



Nadal bidding to avoid early French Open exit

P11



Symbolic and imaginary in Nazrul Islam

P10



Children must be protected from abuse and torture

P8



670 feared dead in Papua New Guinea landslide

P7

Sundarbans cushions blow

Remal makes landfall near Khepupara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cyclone Remal battered the coastal region at wind speeds that might have reached 130kmph, and lost much of its strength while sweeping over the Sundarbans, Met officials said.

"As predicted, the centre of the severe cyclone fell between Khepupara in Patuakhali and Sagar Island in West Bengal," said Abul Kalam Mallik, a meteorologist at Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

He said Bangladesh was on the east of the cyclone's eye which means Bangladesh took the main blow because the east side of a cyclone always causes more damage than the west side in the sub continent.

"The Sundarbans always acts as a natural shield," he added.

More than eight lakh people were evacuated to safer areas in 16 coastal districts ahead of the year's first cyclone.

It brought heavy rains and tidal surges as high as 12 feet yesterday evening.

According to officials, by midnight, wind speed at the coast may have reached 130kmph.

The authorities were yet to assess the extent of damage caused by the cyclone.

A 24-year-old man drowned after he was swept away by the strong current in his flooded village in Kalapara, Patuakhali, while a 65-year-old died after falling from a bicycle while going to a shelter amid strong winds in Satkhira.

People living in some affected areas were left without electricity since Saturday night.

Mohibur Rahman, state minister for disaster management, last night said eight lakh people were evacuated to 9,000 shelters.

"There is adequate dry food, biscuits, safe water and medical supplies there," he said.

The met office issued the "great danger signal no-10" for Barishal region and its shoals, "great danger signal no-9" for the southeastern coastlines.

The Met department said Remal made landfall between 6:00pm and midnight.

According to the Indian Met office, wind speeds may reach up to 120kmph, with gusts up to 135 kmph while the storm hits West Bengal's Sagar Island and Bangladesh's Khepupara area.

Meteorologists warned that the storm could uproot trees and cause major damage to thatched houses and disrupt power and communication systems.

Authorities closed Bangladesh's three seaports and airports in coastal districts.

The disaster management ministry said it mobilised tens of thousands of volunteers to quicken the evacuation efforts.

Dhaka and its adjacent districts also experienced gusty wind and rain yesterday afternoon.

Almost all the coastal districts saw rain and strong winds since early yesterday. It started raining heavily in the evening, reported our correspondents from different districts.

Onrush of water breached embankments along the rivers Shibsra, Kapatakkhya and Koyra at many places in Khulna.

Nine villages in Koyra, Paikgachha and Dacope upazilas were partially submerged.

In Chattogram division, several thousand people of Nijhum Dwip in Noakhali's Hatiya upazila, were in fear as there is no embankment around the island.

The man who died in the Kawarchar area of Kalapara was named Shariful Islam. Locals said he was trying to save his mother-in-law and sister next to their home when he was swept away by the water.

The man who died in Satkhira's Shyamnagar was Shawkat Morol, reports our Satkhira correspondent.

BENAZIR'S WEALTH

Court orders confiscation of more assets

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate assets under 119 more deeds of former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed and his family members in connection with alleged corruption.

The court also directed them to confiscate eight wholly owned and 15 partially owned properties of Benazir, his wife Jissan Mirza, and three daughters. Judge Mohammed Ash-Shams Joglul Hossain of Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court of



SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

MP AZIM'S MURDER

Aktaruzzaman coordinated murder from Gulshan flat

Say investigators

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, RASHIDUL HASAN, and PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

While killing Jhenaidah-4 MP Anwarul Azim Anar at a Kolkata flat, the assailants were on the phone with mastermind Aktaruzzaman, known in his hometown Jhenaidah as Shaheen Mia, several investigators suspect.

He was at his rented flat in Gulshan, Dhaka, at the time and made video calls with the assailants, they added.

Officers earlier said Azim and Aktaruzzaman used to run a gold smuggling racket until they fell out over money last year and Azim kept a stash worth over Tk 100 crore to himself.

After making the arrangement in Kolkata, Aktaruzzaman returned

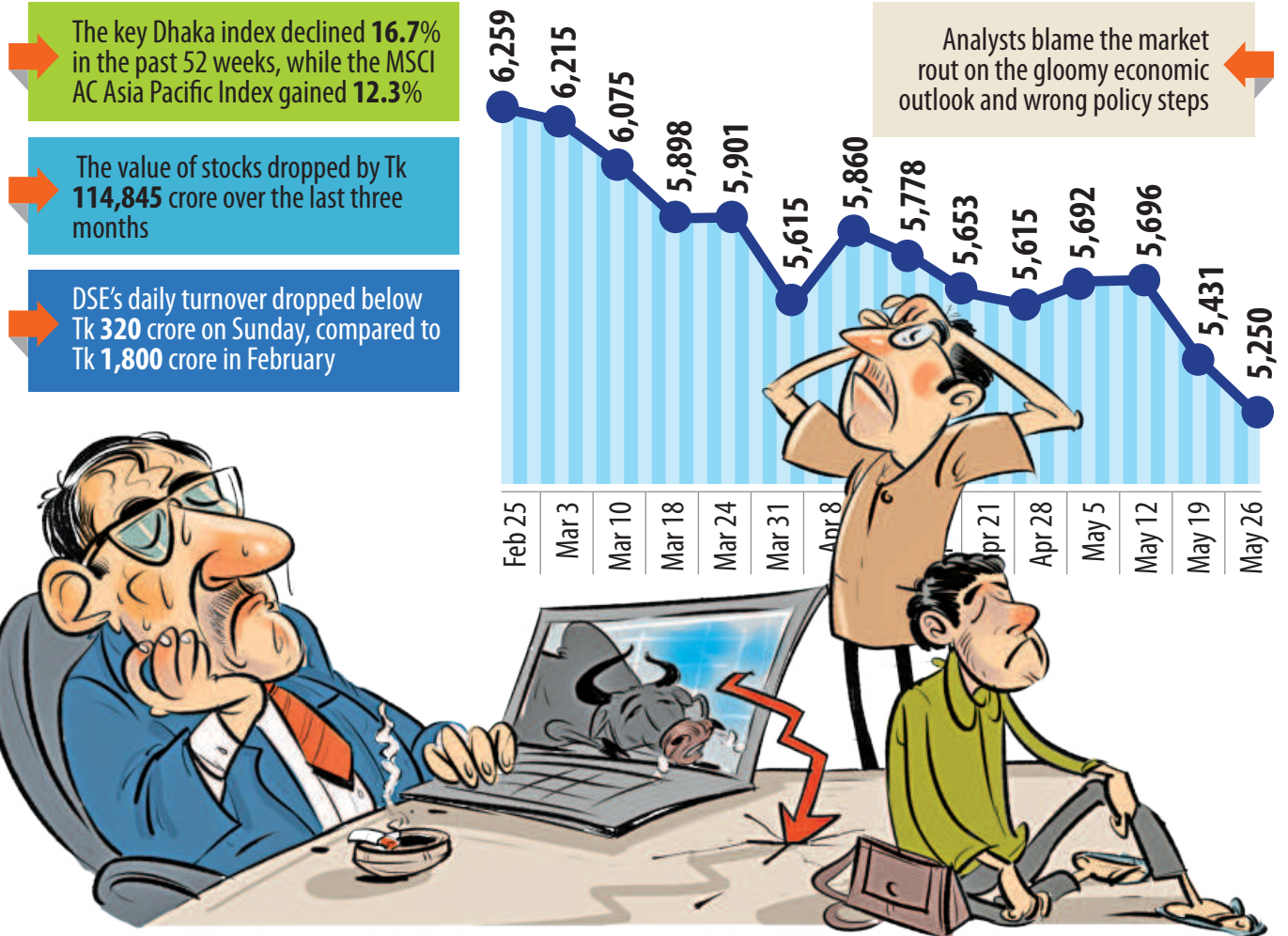


Azim

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Stocks shed 1,000 points in 3 months

Investors shun the market as economic outlook darkens



AHSAN HABIB

The key index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange plunged by 1,000 points in a span of three months as investors keep selling their holdings, fearing further deterioration of economic indicators.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the DSE, has fallen by 1,022 points, or 16 percent, to 5,250 since February 27.

During the period, market capitalisation or share value of the listed companies dropped by Tk 114,845 crore or 15 percent.

The index has been falling sharply since February when Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) withdrew the floor price that was launched in mid-2022.

The system was introduced to stem the market fall amid economic turmoil that resulted from the Ukraine Russia war. The unusual mechanism failed to prevent the index from falling.

Talking to The Daily Star, Faruq Ahmad Siddiqi, a former chairman of the BSEC, said the index is falling mainly due to deterioration of various economic indicators. Investors are in panic, so they keep selling shares.

"The index is falling mainly due to deterioration of various economic indicators. Investors are in panic, so they keep selling shares."

Faruq Ahmad Siddiqi
Ex chairman of Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission

When economic indicators don't do well, it impacts the performance of the listed companies, leading to a drop in their share prices.

On the other hand, the interest rate for treasury bills and bonds rose to more than 12 percent. It is only logical that institutional investors will transfer their funds to the bond market, he pointed out.

As the government missed the revenue collection target, it had to borrow heavily from banks, creating a liquidity pressure in the banking sector. And it ultimately

raised the interest rate against deposits, Siddiqi clarified.

Moreover, investors are now worried over some possible measures, including reimposition of capital gains tax, in the next budget.

Foreign investment is also declining as the local currency massively lost its value against the dollar.

Besides, the central bank allowed foreign deposits through offshore banking. A foreign investor can now get interest rate of more than 8 percent without having to worry about currency devaluation.

They can enjoy tax-free profit of up to 8.40 percent on fixed deposits in the US dollar or the euro for terms ranging from three months to five years, according to the Offshore Banking Act 2024 that took effect in March.

Siddiqi said, "If they can get such a high interest by investing in safe instruments, why would they take the risk of investing in the stock market?"

Foreign investors started selling shares on a large scale after the floor price was withdrawn in January this year.

Shekh Mohammad Rashedul Hasan, SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

BUSINESS

NBR may miss tax collection target again

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) posted about 16 percent year-on-year growth in tax collections in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year. Still, it might be tougher for it to attain the government's goal of raising Tk 410,000 crore by the end of the year.

Two research agencies also said the target, which many have described as ambitious at the beginning of the year, would once again remain unachieved.

The revenue administration raised Tk 289,376 crore in July-April of FY2023-24, which represented 70 percent of the revised target for the year, shows provisional data of the NBR.

STORY ON B1



Locals of Gabbunia village in Khulna's Koyra upazila were going home to collect necessary items before heading to shelters as Cyclone Remal was hurtling towards the southwestern coast yesterday. People in the coastal areas were asked to take precautions ahead of the storm's arrival. Inset, just before Remal's landfall, water rushed onto Char Montaz of Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila.

PHOTOS: HABIBUR RAHMAN AND SOHRAB HOSSAIN

BUDGET FOR FY25

Scope likely for legalising black money

Govt also mulling ways to bring laundered money home

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is thinking about allowing again undisclosed money to be legalised and laundered money to be brought back home through formal channels in the next budget.

A finance ministry official said the National Board of Revenue and Bangladesh Bank are trying to find out ways this could be done.

The official said they were considering to impose a 15 percent tax on legalising black money.

Similar steps had been taken in the past, but the result was not as expected, the official added.

Economists and government officials suspect that a huge amount of money was laundered abroad before the January 7 parliamentary polls.

Besides, a significant amount of foreign currency was also sent abroad in the name of export-import, which is reflected in more than \$10 billion deficit in the financial account of balance of payment.

The official said the government was weighing options so that the money could be brought back home for boosting the foreign currency reserves.

Asked if the government was going to allow legalising

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



BEFORE THE LANDFALL

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP ... A woman gazes into the rough sea as waves crash into the pier at Patenga of Chattogram. Fishermen make haste to secure their trawlers near Kuakata beach. Children taking care of baby goats at a cyclone shelter in Koyra, Khulna. Locals watch as waves smash a boat to pieces in Daulatkhan of Bhola. Volunteers and tourist police urging locals to relocate to cyclone shelters in Kuakata. People with their belongings in Patenga move to higher ground. People placing sandbags to protect an embankment from tidal surges in Koyra.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN, TITU DAS, MONIR UDDIN ANIK, AND HABIBUR RAHMAN

TK 118CR LOAN DEFAULT Court orders arrest of UZ polls candidate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Chattogram loan recovery court yesterday ordered the immediate arrest of an upazila parishad election candidate accused of defaulting on a Tk 118 crore loan.

The candidate Jasim Uddin Ahmed, chairman of Jasika Group, is vying for the chairman post of Chandanaish upazila parishad.

His loans worth Tk 118 crore were taken from Padma and Sonali banks.

The Chattogram Money Loan Court Judge Mujahidur Rahman, while issuing the directive yesterday, called Jasim a "willful defaulter".

The judge had previously issued an arrest warrant against Jasim on April 30, sentencing him to five months of prison.

"He is campaigning unabated even though there is an arrest warrant against him. This is a defeat of the powers of the state to bank looters," Mujahidur said.

He questioned why the police station concerned was not arresting Jasim.

"He is not repaying the loan in spite of having the means to do so. He was given a chance to repay the loan without any interest, but instead of doing so, he is leading a luxurious life. He is spending the loan for purposes other than the one he was given the money for. Instead of paying it back, he is generously distributing it in the constituency he is running in," the judge said in the order.

He added, "Even though an arrest warrant has been issued against him, the officer-in-charge of the police station concerned is not paying any heed to it. The [Padma] bank has even asked Chandanaish police to act on the warrant but no steps are being taken."

He directed that a copy of the order be sent to the Chattogram superintendent of police and deputy inspector general.

Earlier, Padma Bank, to which Jasim owes Tk 89 crore, submitted a joint application on behalf of him to the court, requesting that the warrant issued against him be recalled.

Stocks shed 1,000 points in 3 months

FROM PAGE 1

managing director and CEO of UCB Asset Management, said the investors are worried. They are selling shares, fearing that the economic situation may worsen further.

"I think the investors are overreacting now. The central bank has already taken some major steps to mend the mistakes..."

Early this month, the BB allowed a market-based interest rate and also introduced a crawling peg exchange rate. It also raised the policy rate to tame inflation.

Rashedul said the investors overlooked the major BB steps that may help improve the macroeconomic indicators. They should not sell the shares of blue-chip companies just because the earnings fell in one or two quarters.

These companies, which have been operating for decades, are absorbing

the macro-economic heat, especially high inflation. They will bounce back soon, he pointed out.

Inflation was above 9 percent since March 2023, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

The asset manager further said some flawed policies were adopted and the stock market already paid a price for that.

As examples, he referred to the introduction of floor price, and the policy of keeping the local currency overvalued against the dollar for years.

If large corporates now come forward and buy shares, the stock market can bounce back, he added.

Muhammad Nazrul Islam, secretary general of Bangladesh Merchant Bankers Association, said investors are selling shares as several economic indicators, including remittance and export earnings, are not performing well.

The foreign currency reserves,

which rose to an all-time high of \$41 billion in August 2021, has more than halved to \$18.60 billion. The taka has lost its value by 35 percent.

Moreover, forced sale of shares contributed to the erosion of the index, he said.

When investors buy shares on loans and the share prices fall, merchant bankers and stock brokers sell shares to save the mortgage-free loans. It's known as forced sale.

Nazrul said people should not invest in the stock market by taking loans.

Stock investors continue to leave the market due to the rapid fall in the index.

The number of Beneficiary Owners accounts dropped by more than 4 percent to 17.90 lakh last week compared to the same period last year, shows data from Central Depository Bangladesh Ltd.

Scope likely for legalising black money

FROM PAGE 1

A tax amnesty was offered to bring back laundered money home in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. No one availed the opportunity then, for what a finance ministry official said was "uncertainty" ahead of the parliamentary election.

People may avail the scope this time, the official said.

Almost all governments since the independence have allowed legalising black money in budgets.

So far, about Tk 47,000 crore has been legalised. Of which, about Tk 33,000 crore was legalised during the ruling Awami League's multiple

terms since 2009.

The highest Tk 20,600 crore was legalised during the pandemic in fiscal year 2020-2021, when 11,859 people availed the opportunity.

Currently, the tax authority does not raise questions about the source of investment if any person invests undisclosed wealth in the construction of factories inside economic zones and high-tech parks and pays a 10 percent tax on the invested amount.

The amnesty was available since the first day of July 2019 and is to last till June 30, 2024, said the NBR in an income tax law of 2023.

Court orders confiscation of more assets

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka passed the order after Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Md Hafizul Islam, also the enquiry officer, applied to the court, ACC Public Prosecutor Mahmud Hossain Jahangir told The Daily Star yesterday.

On May 23, the same court ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate properties under 83 deeds, which state 114 acres of land, and freeze 33 bank accounts under the name of Benazir and his family members.

In yesterday's application, the ACC said Benazir stands accused of amassing illegal wealth worth hundreds of crores of taka at home and abroad by resorting to abuse of power, irregularities, and corruption. The properties were registered in the names

of Benazir, his wife, and three children.

The former IGP and his family members are trying to hand over the assets. If they can do it, the investigation will be hampered, read the application.

For a fair enquiry and establishing justice, the properties should be confiscated, it added.

On April 18, the graft watchdog decided to launch an enquiry into the allegations of amassing illegal wealth by the former inspector general of police.

It also formed a three-member committee to investigate the allegations, ACC Secretary Khorsheda Yasmin told reporters at a press briefing at its headquarters on April 22.

"A national daily ran a report on March 31 on Benazir Ahmed's illegal wealth. Later, reports on similar

allegations were published by some other media outlets," said Khorsheda.

Bangla daily Kaler Kantho recently published a two-part investigative report on the acquisition of substantial property by Benazir and his family.

The first report was published on March 31 under the headline "Aladdin's Lamp in Benazir's House."

According to the report, the former police chief's family owns an eco-resort on around 1,400 bighas and has bought another 800 bighas of land next to that resort. They also own 2,00,000 shares in five-star hotels.

Additionally, his family owns a 3,500sqft flat in the capital's Bashundhara residential area, and all these properties were purchased with illegal money, the report said.

Aktaruzzaman coordinated

FROM PAGE 1

to Bangladesh on May 10 and went directly to his Gulshan flat, which he rented several years ago.

Before coming to Bangladesh, Aktaruzzaman put Amanullah in charge and then gave directions from time to time even, sources in a Bangladesh law enforcement agency said.

Aktaruzzaman's friend Celesty Rahman, now on an eight-day remand, came back from Kolkata on May 15 and went directly to the Gulshan flat.

Aktaruzzaman also had another flat in Baridhara. Law enforcers sealed off one of his flats, and a search would be conducted there soon, said investigators.

Investigators said Celesty was not present at the Kolkata flat when the lawmaker was killed on May 13.

In January, the assailants planned to abduct the lawmaker using chloroform.

But the plan was foiled when Azim came to meet Aktaruzzaman with some companions, said an officer involved with the investigation.

They also planned to shoot him dead in Jhenaidah before the January 7 election, but that plan also didn't work due to the presence of security personnel.

Parliament will wait a little more before declaring slain lawmaker Anwarul Azim Anar's Jhenaidah-4 seat as vacant.

"The incident is exceptional. Nothing like this happened in the past. That's why we want to wait," Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury told reporters yesterday.

After a lawmaker dies or resigns, the parliament secretariat issues a gazette notification stating that a seat has fallen vacant.

The Election Commission then holds a by-election within 90 days. If Azim's death is officially confirmed, the seat will be declared vacant.

Law enforcers in India and Bangladesh believe that Azim was killed in Kolkata on May 13, but they have not made a formal announcement of his death because his remains have not been found yet.

On May 22, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Speaker sent condolence messages for Azim's demise.

Meanwhile, a three-member Dhaka Metropolitan Police team, headed by Additional Commissioner (DB) Harun Or Rashid, reached Kolkata yesterday.

"We have spoken to our higher authorities in the government and discussed how we can seek Interpol's assistance to get hold of

Aktaruzzaman," he told reporters at Kolkata airport.

The West Bengal CID has charged Jihad Hawladar, an illegal immigrant from Bangladesh, with murder, conspiracy, destruction of evidence, and attempt to mislead the probe with false evidence.

A prosecutor told a court that Jihad, who worked at a meat shop in Mumbai, reached Kolkata in March with the suspected intent to commit the murder. He allegedly scouted the location and planned the execution meticulously.

Meanwhile, West Bengal CID continued its efforts to find Azim's remains. It earlier deployed divers and fishermen in the Bagjola canal in Bhangar and ponds in the area.

Azim went to Kolkata on May 12 and stayed the night at his friend Gopal Biswas's house. He left the next day, saying he had a doctor's appointment. Gopal later received a couple of texts from Azim's mobile phone that said there was no need to call him. On May 22, India and Bangladesh police said the MP was murdered at a flat in New Town, Kolkata.

Three dead in Israeli strikes on south Lebanon

AFP, Beirut

Two Israeli raids yesterday killed three people in south Lebanon, official media and a source close to Hezbollah said, as Israel's military claimed attacks targeting the Iran-backed militant group.

Lebanon's Hezbollah, a Hamas ally, has traded regular cross-border fire with Israel since the Palestinian militant group's October 7 attack on southern Israel which triggered war in the Gaza Strip.

Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) reported "two martyrs and wounded civilians in the raid that targeted a motorcycle in Aita al-Shaab", a border village.

It said the strike was carried out by an "Israeli" drone.

The NNA had earlier said a separate strike by "enemy aircraft" on the border town of Naqura "targeted a motorcycle", reporting unspecified casualties.

The Israeli army later said in a statement that "a Hezbollah terrorist was identified exiting a military structure" in the Naqura area, adding that "an aircraft struck and eliminated" the operative.



Speakers at a seminar, titled "Recognition of Unpaid Care Work: A Step Towards Financial and Social Empowerment of Women," yesterday. Manusher Jonno Foundation organised the event at a city hotel. PHOTO: STAR

Unseen and unrecognised

Speakers stress recognising women's unpaid care work

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Contribution of female unpaid care work, in GDP equivalent terms, is five times higher than similar contribution by their male counterparts, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

They also noted that if a woman could work one hour less on unpaid care and domestic work, her probability of participating in the labour market would increase by 2 percent.

Additionally, having an under-five child in the family reduces a woman's probability of joining the labour market by 2.5 percent, they added.

These data were presented at a seminar, titled "Recognition of Unpaid Care Work: A Step Towards Financial and Social Empowerment of Women," organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at a city hotel.

Referring to a 2021 survey

Recognition of care work is the first step towards establishing a care economy, and acknowledging its significance in society.

DR SAYEMA HAQUE BIDISHA
Prof of Economics at DU

We are trying to include unpaid care work in the budget. Because without care economy, the economy of smart Bangladesh will not be smart.

WASEQA AYESHA KHAN
State Minister for Finance

conducted by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Dr Kazi Iqbal, research director at the organisation, said, "Women's household and care work was worth

Tk 5,307 billion, equivalent to 14.8 percent of GDP that year. Men's contribution to GDP that year was only 2.8 percent."

According to the study, women spend an average of 4.6 hours on unpaid household services for household members, such as cooking and cleaning, and 1.2 hours on unpaid caregiving services such as childcare and adult care, while men spend 0.6 hours and 0.2 hours on domestic and care work, respectively, he also said.

"On the other hand, women get only 1.2 hours for paid and self-employed work, while men get 6.1 hours for such tasks," he said.

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, professor of Economics department at Dhaka University, stressed the importance of recognising unpaid care work as the initial step.

Recognition of care work is the first step towards establishing a care

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



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Yunus accused of granting Tk 9.5cr loan illegally

Grameen Bank lodges complaint with ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Grameen Bank has filed a complaint with the Anti-Corruption Commission against its former managing director Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, accusing him of illegally granting a loan to a company his family owns.

Tk 9.5 crore was given in loans illegally to Packages Corporation Ltd, Masud Akhtar, the bank's legal adviser, told The Daily Star yesterday.

In addition, Yunus also awarded work orders

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



Launches remain docked at Sadarghat terminal. Vessel movement has been suspended as a precaution due to cyclone Remal, which made landfall yesterday. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Release whitepaper on graft

TIB urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In light of recent exposure of high-level abuses of power, corruption, and political criminalisation, the need to demonstrate the credibility of the government's zero-tolerance stance against corruption has become unprecedentedly important, stated Transparency International Bangladesh.

In a statement referring to the corruption allegations against former army chief, police and Rab chief, and killing of a MP, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said, "If the government and the ruling party only offer evasive explanations out of

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

'River grabbers are criminals'

State minister for shipping tells conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government sees river grabbers as criminals, said State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday.

He said the political identity of encroachers, be it Awami League, BNP or Jatiyo Party, bears no significance to the government. The current establishment has a zero tolerance stance against all river grabbers, he added.

Khalid made these remarks at a conference at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh at Khamarbari in Dhaka.

The two-day National River Conference 2024 was organised by the Association for Land and Development, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, Water Rights Forum, Riverine People and Bangladesh River Travelers Network.

Speaking as chief guest, Khalid said, "We face many problems while

freeing the river from grabbers. We can't handle the greed of sand... Who do I blame for this?"

The state minister reiterated that protecting rivers is a top government priority, highlighting they have enacted new laws on sand and soil management. There is a

Preventing river encroachment requires more than just laws. A stronger public outcry is necessary.

AINUN NISHAT
BRACU Professor Emeritus

directive from the prime minister that no balu mahal (designated sand quarry) can be leased without hydrography survey.

The government observes "river week" annually to create awareness in protecting rivers, preventing pollution, and ensuring their flow,

with this year's event starting on June 4, he added.

BRAC University Professor Emeritus Ainun Nishat said preventing river encroachment requires more than just laws. A stronger public outcry is necessary.

National River Conservation Commission Chairman Sarwar Mahmud emphasised the need for strategic collaboration with all stakeholders and community engagement to effectively prevent and address river encroachment.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of BELA, highlighted that 229 rivers are endangered across eight divisions. She called for a law to protect rivers, along with increased legal power, scope, and manpower for the NRCC as per the court order.

Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir and ALRD Executive Director Shamsul Huda, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Hasan Mahmood Khan new air force chief

UNB, Dhaka

The government has appointed Air Vice

Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan as the new chief of Bangladesh Air Force by elevating him to the rank of air marshal.

He will take over as the new BAF chief on June 11 for three years, according to a notification issued by the defence ministry yesterday.

Hasan will succeed Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Shaikh Abdul Hannan.

Hannan will go on retirement the same day.

Stop activities of 'Silicon City' at Savar: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to immediately stop all activities of housing project "Silicon City" at Savar including its earth-filling, plot selling and registration.

Silicon City has been established under "Silicon and Land Development" allegedly by filling the main flood zone, reservoir and agriculture zone identified in the detailed area plan at Borobordeshi Mouja.

Rajuk chairman, DoE director general and Dhaka DC have been ordered to take necessary steps in this regard.

The HC bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu issued the order following a petition filed by BELA.

GEOPOLITICAL COMPETITION Bangladesh needs to prepare better

Speakers tell book launch

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

As great power competition intensifies in the Indian Ocean region, it is high time that Bangladesh prepares better and plays its balancing act effectively to ensure its national interest, said international relations analysts at a book launch yesterday.

German think tank Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) published the book "The Changing Nature of Geopolitics and the Futures of Bangladesh" edited by Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, executive director of Centre for Alternatives. The book is written by 11 writers on various aspects of current geopolitical scenarios and the position of Bangladesh.

Addressing the event at Foreign Service Academy, Prof Imtiaz said the Indian sub-continent was once the second richest region after China, and that drew the British and other European countries to this region, particularly the Bengal.

He said after the fall of the colonies and the two world wars, two powers -- the US and the Soviet Union -- emerged. Now, with the rise of China and



other powers, the world is bracing multipolarity. And, the Indian Ocean has become the focus of the global and regional powers.

Bangladesh, which is located at the centre of the Indian Ocean and a rapidly growing economy with no enemy, has also become very significant.

"Against this backdrop, our engagement with the outside world also should be multiverse, multi-focused and multilayered," Prof Imtiaz said. "Are we ready to pursue effectively this policy? Is our education system ready? No," he said, suggesting that the technology, however, has created opportunity for the policymakers, diplomats and leaders to equip with the knowledge.

Mahfuzur Rhaman, former principal staff officer at Armed Forces Division, former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, AK Abdul Momen, chair of Parliamentary Standing Committee on foreign ministry, FES programme advisor Shadhan Kumar Das and Diplomats World Advisor Dr Mohammed Faruque also spoke.

Begum Firoz Haider passes away

CITY DESK

Begum Firoz Haider, the youngest niece of Hussein Shaheed Suhrawardy and wife of freedom fighter and former lawmaker late Syed Haider Ally, passed away on Saturday evening. She was 86, said a press release.

She left behind two sons, a daughter, grandsons, granddaughters, and a host of well-wishers. Syed Shahed Reza, secretary general of Bangladesh Olympic Association, is her son-in-law.

She was buried at Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard yesterday after a namaz e-janaza held at Gulshan Azad Mosque.

Her family members have requested all to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



'It may collapse any time'

Bridge over Ratnai river remains dilapidated for 4 years

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The 50-metre bridge over the Ratnai River between Marichbari and Kalirhat on the Bhelabari-Durgapur road in Aditmari upazila, Lalmonirhat, has been in a dilapidated state for four years.

The railings of the bridge are damaged and the pillars cracked. As there is no alternative road, locals are constantly crossing this bridge risking their lives.

No heavy vehicles can cross this bridge, which has left local traders facing a challenge when transporting their goods.

Badsha Mia, a businessman from Kalirhat area, said, "No trucker wants to transport goods over the broken bridge. Because of this, we have to transport goods in light vehicles at higher costs. We have been demanding a new bridge for the last four years, but we are not seeing any results," he said.

Sirajul Islam, a van driver of Marichbari area, said, "When I get on the bridge with a van full of



goods, I feel very nervous. It could collapse at any moment."

Nur Mohammad, a farmer of Sethibari village, said, "Moving on the bridge with even a bicycle feels risky nowadays. The railings and pillars are damaged."

Chairman of Bhelabari Union Parishad Mohammad Ali said several applications were sent to the LGED authorities for the construction of a new bridge, but no action has been taken so far.

Chairman of Durgapur Union Parishad, Asaduzzaman Nannu said

people of his union have suffered the most due to the dilapidated condition of the bridge. LGED authorities have inspected the bridge several times and promised to build a new one.

Aditmari Upazila Engineer Ali Hossain said that under LGED's "Supporting Bridge Project", a proposal has been made to construct a 50-metre bridge over the Ratnai river on the Bhelabari-Durgapur road on May 14. The construction of the bridge will be implemented if the approval and allocation of funds is received.

Justice Anwarul Haque NO MORE

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Mohammad Anwarul Haque, a retired judge of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division, passed away at Square Hospital in Dhaka yesterday.

He was 77. Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan, Law Minister Anisul Huq and Law Secretary Md Golam Sarwar expressed deep shock at his death.

In separate messages, they prayed for eternal peace and salvation of his departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family.

His namaz e-janaza was held at Supreme Court Inner Garden after the Zohr prayers yesterday.



Unseen and

FROM PAGE 3 economy, and acknowledging its significance in society, she added.

Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, former adviser to the caretaker government and executive chairman of PPRC, emphasised the necessity of altering social norms, promoting a sense of social responsibility, and addressing toxic masculinity.

Such efforts require implementing additional policies and budgetary steps, he added.

"We need investment in childcare support in workplaces, maternal health, and to prevent child marriage and much more," he also said.

Speaking as chief guest, State Minister for Finance Waseqa Ayesha Khan, said disregarding women's unpaid care work is a global problem.

"There is no reason to exclude women's household and care work from GDP. We are trying to include unpaid care work in the budget. Because without care economy, the economy of smart

Bangladesh will not be smart," she said.

She also emphasised recognising the work of domestic workers, as it is not easy to work outside the house without their help.

Referring to the prime minister's directive to include women's unpaid care and domestic work in GDP, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said, "A CPD study has shown that the value of unpaid work is three times higher than the paid work of women."

"Even if women are paid for their work, 80 percent of them work in the informal sector, where their salary is not secured," she said. "Now is the time to economically recognise women's unpaid work through a satellite system of accounts," she added.

UN Women Representative to Bangladesh, Gitanjali Singh, believes the recognition process has to be a collective approach. Partnerships are fundamental and collaboration is the key here, she added.

6yrs on, family awaits 6,727 acres

FROM PAGE 5

The Rab then claimed that Akram was killed in a "gunfight" between the elite force and drug dealers. It said Ayesha's allegations and statement were "completely untrue".

Arafat Islam, director at Rab legal and media wing, on Saturday said, "The incident was investigated as per the law, but I am not aware of the findings as I was not in Rab at that time."

Generally, an executive magistrate posted in Rab on deputation carries out an inquiry whenever any incident of firing takes place, said a former senior Rab officer, wishing anonymity.

Neither Rab nor any other authorities ever disclosed any investigation findings or whether any action was taken against Rab members over the incident.

On December 10, 2021, the United States imposed

sanctions on Rab and its seven current and former top officials, including the then IGP Benazir Ahmed and former Rab-7 Commanding Officer Lt Col Miftah Uddin Ahmed, for "serious human rights abuses".

The State Department, in a release, then specifically mentioned the extra-judicial killing of Akram.

On July 21, 2022, the National Human Rights Commission asked the senior secretary of the home ministry's public security division to send a report after investigating the incident and the allegation of not registering a case by any agency other than Rab.

But the commission has yet to receive any report, though the NHRC chairman wrote 12 times to the senior secretary in this regard, said an NHRC official.

PRAYER TIMING MAY 27

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-43 8-05

JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-47 8-35

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়

ধানমন্ডি ৭/এ, ২২১০ বর্গফুটের নতুন ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয় হবে।

বিস্তারিত: ০১৯১৫-৭৯০৪১১

WFP World Food Programme
Programme Alimentaire Mondial
Programa Mundial de Alimentos
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

**SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES**

Invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI) (WFP/BDCO/EOI/24/03) For the Supply of Super Cereal (Wheat Soya Blend with Sugar - WSB+) and Super Cereal Plus (Wheat Soya Blend with Sugar and Skimmed Milk Powder - WSB++)

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is hereby inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI) from local manufacturers who wish to do business with WFP as suppliers of Super Cereal products such as Super Cereal (Wheat Soya Blend with Sugar-WSB+) and Super Cereal Plus (Wheat Soya Blend with Sugar and Skimmed Milk Powder-WSB++).

Interested manufacturers and producers are required to provide the following documents:

- The filled in EOI Response Form, which includes:
 - Table 1. WFP Requirements;
 - Table 2. Supplier Information;
 - Table 3. Supplier Financial Status;
 - Table 4. Supplier Relevant Experience;
 - Signatory by the authorized company representative and company stamp;
- Supplier Vendor Registration Form
- Initial Paper Assessment Form

The detailed EOI information, necessary forms, and specifications, are available in the following link: <https://cutt.ly/Teykq6SS>

Manufacturers who meet the WFP pre-defined criteria will be selected registration on WFP suppliers' roster for invitations to participate in tenders.

The forms and other necessary documents should be submitted to the email address below, not later than 27 June 2024, 4:30 PM (Bangladeshi Time).

ban.foodprocurement@wfp.org

Should you have any questions please contact us at ban.foodprocurement@wfp.org

aisd WE ARE HIRING

American International School Dhaka (AISD) is recruiting a Theatre Manager to oversee the renovation and future operations of Dhaka's premier performance venue.

We need a passionate and experienced Technical Theatre Manager who is proficient in sound engineering, lighting design, and technical theatre management.

For more information, please visit www.aisdhaka.org/community/career

Or, scan this QR code

MANARAT DHAKA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL & COLLEGE (MDIC), GULSHAN

Plot (CEN) # 16, Road # 104, Gulshan, Dhaka-1212, www.manaratcollege.edu.bd

JOB VACANCY

Ref: MDIC/AO/(Recruitment-2024)/F-43/01 Date: 26 May 2024

Applications are invited to fill up following vacancies:

SL	Post & Salary	Qualifications & Experience
01	Librarian Salary: Negotiable	Masters with honours (2 nd Class) in Library and Information Science or Graduation (2 nd Class) and Masters (2 nd Class) in Library and Information Science. Age: 30-35 years with 5 years' experience.
02	Subject Teacher: • Arabic & Islamic Studies • Bangla • Biology • English • Mathematics • Physics Salary: Negotiable	Masters or 4 years honours in respective subjects with minimum 2 nd Class/division or minimum GPA/CGPA-2.50 at all levels. For Arabic & Islamic Studies: Masters or 4 years honours in Arabic/Islamic Studies/Kamil/Takmeel (Dawah) with minimum 2 nd Class/Division or minimum GPA/CGPA-2.50 at all levels. For Biology: Masters or 4 years honours in Zoology/Botany and other equivalent subjects with 2 nd division/ CGPA-2.50 at all levels. Age: 22-32 years Experience will be preferred.
03	Art Teacher Salary: Negotiable	B.F.A. with minimum 2 nd Class/division or minimum GPA/CGPA-2.50 at all levels. Age: 22-32 years Experience will be preferred.
04	Physical Training Teacher (Male) Salary: Negotiable	Graduation with B. P. Ed. with minimum 2 nd Class/division or minimum GPA/CGPA-2.50 at all levels. Age: 22-32 years Experience will be preferred.
05	Junior Teacher (Female) Salary: Negotiable	Graduation/O & A Level with minimum 2 nd Class/division or minimum GPA/CGPA-2.50 at all levels. Age: 22-32 years Experience will be preferred.

Candidates will be selected on contractual basis. Interested candidates are requested to visit the MDIC website www.manaratcollege.edu.bd for detail terms and conditions with instructions to apply.

Application should reach this office by 06 June 2024.

Brig Gen (Retd) Md Mehdi Hassan Pramanik, psc
Principal, MDIC
Ex-Principal, Sylhet Cadet College, Sylhet & Adarnajee Cantonment College, Dhaka

Phone Office: 02478807615
Res: 02478807480

**OFFICE OF THE RAJBARI POURASHAVA
DISTRICT- RAJBARI.**

Memo No. : Raj/Pou/Prok/209 Date: 23/05/2024.

e-Tender Notice No: 08/2023-24

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of Works as mentioned in the following table:

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description of Works	tender Last Selling date & time	tender closing date & time
2242154	IUIDP-2/RAJ/P-16	1. Rehabilitation of Binodpur Main BC Road starting Binodpur Main Road 2 no Rail Gate to Beribadh Via Palpara by Bituminous Dense Carpeting (DC) (Ch.00m-800m), at Ward No.03, Under Rajbari Pourashava, District: Rajbari. 2. Construction of RCC Road starting from 3 no Beradanga Dulal House to Akkas Miah House Via Golam Mostofa House (Ch.00m-190m), at Ward No.04, Under Rajbari Pourashava, District: Rajbari	10.06.2024 4:00 PM	11.06.2024 12.30 PM

These are an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(AHS Md. Ali Khan)
Executive Engineer
Rajbari Pourashava, Rajbari
Email: xen.rjb.pou@gmail.com

GD- 867

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
MANIKGANJ
eed.manikganj.gov.bd**

e-Tender Notice (Open Tendering Method)

Notice No:- EED/Manikganj/Govt. Repair /SHED/2023-24/36 Date: 23-05-2024

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

SL No.	Tender ID	Name of Works	Online Tender Opening Date (On/After)	Online Tender Closing (Date & Time)
01	984276	Construction of Boundary Wall at Govt. Debendra College, Sadar Upazila, Manikganj District.	23-May- 2024	Please visit the Tender Notice on the e-GP Website

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents of following Package 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 Procuring Entity Office, National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Mujahidul Islam Alif)
Executive Engineer (a.c.)
Education Engineering Department
Manikganj
ee.mani.eed@gmail.com

GD- 861



AISHA KHAN'S silver-screen dreams

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



Just after completing the film 'Shekor', Aisha will start shooting for another one, titled 'Shongbad', under the direction of Sohel Arman.

SHARMIN JOYA

This year has been particularly hectic for Aisha Khan. "From 2020 to 2023, I've been involved in numerous projects. Yet, it feels like I've taken on more work than ever before, including TV projects, anchoring jobs and others," shared the multi-faceted artist.

Aisha took on the role of Phalguni, in Proshoon Rahman's *Shekor*, where she will be sharing the screen with FS Nayeem. "After the release of *Ahoto Phuler Golpo* in 2016, I'm returning to the silver screen after six years, and this time, the director was the reason to take on this project," she said.

Clearing the air, she expressed her admiration for Proshoon's direction, and love for *Sutopar Thikana* (2015). "Proshoon *bhaia* thinks out of the box, and we haven't seen him making commercial films, rather he focuses on projects that are more life-like, and artistically grounded in reality."

The team of *Shekor* completed shooting the film, which took them nearly two weeks. "During the shooting, we felt relaxed because the entire pre-production was well-organised. This is why we could complete the shoots

within such a short time."

The filming took place in three locations—Gazipur, Rajshahi, and Kushtia—and Aisha shared that the entire team was fun to shoot with. "Nayeem *bhaia* is very energetic, and he kept the team on its toes. We also had eight-year-old little Muntaha (Muntaha Amilia), the cutest team member. Shooting with her was an amazing experience. The team deserves a huge shoutout for maintaining everyone's health while shooting in the extreme heat."

Shekor tells the story of a non-resident Bangladeshi, focusing on the struggles usually faced by those living abroad. "There are a lot of sacrifices a person makes who leaves behind his land, home, and family just to ensure his family's stability and happiness. This film focuses on one such story to which people living abroad would be able to relate well."

Just after completing one film, Aisha will start shooting for another one, titled *Shongbad*, under the direction of Sohel Arman. This film features Irfan Sajjad alongside Aisha. "We will begin the shooting on June 1

and continue till the end of the month," asserted Aisha.

Meanwhile, she will complete the previously committed works for small screens. "Last Eid-ul-Fitr, the response from the audience was great. Although I'll not be able to invest much time in the upcoming Eid projects, I have to complete the committed ones."

After completing *Shongbad*, the actress wants to take a break. Being the homesick kind, she mostly enjoys her own company, however, she also shared that she needed a vacation this time. "I want to explore a new country this time. It depends on my mood; whenever I feel a little pride in myself, I want to run to the hills and mountains, it makes me feel grounded, and helps me to stay humble. When I feel exhausted, I prefer going near the sea, it helps me to be calm."

This Eid-ul-Azha, Aisha will be featured in five fiction projects, where she will be seen opposite Tawqif Mahbub, Musfiq R Farhan, Abu Hurayra Tanvir, and Syed Zaman Shaon in respective ones.

Aryan Khan wraps up shoot of his directorial debut 'Stardom'

Aryan Khan, son of the legendary Bollywood icon Shah Rukh Khan, has completed the shoot of his highly anticipated directorial debut series, *Stardom*. Celebrations marked the end of the shoot, as Aryan and his team commemorated this significant milestone.



Stardom, set against the dynamic backdrop of the film industry, is both written and directed by Aryan and is produced under the banner of Red Chillies Entertainment, Shah Rukh's home production.

Earlier, it was reported in April that actress Mona Singh has been cast in a pivotal role in the series.

Nusraat Faria becomes goodwill ambassador of Gujarat's Parul University



Renowned Bangladeshi actress Nusraat Faria Mazhar, who also has been working consistently in India's West Bengal film industry, has recently been appointed as the goodwill ambassador for Parul University in Gujarat, India.

Nusraat will represent the university for the next year.

The university held a pre-convocation ceremony for one of its international batches on last Friday, where Nusraat attended as a guest of honour, sharing her life's journey and experiences with the students.

The actress shared, "It was truly an amazing experience. Being a guest of honour at such a prestigious institution brings me immense joy."

COUNTRYWIDE

Wheat cultivation on the decline

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Wheat production as well as its cultivation area in five northern districts of Rangpur region is seeing a significant decline over the past few years as farmers shifting to other crops for higher profits.

The country now requires about 85 lakh tonnes of wheat annually, but the production is only about 11 lakh tonnes in recent years, which is far below than the required quantity, agronomists said.

As a result, the country has to depend on wheat imported from other countries to meet the local demand.

Higher cost of cultivation against poor yield is one of the main reasons behind the dwindling popularity of wheat among farmers in the region comprised of five districts—Rangpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat.

Farmers said they are shifting to other crops as they were not getting expected profit from wheat cultivation. So instead of wheat cultivation they are cultivating other crops including maize.

Most of the farmers across the country used to grow wheat only a few years back. But nowadays, the number of growers has decreased significantly due to its higher production cost and less profit.

At present, it costs a farmer Tk 7,000 to Tk 8,000 to cultivate one bigha of land and get a yield of eight to ten maunds of wheat, while each maund of wheat is being sold for Tk 1,300 to Tk 1,350 in local market.

According to Rangpur Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), this year wheat has been cultivated on a total of

17,167 hectares of land in five districts of Rangpur region, compared to 18,210 hectares last year.

Mentionable, about 25,650 hectares of land was brought under wheat cultivation in 2020, which was nearly 67,500 hectares only about a decade ago.

This year, wheat has been cultivated on about 3.2 lakh hectares of land across the country, while the production target has been set at about 11 lakh tonnes, DAE sources said.

Farmer Sahir Ali of Char Gokunda village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila said as farmers in the northern districts have been struggling to turn a profit from wheat farming in the past few years, about 95 percent farmers of the village have given up wheat cultivation in recent years.

Mansur Ali, a farmer from Rayanj village in Kurigram's Nageshwari upazila, said even 10 years ago he used to cultivate wheat on eight to ten bighas of land.

But for the last four years, he has been cultivating maize instead of wheat for a better profit.

Like him, many other farmers of his locality have given up wheat farming and opting for other crops.

Farmer Suresh Chandra of Madhupur village in Rangpur's Kaunia upazila said wheat farming gradually losing its popularity as other crops now ensure higher profits for farmers. Rangpur DAE Additional Director Obaidur Rahman Mandal said they are encouraging farmers to grow wheat as they can get up to 12 to 14 maunds of wheat by cultivating the improved variety on each bigha land.

KKR thrash SRH to win

FROM PAGE 12

the most dominant team after they ended top of the table with 20 points in the league phase.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer was unbeaten on six, and at the other end, when Kolkata players came rushing on to the pitch.

Hyderabad skipper Pat Cummins won the toss and elected to bat first and go with his team's strength of scoring big, after they racked up IPL record totals of 277 and 287 in this year's edition.

Hyderabad took Cummins for \$2.5 million in the same auction and made him captain after he led Australia to two titles, including the World Test Championship and the ODI World Cup last year.

But Starc took the limelight as he struck in his first over when he bowled in-form Indian batsman Abhishek Sharma, for two, on a delivery that pitched in the middle and caught the top of off stump.

Travis Head followed his fellow left-hand opener Abhishek to the dug-out, caught behind for his second duck in three matches off fast bowler Vaibhav Arora.

Starc struck again and the opposition top order was in disarray at 47-4 inside seven overs.

Andre Russell took down Aiden Markram for 20 and wickets kept tumbling as fellow South African Heinrich Klaassen fell for 16.

Cummins, who was dropped on 10 by Starc, took the team past 100 before falling for 24 off Russell, who ended with figures of 3-19.

2 journalists convicted over

FROM PAGE 12

Moniruzzaman filed the case with the tribunal against three people, including Morshed and Ezaz, under the Digital Security Act.

In March 2022, the Criminal Investigation Department of police submitted a probe report before the tribunal, accusing

Morshed and Ezaz. The CID, however, relieved the third accused from the case as the charges against her could not be proved during investigation.

On November 13 that year, the tribunal framed charges against the duo in the case.

According to the case documents, the weekly

magazine in October, November and December 2020 published several reports about the plaintiff in both print and online versions, which contained false and defamatory information.

Later, its editor Morshed shared screenshots of the news on Facebook in December 2020.

Star Savar correspondent

FROM PAGE 12

hearing the news around 10:30am. While taking photos, local activists of the ruling party [Awami League] attacked and beat me up. They also took away my mobile phone," said Akash.

Fellow reporters first took him to the local upazila health complex. He was later moved to Enam Medical College Hospital for better treatment.

Mohammad Mahmud, of Popular Medical College Hospital, said, "We have put him on 24-hour rest. After getting test results, we will know his condition."

Shah Zaman, officer-in-charge of Savar Police Station, told The Daily Star

that actions would be taken against the criminals upon receiving a complaint.

After visiting the factory, the OC told reporters, "We found no chaos when we arrived at the scene. We still don't know who the actual owners are."

Injured Akash said he would lodge a complaint with the police station.

Witnesses said officials of Sea Pearl Group were seen breaking locks of gates of the factory and replacing them with new ones. They were also giving their men instructions to ensure that no one could enter the factory.

Abhijit Kumar Roy, executive director of Bengal Fine Ceramics Ltd, said they have been operating the

factory for five years, but Sea Pearl Group yesterday seized it with the help of local political activists and several hundred thugs.

Sea Pearl Group Manager (administration) Mashiur Rahman denied the allegation, claiming that they entered the factory peacefully and that "Abhijit Kumar Roy's presence was illegal".

He added that they had no knowledge of any journalist being assaulted.

Meanwhile, Savar Press Club condemned the attack on journalist Akash and demanded justice for those involved.

It will form a human chain on the club premises at 11:00am today, protesting the attack.

50 ruling party

FROM PAGE 12

members from the Mahila Awami League, six from Jubo Mahila League, five from Mahila Sramik League, and eight members from Chhatra League, is expected to have meetings with senior CPC leaders.

Five members of the AL's database team and two involved in making the party's election manifesto were also in the delegation.

AL Deputy Office Secretary Sayem Khan said the activities and political structure of the CPC, relationship with the government and the people, and the way of conducting politics would be discussed.

After concluding their workshops in Zhejiang, the delegation would travel to Beijing on June 1 and visit the CPC headquarters on June 2 and June 3. They would exchange views with senior party leaders there.

The delegation would leave Beijing for Dhaka on June 4, he said.

Party sources said another delegation, led by party presidium member Kazi Zafarullah and consisting of senior AL leaders, is likely to visit China on June 25.

Ready for new truce talks

FROM PAGE 12

on Saturday, though the Israeli military denied the claim.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said yesterday that at least 35,984 Palestinians have been killed in the territory during more than seven months of offensive. The toll includes at least 81 deaths over the past 24 hours, a ministry statement said.

The UN has warned of looming famine in the besieged territory, where most hospitals are no longer functioning.



A farmer looks after his wheat plants at Rayganj village in Kurigram's Nageshwari upazila. PHOTO: STAR

Israel not 'akin' to Hamas

Says ICC prosecutor

AFP, London

International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Karim Khan justified his decision to request arrest warrants for Israel's prime minister and defence minister in an interview with a British newspaper published yesterday.

Khan said on Monday that he was seeking warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, as well as top Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar, Ismail Haniyeh and Mohamed Deif, on suspicions of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

His announcement sparked the ire of Israel and its allies the United States and United Kingdom, all of which criticised Khan for putting together



Hamas and Israel, which has carried out a relentless military campaign in Gaza since October 7.

"It's a precarious moment internationally and if we don't hold on to the law, we have nothing to cling onto," Khan, who rarely speaks publicly, told the Sunday Times newspaper.

"I am not saying that Israel with its democracy and its supreme court is akin to Hamas, of course not," Khan said in his interview.

"I couldn't be clearer, Israel has every right to protect its population and to get the hostages back. But nobody has a licence to commit war crimes or crimes against humanity. The means define us," Khan added.



A Palestinian man walks past a destroyed building in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday, amid the ongoing Israeli offensive in the Palestinian enclave. Israel prepared to allow around 200 aid trucks into Gaza through Kerem Shalom at the southeastern edge of the Palestinian enclave, bypassing the main Rafah crossing that has been blocked for weeks.

PHOTO: AFP

Famine should be declared in Gaza Strip

Say rights organisations as Israel using starvation as a 'weapon of war' against Palestinian people

AGENCIES

At least 70 organisations are calling on relevant authorities and international institutions to officially declare a famine in the Gaza Strip, where there is a rapid spread of famine, according to the Geneva-based Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor yesterday.

It said that food insecurity is increasing across the enclave because of Israel's use of starvation as a "weapon of war" against the Palestinian people - something the organisations say is part of a genocide, a charge Israel has denied.

"The organisations stated that food security levels have significantly declined as a result of

Health authorities officially recorded 30 deaths due to famine: Euro-Med

the Israeli army's ground operation in Rafah City, south of the Gaza Strip, which began on May 7 and was preceded the day before by blocking the entry of humanitarian aid trucks through the Rafah crossing" the statement read.

"Thousands of trucks on the other side of the Rafah crossing have been at a standstill for weeks and are inaccessible to the residents whose lives depend on

them due to Israel's decision to starve the people of the Gaza Strip, close the crossings and prevent the entry of aid."

Euro-Med said health authorities have officially recorded 30 deaths due to famine, and that famine-related deaths occur nearly daily, compounded by Israeli bombings and inadequate medical treatment, reports The Guardian.

About 200 aid trucks were expected to enter Gaza yesterday through the Kerem Shalom border crossing, Khaled Zayed, the head of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society in North Sinai, told Reuters earlier.

The Rafah border crossing has been shut for almost three weeks, since Israel took control of the Palestinian side of the crossing.

Death toll rises to 33 in India game zone fire

THE HINDU ONLINE

The death toll from a game zone fire in India's Rajkot rose to 33, a top local official said yesterday, as rescuers scoured the site the morning after the blaze.

The fire was reportedly caused when some welding work was being carried out. The four-year-old sprawling amusement park was built in temporary structures that had tin roofs and two floors.

Members of the Special Investigation Team held a meeting with local administration in Gujarat's Rajkot city. The bodies were charred beyond recognition. The DNA samples of bodies have been collected for identification of the deceased, they said.

JULY 4 ELECTION

UK Tories pitch national service for 18-year-olds

REUTERS

Britain's Conservative Party will introduce mandatory national service for 18-year-olds if it wins the national election on July 4, comprising military or community participation, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said yesterday.

Young adults will be able to choose between spending one weekend a month volunteering over the course of a year, or take up one of 30,000 spaces to spend a year in the armed forces, Sunak said. The announcement followed Labour Party leader Keir Starmer's comments on Saturday that he was in favour of allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote.

Sunak's Conservatives lag Labour by a wide margin in opinion polls, which have shown little change in fortunes for the prime minister since his surprise election call last Wednesday.

"Britain today faces a future that is more dangerous and more divided. There's no doubt that our democratic values are under threat. That is why we will introduce a bold new model of national service for 18-year-olds," Sunak said in a statement. The Conservative Party said the proposal would be funded by cracking down on tax avoidance and evasion.

MASSIVE LANDSLIDE

670 feared dead in Papua New Guinea village: UN agency

REUTERS, Sydney



More than 670 people have died in Papua New Guinea's massive landslide, the UN migration agency estimated yesterday as rescue efforts continued.

Media in the South Pacific nation north of Australia had previously estimated Friday's landslide had buried more than 300 people. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said earlier yesterday that only five bodies had been retrieved from the rubble.

The agency based its death toll estimates on information provided by officials at Yambali Village in the Enga province, who say more than 150 houses were buried in Friday's landslide.



Employees of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine sort out the debris in a hardware supermarket destroyed by the Russian strike in Kharkiv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Trump booed, heckled by raucous crowd at convention

REUTERS, Washington

US Presidential candidate Donald Trump was booed and heckled by many in a raucous audience at the Libertarian National Convention on Saturday night, a marked change from the adulation he receives at rallies from his fervently loyal supporters.

Libertarians, who believe in limited government and individual freedom, blame Trump, a Republican, for rushing through the creation of a Covid-19 vaccine when he was president and for not doing more to stop public health restrictions on the unvaccinated during the pandemic.

When Trump took to the stage in Washington, there were loud boos and

jeers. A smaller section of the crowd, Trump supporters, cheered him.

Shortly before he appeared, one Libertarian Party member shouted: "Donald Trump should have taken a bullet!"

Trump's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the hostile reception.

Trump, who was president between 2017 and 2021, immediately mentioned the total 88 felony charges he faces in four federal and state prosecutions.

"If I wasn't a libertarian I am now," he said. He denounced the administration of President Joe Biden, his challenger in the November 5 election rematch, and Biden's fellow

Democrats as being part of a "rise in left-wing fascism".

Trump was trying to appeal to libertarians, who have more in common with Republican policy positions than Democrats on issues including taxes and the size of government, in what is expected to be a closely fought election.

He added: "We should not be fighting each other." He asked libertarians to work with him to defeat Biden, an appeal which was greeted by many boos, although the vast majority in the crowd were fiercely opposed to Biden and his administration.

Libertarians garnered only 1.2 percent of the national vote in 2020, or about 1.8 million votes, but November's election could be decided by just tens of thousands of votes in a handful of battleground states, so Trump is seeking to peel away some libertarian support.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department

Office of the Executive Engineer

District: Dinajpur

www.lged.gov.bd

শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

Memo No. 46.02.2700.000.07.59.01.23-1839

Date: 26/05/2024

e-Tender Notice No. 85/2023-2024

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (OTM) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for 01 No. Package of CBU-100 Protect. FY 2023-2024 for this District

Sl No.	Name of package	Name of work	Tender ID
1	CBU-100/Purto 146	Construction of 60.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Pakerhat R&H RD-Kayempur H/S at Ch. 146m (Road ID: 127603002) under upazila: Khansama, District: Dinajpur. (Salvage cost Tk. 286020.00)	991503

Last selling date & time 26-06-2024, 15:00. Closing & opening date & time 27-06-2024, 11:00.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 26 June 2024, 16:00.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Signature)

Md. Masudur Rahman
Executive Engineer
LGED, Dinajpur
Phone: 02589923381
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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Debt servicing becoming costlier

Be careful with future external borrowing

The government needs to pay closer attention to the management of external sovereign debt, as in the upcoming budget, allocation to repay foreign debts may reach Tk 57,000 crore, a 53 percent rise from the current year. This will put further pressure on our dwindling foreign currency reserves, which also needs to be monitored closely. According to the finance ministry, allocation for foreign debt repayment has been Tk 37,076 crore in the current fiscal year. However, interest payments for increasing levels of foreign loans in recent years and the rapid devaluation of the taka against the US dollar have forced the government to set aside a greater amount for debt servicing.

Bangladesh's foreign debt service requirement has increased over the years, with the amount crossing the \$1 billion mark for the first time in 2012-13. In 2021-22, the amount went past \$2 billion, and in the year after that, Bangladesh paid \$2.67 billion in debt servicing. In the current fiscal year, it is going to cross the \$3 billion mark. Interest payments alone reached \$1.05 billion in the first nine months of the fiscal year—crossing the \$1 billion mark for the first time. Given that Bangladesh's access to cheap loans is decreasing and foreign borrowing is also becoming costlier with its rising per capita income, debt servicing could become an issue in the coming years, unless the government takes a cautious approach.

According to the Economic Relations Division (ERD), Bangladesh is now having to borrow at the costlier market-based rates to cover its development spending. As the debt portfolio becomes increasingly dominated by market-based rates—and the volume of the payment becomes more dependent on the unpredictability of the global economy—the interest rate risk goes up. We have seen that happen recently, with the cost of foreign loans going up as interest rates shot up globally. With Bangladesh set to graduate from the group of least developed countries, its share of concessional loans has drastically fallen. Alongside this, the grace period—when a borrower pays only the interest, rather than both interest and principal amounts—of some of its major loans will come to an end over the next few years. Therefore, the government needs to do some careful analysis of what the debt repayment situation will be in the near future.

The government will be well advised to accept any further loans based on careful calculations, as well as ensure the development projects it undertakes using foreign loans are truly beneficial. In that regard, the government has to do better in ensuring timely completion of development projects, as time extensions often lead to massive cost overruns. Additionally, it needs to ramp up its negotiation capacity and try to opt for more concessional loans over costlier options. And finally, it has to devise effective strategies to boost its foreign currency reserves via increased exports and remittance inflow.

Have we forgotten about our polythene ban?

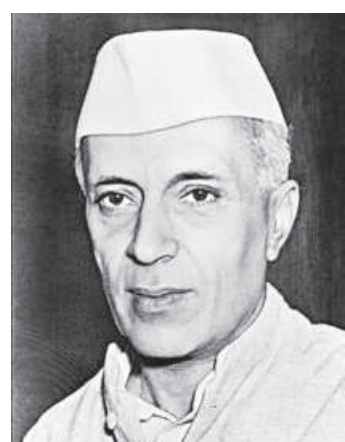
Authorities must not turn a blind eye to its rampant use

Bangladesh may have been the first country in the world to ban the production, marketing, and use of polythene on March 1, 2002, but frustratingly, its pioneering attempts to curb polythene use seem to have fallen by the wayside over the past two decades. Polythene use is back with a vengeance in shops and markets around the country, making us wonder: why has the government completely given up on implementing the ban, when it has taken multiple laudable initiatives over the years to curb polythene usage and promote eco-friendly alternatives?

For instance, the government enacted the Jute Packaging Mandatory Use Act in 2010, which prohibits the use of plastic or polythene packaging for 11 specific products and outlines severe penalties for individuals who violate the polythene ban. Offenders face up to 10 years in prison, a fine of Tk 10 lakh or both. In addition to legal measures, the government has also taken various steps to promote the use of jute as a sustainable alternative to polythene. Yet, all the laws, initiatives, directives and High Court orders over the decades seem to have had no impact on reducing the rampant use of polythene and plastic in the country. A recent study conducted by Environment and Social Development Organisation (Esdo) found that more than 2.5 crore polythene bags are thrown away after being used only once in Dhaka city every day. This deluge of plastic waste clogs drains, canals, ponds, and other waterways, obstructing water flow and leading to frequent flooding even during light rainfall, to say nothing of the irreparable damage to the environment.

We urge the Ministry of Environment to take urgent steps to reverse the disturbing trend. What's the point of having so many progressive laws, policies and directives if no one is bothered about implementing them? It is imperative that the government accepts responsibility for its failure to follow through on its commendable initiatives. The persistent use of polythene highlights the need for stricter enforcement of existing laws, comprehensive public awareness campaigns, and the development of sustainable and affordable alternatives to polythene and plastic packaging.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



Jawaharlal Nehru dies

Former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, a leader of the Indian independence movement of the 1930s and 1940s, died in New Delhi on May 27, 1964.

Children must be protected from abuse and torture



A CLOSER LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her X handle is @tasneem_tayeb

TASNEEM TAYEB

A 15-year-old worker at a local shop in Feni was returning to work after saying Zuhur prayers, when a man sought his help to lift up a bag. Unsuspecting, the boy followed him to a nearby shopping centre, where the stranger and another man subjected him to unspeakable, bestial acts of sexual abuse and torture. Injured and bleeding, the boy was rescued by his employer some two hours later and taken to the hospital where a surgery was required to remove the bathroom cleaning brush handle that the criminals had shoved up his back.

This reminds one of the 12-year-old mill worker in Bogura, who was killed by his co-worker in 2019 by pumping air into his body. Similar incidents of physical torture and sexual abuse of children have taken place before, with many of the victims succumbing to the injuries. Child abuse reports have become a regular feature in our newspapers and newsfeeds, portraying the picture of a society with a festering rot at its core. Unfortunately, we are doing little to remove the rot.

According to a recent Prothom Alo report in 2023 the Child Helpline 1098—operated by the Department of Social Services under the Child Sensitive Social Protection in Bangladesh (CSPB) project—received 15,785 calls, which is almost double of the 8,021 calls received in 2022. While the increasing number of calls mean that more people are now aware of this helpline and are overcoming their fears of stigma and uncertainty to seek help when required, the staggering number of such reported incidents reveal a grim picture of its widespread prevalence. We do not have enough research to understand the actual scope and scale of this social malady.

Between January and April 2024, according to Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), 226 children have been subjected to violence and abuse in the country, 176 children have been killed. Of them 37 were below the age of six. From being tortured at domestic sphere and outside, to abduction and rape, children—innocent, helpless, unsuspecting—are highly vulnerable to multiple forms of abuse. In 2023, 1,013 children were subjected to violence, 485 had been killed, of whom 116 were below the age of six.

As per the ASK data, cases were filed in about 60 percent of these incidents. One major reason why people do not seek legal redress is the power enjoyed and exercised by the perpetrators, who coerce the victims and their families into silence. Then there is the fear of social stigma that the victims and their family would have to endure for the rest of their lives if word got around. Even if the victims and their families

wonder then that the traumatised families often shy away from seeking legal recourse.

We have become a society in which innocent, vulnerable children have become a tool to satiate the filthy desires of the stronger—in various forms, from subjugation to sexual gratification—be it within the security of one's own home, school or outside. Unfortunately, we have become so desensitised that when they are tortured and abused even in front of us, we merely take out our phones to make TikTok videos or Facebook lives, instead of rushing to the rescue of the child victims.

These incidents leave lasting mental and emotional scars on children. Their self-respect and dignity are compromised forever and they often fail to recuperate from these horrors.

fear of being victim blamed. Most importantly, the families, especially the parents, should prioritise social and family values in their conduct so that they can spread the same values among their children.

Schools should have separate curriculum on child rights and safe conduct. The government should partner with the INGOs for technical assistance and resources to train teachers in primary and secondary schools on child psychology and institute effective sexual harassment complaints committee in each educational institution.

The government and judiciary should look into the perennial issue of case backlog—which stood at around four million in all types of courts as of June 2023—and expedite delivery of justice. Perpetrators should be



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

overcome such fears and reach out to the law enforcers to file cases, often the latter side with the perpetrators in exchange for money or leverage.

To top it all off, the delay in delivering justice in such cases are a major discouraging factor. A 2022 report by the Financial Express reveals that 43,114 cases related to women's repression were pending for over five years in 99 women and children repression prevention courts across Bangladesh as of June 30, 2022. From filing cases and conducting investigation, including DNA tests, to presenting the case in the court, every stage is mired in bureaucratic red tape and a frustrating lack of progress. No

They often demonstrate a lack of empathy, failing to create emotional bond with others. They grow into adults who lack self-confidence and often suffer from inferiority complex. Many children develop psychological issues like schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder and chronic depression.

Families have to be more watchful and protective of their children. They should have frank conversations with their children explaining to them good touch and bad touch, their basic rights as children, and the realities in which we live. The home environment should make children feel safe and comfortable to talk and share their thoughts and nightmares without

slapped with the highest, exemplary punishment for child abuse and torture. Law enforcers should be held accountable where evidence of their collaboration with the perpetrators is found. There should be adequate counselling opportunities for children who have been victimised. Families should overcome their fears and seek justice for their children. People in general should immediately intervene if they see children getting abused in public.

Child abuse and torture need to be completely eliminated from the society to ensure a safe and comfortable space for our children where they can grow and realise their potential to the fullest.

We must abandon our ecocidal mindset

Umme Humayra is a development trainee for Oxfam in Bangladesh.

UMME HUMAYRA

In March this year, while visiting Sugandha Residential Area, Chattogram, I was alarmed to see that numerous trees had been felled along the roadside. Shocked, I took photographs and asked why they were cut down. The woodcutters said the decision had come from the residential authority. I filed a complaint with the Department of Environment (DoE) through its online platform, providing evidence of the illegal activity. However, five days later, my grievance was rejected without any explanation.

Seeking further clarification, I reached out to the Forest Department, which conducted an investigation into the matter. Their findings revealed that more than 100 trees had been cut down on both sides of the road in Sugandha Residential Area by the contractor in charge of widening the road. While the local councillor supervised the tree-cutting, neither the councillor nor the contractor took responsibility for their actions.

This is just one example of the relentless deforestation happening across Bangladesh which persists unchecked, as authorities largely turn a blind eye to its destructive impact on the environment. Existing forest and environmental laws are often ignored, leaving them only on paper without proper enforcement. Individuals and organisations recklessly clear out trees to serve their own agendas, without any repercussions.

This systemic negligence jeopardises Bangladesh's commitment to preserving its environment and natural resources. This issue is further compounded by frequent violations of environmental laws by governmental institutions themselves, often influenced by corruption or vested interests. For example, agencies have been accused of approving projects that involve the destruction of protected areas, cutting of trees, and disruption of natural habitats, all in violation of established laws and regulations meant to safeguard the environment.

The Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) is one such agency that recently suspended its plan of cutting trees to construct a ramp for the elevated expressway from Tigerpass to Pologround in the city in the face of public pressure. The initial decision followed significant opposition from local residents and environmentalists, who protested the proposed construction. Ironically, the original plan had received permissions from the Forest Department that authorised felling 46 trees, many of which were 100 years old and culturally significant.

According to our constitution, the state has a responsibility to protect and improve the environment and biodiversity for current and future citizens. Despite this, the government continues to sanction ecocidal projects and allow the destruction of natural resources and biodiversity.

For instance, the decision to clear 52 lakh trees in the Mirsharai mangrove forest for an economic zone left 7,000 deer and other species without a home overnight, demonstrating an ecocidal mindset. The approval of a

102-km tourist railway line through three protected forests further led to the destruction of 670,000 trees and the blocking of 16 critical elephant corridors.

In June 2023, the Chattogram district administration cut down a mangrove forest in Kattali to create a sanctuary for birds. Supervised by the Forest Department, it involved the removal of many trees along the shores of the Bay of Bengal, raising concerns about the lack of oversight and the prioritisation of development over conservation.

Sometimes, despite the best intentions of the Forest Department and the Ministry of Environment, their efforts fall short due to power dynamics within the government. The recent killing of a forest officer by owners of illegal quarries has highlighted the waning power of authorities to enforce environmental laws. A study by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) found that the Forest Department is facing several challenges. They don't have enough resources, which makes it difficult for them to do their job effectively.

Centralisation of administrative power prevents agencies outside specific domains from effectively implementing decisions, which hinders proper enforcement and accountability. As a result, the checks and balances to safeguard the environment are weakened, leading to continued violations and further damage to natural resources.

In the face of this crisis, urgent action is needed. The government's pledge to halt deforestation by 2030, made during COP26, must be translated into meaningful policies at

home. Strict enforcement of existing laws, coupled with enhanced authority and resources for environmental agencies, is imperative.

Enhancing collaboration between the Forest Department, local administration, and law enforcement agencies is crucial. Establishing clear protocols and mechanisms for cooperation will streamline communication and facilitate swift action against environmental offenders. For instance, joint task forces could be formed to investigate and prosecute illegal quarrying operations or deforestation activities. Additionally, providing specialised training to law enforcement personnel on environmental law enforcement techniques can enhance their effectiveness in supporting the efforts of Forest Department.

Decentralising administrative power to empower forest and environmental officers at the grassroots level entails a fundamental shift in governance structure aimed at placing decision-making authority and resources directly into the hands of those closest to the environmental challenges. This process involves devolving responsibilities traditionally held by centralised authorities to frontline officers stationed in local communities. These officers, intimately familiar with the local ecosystems and environmental dynamics, are strategically positioned to swiftly respond to emerging environmental issues. With decision-making authority at their disposal, they can assess the situation, enforce regulations, and implement tailored conservation measures best suited to the specific needs of their surroundings.

Why are IMF policies failing to stabilise our economy?



Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb
writes on sustainable development and is a public policy critic. He has several books to his credit, including "Fourth Industrial Revolution and Bangladesh," "Bangladesh: Development Trajectory And Democracy Deficit," and "50 Years of Bangladesh Economy."

FAIZ AHMAD TAIYEB

During its latest partnership with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Bangladesh has been experiencing high inflation for the past 22 months, its economic crisis worsening gradually. Financial account deficits have surpassed \$9.26 billion. With outstanding payments across various sectors like electricity, aviation, fuel imports, and various digital sectors, the net reserves have plummeted to just \$13.8 billion, a situation reminiscent of nine years ago. The continuous dollar crunch and dollar payment crisis have persisted for the past 22 months, further strangling the country's business and employment sectors due to LC's substandard control.

Meanwhile, the government is also suffering from a local currency crisis. Being unable to make due payments in taka, it decided to issue special bonds worth nearly Tk 26,000 crore. Nearly half of the new foreign loans are being used to pay the interest and principal on unscrupulous loans taken in the past. The country has witnessed the highest depreciation in the value of taka during this

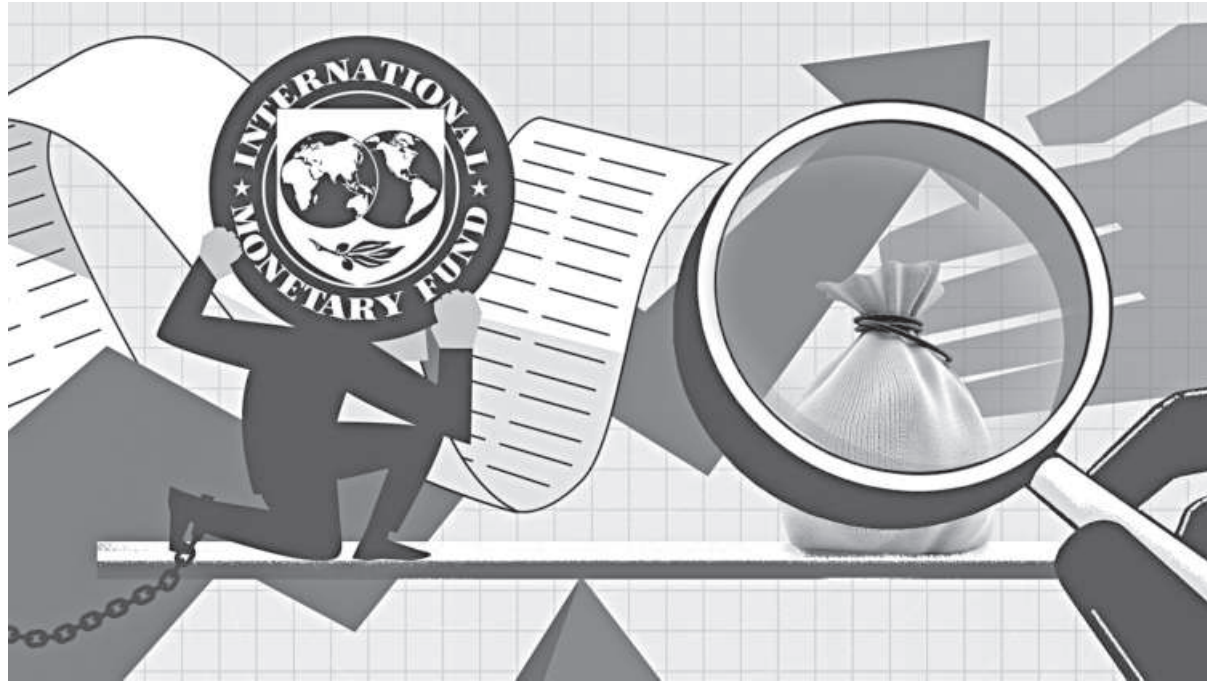
The savings interest rates on deposits have not been adjusted at the right time. Banks have created a messy window for swapping loans at low rates, causing capital flight and deteriorating private sector investments. The Bangladesh Bank failed to put a brake on the rise of politically motivated non-performing loans (NPLs), nor could it restore depositors' trust.

The IMF has not really been critical about the mechanism of hiding billions of dollars' worth of NPLs. Despite IMF engagement, there has been no pressure on banks suffering with NPLs. Four state-owned banks alone have seen a 27 percent increase in defaulted loans, reaching nearly Tk 63,000 crore in total at the end of last year. The crucial issue is that there hasn't been any attempt to bring the top loan defaulters to book. Thus, the IMF has not been able to address the root cause of systemic economic issues.

All efforts to reduce inflation resulted in further increase in prices. Measures like increasing interest rates, restricting capital flight and NPL, and halting capital

circles, false hardware capability, capacity charges, faulty power plants, inefficient power plants, renewal of inefficient ageing power plants, high system loss, and other systemic flaws. Analysis of unit-wise production in 2023 shows that despite 23-25 percent unit mechanical failures in electricity production, revenue is obtained through capacity charges and overbilling. The Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) is procuring electricity production capacity from plants that are sitting idle through billion-dollar electricity purchases. All of these are absent in the IMF's "policy proposals." The pressure to reduce administrative expenses (austerity) is not visible.

IMF's policy on waivers is contentious. Despite failing to meet the three main conditions (dollar rate, net reserve limit, and percentage of NPLs) during the second instalment, Bangladesh received a waiver, which was delayed in other countries for the same reason. Despite the dollar crisis, the country has maintained regular debt servicing (payment of



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

time. So, the question arises: Why does macroeconomic instability continue to plague Bangladesh even after partnering with the IMF?

In my opinion, there are five major reasons: mismanagement of policies; overlooking large-scale statistical discrepancies; failure to propose research-based policies; the nexus between corrupt governance and institutional incompetence; and, ultimately, the mindset of giving concessions to reform policies.

Despite Sri Lanka stabilising its economy within six to nine months of entering a deal with the IMF, Bangladesh hasn't, raising questions about the effectiveness of IMF engagement here.

While the first instalment of the lending package was granted a year ago, inflation has continued to soar, with banking liquidity crises, money laundering, weak bank mergers, and unresolved bad loan issues (NPLs) still persistent. However, government expenditure hasn't been reduced, rather development budgets (ADPs) have been slashed. IMF negotiations haven't significantly impacted critical aspects of poor governance.

The implementation of the crawling peg method (which should have been done at least a year ago) to control the dollar rate was mistimed. Policy rates have been further increased when lending interest rates doubled within a few months. The exchange rate against the dollar hasn't been realistically adjusted, and the real effective exchange rate (REER) hasn't been followed in due course. After 25 percent depreciation over two years, the new step of taka depreciation by 6.3 percent has led to an increase in the total foreign debt position to nearly Tk 70 crore (about \$6 billion). With the dollar rate rising by Tk 7, the government's main burden of electricity capacity charges, fertiliser, and fuel imports, especially electricity production expenses, will increase. As a result, the country will directly experience a new wave of inflation.

flow mechanisms have NOT been taken on time to combat inflation.

Zero incentive policy (the only motto of revenue increase) has triggered new poverty, energy poverty and urban poverty. In particular, continuous hikes of primary energy and electricity prices, import duty and VAT etc exacerbated poverty among the poor and middle class. Rising fertiliser and diesel prices caused very high food prices and fuelled hunger and malnutrition everywhere. International markets have seen a stable or declining price for primary energy over the past six months, yet due to IMF pressure, prices of energy and electricity have not decreased in the country—rather, the opposite happened.

Concerns persist that policy inconsistency and conflicts will not get in the way of ensuring macroeconomic stability in Bangladesh. Triggering all accelerators of inflation at the same time must be avoided; logical sequencing and order management are needed.

Mistimed currency devaluation under the crawling peg method will not curb inflation. Over the past two years, the effect of "new money injection" has fuelled new inflation—i.e. the flow effect of printing reserves is still ongoing. Inflation will continue due to import LC blockade. Although private banks had a higher closing dollar rate of Tk 117 compared to the state-run banks' Tk 110, costly imports will exacerbate inflation. The plan to increase electricity prices four times a year over three years will raise inflation. All logical expectations for inflationary growth will also increase prices in the market.

The IMF's policy to reduce incentives, centred around electricity accounts, is flawed; the policies are not research-based. In reality, Bangladesh loses billions of dollars from manipulated power sector capacity charges. Political malpractice in the power sector includes corruption in large

interest and principal on foreign loans), which may be why the IMF has brought flexibility into its policy here, adjusting its lending business to the government's terms. The June 2024 target for forex reserves has been brought down to \$14.76 billion from \$20.10 billion. Not only that, but the IMF has also reduced the government's revenue target. The question is, has the IMF not conducted sufficient research and preparation? Or does the Bangladesh mission lack enough expertise and the knowledge of local data manipulation?

One of Bangladesh's major problems is misinformation, and the IMF remains indifferent to that. According to IMF studies, the actual amount of defaulted loans is twice the government's figure. There are discrepancies not only in population data, but also in per capita income data. There's uncertainty whether the new exchange rate will adjust the dollar value of the GDP. In the past year, despite a nearly 25 percent decrease in the value of the taka, there has been no trustable adjustment in the dollar rate for GDP. Despite inflating GDP at 9.5 percent inflation rate, a nearly 30 percent decrease has happened in the value of money over the last 1.5 years. There should be a drop in GDP and per capita in terms of dollars, and a sharp rise in debt-to-GDP ratio.

Based on its own information, the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) found a 15 percent food inflation in a recent survey. But the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) reported a 10.22 percent food inflation in April 2024. The deviation between the two surveys is 46.77 percent. This level of misinformation and/or information discrepancy has crossed all limits. Controlling inflation is crucial as a means to restore macroeconomic stability in the country. If the inflation data remains misleading, the effectiveness of the proposed IMF reform policies will remain under question too.

Citizen data server? More like a data supermarket



OF MAGIC AND MADNESS

Badiuzzaman Bay
is assistant editor at The Daily Star.

BADIUZZAMAN BAY

Need someone's phone number to promote your products or do something similarly invasive? Need a rival's call history to know with whom they are talking in secret? Or someone's NID card to open a fake bank/MS account, or take out loans in their name? Or their driving licence to stage an incriminating scene?

There was a time when these questions would be almost as dangerous to ask as the pursuit of their answers. You would be looking over your shoulder constantly, lest someone catch a whiff of your unseemly interests. The criminal market built around such pursuits was still niche, and the *personal* of "personal data" still meant something other than just the nature of the data in question—it was a hands-off warning to anyone looking to infringe upon someone else's privacy. But those days are coming to an end. Today, thanks in large part to the frequent breaches of government websites and servers, there has been a gradual normalisation of data-related crimes, to an extent that hardly do you see anyone raise an eyebrow anymore. Citizens, too, seem to be accepting the fate of their data being inherently vulnerable the moment it is digitised.

There has also been a thriving market for stolen data—a hidden domain populated by men trading in secrets—and leading it from the front are apparently government officials themselves: people who are supposed to protect our data. This was the subject of a recent report that, as a columnist of this daily has rightly assumed, would have "made a much bigger splash" in any other country. But not here. According to the report, citing a letter by the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC), some unscrupulous government employees with login credentials were stealing sensitive personal

data from the national intelligence servers and selling it to some 789 groups and pages on Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp. Collectively, these pages and groups—where questions like the above would be routine—have 32 lakh members and followers.

The sheer size of the network, and its disruptive and destructive potential, is frightening. It's like a data bazaar or supermarket, or, in marketing language, your one-stop shop for all things *you*. Here, your personal details are up for grabs to anyone willing to pay—to be used at their disposal and tossed away when their job is finished. Even payment is not necessary for information that is already publicly available, thanks to previous data breaches and exposures.

The NTMC is legally authorised to monitor all electronic communications in coordination with the telecommunications ministry, BTRC, and law enforcement and intelligence agencies. It stores data related to citizens' NID cards, passports, driving licences, and call detail records. Reportedly, 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 digital trail of the latest breach was discovered when the NTMC traced unusually high numbers of logins to the NIP by IDs belonging to two officials from the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) and Rab-6. Both of them are now under investigation for unauthorised data transfers. Previously, two data entry operators of the IDEA 2 project were also arrested for similar offences, according to our report.

The question is, with so many officials and organisations having access to the servers of the NTMC—a platform with a chequered history of handling

citizen data—are the detected four the only ones to have abused their login credentials? Knowing how prone to corruption many government employees are, and how weak our data security infrastructure is in general, we cannot be sure. It is more likely that other attempts have gone unnoticed. Although we don't know how many people were or will be affected by the latest breach, the number is likely huge.

Over the last few years, we have had many such data breaches which were usually blamed on outsiders. What will the authorities say now that insider involvement has been found in illicit data sharing/selling? Who will take the blame for this lapse in our data security protocols? For the citizens whose data was sold or otherwise made available, the consequences are not hard to imagine. A widespread dissemination of their private data poses a severe risk to their security and privacy. NID details, for example, can be abused to commit various crimes. In the past, we have seen how NID cards were used to open fake bank accounts and obtain loans, or to illegally access government grants. Victims, it goes without saying, may have to pay the price for such identity theft even years after the commission of any crime in their names.

The recent incident has raised fresh alarms both for the victims involved and Bangladesh's existing data ecosystem. A country that once promised a techno-utopian vision through catchphrases like "Digital Bangladesh" and "Smart Bangladesh"—with accompanying digitisation—is increasingly seeing its efforts descend into a dystopian nightmare. How the government responds to this scenario will determine the future of those grand visions.

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উপপরিচালক (দায়িত্বরত), আবহাওয়া ও ভূ-প্রাকৃতিক কেন্দ্র, আগ্রাবাদ, চট্টগ্রাম কর্তৃক আবহাওয়া ও ভূ-প্রাকৃতিক কেন্দ্র, চট্টগ্রাম এবং এর আওতাধীন বিভিন্ন অফিস/পরিষে্বক্ষ্যাসমূহে ব্যবহারের জন্য বিভিন্ন ব্যবহার্য সামগ্রী ক্রয়/সমগ্র্যের নিমিত্তে স্পেসিফিকেশন অনুযায়ী প্রকৃত প্রস্তুতকারী/ সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

০১	মন্ত্রণালয়/ বিভাগ	প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রণালয়
০২	অধিদপ্তরের নাম	বাংলাদেশ আবহাওয়া অধিদপ্তর
০৩	বাহ্যিক/আইসি অফিস	আবহাওয়া ও ভূ-প্রাকৃতিক কেন্দ্র, আগ্রাবাদ, চট্টগ্রাম।
০৪	অর্থায়নের উৎস	২০২৩-২৪ সালের রাজস্ব বাজেট
০৫	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির নম্বর ও তারিখ	২৩.০৯.১৫২৮.৫৬০.৩০.০০৬.২৩.১৮৮ তারিখ ২৩/০৫/২০২৪
০৬	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির নাম/ বর্ণনা	বিভিন্ন ব্যবহার্য সামগ্রী (স্পেসিফিকেশন অনুযায়ী)
০৭	ক্রয় প্রক্রিয়া	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (পিপিএ-২০০৬ এবং পিপিআর ২০০৮ মোতাবেক)।
০৮	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য)	টাকা ১০০০/- (এক হাজার) মাত্র।
১০	আর্নেস্ট মানি/ টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি (অফেরতযোগ্য)	টাকা ১৫,০০০/- (পনের হাজার) মাত্র। উপপরিচালক, আবহাওয়া ও ভূ-প্রাকৃতিক কেন্দ্র, আগ্রাবাদ, চট্টগ্রাম এর অনুকূলে যে কোন তফসিলী ব্যাংক কর্তৃক ইস্যুকৃত পে-অর্ডার/ ব্যাংক ড্রাফট আকারে দরপত্র প্রস্তুতকারীর সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
১১	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের স্থান	আবহাওয়া ও ভূ-প্রাকৃতিক কেন্দ্র, সরকারী কার্যভবন-১, আগ্রাবাদ, চট্টগ্রাম।
১২	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয় আরম্ভের তারিখ	২৬/০৫/২০২৪ হতে প্রত্যেক কার্যদিবসে অফিস সময়কালীন সময়ে।
১৩	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	০৫/০৬/২০২৪ দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১৪	দরপত্র গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	০৬/০৬/২০২৪ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১৫	দরপত্র গ্রহণের স্থান	আবহাওয়া ও ভূ-প্রাকৃতিক কেন্দ্র, সরকারী কার্যভবন-১, আগ্রাবাদ, চট্টগ্রাম।
১৬	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	০৬/০৬/২০২৪ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.১৫ ঘটিকা, আবহাওয়া ও ভূ-প্রাকৃতিক কেন্দ্র, সরকারী কার্যভবন-১, আগ্রাবাদ, চট্টগ্রাম।
১৭	দরপত্রের তথ্য/ শর্তাবলী	দরপত্র সিডিউলে বিজ্ঞপ্তি বর্ণিত রয়েছে।
১৮	কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র আংশিক কিংবা সম্পূর্ণ গ্রহণ কিংবা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।	

আগ্রহী দরদাতাগণ উপপরিচালক (দায়িত্বরত), আবহাওয়া ও ভূ-প্রাকৃতিক কেন্দ্র, আগ্রাবাদ, চট্টগ্রাম এর বরাবর আবেদন করতঃ প্রতিটি দরপত্র সিডিউল নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর অফিস হতে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে উপস্থিতি মূল্যে ক্রয়/সমগ্র্য করতে পারবেন।

(মোঃ নূরুল করিম)
উপপরিচালক (দায়িত্বরত)
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125TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM

Symbolic and Imaginary in NAZRUL ISLAM



“ We are going to determine this while we are still at the aphelion [farthest point from the sun] of our matter for, by the time we reach the perihelion [nearest point from the sun], the heat will be able to make us forget it. Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (Lacan 1966: 242)

SALIMULLAH KHAN

I Kazi Nazrul Islam, according to Kazi Abdul Wadud (1895-1970), perhaps the first formidable critic who took him seriously, “was the first writer among Bengali Muslims of the modern era who was able to conquer the hearts of Hindus and Muslims alike of Bengal.” Wadud was not wide of the mark when he wrote: “Mir Mosharruf Hossain, Kaikobad, Yakub Ali Chowdhury, Latfur Rahman, Begum Rokaya, Kazi Imdadul Haque are names that will live in the annals of modern Bengali literature, but it was Nazrul who won the esteem and admiration of the entire province.”

Wadud and, decades after him, the historian Partha Sarathi Gupta (1934-1999) also argued that Nazrul Islam's genius was shaped in the heat of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. In course of his intervention, ‘Modern Bengali Literature,’ at the All India Writers Conference, Jaipur, 1945, Wadud noted: “He was perhaps not more than twenty at the time he made his debut in Bengali literature (1919-20). He must have been, therefore, a mere boy at the time of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal. Yet, somehow, he carried about him all the fire and fervour of that movement as he made his debut.”

What complicated matters for our critic was the fact that, in Nazrul Islam, the fervour and fury of the Swadeshi agitation, which brought real gains for Bengali Hindu leadership, “was combined with an ardent desire to see his community gain in strength and spirit, and anguish on account of the distressed Islam of the years following the Great War of 1914-1918.”

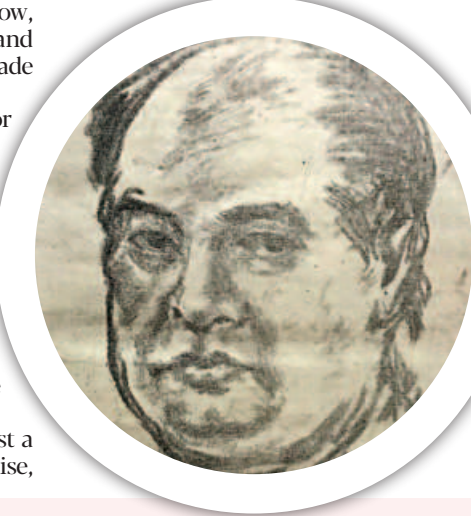
Partha Sarathi Gupta's take, just a few years before his premature demise,

belonged was disbanded in March 1920.

Nazrul Islam's first literary output began to appear mostly in journals edited by young Muslim intellectuals in Kolkata. His poems and songs made him popular among both Muslims and Hindus, keeping guard with the sentiments of Khilafat and Non-cooperation agitations in which he participated.

Nazrul Islam made common cause with the efforts of C.R. Das to regroup nationalists after the failure of the agitations by 1922. However, these efforts soon proved ephemeral with the death of Das in 1925. P.S. Gupta notes the determining factors: “Protest movements among different sections of society could not be coordinated and given a steady anti-imperialist aim. Among the Hindu bhadrak class there was a recrudescence of the Hindutva sentiments of the swadeshi period, a sentiment which found literary expression in the writings of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay.”

On the other side of the divide, it is a recognized fact that, despite a notable share of the Bengali Muslims in the making



of Nazrul Islam as one of the factors of the awakening of the masses of Bengal, Wadud is led to enquire about the question of the ‘true worth’ of Nazrul Islam as a literary figure. His first anxiety relates to the persistence of a dualism (as distinguished from ‘syncretism’ celebrated by the Orientalists) widely noted in the Bengali poet's theology.

Wadud formulates the problematic as not simply coexistence of Islamic and pagan traits, but of their simultaneous development: “Nazrul Islam has endeared himself to his coreligionists of Bengal by his poems and songs on Islam and Muslims. He is also widely held to be responsible for a new ferment among them. But along with his pieces called Islamic he has penned innumerable lines in eulogy of gods and goddesses of the Hindus over which his coreligionists do not feel comfortable.”

Wadud proposes an understanding of this problematic as the fact of cohabitation of the Islamic symbolic with the Hindu Imaginary simultaneously in every Bengali Muslim true to his creed and to his soil. Thus, Kazi Abdul Wadud writes: “The Mussulmans of Bengal sprang, it is undeniable, mostly from the Hindus, i.e., Buddhists and Hindus, of the land. Man's emotional awareness is hardly a fact till he realizes his intimate relationship with fellow man and nature. That emotional awareness again is vitally linked with man's self-assurance of the powers he has been born with (which is another name for Renaissance). So, the Mussulmans of Bengal wishing their own fulfilment must have a deep comprehension of the environment they have been born in and of their heritage from their ancient Hindu forbears—even



Portrait of Kazi Nazrul Islam, sketch by Zainul Abedin, 1946; Photo (L): Jalaluddin Haider

echoed K.A. Wadud's concerns: “He holds a pre-eminent place in the story of efforts to communicate through music the ideal of a nationalism rising above religious differences.”

What differences? Some became apparent in course of the Swadeshi agitation against the partition of Bengal. The movement produced a remarkable crop of patriotic songs by many, and music proved one of the most effective techniques of mass contact. “However,” Gupta adds, “the appeal of the agitation to Muslims in general was limited. While one cannot deny the involvement of some Muslim leaders and their followers, and the composition of patriotic songs by Muslim writers (like Ismail Husain Shirazi), most of the songs and plays had not shed Hindu imagery and historical allusion to the ‘glories’ of ancient Indian civilization. The revolutionary secret societies excluded Muslims from membership, even when some young Muslim boys wanted to join them.”

In the wake of the Swadeshi agitation and the imperial policy of introducing separate electorates, the distance became apparent.

The annulment of the partition of Bengal (1911) was unpopular with most Bengali Muslims, especially East Bengal Muslims. They were also hurt, even in their imaginary, by the fact of Britain's stand against Turkey. The lesser demographic weightage granted to Bengali Muslims in the Lucknow Pact of 1916 also embittered them. Thus, the Bengali Muslim goodwill to make a common cause with the Bengal Congress for a Hindu-Muslim alliance to demand constitutional concessions from the imperial administration was already fraught with fragilities. In these circumstances, when the fragile Hindu-Muslim alliance bore fruit as the Government of India Act, 1919, Nazrul Islam was demobilized because the regiment to which he

of early Bengali literature, the Muslims of the colonial era failed to take a worthy share in the making of modern Bengali literature. K.A. Wadud holds the political changes of the eighteenth century as well as the Islamicist reform movements of the nineteenth mainly responsible for this misfortune. Without necessarily taking such a myopic view, we can concede that in the first half of the nineteenth century, while the Hindu cooperated with the British, a significant part of the Muslims for the most part remained ‘sullenly hostile’ and after the uprising of 1857, they faced the wrath of the conquistadores. Neither the Islamicist reform agitation nor the prostrations of Aligarh did much to rescue the Bengali Muslims from their torpor.

K.A. Wadud's remark is apposite: “The Aligarh movement of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan did something towards the uplift, mental as well as mundane, of the Muslims of North-Western India, but left Bengal practically untouched. Thanks to Syed Ameer Ali, a disciple of Sir Syed Ahmad, just a faint ray of modernism touched the minds of the English educated Muslims of Bengal, but it was too faint to be effective.”

That the English educated Muslims of Bengal did not, for the most part, represent the Bengali Muslims did not deter Kazi Abdul Wadud from making generalizations need not blind us from his appreciation of Nazrul Islam's debut as a tour de force (his ‘true worth’ in manner of saying) in the history of the Bengali Muslims. “Some have not hesitated,” Wadud admits, “to describe his writings as ephemeral. This view, however, no longer holds the field. None in the literary world of Bengal would deny today that Nazrul is a memorable poet of twentieth-century Bengal, nay, of India.”

II Talking of the historical importance

as Firdausi felt the compelling need of realizing the greatness of his non-Muslim ancestors. The matter may well be likened to the tree's thrusting of roots deep down into the earth to draw nourishment from there.”

A second problematic that worried Kazi Abdul Wadud concerns a sign of self-confidence, sometimes taken for a wonder. Nazrul once uttered “I bow to no one except to myself”, and the utterance, as Wadud takes it, “was no stray outburst but the expression of an abiding feeling in him—it is in fact his dominant feeling.”

We would suggest this dominance as an outburst of the Symbolic, in the sense in which Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), the psychoanalyst, employs the notion. Lacan's use of the term symbolic endeavours to show how the human subject is inserted into a pre-established order which is itself symbolic in nature, where the symbolic, exemplified by language as the structure per excellence provides prototype of the unconscious.

Wadud pays tribute to this notion of the symbolic when he writes the following: “The popular ways of viewing him as a poet of Rebellion, as a champion of the cause of the have-nots, as a unifying force between Hindus and Muslims are not to be challenged; they are good inasmuch as they endear the poet to us by stimulating in us some creative thoughts peculiar to our age and environment; yet it is too true that his Rebellion, his espousal of the cause of the have-nots, his endeavours to unite Hindus with Mussulmans, all are rooted in his sense of glory of the self and have derived their potency from that consciousness.”

Salimullah Khan is a Professor at the General Education Department of ULAB.

This is an abridged version. Read the full article online

Hosts thrash Korea in opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Three-time champions Bangladesh made a flying start in the 4th Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi, outplaying Korea 67-22 with 'five lonas' in the opening match of the 12-team tournament at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The hosts had lost to the same opponents in their last two meetings, getting thrashed 38-18 in 2018 Asian Games following a nerve-wrecking 35-32 defeat in the 2016 Kabaddi World Cup.

The charges of Abdul Jalil did not repeat the mistakes of the past as they completed a convincing win over the Koreans in front of a passionate home crowd who cheered the team throughout after the match got underway one hour after the scheduled time.

The crowd were especially behind captain Arduzzaman Munshi, chanting 'Munshi, Munshi' during his successful raids, of which there were many.

Mizanur Rahman, who was in doubt for the match after returning to the national team's fold just one week before the tournament, put on a stellar show alongside another star performer Al Amin as the men in red and green collected points from both raids and in defense.

Bangladesh led the first half 23-11 and kept widening the margin as the game progressed.

"Our team communication was really good, so the margin was also big. If we can keep this communication going among the players, I am confident that we can reach our target of becoming champions," said captain Arduzzaman, who had missed the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023 following injury.

Coach Jalil believes the strategy was key in the Korea match.

"The footwork of the Korea team was initially good and we were losing points while trying to catch them. They were also attacking from one side to another. But they did not have a raider from the left side. So, we analysed it and started defending the opponents accordingly.

"They played wide but we defended closely. I think the strategy made the difference while our raiders - Munshi, Mizan and Al Amin - also performed boldly in the match," said coach Jalil.

Korean coach Jinseok Kang said that they have brought a comparatively young team.

"Most of our players are aged between 20 to 23. Though there are also a few old campaigners," said Jinseok.

Arduzzaman, who announced that he will retire after the tournament, said that although it was a new-look Korea team, the hosts didn't take them lightly. "It is true that I did not find the Korean players that I had played against before as most of their players are new. But they are still good. We were wary of them from the beginning."



Bangladesh players catch a South Korea raider during the opening match of the Bangabandhu Cup International Kabaddi Tournament at the Shaheed Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Defending champions Bangladesh started the tournament with a bang, beating the Koreans by 67-22 points.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Winning a dead rubber does not add much

SPORTS REPORTER

When your opponents rest key performers from the series in a dead rubber game, how fruitful are even positive results you get from the game? That is exactly what Bangladesh were left with after winning the third and final T20I against USA on Saturday.

The Tigers executed their plans against an understrength USA side in the third T20I but it will not erase the lack of impetus shown in first two T20Is.

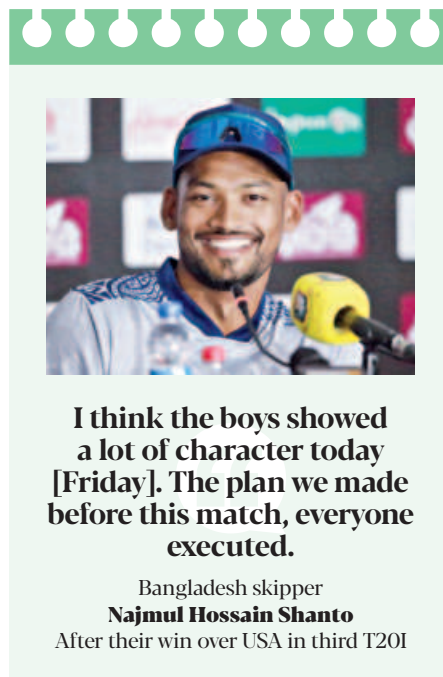
One of the major issues is that of performances of individuals having had a domino effect throughout the team. If things did not work out at the start, the latter players have not worked out a solution to winning matches, especially in case of batting.

The Tigers also failed to win the first two matches for favourable positions which puts their current confidence levels under the microscope. In the first game, death-over bowling lacked conviction but in international T20Is, defending 150-run scores is a difficult task.

In the second game, the Tigers appeared to be ambling towards victory before a disastrous batting collapse led to a series defeat.

Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto had said after the second loss that there was no skill-gap, instead there were mentality issues with the side. However, it is proven that skill-gap leads to such mental breakdowns and how far the team is addressing those issues was evident.

If the idea was to adapt to the USA



I think the boys showed a lot of character today [Friday]. The plan we made before this match, everyone executed.

Bangladesh skipper
Najmul Hossain Shanto
After their win over USA in third T20I

conditions, the first hurdle saw Bangladesh miss the train in terms of showing hunger and desire to perform.

After winning the first two games, USA did not even allow the Tigers to gauge themselves properly in the third T20I, simply by taking out some of their key players from the game. Their preparations are on track but winning a dead rubber does not add up much for Bangladesh despite a dominating 10-wicket win.

Stuart Law, who had served as

Bangladesh's under-19 coach recently and is the newly-appointed head coach of USA, said the home team's desire to win was greater.

"We had more desire and passion about the game in the first two matches," Law said.

"We wanted it a bit more than what they did. Today [Saturday] it was a different story. We may have relaxed a little bit. Bangladesh played pretty well. They will take this in their stride. We were in a privileged position today with the series in our hands. It was nice to give opportunities to other players," he added.

The mental game has already been won by USA and in the World Cup, tougher games await the Tigers. Najmul Hossain, Liton Das and Shakib Al Hasan are going through a rough patch with the bat while wicket-keeper Jaker Ali Anik's performances behind the stumps will not have boosted confidence heading into a major tournament.

Mustafizur Rahman's six-wicket haul on Saturday saw USA put on a below-par score. Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Soumya Sarkar's unbeaten stand then helped the Tigers cruise to victory, which should add a bit of self-belief at the top of the batting order.

"I think the boys showed a lot of character today. I think the plan we made before this match, everyone executed," Shanto had said after the game.

However, the team would do well knowing that things are not going to be as easy as the third T20I in the World Cup and rather than sporadic performances, they need to gather up as a team.

SHORT CORNER

Hridoy wants Tigers to play 'at least T20 WC semifinal'

Bangladesh batter Towhid Hridoy said he wanted his side to qualify "at least for the semifinal" of the upcoming T20 World Cup, starting on June 2 in the USA and the West Indies. On Sunday, Bangladesh Cricket Board's official Facebook page posted a video recorded before the Tigers left for the USA in which Hridoy shared his thoughts on Bangladesh's chances in the major event.

Mbappe proud to leave PSG 'with head held high'

Kylian Mbappe said he was proud to leave Paris Saint-Germain with his "head held high" after winning Saturday's French Cup final, but said he would wait for the right time to confirm where he will be playing next season. "To finish with a trophy in a final, there is no better way," Mbappe told reporters after PSG beat Lyon 2-1 in the final.

Leverkusen's 'dream season' will long be remembered: Xabi

Bayer Leverkusen's German league and Cup double was the result of players keeping faith in the team throughout what turned into a dream season, their coach Xabi Alonso said on Saturday. Leverkusen added the German Cup to their Bundesliga crown with a 1-0 victory over second division Kaiserslautern.

Read full stories on The Daily Star's website

Swimmer Jui breaks two national records

SPORTS REPORTER

Jui Akhter stole the limelight on the second day of Saif Powertec 36th Junior Swimming Championship, breaking two national records at the Syed Nazrul Islam Swimming Complex in Mirpur yesterday.

Jui, a BKSP student, clocked 1:25.07 minutes in the 100m breaststroke in girls' 15-17 group to break the previous record of 1:26.88 minutes made by Mariom Khatun in 2012.

The girl from Kushtia then produced another record in 800m free style, clocking 1:04.78 minutes to break Nazma Khatun's record of 1:12.15 minutes. All timings were recorded using hand-timing. "The way I trained, I was confident to perform well. I want to thank the BKSP coaches," said Jui, adding she dreams winning gold in the South Asian Games in future.



Bangladesh's star pacer Marufa Akter bagged a last-over hat-trick in the Women's Dhaka Premier League for BKSP against Mohammedan Sporting yesterday but it was not enough as table toppers Mohammedan romped to a 72-run win at BKSP ground four.

PHOTO: BCB

Nadal bidding to avoid early French Open exit

AFP, Paris

Rafael Nadal admits he will be facing "one of the toughest opponents possible" when he plays Alexander Zverev in the French Open first round on Monday.

This year's event was expected to be the 14-time champion's farewell to Roland Garros, but he has since insisted he could not confirm "100 percent" it would be his last appearance.

A hip injury and then a muscle tear had seen Nadal out of action for the most part since 2023 and that left him unseeded for the draw and vulnerable to a difficult opening round.

World number four Zverev arrives in Paris as one of the favourites for the title after winning the Rome Open earlier this month.

"Of course, on paper, it is not the best draw," Nadal said ahead of the match on Court Philippe Chatrier.

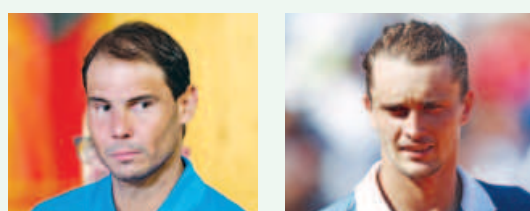
"I play against one of the toughest opponents possible, and at the same time, he came here winning the last event"

Nadal, who turns 38 in a week's time, has shown flashes of his best form in the clay-court swing, but was thrashed 6-1, 6-3 by Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in the second round of his last outing in Rome.

Nadal has a favourable head-to-head record over world number four Zverev ahead of their first meeting since the 2022 French Open semifinals, when the German left the court in a wheelchair near the end of the second set after injuring his ankle.

"I am not anxious. No, I am focused on trying to play well. That's it," said Nadal.

Zverev did not play again in 2022 after that ankle injury but has climbed the rankings again in recent months.



Rafael Nadal boasts a 7-3 winning record over Alexander Zverev.

Nadal lost only three of his 115 French Open matches, claiming the title a record 14 times.

However, Nadal has only played four tournaments since January 2023 after suffering a hip injury.

Zverev has reached the semifinals in each of the last three years at Roland Garros.

The 27-year-old has long been touted as a future Grand Slam champion but remains without one of tennis' four biggest titles.

"I can guarantee you Novak didn't want to play Rafa in the first round and (Carlos) Alcaraz didn't want to play, Jannik (Sinner) didn't want to play him," admitted Zverev.

"I don't want to play him in the first round, but it is how it is. Everybody now is excited for a tough battle and tough first round. I think he's excited and I'm excited for it."



A goalless draw with Real Betis on the final LaLiga matchday on Saturday was largely irrelevant with Real Madrid already confirmed the league champions as the game was all about celebrating the 34-year-old Toni Kroos, who bade an emotional farewell to Los Blancos fans in his final game at a sold-out Santiago Bernabeu. Kroos, who announced he would retire from football at the end of Euro 2024, tried to hold his tears back as he was accorded a guard of honour by his teammates, all wearing his number eight jerseys, the opposition and the fans holding up a giant flag with his face and the words "Thank you, legend".

PHOTO: REAL MADRID

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Army can take steps against Aziz if it wants

Says finance minister

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali yesterday said the army can take steps against its former chief, Aziz Ahmed, if it wants.

While speaking to reporters at the Secretariat on loan defaulters, the minister mentioned the possibility of military action against Aziz.

Earlier, he met International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Director Krishnamurthy V Subramanian.

When asked which economic indicator he would highlight as positive, the minister gave a vague response.

However, when pressed on the economy's biggest challenge, he acknowledged inflation but also noted improvements in areas such as foreign reserves and revenue collection.

He downplayed concerns about the dollar exchange rate, stating that the IMF recommended crawling peg system was working effectively.

He Said, "Now we have to catch the debtors."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Kolkata Knight Riders captain Shreyash Iyer celebrates with Venkatesh Iyer after beating Sunrisers Hyderabad by eight wickets in the most one-sided final of the Indian Premier League history at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday.

PHOTO: BCCI

KKR thrash SRH to win 3rd IPL title

AFP, Chennai

Mitchell Starc bowled a sensational opening spell to fire Kolkata Knight Riders to their third Indian Premier League title with an eight-wicket thrashing of Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Sunday final.

Kolkata bowled out Hyderabad for IPL's lowest total of 113 in a final as Australia's left-arm quick Starc returned figures of 2-14 to live up to his top billing in the world's most lucrative T20 tournament.

Kolkata's batsmen had it easy and despite Sunil Narine's early departure, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, who made 39, and Venkatesh Iyer, on 52 not out, helped the team home with 9.3 overs to spare after a partnership of 91.

Iyer, a left-handed batsman, reached his 50 in 24 balls and hit the winning runs to trigger celebrations for Kolkata, who remained

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Star Savar correspondent assaulted



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Savar correspondent of The Daily Star, Aklakur Rahman Akash, was mercilessly beaten up yesterday morning while he was covering an ownership dispute at a ceramic factory there.

Akash was undergoing treatment at Popular Medical College Hospital in the capital, with injuries to his face, eyes, head, and other parts of his body.

Akash said he went to the spot after hearing reports of vandalism at the Bengal Fine Ceramics Ltd in Bhagalpur.

He added that there had been a long standing dispute over ownership of the company. Around 9:30am, a group equipped with sticks entered the factory, vandalised it, and drove away the workers.

"I went there after

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Ready for new truce talks

Says Israel; 81 more Palestinians killed as bombardments across Gaza continue

AGENCIES

Israel's armed forces bombarded Gaza yesterday, but officials also said diplomatic efforts were expected to resume in coming days towards a truce and hostage release deal.

Air strikes and artillery shelling rained down again overnight on northern, central and southern area of Gaza in the more than seven-months-old offensive.

Fighting has centred on the far-southern city of Rafah, where Israel has vowed to destroy the last remaining Hamas battalions despite a chorus of international opposition to a ground invasion of the city.

Israel's assault there from early May led Egypt to shut its side of the Rafah border crossing -- but yesterday, aid trucks from Egypt again rolled into Gaza, this time via the nearby Kerem Shalom crossing.

US President Joe Biden said Saturday his administration was engaged in "urgent diplomacy to secure an immediate ceasefire that brings hostages home".

Mediator Egypt was also continuing "its efforts to reactivate ceasefire negotiations", said Al Qahera News, which has links with Egyptian intelligence.

Israel's media has said intelligence chief David Barnea had agreed a new framework for talks on a



- 8 rockets fired at Tel Aviv from Rafah: Israeli army
- Aid trucks again roll into Gaza through Kerem Shalom crossing
- Hamas says it captured Israeli soldiers in ambush
- Death toll in Gaza now 35,984

ceasefire in a meeting with America's CIA chief and Qatari mediators in Paris.

An Israeli official, requesting anonymity, told AFP that "there is an intention to renew these talks this week".

However, senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan told Qatar's Al Jazeera network that so far "there is nothing practical on this issue. It is just talk coming from the Israeli side."

Meanwhile, Israel's army said at least eight rockets were fired towards Tel Aviv yesterday from Rafah.

An AFP correspondent in the Gaza Strip reported seeing rockets being fired from Rafah, and the military said that "some of the rockets were intercepted" by Israeli air defences. Hamas armed wing al-Qassam Brigades said it launched a "big missile" attack on Tel Aviv yesterday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has come under increasing domestic pressure over the fate of the hostages, with demonstrators rallying again in Tel Aviv on Saturday.

In recent days, the bodies of seven dead hostages have been retrieved from Gaza, heightening the fear and pain of relatives of the remaining captives.

Hamas said its fighters had captured Israeli soldiers during fighting in Jabalia in northern Gaza

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

DSA CASE 2 journalists convicted over 'false reports'

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday convicted two journalists of the weekly Aparadh Bichitra in a DSA case filed over publishing false and defamatory news reports.

Those convicted are SM Morshed, editor of the weekly magazine, and its senior reporter Ezaz Rahman.

Judge AM Julfiker Hayet of the Cyber Tribunal of Dhaka delivered the verdict while the two were present in the courtroom, Mamun Sikder, the tribunal's stenographer, told The Daily Star.

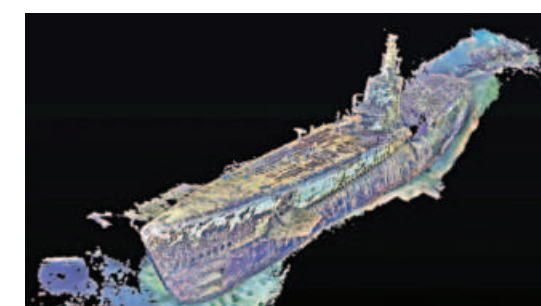
According to the judgement, Morshed was fined Tk 2 lakh, in default of which he would have to serve six months' imprisonment, while Ezaz was fined Tk 1 lakh, in default of which he would have to serve three months in jail.

During the trial, three prosecution witnesses testified.

On January 18, 2021, Islami Bank official Mohammad

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Wreck of famed US Navy WWII sub found off Philippines



CNN ONLINE

The wreck of one of the most storied US Navy submarines of World War II has been found in the South China Sea eight decades after its last patrol, the Navy's History and Heritage Command (NHHC) said Thursday.

The USS Harder lies under 3,000 feet of water off the northern Philippine island of Luzon, sitting upright and intact except for damage behind its conning tower from a Japanese depth charge, the NHHC said in a press release.

Harder was lost in battle on August 24, 1944, along with its entire crew of 79 submariners, while on its sixth patrol of the war, as the US sought to retake the Philippines from occupying Japanese forces.

"Harder was lost in the course of victory. We must not forget that victory has a price, as does freedom," NHHC Director Samuel J Cox, a retired US Navy admiral, said in the press release.

50 ruling party, pro-AL leaders now on China trip

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the invite of the Communist Party of China (CPC), an Awami League delegation, comprising 50 mid-level leaders from its front and associate bodies, is now in Zhejiang province for workshops.

The delegation, led by Tanvir Shakil Joy, vice president of the AL's volunteers' wing Swachchhasebak League and also the lawmaker of Sirajganj-1, left Dhaka on Saturday and would stay in China until June 4. This is the highest level of AL delegation to visit China.

Members of the delegation would be taking part in the workshops organised to mark the 75th founding anniversary of China.

The visit also aims to develop bilateral relations between the AL and the CPC.

The delegation, consisting of eight

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7



Traders moving rice grains from one boat to another at the floating rice market on the Sandhya river in Barishal's Banaripara upazila. Different varieties of rice arrive at this 200-year-old market from Bhola, Patuakhali, Pirojpur and more. These are sold on Saturdays and Tuesdays from 7:00am to 12:00pm. Local traders buy the grains at Tk 900 to Tk 1,300 per maund. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: TITU DAS

Russian attack on Kharkiv kills 16

Dozens injured; Ukraine's President Zelensky condemns Russian 'madness'

REUTERS, Kharkiv

A Russian strike on a crowded DIY hardware store in Kharkiv killed 16 people and wounded dozens more, Ukrainian prosecutors said yesterday morning, the death toll rising as the country's second-largest city reeled from two attacks a day earlier.

Two guided bombs hit the Epicentr DIY hypermarket in a residential area of the city on Saturday evening, regional governor Oleh Synyehubov said on national television, adding that "unfortunately, 16 have already been recorded dead".

The strikes caused a massive fire which sent a column of thick, black smoke billowing hundreds of metres into the air.

Forty-three people were injured, the local prosecutors' office said, adding that ten of the twelve dead had still not been identified. Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said about 120 people had been in the hardware store when the bombs struck.

"The attack targeted the shopping centre, where there were many people - this is clearly terrorism," Terekhov said. In a post on the Telegram app, Ukraine's Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said 16 people were still missing after the strike.

The past week has seen an uptick in strikes on the city after Russian troops stormed across the border, opening a new front north of the city.

Russia has bombarded Kharkiv, which lies less than 30 kilometres (20 miles) from its border, throughout the war, having reached its outskirts in a failed bid to capture it in 2022.