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A councillor and his illicit tobacco trade

MOHAMMAD SUMAN and MARTIN SWAPAN PANDEY

A significant share of Bangladesh's illegal cigarette market is controlled by two companies where Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) Councillor Abdus Sabur Liton and his brother have the majority stakes, an investigation by The Daily Star has found.



ABDUS SABUR LITON

people. On May 21, CIC and customs intelligence busted Bijoy International's office in Chakaria upazila in Cox's Bazar and recovered documents that point to the tobacco company's link with manufacturing cigarettes with illegally imported raw materials, according to documents and customs officials.

Earlier on May 9, customs intelligence raided another tobacco factory, Tara International Tobacco, where Liton has the majority share, documents show. SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

The councillor's companies making "fake versions" of foreign brand cigarettes

Customs' raid finds evidence of large-scale illegal cigarette production

Trading companies supply illegally imported raw materials to his factories

7.56 tonnes of cigarette box paper meant for his company are currently held by port authorities

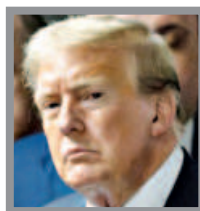
The councillor says all his business operations are legal



Jobseekers through Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to catch flights for Malaysia. Many of them waited at the airport for about 10 hours after receiving assurances from manpower brokers that they would be flown to the Southeast Asian country before the expiration of the deadline for new Bangladeshi expatriates to enter the country at midnight last night. The photo was taken around 3:00pm yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

HUSH MONEY TRIAL Trump 'guilty on all 34 counts'

Verdict won't bar him from contesting US presidential polls



- Judge sets sentencing for July 11
- Trump says real verdict will be delivered on polling day

AGENCIES

Donald Trump on Thursday became the first former US president ever convicted of a crime after a New York jury found him guilty on all charges in his hush money case, months before an election that could see him yet return to the White House.

The jury found him guilty on each of the 34 counts of falsifying business records to hide a payment meant to silence porn star Stormy Daniels. He could in theory be sentenced to four years behind bars for each count but is more likely to receive probation.

The 77-year-old Republican, who was released without bail, is now a felon -- a historic and startling first in a country where presidents are frequently described as the most powerful man in the world. SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

LAST DAY OF ENTRY TO MALAYSIA ON WORK VISA

Hundreds flock to Dhaka airport

Many of them could not fly as agencies fail to provide them with tickets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred Malaysia-bound migrant workers waited for hours at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport amid uncertainties as the deadline for workers to enter the southeast Asian country ended yesterday.

They came to the airport without plane tickets after the local recruitment agents promised that the tickets would be provided on time.

Throughout yesterday, the two international terminals remained packed and there were crowds in front of the terminals as well. Many of the workers reached the airport on Thursday night or earlier.

Some said they were losing hope of reaching Malaysia because the recruiting agents were not answering their phones.

Around 5:00pm, Muhammad Aziz, who came to the airport on Thursday night from Jamalpur, said he had been

waiting for more than 12 hours and he was not sure whether the agent would give him the ticket.

He added that he received the Malaysian visa on May 21 to work at a furniture factory.

In March, Malaysian authorities said workers of Bangladesh and 13 other countries will not be allowed to enter the southeast Asian country after May 31.

Nurul Islam, who came to the airport from Jhenaidah, said he had been waiting at the airport for three days. He did not receive his ticket as of 3:15pm.

"I spent Tk 5.40 lakh for this. I will be in serious trouble if I cannot reach Malaysia on time," he said, breaking down in tears.

Many other workers at the airport were in a similar situation. Most of them spent between Tk 5 lakh and Tk 6 lakh they managed by selling their lands or borrowing from banks.

Another man said he got a ticket to waiting for more than 12 hours and he was not sure whether the agent would give him the ticket. SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

'Benazir, his family left the country'

Say several officers of govt agencies

DIPAN NANDY

Though the authorities remain tightlipped about the whereabouts of former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed and his family members, several sources say they have left the country.

Benazir, his wife, and their three daughters left Dhaka on a Singapore Airlines flight on the night of May 4, said several officers of law enforcement and intelligence agencies on the condition of anonymity.

According to an officer, the former police chief, who is facing an Anti-Corruption Commission probe, went to Singapore with his family, stating on documents that his wife needed treatment. They

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Cyclone Remal has caused extensive damage to Menhazpur Hakkani Secondary School on the bank of the Nilganj river in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila. At least 474 educational institutions in the district have been affected by the cyclone that made landfall on Bangladesh coast on Sunday afternoon. The photo was taken on Wednesday. PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

6 SOUTHERN DISTRICTS Over 1,250 edn institutions hit hard by 'Remal'

STAR REPORT

At least 1,259 educational institutions in six southern districts have been affected by Cyclone Remal, according to education offices.

The institutions include primary and secondary schools, colleges, and madrasas.

Some of the schools made of tin and wood have been destroyed by the storm, while tin roofs of some others have been blown away.

Playgrounds and ground floors of many educational institutions have been damaged as floodwater entered there. Tidal surge caused flash floods during the cyclone that hit the country's coastal areas on Sunday.

Academic activities in the affected educational institutions are being hampered, said officials and teachers.

In Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila, Menhazpur Haqqani Secondary School, which was made of tin and wood, collapsed.

"We don't know when our school will be rebuilt and when our classes will resume. We want to go to school soon," said Rabiul Hossain, an eighth grader of the school.

"We are trying to build a makeshift structure to continue classes. It will take at least one week to resume our academic activities," said Ashraf Uzzaman, headmaster of the school.

Around 250 students study there, he added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

UPAZILA ELECTION EC summons state minister over polls code violation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday summoned State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Mohibbur Rahman, saying he violated the electoral code of conduct by campaigning for multiple upazila polls candidates in Patuakhali's Rangabali.

In a letter sent by the EC, Mohibur was asked to appear before the commission on June 2 and offer an explanation in this matter.

In the letter, the EC said the state minister sought votes for the candidates running in the Rangabali upazila polls to be held on June 5.

According to the letter, Mohibbur sought votes for upazila chairman candidate Saiduzzaman Mamun, vice chairman candidate Roushan Mridha and candidate for vice chairman reserved for women Ferdousi Parveen while distributing relief aid among the flood-affected victims at Kodalia Ghat in Chhota Baishdia union and in Chalitabunia Bazar of Chalitabunia Union in Patuakhali's SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



Paddy soaked by floodwater is being dried in the sun on a road in Alirgaon village of Gowainghat upazila yesterday. The flash flood has left 6.43 lakh people marooned in eight upazilas of Sylhet. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Hasan Mahmud seeks OIC's continuous support for Rohingya repatriation

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud has sought continuous support from the member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to ensure the safe and sustainable repatriation of nearly 1.3 million forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

He made this appeal while briefing ambassadors from OIC member countries at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Thursday, a foreign ministry press release said yesterday.

During the briefing, Hasan praised the OIC for its leading role in international efforts to alleviate the plight of the Rohingyas and updated the envoys on the current situation of the Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh.

The foreign minister expressed deep concern over the increasing conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine state at the briefing held in the OIC conference room at the UN headquarters.

He laid emphasis on the need for the Rohingyas' full citizenship rights upon their return to Myanmar.

Ambassadors from OIC member states, including Saudi Arabia, Gambia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Turkey, Iran, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Egypt, and Indonesia, expressed their gratitude to the Bangladesh foreign minister for the timely briefing.

A councillor and his illicit tobacco trade

FROM PAGE 1

Company filings at the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC) show that as of December 2020, Liton and his brother Abdul Mannan Khokan hold all 20,000 shares worth Tk 100 each of Bijoy.

Before that, the two brothers held 60 percent of the shares and another company held 40 percent. The private investment company then transferred its share to the two brothers on December 10, 2020, although it is yet to be approved by the RJSC, documents show.

Under company law, transfer of share takes effect on the date of transfer, unless there are forgeries by the parties involved or incomplete documentation. However, the final completion of share transfer is subject to RJSC's approval, a company lawyer said.

Liton, also acting convener of a port city unit Awami League, owns 70 percent share in Tara International Tobacco, a partnership set up in March 2017 with a proposed initial capital of Tk 40 lakh. The rest 30 percent share of the company is held by Omar Faruk Siddiki, also from Chattogram, documents show.

THE TOBACCO RACKET

Analysing import and local purchase documents seized from Bijoy and Tara, CIC officials suspect both companies have been engaged in tax evasion through imports of raw materials for cigarette using non-existent and anonymous entities.

Tobacco Tax Policy 2021-2030 strictly prohibits imports of tobacco raw materials by any entity other than cigarette manufacturers.

In actuality, a number of trading companies have been importing various raw materials for cigarette, including the three essential components: acetate tow, unmanufactured tobacco, and cigarette paper.

Acetate tow is the soft, cotton-like material used to make cigarette filters.

NBR data show at least 5,906 tonnes of raw materials used for cigarette production, including these three key components, have been imported by 11 trading companies in the last two years since February 2022.

None of these traders are manufacturers, and at least four of them supplied their illegal imports to Bijoy and Tara, officials say.

The raw materials they imported are enough to produce at least 295 crore cigarette sticks, CIC officials tell The Daily Star, adding that the government lost at least Tk 1,500 crore in revenue from these cigarettes, as the companies did not pay any VAT and supplementary duty.

Most of these raw materials came from China, Malaysia, Germany, India, Hong Kong and Indonesia, documents show.

These companies are SB Traders, M/s Anik Enterprise, Rapid Marketing, Rapid Pack Limited, M/s Osman Trading, RH Traders, Saad International, Alam Traders, AK Enterprise, Star Impex and CR7 Trading.

CIC investigators say most of them are phantom companies, meaning they are being used as shell companies.

The Daily Star went to the physical address of three companies in Dhaka and Chattogram, but did not find them.

Between May 9 and May 21, a large quantity of equipment and raw materials used for cigarette production were seized from the warehouses of Rapid Pack Limited in Dhaka's Keraniganj and AK Enterprise in Chattogram.

Customs officials have since shut the warehouses of both companies. During the raid, CIC and customs officials found Rapid Pack Limited had cigarette manufacturing equipment, although it has no permission to make

them.

The CIC officials' raid on Bijoy and Tara was based on the analysis of the import, purchase and sales records of Rapid Pack and AK Enterprise.

Documents show both Rapid Pack and AK Enterprise supplied their imported raw materials to Bijoy and Tara, which is illegal as only direct manufacturers can import such items.

In the subsequent raid on Bijoy on May 21 by a joint team of CIC and port city customs intelligence, officials found documents related to its trade with Rapid Pack, Rapid Marketing, AK Enterprise and Alam Traders.

Currently, 7.56 tonnes of paper for cigarette packets inscribed with foreign brand "Oris" imported by AK Enterprise are being held by the Chattogram Customs. AK Enterprise falsely declared them as coated paper.

During interrogation, AK Enterprise owner AKM Ziauddin told customs officials that he imported

trading companies submitted their tax and VAT returns in the last two years, which is mandatory.

ILLEGAL MARKETING

In December last year, local businessmen from different regions sent multiple letters to NBR, saying two cigarette brands named "Express" by Bijoy and "Peacock" by Tara were being distributed in rural areas of Chattogram, Khagrachhari, Rangamati, Kurigram, Feni, Kushtia and Lalmonirhat with fake banderoles.

The letters, seen by this newspaper, said 10-stick packs of Express and Peacock cigarettes were being sold for Tk 15-25, much lower than the government-set retail price of Tk 45 for a 10-stick pack. Many of these packs had no banderoles, while others had fake banderoles.

Banderoles are the instrument used for controlling illicit tobacco trade and collecting tax revenue around the world. In Bangladesh, they are printed

Oris company raises any objections. The allegations of manufacturing Esse Lights, Oris and other slim cigarettes are baseless. I do not even have the equipment to make them," he said.

But CIC officials say the quality of the Oris paper seized at his factory and those used in some slim Oris cigarettes that they collected from the market is similar.

ILLEGAL CIGARETTE TRADE IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is a fairly small player in illicit tobacco trade, but the trend is rising.

Globally, illicit tobacco trade is estimated at about 10 percent of the total market size.

Latest data on counterfeit cigarettes are not available, but a 2019 study by the World Bank Group shows Bangladesh's illicit cigarette trade in 2016-17 was roughly 2% of the total cigarettes sold in the market, or about 1.5 billion sticks.

It was 50 percent for Latvia, 38 percent for Pakistan, 36 percent for Malaysia and 17 percent for India that year.

In case of Bangladesh, the 2 percent illicit tobacco market share in 2016-17 was more than a three-fold growth from 2014-15, when the illicit tobacco market share was only 0.6%, the WB report said.

About 92% of this illicit trade is in cigarettes that escape the tax net. The remaining 8% of contraband cigarettes are divided between smuggling and counterfeit products. The country loses about \$100 million in revenue from the illicit cigarette trade annually, almost 4% of total tobacco revenues, the study found.

However, NBR officials say that currently 8-10 percent of the cigarettes available on the market are illegal.

And the racket involving Bijoy, Tara and some of the 11 trading companies under investigation controls a big chunk of this illegal tobacco market, they add.

Benazir

FROM PAGE 1

later travelled to Dubai.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the claims.

This correspondent called Benazir multiple times and sent him text messages, but he did not respond.

Contacted yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "We have no information that he left the country."

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader also said he has no idea whether the former IGP had left the country.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Immigration) Monirul Islam said, "Since Benazir is no longer the IGP, I do not have his immigration information."

After his retirement as the IGP in September 2022, Benazir and his family lived at a flat on the Rancon Icon Tower in Gulshan. On March 5, 2023, he purchased four apartments at House no. 1 on Road-130 in Gulshan-1.

One of the security guards of the 15-storey Rancon Icon Tower said, "I haven't seen any family members enter or leave the flat in quite a long time."

The ACC summoned Benazir for questioning on June 6, and his wife and three children on June 9. A source said Benazir and his family's lawyer might request more time from the ACC.

Benazir's lawyer, Shah Monjurul Hoque, said, "I don't have information about his whereabouts."

On April 18, the ACC launched an inquiry into the allegations that the former police chief amassed illegal wealth. A three-member committee is conducting the probe.

Before becoming the IGP, Benazir was the director general of Rab.

Hundreds flock to Dhaka airport

FROM PAGE 1

Kuala Lumpur, but there would be a stopover in the UAE.

"I will reach Malaysia on June 1. I am not sure whether they will let me work as I will miss the deadline," he said.

A special flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines left for Kuala Lumpur with 271 passengers at 7:15pm yesterday. The flight was arranged at the instruction of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare, said Masud Khan, manager (public relations) at Biman.

Asked about the crowd of people, Group Capt Kamrul Islam, executive director of the airport, said additional flights were being arranged to handle the pressure.

In the last three days, 5,294 Bangladeshi migrant workers left for Malaysia in 30 scheduled and special flights of Biman, US Bangla,

Malaysian and Batik Air.

Besides, 179 migrant workers reached Kuala Lumpur on four transit flights, Kamrul said.

Biman earlier operated four special flights. The tickets sold for Tk 73,616 each.

Nearly 4.50 lakh Bangladeshi workers migrated to Malaysia between August 2022 and April this year, shows Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training data. The southeast Asian country reopened its labour market for Bangladesh in 2022 following a four-year suspension.

Last year, Malaysia was the second largest overseas job market for Bangladesh.

At an event in Dhaka on Wednesday, Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Haznah Md Hashim said the deadline will not be extended.

Over 1,250 edn institutions

FROM PAGE 1

At least 256 primary schools and 218 other educational institutions, including secondary schools, colleges, and madrasas, have been hit by the cyclone in Patuakhali, according to local education offices.

Repair of the educational institutions may cost Tk 20 crore, said officials at the district education office.

"We are preparing a list of the affected schools and will send it quickly to the higher authorities seeking funds for repair," said Molla Bakhtiar Rahman, Patuakhali district primary education officer.

In Pirojpur, 174 primary schools and 220 other educational institutions, including secondary schools, colleges, and madrasas, have been hit by Remal.

"The cyclone has damaged the tin roof of our madrasa," Martuja Billah, principal of Sapleza Nesaria Alim Madrasa in Mathbaria upazila, told The Daily Star.

"We are still collecting information about the damage. I think that the number of the affected schools may go up," said Idris Ali Azizi, the district

education officer.

Besides, at least 171 primary schools have been damaged by the cyclone in Khulna, Bagerhat, and Satkhira.

Of them, 67 schools are in Satkhira, 66 in Bagerhat, and 38 in Khulna, said Md Moslem Uddin, Khulna divisional deputy director at the Directorate of Primary Education.

As per an estimation, the damage may result in a loss of over Tk 2 crore, he added.

Mohammadpur Government Primary School in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila has 1,376 students. "We already have a shortage of classrooms. On top of that, a portion of tin roof of a classroom has been blown away," said Md Moniruzzaman, head teacher at the school.

Moslem Uddin said classes are being hampered at many affected schools.

In Jhalakathi, 50 primary schools, 95 secondary schools and colleges, as well as 75 madrasas have been damaged by the cyclone, according to local education offices.

[Our correspondents from Patuakhali, Pirojpur, and Khulna contributed to this report.]

Israel offers new Gaza ceasefire plan

FROM PAGE 12

change their minds.

"... I ask you to take a step back, think what will happen if this moment is lost," he said. "We can't lose this moment."

An earlier hostage proposal put forward earlier this year called for the release of sick, elderly and wounded hostages in Gaza in exchange for a six-week ceasefire that could be extended to allow for more humanitarian aid to be delivered into the enclave.

The proposed deal fell apart earlier this month after Israel refused to agree to a permanent end to the war as part of the negotiations and ramped up an assault on the city of Rafah in southern Gaza.

Hamas said on Thursday it had told mediators it would not take part in more negotiations during ongoing aggression but was ready for a "complete agreement," including an exchange of hostages and prisoners if Israel stopped the war.

Yesterday, the UN said that the humanitarian aid allowed into the Gaza Strip is not getting to civilians in need, as Israeli forces struck targets across the Gaza Strip, with witnesses reporting air raids around the southern city of Rafah.

"The aid that is getting in is not getting to the people, and that's a major problem," Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian

agency OCHA, told a media briefing in Geneva.

"We continue to insist that Israeli authorities' obligation under the law to facilitate delivery of aid does not stop at the border," said Laerke.

"We need that safe and unimpeded access to get to the drop-off point so we can pick it up and get it to people."

Meanwhile, Israeli forces have ended combat operations in the Jabalia area of north Gaza after destroying more than 10 kilometres of tunnels during days of intense fighting that included over 200 air strikes, the military said yesterday.

At the south end of Gaza, Israeli forces are pressing an offensive into Rafah. Tank-led Israeli troops aim to break up Hamas' fighting formations in the city on the border with Egypt.

At a news conference in Prague, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the humanitarian situation remains dire in Gaza, especially in terms of distributing aid to civilians, citing combat operations in the south.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said yesterday that at least 36,284 people have been killed in the territory during more than seven months of offensive. The toll includes at least 60 deaths over the past 24 hours, a ministry statement said.

Bangladesh a key partner of UN: Guterres

UNB, Dhaka

UN Secretary-General António Guterres praised Bangladesh as a vital UN partner, highlighting its contributions to international peace, sustainable development, and climate change efforts.

During a meeting with Foreign Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud in New York, Guterres expressed gratitude for Bangladesh's support to the Rohingya and voiced concern over Myanmar's forced recruitment of young Rohingya. Commending Bangladesh's climate resilience, Guterres assured support for Bangladesh's transition from a low-income country, stating, "For this, Bangladesh should be rewarded, not punished."

Foreign Minister Mahmud thanked Guterres for his leadership on global issues, including the Gaza crisis, and urged continued UN focus on the Rohingya crisis, advocating for the safe repatriation of 1.3 million refugees.



A man with a broken leg rides a rickshaw-van on the way to the hospital. He broke his leg after slipping in the waterlogged streets of his area on Monday. For more than three days, the waterlogging situation in Jurain area is yet to be solved. Inset, locals in a hunger strike protesting the prolonged waterlogging and low gas pressure, demanding an immediate resolution. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



'Masters of corruption'

Quader on BNP leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The names of BNP leaders would top any list of corrupt individuals, said Obaidul Quader yesterday.

He said the party leaders are "masters of corruption and looting", adding they siphoned money abroad and enriched themselves at the country's expense.

He was speaking at a press conference organised at AL president's Dhanmondi office.

Addressing former IGP Benazir Ahmed's situation, Quader said the court would decide on his arrest following an Anti-Corruption Commission investigation. On reports of Benazir fleeing abroad and withdrawing money from his bank account, he said, "I don't know, it is not clear yet. ACC says they think he [Benazir] fled the country. Let them prove it," he added.

PRAYER TIMING		JUNE 1	
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:05	12:45	5:00	6:45 8:15
JAMAAAT 4:40	1:15	5:15	6:50 8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

AL turned country into 'bottomless basket': Abbas

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Mirza Abbas yesterday accused the Awami League (AL) government of turning Bangladesh into a "bottomless basket" through rampant corruption. Speaking at a mass prayer event marking BNP founder Ziaur Rahman's 43rd death anniversary, Abbas claimed that Ziaur Rahman had rescued the nation from this status during his tenure. The event, organised by Dhaka South City BNP in front of the Nayapaltan central office, included prayers for Ziaur Rahman's soul and BNP chief Khaleda Zia's health. Abbas criticised the government for raising fuel prices amid skyrocketing living costs, worsening the public's hardships.

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'DEVIL'S BREATH'

The world's 'scariest' drug

Now in hands of country's criminals

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Imagine walking down a quiet street, minding your own business, when a stranger approaches. They offer you a seemingly harmless business card, and you take it without thinking twice. Little did you know that the card was soaked in a drug, which would be absorbed by your skin within minutes.

Or someone might just blow the powdered drug directly in your face, and after inhaling that, within minutes you find yourself in a "Zombie-like state", unable to control your actions or resist their demands.

The drug leaves victims with no ability to control their actions. According to worldwide urban legends, the victims will do anything for their attackers, from giving up all their belongings to even going as far as killing someone for them.

The drug is scopolamine, derived from nightshade plants. Scopolamine, also known as hyoscine, is a natural or synthetically produced tropane alkaloid and anticholinergic drug which has a few legitimate medical uses, such as treatment for motion sickness, postoperative nausea and for the tremors of Parkinson's disease.

It is said to be one of the first "truth serums" which was used during WWII to obtain information from unwilling targets. However, it's mostly known for its darker sides.

It is popularly known as "devil's breath", and is globally recognised as "the world's most dangerous drug".

Criminals, particularly in Colombia and Ecuador, have used it to render victims helpless, robbing them blind, stealing their belongings, or even committing more heinous crimes such as murder or rape.

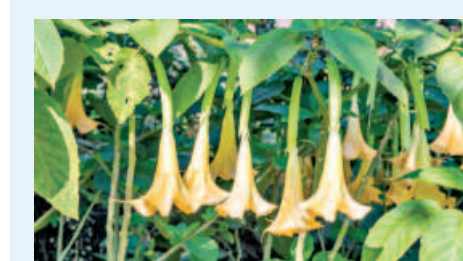
The scariest thing is that the drug has found its way to criminals in Bangladesh.

Fatema Begum, a resident of Chattogram,

fell victim to such a crime on May 22.

While returning from a local market, two men posing as charity workers approached her, and when she turned around to talk to them, one of the individuals blew some powder in her face, leaving her disoriented.

Under the drug's influence, Fatema



Brugmansia, from which scopolamine is extracted.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

"Devil's breath" can render victims suggestible and disoriented, causing them to lose all willpower and readily give up their belongings to criminals. It takes effect within 10 minutes of inhalation, and the victim's memory and brain can't function normally.

DR DULAL KRISHNA SAHA
Chief chemical examiner of DNC

lost control over herself and unknowingly complied with the criminals' demands. They stole her valuables, including jewellery worth Tk 80,000, cash, her phone, and a shopping bag.

The incident was captured on CCTV. Bystanders mistook the interaction for a usual encounter.

Double Mooring Police Station Officer-in-Charge Fazlul Kader Patwari said under scopolamine's influence, Fatema did what the criminals told her to do. When Fatema regained her senses after some hours, she realised she had been robbed.

"Scopolamine is made from the Borrachero plant. Known as "devil's breath" in its powdered form, this substance can render victims suggestible and disoriented, causing them to lose all willpower and readily give up their belongings to criminals," Dr Dulal Krishna Saha, chief chemical examiner of the Department of Narcotics Control, told The Daily Star.

By putting it on a visiting card, paper, cloth, or mobile phone screen, it's brought within four to six inches of the target's nose.

"It takes effect within 10 minutes of inhalation, and the victim's memory and brain can't function normally. Some take an hour to return to normal, while many fail to fully recover within three to four hours," he said.

In recent years, robberies using scopolamine have been reported in various parts of the country, including Dhaka, Jashore, Khulna, Rajbari, and Bogura.

Narayanganj Police first recovered 10 grammes of scopolamine from a gang in September 2023 while investigating the murder of a teacher of Northern University.

The gang used to sell scopolamine, potassium cyanide, and chloroform through online groups.

Police do not have exact figures for crimes related to scopolamine, but they found some Iranian nationals' involvement in them, along with local culprits.

On January 21, 2023, Jisan, an employee at a travel agency in the capital's Pallabi, fell victim to such a crime when two Iranian men visited the agency and took Tk 4.5 lakh from Jisan's cash box.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY

BCL factions reign with violence, univ admin silent

A CORRESPONDENT, RU

Bangladesh Chhatra League declared its Rajshahi University unit after seven long years on October 21 last year.

Mostafizur Rahman Babu is the president and Asadullah Hil Galib is the general secretary of RU BCL.

Since they took charge, at least 30 violent incidents involving BCL men have been reported on the campus. These incidents include factional clashes, extortion, illegal occupation of dormitory seats, and attacks on journalists, opposition, and general students.

Despite this, the university administration has largely refrained from taking disciplinary action against the accused. According to RU sources, no disciplinary committee meetings have been held this year.

The trouble began on October 22, when a group of BCL members, dissatisfied with their exclusion from the new committee, vandalised rooms in Madar Bux Hall.

On November 26, BCL leaders assaulted Rayhan Islam, the RU campus correspondent for Bangladesh Protidin. On May 7, RU BCL general secretary Galib and others confined and tortured Nafiuul Islam, a leader of the RU unit Chhatra Dal, in a room of Madar Bux Hall.

Just days later, on May 11, two BCL factions led by RU unit president Babu and Suhrawardy Hall unit president Niaz Morshed locked in a clash, resulting in at least five injuries. The factions brandished local weapons in another showdown two days later.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

CYCLONE REMAL

Animal death toll rises to 100 in Sundarbans

UNB, Khulna

The death toll of animals from the flooding in the Sundarbans has climbed to 100 after Cyclone Remal hit the world's largest mangrove forest on Sunday.

According to the Forest Department, the carcasses of 96 deer and four wild bears were recovered from the forest till Thursday evening.

The animals were found dead in several areas including Kotka, Kochikhali, Karamjal, Pakhi Char, Dimar Char, Shelar Char and Narikel Baria.

Moreover, 18 deer and one python were rescued in a critical condition. After giving first aid, they were released into the forest.



Besides, damages to various infrastructures in the forest were estimated at around Tk 6.27 crore.

Over 100 ponds in the forest were flooded with saline water, causing distress to both wildlife and the local residents.

An 11-kilometer area known as Gol Bagan was also damaged.

However, it will take more time to fully assess the extent of damages to the trees and animals, said Mihir Kumar Dey, forest conservator in the Khulna range.

He said this time the forest faced an unusual situation due to the cyclone as it experienced two high tides and two low tides within a 24-hour period, flooding parts of the forest.

PRE-POLLS VIOLENCE

Day of joy marred by tragedy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Sumon Miah and Sazia Afrin Liza from Narsingdi's Raipura endured a lengthy wait for parenthood. After 16 years, their dreams blossomed into reality with the birth of their twin daughters at a private hospital in Dhaka on Thursday.

However, this long-awaited celebration was overshadowed by sorrow, as Sumon was tragically absent.

Just eight days prior, Sumon, a candidate vying for the vice-chairman position in the Raipura Upazila Parishad election, was killed in a clash with supporters of a rival candidate.

Sumon, 40, son of Charsubuddi Union Parishad Chairman Nasir Uddin, was involved in ruling party politics. He was a former joint general secretary of Narsingdi Government College Chhatra League.

"While it was supposed to be a joyous occasion to welcome the twin babies, our happiness is marred by the brutal killing of my son," said Nasir Uddin, Sumon's father.

"These innocent babies are now fatherless," he added, tearing up.

On May 22, during an election campaign in Mirekandi area of Paratali Union, Sumon and his followers clashed with supporters of vice chairman candidate Abid Hasan Rubel. There, Sumon was beaten during the clash.

In critical condition, he was rushed to Raipura Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



In the wake of Cyclone Remal, at least 16 tin-shed houses were completely destroyed and 10 damaged in Char Balaki village of Gazaria upazila, near the Meghna River in Munshiganj. Trees have fallen over, roads have been damaged and numerous livestock have been lost as well. Even four days later, locals are still repairing their damaged homes.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

MP AZIM MURDER 3 placed on fresh remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed three accused on a five-day fresh remand in a case filed following the murder of lawmaker Anwarul Azim Anar in Kolkata.

The three accused are Amanullah alias Shimul Bhuiyan, Celesty Rahman, and Tanvir Bhuiyan.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Shanto Islam Mallik passed the order after members of Detective Branch of police produced them before the court with an eight-day remand prayer in the case, said a court staffer.

On May 24, the three accused were placed on an eight-day remand.

They were arrested in a case filed by Azim's daughter Mumtaz Ferdoush Dorin with the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station on May 22.

Meanwhile, the West Bengal CID has formed a special team to probe the murder, our correspondent from Delhi reported.

Besides, the search for the MP's body parts continued. "Our search is on in the canal. A few more samples have been collected from the sewage lines of the building where the MP was last seen entering. We are sending them for examination," a CID officer said.

The detectives were also trying to find out more information from his mobile phone's call history.

The West Bengal CID is also examining the CCTV cameras installed along the routes suspected to have been taken by the assailants in disposing of Azim's body parts.



Around 500 residents of Bahadurabad, led by local UP member, voluntarily worked for a week to build the dam in Payolakandi area, Jamalpur recently, at a cost of Tk 1 lakh, which was also raised by the locals from the markets and villages.

PHOTO: STAR

Locals build bamboo dam to prevent river erosion

Their demand for permanent embankment fell on deaf ears

SAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB, Jamalpur

Locals in Bahadurabad union under Jamalpur's Dewanganj upazila have built a 300-foot bamboo cross dam -- a makeshift dam -- to prevent erosion of Brahmaputra river during monsoon.

Around 500 residents of the union, led by union parishad member Ahmed Ali, voluntarily worked for a week to build the dam in Payolakandi area at a cost of Tk 1 lakh, which was also raised by the local residents from the markets and villages in the union.

They came up with the effort after the authorities concerned failed to take any visible step in response to their demand for the construction of a concrete dam to prevent river erosion. Brahmaputra flows through

Dewanganj, Islampur, Malandah and Sadar upazilas of Jamalpur district.

"The cross dam was built on the second week of May with bamboo and wood collected by the villagers. Six more such bamboo dams will be built on the river bank this year," said Abdul Karim, a farmer of Payolakandi village.

"Every year since 1974, the Bahadurabad area has sustained erosion of Brahmaputra river. Over last 50 years, the river engulfed many villages including Payolakandi Namapara, Madhyapara, Purvapara, Farajipara, Madar-char, Madan-char and Gumer-char villages in the union," he also said.

"Last year, over 300 families in Dewanganj and Bokshiganj upazilas lost their homesteads and around 250 acres of arable

lands to Brahmaputra's erosion," said Moinul Islam Butto, a local representative of Bahadurabad union.

"Around one thousand people living along two-kilometre stretch of the river banks are at risk of losing everything to erosion as monsoon looms. However, even in five decades, the government has yet to take any step to save us from the river's erosion," he added.

Local residents Ahmed Ali, Md Anwar Sheikh, and many others said they had to relocate numerous times after losing their homesteads to the river.

"The government should excavate the river and build permanent embankments to protect the union," said Shajahan Mia, chairman of Bahadurabad union parishad.

Terming the local residents'

initiative as praiseworthy, Sheikh Zahid Hasan, UNO of Dewanganj upazila, said he informed the matter to local lawmaker as well as the Bangladesh Water Development Board in Jamalpur.

Contacted, Rafiqul Islam, deputy assistant engineer of BWDB in Jamalpur, said, "Cross dams made on river banks with bamboo is a traditional method that works well to prevent erosion."

"Last year, BWDB had placed 13,000 geo-bags across 160-metre stretch on the river bank, but nearly half of those were washed away, mostly in Amkhawa union in Dewanganj upazila," the official also said.

"Proposal for a permanent embankment for Bahadurabad union has already been sent to the concerned ministry," he added.

E-PASSPORTS

Foreign ministry not consulted while dropping 'except Israel': Momen

UNB, Dhaka

Former foreign minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not consulted while removing the words "except Israel" from the e-passport.

He, however, said Bangladesh's position regarding Israel remains unchanged.

"I was foreign minister at that time. I was not consulted, even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not consulted," he said while responding to a question, noting that the Ministry of Home Affairs looks into the passport matters.

Bangladeshi passports now do not bear the text -- "valid for all countries of the world except Israel".

Momen, also the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on foreign ministry, said Bangladesh does not have any commercial relations with Israel.

He was responding to questions at a public parliament debate contest at FDC, organised by Debate for Democracy with its chairman, Hassan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron, in the chair.

The topic of the debate was "United efforts by the Muslim world can help stop Israeli aggression in Palestine".

The State University of Bangladesh and Kabi Nazrul Government College debated on the topic.

The attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was drawn to a message on X issued from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel welcoming the removal of a ban on travel to Israel on e-passports issued by Bangladesh in 2021.

Momen said they were told that the removal of the observation was done to maintain the international standard of Bangladeshi e-passports.

The MoFA at that time said it did not imply any change in Bangladesh's foreign policy towards the Middle East.

The ban on travel of Bangladeshi passport holders to Israel remains unchanged, according to the MoFA.

The government of Bangladesh has not deviated from its position on Israel and Bangladesh remains firm on its longstanding position in this regard.

The government of Bangladesh has always condemned the atrocities inflicted upon civilians by the occupation forces of Israel in the al-Aqsa mosque compound and Gaza.

The world's 'scariest' Day of joy

FROM PAGE 3

Despite watching them and talking with a smile, Jisan did not realise he was being robbed until they left with the money. Later that month, police detained one of the culprits.

In April last year, law enforcement arrested five individuals -- including three Iranians, in Dhaka and Jashore -- following a robbery in Abhaynagar, where a shopkeeper handed over Tk 6 lakh to

the perpetrators.

Later in August, two more Iranians were detained in Shibganj of Bogura, following a similar incident.

Contacted, Enamul Haque Sagor, assistant inspector general (media) of Police Headquarters, said, "It is a different modus operandi than regular crimes. We have already arrested several individuals. Whenever such crimes with unusual methods come to light, we take action."

FROM PAGE 3

Following his death, the Election Commission has halted the Raipura Upazila Parishad polls.

Besides, two cases were filed with Raipura Police Station, accusing his rival candidate Abid Hasan Rubel as the prime accused. Safayet Hossain Palash, officer-in-charge of Raipura Police Station, said they have already arrested four individuals in connection with the killing. "A reward of Tk 1 lakh has been announced for the arrest of the prime accused, Abid Hasan Rubel, who was a vice-chairman candidate. Efforts are underway to apprehend the other suspects," he added.

'My health, my responsibility'

Speakers tell event on cardiac care

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A growing tendency of excessive commercialisation is taking place in the cardiac healthcare system in Bangladesh, which requires immediate attention, said renowned economist Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday.

He said excessive commercialisation in the health service is a global phenomenon and Bangladesh is no exception.

Zillur, also former adviser to a caretaker government, was speaking at a seminar at National Sports Council Complex in Purana Paltan of the capital. Saool Heart Centre, Bangladesh organised the event titled, "19th National Saool Heart Lifestyle".

Speaking as the chief guest, Hossain Zillur said, "My health is my own responsibility. The state's health budget can be increased tenfold, doctors can be more attentive, but if we ourselves are not aware, then it will not be solved."

Oil is the biggest enemy to the heart, said Bimol Chhajer, a non-invasive cardiac specialist from India, adding that everything can be cooked with water instead of oil.

"This is why cooking without oil is important for everyone, especially for heart patients," he said.

Changing food habits and lifestyle -- eating oil free foods, doing yoga and maintaining a diet -- can prevent heart disease, he added.

Mohon Raihan, chairman of Saool Heart Centre Bangladesh, said Saool Heart Centre was established in 2009 as a health movement to keep citizens free from the risk of heart disease.

Heart disease accounts for 30 percent of the world's deaths, he added.

BCL factions reign

FROM PAGE 3

In response to the May clashes, the central BCL unit suspended at least five RU BCL leaders. However, the RU authorities have not taken any punitive measures against those involved.

Additionally, between May 13 and May 19, BCL activists drove out at least three general students from their dormitory seats. The continuing unrest has left the RU campus in a state of turmoil, with many students feeling unsafe and unprotected.

Contacted, RU Proctor Prof Ashabul Haque said, "We only received a few

complaints, which were settled even before we intervened. So, how can we take disciplinary action?"

RU BCL President Mostafizur Rahman Babu said action will be taken against anyone involved in the previous "stray incidents" and any other misconduct.

RU Pro Vice-Chancellor Sultan Ul Islam, however, said the university admission is "concerned" with the recent surge in violence.

"We will hold meetings with student bodies, particularly BCL, to maintain peace and stability on the campus," he added.

NOAKHALI POURA BEBSHAHI & DOKAN MALIK KALLYAN SOMOBAY SOMITY LTD

Court Road, Majidee Court, Noakhali.

Memo No NPBSMKSSL Tender-01/2024/1134

Date: 30/05/2024

Corrigendum Notice (Amendment)-1

It is hereby notified to all concerned that the following amendment has been made to the invitation of work of Vertical Extension of Noakhali Pourashava Approved "Noakhali Super Market" [Full Extension of 5th Floor & Partial Extension of 6th floor]: Civil & Structural Works, Electrical works, Lift & Escalator works, Central Air Conditioning System works, Fire Protection System works and works of Development of Faecade Tender No.01 vide Memo No NPBSMKSSL Tender-01/2024/1130 dated: 06/05/2024 due to unavoidable circumstances and the amendments shall be as follows.

Tender Notice field name	As Mentioned in original Tender Notice	To be Replaced
Eligibility of Tenderer	i) This Invitation for Tenders (IFT) is open to all eligible tenderers as mentioned below: ii) Tenderer shall be a Reputed Contractor/ Construction Firm who have at least 10 (ten) years of general experience in building construction works. iii) The Tenderer shall have specific experience as contractor in successful completion of at least 1 (one) number of Building Construction Works (including civil, sanitary, electrical, lift, fire protection system & related works etc.) having valuation of Tk. 15.00 (Taka fifteen) crore or more during the last 05 (five) years in a single tender in govt./ semi-govt./ autonomous organization of Bangladesh. Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper. iv) The Tenderer must have a minimum liquid asset/ cash flow capacity/Credit facility of Tk. 5 (five) crore. v) Attested copy of all documents shall be submitted along with the Tender. vi) The Tenderer shall have a Minimum Average Annual Construction Turnover of Tk. 20.00 Crore over the best 03(three) years in the last 05(five)years. Certificates for Contracts in Progress or Completed Under Public Sector Must be Submitted along with Tender in Support of Construction Turnover. vii) The minimum Tender capacity shall be Tk. 22.00 Crore viii) The Tenderer must submit (a) Up to date Income Tax Clearance Certificate. b) Valid VAT Registration Certificate. c) Up to date Trade License & ABC Category Contractor ship and Supervisory License from Electricity Licensing Board of Bangladesh ix) Other Notable Terms are Pointed out at TDS.PCC.ITT and GCC Which Strictly Should be Followed.	i) This Invitation for Tenders (IFT) is open to all eligible tenderers as mentioned below: ii) Tenderer shall be a Reputed Contractor/ Construction Firm who have at least 10 (ten) years of general experience in building construction works. iii) The Tenderer shall have specific experience as contractor in successful completion of at least 1 (one) number of Building Construction Works (including civil, sanitary, electrical, lift, fire protection system & related works etc.) having valuation of Tk. 15.00 (Taka fifteen) crore or more during the last 05 (five) years in a single tender in govt./ semi-govt./ autonomous organization of Bangladesh. Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper. iv) The Tenderer must have a minimum liquid asset/ cash flow capacity/Credit facility of Tk. 5 (five) crore. v) Attested copy of all documents shall be submitted along with the tender.
Last date and Time for Selling of Tender Documents /Place of Selling.	02/06/2024 5:00pm	11/06/2024 5:00pm
Last date and Time for Receiving of Tender Documents/Place of receiving	03/06/2024 1:00pm	12/06/2024 1:00pm
Date & Time for Opening of Tender	03/06/2024 3:00pm	12/06/2024 3:00pm
GCC 70.1	The proportion of payments to be retained is 10 (ten) percent	The proportion of payments to be retained is 05(Five) percent
GCC 92.3(b)	The arbitration shall be conducted in the place mentioned below: Office of the Superintending Engineer, PWD Division, Noakhali.	The arbitration shall be conducted in the place mentioned below: Office of the Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Noakhali.
ITT 15.1(a)	The required average annual construction turnover shall be greater than Tk 15(fifteen) crore over the best 03(three) years in the last 05(five)years.	The required average annual construction turnover shall be greater than Tk 20(twenty) crore over the best 03(three) years in the last 05(five)years.
ITT 15.1(d)	-	The minimum Tender capacity shall be Tk. 22.00 Crore
ITT 65.1	The amount of Performance Security shall be 10(ten) percent of the Contract Price	The amount of Performance Security shall be 05(five) percent of the Contract Price

President

Super Market Implementation Committee
Noakhali Poura Babsayee & Dokan Malik Kollan Somobay Somity Ltd.
Court Road, Majidee Court, Noakhali.

পুট ক্রয়
জলসিঁড়ি আবাসন এ পুট
কিনতে চাই।
যোগাযোগ: ০১৫৭৭-০৩৮৭৩৮,
০১৯৪৭-১৩৩০০১

পুট বিক্রয় বিজ্ঞপ্তি
উত্তরা ওয় গ্রকরের অঙ্গীত দেবির
১৬/এইচ. তিন কাটা উত্তরমুখী কনার
পুট বাউডারী-দেয়াল দেওয়া। পুটের
উত্তর পাশে ৬০ ফিট রাস্তা। শুধুমাত্র
ক্রেতাপণ যোগাযোগ করুন।
যোগাযোগ: ০১৭২০ ৯০২ ১৮৪

Invitation to submit proposals for two Request for Proposals (RFPs) issued by UNICEF Bangladesh

RFP No. LRPS-2024-9190552: Providing services for 'Preventive Maintenance and On-call maintenance of the medical equipment provided to Special Care Newborn Units in selected hospitals as part of UNICEF's Program Assistance to GoB'.

UNICEF Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a strong track record and professional credibility of providing the above-required services under one contract. To receive the detailed scope of work and procedure to submit the bid response, please email to supplybangladesh@unicef.org

The pre-bid meeting schedule and bid submissions deadlines are mentioned in the respective bid document.

Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.

www.unicef.org/bangladesh

unicef for every child



Invitation to submit proposals for two Request for Proposals (RFPs) issued by UNICEF Bangladesh

RFP No. LRPS-9190596 Support for Adolescents and Youth Empowerment in Rohingya Refugee Camps and Host Community in Cox's Bazar.

RFP No. LRPS-9190599 Support Implementation of Positive Parenting Program in Rohingya Refugee Camps in Cox's Bazar.

UNICEF-Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a strong track record and professional credibility of providing the above-required services under one contract. To receive the detailed scope of work and procedure to submit the bid response, please email to supplybangladesh@unicef.org

Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.

www.unicef.org/bangladesh

unicef for every child



INTERNATIONAL

PARLIAMENTARY POLLS

S Africa heads for coalition as ANC support plunges

REUTERS, Midrand

South African parties geared up for coalition talks yesterday as the governing African National Congress (ANC) looked set to fall well short of a majority for the first time in 30 years of democracy.

While the party of the late Nelson Mandela looked likely to remain the largest political force after Wednesday's election, voters appeared to have punished the former liberation movement for years of decline.

With results in from 61.2 percent of polling stations, the ANC had 41.9 percent of votes, a precipitous drop from the 57.5 percent it secured in the last national election in 2019.

The pro-business Democratic Alliance (DA) was in second place on 23 percent. uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), a new party led by former president Jacob Zuma, was at 11.7 percent and eating into ANC support, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, Zuma's home province.

MK had overtaken the Marxist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), currently the third biggest party in parliament, which was sitting on 9.5 percent.

Political parties' share of the vote will determine the number of seats they get in the National Assembly, which then elects the next president.

That could still be the ANC's leader, incumbent President Cyril Ramaphosa. However, an embarrassing showing at the polls risks fuelling a leadership challenge — but the ANC's Deputy Secretary-General Nomvula Mokonyane said he would not resign.

"Nobody is going to resign... Collectively, all of us, we still are confident that he (Ramaphosa) has to remain the president of the ANC," she told reporters at the results centre.

"The leadership of the ANC will meet, structures of the ANC will be consulted. For now we are not talking to anybody," she said.



TRUMP'S CRIMINAL CONVICTION

US election stumbles into new territory

AFP, New York

Torn apart and rewired by Donald Trump's historic criminal conviction, the 2024 presidential campaign moved into uncharted territory yesterday with all eyes on how the two main protagonists navigate the dangers.

Trump wasted no time in shifting from courtroom to campaign mode.

"I am a political prisoner!" he announced immediately after the guilty verdicts landed Thursday on all 34 charges in his New York hush-money trial.

In addition to the New York case, he faces three far more serious criminal indictments over his attempts to overturn his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden and hoarding of top-secret documents at his home in Florida.

Those cases, however, are not likely to go to trial before the November election.

And Trump has in any case turned what would immediately destroy an ordinary political career into a badge of honor, comparing himself to political prisoners like Nelson Mandela and telling supporters that the scandals prove his conspiracy theory about a "deep state" taking away his freedom.

Biden, by contrast, has so far avoided making Trump's multiple legal difficulties an issue. As president, he is keen to avoid giving ammunition to Republicans who claim he is meddling in the justice system.

Now he will have to decide



whether Trump's conviction changes the calculus.

Biden's campaign reacted to the verdicts by saying that "no one is above the law." It added, however, that the focus should turn to the election, because "the threat Trump poses to our democracy has never been greater."

Biden himself said nothing about the momentous events in New York.

Yesterday, he had a busy public schedule, including talks with the Belgian prime minister and a celebration for NFL Super Bowl champions the Kansas City Chiefs, which will offer frequent opportunities for him to make remarks to journalists.

Trump is now the first former US president ever convicted of a crime. He would be setting another, even more startling record if he wins on November 5 and replaces Biden in

the White House.

The jury found him guilty of falsifying business records to hide a payment meant to silence porn star Stormy Daniels and prevent her from publicizing an alleged sexual encounter that could have been fatal to his 2016 presidential campaign.

Prosecutors successfully laid out a case alleging the hush money and the illegal covering up of the payment was part of a broader crime to prevent voters from knowing about Trump's behavior just as he was about to face Hillary Clinton.

Robert F Kennedy, who is running as an independent in the presidential race, predicted on X that the New York trial would "backfire."

But Keith Gaddie, a political analyst and professor at Texas Christian University, said the political impact of the shocking events has yet to be determined.

Zelensky hails US weapons green light as 'step forward'

AFP, Stockholm

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday hailed a US decision to partially lift restrictions on using US-donated weapons to strike inside Russia as a "step forward".

Washington gave the green light on Thursday for Ukraine to use US weapons to defend its Kharkiv region on the border with Russia, overcoming previous concerns that authorising such strikes could drag Nato into a direct conflict with Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that US-made weapons "are already being used to attempt strikes on Russian territory". "This is quite eloquent evidence of the extent of US involvement in this conflict," he said. But, Nato head Jens Stoltenberg said: "Ukraine has the right for self-defence and we have the right to help Ukraine."

24 people dead in eastern India as temperatures soar

AGENCIES

At least 24 people died of suspected heatstroke in India's eastern states of Bihar and Odisha on Thursday, and the heatwave in the region is expected to continue until today, authorities said.

An Indian court has urged the government to declare a national emergency over the country's ongoing heatwave, saying that hundreds of people had died during weeks of extreme weather, reports AFP.

India has been experiencing a blisteringly hot summer and a part of capital Delhi recorded the country's highest ever temperature at 52.9 degrees Celsius this week, though that may be revised with the weather department checking the sensors of the weather station that registered the reading.

Decision

FROM PAGE 12

its laws and regulations.

"After the examination, the committee will submit a report to the commission. A decision on the investigation will then be made based on the report," he said.

On Wednesday, SC lawyer Salah Uddin Reagan filed the petition with the anti-graft watchdog seeking probe into the alleged corruption by the former army chief.

In the petition, the lawyer said the US sanctions on corruption charges and subsequent reports in national newspapers have tarnished the image of Bangladesh and its army, both nationally and internationally.

On May 21, the US imposed sanctions on Aziz and his immediate family members for what it said was his involvement in significant corruption.

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

Aziz had been the chief of army staff from June 2018 to June 2021. Before that, he led Border Guard Bangladesh for four years from 2012.

EC summons

FROM PAGE 2

Rangabali upazila on Thursday.

According to the electoral code of conduct of upazila polls, no MPs or ministers can take part in electioneering for any polls candidate.

The EC, in separate letters, also asked Saiduzzaman Mamun, Roushan Mridha and Ferdousi Parveen to appear before the commission to offer their explanation in this matter on the same day.

57 constituencies

FROM PAGE 12

63.36 percent respectively.

Pollsters and political analysts differ on the possible outcome of the election, with lower voter turnout and urban voters' apathy seen as risks for BJP. The saffron party and its allies won 352 in the last election in 2019 with BJP alone winning 303 seats.

Cricket in uncharted territory

FROM PAGE 12

Council (ICC) event to be held in part in the United States.

While the bulk of the tournament will be played out in the Caribbean, 16 group stage games in the 20-team tournament will be played on American soil, including the highlight of the group stage — a clash between India and Pakistan.

That match is due to be played at a 34,000-capacity temporary venue in Long Island, New York on June 9.

The rest of the tournament will be held in the West Indies, including the Super Eight stage,

the semifinals and the final, which will be played at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados.

The ICC sees the tournament as a launch pad towards the sport's return to the Olympics for Los Angeles 2028, when the T20 format will be used.

Major League Cricket, a T20 tournament, was launched last year and also stands to benefit from any growth in interest in the big-hitting, spectacular shortest form.

The ICC also sees the T20 format as the perfect vehicle for growing the game and this year's edition will feature three

T20 World Cup debutants in the USA, Canada and Uganda.

Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Oman are among the other nations who are relatively new to the big stage and who will be looking to make their mark and grab some attention with an upset win.

With the teams drawn in four groups of five teams, with just the top two advancing, none of the smaller nations are expected to progress beyond the group stage and there is a danger the pool stage could mainly be a 'weeding out' process.

Unrest likely

FROM PAGE 12

Inspector General involved in such criminal activities, and actions are being taken against them.

On the last day of his two-day visit to the Rohingya camps, the home minister yesterday held several meetings with different stakeholders of the Rohingya camp issues. He visited camp 19 in Ukhiya around 11:00am and held a meeting with members of Armed Police Battalion (APBn).

Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun, Additional IGP Anwar Hossain, APBn chief Salim Mohammad Jahangir, and Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mizanur Rahman accompanied the home minister during his visit to the camps.

After a law and order meeting on the Rohingya camps on Thursday night, the home minister

told reporters at Cox's Bazar Circuit House that no one from Myanmar will be allowed to enter Bangladesh.

He said the government aims to secure the country's border with Myanmar and ensure safety at the Rohingya camps by preventing terrorist activities.

Asaduzzaman directed police and the APBn to stop the violence in Rohingya camps.

Trump 'guilty on all 34 counts'

FROM PAGE 1

Trump, however, is not barred from continuing his battle to unseat President Joe Biden in November — even in the unlikely event he goes to prison.

But this guilty verdict still could sway November's presidential election. A poll from Bloomberg and Morning Consult earlier this year found that 53 percent of voters in key swing states would refuse to vote for the Republican if he were convicted.

Another poll, from Quinnipiac University this month, showed 6 percent of Trump voters would be less likely to vote for him — consequential in such a tight race.

In a press conference yesterday, Trump railed against his criminal conviction, calling his New York trial "very unfair", attacking the process as politicised and vowing to appeal.

"It was very unfair... You saw what happened to some of the witnesses that were on our side — they were literally crucified,"

Trump said in a rambling speech at Trump Tower in Manhattan in which he called his adversaries "sick" and "fascists."

He vowed to challenge his conviction on 34 counts of falsifying business records, declaring "We're going to be appealing this scam... on many different things."

Earlier, immediately after the conviction, Trump himself voiced defiance.

"I'm a very innocent man," Trump told reporters, vowing that the "real verdict" would come from voters on election day. He branded the trial "rigged" and a "disgrace."

Biden's campaign issued a statement saying the trial showed "no one is above the law." It added that "the threat Trump poses to our democracy has never been greater."

Judge Juan Merchan set sentencing for July 11 — four days before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, where Trump is due to receive the party's formal nomination.

The 12-member jury had deliberated for more than 11

hours over two days before the unanimous conclusion within a matter of minutes.

Merchan thanked the jurors for completing the "difficult and stressful task."

Their identities had been kept secret throughout proceedings, a rare practice more often seen in cases involving mafia or other violent defendants.

Trump also faces federal and state charges of conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 election won by Biden, and for hoarding secret documents after leaving the White House.

However, those trials — on far weightier alleged crimes — are unlikely to get underway before the presidential election.

Trump was convicted of falsifying business records to reimburse his lawyer, Michael Cohen, for a \$130,000 payment to Daniels on the eve of the 2016 election, when her claim to have had sex with him could have proved fatal to his campaign against Hillary Clinton.

6.43 lakh

FROM PAGE 12

While water levels in the Surma and Kushiyara rivers dropped yesterday, they flowed above the danger marks at three points.

With the rivers still flowing above the danger levels, parts of Sylhet city's Uposhor, Taltala, and other areas were freshly inundated yesterday.

The district administration has prepared 547 centres to provide shelter to those affected. A least 3,739 people were staying at the shelters yesterday, compared to 4,802 on Thursday night.

Sylhet Deputy Commissioner Sheikh Russel Hasan said, "The rain has largely subsided, and the overall flood situation is slowly improving, with many returning home from shelters. We have allocated sufficient relief goods for the affected people. We are monitoring the situation round the clock."

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Turn of tide this time for Dortmund, Reus?

SAMAMA RAHMAN

As Borussia Dortmund prepare to walk into Wembley for a Champions League final against Real Madrid, it is hard to pinpoint their source of inspiration.

Any memories of the venue will certainly be tainted by their cruel loss to Bayern Munich 11 years ago, in the final of the same tournament no less.

Add to that the match-up, against the kings of Europe and a team that always seems to win the mental game, and their prospects shrink further.

There is also little encouragement to be found from their recent performances on big occasions. In fact, those performances will only reinforce the mental barrier.

At the end of last season, all Dortmund had to do was beat Mainz at home to become German champions and nothing else would matter. "We have it in our hands," read a banner across the famed Yellow Wall.

Anticlimactically, perhaps overwhelmed by pressure, they floundered to a draw, conceding the title to Bayern.

There have been many such setbacks in recent seasons.

And one player who has lived

through them all is Marco Reus. In fact, the well ran dry immediately after Reus arrived from 2012, the summer after Dortmund won a second straight league title.

Now, after 12 years at Dortmund, including five years as the team's captain, Reus has only two German Cups to his name.

The lack of silverware has often invited questions about mentality, sometimes causing tempers to flare. "You're really getting on my nerves now with your mentality crap, you really are," Reus fumed on the pitch after his team had conceded a last-minute equaliser away at Eintracht Frankfurt.

Whether it has to do with mentality or not, their mercurial form only adds to the mystery. In the Champions League, Dortmund

only other remaining player from BVB's last Champions League final in 2013.

After winning two Bundesliga titles at Dortmund, and going trophyless for the next four years, Hummels moved to Bayern, where he proceeded to win the league three times in as many seasons.

His trophy cabinet also boasts the World Cup trophy, won in 2014, a prize Reus missed out on through injury.

Still, at Dortmund's home, Reus is hailed as among the all-time greats and adored by the fans as 'one of us'.

"Marco is a living legend," coach Edin Terzic said after Reus' decision to leave. "Where else can you find that in modern football? A story where someone chooses a club for twelve



It's going to be a great game. Real Madrid, their history speaks for itself. I've got a few friends over there, Vini and Jude. I actually messaged them after they won against Bayern. I said, 'I'll see you there.' It's going to be a tense game, for sure.

Borussia Dortmund forward **Jadon Sancho**

have been imperious. They finished top of a group with PSG, AC Milan and Newcastle, dramatically overcame Atletico Madrid in the quarters and then saw PSG off without conceding in the semis. But in the Bundesliga, they finished in fifth place.

This all-too-familiar hot and cold pattern has often led to players leaving Dortmund for greener pastures. Young players that are hungry for trophies, like Jude Bellingham, now on the opposing team, and Erling Haaland, are among such examples.

But a better representation would be one of Reus' peers like Mats Hummels, the

years and spends almost his entire career there is extraordinary at this level."

Coming from Terzic, a Dortmund fan who attended his first game in 1991 at the Westfalenstadion aged just nine, those words carry serious weight.

Despite all the near misses and cruel twists of fate, lifting the Champions League with Dortmund would be a salve for any wound.

But while this date with destiny presents a chance, it also threatens to turn him into the tragic hero one last time. In that case, as he has for years, Reus can turn to the fans, secure in the knowledge that, just like on the last day of the last season, they will be singing his name regardless of the result.

INTERESTING FACTS



This is set to be Real Madrid's 18th final in the European Cup/Champions League. Los Blancos have lost only in three finals, with their last defeat in the final of the competition coming back in 1981.

Real Madrid have won five of the last 10 UEFA Champions League. They have also won their last eight finals in the competition.

Real Madrid legend Toni Kroos will be playing his final game for the all-whites while Borussia Dortmund will be bidding goodbye to their legend Marco Reus and centre-back Mats Hummels.

This is going to be Dortmund's third Champions League final. They have won it once, in 1997, but lost when they last played the final in 2013 in Wembley against arch-rivals Bayern Munich. Interestingly, the final of this season will also be played at the same venue.

Dortmund's defeat by Bayern 11 years ago was the only all-German final — and the last time the match was played at Wembley.

Real Madrid hold a slender advantage considering their head-to-head stats against Borussia Dortmund. In the five matches played in the Champions League between these two sides, Real Madrid have won twice, Dortmund won in one while two other matches ended in draws. Real, however, have won their last two encounters in 2017.

Luka Modrić and Dani Carvajal could appear in their sixth Champions League final victory for Madrid — matching Paco Gento's record.

Having scored the only goal against Liverpool in 2022, Vinícius Júnior could become only the eighth player to find the net in more than one Champions League final.

Real's triumph in Paris two years ago was the 12th Champions League win for a Spanish side — five more than the next highest-ranked nation, England.



According to the current situation and the squad, we are the favourites. But this a UCL final and anything can happen in a knockout game. Dortmund will win if we play badly or be overconfident.

— Sifat Jashim, secretary of Pena Madridista Bangladesh



We don't have sky-high expectations like now that we're in the final we have to win it. We have to remember that our opponents are the most successful team in the history of the competition.

— Sreezon Das Gupta, admin of DER BVB Borussia's Bangladesh

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Real Madrid against the world!

The fear, that's normal. I have experience. My team gives me confidence and hope. They look focused on the game. They're in Champions League mode. We're not on holiday yet, and the other teams are. They'll see the game on TV.

— Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti

NABID YEASIN

Come June 1, when Real Madrid players line up for the UEFA Champions League's grand finale at the iconic Wembley Stadium, they will not only be up against the yellow army of Borussia Dortmund but against the entire footballing world — and there are ample reasons for it.

The sheer dominance in Europe's most elite club competition, the incomparable history of the club, and most importantly, the manner in which they have managed to conquer the most sought-after title time and again means that it will only escalate the envy of almost all the clubs, managers, players and their fanbases to see Real succeed in their bid to land a record-extending 15th Champions League title. The record 14-time winners of the tournament have made it



heavily on their attacking prowess to outscore their opponents both in Spain and Europe, managed to pull off a defensive masterclass akin to the classic Italian style of play against City once again in the quarterfinal second leg this season.

Joselu's story of turning the unlikely hero with two last-ditch goals in this year's semifinal against Bayern Munich still seems like a fairytale — one that must sting everyone who hoped for the n-th time that Real would surely not script yet another Champions League miracle.

Pundits resorted to labelling their inexplicable comebacks as 'lucky' breaks innumerable times. But Real have pulled the rabbit out of the hat so often that now it only seems logical to state that there indeed exists the intangible 'Real DNA' that kicks in just in moments of despair, spreading in whoever dons that proud white shirt, to keep stupefying the world with glimpses of pure footballing genius.

Real Madrid have dashed the hopes of so many hearts, at times in such cruel manners, that now their ascent feels like a harsh taunt to the rest so far behind.

Hence, it won't be a surprise to see the entire world join the Yellow Wall of Dortmund for the final but that could do very little to deter Real Madrid from being determined to extend their Champions League legacy. And they will have the extra motivation of turning the occasion into a fitting goodbye to one of their legends — Kroos.

Nicknamed 'the German sniper' for his ability to pinpoint his passes and throughs to anyone at any point of the pitch from even the farthest corners of the ground, Kroos will be bringing the curtain down on a glorious trophy-galore 10-year stay at Real Madrid at Wembley.

"Real Madrid games always follow the rhythm of Toni Kroos. If he wants the team to slow down, we slow down. If he wants us to speed up, we speed up. He decides everything," Kroos'former Real teammate Casemiro had once said. Surely, the players in all-whites will hope for their final dance to the tune of maestro Kroos to be memorable and meaningful, even if it means they would need to fight it out against Dortmund, backed by the entire world.



so that it is not an exaggeration to say that the Champions League is now synonymous with Real Madrid — a club that is touted as the greatest ever mostly because of their unfathomable pedigree in the very competition.

Just in this decade, Real lifted the coveted Champions League trophy five out of 10 times — beginning with their mission 'La Decima', climaxed through the iconic '92:48' Sergio Ramos header in their 4-1 win in extra-time over city rivals Atletico Madrid in 2014 final.

It was as if that particular triumph had not only ended Real's 12-year drought in the competition but also opened the floodgate that next brought in an unprecedented threepeat (from 2016 to 2018) that the world could only stand, watch, admire, and aspire to replicate.

While Zinedine Zidane and his core group of Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale, Karim Benzema, Luka Modric, Casemiro, and Toni Kroos made winning three successive Champions League look almost like a walk in the park, it surely comes as a

dream run for most in the business.

But what probably rubs most clubs and their fanbases the wrong way is how Real defied the odds in every knockout stage in the 2022 campaign to win their 14th — taking their tally so far out of reach of their pack of chasers that now they actually own double of AC Milan, the next best club in terms of Champions League titles with seven in the Italian club's lot.

No one would be able to define how Benzema unleashed a 17-minute hat-trick to overturn a 2-0 aggregate score of a star-studded PSG boasting Lionel Messi, Neymar, and Kylian Mbappe in the round of 16 in 2022. Experts were dumbfounded and at a loss for words trying to make sense of Modric's trivela pass to Rodrygo for the tie-winner against Chelsea in the quarters that season, or how Real players pulled off another astonishing miracle at the Santiago Bernabeu by scoring thrice between 90-95 minutes to dump out favourites Manchester City from the semifinal that season.

There was no logic in how Real, a side that rely





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FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

73% rise in tobacco production!

Is the govt truly serious about its vision to be tobacco-free by 2040?

Bangladesh may aspire to be tobacco-free by 2040, but the government's commitment to implementing stricter tobacco control laws seems at odds with the consistent surge in tobacco production: a nearly 73 percent increase in per-hectare yield over the last 14 years. Tobacco farming now accounts for over 30 percent of annual deforestation, placing the country third globally in this regard. The University of Bath ranks Bangladesh as the 12th largest tobacco grower as of 2020. This growth is alarming given the well-documented health and environmental hazards associated with tobacco cultivation, to say nothing of the dangers associated with its consumption.

The introduction of high-yielding varieties by tobacco companies, coupled with aggressive promotion of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, has enticed farmers with promises of higher profits. However, numerous studies highlight that excessive use of such chemicals depletes soil fertility, contaminates water sources, and disrupts ecosystems. A 2015 study in Kushtia found alarming levels of toxic residues in soil and water samples collected near tobacco farms. This contamination not only harms aquatic life, but also poses a health risk to humans who rely on these water sources. The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that each cigarette emits about 14 grams of CO₂ over its lifecycle, and producing 300 cigarettes requires one tree for paper and drying leaves. Water pollution is another grave concern, with a single cigarette requiring about 3.7 litres of water over its lifecycle. Tobacco cultivation demands up to eight times more water than crops like tomatoes or potatoes, leading to significant water usage and pollution.

Despite these grave environmental and health risks, farmers are drawn to tobacco farming due to its profitability. But the real beneficiaries of this growth are the big tobacco companies. In 2022, Euromonitor International estimated the value of Bangladeshi tobacco market at Tk 42,000 crore. British American Tobacco (BAT), with an 85 percent market share, saw its profit after tax rise nearly twofold from Tk 925 crore in 2019 to Tk 1,788 crore in 2023. Meanwhile, the tobacco industry, a top taxpayer, generated over Tk 32,502 crore in revenue from domestic cigarette sales alone last fiscal year, an eight percent increase from the previous year. We cannot help but wonder: is the government, which owns 10 percent share in BAT, truly genuine about its resolve to discourage tobacco farming?

Surely, the government recognises that public health and safeguarding the environment must be prioritised over short-term economic gains. It must strengthen its resolve to discourage tobacco farming by providing alternative crops with comparable profitability and technical support to farmers. We also need stricter regulations as well as public awareness campaigns to control the marketing of high-yielding tobacco varieties and the excessive use of harmful chemicals. The government's vision for a tobacco-free nation by 2040 must account for something.

Malaysian labour market freezes again

Why can't the govt address the recurring irregularities?

On Friday, Malaysia once again closed its doors to aspiring Bangladeshi migrants—along with workers from 13 other countries—because of anomalies in the worker recruitment process. Since the Southeast Asian country first started taking workers from Bangladesh, the labour market has been frozen several times, reportedly due to corruption and irregularities in the recruitment process at the expense of workers' exploitation and criminalisation. It is frustrating that in all these years, neither the Bangladeshi government nor its Malaysian counterpart took any effective steps to address the widely reported irregularities and bring to book the syndicates involved in the recruitment process.

The last MoU signed by the two countries in 2021 capped the cost of recruitment for each worker at \$720, but in reality workers ended up paying as much as \$5,000, the highest price globally, according to a report in our daily. Meanwhile, workers kept on being deceived by ghost recruiters, then jailed and detained in Malaysia for no fault of their own. In the meantime, the syndicates, including 100 Bangladeshi recruiting agencies, some of which are owned by Bangladeshi lawmakers and their families, kept on making money at the workers' expense. A portion of this money is also being laundered to Malaysia as bribes for Malaysian recruitment firms.

In a recent letter to both governments, four UN experts talked about exploitation noting that "certain high-level officials in both governments are involved in this business or condoning it." Yet, the Malaysian high commissioner to Bangladesh would have us believe that the syndicates recruiting Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia are "beyond the control of the two governments." After decades of worker exploitation right under their noses, can the two governments absolve themselves of their responsibilities, particularly when they are yet to acknowledge—much less take action against—high-level officials involved in the corrupt process?

They must bring the perpetrators to book, no matter how powerful the syndicates are. The irregularities in migrant worker recruitment need to be resolved once and for all, so that our workers do not return as dead bodies or financially and emotionally broken individuals.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



Indonesian President Sukarno delivers speech on Pancasila

On this day in 1945, in a speech, Indonesian nationalist leader Sukarno articulated the Pancasila—the Five Principles—that became the founding philosophy of the independent Indonesian state.

LOW VOTER TURNOUT IN UPAZILA ELECTION

Time for some soul-searching for the Awami League

Partha Pratim Bhattacharjee is planning editor at The Daily Star.



PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

In an ominous sign for democracy, voter turnout in Bangladesh's elections has been decreasing significantly in recent years, exhibiting voters' apathy towards this important process by staying away from casting votes. After the first phase of the ongoing upazila election, which saw 36 percent voter turnout, the ruling Awami League's General Secretary Obaidul Quader explained the poor turnout by saying that the paddy harvesting season as well as storms and rain in different districts were to blame. Nevertheless, he labelled the turnout "satisfactory."

Harvesting was over in almost all the places in the country before the second phase of election, held on May 21, and there was no rain on that day. Yet, the situation did not improve as the second phase saw only 37.57 percent voter turnout—second lowest since 2009.

Although there was not much difference in the voter turnout between the first phase and the second phase, the AL spokesperson came up with a different explanation this time, saying BNP, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and some "anti-state" intellectuals were spreading falsehoods to discourage people from casting their votes.

The AL second-in-command, however, again termed the turnout "quite satisfactory."

In the third phase of the election, which was held on Wednesday, the polls saw 36.24 percent voter turnout—lower than the second phase. This time, Quader reiterated that the voter turnout was satisfactory, despite a natural disaster in the same week.

Now, one may ask whether the Awami League, one of the oldest political parties in the country, which has always claimed to have guaranteed people's right to food and franchise,

is satisfied with 36-37 percent voter turnout. AL, which has been in power since 2009, always claimed to have 40 percent of the vote bank. If that is true, then judging by the voter turnout in recent elections, one can either assume that not all pro-AL voters are exercising their franchise, or only its own voters are turning up at the polling booths.

There are several reasons behind the voters' apathy that keeps them from exercising their franchise, including the absence of major political parties in the polls, the Election Commission's failure to ensure free and impartial elections, and the ruling party establishing a trend of being elected unopposed.

If people's apathy towards casting votes gradually turns into apathy for the democratic process, it may be dangerous for all political camps in the country, including the Awami League.

It also seems that a new voting system has been developed in the country over the past decade. Winning by all means and keeping opposition parties off the ballot has become the new voting system.

Take the last three national elections in 2014, 2018 and 2024, for example. Of them, the 2014 and 2024 elections were largely one-sided with most political parties boycotting them, while the 2018 election was questionable as opposition parties alleged that ballot stuffing took place on the night before the voting day.

In the 2014 election, 153 candidates of AL got elected without a single vote being cast, which was enough to form the government.

The total number of voters in the 2014 election for all 300 seats was 9.19 crore, while the total number of voters for the 147 seats in which the election was held was 4.31 crore. A total of 4.88

crore voters, 53 percent of the total voters, were unable to cast their votes and their mandate was not required to form the government in 2014.

In such a situation, it seems the ruling camp is not taking any election—national or local government—seriously, and an attitude may have developed within the party that "whoever wins has to be one of ours."

This time, however, the ruling party changed its strategy and decided not to give party nominations and not to allow the party electoral symbol to be used in the local body polls, aiming to make the election participatory, increase voter turnout, and turn the election festive. But this strategy has so far fallen flat as it has failed to encourage voters to turn up at the



With no voters in the vicinity, security personnel sit idle at the Dashgaon Noagaon High School polling centre in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila during the second phase of the upazila election on May 21, 2024. FILE PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

This situation has also left voters with limited options: they can either cast their votes for the ruling party candidates or its dissidents. With the absence of major political parties in recent elections, the polls appear to be a fight between Awami League and Awami League. So, before any election, Awami League aspirants put in their best efforts to get the party ticket instead of wooing voters, seemingly believing that getting the party ticket is enough for them to get elected.

Like the electoral system, a new approach has been adopted by the Awami Leaguers, and most of them have become desperate to cling to power and get elected unopposed for that. The party men don't want any competition on their way to power. In the absence of the opposition parties, the AL candidates can't even tolerate their own party colleagues on their way to win.

polling booths. Is it realistic to change the electoral culture that developed over a decade simply by changing strategy?

The time has come for the Awami League to realise why voters are turning away from casting votes. Will the ruling camp finally do some soul searching? The chances are slim.

The Awami League, which has led all democratic movements before and after the birth of Bangladesh, is now busier with government affairs than its own organisation. It is busier bashing opponents and holding programmes to counter opposition parties, than finding out organisational weaknesses in its own ranks.

As the party prepares for a grand platinum jubilee celebration next month, it is high time for the party to do some soul-searching instead of focusing on countering its political arch-rival.

How we can protect the best interests of children during divorce

Laila Khondkar is an international development worker.



LAILA KHONDKAR

"The worst thing for the children when their parents divorce is to do 'middle-manning.' You have to tell your mother about your father and vice versa," shared a young university student who had to go through this experience during her parents' divorce a few years ago.

The Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics 2023 (BSVS 2023), a nationwide survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) on 308,032 families, revealed that out of every 10,000 individuals in the country, 11 were divorced. There is a slight decline in divorce from the previous year, when the rate had increased sharply after the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, divorce is on the rise in society, and this trend is expected to continue.

There are many reasons why people may choose to separate from their partners, from a lack of mutual understanding to violence against women. Moreover, economic empowerment of women gives them the capacity to leave unhappy and abusive marriages. This article, however, is not about analysing the socioeconomic and cultural reasons for divorce. Rather, I would like to focus on the impact children suffer when their parents divorce.

Parental separation can affect children's lives in many ways, including changes in eating habits, behaviour, and exam results. Children may feel depressed and anxious, and there is also the risk of other mental health problems. Most studies on divorce

show that the first one to three years are somewhat more difficult for children to adjust to the situation. Also, not all children are equally affected by parental separation. Those who have witnessed very high levels of conflict and bitterness between parents find some relief in separation.

Post-divorce complications can often become very bitter. There are disputes between parents over who will have custody of the child. A judgement is obtained if legal recourse is taken. However, the tension throughout the whole process can negatively impact the child.

The parents of a Swedish friend of mine divorced when he was 16 years old. He said, "Since I was seven or eight years old, I have seen a dysfunctional relationship between my parents. I myself asked them to get divorced when I reached adolescence. During my school final exams, the situation at home was insufferable because of their conflicts. A social worker arranged for me to be placed with another family. So, when my parents finally

got divorced, I was relieved." My friend maintained a good relationship with both parents after the divorce. He is now a university teacher and a father of two children. There are countless examples of children succeeding in education, career and life after parental divorce.

Some teenagers in Bangladesh feel like my Swedish friend because the intense strife between their parents is unbearable for them. Many have witnessed physical and emotional abuse taking place in the relationship between their parents. According to child protection experts, if children witness abuse happening in front of them, it is also a form of child abuse. Children need to be protected from this form of abuse as well.

Divorce is still a taboo subject and considered unacceptable by many in Bangladesh. The attitude is changing slowly, but the dominant social tendency is to protect the institution of marriage at any cost, even when it is no longer meaningful for the couple concerned. Therefore, children are under additional mental stress when parents are separated. Many are bullied at school and are subjected to harsh comments from neighbours and relatives. These discriminatory social attitudes need to change. People should stop making judgemental remarks about matters of others' lives without having the slightest idea about their realities.

Post-divorce complications can often become very bitter. There are disputes between parents over who will have custody of the child. A judgement is obtained if legal recourse is taken. However, the tension throughout the whole process can negatively impact the child. Some parents also prevent the child from seeing another parent, which is not acceptable from a legal point of view and a violation of children's rights. Except for a few extreme cases when a parent is a risk to the child, every parent has a right to interact with the child and perform

their responsibilities. Having both parents in life is positive for the child's holistic development.

Some parents involve their children in discussions about alimony, division of property, etc, or try to sway them to their side. When parents fight or blame each other in front of their children, it leads the child to believe they must take sides, which is harmful for them. A parent's responsibility is to protect the child's best interests under all circumstances, but many fail to do so post-separation. Their anger and frustration are reflected in their behaviour towards their children.

Parents should consider the situation from their children's perspectives. It is beneficial for children to grow up in a peaceful environment with their parents. But if that cannot be ensured and separation becomes inevitable, the matter should be explained to the children as clearly as possible. Parents should listen carefully if their children express their feelings about the separation. Every child is different. Their reactions will also vary. It is important to let them know that feelings of anxiety, anger, and sadness are normal.

Parents have to learn how to manage the process in a mature way so that it does not affect children negatively. They are responsible for not involving children in the bitterness following separation. It is important for children to have reassurance that despite the separation, both parents will love them unconditionally. Children should be informed that even if the relationship between their parents changes, they can still love both of them.

Relatives, neighbours, and colleagues need to be sensitive to the people going through a divorce as well as their children. Teachers should also ensure that no student is discriminated against because of their parents' divorce. These will make it relatively easier for children to cope with the situation.

Kaiputra: The untold story of a discriminated and excluded community



Philip Gain
is researcher and director at
the Society for Environment and
Human Development (SEHD).

PHILIP GAIN

The government term for the community that rears pigs in the open field in Bangladesh is Kawara. The public, in general, also uses the same word but Kawara, in Bangla, is used in a derogatory way implying the community that lives with pigs. Lately, the Kawara people have adopted the term "Kaiputra," a more respectable term to identify themselves.

If you are travelling through the southwestern districts, especially Satkhira, Jashore, Khulna, Kushtia, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Barishal and Narail, you are likely to see a herd of pigs grazing along the roadside or in a *beef*. Generally, a flock has 200 to 500 black pigs, almost similar to wild boar in looks. Pigs are considered unholy and therefore unwanted in a Muslim majority country.

However, the pork that comes from the southwestern districts of Bangladesh has high demand among non-Muslims and the big hotels, particularly in Dhaka. The Christians in Dhaka cannot think of celebrating their festivals without pork from the southwestern districts of the country. In fact, black pigs, fed and reared in the open field in these low-lying districts, are routinely slaughtered in Nagori in Kaliganj close to Dhaka and brought to shops in Farmgate. The meat is also supplied to hotels.

We have been following the herds of pigs in a few districts since 2016 for our research interest on the Kaiputra, one of the most miserable and impoverished people of Bangladesh. They leave their families in villages in Satkhira, Jashore and Khulna districts and live with the pigs throughout the year. A herd of 500 pigs require a dozen strong men who are known as *rakhals*. What I admire most about the *rakhals* is that they treat the pigs like their siblings. They have particular skills to communicate with the

pigs, an intelligent animal.

The *rakhals* indeed feed the pigs, live with them day and night and talk to them. The pigs also listen to them and follow their instructions. The *rakhals* and pigs in the depth of our beels have an amazing life that we hardly notice. We normally see them when they come on the road to move from one place to another or feed along the roadside.

The rakhals and their origin

The Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) has thoroughly mapped the Kaiputra community and published a book, "Kaiputra: Pig Rearing Community" in 2019. SEHD found this community in 46 villages in Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna districts. In 41 of these villages, the Kaiputra community is active in their traditional business of pig rearing in the open. Kaiputras in five of the villages do not send their men as *rakhals* in the field. In addition to these 46 villages, there are another 29 villages in these three districts, where the Kaiputra communities have taken up fishing. They are no more interested in traditional pig rearing and in identifying themselves as Kaiputra.

The guesstimated Kaiputra population is 12,000. In 2018, the number of herds of pigs reported by the community members was 102 and the number of pigs, 16,296. Some members of the Kaiputra communities also raise pigs in their homes.

Although all Kaiputra people are followers of Hinduism, they are not considered to be within the four *Varnas* of the caste system and are therefore untouchables. There is no other community in the southwest of Bangladesh so isolated, ostracised, broken, impoverished and socially excluded.

On April 7 and 8, I visited a Kaiputra para in Dakshin Alipur (No. 2 Ward) in Alipur Union of Satkhira Sadar Upazila. The condition of

47 Kaiputra households—39 on the western side and 8 on the eastern side—of the Satkhira-Shyamnagar highway is worse than appalling. Many of the houses are *jhupris*. The community reported that the 47 families have been living there on *khas* land for many decades.

Around 50 men (*rakhals*) from this Kaiputra para go out in the field with their herds. Their monthly salary ranges between

pigs, our neighbours look down on us," says Shefali Mondol (35), who also begs and sometimes works as a daily labourer. "In tea stalls and hotels in *bazar* areas, our cups and plates are separate. We are not socially equal to other humans."

The government reportedly has plans to expand the Satkhira-Shyamnagar Highway into four lanes and has been asking the Kaiputra community to vacate the land they

of Bangladesh. These families will remain grateful to the prime minister if she resettles each of them on a piece of land.

Living the life of pig graziers in a fast-changing Bangladesh is really challenging. Maintaining a herd of around 500 pigs requires a large sum of money. The owners of the herds do not have access to bank loans. They take loans from moneylenders at a very high interest rate. They also take loans from NGOs, which are inadequate. There are also high risks of swine flu and other unknown diseases that kill pigs in masses.

In January 2022, an unknown disease killed many herds of pigs. Dilip Mondol, owner of a big herd of pigs in Vayana village in Jashore, helplessly watched all of his 700 animals die when an unknown disease struck. His net loss was Tk 50 lakh. His debt to different parties was Tk 30 lakh. He is completely broke now. He is not sure if and when he can come back to business. There are many others who witnessed their pigs' death after the attack of the unknown disease. Many do not report these diseases in fear of hostility from the locals.

The Kaiputra people want change and a respectful life. Bangladesh has indeed made significant progress in many sectors including health, education, economy, employment generation and fisheries. Many from the Kaiputra community have also changed their occupation. Those who have given up their pig grazer profession and moved to fishing feel they are doing better socially and economically. Many have also been changing their Kaiputra title, Mondol, to Taraldar, Biswas, Sarkar, etc. Their children are getting admitted to schools in greater numbers. Yet, the Kaiputra like those in Dakshin Alipur are left far behind than any other community in the southwest, where they are concentrated.

As long as they keep taking their pigs for grazing in the open field, a practice they have inherited from their forefathers, they need support and protection from state and non-state parties. Their urgent needs include but are not limited to: the ability to take their pigs for grazing without fear, license, insurance, access to bank loans, social protection, access to *khas* land with ownership, medical treatment for pigs when they are struck by diseases, and recognition of pigs as domestic animals.



Rakhals with their herd of pigs in Gopalganj in 2016.

PHOTO: PHILIP GAIN

Tk 3,000 and Tk 9,000 plus a daily allowance for food.

The most appalling thing about the Kaiputra community of Dakshin Alipur is 25 of its female members, all widows and abandoned, beg in neighbouring areas. One of them is Kalyani Mondol (60 and above), who has been begging since her husband, a *rakhali*, died many years ago. She has a daughter, who has been married off. Kalyani lives in a *jhupri*, about 6 feet by 6 feet, made of nipa palm leaves, polythene and rusted tins. During rain, she has to sit up and stay awake. She is physically handicapped and walks with the help of a stick. What she gets in widow allowance is hardly enough. She cannot survive without begging.

"Because we beg and our men work with

inhabit. The Kaiputra people are completely landless and have nowhere to go.

They, however, have a suggestion for their relocation. "We are landless and our houses are so flimsy that we consider ourselves homeless," says China Mondol, a mother of two *rakhals*. China occasionally begs for a living. "There is plenty of *khas* land on the western side of our current location. We are repeatedly appealing for pucca houses under Ashrayan scheme to resettle us there."

It is to be noted that in August the prime minister announced Satkhira Sadar Upazila free of landless and homeless people. The 47 Kaiputra families of Dakshin Alipur in Satkhira Sadar clearly show that the upazila is not free of the landless and homeless, if Kaiputra people are considered citizens

Earth: Our only home, our responsibility



Md Ziaul Haque
is assistant professor at the
Department of English of the
University of Creative Technology,
Chittagong.

MD ZIAUL HAQUE

The fragile beauty of Earth is a poetic reminder of the intricate balance that sustains all life on our planet. From the expansive oceans to the verdant forests and majestic mountains, every facet of our natural world contributes harmoniously to the symphony of existence. The intricate ecosystems brimming with a diverse array of flora and fauna underscore the resilience and interconnectedness of all living organisms.

However, the swift pace of human activities, which are causing deforestation, pollution, and climate change, poses a severe threat to Earth's delicate beauty. It is crucial for us to acknowledge that our actions have profound consequences on this planet, and to assume responsibility for preserving and safeguarding this irreplaceable home for future generations.

Environmental conservation transcends mere moral obligation; it is an essential prerequisite for the survival of our planet and its inhabitants. The well-being of humanity is directly linked to the health of our ecosystems, encompassing clean air, water, and fertile soil for agriculture. Through the preservation of biodiversity and protection of natural habitats, we ensure that the delicate balance within our ecosystem remains undisturbed, enhancing resilience against environmental perils such as climate change.

Moreover, environmental conservation plays a pivotal role in securing the ability of future generations to flourish on Earth. By taking proactive measures to curb pollution, conserve resources, and mitigate habitat destruction now, we are investing in a sustainable future for all life forms on this planet. Each individual endeavour towards environmental conservation contributes significantly towards fostering a more symbiotic relationship between humankind and the natural world—one that prioritises reverence for the

environment and ensures enduring prosperity for all living entities.

Amid mounting evidence showcasing the undeniable impacts of climate change, we must acknowledge the urgency surrounding this global crisis. Rising sea levels, extreme weather phenomena, and ecological shifts are no longer distant anticipations but tangible realities confronting us today. The accelerated pace at which environmental degradation is unfolding necessitates immediate action from individuals, communities, and nations alike.

Of particular concern are the ramifications of climate change on biodiversity. Species worldwide face extinction as their habitats vanish or become inhospitable due to fluctuating temperatures and environmental circumstances. Moreover, the issue of climate change is exacerbating prevalent social disparities by disproportionately affecting marginalised communities that lack the means to adapt or recover from environmental crises. With rising temperatures and an increase in natural disasters, vulnerable populations face heightened risks to their health, livelihoods, and overall welfare. A comprehensive approach to addressing climate change is imperative, one that places equity and justice at the forefront. Preserving biodiversity and the health of ecosystems is not merely an environmental concern but a critical matter for human survival. Each species within an ecosystem plays a vital role in maintaining its equilibrium, and the loss of even one can trigger ripple effects throughout the entire system.

By safeguarding biodiversity, we are also ensuring our own well-being, as diverse ecosystems provide essential resources such as clean air, water, food, and medicine. Additionally, protecting ecosystems is crucial for combating climate change. Healthy forests act as carbon sinks by absorbing

significant amounts of CO2 from the atmosphere and helping regulate global temperatures. Safeguarding these natural habitats is essential for addressing climate change and securing a sustainable future for the upcoming generations.

Sustainable living practices are key to securing a flourishing future for our planet. From reducing waste and embracing renewable energy sources to supporting local businesses and promoting ethical consumption practices, each small step we take can have a substantial impact on the environment. By making mindful choices in our daily lives, we can contribute to a more sustainable and harmonious world for upcoming generations.

The adoption of minimalism is another pivotal aspect of sustainable living that often goes unnoticed. Instead of constantly pursuing material possessions and consumerism, embracing a minimalist lifestyle helps decrease our carbon footprint and shift our focus towards experiences over material goods. By simplifying our lives and reducing excess clutter, we not only benefit the environment but also enhance our overall well-being in the process.

Dissemination of information and the education of others on environmental concerns can also serve as a catalyst for collective efforts towards a more sustainable future. Simple gestures such as engaging in community clean-up initiatives or backing local conservation projects have the potential to trigger a cascade of positive outcomes. Ultimately, it falls upon each individual to acknowledge his or her role in shaping the planet's well-being and to strive towards a harmonious coexistence with the natural world.

Government policies and global initiatives hold significant sway in determining the course of our planet's future. International agreements on climate change, like the Paris Agreement, and sustainability targets set by various nations are pivotal in addressing environmental issues on a global scale. It is heartening to witness governments uniting to combat challenges such as deforestation, pollution, and resource depletion through collaborative endeavours and shared commitments. Nonetheless, there remains substantial work ahead in terms

of effectively implementing and enforcing these policies. Without robust enforcement mechanisms and accountability measures, many initiatives risk falling short of their intended impact.

Our obligation to safeguard our habitat culminates in recognising that

the destiny of Earth lies within our grasp. Each person has a responsibility to safeguard and nurture this planet for generations to come. By curbing our ecological footprint and advocating for sustainable methods, we collectively hold the power to instigate change. Moreover,

acknowledging the interdependence among all living creatures underscores the urgency for immediate action. By understanding that every decision we make impacts not only ourselves but also the intricate balance of nature, we can start fostering a sense of duty towards this beautiful planet.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department Office of the Executive Engineer Pirojpur. www.lged.gov.bd

সেবা হাসিনার যুগান্তিত
আম শাহের উদ্ভূতি

Memo No.46.02.7900.000.07.001.2024-721

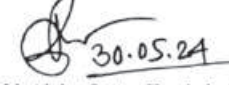
Date-30.05.2024

e-Tender Notice No-64/2023-2024 (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works office of the under signed.

Sl no.	Tender ID No.	Package No and Name of works	Last selling date & time	Closing & Opening Date & Time
1	993524	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-285) Construction of 21.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on ikree ishaque master house-jhawtala road at ch.2650.00m road [Road ID: 5791454002] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
2	993525	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-286) Construction of 18.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on sreepur uzr to katakhali bopdrer via 104 no gps road at ch.400.00m, road [Road ID: 579145256] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
3	993526	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-287) Construction of 10.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on senerhat-bhitbaria up office. at ch.1870.00m. road [Road ID: 579143001] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
4	993527	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-288) Construction of 14.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on bhitbaria up office to eneyet khan hat. at ch.2070.00m. road [Road ID: 579143004] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
5	993528	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-289) Construction of 11.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on matibhanga amir ali khan house bridge to uttar charail poler hat uzr road at ch. 1200.00m. road [Road ID: 579145203] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
6	993529	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-290) Construction of 10.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on bhandaria-kawkhali rhd road to basher pul to eneyet hat via h/o siddik mollabari road at ch.600.00m. road [Road ID: 579144091] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
7	993530	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-291) Construction of 14.00m. Long RCC bridge on bhitbaria up office to eneyet khan hat. at ch.1620.00m. road [Road ID: 579143004] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
8	993531	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-292) Construction of 20.00m. Long RCC bridge on bhandaria chairkhali rhd road to md. toyabali shop via md. jabber howlader house, at ch. 120.00m. road [Road ID: 579145122] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM
9	993532	IBRP/Piroj/Ban/Brg-293) Construction of 12.00m. Long RCC girder bridge on hetalia ns high school to pasharbania high school via hosen boyati house At ch. 10.00m. road [Road ID: 579145127] under Bhandaria Upazila, District: Pirojpur.	23.06.2024 16:00 PM	24.06.2024 13:00 PM

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 through on line at any branches of registered Banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


(Md. Abdus Sattar Howlader)
Executive Engineer
LGED, Pirojpur.
Tel: 02478890486
Email: xcn.perojpur@lged.gov.bd

5 Reasons Why You Should Drink MILK EVERY DAY

SAMIA HUDA

Milk, often referred to as nature's most complete food, has been a dietary staple for centuries. It's not just a beverage; it's a powerhouse of essential nutrients that contribute to overall health and well-being. Here are five compelling reasons why you should make drinking milk a daily habit.



1

EXCELLENT SOURCE OF CALCIUM

Calcium is crucial for maintaining strong bones and teeth. Milk is one of the best sources of this vital mineral, helping prevent conditions such as osteoporosis and dental problems. Consuming adequate calcium, especially during childhood and adolescence when bone growth is at its peak, sets the foundation for a healthier skeletal system throughout life. For adults, regular intake of calcium helps maintain bone density and reduces the risk of fractures.



2

RICH IN HIGH-QUALITY PROTEIN

Protein is an essential macronutrient that plays a critical role in building and repairing tissues, producing enzymes and hormones, and supporting immune function. Milk contains all nine essential amino acids, making it a complete protein source. Drinking milk daily can help meet your body's protein requirements, which is particularly beneficial for those engaged in regular physical activity or muscle-building.

3

PACKED WITH ESSENTIAL VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Milk is rich in vitamin D, which aids in calcium absorption and bone health. Additionally, milk contains vitamin B12, important for red blood cell production and neurological function, and vitamin A, essential for vision and immune health. The potassium and magnesium in milk help regulate blood pressure and support cardiovascular health.



4

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Incorporating milk into your daily diet can aid in weight management. The protein and fat content in milk contribute to a feeling of fullness, reducing overall calorie intake by curbing hunger and preventing overeating. Studies have shown that individuals who consume dairy regularly are more likely to maintain a healthy weight or even lose weight when combined with a balanced diet and regular exercise.

5

PROMOTES HYDRATION AND OVERALL HEALTH

Milk is composed of about 90% water, making it an excellent source of hydration. Staying hydrated is vital for bodily functions such as temperature regulation, nutrient transport, and waste removal. Furthermore, the electrolytes in milk, such as potassium and sodium, help maintain fluid balance in the body, which is especially important after exercise or during hot weather. So, raise a glass to better health and make milk a daily habit!

আপনার সন্তানের বেড়ে ওঠায় নিয়মিত

WORLD'S NUMBER 1[#] MILK POWDER

দিচ্ছেন তো?

Happy World Milk Day!



#Source:Euromonitor Limited; Dairy Products and Alternative 2023 Edition; Retail Value RSP, 2022 data

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FLASH FLOOD IN SYLHET

6.43 lakh people stranded in eight upazilas

Many facing shortage of drinking water, food

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

At least 6.43 lakh people have been marooned in Sylhet's eight upazilas as flash floods hit the district early Thursday, according to the local administration.

Vast swathes of low-lying areas in Gowainghat, Companiganj, Jaintiapur, Kanaighat, Zakiganj, Beanibazar, Golapganj, and Sadar upazilas went under water owing to incessant rains and a gush of water from upstream areas in neighbouring Indian Meghalaya State since Wednesday night.

As a result, homes, schools, vegetable fields, fish enclosures, and key roads were submerged in 48 unions under these eight upazilas.

The flood-affected people are suffering from shortage of food and drinking water.

"Water entered my home so quickly that I could barely save any of my belongings. Paddy stored in the house got wet, and my fish worth Tk 7 lakh in three ponds were washed away," Moklisur Rahman, a resident of Nayagram Uttar area in Gowainghat upazila, told this newspaper last morning as he was drying his crop on a road.



Sabina Akhter's house, located in the same village next to a haor, was swept away by strong currents when the flash floods hit first.

"We had to take shelter at a neighbour's house. We'll now have to take out a loan to rebuild the house, but we aren't sure how we would repay the loan," she said.

Malika Begum of Forfora village in Jaintiapur upazila said her family along with eight other families took refuge at a shelter early Thursday.

"There were 15 families last night. Seven of them left as the floodwater in their localities receded. But we are still not being able to return home as the situation has not improved in our village," she said.

With the Sari Gowain river flowing below danger level, the floodwaters were slowly receding yesterday in five upazilas that were first hit by the flash floods — Gowainghat, Companiganj, Jaintiapur, Kanaighat, Zakiganj.

As of 6:00pm yesterday, the river was flowing 24cm below the danger mark at Gowainghat point and 34cm below the danger mark at Sarighat point, where the river flowed 33cm above the danger mark around the same time on Thursday.

In the last 24 hours till 6:00pm yesterday, 15mm rainfall was recorded in Kanaighat upazila and 19mm in Sylhet Sadar upazila.

Meanwhile, 193mm of rainfall was recorded in Cherrapunji, Meghalaya in the last 24 hours till 9:00am yesterday.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



This bridge on the Louhajang river in Kachudanga area of Tangail town was built three years ago, but there is no approach road to it. Bamboo walkways built by locals offer a precarious crossing for pedestrians.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

Unrest likely if Rohingyas not sent back to Myanmar

Says home boss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Unrest may occur in Cox's Bazar if the Rohingyas are not repatriated soon, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said yesterday.

"A hub of international terrorists may be created here. There may be an influx of arms. Many things can happen. And we already see some signs of them," he told journalists while visiting a Rohingya camp in Ukhiya of Cox's Bazar in the morning.

The minister said some people who are fighting inside Myanmar can be seen in Rohingya camps.

"The biggest fear is that drugs have been coming in from Myanmar for a long time although our country does not produce any drugs. Some people in the camps here have got involved in drugs," said Asaduzzaman.

He said the government is trying to identify those

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Israel offers new Gaza ceasefire plan

Says Biden, urges Hamas to accept it; aid not reaching Gaza population, says UN

REUTERS, Washington

US President Joe Biden yesterday said Israel had proposed a Gaza ceasefire in exchange for the release of hostages, and called on Hamas to agree to the new offer, saying it was the best way to end the conflict.

"It's time for this war to end and for the day after to begin," said Biden, who is under election-year pressure to stop the Gaza conflict, now in its eighth month.

Talks mediated by Egypt, Qatar and others to arrange a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas have repeatedly stalled, with both sides blaming the other for the lack of progress.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli prime minister's office or from Hamas on Biden's remarks.

The new proposal Biden laid out yesterday is made up of three phases;

the first would be a ceasefire lasting for six weeks.

During this time, Israeli forces would withdraw from Gaza and hostages, including the elderly and women, would be exchanged for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. Palestinian civilians would return to Gaza, including northern Gaza, and 600 trucks would bring humanitarian aid into Gaza each day, Biden said.

In the second phase, Hamas and Israel would negotiate terms of a permanent end to hostilities. "The ceasefire will still continue as long as negotiations continue," the president said.

The third phase would include a major reconstruction plan for Gaza.

The proposal has been relayed to Hamas by Qatar, Biden said.

He called on those in Israel who were pushing for "indefinite" war to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

- » Israel says combat operations in part of north Gaza over
- » 60 more Palestinians killed
- » Humanitarian situation dire in Gaza: Blinken

57 constituencies go to polls today

Modi, Omar Abdullah among key candidates in the last phase

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

An estimated 10.06 crore Indians are expected to cast their votes today in the last phase of voting in 57 constituencies spread across eight states and two union territories.

A total of 904 candidates, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, are in the fray in the seventh and final phase of voting which began on April 19.

Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is seeking a third term from the ancient city of Varanasi in eastern Uttar Pradesh, and his nearest challenger is Ajay Rai of Congress.

In a video message to Varanasi voters on the last day of campaigning on Thursday, Modi urged them to turn up at polling booths in record numbers.

Among other key candidates in the seventh phase are: senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad in Patna Sahib constituency in Bihar, Omar Abdullah of Jammu and Kashmir National Conference in Baramulla and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee in Diamond Harbour.

Nine Lok Sabha constituencies in Kolkata, its nearby suburbs, and the Sunderbans are going to the polls in the last phase of elections in West Bengal. Votes will be counted on June 4.

In Punjab, there will be battles for 13 seats between the state's ruling Aam Aadmi Party and Congress despite the fact that the two parties had forged an alliance for taking on BJP for the seven seats in Delhi.

Once again, the focus in the last phase will be on the voter turnout. The turnout in the first six phases of polling was 66.14 percent, 66.71, 65.68, 69.16, 62.2 and

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



AZIZ AHMED

Decision on probing graft allegations soon: ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission will soon decide whether it will launch an investigation into the corruption allegations against former army chief Aziz Ahmed.

In a meeting on Thursday, the ACC reviewed the petition filed by a Supreme Court lawyer and asked its Scrutiny Committee to look into the allegations against Aziz.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, ACC Chairman Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah said the Scrutiny Committee was instructed to verify whether the allegations against General (ret'd) Aziz fall within the jurisdiction of the commission as per

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

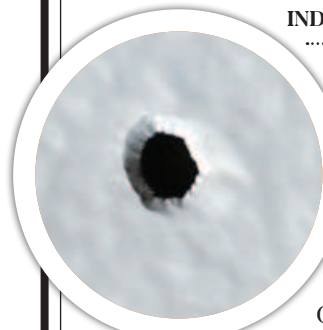


Smoke billows following Israeli bombardment as displaced Palestinians move in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Mysterious pit on Mars could be key to colonising the Red Planet

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



A newly discovered hole on Mars likely connected to underground caves could be key to colonising the Red Planet, astronomers say.

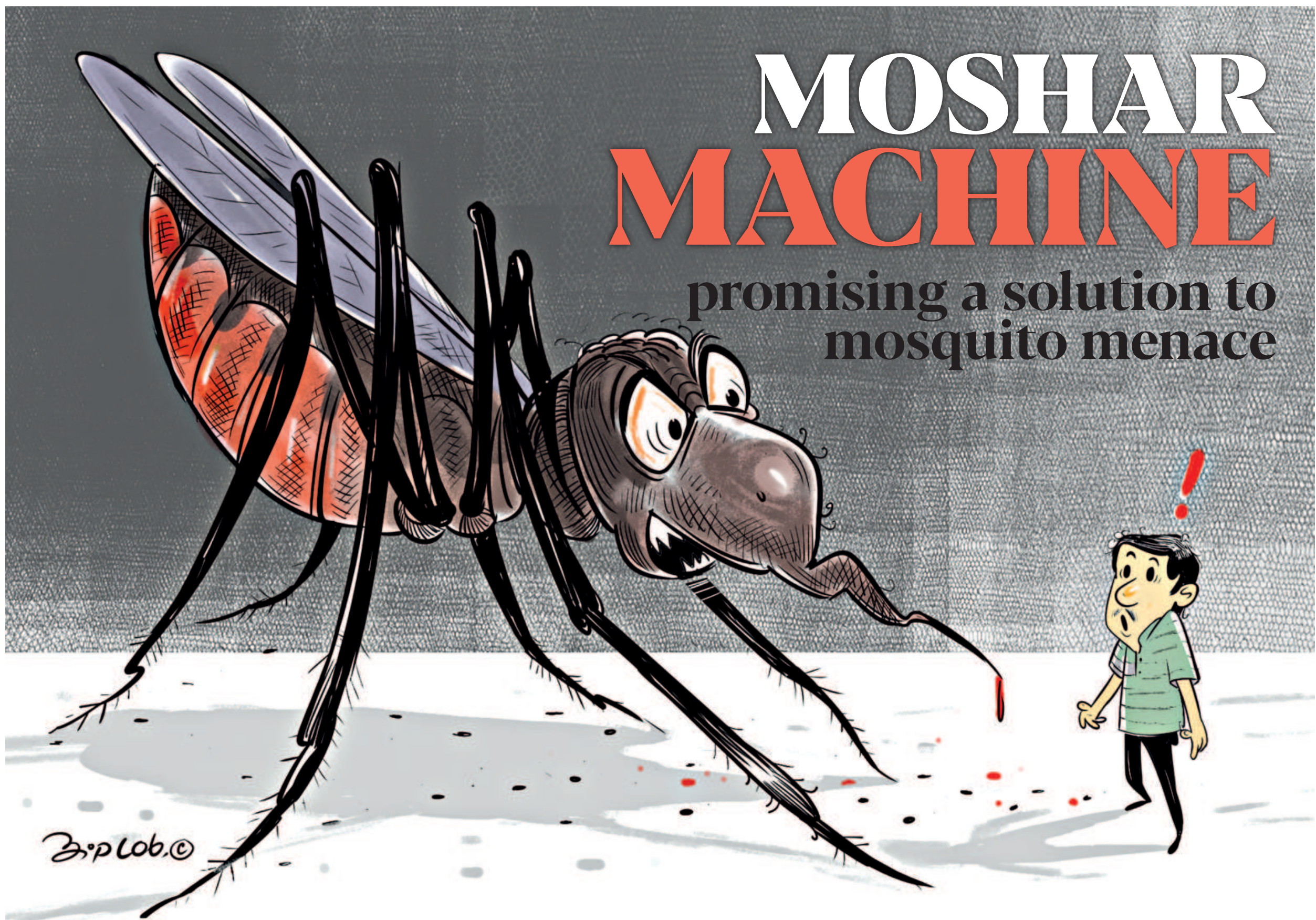
An image of the pit, which is a few metres across, was captured by Nasa's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter.

"Pits may reflect geologically recent tectonic or volcanic activity. Any associated caves could be targets for future robotic exploration," researchers at the University of Arizona who analysed the images said in a blog post.

Mars has vast networks of lava tubes similar to those found on Earth which could host life forms, sheltering them from dust storms and the harsh planetary conditions caused by the lack of an effective magnetic shield and a thick atmosphere like Earth's.

Scientists suggest such cave networks, formed from the collapse of ancient lava tubes, could be potential shelters for future astronauts.

The newly discovered pit is near a dormant volcano in the Arsia Mons region, a volcanic plain thousands of kilometres across. This region is elevated relative to the rest of Mars by about 10km on average.



MOSHAR MACHINE

promising a solution to mosquito menace

“We designed this metal body to house the device so that it can be deployed in public places. This metal outer cage made this machine extremely durable, requiring simple maintenance like cleaning the nets with a brush.”

Ashiqur Tanim, Founder THINK LABS

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

When the entire country is grappling with mosquito menace, a Bangladeshi entrepreneur and his team have come up with an ingenious solution that promises to be an effective tool in mosquito control.

Manufactured entirely in their lab with low-cost, eco-friendly technology, the device, named “Moshar Machine”, can trap and kill a large number of mosquitoes if placed at an appropriate location.

Ashiqur Tanim, an Australian-educated entrepreneur, returned to Bangladesh in 2019 to invest in the research and development sector. He set up a lab in Dhaka named THINK LABS, hired young Bangladeshi engineers and started developing tech-based solutions for a wide range of clients.

Tanim’s love for technology and his drive to make a difference led him to focus on mosquito-borne diseases like Dengue, which take countless lives each year. He saw this as his chance to



breathing ensures that beneficial insects for the ecosystems such as bees will not get attracted by the device.

He also stated that while any insect trapping system might unintentionally catch a small number of beneficial insects, the Moshar Machine’s design significantly reduces the likelihood of this happening. The team is always monitoring field data and feedback to refine the Moshar Machine for maximum effectiveness further and minimise unintended impact.

He suggested, “For indoor use, the best performance can be obtained if the machine is positioned in well-ventilated spaces and entry points of a house. We have also developed the prototype of a smaller portable version of this machine for indoor usage.”

According to Tanim, the larger version of the machine is perfect for controlling mosquitoes in public spaces and mosquito breeding zones, ultimately reducing mosquito infestation in the locality.

THE INNOVATION NEEDS FUNDING AND PATRONISATION

THINK Labs’ innovative device has attracted attention from various quarters, and many people and institutions have purchased it for personal use.

Bangladesh Diesel Plant Limited, a state-owned engineering company, has shown interest in manufacturing the steel outer cage of the device. At present, the team has the capacity to manufacture 3,500 of these machines per month.

According to Tanim, the full benefit of this machine can only be realised when it is deployed systematically in public places and mosquito breeding zones and managed by relevant authorities.

He said, “If the government tries the machine and patronises its research and development, a more durable, high capacity and low-cost version of this machine can be developed. We have the capacity to install anti-theft and automatic monitoring mechanisms with this machine for deploying in public places. Some of these models have already been deployed at different places in Dhaka and they are working really well.”

light at a particular wavelength which enables it to interact with a special chemical coating within the device. Scientifically, this interaction is called photocatalysis.

This process produces highly reactive superoxide anions and hydroxyl radicals which oxidise organic matter in the air (bacteria, viruses and other organic compounds) and this ultimately leads to the release of trace levels of carbon dioxide that replicates human breathing.

According to Tanim, “Usual CO2 mosquito traps burn fossil fuels such as propane and use other chemicals to mimic human breathing. Users have to refuel the device regularly which is expensive and the fuel and its byproducts may also have some adverse impact on the environment.”

“The Moshar Machine’s innovative technology initiates photocatalysis and uses organic compounds in the air to replicate human breathing. So, we don’t need any fuel to operate the machine and it does not produce any adverse by-products,” states Tanim.

“On the other hand, the process automatically kills harmful bacteria and viruses in the air thus disinfecting it. And, the huge amount of dead mosquitoes this machine produces can be used as high-quality poultry and fish feed,” added Tanim.

Once the mosquitoes get attracted

to the machine, they are sucked into it through automated flaps and transferred to a cage where they die within two to three hours from dehydration. The flow of dry air produced by a fan fitted inside the machine speeds up the process of dehydration.

The entire setup comes inside a large metal body so that it can be safely used outdoors.

Tanim said, “We designed this metal body to house the device so that it can be deployed in public places. This metal outer cage made this machine extremely durable, requiring simple maintenance like cleaning the nets with a brush. It also enables the device to have a high volume of mosquito retention capacity.”

EFFICACY OF MOSHAR MACHINE
Eminent entomologist Professor Dr Kabirul Bashar has conducted a comprehensive efficacy test of the device at several locations.

He commented in the test report, “According to the test results, the Moshar Machine attracts and captures mosquitoes quite successfully. Its ability to significantly reduce mosquito populations in the tested environments is particularly promising. The Moshar Machine’s environmentally friendly design, free of hazardous chemicals, not only makes it safe to use in a variety of situations

but it also benefits the environment.”

The test report showed that the Moshar Machine successfully captured and killed eight species of mosquitoes including Aedes albopictus which transmits dengue, zika virus and Chikungunya, Anopheles minimus which is one of the primary vectors of malaria and other species of culex, mansonia and armigeres mosquitoes.

When asked about the efficacy of this machine Dr Bashar commented, “I have compared this device with other mosquito traps developed by renowned foreign companies. I have found Moshar Machine more effective and much cheaper than those. It can kill more than 3,000 mosquitoes in one night. It is appreciable that a Bangladeshi company has developed it and I think we should popularise it.”

Dr Bashar stated further, “The device only attracts female mosquitoes as a result it can affect breeding and curb mosquito population effectively. The Moshar Machine can be a non-hazardous and environment friendly approach to control mosquitoes if it can be deployed and managed effectively on a wider scale.”

Tanim said the machine’s unique technology of emulating human



contribute meaningfully to the society.

After years of research, Tanim and his team at THINK LABS developed a mosquito trap based on the formula of existing CO2 mosquito traps. However, unlike the other traps, THINK LABS’ device is of much larger capacity, way cheaper, and eco-friendly. It can also be used as an air disinfectant.

HOW THE DEVICE WORKS

The researchers at THINK LAB have developed a way to make the device emulate human breathing, a feature that female mosquitoes, which require blood to reproduce, find irresistible.

The “Moshar Machine” device is equipped with a light source that emits

FICTION

AFTER THE RAIN

MIR ARIF

At that time the only thing that mattered to me was being a bad boy in the industry. I knew I was excused for the gossip I created, for a huge portion of my fans were naïve to believe that my scandals were simply the creation of the media, to keep the populace returning to theaters for the same films—in other words, a simple business ploy.

While leaving the institute, a nurse gave me a packet of cigarettes as a token of friendship. I sat on the grassy lawn secured with a chain link fence, took a cigarette out of the packet, and wedged it between my lips. It was one of those slow afternoons when leaves didn't stir and clouds didn't move—only occasionally crows cawed from some magnolia branches, as though waking people up from a reverie. Behind me stood the three-story facility, its red walls peeled off by age and humidity. With no one to disturb my silence, no residents guffawing or raving, I could finally enjoy a silent afternoon on my own. It was strange to be able to sit under the open sky as a part of me didn't want to leave, wanted to go back inside the institute, my second home where I spent 36 years of my life, more than half of which passed sleeping. I was lucky to have never been chained to bedposts, which was done to some patients to avoid violence and aggression. Getting a second chance to live, I knew I wouldn't return there and squander it.

Of all things, I wished to see myself in front of a mirror. Were there any remnants of youth and handsomeness on my face? Or did I turn ugly, so bad that my appearance would frighten strangers and kids? Or was it a face of age and wisdom, with tufts of grey hair resting on my head? I had no idea what I looked like, but I knew that nobody would believe that I was born into a very wealthy family. My

perhaps she didn't. A thin, wispy woman in my memory, always fighting with my father for something not right in the house. Although she never named it, we kids knew. We knew she wasn't our mother; she was simply passing her years with us. She had nowhere else to go, no laws to protect her rights, no friends to console her. As though to balance the turmoil in the family, my father prospered outside, in his ship-making business. The only good thing he did for us was bring home a projector and run foreign films—mostly Indian and Iranian and occasionally Hollywood, films that came out not so recently but years and decades ago. He watched them with us in the garden, seated on his old Burmese teak chair, surrounded by sash-wearing servants while everyone else, including my mother, sat on the grass.

I didn't know where it came from, probably the movies had something to do with it. I grew up believing I was meant for greater things in life. I'd been acting since high school, a passion I continued with utmost honesty. Years later, after influential letters and phone calls from my father, I signed my first film contract that earned me 30,000 taka. It was a lot back then, for a young bachelor I mean, but I compensated for all the losses of my early youth by sleeping frequently with my co-stars, producer's wives, and occasionally fans. In short, I was a symbol of debauchery and licentiousness. It was a bad deal for a young nation trying to realise what she wanted to become. Frustrated boys looked up to film stars; young girls copied the notion

were never painted black, nor did projectionists insert any pornographic materials during the show.

Not all journalists were easy; some Western-educated ones found it appalling having to come back to their homeland to work in a new industry that didn't generate as much profit as they hoped for in their nascent career. They told us how to run things, hounded me for days for gossip. I would neither deny nor affirm my recent scandal with Suchanda and her failing marriage. Sometimes silence lets your audience think you are smart, a simple strategy that I also learned from the industry. It was one of those tough days, having been interviewed between my shooting breaks by a young journalist in a single-breasted jacket. The shooting itself was indoors, in a large duplex mansion, where, according to the plot, I was to visit and grovel at the father of my heroine to ratify our eloped marriage. I was to climb the stairs, only existing in those film mansions, and talk to my heroine's father who was waiting to see my ability to climb stairs, a pure ups and downs affair for the morally astute hero. When the heroine's father shouted—"Get out, you scoundrel. I say get out!"—I might have strayed from the script and uttered one or two sentences on a whim. The director, a university dropout with a strict sense of direction, wasn't happy about my liberty with dialogues. I had a row with him and when I stormed out, the young journalist came after me with unreal questions that had nothing to do with acting or films. Still, I patiently responded to his questions, ruling out any possibility of fathering a child with one of my co-stars. I was in a very bad mood when I left the set without finishing the slotted scenes of the day and drove straight to Dacca Club in my recently purchased Chevrolet Impala. I honked and floored the accelerator recklessly in a rickshaw-filled avenue shaded by flame trees. Although not as fancy as a hand-built Cadillac or Rolls-Royce, the sports coupe had a smooth, elongated body, painted in a shade of beautiful turquoise that no other cars in the city had. I took pride in that classic American car, a symbol of power and style, complementing my rising popularity.

The stairs at the club cascaded up to the third floor, and eventually to the rooftop, where I planned to occupy a table and lounge away smoking cigarettes and ordering one or two shots of Old Monk that quickly let me forget any troubling thoughts. From above, I heard shoes clicking on the mosaic floor. Two girls with beehive hair, and in tasselled, sleeveless blouses were climbing down. Our paths crossed. One of them recognized me and a gasp was visible on her face. I quickly acknowledged their presence with a nod and climbed up to the third floor, to realise that there was nobody to greet or usher me in as my visit was unannounced. I was standing in the stairway alone—then I saw one of the girls coming up to me—in slow, steady steps. She stopped before me and all I could see was the pattern of her saree. It was hard for me to look at that face, so pretty, so young, making me feel that I was in the street after rain and I could see everything had been wiped fresh and clean and the world had never aged, never gotten sick. Being in that world was the most wonderful thing. I was never poetic in that sense; in fact, I hated poets, labelling them as lazy dreamers who had nothing better to do with life, but at that moment, I wished I had words to describe her beauty.

The girl held out a tissue. Immediately I understood why she returned. She tipped her head back to look at me closely. We were listening to each other's breath, so close that I could hear her throbbing heart.

This is part one of the "After the Rain", to be serialised here on Star Literature.

Mir Arif is a Bangladeshi author living in Ohio. He is working on his novel, 'The Second Interpretation', while awaiting the publication of his story collection, Adrift. Find him @mirarif.



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

father always told me that your birth was just a coincidence in the grand scheme of things. "You are not made of something superior. You and our servants have the same blood. We come from the same 'alam arwa, the world of souls", he told me one day while I was playing hoopla with my brothers, aiming at targets strewn on the grassy backyard. I wouldn't have known that disguised in his grandiose speech was the truth of my birth, that I was born out of wedlock in the womb of one of his servants, a woman I'd never know. She was sent away soon after my birth.

I was simply a child, fighting with my siblings or crying out for help when I didn't win a fight. I'm not ashamed to tell you this: my father kept knocking up servants and his legally married wife ended up having six babies to raise, none from her womb. There was simply no place for her outside of the dictation of my father's world, so she ended up doing what any mother is expected to do. She raised us, fed us, bathed us, and even put us to sleep, singing lullabies about marauders coming to our land and harming peasants' wives and stealing their kids. I can't tell if she loved us, perhaps she did,

of romance from actresses with beehives, a hairstyle so common in those days. At that time the only thing that mattered to me was being a bad boy in the industry. I knew I was excused for the gossip I created, for a huge portion of my fans were naïve to believe that my scandals were simply the creation of the media, to keep the populace returning to theatres for the same films—in other words, a simple business ploy. Another section of my fans viewed those scandals as my "manly" need. A last segment of fans emphasised art should be enjoyed solely for its own materials, irrespective of the artist's personal life and his scandals. Indeed, it was a great pleasure to think that my work had something to do with art, that I was an artist slogging through a nasty, brutal world. I believed in the lies generated by my fans and even perpetuated them through multiple interviews with journalists from *Dawn* and *The Ittefaq*, and *The Morning News*. A confident actor believes in his lies, I told myself. The '60s was a nice time, holding together the nation—both literates and illiterates—through film. They were a novelty to the nation, and actors were at the centre of things. Cinema posters



ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

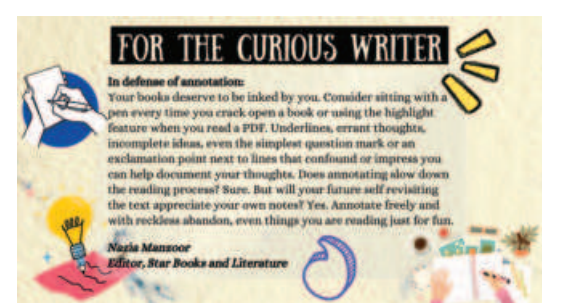
POETRY

Modern graveyard

KASHFIA NAHREEN

We have built a civilisation of sky-high buildings, of concrete cities, of disconnected communities. Cracks creeping up the foundation of our homes, black mold making its way through every floor, termites in the walls, fractures in every bone. So, we stand, divided in this graveyard of hope.

Kashfia Nahreen is an aspiring poet and author who is doing her Masters in Creative Writing.



POETRY

No longer eighteen

MALIHA TRIBHU

They said, growing up would be a trap you could fall into, something you cannot get out of once you slip into it. It isn't a flip of a coin you toss onto the air and catch it on the palm of your hands like a resting butterfly catching its final breath, like a caterpillar cocooned into its shell undergoing metamorphosis—growing up sneaks up to you whether you want it or not. Growing up catches up to you on a random Tuesday, somewhere around the scorching heat waves of May; and all of a sudden it isn't entirely about you anymore. You now hold your mother's grief onto the palm of your hands, You now carry the anger of your sister's pent up rage over the years for everything she could not have. And now you wear an invisible armor just for her, just so you could protect her

from everything you could not protect yourself of back when you were sixteen; Because the world got under your skin at sixteen and you let them, you let them throw mud all over your face and bicker away their blames for you not being enough—you wandered about the maze made out of your own self-loathing guilt for years until the truth appeared in front of you one by one, on a random Tuesday—welcome to the age you've been so desperately praying for, to the age of making a difference instead of repeating the mistakes your mother once made. You are no longer the clown amusing their circus, neither are you the puppet of their unfulfilling dreams and aspirations. You are on your own now—as horrifying and liberating as it sounds. Growing up never comes up to you with everything figured out in a perfect order,



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

neither with a survival kit and a manual that might be half-written in Chinese. It catches up to you like a sudden instinct installing onto our brain; screaming,

"you must protect them now like the way you've always wanted to protect yourself — for everything you could not have for yourself, for every blame that had been thrown at

your face, for every time you prayed that someone would protect you, that someone would rescue you, you now wear the armor for them like a necklace handed down from your mother, a badge of strength handed down from her mother—but this time, it isn't the iron bars chaining you down to your feet, like the ways it chained onto your mother's bones, but a crown resting onto your head—something you could hand down to your sister." Growing up is an act of acceptance of the battles you will win and lose; at the cost of protecting the ones you love. And when something like that dawns upon you like catching up to a midnight dream You know then and then That you are no longer a girl of eighteen.

Maliha Tribhu is a writer, currently an undergraduate majoring in Marketing at the University of Dhaka.

BHABNA 'Cannes' do it

The usual scenario of attending any film festival is that artists go to showcase their films. An unusual scenario took place when Bangladeshi actress Ashna Habib Bhabna returned from the 77th Cannes International Film Festival, after scoring a Malaysian movie.

MUA:
SUMON RAHAT
PHOTOS:
SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



SHARMIN JOYA

As soon as Bhabna returned home, she spared some time for a glamorous photoshoot with The Daily Star.

"The experience was a dream come true and the tour was completely worth it," shared the artiste. "The first actress to walk on the red carpets of the prestigious Cannes was legendary actress Babita, and we also saw Jaya Ahsan visiting the Cannes, so I had a dream to visit the French Riviera someday to represent my country."

She informed that after applying to the festival as a South Asian actress, she received an accreditation letter to attend the event. She got around 20 days to prepare for the adventurous solo trip. "As

I was selecting my attires for the festival, I was quite concerned about the fact that I would be representing my country, my culture, my family—swiftly blended with my taste, which ultimately showcased during the festival."

Renowned Indian newspaper Times of India published an article titled, *Sari not sorry! This Bangladeshi actress dressed better than any Bollywood star at Cannes*— remarking on her great fashion sense. "I consider this as an award for myself, the report was such a sweet surprise for me. I saw the article when I returned to Dhaka. I have pinned this message on my Facebook timeline as well."

During the eight days of her solo trip, she enjoyed the premiers of many films, walked on the official red carpet wearing her mother's elegant wedding saree, and also graced the event with some unique attires, that caught everyone's attention. Her outfits for the festival included traditional jamdani, a gown made with Banarsee material, and a crown-styled fancy outfit, which earned her praises. During her visit, she also signed a Malaysian film *Zenubia*, announced to be directed by Bangladeshi-born filmmaker Zafor Firoze, and executive produced by Qiao Li. "The

director told me that he had been trying to reach me for a long time, and when we met at the festival, he approached me for this work; everything seemed like a miracle to me!"

According to Bhabna, it has been a great experience for her as she could meet many international artistes and directors there. "There is a misconception regarding the festival that you can only attend if you go with your work. Many international artistes visit the festival for networking, to approach or collaborate for new projects. It is a huge arena and the film market itself is a great way of worldwide networking. As a media personality, anyone can visit the event if they are eligible and receive an invitation from the festival."

Bhabna mentioned that one of her dresses carried the names of her most favourite actresses, which included Meryl Streep, Audrey Hepburn, Babita and Suborna Mustafa. "It was another miracle that my first visit coincided with Meryl Streep receiving an Honorary Palme d'Or at the festival."

The actress had the opportunity to watch the premiere of the Chinese film *Caught by the Tides*, directed by Jia Zhangke. "After walking the official red carpet, I watched this film at Rumer Hall, and at that time, I made a wish that one day my film would be premiered in this hall, which I believe will come true someday!"

As Bhabna dreams big, she is now flooded with good wishes and appreciation from her admirers. At the same time, she is also facing criticism, as she was trolled on social media a few days ago over posting a photo of a cow standing on a truck in extreme heat. To this, the actress remarked, "I saw an animal suffering in the heat, where I was sitting in an air-conditioned car, it deeply hurt me, and I couldn't resist posting this, as I always do. I didn't suggest anybody to refrain from eating meat, nor did I say I don't eat meat."

Bhabna has three films awaiting theatrical release—*Dampara*, *Payel* and *Japito Jibon*. The actress also shared that the shooting of *Zenubia* would commence from November in Malaysia.



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Art exhibition: Inner Speed
June 1-4 | 3pm- 9pm
Alliance Française de Dhaka



Batighar Theatre Festival
June 8-10 | 7pm- 9:15pm,
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



**Paradise and Papers:
Exhibition of Rare, Vintage
Collectibles**
June 7-8 | 10am-9pm
Bishwo Shahitto Kendro

TRENDY STREAMS	<p>Netflix Crew</p>	<p>Prime Video Panchayat Season 3</p>	<p>Chorki Kalpurush</p>	<p>Disney plus The Acolyte</p>	<p>HBO Max Ren Faire</p>
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WHAT'S ON THE GRAM

ARIFIN SHUVOO

Last year, Arifin Shuvoo caught the Bollywood limelight with his performance in the Bangabandhu biopic, *Mujib: The Making of a Nation*.

Recently, the actor shared some eye-catching photoshoot outcomes on his Instagram account, exuding a mysterious vibe in a printed black, white, and golden shirt that adds an alluring touch to his appearance.

He looks fierce, channeling his inner masculine aura as he wears matching rings to add to his whole vibe.

The actor will next appear in the Mithu Khan directorial film *Neel Chokro*.

WHAT'S PLAYING

KHOONEYE MA

Marjan Farsad's *Khooneye Ma* is a hauntingly beautiful Persian folk song that evokes a profound sense of nostalgia for the old world of Iran. With its simple yet poetic lyrics, the song offers a glimpse into the longing experienced by those who leave their homeland behind.

Released in 2014 as part of her album *Blue Flowers*, *Khooneye Ma* masterfully blends traditional Persian melodies and heartfelt storytelling. Farsad's soothing voice creates a melancholic atmosphere, while the lyrics paint a vivid picture of cherished memories and a yearning for the warmth and laughter of home.

A few lines of the song loosely translate to: *Our house has stories/It has sour cherries and pistachios/Behind its warm laughs/It has tired people.*

TV TALKIES

'THE 8 SHOW'

A high-stakes tale of survival and greed

It seems that South Korea takes its series based on high stakes survival games rather seriously. *The 8 Show*, based on the Webtoon *Money Game & Pic Game* by Bae Jin-soo, which premiered on Netflix this month is yet another wildly extreme show that sticks the landing in its genre.

On the heels of the success of the popular South Korean show *Squid Game*, this show centralises around eight random individuals in financial crisis. The show presents a compelling narrative, particularly with the ultimate prize money amounting to burgeoning outrageous degrees.

Participants are offered a chance to engage in a clandestine game with intricate regulations. The objective? Secure a prize of 44.8 billion won. At first glance, it appears straightforward, until the players grasp the bewildering intricacies of the competition and realise the lengths to which each of them is prepared to go.

The 8 Show relies on the even playing ground that the participants begin with to

exploit the various degradations of human nature. Enveloped in plunging mystery, the series ends with a promise to be able to do more in a possible second season.



MANMADE FIBRE

Bangladesh's best bet to become top apparel exporter

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Having become the world's second largest source for apparel items after China, Bangladesh is now pushing for the top spot by adding more value-added products to its export basket.

Clothes made of manmade fibre (MMF) are playing a particularly vital role in this regard as such highly value-added apparel items have significant demand abroad.

Besides, non-cotton apparel fetches higher prices than cottonwear for being more flexible, durable and functional, with the cost of a T-shirt made from MMF being about double that of one made from cotton.

As such, local garment makers have been diversifying their product base with non-cotton items.

Additionally, they have increased their production capacities, maintained consistency in supply and improved product quality over the past five decades.

Now, about 7.9 percent of all apparel items

filament yarn and viscose staple fibre has increased, they each account for just 5 percent of the global output.

On the other hand, global production of acrylic staple fibre declined from 1.7 percent in 2017 to 1.4 percent in 2022. Meanwhile, wool and silk have a negligible global production share of 1 percent and 0.1 percent respectively.

Volume-wise, the trade of both cotton and non-cotton fibres has increased at a rate of about 1 percent annually from 2018 to 2022.

During this five-year period, global trade of polyester fibre fell by a compound annual growth rate of 3 percent while polyester yarn and fabric saw increases of 1 percent and 2 percent respectively.

The boom in local MMF apparel production was practically initiated by the collapse of Rana Plaza in April 2013 as the tragedy revealed how workers in the garment industry were subject to unbearable working conditions.

This prompted many international retailers and brands to move away from the country until certain conditions, particularly those laid



Objects like plastic bottles can be recycled to make fibre. PHOTO: ZAHANGIR SHAH



PHOTO: REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Non-cotton apparel fetches higher prices than cottonwear for being more flexible, durable and functional, with the cost of a T-shirt made from MMF being about double that of one made from cotton

sold worldwide come from Bangladesh as the country has turned into a reliable source for international clothing retailers and brands.

And with about 29 percent of the country's garment exports comprising MMF products, Bangladesh aims to use this segment to expand its global market share to 12 percent by 2030.

With this in mind, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) aims to increase the country's annual apparel exports to \$100 billion within the next six years.

Against this backdrop, local exporters have been exploring markets for MMF products and increasing their value addition, BGMEA sources said.

Value addition in the country's export-oriented garment items currently stands at about 71 percent, as per data of Bangladesh Bank.

Exporters attribute the growing volume of MMF apparel shipments for the increased value addition in export-oriented garment items.

This is because the MMF segment accounts for a bulk of the export receipts from highly value-added garments, with some producers even exporting MMF jackets worth \$100 per piece.

The share of MMF in global fibre production has increased to 78 percent over the past five years, according to a study, styled "Beyond Cotton - A Strategic Blueprint for Fiber Diversification in Bangladesh Apparel Industry", released in March this year.

Of the total non-cotton fibre production, about 39 percent is comprised of polyester filament yarn while polyester staple fibre makes up 15 percent, the study shows.

And although the production of nylon

out by the Alliance and Accord, were met by local producers.

So, as a part of the remediations, garment makers invested extensively to fortify workplace safety as per the recommendations, which included addressing fire, structural and electrical concerns.

Not only did this boost the confidence of foreign buyers, but it also led to Bangladesh emerging as the global champion in green garment factories.

Now, the country has 217 LEED certified green garment units, of which 83 are platinum rated, 120 are gold, 10 are silver and four are just certified by the US Green Building Council.

It was only after these investments were made that the capacities of local garment makers reached such a level that they could diversify their product base with more value-added items and include non-cotton products.

Another trend that spurred the transition to synthetic fibres is changing fashion.

For example, the demand for casualwear such as polos and T-shirts made from blended fibres has increased as their acceptability in formal settings such as offices has risen over the past decade.

Now, non-cotton apparel is the largest and fastest growing category of garment exports, contributing 50 percent of all shipments from leading sources such as China, Vietnam and Italy.

The concentration of cotton apparel exports compared to non-cotton is higher in cotton producing countries like India and Turkey. However, Bangladesh accounts for a high share of global cotton apparel exports even though cotton production in the country is negligible at best.

China is the largest exporter of non-

cotton apparels with a market share of 36 percent while India contributes 2 percent and Bangladesh provides 1 percent.

However, China's share is declining as it was 56 percent just a few years ago while India is also seeing reduced non-cotton apparel exports.

On the other hand, the situation is reverse in Bangladesh as the country's share in the global non-cotton apparel trade used to be even less than 1 percent, the study shows.

"If we want to achieve more from garment exports, the traditional model will not work as a new model prioritising fibre diversification is needed," said Faruque Hassan, the immediate past BGMEA president.

The data also shows that MMF imports recently increased, indicating that local garment manufacturers are expanding their product base.

"Still, government support is needed for the sector's growth," Hassan said.

Against this backdrop, he urged the government for a 10 percent incentive on exports of MMF garments to encourage production and thereby help grab a bigger share of the global non-cotton apparel market.

"Cotton is also a priority for Bangladesh but MMF-based garment production is an innovative idea to grab more market share," Hassan said.

He also urged for withdrawal of the Tk 3

Investment in artificial fibre still low

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Investment in manmade fibres in Bangladesh is low as the country has mainly focused on the trade and production of cotton fibre garments over the past five decades.

The total investment in the relatively new sector stands at around Tk 7,000 crore.

But with the evolution in fashion and climate change, the demand for garments made from manmade fibres has been rising worldwide and China, the largest apparel supplier globally, is dominating in this segment.

Recently, Vietnam has also been staging a strong performance in this segment globally.

Bangladesh's share in the total global trade of manmade fibre-based garments is still hovering at around 5 percent and it is growing gradually through the gain of contracts lost by competitors China, Vietnam and India.

If Bangladesh invests \$18 billion, the country will be able to export \$46 billion worth of non-cotton garment items by 2032, according to a study on "Beyond Cotton - A Strategic Blueprint for Fiber Diversification in Bangladesh Apparel Industry".

The study was conducted by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) in March this year.

Of the amount, \$4.6 billion needs to be invested in fibre, filament and yarn manufacturing, \$9.2 billion in fabrics manufacturing and \$4.2 billion in garment manufacturing, the study also said.

This will enable the installation of an additional 4.7 million spindles, 14,000 knitwear machines and 0.5 million sewing machines.

Bangladesh should expedite the process of enhancing its capacity in manufacturing garments from manmade fibres, recommended another study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) on behalf of the BGMEA in April this year.

This is due to the fact that 60 percent of the \$1,121 billion-worth garments to be traded globally in 2030 will be constituted of manmade fibres, be it wholly or by a substantial margin, it said.

Meanwhile, 35 percent will be cotton and cotton-rich garments and only 5 percent others.

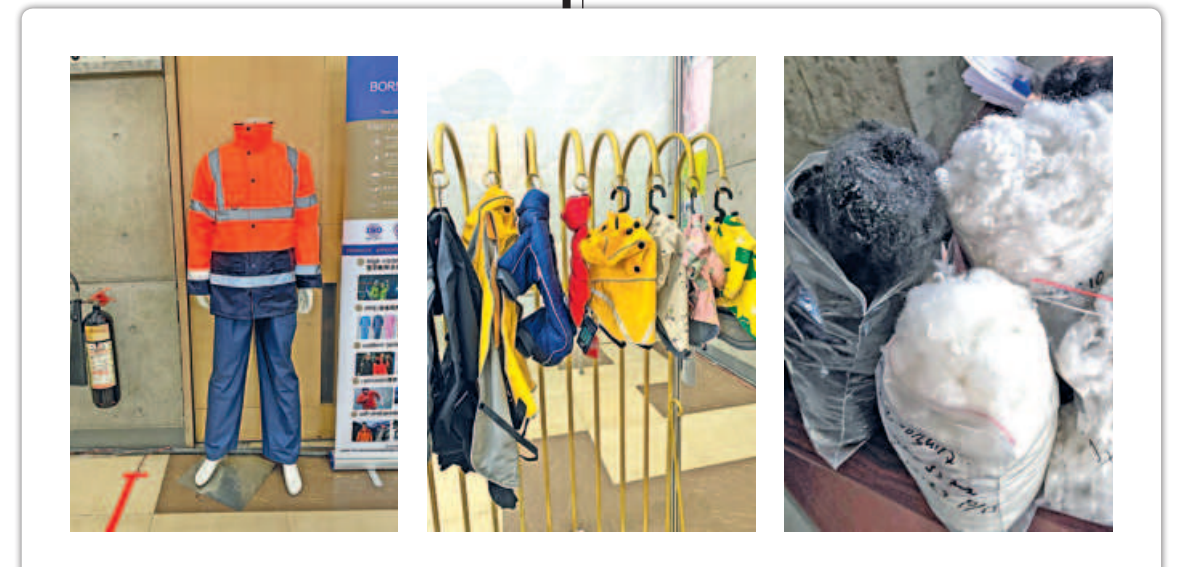
In contrast, the value of garment items traded globally in 2022 stood at \$953 billion, of which manmade fibre and manmade fibre-rich garments accounted for 50 percent, cotton and cotton-rich fibres 37 percent and others 13 percent, the study said.

The study also found that the total global trade of four garment items, including brassieres, technical textiles, activewear and swimwear, jackets, suits and blazers, stood at \$100 billion in 2022.

Around 73 percent of that value came from manmade fibre-based items.

There are six to seven mills dedicatedly producing manmade fibres, said Monsoor Ahmed, additional director of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), a platform for primary textile millers.

Many have expanded their manmade fibre



value-added tax on sales of MMF yarn in the domestic market.

But like all things artificial, MMF does come with its own set of drawbacks, particularly environmental.

MMF or synthetic fibres are engineered through a complex chemical process rather than being manufactured from natural sources.

In essence, these fibres are mainly made from polymers derived from petrochemicals.

So, while the fossil-fuel-derived fibres are not conflict materials, they are products of an industry with a heavy social impact.

Besides, MMF are not biodegradable and have been contributing to environmental pollution as washing non-cotton clothes releases microplastics.

production capacity along with that of cotton fibres to cater to local garment manufacturers and export small quantities, he said.

Since the investment in this segment is still low, most of the demand is met through imports, mainly from China, he added.

Abul Kalam Mohammad Musa, managing director of Manikganj-based Mumanu Polyester Industry, said he has been producing manmade fibres from discarded polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles by setting up a mill in 2018.

The fibre is used in the production of jackets, outerwear, sportswear and activewear, he added.

His production capacity is 120 tonnes per day but he can utilise just half of it for a scarcity of raw materials in local markets and due to a restriction on imports of the required polymer.