালয়
সড়ক বিভাগ, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ।
☎ ০২৫৮৮-৮৯৩১০১
E-mail - cenaw@rhd.gov.bd
স্মারক নং-০৫.০২.৭০০০.৪৫৪.০২২.০০২.২৪-১৪৭৭(৩০) তারিখঃ ২১/০৫/২০২৪ খ্রিঃ
"সেতুর ইজারা কোটেশন আহ্বান বিজ্ঞপ্তি (৫ম আহ্বান)"
০১। ইজারা কোটেশন নং ০৩-এন,জে,আর, ডি/ ২০২৩ - ২০২৪ খ্রিঃ ।
০২। ইজারার বিবরণ ১। সওজ, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ সড়ক বিভাগীয় রমনপুর - ভোলাহাট - বিডিয়ার ক্যাম্প সড়কের ৩য় কিসিতে অবস্থিত "সেতুর সুলতান সেতুর (মকরমপুর সেতুর)" উপর দিয়ে পারাপারকারী যানবাহন হতে টোল আদায়ের নিমিত্তে ইজারা প্রদানের বন্দোবস্ত।
০৩। ইজারা চুক্তির মেয়াদ ১। ৩ (তিন) অর্থ বৎসর (০১/০৭/২০২৪ হতে ৩০/০৬/২০২৬ খ্রিঃ পর্যন্ত (১০৯৫ দিন) ।
০৪। ইজারা কোটেশনের সিডিউল মূল্য ১। টাঃ ৫০০০.০০ (পাঁচ হাজার টাকা মাত্র)।
০৫। বায়নার টাকার পরিমাণ ১। উদ্ধৃত মূল্যের ১০% (শতকরা দশ ভাগ) ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/ পে-অর্ডার আকারে
০৬। ইজারা কোটেশন বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় ১। ০২/০৬/২০২৪ খ্রিঃ তারিখ বিকাল ৪.০০ পর্যন্ত।
০৭। মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় ইজারা কোটেশন গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় ১। ০৩/০৬/২০২৪ খ্রিঃ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.৩০ পর্যন্ত
০৮। ইজারা জাকে অংশ গ্রহণের যোগ্যতা ১। ডায়ট ও আয়কর সনদধারী প্রতিষ্ঠান/নাগরিক, সরকারী/বেসরকারী/ স্বায়মশাসিত সকল প্রতিষ্ঠানের ঠিকাদার।
০৯। যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা কোটেশন ক্রয়ের জন্য পাওয়া যাবে কোটেশন ১। জেলা প্রশাসক, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ/ নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ/ রাজশাহী/ নওগাঁ/পরিষ্কারনা বিভাগ-১/সেতুর ডিআইন বিভাগ-১, পূর্বচন্দ, সড়ক ভবন, তেজগাঁও, ঢাকা/ উপ-বিভাগীয় প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক উপ-বিভাগ, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ/ শিবগঞ্জ/ বিভাগীয় কমিশনার, রাজশাহী
১০। যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় গ্রহণ করা হবে ১। (ক) নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী,সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ। (খ) বিভাগীয় কমিশনার, রাজশাহী (গ) জেলা প্রশাসক, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ।
১১। ইজারা কোটেশন খোলার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময় ১। স্থানঃ নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সড়ক ও জনশখ অধিদপ্তর, সড়ক বিভাগ, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ। তারিখঃ ০৩/০৬/২০২৪ খ্রিঃ । সময়ঃ বিকাল ৩.০০ ঘটিকা।
১২। ইজারা আহ্বানকারী যে কোন সময় যে কোন কোটেশন / সকল কোটেশন বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
(সানজিবা আফরীন কিতুক)
পরিচিতি নং-৬০২৫১
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী (সে ডাঃ) সওজ,
সড়ক বিভাগ, চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ।



## INTERNATIONAL

## US undermined aviation safety with sanctions

Says Russia after Raisi helicopter crash

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, commenting on the helicopter crash that killed Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi, said yesterday that US sanctions had worsened aviation safety.

Iranian media reported that images from the site showed the US-made Bell 212 helicopter on which Raisi was travelling slammed into a mountain peak, although there was no official word on the cause of the crash.

Iran was a major buyer of Bell helicopters under the Shah before the 1979 Islamic revolution, though the exact origin of the aircraft that crashed was not clear. Decades of sanctions have made it hard for Iran to obtain parts or upgrade its aircraft.

"The Americans disown this, but the truth is that other countries against which the United States announced sanctions do not receive spare parts for American equipment, including aviation," Lavrov said about the crash.

"We are talking about deliberately causing damage to ordinary citizens who use these vehicles, and when spare parts are not supplied, this is directly related to a decrease in the level of safety."

Raisi's death has introduced "great uncertainty" in the succession, analysts said, stirring rivalries in the hardliners' camp over who will succeed Khamenei as the country's ultimate authority.



Doctors and staff of Kamal Adwan Hospital evacuate Palestinian patients following an Israeli strike in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday. Residents and medical officials said Israeli tanks were besieging the Al-Awda Hospital in Jabalia for the third day, and opened fire against Kamal Adwan Hospital in nearby Beit Lahia town.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## UN COURT Small island states win key climate case

AFP, Berlin

The UN maritime court yesterday ruled in favour of nine small island states who brought a case to seek increased protection of world's oceans from catastrophic climate change.

Finding that carbon emissions can be considered a sea pollutant, the court said countries have an obligation to take measures to mitigate their effects on oceans.

"Anthropogenic GHG emissions into the atmosphere constitute pollution of the marine environment" under the international treaty UNCLOS, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) ruled in an expert opinion.

The case was brought in September by nine small countries disproportionately affected by climate change, including Antigua and Barbuda and Vanuatu.

## PRO-GAZA PROTEST Students stage walkout from Yale graduation

REUTERS, New Haven

Scores of graduating students staged a walkout from Yale University's commencement exercises on Monday, protesting the Israeli offensive in Gaza, Yale's financial ties to weapons makers and its response to pro-Palestinian demonstrations on the Ivy League campus.

The walkout began as Yale President Peter Salovey started to announce the traditional college-by-college presentation of candidates for degrees on the grounds of Yale's Old Campus, filled with thousands of graduates in their caps and gowns.

At least 150 students seated near the front of the audience stood up together, turned their backs to the stage and paraded out of the ceremony through Phelps Gate, retracing their steps during the processional into the yard.

Many of the protesters carried small banners with such slogans as "Books not bombs" and "Divest from war." Some wore red-coloured gloves symbolizing bloodied hands.

Other signs read: "Drop the charges" and "Protect free speech" in reference to 45 people arrested in a police crackdown last month on demonstrations in and around the New Haven, Connecticut, campus.

## Aid for Palestinians piles up in Egypt

Rafah crossing closed due to threat posed to aid work by Israel's military operation; US pier delivery falters

REUTERS, United Nations

Food and medicine for Palestinians in Gaza are piling up in Egypt because the Rafah crossing remains closed and there has been no aid delivered to a UN warehouse from a US-built pier for two days, UN officials warned on Monday.

Senior UN aid official Edem Wosornu said there were insufficient supplies and fuel to provide any meaningful level of support to the people of Gaza as they endure Israel's military onslaught against Hamas.

"We are running out of words to describe what is happening in Gaza. We have described it as a catastrophe, a nightmare, as hell on earth. It is all of these, and worse," she said.

She told the UN Security Council that the closure of Rafah crossing from Egypt had stopped the delivery of at least

## 900,000 forced to flee Rafah since the start of Israeli offensive: UN

82,000 metric tonnes of supplies, while access at Israel's Kerem Shalom crossing was limited due to "hostilities, challenging logistical conditions, and complex coordination procedures."

Egypt said on Monday that the crossing is closed due to the threat posed to aid work by Israel's military operation.

Aid access into southern Gaza has been disrupted since Israel stepped up military operations in

Rafah, a move that the UN says has forced 900,000 people to flee.

Israel's UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan told the Security Council that Israel had no other choice but to go after Hamas in Rafah and that the removal of civilians from an active war zone should be

quantities of aid, but now areas in the vicinity of this crossing are also under evacuation orders" by Israel.

Aid deliveries began arriving at a US-built pier on Friday as Israel comes under growing global pressure to allow more supplies into the besieged coastal enclave. The



supported and not condemned.

"They have moved to a designated humanitarian zone that is being filled with aid. And our hope is for many more civilians to leave Rafah and move out of harm's way," he said. "Temporary evacuation is reversible, but the loss of life is not."

However, Wosornu described the situation for Palestinians at the new sites as horrendous.

In northern Gaza, where the UN warns a famine is imminent, Wosornu said the Erez crossing had been closed since May 9 and the newly-opened Erez West crossing

"is now being used for limited

aid distribution from the floating pier, but has remained adamant that deliveries by land are the best way to combat the crisis.

The UN said that 10 truckloads of food aid - transported from the pier site by UN contractors - were received on Friday at a World Food Programme warehouse in Deir El Balah in Gaza.

But on Saturday, only five truckloads made it to the warehouse after 11 others were cleaned out by Palestinians during the journey through an area that a UN official said has been hard to access with humanitarian aid.

## India EC bars BJP candidate from campaign

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

The Election Commission (EC) of India has "strongly censured" retired Calcutta High Court judge and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Lok Sabha candidate from West Bengal's Tamluk constituency, Abhijit Gangopadhyay, and barred him from all campaigning for 24 hours after his crass remarks about chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

The 24-hour bar on his campaigning began at 5:00pm yesterday.

"[T]he Commission painfully notes the fact that such abominable words have come from someone of Shri Abhijit Gangopadhyay's educational and professional background and hence does not remotely deserve any benefit of doubt. And whereas, by Shri Abhijit Gangopadhyay's words, he has brought damage and disrepute to the state of West Bengal that has a distinguished tradition of respect for women," the polls body noted in its order.

On May 15, Gangopadhyay, at a public meeting in Haldia, had said in Bengali, "Mamata Banerjee, how much are you being sold for? Your rate is 10 lakhs, why? Because you're getting your make up done by Keya Seth? Mamata Banerjee, is she even a woman? I keep wondering sometimes."

## 40 killed in Nigeria gunmen attack

AFP, Jos

Gunmen on motorbikes stormed a mining community in central Nigeria, killing up to 40 people and torching homes, residents said, in the latest violence to hit a region troubled by resource disputes and intercommunal strife.

The attack late on Monday took place in Plateau state, where in December nearly 200 people were killed in raids on mostly Christian villages.

Armed men invaded Zurak mining community in Wase district in the evening, shooting sporadically at residents and torching houses, Plateau state commissioner for information Musa Ibrahim Ashoms told AFP by telephone.

He initially gave an estimate of around 40 killed, but later said only nine had so far been confirmed dead after speaking to local officials as the situation was still unclear.

## 1 dead, 30 hurt as S'pore flight hits turbulence

AFP, Bangkok

One person died and 30 were injured yesterday when a Singapore Airlines flight from London hit severe turbulence and was forced to make an emergency landing in Bangkok.

Flight tracking data suggested the plane dropped more than 1,800 metres (6,000 feet) in just five minutes over the Andaman Sea, west of Thailand, causing multiple head injuries to those on board.

It is the latest drama involving a Boeing plane, after a fuselage panel blew out of an Alaska Airlines 737 MAX in January as well as two fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019.

Singapore Airlines said flight SQ321 took off from London's Heathrow airport and "encountered severe turbulence en route".

## Dhaka, Canberra

FROM PAGE 12

their coastguard to Bangladesh to talk to the head of Bangladesh Coastguard in order to bring about a fruitful cooperation.

The home minister told journalists at the secretariat that Wong emphasised on enhancing the sharing of intelligence for the development of both the countries.

Wong said, "We share a region, an ocean and a future. We are determined to do all we can with you and other partners in the region to ensure a region that is peaceful, stable and prosperous."

About big power competition in the Indo-pacific region, she said Australia is a middle power, not super power, and believes in partnership, collaboration and engagement.

"So, we will collaborate with the countries in the Indian ocean through IORA [Indian Ocean Rim Association], work with partners of the ASEAN, with which it has strategic partnership, and we have a growing relationship with Bangladesh.

"We are a democracy and care about the issues [democracy, human rights, governance and gender equality] you spoke about. We want to do what we can to facilitate development, [so] that the people are safe, prosperous and the conditions for peace are there."

About the Rohingya crisis, Wong said Australia will continue to work with

Bangladesh on addressing it.

"This is a critically important issue to our region. Sustainable repatriation of the Rohingyas is the solution," she said, adding that it is important to hold accountable the perpetrators who committed the crimes against the ethnic minority.

She also said Australia will provide additional funding to Bangladesh for technical education and additional economic assistance for economic reforms to support the LDC graduation.

Wong added that Australia and Bangladesh are also working on practical solutions to climate change, including transforming economy to clean energy economy.

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said the bilateral trade between the two countries saw a significant rise, currently at \$4 billion, and Australia will continue to provide duty-free access of Bangladeshi products to the Australian market even after the LDC graduation.

"We sought Australian investments to our IT sector and special economic zones."

"We also spoke about skilled migration and a joint programme for Bangladeshi and Australian universities," he said, adding that more than 100,000 Bangladeshis are already in Australia and are making significant contribution to its society.

## Washington

FROM PAGE 2

The minister said Bangladesh has adopted a "zero tolerance" policy against corruption and it will continue to work with the United States on this issue.

Hasan said the two countries are working together on combating terrorism and human trafficking, among other issues.

The US state department yesterday announced the public designation of Gen (ret) Aziz due to what it says was his involvement in "significant corruption".

This action renders Aziz and his immediate family members generally ineligible for entering the US.

Aziz served as Bangladesh's chief of army staff from June 2018 to June 2021.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan declined to comment on the US sanctions against the former army chief.

Speaking to reporters after a cabinet meeting at the Secretariat yesterday, the minister said, "I have no comment on this. I don't know why this ban has been imposed."

The US in May last year announced a new visa policy stating that it would impose visa restrictions on Bangladeshis, who undermine the democratic election process, and their immediate family members.

## An alarming lapse in data security protocols

### NTMC's revelation about illicit sale of private data raises concerns

The National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre's (NTMC) recent revelation about the illicit sale of citizens' NID card and phone call details comes as yet another reminder of how susceptible government stored data is to breaches and exploitations. The fact that government employees themselves have exploited their access to the data—selling it through various social media groups and messaging apps—adds another dimension to this story. For one, it exposes an alarming lapse in the data security protocols. It also means that nothing short of an overhaul of the whole data security infrastructure will be enough to contain this multifaceted threat.

The NTMC server keeps data relating to citizens' NID cards, passports, driving licenses, and call detail records. Nearly 500 officials of 42 organisations can log in to its National Intelligent Platform (NIP) using their IDs, and access the data for verification and investigation purposes. The latest breach, as per a letter by the NTMC to the home ministry, was traced to unusually high numbers of logins to the NIP by IDs belonging to two high officials from the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) and Rab 6 between March 25 and April 25. Both of them are now under investigation for unauthorised data transfers. Previously, two data entry operators of the IDEA 2 project were arrested for similar offenses.

Although we don't know how many people were affected by the latest breaches, the NTMC in its letter said that personal data was being sold through 21 WhatsApp, 48 Telegram, and 720 Facebook groups and pages, which collectively have 32 lakh members and followers. Such widespread dissemination of sensitive information poses a severe risk to the security and privacy of individuals concerned. Personal data including NID details can be abused to commit various crimes. We have seen how such data was used to open fake bank accounts and obtain loans, leading to financial and identity theft, or to illegally access government grants. Victims, it goes without saying, have to pay the price even years after the commission of such crimes in their names.

The latest revelation should serve as a wake-up call for the government. It has waited too long for the data security system to fix itself, without undertaking any robust measure, but this was a fool's dream. What the government needs to do is act decisively to not just ensure that our data is unbreachable for hackers but also implement stringent security and accountability measures for officials and organisations having access to the data. The NTMC has made a number of recommendations in this regard, which the government should carefully evaluate and implement.

## Waste of a rescue app for women

### Govt should properly utilise tools meant to prevent gender violence

In a country where sexual harassment and violence against women are rampant despite having various legal and administrative safeguards, the failure of one app meant to help women in trouble to reach its intended users is perhaps not a big surprise. But it indeed feels like a wasted opportunity, especially given the widespread use of mobile phone and internet among women in Bangladesh. The "Joy" app—through which women facing violence can send rescue pleas to law enforcers, family and friends—was seen as a laudable step when it was launched in 2018. However, over the last six years, only six requests were sent through the app, which is quite disconcerting.

For context, over the last four years, more than 6,000 women were raped and more than 300 were murdered after rape. Had the app worked properly or had girls and women known about it, could some of those victims be rescued? You can no longer find the app on Google Play, and no link to the app is even visible on the landing page of the website of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) or other relevant ministries. The app is apparently under reconstruction currently, and Google might have restricted some of its features in Android 12. But this is no excuse for its serial underperformance in all the years that it has existed.

We have seen a similar usage pattern with the MoWCA's 109 helpline, which is not being used for the purpose it was intended to serve. Moreover, since 2013, an estimated 600-plus apps have been developed by the government, but like Joy, most of these disappeared from Google Play. Joy was built with a budget of Tk 45 lakh. If similar amounts were spent to develop the other apps, imagine how much of taxpayers' money went to waste. It is clear that government officials and organisations behind these initiatives put little effort into properly utilising them, making a mockery of the whole investment. But rescue tools like an app or helpline can save many potential victims of violence, if properly used and promoted. We urge the authorities to take immediate steps to revive these important tools.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY



### Pact of Friendship and Alliance between Germany and Italy

On May 22, 1939, Adolf Hitler of Germany and Benito Mussolini of Italy signed the Pact of Steel, formally known as the Pact of Friendship and Alliance between Germany and Italy, a full military and political alliance between their countries.

# Why is it taking so long to stabilise the economy?



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SADIQ AHMED

Bangladesh's economy showed remarkable signs of swift recovery from the adverse effects of Covid-19, but this progress was cut short by the advent of serious macroeconomic imbalances in April 2022. These imbalances are reflected in high inflation, depleting foreign exchange reserves, pressure on the exchange rate, shrinking capital inflows, and pressure on the budget. To address the stabilisation issues, the government entered a four-year programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Implementation of the second year of the programme is currently underway.

While the government's intentions to address the macroeconomic stabilisation challenges are laudable, the results so far fall short of what is necessary. Inflation remains high, the availability of foreign exchange is severely constrained, GDP growth is on a downward trend, investment rates are down, and export growth is much below the long-term trend. Shortage of foreign exchange and the associated import cutbacks are constraining the recovery of GDP growth, private investment, and exports.

My research, documented in a new book titled Bangladesh Stabilizing The Macroeconomy, suggests that the reason for the slow progress in macroeconomic stabilisation is the inadequate implementation of required reforms. At the initial stage, the main policy response was to manage the balance of payments with import controls and use of forex reserves, and to control domestic inflation through budgetary subsidies on oil, gas, electricity, and fertiliser. An effort was also made to protect GDP growth and investments through a strong control over interest rates, by increasing fiscal deficits, and through liberal use of Bangladesh Bank financing of fiscal deficits.

These policies, instead of helping the stabilisation agenda, further worsened the imbalances. There was an unsustainable run-on forex reserve that put pressure on the exchange rate, foreign capital flows fell, and the inflation rate accelerated approaching nearly 10 percent. Growing budgetary subsidies lowered spending on core social services and put pressure on

fiscal deficits. To stem the slide of the exchange rate, the government further tightened imports, which declined by 27 percent from the FY2022 level, adversely affecting GDP growth, investment, and exports.

What went wrong? The macroeconomic imbalances have emerged from three sources: inflationary pressure; the balance of payments pressure; and fiscal pressure.



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

Addressing these issues requires the use of at least three policy instruments that best relate to each of these areas: monetary policy to ease the inflationary pressure; exchange rate policy to ease the balance of payments pressure; and tax or expenditure policy measures to ease the budgetary pressure. Their combined use as a coordinated set of policy actions can help avoid the bluntness of any single instrument and reinforce the effectiveness of each of the policy reforms.

Regarding balance of payments management, excessive reliance on import controls is inconsistent with GDP growth acceleration. While selective import controls can play a short-term emergency adjustment role, resorting to import controls can cause serious supply disruptions, discourage

domestic and foreign private investments, hurt exports, and lower GDP growth. The only sustainable way to manage the balance of payments pressure is to focus on the supply side to increase exports and to use demand-side instruments to lower demand for imports.

A critical determinant of exports is the incentive policy regime. Investors will produce and export only if the profitability from exports exceeds the profitability from domestic production. Two key determinants of export profitability are the exchange rate and trade protection. An overvalued real exchange rate hurts exports and encourages production for the domestic market. Similarly, the higher the trade protection, the higher the incentives for domestic production and bias against exports.

anti-export bias of trade policy. A flexible exchange rate along with lower trade protection will boost exports and remittances, thereby increasing forex supply. On the demand side, reduction in private spending through increase in interest rate combined with higher taxes and lower fiscal deficit will help reduce the demand for imports and avoid the exchange rate from overshooting.

Regarding inflation management, research shows that globally as well as in Bangladesh the main source of inflationary pressure is excess liquidity in the system resulting from the pandemic-time stimulus packages. In Bangladesh, these were further intensified by the persistence of interest controls through the "6/9" interest rate policy, rising fiscal deficit, and liberal Bangladesh Bank financing of fiscal deficit. Thankfully, since September 2023, the 6/9 interest rate policy has been abandoned and the Bangladesh Bank has stopped financing the budget deficit. This is a welcome reform, which has already lowered the pressure on the exchange rate. Inflation reduction will take time and may require further increases in the interest rates. Most importantly, the budget deficit must be reduced to lower inflation. This has not yet happened owing to the inadequacy of fiscal reforms.

Concerning fiscal policy, the required policy approach is to cut the fiscal deficit by increasing revenues through meaningful tax reforms and by reforming the state-owned enterprises (SoEs). Every year, the government sets ambitious tax targets that are not met. As a result, the tax-GDP ratio is not only extremely low at less than eight percent of GDP, but also declining or stagnant. Meaningful tax reforms require addressing the substantial institutional constraints to help establish a modern tax system in the country. This would be much more effective than setting ambitious tax revenue targets through ad-hoc tax measures. Regarding SoE reforms, the government must recognise that it has invested heavily in these enterprises but the financial rate of return on this investment is exceptionally low due to corporate governance and pricing constraints. For example, the book value of total assets of non-financial SoEs was estimated at around 17 percent of GDP in FY2021. A 10-12 percent return on these assets should yield profits of 1.8-2 percent of GDP. In sharp contrast to this, actual profits were only about 0.6 percent of GDP. The case for corporate governance and pricing reforms of SOEs is obvious.

## We are not taking care of our young generation



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ABU AFSARUL HAIDER

Recently, the Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre (BYLC) and Brac University's Centre for Peace and Justice conducted a joint survey involving 5,609 young individuals aged 16-35 from various parts of the country to gauge their perspectives on education, health, livelihoods, justice, climate change, migration, democracy and governance. The findings indicate that 55.3 percent perceive Bangladesh to lack peace, 71.5 percent feel uncomfortable expressing their views publicly, and 68.6 percent feel that the current education system fails to adequately prepare them for employment or entrepreneurship. Moreover, nearly 89 percent cited corruption, along with unemployment (67 percent), inflation (51 percent), and climate change (73 percent), as adversely impacting their well-being. Similarly, a 2020 World Economic Forum study uncovered that 82 percent of individuals aged 15-29 expressed a desire to migrate from Bangladesh due to socioeconomic concerns.

These reports raise the question as to why our youth struggle with such feelings of frustration, insecurity, detachment, apathy, and disillusionment, especially when they belong to a generation known for its potential to drive change. Several factors contribute to these sentiments and shed light on the underlying

causes.

One significant factor behind young people's feeling of disillusionment is the pervasive corruption committed by businessmen, politicians, government officials, and influential figures, among others. When politicians engage in activities like election-rigging, nepotism or bribery, when prominent business leaders evade taxes or commit loan fraud, and when influential individuals manipulate public tenders or get involved in illicit activities like drug trafficking or extortion, the repercussions are felt throughout society.

Often, these corrupt individuals go unpunished, eroding trust in the system, which is particularly disheartening for the youth who dream of a brighter future and a more equitable society, and perceive these incidents as a betrayal of their aspirations for good governance. Moreover, today's political landscape lacks fundamental principles like reconciliation, tolerance, honesty, and respect for human dignity and differing beliefs. Instead of addressing crucial issues like economic development, health and education, politicians resort to criticising and verbally attacking each other with flimsy arguments and offensive language, lacking healthy debates or discussions on matters directly affecting citizens' lives.

Furthermore, political parties are exploiting the youth for their own gains. Student politics was once a domain for the brightest and socially conscious students to engage in and contribute to national affairs. Now it has been hijacked by non-student actors, who manipulate young people as pawns to advance their political agendas. Student politics, once a beacon of idealism, has become tainted by partisan interests, power struggles, and greed for wealth. Consequently, the younger generation is increasingly feeling disinterested and apathetic towards the country's politics and politicians. Recent events, such as the resistance to partisan student politics at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) is a case in point.

The economic growth and development that we take pride in regrettably bypassed the majority of the population, benefiting mainly the higher-income groups. The Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2022, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), reveals a widening rich-poor gap in income distribution within the country. Shockingly, the report indicates that 30.04 percent of Bangladesh's income is concentrated within the top five percent of households. Moreover, this economic growth has not only exacerbated income inequality, it failed to generate sufficient employment opportunities for the millions of young Bangladeshis entering the workforce annually. According to the 2022 Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics report, approximately 41 percent of the nation's youth are inactive, meaning they are not studying, working or receiving any job training. While many are trying for employment, experts argue that they

are not getting the necessary support from the system, as approximately 87 percent of them are engaged in informal employment.

What's even more alarming is that, as a society, we have inadvertently set the wrong standards for the generations following ours. Our society that once used to value morals and ethics has now become superficial and lost its moral compass. Values such as honesty, trust, integrity, respect and tolerance of others' opinions no longer play an important role in our daily lives. The concept of value has shifted, and it is now determined by price rather than the intrinsic quality of things. Morality, a term that traditionally conveys a sense of virtue, seems to be more applicable to those who are perceived as weak and fragile within the community. Sadly, our definition of "success" has evolved; today, it's predominantly equated with monetary wealth, irrespective of its legality. As a result, many young individuals find themselves struggling with the fundamental question of discerning "right" from "wrong." Besides, many talented young people opt to leave the country at the earliest opportunity, which could seriously hurt the nation's long-term growth and prosperity.

The total population of Bangladesh stands at 169.8 million, of which 27.96 percent are between the age of 15 and 29 years. These young people represent the future of our nation. Social scientists emphasise that a nation that does not take care of its youth is a doomed nation. Therefore, the government and the entire society should focus on harnessing and utilising the energy, passion, and spirit of the youth through positive means to engage them fully in the economic and social sectors to build the leaders of tomorrow.



## Biden-Netanyahu standoff complicates the Gaza conflict



Talmiz Ahmad is a former Indian ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

TALMIZ AHMAD

Amid the extraordinary carnage in Gaza, the international community is witnessing with surprise and bemusement the spectacle of the US president standing eyeball to eyeball with the Israeli prime minister, with neither of them signalling any desire to give way. This spectacle is particularly astonishing since Joe Biden has consistently prided himself on being Israel's best friend and, during the Gaza war, has proffered almost unstinting support to Israel's war efforts.

Ties between the US and Israel, two of the world's closest allies, have generally been described with words such as "tightly knit," "unwavering support," and "ironclad." What, then, has gone wrong? It now appears that the large-scale killing of Palestinians in Gaza and the widespread pro-Palestine agitations in the US and several European cities have finally awakened the US president's conscience, or just rudely reminded him that he is losing support in the presidential race.

After seven months of wanton death and destruction, Biden started counselling restraint just as Benjamin Netanyahu was preparing to order a fresh assault on

Rafah, in southern Gaza, where nearly two million displaced Gaza residents have found temporary, albeit squalid, refuge.

All through March, the US president repeatedly conveyed to Netanyahu the need for a ceasefire and increased humanitarian supplies to the beleaguered enclave. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer described Netanyahu personally as a liability for Israel. Finally, in an unprecedented move, the US declined to veto a UN Security Council resolution that called for a cessation of hostilities and increased flow of humanitarian aid in Gaza.

Living up to his reputation as a master political manipulator, Netanyahu then adroitly shifted attention from Gaza to Iran by attacking the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, killing seven senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers, including two generals. The prospect of an Iranian retaliation pushed the US immediately back to the Israeli side. After the October 7 attack, Biden said, "We will make sure Israel has what it needs to take care of its citizens (and) defend itself." Secretary of State Antony



In the standoff between Joe Biden and Benjamin Netanyahu, it is Biden who seems to have the weaker hand.

FILE PHOTO: AFP

Blinken, meanwhile, gushed, "... as long as America exists, you will never ever have to (defend yourself). We will always be there by your side." Fortunately for regional security, April's tit-for-tat exchanges between Iran and Israel were largely mere demonstrations of technology and capacity, with both sides deciding not to escalate matters further.

This brought Gaza back to the US's attention, amid widespread demonstrations on numerous university campuses expressing support for Palestinian aspirations, referring to Biden as "Genocide Joe" and calling for an immediate end to the conflict. On May 6, Biden advised Netanyahu not to invade Rafah. The Israeli prime minister immediately ordered aircraft to hit targets in southern Gaza, while a brigade seized the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. Another brigade moved to the border with eastern Rafah.

Two days later, in an interview on CNN, Biden publicly set out his red line, saying, "If they (Israelis) go into Rafah, I'm not supplying the weapons that have been used to deal with the cities." He also ordered a pause in the delivery of 3,500 bombs to Israel. Netanyahu remained unfazed. He categorically stated, "If we must, we shall fight with our fingernails."

Israel has not yet conducted a full-scale assault on Rafah, but it continues to launch regular attacks on targets there and intense bombing at the Rafah Egypt border. Several dozen Palestinians have been killed. Israel has also dropped leaflets warning civilians that they will face "extreme force" if they remain

in the area. Last week, Israel hit a UN vehicle carrying emergency medical supplies to Rafah, while intensifying attacks in northern Gaza. Blinken has warned helplessly that the Rafah attack will inflict "terrible harm" on the population.

**In an interview on CNN, Biden publicly set out his red line, saying, 'If they (Israelis) go into Rafah, I'm not supplying the weapons that have been used to deal with the cities.' He also ordered a pause in the delivery of 3,500 bombs to Israel. Netanyahu remained unfazed. He categorically stated, 'If we must, we shall fight with our fingernails.'**

The stakes for Netanyahu are very high. A ceasefire, without Hamas having been "annihilated," would diminish the prime minister's standing among his right-wing support base and could even lead the extreme right to topple his government. As soon as he ceases to be prime minister, Netanyahu will face the revival of criminal cases against him and possible imprisonment. Hence, he has every reason to continue the conflict in Gaza,

at least until Hamas' military commander, Yahya Sinwar, has been apprehended or killed and he can proclaim victory.

Netanyahu is on solid ground at home. He faces little domestic opposition to the conduct of the war, except from the families of the hostages. No influential group is calling for halting the Rafah attack or for an increase in humanitarian assistance.

The Israeli prime minister believes he can face off with Biden. He has already taken on a Democratic president, Barack Obama, on his home turf, when in March 2015 he attacked the nuclear agreement with Iran at a joint session of Congress. Now, he again enjoys the full backing of the Republicans who are criticising Biden for betraying Israel's interests by halting military supplies.

In this standoff, it is Biden who seems to have the weaker hand. In the presidential campaign, polls are still placing him neck and neck with Donald Trump, with the latter even marginally ahead in the swing states. The pause in supply of munitions is hardly likely to make much difference, given that Israel already has enough weaponry for the Rafah assault and billions of dollars of US supplies are ready for delivery.

A Biden climbdown is very likely. As an observer has noted cynically, "US red lines with Israel have been known to turn pink."

**This article was first published by Arab News on May 17, 2024, and is being republished with the author's permission.**



Smoke rises after an Israeli strike as Israeli forces launch a ground and air operation in the eastern part of Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip on May 7, 2024.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

## Who was Raisi and what does his death mean?

Aliza Rahman is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.

ALIZA RAHMAN

The death of Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi adds to the growing tensions the country is undergoing at present. From sanctions in 2018 causing further deterioration in the Iranian economy, to Iran's recent historic drone strikes against Israel, Raisi's death comes amid a situation where Iran is already tackling multiple difficult situations, on both the international and domestic fronts.

Raisi, who died in the crash of a helicopter he was riding on his return from a visit to Azerbaijan, held several important positions in Iran. From a town prosecutor, he saw himself promoted to the position of a provincial prosecutor, eventually becoming the chief prosecutor of Tehran. In the 1980s, Raisi was appointed by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to the committee that was responsible for the executions of thousands of political dissidents.

Raisi was an ultraconservative hardliner, who served as judiciary chief in 2019, then became president in 2021 in an election that had low voter turnout and the widespread disqualification of other candidates who were deemed more moderate and reformist. His policies have been condemned both internationally and domestically.

Within Iran, Raisi has long been associated with repressive tactics. A conservative cleric, Raisi ensured stricter enforcement of the "hijab and chastity law" in 2022, a year after his election to the position of president. Soon, in a matter of weeks, the decision led to the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, sparking the "Jin Jiyan Azadi" movement in Iran. What occurred after is the severe repression of the ensuing protests, with 582 people executed in 2022, and 834 people executed in 2023. As is now well-known, violent crackdowns of the protests followed.



This kind of behaviour from Raisi was not new. A leaked 2016 audio tape positions Raisi as being involved in the executions of thousands of Iranian dissenters, despite his later denial of his role. In 1988, 5,000 people were executed, according to various human rights groups such as Amnesty International. The victims are said to be in unmarked mass graves and the event has been deemed an ongoing crime against humanity.

On the international stage, Iran's interests align with powerful nations such as Russia, China, Türkiye and the UAE, with political authorities in these states expressing condolences in the aftermath of Raisi's death. A staunch critic of the West, Raisi used incendiary rhetoric against Israel in light of the latter's attack on Gaza following Hamas's October 7 attack.

Speaking of enacting revenge against Israel for its actions in Gaza, Raisi was supportive of Israel's drone attacks on Israel.

With Israel attacking Gaza for over half a year, speculations have risen among some in the general public of a possible involvement by Israel in Raisi's death. Considering Raisi's anti-West sentiments and Iran's general stance against Israel, it is not surprising that these speculations have come about. The death of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in 2020 also makes such a possibility appear more credible.

The informal coalition led by Iran called the Axis of Resistance situates the country as an even greater threat to US interests. The backing of Houthis, Hezbollah and Hamas, the latter of which has claimed it is in "full solidarity" with Iran, makes the death of Raisi seem like it is in the strategic

### RAISI HAS HELD SEVERAL IMPORTANT POSTS

In 2017, he lost the elections to be president, with Hassan Rouhani winning

In 2019, he was appointed head of the Iranian judiciary by Khamenei

In 2021, he became president in an election that saw low voter turnout the widespread disqualification of other candidates who were reformist and more moderate

He was a long time member of the **Assembly of Experts**, a group that decides who will replace the leader should the Supreme Leader pass away

VISUAL STAR

those loyal to him being amply rewarded with power and positions. Raisi's interim successor, Mohammad Mokhber, is also believed to be a Khamenei loyalist.

The main challenge, however, arises from the fact that Raisi was seen as a potential successor to the current supreme leader. According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was amended in 1989, articles 60, 113, and 114-142 situate the president as the person with the most power after the supreme leader. It is imperative to remember, though, that under Iran's current system, it is still the supreme leader who holds the most sway in every aspect of governance. This power has been compared to that of the Muslim Caliphs in the Middle Ages.

While previous presidents of Iran all had disagreements with the supreme leader, Raisi was seen as having what has been called an "unequivocal allegiance to the supreme leader" by Shahram Khodji, a professor of Middle East politics at the University of Waterloo in Canada. With Raisi's demise, as per Article 131 of the constitution, the first vice president will become the president and a new presidential election must be held within the coming 50 days.

Raisi's death undoubtedly changes who will succeed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is 85 years old and known to be ill, though the Western press is accused of having exaggerated the extent of Khamenei's illness. It complicates the inner politics of Iran itself; it is believed that the son of Ali Khamenei, Mojtaba Khamenei, intentionally helped him to become president and trapped him in the position, to showcase his incompetence. It is unclear how Iran's political dynamic will play out in the coming days, in a regime where the Iranian people are largely frustrated with the economy and social and political repression. Given the turbulent state of the Middle East at the moment, the repercussions of Raisi's death could have effects in not only Iran but also the wider region.



The loss of lives and civic hardships continue despite a Tk 8,626.62 crore mega project by the Chattogram Development Authority, which is currently underway, aimed solely at addressing waterlogging. This photo was taken recently in Ambagan Shaheed Lane area. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



People cross this makeshift pathway, set up as part of ongoing works, in Chawkbazar Phoolta area. This temporary pathway not only makes it difficult for vehicles to cross, but also poses a risk to people as they can fall into the canal at anytime. PHOTO: ARUN BIKASH DEY

TK 14,389CR PROJECTS TO MITIGATE WATERLOGGING

# Deadline extends, cost goes up but suffering lingers on

**“We cannot move across the makeshift path on vehicles. We have to leave vehicles on one end, walk the pathway on foot, then take another vehicle on the other end.”**

TAPOS NANDI, a resident of Phoolta area

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

Every year, Chattogram sinks following rain, which washes away the tall claims of monsoon preparedness by the city corporation and Chattogram Development Authority.

It was no different last year. The port city witnessed hours of waterlogging throughout the monsoon, resulting in low-lying areas, including but not limited to Chawkbazar, Bahaddarhat, Muradpur, Sholashahar Gate No-2, Badurtola, Bakalia DC Road, KB Aman Ali Road, Agrabad, Halishahar, Chandgaon, Katalganj, Shulakbahar, and Dewan Bazar, being submerged under knee-to-waist deep water.

Ironically, the mayor's residence, "Mayor Bhaban", in the Bahaddarhat area, was not spared.

The ordeal is often not limited to "mere" suffering, it also takes lives. Nipa Palit, 22, a second-year BBS student at Hathazari Government College, died after drowning in waterlogged streets while going to college last year.

Also, falling into open drains and either vanishing permanently or being discovered as a deceased body after some time (if fortunate) remains a recurring concern in the port city, with the previous year being no different.

And the loss of lives and civic hardships continue amid a Tk 8,626.62 crore mega project by the Chattogram Development

Authority, aimed solely at addressing waterlogging. Authority, aimed solely at addressing waterlogging. Authority, aimed solely at addressing waterlogging.

one bank, while work to construct it on the other side has not yet begun. Also, excavation materials and equipment were seen kept on the canal's bank.

With monsoon almost knocking at the door, the CDA's workers have just started working on this canal, which they should have done just after last monsoon, said Fazlur Rahman, a resident of Badurtala Jangi Shah Majar Lane area.

"Also, they are still working on constructing the retaining walls. We don't understand why they are not beginning the excavation work yet," he added.

As part of the ongoing work, the culvert over Chaktai Khal in Chawkbazar Phoolta area has been dismantled to build a new one. A makeshift pathway has been made over the canal, making it difficult and risky for people and vehicles crossing it.

Tapos Nandi, a resident of Phoolta area, said, "We cannot move across the makeshift path on vehicles. We have to leave vehicles on one end, walk the pathway on foot, then take another vehicle on the other end."

A similar situation exists in the case of Mirza Khal. Workers have been observed constructing retaining walls on both sides of the canal, but excavation work has yet to start in many sections.

Earth was seen piled up in the canal while excavation materials were



Chaktai khal in Badurtala area. PHOTO: ARUN BIKASH DEY

According to sources, dams have been made in different canals to build retaining walls. Locals are concerned that the dams will only obstruct the free flow of rainwater and add more waterlogging woes.

**DEADLINE EXTENDED TWICE**

The project, initially worth Tk 5,617 crore -- started in 2018. Although works were scheduled to be completed by June 2020, the project was later re-evaluated twice, with the deadline extended till June 2026.

The project aims to remove a total of 9.50 lakh cubic metres of mud and silt from 36 canals in the port city and construct 85.68 km of roads, 48 PC girder bridges, six culverts, six tidal regulators, and 42 silt traps on the important canals. It will also expand side drains to 15.50 km and construct 10.77 km of new drains and 200 cross-drain culverts.

According to project officials, 65 percent of the project has so far been completed.

Dr Muhammad Rashidul Hasan, professor of Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, said, "It is true that land acquisition for such a mega project is a very complicated task in our country. However, the project officials should have considered an alternative strategy to lessen the sufferings of people in the coming monsoon."

Contacted, CDA chief engineer Hasan Bin Shams, however, claimed that the extent to which the project has progressed so far would considerably curtail waterlogging.

"Of the six newly constructed regulators on different canals, five will be opened before monsoon to regulate tidal water. Also, if the excavation works of the six major canals in the city could be completed before monsoon begins, the waterlogging problem will be solved to a great extent during the coming monsoon," he said.

Lt Col Ferdous Ahmed, director of

the mega project, said the excavation works of Chaktai, Mirza, Mahesh, Birza, Bakalia, and Hizra canals were supposed to be completed by mid-April but it could not be possible due to various reasons.

"However, we are trying to complete the work before monsoon begins," he added.

When questioned about the dams in the canals, he clarified that they have been constructed to create retaining walls, ensuring a passage for rainwater flow.

"We aim to free up nearly 95 percent of the dams before the onset of the monsoon," he added.

**ONGOING PROJECTS**

- » CDA Tk 11,406.01 crore (2 projects)
- » CCC Tk 1,362 crore (1 project)
- » WDB Tk 1,620.73 crore (1 project)
- » Total: Tk 14,388.74 crore

Regarding the culvert on Chaktai Khal in the Phoolta area, he mentioned that its completion would require seven to eight months. Additionally, an alternative route has been established for people to cross the canal.

**PROGRESS OF OTHER PROJECTS**

Meanwhile, CDA has also been implementing another Tk 2,779.39 crore project since June 2017 -- to construct a 9.5 km road and dam between Kalurgaht Bridge area and Chaktai canal near the bank of Karnaphuli river.

The project, scheduled to be completed by June 2024, has so far seen only 65 percent progress, said project officials.

"Apart from constructing dams on the bank of Karnaphuli river as

well as Chaktai and Razakhali canals, a total of 12 sluice gates and pump houses would be installed to regulate tidal water," said Hasan Bin Shams.

"So far, we have installed 10 sluice gates, but are yet to install the pump houses in six canals, which is expected to be completed by May," he also said.

The deadline of the project has also been extended till June 2025, the CDA chief engineer added.

Also, Bangladesh Water Development Board has been implementing a Tk 1,620.73 crore project since 2019 to set up 13 tidal regulators in Karnaphuli and 10 in Halda rivers.

The regulators will be set up where canals connect to the rivers, with a pump house to regulate the flow of water.

Only 29.95 percent of the project has been completed so far.

Contacted, Shawkat Ibn-e Saheed, executive engineer of BWDB in Chattogram, said, "Of the 23 tidal regulators, works for four have been completed and works for seven are going on."

"Although initiated in 2019, the project work actually began in August 2021. The deadline would have to be extended from June 2024 to June 2028."

Moreover, the Chattogram City Corporation has been working on a Tk 1,362 crore project since 2014 to dig a new canal from Bahaddarhat Baroipara to Karnaphuli river.

The project expired in June 2017 before being extended to June 2024.

However, only 50 percent of the project work has been completed so far, including 80 percent of land acquisitions, said Forhadul Alam, director of the project.

"We have got 21 acres of land from Chattogram District Administration out of the 25 acres of land required for the project. Works are ongoing to dig the canal on the acquired lands," he added.



Heavy rain lasting over an hour on May 6 this year left the entire Prabartak Mor area of Chattogram city waterlogged. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Authority, aimed solely at addressing waterlogging.

Visiting Chaktai Khal, a vital canal in the city located between Chawkbazar Phoolta and Badurtala Jangi Shah Majar Lane areas, this correspondent recently observed a significant portion of the canal was yet to be excavated, as the portion was visibly filled up due to siltation.

A retaining wall has been built on

kept on the bank in the Mirzarpool area.

"I don't understand why the CDA has started excavation of the canals just before monsoon," said Abdul Halim, a local of Mirzarpool area.

"The earth that has piled up in the canal would hinder the flow of water after rains and consequently cause the area to become inundated," he added.

# SPORT

## What to WATCH

**T SPORTS**  
**Federation Cup final**  
**Bashundhara Kings vs Mohammedan**  
**Live from 3:00 pm**  
**IPL**  
**Eliminator**

**Rajasthan vs Bengaluru**  
**Live from 8:00 pm**  
**SONY SPORTS 2**  
**Europa League final**  
**Leverkusen vs Atalanta**  
**Live from 1:00 am**  
**(Thursday)**

## Liton's quest to RECOVER COMPOSURE

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Despite having a high performance ceiling, Liton Das has had to prove his mettle over the last few years to be acknowledged as Bangladesh's top batter across formats. A slump in form eventually jeopardised his position as a guaranteed starter heading in to the T20 World Cup this year, but the wicketkeeper-batter's performance ceiling still weighed heavy enough for the team management in keeping him in the World Cup roster.

Something seems amiss with Liton. The same process that he followed, the level of calmness portrayed in a brilliant match-winning knock against New Zealand in the historic Mount Maunganui Test in early 2022, has not been exhibited for a while.

When it comes to the

performance ceiling, the knock against India at the T20 World Cup in 2022 serves as a case in point. It is a ceiling that any other batter from the national side would like to have scaled, given the quality of the bowling lineup India had and the destruction Liton conjured with ease.

That innings was, perhaps, also the beginning of improvised shots. It paid off during that knock but has often brought his downfall in the shorter formats.

Even last year, Liton had struck 323 runs in nine T20Is, averaging over 40. Those knocks coincided with Bangladesh's whitewash of England, Afghanistan and Ireland at home in the shortest format, and, despite looking out of sorts, he managed a 41 not out in New Zealand which handed the Tigers their first T20I win on Kiwi soil.

Liton may not be an automatic starter but Bangladesh's plans could change drastically after just one game at the main event in the USA and West Indies. His return to form would be crucial and Liton now feels that he might have overlooked preparations during a good patch.

"It is important to hold onto your performances in good times, because you are playing well in one match and a lot of things may be going around your head, like you are doing well and you start having a careless attitude," Liton said in a video posted by BCB yesterday.

Liton says that he will try to do better than he had done in the past two T20 World Cups. He still has the trust of head coach, who said: "He is one of our top



batsman; expecting big things from him at the World Cup."

Assistant coach Nic Pothas had earlier remarked that Liton was just one good innings from finding his groove.

The USA series and the two warm-up matches for the World Cup would present Liton with the chance. Liton, however, did not have the best of time in the middle in the T20I opener against the co-hosts yesterday as he departed after scoring a 15-ball 14. He got a couple of reprieves before his dismissal and then failed to capitalise on his good fortunes.

So, to ensure his hard work pays off, Liton needs to return to the basics. When it comes to getting back in his elements, he may just need to revisit what had clicked in his good times.

## Ronaldo to play in sixth European Championship

**REUTERS**

Portugal's 39-year-old forward Cristiano Ronaldo will play in his sixth European Championship and veteran defender Pepe also made the cut as coach Roberto Martinez named his 26-man squad on Tuesday.

Ronaldo, who has scored in every Euros since his first appearance in 2004, has netted 14 goals in the finals. He also scored 10 times in the qualifiers last year.

Ronaldo now plays for Saudi Pro League side Al-Nassr where he has scored 42 goals and provided 13 assists in all competitions.

"Cristiano? It's better to talk about the data. He's a player who's scored 42 goals in 41 games for his club," Martinez said.

"That shows his continuity and physical ability to always be fit, as well as the quality he has in front of goal, which we really like and need."

However, Ronaldo will not be the oldest member of the squad with Martinez also calling up Porto defender Pepe who turned 41 this year.

Pepe was an integral part of Porto's team this year, making 38 appearances as they reached the Champions League last 16 and finished third in the league. They are also in the Cup final.

## Kroos to retire after Euros

**AFP, Madrid**

Real Madrid's German international Toni Kroos announced on Tuesday he will retire from all football after Euro 2024.

"My career as an active footballer will end this summer after the Euro championship," 34-year-old Kroos, who won the 2014 World Cup with Germany, said on Instagram.

Before the European Championship, Kroos has a chance to win the Champions League with Real for a fifth time when they face Borussia Dortmund at Wembley on June 1.

He also won the Champions League with Bayern Munich before joining the Spanish giants in 2014. He won four La Liga title with Los Blancos.



He announced he was quitting international football in July 2021 but reversed his decision in February after talks with Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann, who persuaded him to play on till the Euro 2024 on home soil.

Kroos, who has racked up 108 caps and 17 goals for Germany, was one of the key players when they won the World Cup in Brazil in 2014.

"My ambition was always to finish my career at the peak of my performance level," Kroos said on Instagram.

"I am happy and proud that in my mind I found the right timing for my decision and that I could choose it on my own."

## Kings eye rare treble, MSC look for 12th

**SPORTS REPORTER**

Favourites Bashundhara Kings will look to add a new feather to their burgeoning cap when they take on defending champions Mohammedan in the final of the Federation Cup at the Rafique Uddin Bhuiyan Stadium in Mymensingh today.

The match will get underway at 3:00pm, with T-Sports telecasting the match live.

Even though Kings have almost turned into an unstoppable force since their introduction to country's top flight football in 2018, they have not been able to win a treble. That feat is held solely by Sheikh Russel KC, who won all three domestic titles in the 2012-13 season.

With the season's Independence Cup and the Bangladesh Premier League titles in the bag, Kings have the chance to do the same, after failing to win three titles in the same season in six previous attempts.

However, Kings must overcome the hurdle of defending champions Mohammedan, who will look to end the season with a trophy and go on top of Federation Cup's overall winners' chart alongside archrivals Abahani with 12.

"We truly believe in ourselves, in the trust in each other, in the technical and tactical automatism and we will leave everything we have out in that final game," Kings coach Oscar Bruzon told reporters on the eve of the final. "We are eager to achieve all the club goals when they decided we are the main actors to go for it."

"Every game is different from the



previous one due to multiple factors, but our rivals have been consistent in their game idea throughout the season. They have a packed defence, defend by numbers the central areas, use high wing-backs and mobile and physical players upfront," the Spaniard said, assessing the opposition's playing style.

Statistics put Kings much ahead of Mohammedan as they have won 10 matches, drew twice and lost only three in 15 meetings between the two sides. However, all three defeats against Mohammedan have in the last two years, under the guidance of Alfaz Ahmed.

"We all want to wrap up our campaign by winning the season's last trophy and

**Fed Cup titles won**

MSC 11, Kings 2

**Head-to-head this season**

Played	Kings won	MSC won	Draw
3	2	1	0

**Head-to-head overall**

Played	Kings won	MSC won	Draw
15	10	3	2

**Club's top-scorer this season**

**Kings:** Dorielton Gomes (19)

**MSC:** Souleymane Diabate (15)



## New T20 league on way with NCL teams

**SPORTS REPORTER**

The need for a change in Bangladesh's T20 fortunes had eventually spurred Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to make a move, and discussions have gone ahead for Bangladesh's newest T20 league for local players following yesterday's meeting between BCB's Tournament Committee and Technical Committee.

Cricketer operations chairman Jalal Yunus, Tournament Committee chairman Sajjadul Alam Bobby and chairman of selection panel Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu were among those present in the meeting.

Not long ago, just ahead of the recent Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), a few players just outside the periphery of the national team were discussing how difficult it was to find T20 rhythm before the BPL.



**"In franchise cricket there are foreign players so it was important to have a tournament for local players. So we have decided to have a T20 tournament in first week of December with the eight NCL teams.**

**Minhajul Abedin**

BCB chief coordinator of programs

"It would be great if we can have another T20 league apart from BPL. It would really help with T20s and also help players grow," one of the players had said.

What appeared to be quite unlikely at that point, due to a packed domestic schedule, is now becoming a reality.

The new T20 league would take place in December, pending approval of the board. To open a slot for a new T20 tournament, the board had to make changes to tournament structure and schedules in the cricket calendar.

The National Cricket League (NCL) will begin on October 15 but this time the tournament will take place in single league format, meaning each team will play each other once – unlike the previous two-tier system.

The NCL teams would also be the teams in the new T20 league. "The selection panel will pick the players for the eight sides. Everyone at the meeting agreed and we are awaiting the board's approval," chief coordinator of programs Minhajul Abedin said in a video message yesterday.

"In franchise cricket there are foreign players so it was important to have a tournament for local players. So we have decided to have a T20 tournament in first week of December with the eight NCL teams. Some 128 to 130 cricketers would get the opportunity to play and be able to overcome their deficiencies in this format, helping Bangladesh cricket," Minhajul added.

Also, the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL), which is played in December during winter, will now be played between April and May to prioritise the preparations of facing hot and humid conditions in longer-version international matches. Longer-version cricket has been on the agenda and Minhajul said that consideration was given so that national team players can play more domestic red-ball cricket.

A fruitful meeting saw some changes in the calendar which can help Bangladesh fulfill shortcomings in the two formats – Tests and T20Is – that they have struggled to develop up to expectations over the years.

## One down, two to go as Leverkusen face Atalanta in Europa League final

**REUTERS**

Bayer Leverkusen had won only two major trophies in their 119-year history before this season but on Wednesday the newly-crowned Bundesliga champions have the chance to claim a double when they face Atalanta in the Europa League final in Dublin.

Leverkusen broke Bayern Munich's 11-year monopoly of the title in Germany this term as Xabi Alonso's side became the first team in the Bundesliga's 61-year history to complete the season unbeaten. They have also reached the German Cup final.

Their undefeated run in all competitions this term has earned them the nickname Bayer 'Neverlusen' and Serie A side Atalanta will have their work cut out trying to beat a team that have not lost in a European record 51 matches since August.

Several sides have come close to handing Leverkusen their first defeat of the season but, with 17 goals scored in or after the 90th minute, they do not give up until the final whistle.

"We have been competitive in every game, whether we were playing well or poorly. We played well for the majority of the games, but we didn't give up in the ones where we didn't play well," Alonso



Leverkusen scored six goals in or after the 90th minute in the Europa League this season. This is the most ever a team has netted that late in a single campaign of a major European competition.

Xabi Alonso's side, unbeaten in 51 games in all competitions (42W 9D), can become the fourth side to lift the Europa League trophy with an unbeaten record after Chelsea (2018-19), Villarreal (2020-21), and Eintracht Frankfurt (2021-22).

Atalanta can become the first Italian side to win the Europa League, with previous winners only ever hailing from Spain, Portugal, England or Germany. This is Atalanta's first European final and they are the 11th different Italian side to reach one.

Gian Piero Gasperini has lost four finals as a coach, including three as Atalanta manager, and is yet to win a major trophy. He lost three Coppa Italia finals and a Supercoppa Italiana final.

Atalanta and Leverkusen have previously faced off twice in Europe, with the Italians winning both legs of a Europa League last-16 tie in 2021-22 (1-0 away, 3-2 at home).



said in an interview with UEFA.

"That says a lot about the commitment of this team when it comes to preparing for every game. We didn't take any game for granted."

Much like Alonso, coach Gian Piero Gasperini has changed Atalanta's fortunes, making the Bergamo-based outfit an ever-present club in European competition since his arrival in 2016 and will hope to end the season with their first major trophy in 61 years after losing to Juventus in the Coppa Italia final.

Atalanta play an enjoyable attacking style with high intensity and managers like Pep Guardiola and Maurizio Sarri have likened facing Gasperini's teams to "going to the dentist."

"Even if you come out unscathed, you still feel the pain," Sarri once said.

Just like Alonso, the match in Dublin will also be Gasperini's first European final.

"It's a great achievement and source of satisfaction, achieved with a really good season from this whole team," the 66-year-old Italian said.

"Is it the highest point of my career? Yes, in terms of accomplishment and prestige, absolutely. In terms of gratification, fortunately I've had quite a few, although perhaps not on the same level."



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## UPAZILA ELECTION Second phase too marked by low turnout

1 killed in polls violence in Cox's Bazar

**STAR REPORT**

The second phase of the upazila elections also saw a low turnout yesterday like in the first phase.

The usual election-day fervour was missing as most of the voting centres across 156 upazilas wore a deserted look due to a poor presence of voters.

During the polls yesterday, sporadic incidents of violence left one person dead in Cox's Bazar and at least 20 others injured in other places.

After voting ended, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal said that over 30 percent votes were cast in the second phase. "It was not encouraging."

He said a major political party boycotted the polls and also discouraged people from voting.

"This might be one of the main reasons for the low turnout. This can happen in democracy," Awal told reporters at the Election Commission office.

"There is no problem with our voting system. The crisis lies in politics. I think the problem of low turnout can be resolved if politics follows a healthy process," the CEC said.

Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said the turnout was satisfactory and the elections were held peacefully.

BNP, TIB, and some anti-national intellectuals were

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PHOTO: REUTERS

People attend a funeral ceremony for the late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province, Iran yesterday.

## Iran begins funeral ceremonies for Raisi

**AGENCIES**

Tens of thousands of Iranians yesterday gathered to mourn the late president Ebrahim Raisi following his death in a helicopter crash, as authorities probe what caused the aircraft to smash into the side of a remote mountainside during foggy weather.

Waving Iranian flags and portraits of the late president, mourners set off from a central square in the northwestern city of Tabriz, where Raisi was headed when his helicopter crashed on Sunday.

They walked behind a lorry carrying the coffins of Raisi and his seven aides.

Their helicopter lost communications while it was on its way back to Tabriz after Raisi attended the inauguration of a joint dam project on the Aras river, which forms part of the border with Azerbaijan, in a ceremony with his counterpart Ilham Aliyev.

## INDIAN OCEAN Dhaka, Canberra to collaborate on maritime security

Australia FM, Hasan Mahmud hold talks

**DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT**

The coastguards of Bangladesh and Australia will cooperate and collaborate as part of maritime security in the Indian Ocean, said Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong yesterday.

"We've had quite a lot of discussion on this today. One of the things we want to do is to have deeper collaboration with our coastguards," she said after meeting Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud at the state guesthouse Padma in the capital.



**Penny Wong**

Earlier, she also called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan.

Wong, who is the first Australian Foreign Minister visiting Bangladesh in the last 26 years, arrived in Dhaka yesterday morning. Today, she will be visiting the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

She said she told Asaduzzaman Khan that Australia would bring the head of

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## LIFTS AT PUBLIC HOSPITALS WHERE HORROR ABOUNDS



**SHAHEEN MOLLAH** with SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Shipon Mia (not his real name) fears for his life throughout the hours he works as a liftman at a building of Sir Salimullah Medical College, commonly known as Mitford hospital, in the capital.

The man, in his late 20s, does not know when the lift was set up. The hospital authorities too could not say anything.

The lift, with a collapsible gate, has five buttons with no floor numberings

Lifts in at least 13 state-run hospitals in Dhaka are in poor state

Building-3 of Mitford Hospital has only one lift that malfunctions sometimes

All 8 lifts in two buildings of NICRH malfunction at times

At least 7 lifts of DMCH are often overloaded

on them. Shipon, who joined the hospital a year ago, has to press and hold a button whenever it goes up or comes down.

"Getting stuck is normal here. But what scares me is that the lift gets electrified and someone can get shocked if they touch it at that time. Sometimes the lift stops abruptly and takes at least 10 minutes to restart," he said.

Notices are displayed inside and outside the lift, cautioning people not

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## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION Bangladesh categorised as country 'in crisis'

Article 19 launches global report

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Bangladesh has been categorised as "in crisis" in terms of freedom of expression, according to the Global Expression Report 2024 released yesterday.

The index categorises countries as being "open", "less restricted", "highly restricted" and "in crisis".

"In 2023, the percentage of people living in countries 'in crisis' rose to 53 percent. That is more than four billion people in 39 countries," the report said.

If any country scores between zero and 19 out of 100, it is categorised as a country in crisis, where the freedom of expression is marked as the worst, the report said.

Bangladesh scored 12.

It ranked 128 out of 161 countries, flanked by Democratic Republic of Congo and Algeria.

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## NETANYAHU, HAMAS LEADERS France, Belgium back ICC bid for arrest warrants

**AGENCIES**

France, Belgium and Slovenia released statements supporting the world's top war crimes court and its chief prosecutor's request for arrest warrants for leaders of Israel and Hamas, after Israel and the United States both harshly condemned the effort.

The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders — Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh — of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel.

While Netanyahu and Gallant do not face imminent arrest, the announcement Monday was a symbolic blow that deepened Israel's isolation over the offensive in Gaza, reports AP.

"France supports the International Criminal Court, its independence and the fight against impunity in all situations", the foreign ministry said in a statement late on Monday.

The Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib welcomed the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor's request for arrest warrants against Israeli and Hamas leaders as an "important step".

"Crimes committed in Gaza must be prosecuted at the highest level, regardless of the perpetrators. The fight against impunity wherever crimes occur is a priority for Belgium," Lahbib said in a statement.

Israeli forces thrusted deeper into the Jabalia camp in northern Gaza yesterday, laying waste to residential districts with tank and

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## Tigers start USA tour with defeat

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Bangladesh's T20 World Cup preparations got off to the worst possible start as the Tigers suffered a five-wicket defeat against USA in the first-match of a three-match T20I series at Prairie Park Cricket Complex in Texas yesterday.

Chasing a modest target of 154 runs set by Bangladesh, the hosts made a brisk start, then stuttered in the middle before motoring along to the victory, thanks to an unbroken 62-run stand off 28 deliveries.

Former New Zealand international Corey Anderson smashed an unbeaten 34 off 25 deliveries while Harmeet Singh stroked 33 not out off just 13 balls to get the hosts home with three balls to spare in their first-ever international match against the Tigers.

Mustafizur Rahman was the most successful bowler

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Buses caught in traffic near the Gulistan ramp of Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover. Buses waiting to pick up passengers and those making U-turns aggravate the congestion there. Pedestrians cannot use the footpath which has been occupied by ticket counters and hawkers. The photo was taken around 2:30pm yesterday.

PHOTO: ANSUR RAHMAN

## IS CTG READY FOR MONSOON?

Every monsoon, Chattogram sinks. Despite at least four ongoing projects worth Tk 14,389.36 crore, there seems to be no respite for port city dwellers. Meanwhile, project costs continue to rise with each extended deadline. With monsoon knocking at the door, port city residents are now bracing for similar suffering. In today's Page 10, we look into the current progress of the projects and people's apprehension.



Prabartak Mor area of Chattogram city after an hour's rain on May 6.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN