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A wounded economy, another perilous year

Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali unveils fiscal goals in his maiden budget in parliament today. Will he be able to fix the precarious state of the economy?

ARUN DEVNATH

It's not the best of times. It's not the season of light. The future will tell whether it's the period of Dickensian despair on the economic front. But this is not the moment for business as usual, for sure.

The cycle of economic exhilaration that portrayed Bangladesh as a stellar performer in Asia for a decade is no more on the steady ground that it once was. A triad of crises is now seeping into every corner of the economy. Inflation is an index of chronic consumer pain. The exchange rate shock is hurting almost everyone. Foreign exchange reserves are still haemorrhaging – half a billion dollars per month.

A sea of red ink appears on the horizon as almost all indicators depict a gloomy picture. GDP growth has come down from its exuberant peak. Stock prices continue to drift downward. Most banks, save for a dozen, are lurching in and out of fund shortages. The zombie banks kept alive for too long are dragging the sector down.

Is the economy becoming a chronic patient? Perhaps not. But it's grievously bruised and needs to be healed and fast.

Years of stability lulled us into believing everything was perfect. People in almost every sphere became habituated to an equilibrium of low inflation, low interest rates and low exchange rate volatility. Under this apparent calmness was a layer of stress.

Then the global crisis came more as a trigger than a cause, exposing Bangladesh's vulnerabilities. Now the tinted perception of the economy is wearing off, acceptance of which we are resisting.

The new fiscal year starting in July could be another perilous year amid a confluence of global economic headwinds and the lingering effects of the government's past misguided steps.

As Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali unveils fiscal goals in his maiden budget as the finance minister today, he will come under sharper scrutiny than his predecessors who managed the economy in the past 15 years.

Sadly, Ali has inherited a wounded economy, but he doesn't have to live with a controversial legacy left by AHM Mustafa Kamal, his immediate predecessor, whose 6/9 percent interest rate formula that afflicted the banking sector for three years will go down in history as the most perverse practice. Its toxic fallout, some say, still lingers as it created unnecessary aggregate demand for credit leading to inflationary pressure. Inflation, equivalent to a highly regressive tax on already stagnating wages and salaries, doesn't seem to be coming down to a tolerance level so soon. It will be a long slog for the government to tame consumer prices.

Ali, 81, was well known for foreign service, but not so much for economic management. Still, the heavy lifting of budget planning fell on his frail shoulders right after he took the helm of the country's finance ministry in January. And it's playing out at a time when Bangladesh faces one of the worst economic crises in history. Now, he is diving into a territory that requires a coordinated policy approach to bring the economy back on track. That's an enormous task.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Govt to rely more on local banks than foreign funds

REJAU KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government will rely more on domestic bank borrowing than foreign financing in the next fiscal year, intensifying pressure on the economy.

In the revised budget for the current fiscal year of 2023-24, the net foreign financing was cut by 25 percent due to the increasing debt servicing cost and low utilisation of foreign funds.

Net foreign financing is calculated after excluding the expenditure on debt servicing.

The net foreign financing is likely to be reduced by 12 percent in 2024-25. In the current fiscal year, Tk 1,02,490 crore was allocated as net foreign financing, which was later reduced to Tk 76,293 crore.

DEBT SERVICING

FY25*	\$5.18b
FY24	\$3.72b
FY24 (revised)	\$3.83b

FOREIGN LOAN UTILISATION

FY25*	\$12.86b
FY24	\$13.17b
FY24 (revised)	\$9.65b

*Probable

Foreign aid in the pipeline as of April 24: \$46b

The amount will be Tk 90,700 crore in FY25.

In the revised budget, the allocation for debt servicing has increased by 2.7 percent to \$3.82 billion, including principal amount and interest payments. The expenditure climbed 13.8 percent due to the depreciation of the taka and stood at Tk 42,200 crore.

When the budget was placed last year, an exchange rate of Tk 99.46 per dollar was used. An exchange rate of Tk 110 per dollar has been taken into consideration in the case of the revised budget of FY24 and the proposed budget for FY25.

On May 8, the central bank, however, fixed Tk 117 as the mid-rate as it looks to allow the market to set the exchange rate.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Modi invites PM to his inauguration
Hasina congratulates him on polls victory

STAR REPORT

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday invited his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina to attend the swearing-in ceremony of his government on June 8.

Hasina accepted the invitation, Noorelahi Mina, PM's deputy press secretary, told the media yesterday, reports UNB.

In a telephone conversation yesterday evening, Hasina congratulated Modi on the resounding victory of National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, in the 18th Lok Sabha elections.

"This victory of NDA

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Modi likely to take oath as PM on June 8

Elected as leader of BJP-led NDA with crucial support from Janata Dal(U), Telugu Desam Party

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Narendra Modi moved a step closer to becoming India's prime minister for a third successive time as he was unanimously elected the leader of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance yesterday.

The only other Indian to have been elected prime minister three times in a row was the country's first PM and Congress stalwart Jawaharlal Nehru.

Modi will take oath on June 8. Leaders of the NDA passed a proposal to this effect in a meeting at Modi's official residence in New Delhi's Lok Kalyan Marg.

The decision came a day after the NDA won 293 seats in the Lok Sabha election, giving them a majority in the 543-member legislature. The alliance is likely to stake claim to form government for the third consecutive time.

Bihar Chief Minister and Janata Dal (U) supremo

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

'New law may dent BTRC's autonomy'

Experts say as draft act gives ministry power to remove its commissioners

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The government will have the power to set the terms of removal and resignation of the commissioners of the telecom regulator, according to a draft law.

Currently, when a commissioner of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission faces allegations of conflict of interest, corruption or abuse of power, a committee of Supreme Court judges investigate the matter and the government takes action as per its recommendations.

According to recent changes made to the draft telecommunications act, the ministry will handle such matters.

According to telecom and ICT specialist TIM Nurul Kabir, the BTRC would lose whatever autonomy it has if the ministry has such power.

"The BTRC should be autonomous," he said.

At a discussion on the draft law, BTRC Chairman Mohiuddin Ahmed yesterday said, "I want to perform my duty without fear or intimidation. I am an engineer with years of experience. I am 64. If someone supervises me and tells me what should or should not be done, my brain does not function."

The discussion at the ICT Division was organised by the Telecom and Technology Reporters Network

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Smoke emitted from factories at the Faridabad Kadamtoli industrial area makes its way to the nearby homes, putting residents at risk of myriad health issues. Due to the factories, the area has been prone to extreme air and water pollution. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

BCL leader murders activist in broad daylight

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A Chhatra League leader shot and killed an activist of the pro-Awami League student body in broad daylight in Brahmanbaria yesterday and walked away in plain sight after the murder.

Ayesh Rahman Izaz, 22, a second year student of Botany (honours) at Brahmanbaria Government College, was shot by district Chhatra League Vice President Hasan Al Farabi Joy in Brahmanbaria town's College Para Hostel area.

Quoting witnesses, Mohammad Aslam Hossain, officer-in-charge of Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station, said supporters of upazila chairman candidate Shahadat Hossain Shuvon, also the general secretary of district Chhatra League, took out a victory procession in front of the Christian Mission Primary

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Questions may arise over rule of law

US state dept says about case against Prof Yunus

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US has expressed worries that the perceived misuse of labour and anti-corruption laws in relation to Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus can raise questions about the rule of law in Bangladesh and dissuade foreign direct investment.

"So, we continue to closely monitor developments in the case against Dr Yunus. We have expressed our concern that these cases may represent a misuse of Bangladesh's labour laws to harass and intimidate Dr Yunus," said State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller at a regular press briefing in Washington DC on Tuesday.

He said the US would continue to encourage the Bangladesh government to ensure a fair and transparent legal process for Dr Yunus.

Miller made the comments in response to a question from a journalist regarding Dr Yunus' case.

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Displaced Palestinians flee from the east of al-Bureij in the central Gaza Strip yesterday, due to the Israeli bombardment of the city. PHOTO: AFP

GRAFT ALLEGATIONS Benazir seeks 15 days' time to appear before ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former IGP Benazir Ahmed may not appear before the Anti-Corruption Commission for questioning today as he has sought 15 days' time to appear before the commission.

His lawyer on behalf of him sought the time, said Md Jahurul Haque, ACC commissioner (investigation), in reply to a query from a journalist at the ACC headquarters yesterday.

"I don't know exactly. But I heard he [Benazir] sought time," said the commissioner.

"The investigation team will decide about it [summons]. It is their matter. They will know better."

On May 28, the anti-graft body issued a notice to Benazir and his family for interrogation over the allegations that he amassed illegal wealth through corruption. According to the notice, Benazir was summoned to appear before the ACC today, his wife Zeeshan Mirza and two daughters on June 9.

Although the ACC sent the summons to his Gulshan home last week, no one from Benazir's family received the letter. As of yesterday, the letter remained at the guardroom of their Gulshan home amid speculations that the ex-IGP and his family had left the country.

However, it is still unknown whether Benazir's wife and two daughters will appear before the anti-graft body on June 9.



A wounded economy, another perilous year Modi invites PM to his inauguration

FROM PAGE 1

Two years in a row, fiscal policy failed to heal festering wounds. But the new budget presents an opportunity for the new minister to reveal a vision to turn things around. Ali faces a difficult trade-off between maintaining economic growth and strengthening public finances.

One of his fiscal goals is a narrower budgetary deficit equal to 4.6 percent of the gross domestic product, a clear departure from the golden rule of the 5 percent gap that Bangladesh has followed for ages with some exceptions. Some economists say the new deficit plan is still too high. The issue is not debt sustainability but macroeconomic stability because more than half of the deficit financing will come from domestic borrowing. That could either come in conflict with monetary policy targets to reduce domestic credit growth or severely crowd out private credit by driving interest rates too high. The economists suggest it should be contained to 3 percent of GDP at least for fiscal 2024-25, another uncertain year, to reduce the burden.

"The main elements of the budget strategy should be to reduce fiscal deficit significantly to lower aggregate demand. This demand reduction should be achieved in a way that it does not compromise the future growth prospects," said Sadiq Ahmed, vice chairman of the Policy Research Institute.

For this to happen, the strategy involves raising tax revenues through effective reforms, increasing the profitability of state enterprises through corporate governance, reducing unnecessary subsidies, and increasing spending on education, health and social protection,

according to Ahmed.

Bangladesh's tax-to-GDP ratio is a long-standing fiscal weakness. At 7.3 percent of GDP, this ratio is one of the lowest in the world. Revenues continue to be underwhelming due to tax exemptions, weak administration and challenges in implementing tax reforms.

The budget day is a cacophony of big numbers that drowns out the need to cushion the poor against price shocks. The finance minister is expected to do more than just keep the poor in his thoughts. Urban poverty is deepening. In Bangladesh, more than 18 percent of the population lives under the poverty line and another 20 percent, as research organisation SANEM suggests, are very vulnerable and run the risk of falling into poverty due to any shock.

"The budget should look at the pressure heaped upon the marginalised groups, the fixed-income groups, and the low-income people, and how they can be helped through budgetary allocations, fiscal policies, and fiscal incentives," said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, a think-tank.

One easy way to free up funds for social protection is by cutting subsidies as the International Monetary Fund suggests. By loosening the exchange rate further, Bangladesh, for example, can eliminate subsidies on exports and inward remittances. However, some agriculture input subsidies on fertiliser, seeds and irrigation are necessary. Overall, it is possible to reduce subsidy spending from a high of 1.9 percent of GDP in FY2023 to 0.8 percent of GDP in FY2025, according to an estimate by Sadiq Ahmed of PRI. These savings can be redeployed

to healthcare, education and social protection.

In the new fiscal year, the government will bear a heavier burden of interest payments. So, the allocation for interest payments of domestic and foreign loans will likely jump more than 20 percent to an all-time high. The government has already intensified local borrowing to plug the fiscal deficit, pushing the yield on treasury bonds and bills to a peak. While it opened an avenue for investors to park money in government securities, it has some consequences. Public debt accumulated through treasuries is largely a way to transfer funds from taxpayers to wealthy bondholders, as famed French economist Thomas Piketty argues.

In the run-up to the budget, there were some refreshing changes, albeit pushed by the IMF. In early May, Bangladesh made three major decisions to cushion the economy against critical risks such as stubborn inflation and forex erosion. In a rare move, the central bank let the local currency slide by the most in a day against the mighty dollar. Bangladesh Bank also raised the key policy rate for the second time this year and made lending rates market-based, abandoning a treasury bill-linked formula for banks.

These steps testify to the authorities' belated realisation. Realisation, nonetheless.

This year's budget is coming at a very distinctive time in the history of Bangladesh's economic development. While the budget is simply an estimate of government revenues and expenditures for a fiscal year, it's also an occasion for soul-searching -- a day of reckoning.

It's time to gaze inward.

FROM PAGE 1

How much money Bangladesh would have to pay will ultimately depend on the exchange rate at the time of payment.

In the proposed budget to be placed today, the debt servicing cost is likely to be \$5.18 billion or Tk 57,000 crore, a 35 percent increase compared to the revised budget.

The debt servicing cost is increasing, and foreign funds are not being utilised fully. As a result, the net foreign financing has reduced.

The government had set aside \$13.17 billion as foreign financing in the budget for this year, but it was later revised to \$9.65 billion. Of the amount, \$2.92 billion was earmarked

Modi prepares for a record third term as Indian prime minister as nations congratulated him on the election victory.

Hasina also mentioned the very cordial and friendly relationship between Bangladesh and India.

Meanwhile, Modi has thanked Hasina for her warm wishes following his election victory.

"India and Bangladesh share historic relations, which have seen

unprecedented growth in the last decade," Modi said in a message shared through X, formerly known as Twitter.

Modi said he looks forward to working together to further strengthen the people-centric partnership between Bangladesh and India.

Hasina was among the first foreign leaders to congratulate him, reflecting the warmth and personal rapport between the two leaders, the message said.

Govt to rely more on local banks

FROM PAGE 1

as budgetary support in the original budget, and it was revised to \$1.35 billion.

The new budget is likely to allocate \$12.86 billion as foreign financing and \$3 billion of it could be kept as budget support.

A top finance ministry official said the government had, in most years, failed to utilise the allocated foreign funds. The low use is another reason behind the decreasing foreign financing, according to the officials.

As of April, at least \$46 billion in unused foreign financing was in the pipeline.

During the National Economic Council meeting last month, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked all

ministries and divisions to quickly finish foreign-funded projects.

While foreign fund utilisation is decreasing, the amount of bank borrowing is increasing significantly.

The highest borrowing will be from banks, Tk 1,37,500 crore. In the revised budget, the bank borrowing increased by 17.78 percent to Tk 1,55,935 crore.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, said if the government increases bank borrowing, it leaves fewer chances for the private sector to get loans.

"This affects inflation and puts pressure on foreign currency reserves."

Modi likely to take oath as PM on June 8

FROM PAGE 1

Nitish Kumar and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) President N Chandrababu Naidu, whose support is crucial to the government and its stability, attended the NDA meeting. Top leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its other allies were also present.

Both Kumar and Naidu handed over formal letters to Modi, declaring their support for him as PM.

Kumar's party won 12 seats and the Naidu-led TDP, the second largest party in the NDA, bagged 16. The support of both the parties is vital to prop up the Modi dispensation.

Earlier yesterday, NDA leaders met at Modi's residence to review the election result and discuss the government formation, after which a delegation of senior figures from the BJP and its NDA partners was supposed to meet President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan to stake claim to power.

With Modi's BJP failing to secure a majority on its own in the parliamentary election and looking up to NDA allies for support, the shape of national politics and governance at the Centre will be impacted. The electoral verdict has taken India back to the tricky terrains of coalition politics after a decade.

Ever since he became the prime minister for the first time in 2014, Modi has enjoyed the cushion of a comfortable BJP majority in the Lok Sabha and a much-weakened opposition.

With that cushion now gone, he will need considerable support from its allies like TDP, Janata Dal, and Eknath Shinde's faction of Shiv Sena.

However, the first challenge for BJP now would be to keep the NDA intact with a numerically resurgent opposition INDIA bloc snapping at its heels and not giving up the idea of cobbling together a majority in the Lok Sabha.

Both Naidu and Kumar are old hands in playing coalition politics and have switched sides a number of

times. The allies will look to drive hard bargains and extract their pounds of flesh as the government formation exercise is set into motion. This raises questions about their reliability.

The allies are expected to push BJP for a common minimum programme in the coming days. It is quite possible that BJP is forced to put its ideological core issues, like a nationwide uniform civil code, on the back-burner.

Sources said a variety of "demands", including special status for their states and a pick of ministerial berths, are on the table in talks between Modi, Kumar and Naidu. There are chances Modi will feel the often-conflicting pulls of coalition politics.

On the other hand, Nitish Kumar is likely to insist on conducting a countrywide caste census, an issue Congress and INDIA parties have also been flagging to give reservation on the basis of numerical strength of the backward populace. This is particularly important for Kumar, who faces a fresh assembly election in his home state.

Meanwhile, passing laws in parliament will require Modi to go for a consensual approach across the political spectrum -- something he is not used to.

Naidu, who contested the Lok Sabha polls and the assembly polls in Andhra Pradesh in alliance with BJP, and actor-turned-politician Pawan Kalyan of JanaSena party, had been kingmakers on many occasions in the past.

In 1996, when the Lok Sabha election produced a hung parliament, it was Naidu, as the convener of the United Front (a coalition of parties not aligned with either Congress or BJP), who propped up the HD Deve Gowda government with outside support from Congress. A few months later, he also played a key role in forming the government at the Centre with Inder Kumar Gujral at the helm.

In 1999, Naidu contested the Lok Sabha polls in alliance with BJP and secured 29 seats. He backed the then

Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, which was short of the majority mark. However, TDP did not join the government.

On the other hand, Nitish Kumar was, for a short period, the railways minister, surface transport minister and agriculture minister in the Vajpayee government from 1998 to 1999. He got the portfolio again in the Vajpayee government of 2000-2004.

Critics have accused Modi of having authoritarian streaks in the past. But when he assumes office in the coming days as head of the NDA coalition, can he live down that image and reinvent himself as a consensual leader who takes onboard his allies?

Ukraine downs 22 of Russia's 27 drones launched overnight

REUTERS, Kyiv

The Ukrainian air force said it shot down 22 of the 27 Shahed-type drones launched over five Ukrainian regions in Russia's overnight attack yesterday.

The attack damaged an industrial facility and injured one person in the region of Poltava, its governor, Filip Pronin, said on the Telegram messaging app.

The Ukrainian military destroyed six drones over the southern region of Mykolaiv, its governor said. Debris from one of them destroyed a private home, and damaged about 10 more, but no casualties were reported, he added.

Four drones were shot down over the southern region of Kherson and four more over the central Dnipropetrovsk region, the regions' governors said.

The attack also targeted the northern region of Sumy, with no details of damage reported by regional authorities.

BCL leader murders activist

FROM PAGE 1

School polling centre. Izzaz was shot around 6:00pm when the procession reached the College Para Hostel area.

As Izzaz fell to the ground, some participants of the procession rescued him and whisked him to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital. Doctors at the hospital referred him to Dhaka for better treatment but he died around 7:00pm on the way to the capital.

This newspaper has seen a video showing Joy hiding his gun and fleeing the scene after the shooting.

Hearing about the shooting, a large number of Chhatra League leaders and activists gathered in front of the Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital. They took out a protest procession.

Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain, superintendent of Brahmanbaria police, said that there was a dispute between two factions of district Chhatra League.

The OC said Izzaz's relatives took the body to Dhaka Medical College for an autopsy.



PHOTO: VIDEO GRAB
BCL leader Joy runs away with a gun after shooting Izzaz (not in frame).

'New law may dent BTRC's autonomy'

FROM PAGE 1

and Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for telecom, said changes would be made to the draft in light of the concerns.

As a one-stop service provider, the BTRC needs independence, he said.

"If the law puts pressure on them, they cannot act autonomously," he said, adding that the BTRC and the ministry should work together.

As per the draft, social media sites like Facebook or X will need licences to operate in Bangladesh.

The current law's Tk 300 crore fine for unlicensed telecommunication activities will stay in the new one.

Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer of Robi, said, "We believe excessive regulation through licensing will hinder growth in the sector."

China accuses US of interfering after Tiananmen comments

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday lashed out at the United States after Washington's top diplomat Antony Blinken vowed never to forget the crackdown in Tiananmen Square 35 years ago.

"The move of the US seriously interferes with China's internal affairs," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said.

"China is strongly dissatisfied and firmly opposes it," she added.

She called on the United States to "stop provoking ideological confrontation, and stop interfering in China's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights."

Chinese troops and tanks forcibly dispersed peaceful protests in

Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, quelling huge, weeks-long demonstrations demanding greater political freedoms.

The exact toll is unknown but hundreds died, with some estimates putting the figure at more than 1,000 people. China's leaders have since sought to erase any public mention of the crackdown.

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GOVT JOBS 30pc quota for children of freedom fighters restored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday declared illegal the government decision that in 2018 cancelled the 30 percent quota for the freedom fighters' children in the civil service of ninth to 13th grades (first and second classes of government jobs).

The 30 percent quota for the freedom fighters' children has been restored following the HC verdict, Deputy Attorney General Sk Shaifuzzaman told The Daily Star.

He said the government may move an appeal before the Supreme Court challenging the HC verdict.

The bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu delivered the judgement following a petition filed by Ohidul Islam Tushar and six others, who are children of freedom fighters, challenging a circular issued by the Ministry of Public Administration on October 4, 2018 that cancelled the quota system.

Details of the HC verdict will be known when its full text is released.

Two held for killing child after rape

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Gazipur

Police yesterday arrested two teenagers for raping and killing a three-year-old in Gazipur's Konabari upazila.

The arrestees, aged 16 and 14, are from Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila, said KM Ashraf Uddin, officer-in-charge of Konabari Police Station.

According to the victim's family, the child went missing on Tuesday.

Her body was found in a sack near a house in the upazila's Madhyapara area around 11:00am yesterday, the OC said.

The family filed a case with the police station.

The arrestees confessed to the crime during primary interrogation, the OC said.

Govt alone felled over 7 lakh trees last year

Says RDRC study



Sat Masjid Road, September last year.

FILE PHOTO

MD ABBAS

At a time when heatwaves and rise in temperatures have become a headache for the country, different government agencies felled over seven lakh trees across the country last year in the name of development work, according to a new study.

The study, titled "Logging off Plants in Bangladesh," presented statistics on tree felling from March 2023 to March 2024, conducted by the River and Delta Research Centre (RDRC), a research organisation.

The study report, unveiled yesterday, said a total of 7,46,465 trees were chopped down during this period.

In the report, the Forest Department was identified as the government agency that was behind the felling of most trees.

Additionally, 24 other government organisations were also named in the report for felling trees.

Apart from that, private organisations and influential people have also cut trees during this period.

According to the study report, the Chattogram district experienced the highest tree cutting, with 506,222 trees being felled, while the Rangpur district saw the least amount of tree felling.

A total of 1,081 trees were logged last year in Dhaka, meaning 83 trees per month and about 3 trees per day, said the report.

On average, approximately 88,190 trees were logged per month, amounting to

STUDY AT A GLANCE

Chattogram district experienced the highest tree cutting, with 506,222 trees being felled, while Rangpur district saw the least amount of tree felling.

A total of 1,081 trees were logged last year in Dhaka, meaning 83 trees per month and about 3 trees per day.

On average, approximately 88,190 trees were logged per month, amounting to around 2,902 trees per day over the last year, it added.

Meanwhile, the felling of 400,152 more trees is ongoing under different projects. The Teesta Irrigation Project in Nilphamari alone is the single largest contributor to tree felling, with 400,000 trees being cut down for its implementation, the report also said.

RDRC Chairman Mohammad Azaz, who led the research, said, "Though some projects are ongoing, this report took into account the newly reported tree-cutting figures."

However, experts said the actual number of felled trees would be three times the reported figures.

They added that there is no estimation of how many shrubs, small trees, and

biodiversity have been lost with these trees.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, executive director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said these figures show the government's insensitivity towards protecting the environment and its slogan-based, so-called environmental protection initiatives.

"The government has purposefully prioritised development over the environment, which is completely unacceptable. The government does not make laws to prevent the felling of trees because many government projects involve extensive cutting down of trees," she said.

The government does not have the licence to cut trees in the name of development, she added.

"We must carry out development work while preserving trees and planting more to combat the effects of climate change," she said, advocating for strong laws to prevent the felling of trees.

She opined that it should be made compulsory to save trees while implementing development projects.

Amir Hosain Chowdhury, chief conservator of forests at Forest Department, said the department has marked 16,000 trees for cutting so far and has felled 86,000 trees under the social forest scheme.

"If we cut any trees, we plant more trees in their place. We have already signed a MoU with the Water Development Board to plant 71,000 trees once they allocate the land," he added.

'It might take country 215yrs to end child marriage' Speakers stress education, awareness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Marrying off children at an early age is a waste of the country's most valuable asset, said Simeen Hussain, state minister for Women and Children Affairs, at a programme yesterday.

"If we invest in children, particularly girls, the returns will benefit the family, society, and the country," she said while inaugurating a joint Global Programme to End Child Marriage at a Dhaka hotel.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in Bangladesh, in collaboration with UNFPA and Unicef, launched the third phase of the programme.

"Eradicating child marriage is a keystone of our commitment to safeguarding the rights of children in Bangladesh," said the state minister.

"We commend the collaborative efforts of UNFPA and Unicef and affirm our commitment to working closely and effectively to implement the National Plan of Action to End Child Marriage and roll out the Child Marriage Restraint Act."

Keya Khan, director general of the Department of Women Affairs, said the early marriage rate rose to a new level during the Covid-19 period; however, the government is not sitting idle.

"We have been working on identifying the reasons behind it and working on impactful solutions to reduce the rate," she added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Include women's unpaid care work in GDP calculation Speakers tell MJF seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is high time to give economic recognition to women's unpaid care and domestic work, said speakers at an event yesterday.

Along with policymakers, women themselves must come forward to implement this, they said.

They made the remarks at the national women's conference titled "Role of Women's Rights-Based Organisations in Bringing Gender Equality," organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation at the capital's Gulshan.

Speaking as chief guest, Sagultha Yasmin, lawmaker and chairperson of parliamentary standing committee on Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, emphasised the need to include unpaid care work in GDP calculation.

"The path of women's progress may never be easy; women themselves have to make their own safe roads," she said.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam chaired the conference. She highlighted the collective responsibility to protect women's rights.

"Underprivileged women, local organisations, government, and citizens must come forward to protect women's rights," she said in her welcome speech.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Govt must take action against Benazir

Chunnu tells parliament, Tarana demands
names of money launderers to be published

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Chief Whip Mujibul Haque Chunnu yesterday in parliament demanded that the government take serious action against former IGP Benazir Ahmed.

Taking part in an unscheduled discussion, Chunnu, a Jatiyo Party lawmaker, said many like Benazir will get "inspired" if the government does not take action against him.

Chunnu said when leaders of the opposition went abroad for treatment, they were detained for hours at the airport.

"So, it's not possible that someone like Benazir will go abroad without the knowledge of the government. There are so many forces and so many agencies; what information do they gather?" questioned Chunnu.

"The home minister said he did not know whether Benazir had gone abroad or not. Why would he not know? Benazir went through immigration. If the government is not informed by the immigration authorities that Benazir has crossed the immigration, then all the immigration officials should be fired," he also said.

Pointing to Prothom Alo's editorial published yesterday on Benazir's widespread corruption and irregularities, he said committing such levels of corruption is only possible in Bangladesh.

Chunnu said Benazir has been promoted during the tenure of this government. "During the tenure of this government, he amassed so much through corruption," he added.

TARANA DEMANDS LIST OF MONEY LAUNDERERS

Awami League MP Tarana Halim, speaking on a point of order, said there are syndicates everywhere - for vehicles, roads, rice depots, and cloth distribution. Who are these syndicates? We want to know and their names should be published.

"We want to know whose name is in the Panama Papers, the Paradise Papers... We want to know."

She also said names of those who have homes in Canada's Begum Para and have smuggled money should be disclosed in parliament.

She also said the parliamentarians, who are allegedly involved in such a syndicate, should adhere to self-criticism.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Four teens pose for a selfie standing on a railway track, without having any bother about a train approaching through another track just beside them. Many others are also seen walking carelessly along the tracks. Such actions can lead to tragic accidents. The photo was taken near the Airport Railway Station recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Include women's unpaid care

FROM PAGE 3
MJF has been implementing the "Women's Voice and Leadership-Bangladesh" project to enhance the capacity and activities of local and regional women's rights organisations, support the empowerment of women and girls, protect their rights, and achieve gender equality.

(gender equality) at High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh, said Bangladeshi women are born with the indomitable ability to win all kinds of wars.

"However, social discrimination and negative perceptions of women make their way difficult. Women must take the rights movement as a lifelong commitment," she added.

Mahila Parishad President Dr Fawzia Moslem said, "There has been a change in the areas of women's needs. Targets should be set according to that."

A day-long plenary session was conducted by activist Jashodhara Dasgupta. MJF senior coordinator Mohuya Leya Falia presented the project activities at the conference.

Fate of 17,000

FROM PAGE 5
Malaysia for failing to obtain air tickets despite possessing all valid documentation, expressed their helplessness by saying they had mortgaged land, sold livestock, and borrowed money from banks and relatives to pay the recruiting agencies.

"I had aspirations of securing a decent job in Malaysia to guarantee my family's financial security," said Anisul Islam of Manikganj.

"I paid Tk 5.30 lakh to the recruiting agencies and brokers, and now if the government provides only Tk 79,900 as the government fee, I will be destroyed," he said.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration and Youth Initiatives Programme, said if the ongoing discussion about sending them to Malaysia is successful, there will be a positive outcome.

"If it is not done and they are given only the government fee, they will surely be penniless due to the pressure of loans and other burdens," he added.

In March, Malaysia announced May 31 as the deadline to bring in foreign workers.

The country resumed hiring Bangladeshi workers in 2022 after a four-year suspension over allegations of irregularities in recruitment process.

Between August 2022 and April 2024, nearly 4.50 lakh Bangladeshis migrated to Malaysia.

Last year, Malaysia was Bangladesh's second-largest overseas job market after Saudi Arabia.

It might take

FROM PAGE 3
Kristine Blokhus, UNFPA country representative to Bangladesh, said, "Currently, the rate of reduction of child marriage in Bangladesh is only 2.1 percent per year, which means it will take Bangladesh over two centuries – 215 years – to eliminate child marriage."

"Keeping girls in school is a game changer," she added.

Stanley Gwavuya, OIC representative of Unicef in Bangladesh, and Nazma Mobarek, secretary of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, also spoke.

REMAL AFTERMATH

Bhola dam at risk of further damage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

The Tajmuddin embankment in Bhola collapsed in some places after sustaining damage during the cyclone Remal.

Even though the contractor firm tasked with the renovation began repairing the collapsed parts, visiting the site recently, this correspondent, noticed that the firm has been carrying out repairs on a two-kilometre stretch of the dam using soil from beside it.

Due to that, ditches are being formed. Locals feared the embankment will remain susceptible to further damage as the repair is unlikely to sustain.

Abdur Razzak, the contractor, said, "The repair work is being done on an emergency basis."

Jahirul Islam, deputy assistant engineer of BWDB, said, "This dam is a part of the 34-km under-construction embankment project from Tajmuddin to Mirza Kalu areas. Since a part of it collapsed, the firm is using the soil from beside the embankment to repair the breach on an emergency basis."

"Later, the embankment will be properly renovated and strengthened as per the tender," he added.

Masum Rabbani, the project manager, echoed him.

Seventh death anniversary of Justice Latifur Rahman

CITY DESK

Today is the seventh death anniversary of Latifur Rahman, former chief justice and chief adviser to a caretaker government, said a press release.



On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at his residence in Jashore.

He was born in 1936 in Jashore. He studied English literature and law at Dhaka University.

He began his legal career at the High Court in 1960 and was appointed as an additional judge at the HC Division of the Supreme Court in 1979.

On January 15, 1991, he became a judge of the SC.

Govt must take action

FROM PAGE 3
Before Tarana ended her speech, Chief Whip Noor-e-Alam Chowdhury Liton took the floor and wanted to know what the

discussion was about.

Pointing to the Deputy Speaker, Liton said, "If you givesomeone half an hour on a point of order, then none of the rules and regulations

of the parliament are being followed. Many MPs are sitting here; their time is valuable. But you have started a general discussion in name of point of order."

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06-08 JUNE 2024
Time: 10:00am - 07:30pm
Venue: International Convention City Bashundhara, Kuril, Dhaka
Hall-04, 04A

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ব্যবহৃত গাড়ী বিক্রয় দরপত্র

লাফার্জহোলসিম বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড এর নিম্নে বর্ণিত গাড়ী (বাছ সিমেন্ট ট্রাক) সমূহ বিক্রয়ের জন্য শিডিউলে বর্ণিত শর্তাধীনে আত্মীয় ক্রেতাদের নিকট হতে দরপত্র আহ্বান করছে। আত্মীয় ক্রেতাদের ০৬ জুন থেকে ২৭ জুন, ২০২৪ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে গাড়ী (বাছ সিমেন্ট ট্রাক) সমূহ নির্দিষ্ট স্থানে পরিদর্শন এবং ৩০ জুন, ২০২৪ তারিখ পর্যন্ত নিম্নবর্ণিত স্থান থেকে শিডিউল সঙ্গ্রহ করতে পারবেন (ভুক্ত, শনিবার ও সরকারি ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত)।

ক্র: নং	বিবরণ	সিসি, মডেল	রেজিস্ট্রেশনের সন	সংখ্যা	পরিদর্শন এর স্থান
১	টাটা, বাছ সিমেন্ট ট্রাক, ঢাকা মেট্রো শ ১৪ ০৩৭৩	সিসি- ৫৮৮৩ মডেল- ২৫১৫	২০১১	১টি	মেঘনা প্রাক্তি ল্যাফার্জহোলসিম বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড, মেঘনা মাট, নারায়ণগঞ্জ যোগাযোগঃ +৮৮০১৭৩৩০১১৬৪৩
২	টাটা, বাছ সিমেন্ট ট্রাক, ঢাকা মেট্রো শ ১১ ১৯২০	সিসি- ৫৮৮৩ মডেল- ২৫১৫	২০১৪	১টি	
৩	টাটা, বাছ সিমেন্ট ট্রাক, ঢাকা মেট্রো শ ১১ ১৯২১	সিসি- ৫৮৮৩ মডেল- ২৫১৫	২০১৪	১টি	
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৬	টাটা, বাছ সিমেন্ট ট্রাক, ঢাকা মেট্রো শ ১৩ ০১৯৪	সিসি- ৫৮৮৩ মডেল- ২৫১৮	২০১৬	১টি	
৭	টাটা, বাছ সিমেন্ট ট্রাক, ঢাকা মেট্রো শ ১৩ ০১৯৫	সিসি- ৫৮৮৩ মডেল- ২৫১৮	২০১৬	১টি	
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১০	টাটা, বাছ সিমেন্ট ট্রাক, ঢাকা মেট্রো শ ১৩ ০৩৫৬	সিসি- ৫৮৮৩ মডেল- ২৫১৮	২০১৭	১টি	

আত্মীয় ক্রেতাদের অফিস চলাকালীন, (ভুক্ত, শনিবার ও সরকারি ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত), কোম্পানির অনুমুলে উক্ত মূল্যের ১০ শতাংশ হারে পে অর্ডার/ডিডি সহ আবেদন পত্র ও প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজ সহ, অফিসে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার ব্যাগে আপাতী ০১ জুলাই ২০২৪ দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে দাখিল করতে পারবেন। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোনরূপ কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে টেন্ডার বাতিল, পরিবর্তন বা পুনঃআবেদান এর অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন।

শিডিউল সঙ্গ্রহ এবং জমার স্থানঃ ল্যাফার্জহোলসিম বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড, নিনাকাবা, সেক্টর ০৭, ২২৭/এ বীর উত্তম মীর শওকত সড়ক, তেজগাঁও-ভলশান লিংক রোড, তেজগাঁও, ঢাকা ১২০৬। যোগাযোগঃ +৮৮০২ ২২২২৮১০০২, +৮৮০২ ২২২২৮৬৩৯৩, মোবাইলঃ +৮৮০১৭৩৩০১১৬৪৩।

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রাজউক পূর্বীচল ২২ নং সেক্টরে সুলাভ মূল্যে আরসিসি বাউন্ডারিকৃত ৫ কাঠা এলোটি পুঁজি বিক্রয় হবে। সরাসরি মালিক মোবাইল: ০১৮৪০১১৭৯৯৯৯

কুলা প্রবেশ ও পুঁজি বিক্রয়কার কুলা-৩০৩

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি সংক্রান্ত

০৬ জুন ২০২৪ তারিখে The Daily Star ও দৈনিক জনকণ্ঠ পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তির বিধি/শর্তাধীন প্রাক্তি করা উপস্থিত হওয়ার তারিখ ও সময়:

"১০/০৬/২০২৪ইং সন্ধ্যা ১০:০০ ঘটিকা" এর পর থেকে

"১০/০৬/২০২৪ইং সন্ধ্যা ১০:০০ ঘটিকা" মত পর্যন্ত হইবে।

(স্বাক্ষরিত) মোঃ আতিকুর রহমান (কুলা) রেজিষ্টার

GD- 945

World Health Organization Bangladesh

VACANCY NOTICE

World Health Organization (WHO) invites applications from the interested and eligible candidates for the following position under following contractual modality:

- Team Assistant / TGS

For further details on submission of applications including detailed post description please visit our websites:
<https://www.who.int/bangladesh/about-us/employment>
<https://careers.who.int/careersection/ex/jobsearch.ftl>

Qualified **female candidates** are highly encouraged to apply.

WHO has a smoke-free environment and does not recruit smokers or other tobacco users.

IUB **INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH**
Purchase & Procurement Department
Plot#16, Block#B, Aftabuddin Ahmed Road, Bashundhara Residential Area, Dhaka-1245

TENDER FOR SECURITY SERVICE PROPOSAL

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) invites sealed offers from prospective security service providers for deployment of security services on its campus in Bashundhara Residential Area, Dhaka.

The details of the service and other terms and conditions are mentioned in the tender schedule. Interested bidders are requested to collect tender schedule from the Purchase & Procurement Department on payment of Tk. 2,000/- (non-refundable) in the form of cash to the Finance & Accounts Department of Independent University, Bangladesh between the office hours (from 9:30 am to 4:00 pm, Sunday through Thursday) **till June 23, 2024.**

Interested bidders are requested to submit the bids to the Purchase & Procurement Department by **June 30, 2024, before 2:00 pm following a pre-bid meeting to be held on June 25, 2024, at 2:00 pm.** The bids will be opened on **June 30, 2024 at 2:30 pm** in the presence of the bidders who wish to remain present.

The university authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
Local Government Engineering Department (LGED)
Office of the Executive Engineer
LGED, Bhola District, Bhola

শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

(Re-Bidding Notice)

Memo No. 46.02.09.00.000.037.24.1846 **Date: 05-06-2024**

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh [represented by LGED] has received financing from KfW and GCF toward the cost of the "Climate Resilient Infrastructure Mainstreaming Project (CRIMP)" and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for "Construction of 7 Nos. New Cyclone Shelters and associated access roads at various locations of Bhola District".

The Executive Engineer, LGED, Bhola District, Bhola now invites sealed Bids (Re-Bid) from eligible Bidders for "Construction of 7 Nos. New Cyclone Shelters and Associated Access Roads at Various Locations of Bhola District" as follows:

Package No.	Item of work	Quantity	Time for completion
CRIM/BHO/CS-NEW/W-01 Procurement Number: 507603 BMZ no. 202062255	Construction of 7 Nos. New Cyclone Shelters and Associated Access Roads at Various Locations of Bhola District	Upazila: Char Fasson-6 Manpura-1 Total- 7 Nos. 5 km	21 months

Bidding will be conducted by means of the International Competitive Bidding (ICB) procedure with qualification as specified in the "KfW Guidelines for the Procurement of Consulting Services, Works, Plant, Goods and Non-Consulting Services in Financial Cooperation with Partner Countries" ("KfW Guidelines, 2021"). Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the Executive Engineer, LGED Bhola District, Bhola, email: xen.bhola@lged.gov.bd and may inspect the bidding document during office hours 09.00 to 16.00 hours (local time) at the address given below. A read-only copy of the bidding document will also be available for viewing by prospective bidders on the website of the Employer www.lged.bhola.gov.bd

A complete set of bidding documents in English may be purchased by eligible bidders through either one of the following two options:

Option-1: On submission of a written application letter on bidder's official letterhead which should be delivered to the Employer's address shown below together with the original Bank Draft or Pay Order in favor of "Executive Engineer, LGED Bhola District" for payment of the non-refundable fee in the amount of Bangladesh Taka 10,000 or US Dollars 100, and the bidding documents may be collected by the bidder from the Employer's address below.

- Executive Engineer, LGED, District Bhola
- Project Director's Office, CRIM Project, Level-7, LGED Bhaban, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.

Option-2: On submission of a written application through email, which should be sent from the bidder's official email address to the Employer's-email address shown below, together with an attached copy of documentary evidence demonstrating direct deposit/electronic wire-transfer payment to the Employer's bank account specified below of a non-refundable fee as follows:

For delivery of the bidding documents **within Bangladesh:** Bangladesh Taka 15,000 Or US Dollars 150. (Bid Document fee plus delivery cost).

For delivery **outside Bangladesh:** Bangladesh Taka 30,000 or US Dollars 300. (Bid Document fee plus delivery cost).

Within 3 working days of receipt of the required amount in the Employer's bank account, the Employer will dispatch the bidding documents through courier service and send a copy of the courier service order receipt through reply email to the bidder's email address, which the bidder may use to track the delivery. The Employer shall not be responsible in case of late or incorrect delivery by the courier service company.

Pre-Bid meeting will be held on **30/06/2024** at 11.00 hrs (Bangladesh Standard Time) online at LGED Bhola District, Bhola, Bangladesh (The Host). The Link will be provided on 23/06/2024 to the Purchaser of STD through their e-mail.

Bid Document last selling date on or before 16.00 hours (GMT+6) on **21/07/2024.** Bids must be delivered to the address indicated in the clause ITB 22.1 of the bidding document on or before 13.00 hours (GMT+6) on **22/07/2024.**

Bids will be submitted by the Bidders in the office of the Employer's address below.

- Deputy Commissioner, Bhola
- Superintendent of Police, Bhola
- Executive Engineer, LGED, District Bhola

Electronic Bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. All envelopes marked "QUALIFICATION" will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend, at the address below on 16.00 hours (GMT +6) on **22/07/2024.** All envelopes marked "BID" shall remain unopened and will be held in safe custody of the Employer until the second public Bid opening. All Bids must be accompanied by a "Bid Security" of BDT 15 million (fifteen million) or alternatively USD 135,000 (USD one hundred and thirty five thousand) or equivalent in any freely convertible currency in favour Executive Engineer, LGED, Bhola and Bid security must be attached by the bidders with the 'Qualification Document'.

Bank Account for electronic wire transfer:
Account Name: X.E.N. LGED BHOLA
Account Number: 1056001494284
Bank Name: National Bank Limited
Branch Name: Bhola Branch
SWIFT Code: NBLBDDH
Routing Number: 150090102
The address(es) referred to above is (are):

Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil
Executive Engineer
LGED Bhola District, Bhola
Email: xen.bhola@lged.gov.bd

GD- 952

Fate of 17,000 still uncertain

KL determined not to extend deadline despite Dhaka's requests

MD ABBAS

While Bangladesh wants to send the remaining aspirant migrant workers to Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur has said it will not extend the deadline for the entry of foreign workers.

Despite receiving clearance, around 17,000 aspiring migrants who failed to fly to Malaysia within the deadline are uncertain whether they will be able to go there.

"We stand by the deadline because we have 15 source countries, and we want to ensure uniformity in the application of this deadline," said Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Haznah Md Hashim.

She said this applies to all 15 source countries and is not specific to Bangladesh.

"The state minister requested us to reconsider the deadline, and I will convey the message to Kuala Lumpur," she informed.

Regarding allegations from Bangladesh Association for International Recruiting

Agencies (Baira) that the Malaysian government issued e-visas on June 2 even after the deadline, Hashim said, "We cannot entertain any allegations without proof. So far, the entire Malaysian government, including those who issue visas, has adhered strictly to the deadline."

In response to a question about workers not getting jobs in Malaysia, she said, "This is something our government is looking into. I will not make any comments regarding it."

Shofiqur Rahman Choudhury, state minister for expatriates' welfare and overseas employment, said they requested Malaysia to reconsider the deadline and are actively working on it.

"The investigation committee will determine why the workers could not go to Malaysia. For those who have BMET cards or e-visas, arrangements will be made to ensure they receive compensation," he said.

Most workers, who could not travel to

Three killed in Khulna road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Three people were killed in a collision between a motorcycle and an engine-driven rickshaw-van in Paikgachha upazila of Khulna yesterday morning.

One of the deceased was identified as Ismail, 60, the van driver.

The identities of two other deceased who were the motorcycle riders are yet to be known.

Obaidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Paikgachha Police Station, said the accident happened around 10:00am near a bridge.

Police seized both the vehicles. The bodies were sent to Khulna Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Drive to clear parking lots after Eid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation, in collaboration with Rajuk, will conduct a drive against illegal shops occupying parking spaces in buildings after Eid-ul-Azha, said DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam yesterday.

He made this announcement while inaugurating a tree plantation programme on the Gulshan-Badda Link Road to mark World Environment Day.

"As many buildings have their parking lots occupied by shops, cars are forced to park on the roads. The drive against this will start after Eid," he added.



Dredgers being used to extract sand from the Bangshi river in Tangail's Mirzapur upazila. This illegal activity has also exacerbated the erosion threat, inset.

PHOTO: STAR

Illegal sand extraction plagues Bangshi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

An influential syndicate has been illegally lifting sand from the Bangshi river in the Rahimpur area of Tangail's Mirzapur upazila using dredgers over the past few weeks.

The indiscriminate sand lifting is turning the river turbulent as monsoon looms, posing a threat to exacerbate its already severe erosion on the riverbanks.

As such, villagers are living in fear of losing their croplands and homesteads, which are only a few kilometres from the dredging site, to the river.

The illegal sand lifting has continued despite protests from the villagers and no action has been taken by the local authorities to stop the menace, they said.

Over the years, the Bangshi has been devouring hundreds of houses, other structures, and vast areas of croplands every year during the monsoon.

Locals alleged that the sand lifting has been continuing over the last one and a half months, day and night, in the Rahimpur area, supervised by one Shafiqur Gorai union.

The extracted sand is then filled in bulkheads and transported to be sold elsewhere, they added.



"Whenever the villagers protested, goons of the sand lifters threatened and assaulted the people. The syndicate also lodged false cases against many villagers. So, the residents are now afraid while the local authorities are largely silent," said Ramjan Ali of Rahimpur village.

Mosharaf Hossain, another resident of Rahimpur, alleged that the culprits are a part of a strong political clout, with the support of the local public representatives belonging to the ruling party.

This correspondent tried to contact Shafiq, who supervises the sand lifting activities, but he was

neither found in the area nor he could be reached over the phone.

Contacted, Masudur Rahman, assistant commissioner (land) in Mirzapur upazila, said they are aware of the matter. "We conducted a couple of drives against illegal sand lifting. Fresh drives will be launched soon," he added.

Sheikh Nurul Alam, upazila nirbahi officer in Mirzapur, said he joined the office recently and will take steps after investigating the matter.

"Stern action will be taken against anyone found involved in illegal sand lifting, no matter how powerful they are," he added.

সোনালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি
ইনফরমেশন টেকনোলজি ডিভিশন
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SL No.	Tender No. & date	Name of tender	Tender opening date & time
1.	2024/36, 05/06/2024	Procurement of Desktop Computer, Offline UPS, Printer and Document Scanner for different location/Sub-Branch of Sonali Bank PLC	25/06/2024 03:30pm

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির বিস্তারিত তথ্যের জন্য সোনালী ব্যাংক পিএলসির Website www.sonali.com.bd এর Tender Board দেখুন।
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ডেপুটি জেনারেল ম্যানেজার

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উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি (OTM)

২০২৪-২৫ অর্থ বছরে নিম্নবর্ণিত কাজে ফ্রেমওয়ার্ক চুক্তির ভিত্তিতে টিকানার নিয়োগের জন্য পৃথক পৃথক সীলমোহরকৃত খামে যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন স্ট্রিক্ট দরনামাদেয় নিকট হতে পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন, ২০০৬ ও পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা, ২০০৮ ও সংশোধনীসহ এর নীতিমালা অনুসরণ করে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্রমিক	বিবরণ	দরপত্র দলিলের মূল্য	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি (টাকা)	কার্য সম্পাদনের মেয়াদ
১.	ব্যবহার্য দ্রব্যাদি (কোড-৩২৫৬১০৩)		৩০০০০০/- (তিন লক্ষ টাকা)	
২.	অন্যান্য মনিয়ারী (কোড-৩২৫৬১০৫)	১৫০০/- (এক হাজার পাঁচশত টাকা)	৫০০০০/- (পঞ্চাশ হাজার টাকা)	
৩.	যাচাই বিধান সামগ্রী (কোড-৩২৫২১০৮)		৪০০০০/- (চল্লিশ হাজার টাকা)	
৪.	পেশাক, উইন্টার টিউবিক, সামার টিউবিক, ব্রু প্রজার, ফরমাল সাদা (ইনার) ফুলশার্ট সেলাই ও নেইমপ্লেট, রিবন তৈরি (কোড-৩২৫৬১০৬)	১২০০/- (এক হাজার দুইশত টাকা)	২২৫০০০/- (দুই লক্ষ পঁচিশ হাজার টাকা)	২০২৪-২৫ অর্থ বছর
৫.	যানবাহনের জন্য কাঁচামাল ও যুগ্ম যন্ত্রাংশ ক্রয় (কোড-৩২৫৬১০৫)	৫০০/- (পাঁচশত টাকা) (প্রতিটি লট)।	লট-০১=২০০০০/-, লট-০২=১৫০০০/-, লট-০৩=১৫০০০/-, লট-০৪=১০০০০/-, লট-০৫=৮০০০/-	
৬.	মোটরযান (মেরামত) (কোড ৩২৫৮১০১)	৫০০/- (পাঁচশত টাকা) (প্রতিটি লট)।	লট-০১=৮০০০/-, লট-০২=৮০০০/-, লট-০৩=৫০০০/-, লট-০৪=৪০০০/-	
৭.	এসি মাইক্রোবাস, এসি হাইডেটকার ও মিনিবাস আড়ায় সংগ্রহ (কোড-৩১২১১০৬)	৫০০/- (পাঁচশত টাকা)।	৩০০০০/- (ত্রিশ হাজার টাকা)।	
১৩.	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর পদবী ও টিকানা: আন্তরিক আইজিপি (টিআইআইএম), বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, রাজারবাগ, ঢাকা।			
১৪.	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর পদবী ও টিকানা: (ক) ট্রেড লাইসেন্সধারী (হালনাগাদ), (খ) ব্যাংক সলভেন্সি সার্টিফিকেট (হালনাগাদ) ও ০১ বছরের স্টেটমেন্ট (হালনাগাদ), (গ) ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট (হালনাগাদ), (ঘ) আয়কর সনদ (হালনাগাদ), (ঙ) টিকানারের নথিরকতের সনদপত্র, (চ) মালিকানা সনদপত্র, (ছ) সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা সনদপত্র, (জ) আর্থনিক স্থায়ীত্ব সনদিত মোটরযান ওয়ার্কসপের অধিকারী (মোটরযান (মেরামত) এর ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য)। অন্যান্য শর্তাঙ্কী টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট মোতাবেক।			
১৫.	কর্তৃপক্ষ করণ দর্শনো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।			

(ড. জৌহুরী মোঃ যাকের মলিক)
পিপি-৭৯০৬১২১৭০২
এসপি (এআইএফ)
পক্ষে/অতিরিক্ত আইজিপি (টিআইআইএম)
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ, রাজারবাগ, ঢাকা।
মোবাইল: ০১৩০২-০২০০৩৯ ফ্যাক্স ৮৩০১৪০৪।

Death anniversary of Mahbubul Alam today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 10th death anniversary of Mahbubul Alam, former editor of The Independent.

He died on this day in 2014 at the age of 78.

Mahbubul, also a former caretaker government adviser, started his journalism career in the mid-1950s and was associated with the profession till his death.

He also worked as minister (press) at the Bangladesh mission in Washington DC and London and as Bangladeshi ambassador to Bhutan.

He was also managing director and chief editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

In 2006, he became an adviser to the caretaker government.

Mahbubul Alam led the Newspaper Owners Association of Bangladesh (Noab) as its president for quite some time.

PRAYER TIMING
JUNE 6

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-45	5-00	6-45	8-15
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-50	8-45

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Excited but nervous as well: APURBA ON 'GOLAM MAMUN'

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Popular actor Ziaul Faruq Apurba is returning to Hoichoi with a significant bang by starring in Shihab Shaheen's directorial *Golam Mamun* on June 13.

The project, which is the spin-off of the much-acclaimed series *Buker Moddhye Agun*, directed by Taneem Rahman Angshu, will see the actor playing the titular role.

Earlier in *Buker Moddhye Agun*, Apurba portrayed the role of a fierce police officer and earned many accolades for his role.

Prior to the upcoming release of the series, Apurba spoke to The Daily Star about his expectations and experience of working in the spin-off.

"Although I am hopeful about the series, I am also undeniably nervous. I feel like the results for my exams are going to be out on June 13, which is the release date of the series," said the actor.

Apurba mentioned that the team had put much effort into this production. "Shihab Shaheen and I collaborated many times, and most of my remarkable projects have been directed by him. He is a great director, and working on this project was a really great experience as well," he shared.

The actor assured that this action thriller would feature a more diverse plot than the typical ones in the genre. "I must thank the director for this. The character Golam Mamun has definitely been a challenging role, for which I had to take a lot of preparation," he added.

In this project, actress Sabila Nur took on the helm of a daring police officer named Rahi, opposite Apurba. The actor appreciated her work, stating, "As a co-actor, Sabila is very comfortable to work with, and she portrayed the role very well."

Apurba mentioned being happy with people appreciating him in *Buker Moddhye Agun* and he hopes that they will love him in the upcoming season too.

Reportedly, Apurba has recently suffered serious injuries to his hand and back while

filming an action scene outdoor for the series. The incident exacerbated his existing back pain and the combination of muscle and back pain rendered him nearly unconscious.

A physiotherapist promptly delivered first aid, and despite the doctor's advice for complete rest, Apurba returned to the set after receiving temporary treatment.

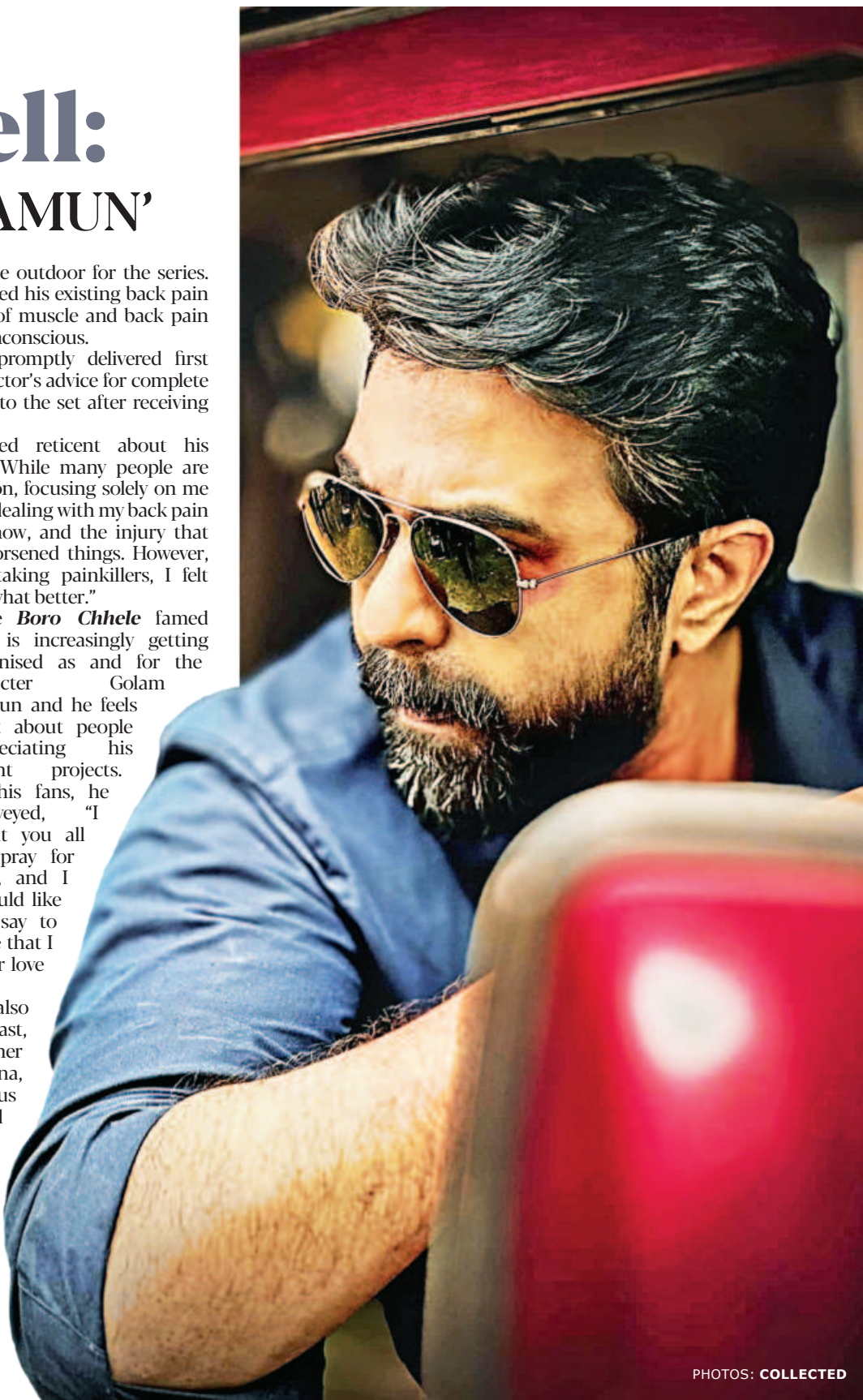
The actor remained reticent about his decision, remarking, "While many people are involved in a production, focusing solely on me isn't feasible. I've been dealing with my back pain for quite some time now, and the injury that day worsened things. However, after taking painkillers, I felt somewhat better."

The *Boro Chhele* famed actor is increasingly getting recognised as and for the character Golam Mamun and he feels great about people appreciating his recent projects. To his fans, he conveyed, "I want you all to pray for me, and I would like to say to everyone that I

am grateful for all your love and support."

Golam Mamun also features an ensemble cast, including Fakhru Basher Masum, Sharlin Farzana, Sharif Siraj, Syed Nazmus Sakib, Nafiz, Rashed Mamun, Sushoma Sarker, and Deepak Kumar Goswami.

In regard to his silver screen venture, Apurba is poised to make his Tollywood debut with the film *Chalchitro*, directed by Pratim D Gupta. The thriller film is set to be released soon.



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Kangana Ranaut wins in Mandi in Lok Sabha Election 2024



Prominent Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut's leap into politics has proved to be a remarkable success. The acclaimed *Queen* actress clinched a Lok Sabha seat from the Mandi constituency in Himachal Pradesh, winning by a substantial margin of 74,755 votes.

This victory saw her defeat Congress candidate Vikramaditya Singh, who had previously contested in two assembly elections but was vying for a parliamentary seat for the first time.

On the professional front, Ranaut is set to star in *Emergency*, a biopic on former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, which delves into a pivotal period in Indian history.

'Peaky Blinders' returns as film with Cillian Murphy



Netflix has officially announced a *Peaky Blinders* film with Oscar winner Cillian Murphy reprising his iconic role as the fearsome gangster, Thomas Shelby.

Directed by Tom Harper, who helmed episodes

of the series' first season in 2013, the film promises to be a thrilling continuation of the beloved saga, reported Deadline.

Additionally, Murphy will also serve as a producer on the project.

"It seems like Tommy Shelby wasn't finished with me...It is very gratifying to be re-collaborating with Steven Knight and Tom Harper on the film version of *Peaky Blinders*. This is one for the fans," shared Murphy.

NEWS

Amanullah

FROM PAGE 12

After the killing at a flat in New Town, Kolkata, Amanullah returned home on May 15, according to sources at the court and the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

After recording his statement, the court sent him to jail.

Amanullah, who goes by the alias Shimul Bhuiyan, was in charge of controlling the activities of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) in Khulna, Jhenidah, and Jashore.

Azim was also involved with the PBCP, and as Amanullah and Azim had a dispute over PBCP factions, the former readily agreed to kill the lawmaker.

As per Amanullah's statement, the accused tried to kill Azim on two occasions in January and March this year, but failed.

On April 25, Aktaruzzaman rented the New Town flat where Amanullah and Celesty met the other accused five days later to make a plan. Aktaruzzaman returned to Bangladesh on May 10.

As per the direction of Aktaruzzaman and Amanullah, the other accused took Azim to the flat, saying that they would discuss and settle the business matters.

Amanullah with the help of the other accused then killed the lawmaker there.

The accused dismembered the body and flushed part of it down the toilet. Some remains were put in a trunk which was discarded in the Krishna Mati area of Kolkata.

Accused Faisal, Mustafiz, and Jihad Howlader were directly involved in the killing, Amanullah said in the statement, adding that accused Jihad and Siam, arrested in Nepal, were involved in getting rid of the remains.

Jihad Howlader, who is in custody of West Bengal CID, was placed on a fresh two-day remand after the end of a 12-day one.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said until the DNA verification was done, law enforcers would not be able to tell for sure that they found Azim's remains.

"We have come to know from the arrestees that he was killed. Investigations and interrogations are underway in the two countries. Both countries will reach a decision," he added.

Ansar Al Islam raised

FROM PAGE 12

report submitted to the court, the arrestees admitted their involvement in Ansar Al Islam and the coordinators of Deen Islam Foundation. The outfit remains active on different online platforms, including social media, with the aim to recruit new operatives.

The arrestees said four to five other Ansar Al Islam operatives were also involved in fund raising, reads the report.

Deen Islam Foundation opened its Facebook page on April 19, 2022, and it has already attracted some 9,700 followers. These is a link of its website on the Facebook page, but The Daily Star could not access the website on Tuesday. There are two mobile phone numbers listed on the page, but both of those phones were found switched off.

A high official of the CTTC unit said that the foundation is not a registered platform.

"During interrogation, the arrestees could not provide information about the destination of the money. The statements regarding the transfer of the money were inconsistent," the official told this newspaper requesting anonymity.

In March this year, The SecDev Foundation, a Canadian NGO, in its monthly digital harms report said that AQIS in a digital booklet called upon the Bangladeshi Muslims to fund "the ongoing Palestine war".

Not much surprise

FROM PAGE 12

Najmul Hossain-led side have had a taste of playing at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York, where their batting against India in a warm-up match left a lot to be desired.

There is also the advantage for the Tigers, having already seen all of their group stage rivals play in the tournament so far. South Africa defeated Sri Lanka heavily, while Nepal and Netherlands played out a tight contest in Grand Prairie International Stadium in Dallas, the venue for Bangladesh's opening World Cup game against Sri Lanka on June 8.

In terms of conditions, there will be little surprise for Bangladesh heading into their upcoming matches in the USA. Sri Lanka have shown chinks in their armour, especially with the bat against the Proteas. But in trying to chase down a small total, South Africa batters did not look comfortable either. If the wickets do turn out to be on the slower side in New York, it

"The booklet provided a detailed calculation of how Hamas had to spend Tk 100 crore to launch 12,000 rockets during October-December. They called it a real shame that the war is being funded and supported by Shiite Iran and asked Muslims to send donations to the global jihad frontiers," reads the report.

"The group likely has already increased its fundraising inside the country," the report added.

The SecDev Foundation works globally to help at-risk people and organisations use digital technologies more safely and effectively.

Ahamedul Islam, deputy commissioner of the DMP at the CTTC unit, said there is no evidence indicating that Ansar Al Islam has sent funds for the Palestinian people.

"Collecting funds in the name of Jakat, building mosques, and aid for Qurbani is a common practice of the militant outfit. Some funds also came from abroad," he told The Daily Star.

In September 2022, the CTTC had found that Ansar Al Islam received about Tk 15 crore from people in the UK and Australia for carrying out its activities.

Ahamedul said the banned militant outfit is trying to make a comeback and it has adopted the crowdfunding tactic to dodge the law enforcers.

"We have already stepped up vigilance and taking lawful action," he added.

might aid Bangladesh bowlers even though the batting unit has looked awkward on all surfaces so far.

Moreover, the game between Netherlands and Nepal showed that they will not be easy fixtures for the Tigers, but those matches will be in the West Indies. Bangladesh vice-captain Taskin Ahmed was expecting Dallas wickets to be a little different.

"The wicket of New York was a little low-scoring. I think the wicket in Dallas will be different. We need to play according to the conditions and situation. Whether it's a low-scoring or high-scoring match, if we can play according to our style, I think we can do well on that day," Taskin told reporters at the Mustang Cricket Academy on Tuesday.

With not much time left to prepare, Bangladesh will now be hoping to be in the right frame of mind as they gear up for their World Cup opener, which could potentially make or break their campaign.

People

FROM PAGE 12

go abroad with the help of brokers get into trouble.

Despite getting clearance from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), a total of 16,970 migrant workers could not reach Malaysia before May 31, when the deadline for workers to enter the Southeast Asian country ended.

Responding to another query from ruling Awami League MP Alauddin Ahmed Chowdhury, the premier yesterday said if a project is not completed on time, the project cost increases, which ultimately puts an adverse impact on the socio-economic development of the country.

"As a result, almost all projects are modified once or more after approval without increasing the duration or cost. This hinders the implementation of the Annual Development Plan," she said.

Hasina said many projects are not completed on schedule due to various errors and deviations, she said.

"As a result, the progress of the project is hampered and the beneficiaries are deprived of receiving the benefits on time."

Replying to a query from AL MP Mahfizur Rahman, Hasina said experts have stated that traffic snarl-ups in Dhaka city and their resulting impacts are leading to annual financial losses of about \$3.8 billion.

"This money will be saved if the metro rail lines are opened under the Time-bound Action Plan 2030, and an opportunity will arise to invest the full amount in the economy," she added.

The premier said a study has found that once the entire section of MRT Line-6 (Uttara to Kamalapur) of Dhaka metro rail is made operational, about Tk 8.38 crore will be saved in terms of daily travel time cost and around Tk 1.18 crore in terms of vehicle operations cost.

Responding to another question from AL MP Faridun Nahar Laily, the leader of the House said it is unfortunate that a clique of communal forces and war criminals and the BNP-Jamaat were continuously spreading rumours through social media.

"Many of them are staying in different developed countries. They are mainly spreading false and distorted news against Bangladesh and its government through social media outlets like Facebook, X [formerly Twitter], and YouTube."

She said legal, technical, and diplomatic steps have been taken at home and abroad to stop the spread of misinformation and rumours.

Trend of low voter

FROM PAGE 12

in upazila polls since 2009, said EC sources.

The turnout was 36 percent in the first phase of upazila elections held on May 8, 38 percent in the second phase on May 21, and 36 percent in the third phase held on May 29.

The figure was 70.57 percent in the 2009 upazila polls, which dropped to 61.23 percent in 2014. On average, it stood around 40 percent in the 2019 upazila polls conducted in five phases.

In the January 7 national election, the turnout was 42 percent.

The BNP and many other political parties have stayed off the upazila polls, like they did in the January 7 national election saying that the EC is "not capable of holding the elections in a free and fair manner".

The battle of ballots took place among independents, mostly from the ruling Awami League, as other political parties did not field any candidates.

In Chattogram, a voter was injured when activists of two vice-chairman candidates clashed at East Pingala Government Primary School polling centre in Patiya upazila.

A mobile court fined four people Tk one lakh over attempting to

influence voters at Baharchhara Ratnapur High School Polling Centre in Banskhali upazila.

In Patuakhali, a mobile court sentenced a man to six months' imprisonment for trying to cast fake votes at Gangipara Government Primary School polling centre in Rangabali upazila.

A chairman candidate sought a re-election to Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila, alleging "massive irregularities" committed by supporters of his rival.

In Dinajpur's Phulbari upazila, a thin presence of voters was seen at different polling stations throughout the day.

In flood-hit Zakiganj and Kanaighat upazilas of Sylhet, many voters came to polling stations on boats.

"The road to the polling station has been submerged. So, I have come to cast my vote on a boat," said Saju Uddin, a voter of Konagram Government Primary School polling centre in Kanaighat upazila.

Elections to 22 upazilas, which were suspended due to Cyclone Remal, will be held on June 9.

[Our correspondents from respective districts contributed to this report.]

Identify those responsible, take action

FROM PAGE 12

was tortured by police before her death.

It is a gross violation of human rights, and the activities of Bangladesh police is being questioned at home and abroad because of the irresponsible action of a few.

Those who are involved should face legal action, it added.

Afroza Begum, 40, died on Sunday morning hours after she was picked up by Abhaynagar police from her home in the Nawapara area, according to her children.

Her son Sabbir Mollah, a 9th grader, told reporters that police threatened to frame his mother in a narcotics case unless she paid them Tk 2 lakh.

A team of police led by Assistant Sub-Inspector Silon Ali went to their home near midnight on Saturday

and a woman constable frisked his mother.

"Then the ASI started hitting her. At one stage, she fell to the ground. He then tied my mother's hair to a ceiling fan and tortured her," Sabbir said.

As Afroza's condition deteriorated, she was taken to Jashore General Hospital where doctors declared her dead around 11:30am on Sunday.

ASI Silon earlier told The Daily Star that the allegations of torture were baseless.

Akikul Islam, officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station, said police detained Afroza with 30 yaba pills. She later fell ill and died on the way to a hospital.

On Monday, police formed a three-member committee, led by an additional superintendent of police in Jashore to investigate the matter.

INTERNATIONAL

How Modi's party lost its majority

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will remain in office but with a substantially reduced mandate, confounding expectations of a resounding victory forecast by analysts and exit polls. AFP takes a look at the reasons why Modi and his party failed to achieve a third successive landslide win:

DIVISIVE CAMPAIGN

Critics and rights groups accused Modi of ramping up rhetoric against Muslims to unprecedented levels during his campaign in a bid to mobilise the Hindu majority.

At his rallies, he referred to Muslims as "infiltrators", and claimed the main opposition Congress party would redistribute the nation's wealth to Muslims if it won.

But the strategy failed to galvanise Hindu voters behind the BJP, while also solidifying minority communities' support for the opposition.

BIGGEST STATE FLIPS

For the first time in 15 years, Modi's party failed to win the most seats in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state and a bellwether for national elections.

Uttar Pradesh is the heartland of India's majority faith, with widespread support for Modi's Hindu-nationalist agenda.

But an alliance of opposition parties who had competed against each other in past polls saw BJP candidates face stronger rivals, who ultimately won more than half of the state's seats.

INDIA ELECTION 2024

Ridiculed for half a decade, Rahul slows Modi juggernaut

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

As the Indian parliamentary election results neared completion on Tuesday, supporters at the Congress party's national headquarters at 24 Akbar Road in the heart of Delhi broke into celebrations.

The happiest man was Rahul Gandhi as Congress, powered by his campaign, won 99 seats on its own recording its best performance in national elections since 2004.

Often derided as "pappu" and dismissed as a serial 're-inventor' constantly looking for an identity, Rahul perhaps thought he had had the last laugh in this Lok Sabha election. Congress' tally of seats is not only a quantum jump from the worst show of 52 seats five years ago but more importantly prevented BJP from getting a majority on its own. This is the first time that BJP under Modi failed to get to the magic figure of 272 in the 543-Lok Sabha.

Rahul carried out a 'padyatra' from Kanyakumari to Kashmir in 2022-23 and a 'Nyay Yatra' this year from Manipur to Mumbai in the run up to the parliamentary elections setting the narrative for Congress and staying the course and refusing to be distracted by setbacks.



Riding a tempo with migrant workers, tractor in the company of farmers, hugging a child, bowing to comfort a woman who lost her husband or attacking BJP, particularly Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in press conferences, short videos and social media platforms—Rahul was the centre-piece almost all over.

The 53-year-old scion of the Gandhi family describes himself as the best chess player among Indian politicians. His latest gambit of making social justice as the central theme of his party's campaign seems to have paid off in the political chess with his party making a surprising comeback in the Hindi belt, making significant gains in Rajasthan,

Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Even the harshest of detractors of Rahul would concede that his 2024 campaign was by far his best as he focused on bread and butter issues and the party's welfare guarantees which struck a chord with a section of the voters.

A key feature of Rahul's election campaign was that he depended heavily on social media as opposed to conventional interactions and interviews with the mainstream media. His repeated claim at rallies that BJP would change the Constitution if it is voted back to power as he carried a copy of the Constitution succeeded in whipping up a fear perception.

He contested from Kerala's Wayanad and Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly constituency his mother Sonia Gandhi gave up. In Rae Bareilly, he bettered Sonia's margin of victory in 2019.

The half a decade has been challenging for Rahul's political career. He lost the Lok Sabha poll in Amethi to BJP's Smriti Irani by over 55,000 votes in 2019. His strategy of pitching the 2019 polls campaign of Congress on the alleged scam in Rafale fighter jets purchase issue and bringing Modi in the line of fire boomeranged badly. But he did not budge and continued to attack the Prime Minister—this time on the Adani issue.

Questions may arise over rule

FROM PAGE 2

comment on Sunday that he was at the worst point of his cursed life.

The journalist asked if the US would consider more actions to show solidarity with the democracy-loving people of Bangladesh or the sanctions already imposed against former army chief Aziz Ahmed and police chief Benazir Ahmed were enough to hold the Bangladesh government accountable.

Miller in response said he does not have any actions to preview.

The journalist also sought Miller's comments

on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent statement that a white man offered her that she can stay in power without any pressure if she allows a foreign country to establish an airbase (in the Bay of Bengal).

On May 23, Hasina also mentioned that a conspiracy was afoot to carve out a Christian country taking parts of Chattogram of Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Miller responded, "So I'm not exactly sure who those comments refer to, but if it is in fact the United States, I'll just say that they're not accurate."

Israel launches new incursion

FROM PAGE 12

move with majority vote on Tuesday evening, dismissing a call for a referendum on the issue by the largest opposition party.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters on Tuesday, "We are waiting for a response from Hamas" through the Qatari mediators, referring to a ceasefire proposal that US President Joe Biden revealed on Friday.

Qatar said on Tuesday that the proposal was now much closer to the positions of both sides.

Hamas has said it views the contents of the plan positively and has criticised Washington for what it described as attempts to blame the Palestinian group for hampering it.

But a spokesman for Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, reiterated on Tuesday it could not agree to any deal unless Israel makes a "clear" commitment to a permanent truce and complete withdrawal from Gaza. Israel says it cannot do that until Hamas is wiped out.

The United Nations Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) issued a new plea for a ceasefire yesterday on X.

"The war in #Gaza has upended millions of Palestinian lives & caused catastrophic damage to the natural environment that they depend upon for water, clean air, food & livelihoods. Restoring environmental services will take decades - & cannot even start until a #ceasefire," it said.

'Free me from govt' Says Fadnavis after BJP's poor show in Maharashtra

TNN, New Delhi

Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis yesterday offered to step down as Maharashtra deputy chief minister taking moral responsibility for the party's poor showing in Lok Sabha elections in the state.

The BJP, which had 23 members in the last Lok Sabha, could manage to win only 9 this time around.

Fadnavis urged the party's top leadership to free him from the state government so that he could work for the party.

"I am requesting the BJP high command to relieve me from the responsibility of the government," Fadnavis said. The Maharashtra deputy chief minister claimed that the BJP-led NDA got more votes in Mumbai but there was consolidation of votes against the party which resulted in loss of seats.

Manipur rejects BJP after year-long ethnic clashes

REUTERS, Guwahati

India's main opposition Congress party bagged both parliamentary

seats in strife-torn Manipur in the general election as the north-eastern state voted out Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party and its ally after year-long ethnic clashes.

Since May last year the remote state bordering Myanmar has been roiled by fighting between the majority Meitei and tribal Kuki-Zo people that killed at least 220 people and displaced 60,000 to relief camps.

The state of 3.2 million people continues to be divided into two enclaves - a valley controlled by Meitei and Kuki dominated hills.

In the lead up to the election, victims on both sides of the sectarian divide expressed their displeasure with Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party for not being able to bring peace to the state.

"This is the voice of those people..." said Congress's A Bimal Akiojam, who beat his BJP rival in the Meitei-dominated inner Manipur seat by close to 110,000 votes.






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তারিখ-০২-০৬-২০২৪

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ পাট গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (বিজ্ঞানসৌকর্য) এর নিয়োগে শূন্য পদসমূহ পূরণের লক্ষ্যে পদের পার্শ্বে বর্ণিত শর্ত সাপেক্ষে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে অনলাইনে আবেদন আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:



কৃষি ইনস্টিটিউট

৫. বয়সসীমা (০৮ জুলাই, ২০২৪ তারিখ অনুযায়ী)
ক) আবেদনকারীদের বয়সসীমা ১৮ থেকে ৩০ বছরের মধ্যে হতে হবে।
খ) মুক্তিযোদ্ধাদের পুত্র-কন্যা/শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী আবেদনকারীদের জন্য বয়সসীমা ১৮ থেকে ৩২ বছর।
গ) বয়স প্রমাণের ক্ষেত্রে একিভেডিড গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়।

৬. মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় সকল সদস্যদের মূল কপি প্রদর্শন করতে হবে এবং পূর্ণকৃত Application Form সহ সত্যায়িত একসেট ফটোকপি দাখিল করতে হবে। এছাড়া জেলার স্বামী বাসিন্দার প্রমাণ হিসেবে ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ/পৌরসভা/সিটি কর্পোরেশন কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সনদ, জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের ফটোকপি এবং আবেদনকারী মুক্তিযোদ্ধার পুত্র-কন্যা/নাতি-নাতনী হলে তার মুক্তিযোদ্ধা সংক্রান্ত সনদপত্র/শেজেট এবং আবেদনকারী যে মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার নাতি-নাতনী এই মর্মে সংশ্লিষ্ট ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের চেয়ারম্যান/সিটি কর্পোরেশন/পৌরসভার মেয়র/প্যালেস মেয়র/ওয়ার্ড কাউন্সিলর কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সনদের সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি দাখিল করতে হবে। দাখিলকৃত মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সনদের সত্যতা মুক্তিযুদ্ধ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়ের নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক যাচাই করা হবে।

৭. আবেদনকারীদের মোবাইল ফোনে Teletalk Bangladesh Limited হতে (শুধুমাত্র যোগ্য প্রার্থীদেরকে) SMS এর মাধ্যমে যথাসময়ে প্রয়োজনীয় নির্দেশনা প্রদান করা হবে।

৮. অনলাইনে আবেদনপত্র পূরণ সংক্রান্ত নিয়মাবলি ও শর্তাবলিঃ

ক) পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণে ইচ্ছুক ব্যক্তি <http://bjri.teletalk.com.bd> এই ওয়েবসাইটে আবেদনপত্র পূরণ করতে পারবেন। আবেদনের সময়সীমা নিম্নরূপঃ

- Online-এ আবেদনপত্র পূরণ ও পরীক্ষার ফি জমাদান শুরুর তারিখ ও সময়: ০৮-০৬-২০২৪, সকাল ১০:০০ টা।
- Online-এ আবেদনপত্র জমাধানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়: ০৮-০৭-২০২৪, বিকাল ০৪:০০ টা।
- উক্ত সময়সীমার মধ্যে User ID প্রাপ্ত প্রার্থীগণ Online-এ আবেদনপত্র Submit-এর সময় থেকে পরবর্তী ৭২ (বাহাতর) ঘণ্টার মধ্যে SMS এর মাধ্যমে পরীক্ষার ফি জমা দিতে পারবেন।

খ) Online-এ আবেদনপত্র প্রার্থী তার স্বাক্ষর (সেই ৩০০xপ্রস্থ ৮০) pixel ও রশ্মিন ছবি (সেই ৩০০xপ্রস্থ ৩০০) pixel স্ক্যান করে নির্ধারিত স্থানে Upload করবেন।

গ) Online-এ আবেদনপত্র পূর্ণকৃত তথ্যই যেহেতু পরবর্তী সাক্ষর কার্যক্রমে ব্যবহৃত হইবে, সেহেতু Online-এ আবেদনপত্র Submit-করার পূর্বেই পূর্ণকৃত সকল তথ্যের সঠিকতা সম্পর্কে প্রার্থী নিজে শতভাগ নিশ্চিত হবেন।

ঘ) প্রার্থী Online-এ পূর্ণকৃত আবেদনপত্রের একটি রশ্মিন প্রিন্টকপি পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত যে কোন প্রয়োজনে সহায়ক হিসেবে সংরক্ষণ করবেন।

ঙ) SMS প্রেরণের নিয়মাবলি ও পরীক্ষার ফি প্রদান: Online-এ আবেদনপত্র (Application Form) যথাযথভাবে পূরণ করে নির্দেশনা মতে ছবি এবং স্বাক্ষর Upload করে আবেদনপত্র Submit-করা সম্পন্ন হলে কম্পিউটারে ছবিসহ Application Preview দেখা যাবে। নির্ভুলভাবে আবেদনপত্র Submit-করা সম্পন্ন প্রার্থী একটি User ID, ছবি এবং স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত একটি Applicant's Copy পাবেন। উক্ত Applicant's Copy প্রার্থী Download পূর্বক রশ্মিন প্রিন্ট করে সংরক্ষণ করবেন। Applicant's কপিতে একটি User ID নম্বর দেওয়া থাকবে এবং User ID নম্বর ব্যবহার করে প্রার্থী নিয়োগে পদ্ধতিতে যে কোন Teletalk pre-paid mobile নম্বরের মাধ্যমে ০২ (দুই)টি SMS করে পরীক্ষার ফি বাবদ ১নং ক্রমিকের উল্লিখিত পদের জন্য ৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকা এবং টেলিটকের কমিশন চার্জ বাবদ ৫৮/- (আটশ) টাকাসহ অফেরতযোগ্য মোট ৫৫৮/- (পাঁচশত আটশ) টাকা, ক্রমিক নং-২-১২ এ উল্লিখিত পদের জন্য ২০০/- (দুইশত) টাকা এবং টেলিটকের কমিশন চার্জ বাবদ ২৩/- (তেরিশ) টাকাসহ অফেরতযোগ্য মোট ২২৩/- (দুইশত তেরিশ) টাকা এবং ক্রমিক নং-১৩ এ উল্লিখিত পদের জন্য ১০০/- (একশত) টাকা এবং টেলিটকের কমিশন চার্জ বাবদ ১২/- (বারো) টাকাসহ অফেরতযোগ্য মোট ১১২/- (একশত বারো) টাকা অনধিক ৭২ (বাহাতর) ঘণ্টার মধ্যে জমা দিবেন। এখানে বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখ্য যে, "Online-এ আবেদনপত্রের সকল অংশ পূরণ করে Submit করা হলেও পরীক্ষার ফি জমা না দেওয়া পর্যন্ত Online আবেদনপত্র কোন অবস্থাতেই গৃহীত হবে না।"

প্রথম SMS: **BJRI**<space>**User ID** লিখে Send করতে হবে 16222 নম্বরে। Example: **BJRI ABCDEF**
Reply: **Applicant's Name, Tk-..... will be charged as application fee. Your PIN is 12345678. To pay fee Type BJRI**<space>**Yes**<space>**PIN** and send to 16222.
দ্বিতীয় SMS: **BJRI**<space>**Yes**<space>**PIN** লিখে Send করতে হবে 16222 নম্বরে। Example: **BJRI YES 12345678**
Reply: **Congratulations Applicant's Name, payment completed successfully for BJRI Application for post xxxxxxxx. User ID is (ABCDEF) and Password (xxxxxxx)**

চ) প্রবেশপত্র প্রাপ্তির বিষয়টি <http://bjri.teletalk.com.bd> ওয়েবসাইটে এবং প্রার্থীর মোবাইল ফোনে SMS-এর মাধ্যমে (শুধুমাত্র যোগ্য প্রার্থীদেরকে) যথাসময়ে জানানো হবে। Online-এ আবেদনপত্র প্রার্থীর প্রদত্ত মোবাইল ফোনে পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় যোগাযোগ সম্পন্ন করা হবে বিধায় উক্ত নম্বরটি সার্বক্ষণিক সচল রাখা, SMS পড়া এবং প্রাপ্ত নির্দেশনা তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে অনুসরণ করা বাধ্যতামূলক।

ছ) SMS-এ প্রেরিত User ID এবং Password ব্যবহার করে পরবর্তীতে রোল নম্বর, পদের নাম, ছবি, পরীক্ষার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থানের/কেন্দ্রের নাম ইত্যাদি তথ্য সফলিত প্রবেশপত্র প্রার্থী Download পূর্বক রশ্মিন Print করে নিবেন। প্রার্থী প্রবেশপত্রটি লিখিত পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের সময় এবং উত্তীর্ণ হলে মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় অবশ্যই প্রদর্শন করবেন।

জ) শুধুমাত্র টেলিটক প্রি-পেইড মোবাইল ফোন থেকে প্রার্থীগণ নিম্নবর্ণিত SMS পদ্ধতি অনুসরণ করে নিজ নিজ User ID এবং Password পুনরুদ্ধার করতে পারবেন।
User ID জানা থাকলে: **BJRI**<space>**Help**<space>**User**<space>**User ID** & Send to 16222
Example: **BJRI Help User ABCDEF & Send to 16222**
PIN Number জানা থাকলে: **BJRI**<space>**Help**<space>**PIN**<space>**PIN No** & Send to 16222
Example: **BJRI Help PIN 12345678 & Send to 16222**

৯. কর্তৃপক্ষ নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণের সকল ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করবেন।

১০. বাস্তবতার বিরিখে পদের সংখ্যা হ্রাসবৃদ্ধি হতে পারে।

নিয়োগের শর্তাবলিঃ

- আবেদনকারীর নাম, পিতার নাম, মাতার নাম ও জন্ম তারিখ (এসএসসি সনদ, বা এনআইডি অনুযায়ী) অনলাইনে আবেদন ফরমে এবং পরবর্তীতে হব্ব সেভাবে লিখতে হবে।
- সরকারি/আধা-সরকারি/স্বায়তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে চাকরিত প্রার্থীদের যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতি গ্রহণপূর্বক নির্দিষ্ট সময়সীমার মধ্যে আবেদন করতে হবে এবং মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় অবশ্যই উক্ত অনুমতিপত্র প্রদর্শন করতে হবে।
- জেলা কোর্টসহ সরকার কর্তৃক প্রচলিত অন্যান্য সকল প্রকার কোর্ট বিধি অনুযায়ী অনুসরণ করা হবে।
- মুদ্রিত/হস্তলিখিত কোন প্রকার আবেদন বা কাগজপত্র ডাকযোগ্য বা অন্য কোন উপায়ে প্রেরণ করা হলে তা গ্রহণ করা হবে না।


(ড. এস. এম. মাহবুব আলী)
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The Daily Star

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An election unlike any in recent past

Indian election results have lessons for Bangladesh, too

Over the last decade, few surprises perhaps came as heartwarming to observers of India's democratic journey as the ones from its latest Lok Sabha election. The Indian election authorities rightly deserve kudos for successfully conducting the world's—and history's—largest democratic exercise that, over six weeks, saw 64.2 crore people vote, including a record 31.2 crore women. That in itself is a watershed moment that needs to be celebrated. The staggered election has also thrown up some big surprises, especially the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) failure to secure an outright majority for the first time since sweeping to power in 2014, as well as the rise of a strong parliamentary opposition.

The relative peace and enthusiasm that marked the election serve as a lesson for countries like Bangladesh where violence and poor voter turnout have become synonymous with the electoral exercise. It stands as a testament to people's power, and the fact that a fair election is possible despite sharp ideological divides among the contesting parties. The election results, from that perspective, can be seen as a popular rejection of attempts to sully India's secular legacy. We have seen how the Hindutva and anti-immigrant rhetoric was used, especially by BJP, to rally voters behind its re-election campaign. While PM Modi is set to return to power for a rare third consecutive term, one hopes for the sake of ordinary Indians and the region at large that such divisive rhetoric will come to an end.

Perhaps the biggest surprise of all—one that we can particularly relate to—is the resurgence of the Congress-led opposition alliance, INDIA, which secured 232 seats against BJP-led NDA's 293. It is a defeat that feels more like a victory considering the last decade, as some observers said. We cannot deny the significance of a strong parliamentary opposition in democracy. A strong opposition ensures checks and balances, preventing any single party or leader from holding excessive power. By scrutinising government actions and policies, it holds the government accountable to the public. Without a robust opposition, democracy can become stagnant, unresponsive, and vulnerable to authoritarianism. The Indian experience thus offers a lesson for Bangladesh where the lack of such an opposition has been acutely felt for long. Equally instructive has been the rebalancing of powers among coalition partners—with BJP having to rely on smaller allies—which also provides stability in parliamentary affairs.

The drama over the Indian election may not be over yet, as speculations over the formation of the next coalition government continues. As a neighbour and friend, it is our hope that Indian voters' desire to see a pro-people, pluralistic polity will be honoured regardless of what the next government looks like. We also hope that the two countries can continue on a path of mutual respect and growth in the coming days. As for those involved in Bangladesh's politics and electoral exercise, they can certainly take a leaf or two out of the Indian book.

Another blame game afoot

Authorities must take responsibility for Malaysia migration debacle

Following the debacle that led to 16,970 aspiring migrant workers failing to reach Malaysia before the deadline of May 31 set for migrants' entry, a blame game seems to be afoot. One the one hand, the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) denied responsibility for the disaster, blaming the Malaysian government and Bangladesh's Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment for the mismanagement. On the other hand, the relevant state minister hinted that the Malaysian government was at fault for the issuance of e-visas beyond the deadline, but said it was pointless to blame anyone right now, while denying the existence of any syndicate among recruiting agencies.

We, however, cannot help but disagree. For it is absolutely essential to identify who is at fault for such a catastrophe, and hold them responsible. We have seen such problems arise repeatedly in the past, which suggests that this is not a one-off issue but a systemic one—in which the subject of syndication comes up every time. In fact, the reason given by the Malaysian authorities for repeatedly stopping or restricting access for our migrant workers has been the syndicate problem, along with the mismanagement and corruption that come with it. Even UN experts, in a report, expressed concerns for our migrants and mentioned the hefty sums they have to pay because of criminal networks operating in Malaysia and Bangladesh in which "certain high-level officials" of "both governments are involved." So why is the minister denying their existence?

Baira, meanwhile, refuted the expat ministry's figure and said no more than 5,000-6,000 workers failed to travel abroad. However, data from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) suggests otherwise. Why is that? Clearly, someone—or perhaps no one in this case—is not doing their job properly. Otherwise, why should there be any confusion at this point about the number of migrants who couldn't go abroad?

It is time for the relevant authorities to be finally held to account. The whole process of how we send migrants abroad, not just in Malaysia but other destination countries as well, needs to be revisited and reformed given how badly it has performed time and again. And most importantly, steps must be taken to reimburse and rehabilitate workers who could not travel abroad, despite paying for it, because of these systemic issues and failures.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



Normandy invasion begins

Led by US General Dwight D Eisenhower, an Allied armada of ships, planes, and landing craft and some 156,000 troops began the invasion of northern France from England on this day in 1944—the famous D-Day of World War II.

FY2024-25 BUDGET

Whitening black money, raising taxes won't fix our economic ails



A CLOSER LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb
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TASNEEM TAYEB

The possibility that the government may offer financial criminals a special facility to "whiten" their black money with just a flat 15 percent tax and full amnesty has raised concerns not just among the country's economists and civil society but also the common people. And rightfully so, for the honest breadwinners have to pay an income tax at 25 percent at the highest slab. Adding VAT and other indirect taxes that ordinary taxpayers are required to pay, this plan—which, unfortunately, is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh—is ill-judged and unjust at the very least.

The Income Tax Act, 2023 allows legalising illegally amassed money by paying a mere 25 percent tax and a 10 percent fine on the tax amount. This time around, however, what's raising eyebrows is the nature of the special offer: no questions asked, just a 15 percent tax, and illegally earned money becomes legal.

Some may argue that bringing black money back into circulation would be good for our economy's health. But at what cost? It is a no-brainer that allowing such impunity to black money hoarders will encourage the practice further, and discourage honest taxpayers from paying their taxes compliantly. The maths is simple: it is a 50 percent saving on taxes if one simply turns their legitimately earned income into undisclosed money and then whiten it—no strings attached and no repercussion involved.

It has been suggested that such an unconditional scheme to legalise black money is required, as the last time such a facility was offered in FY2020-21, a record Tk 20,600 crore was legalised—enabling the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to collect Tk 2,064 crore in taxes—by about 12,000 individuals, including government employees, doctors, businesspersons, and bank sponsor directors, among others. But once this scheme was lifted, in the subsequent years, fewer people availed the offered options to

legalise illegal money.

Does this mean that the facility anticipated to be offered again would reduce the tax collection pressure on the NBR and inject more money into the economy? Not necessarily. We must remember that due to the travel and communication restrictions during the Covid pandemic, which essentially limited the hundi channels, people had little option but to keep their dirty money home, hence many availed the golden opportunity. The



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

context in 2020-21 was different from that in 2024-25, and expecting to generate the same response from dirty money owners based on a general clemency and a flat tax rate might be a folly.

Interestingly, in this budget, the government is also planning to raise the highest tax slab back to 30 percent. While some may argue that such an increase is just and the right thing to do, we need to take a closer look at a few data points to understand how this would impact the salaried individuals.

As per the current slab, an individual with an annual income of Tk 3.5-4.5 lakh has to pay income tax at five percent. In the second slab, individuals

with an income up to Tk 7.5 lakh need to pay income tax at 10 percent. An annual income up to Tk 11.5 lakh requires payment of 15 percent income tax. Those earning up to Tk 16.5 lakh have to pay 20 percent income tax. Anyone earning more than Tk 16.5 lakh per year has to pay 25 percent of their income as income tax.

At a time when food inflation stands at 10.22 percent (as of April 2024), income growth is falling behind inflation, the taka has depreciated against the US dollar by around 36 percent (since January 2022), utility bills are rising, health spending has surged by over 202 percent, this tax regime is a staggering burden.

Some may argue that in India the tax-free income is up to 300,000 rupees per year, and the highest tax slab is 30 percent for an annual income of 15 lakh rupees and above. If we compare our tax regime with India's,

it is a biting blow for them, the simple reason being inflation. In 2014, when the 30 percent tax was slapped on this slab, the inflation rate was 7.35 percent. When the same was reduced to 25 percent in 2020, the inflation rate was 5.65 percent.

Back in 2020, Leave Fare Assistance (LFA) and income from Workers Profit Participation Fund (WPPF) were tax-free as long as they were within Tk 50,000. Both are now taxable, reducing further the disposal income of salaried individuals who fall in the 25 percent bracket. There are about 89,290 taxpayers who fall in this tax category, according to BBS. How is it just to tax someone earning Tk 16.5 lakh and someone earning, say, Tk 1 crore in the same slab?

If one assumes that the government is considering raising the tax slab back to 30 percent to ensure social equity and fair taxation, it should consider two points. First, it should expand the range for each slab and reduce the tax burden on each of these slabs, expanding the tax-free limit to up to Tk 5 lakh, so that the middle-class taxpayers can meet their basic necessities with dignity.

Secondly, the government should further break the current highest tax slab into several brackets and impose a super tax—a tax in addition to a normal tax, upon an annual income above a certain amount—on the rich and wealthy. The concept of super tax is gaining popularity globally as a tool to ensure social justice and could get the NBR the much-needed extra tax that it needs to extract from the right people.

Instead of taking the easy way out and burdening the already struggling segment of the taxpaying population, it is vital that the government look for a way to efficiently utilise the tax money it collects every year. A study by the Policy Research Institute (PRI) of Bangladesh reveals that a whopping 43 percent of taxpayers' money is spent on salaries, pensions and other benefits for government officials.

At the same time, the government must focus on containing the rampant corruption that enables the shameless plundering of taxpayers' money through various projects.

It is understandable that the government needs money to pay off its debts and meet its expenses, but allowing wholesale legalising of dirty money and taxing people further are not the solutions to this problem.

For real growth, invest more into education and health



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ABU AFSARUL HAIDER

Over the past one and a half decades, the government has undertaken numerous infrastructural projects, developing and renovating roads, bridges, ports, airports, communication, energy and power, etc in the country. While infrastructure development provides the necessary physical foundation for economic growth and social progress, the most critical sectors requiring investment for a country's overall growth are education and health. Unfortunately, Bangladesh still struggles to adequately invest in these essential areas.

Recent revelations from the draft development budget for FY2024-25 paint a disheartening picture. Both the health and education sectors are set to receive allocations below the targets outlined in the eighth five-year plan. The health sector is allocated just 7.80 percent of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) budget, significantly less than the targeted 11.10 percent. Similarly, the education and technology sector is allocated only 13.70 percent, falling short of the proposed 16.50 percent. Basic economic principles highlight that a well-educated and healthy population is crucial for long-term economic growth and sustainable development. If so, why are these two critical sectors often neglected in this country?

Officials at the Planning

Commission say the education and health ministries get lower allocations because they struggle to spend the allocated funds effectively. Additionally, cost overruns and delays in implementing projects are also to blame. Data from the commission reveals that over the past five years, development projects in the health and education sectors experienced cost overruns of 13 percent and 27.5 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, 55 percent of health ministry projects and 34 percent of education ministry projects had to have their deadlines extended. So, why should the public suffer due to management weaknesses?

Bangladesh's current population is around 17 crore, with 7.37 crore people employed in various sectors and 2.74 crore aged between 15-29 years. However, we have not fully capitalised on the demographic dividend of this large number of young people because we lack a skilled and healthy workforce. Unfortunately, our approach to development has neglected education, research, and health, focusing instead on constructing large-scale infrastructure. Infrastructural development, while essential, is not sustainable without enhancing human capacity. Sustainable development requires a healthy, skilled, tech-savvy workforce, which necessitates proper investment in health, education, and research.

We are already struggling on that front, with research indicating that our garment, real estate, telecommunication, information and technology sectors are facing severe shortage of skilled manpower. Consequently, foreign workers are being hired, leading to huge amounts of dollars leaving the country. Additionally, the lack of investment means that people's out-of-pocket expenses for healthcare and education will continue to remain high.

Currently, individuals bear a significant portion of medical expenses, with households covering up to 72 percent of all healthcare costs through out-of-pocket payments. This system imposes a heavy financial burden on impoverished families, often forcing them to either forgo treatment or incur debt. Additionally, to manage healthcare costs, families often cut back on essential daily expenses. According to the World Food Programme's 2023 Food Security Monitoring, 36 percent of Bangladesh's population suffers from food insecurity, with poverty and malnutrition continuing to co-exist. Nutrition is closely linked to labour productivity. The Asian Productivity Organisation's Productivity Data Book 2020 reports that Bangladesh's labour productivity is 10.4 percent, compared to the average of 16.3 percent in South Asia and 27.8 percent in APO countries.

Bangladesh spends 2.3 percent of its GDP on the public health sector, compared to Nepal's 5.6 percent, Sri Lanka's 3.8 percent, and India's 3.8 percent. Developed nations like the UK spend around 10 percent of their GDP on healthcare. In Bangladesh, 65 percent of the health budget goes towards salaries and allowances, with the remainder allocated for

development. It is embarrassing that a country aspiring to become an upper-middle-income nation by 2031 and a developed country by 2041 still sees a significant number of its citizens, including politicians, businessmen, and ordinary people, seeking medical treatment abroad every year. This trend indicates a lack of confidence in our own healthcare system. While individuals may argue that seeking overseas medical care is a personal choice, it becomes more alarming when leaders and politicians do the same. Their decisions to seek treatment abroad highlight a serious issue, as they are the ones responsible for developing the healthcare system.

Education, often hailed as the great equaliser, also faces a similar fate. Government expenditure on education is a meagre 1.64 percent of the GDP. This is significantly lower than the averages for LDCs (above three percent), middle-income countries (above four percent), and high-income countries (above five percent). According to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report 2022, Bangladeshi families cover 71 percent of the total education costs. For fixed-income and poor families, this creates a disproportionate burden.

Insufficient funding in health and education can result in substandard healthcare and human resource development, while also increasing people's out-of-pocket expenses. These rising costs perpetuate cycles of poverty and vulnerability. Addressing these inequalities requires proper government financing in education and healthcare. If financial constraints are an issue, the government must find innovative ways to fill the gap. Additionally, it should work on increasing the capacity of the relevant ministries to effectively use the allocated funds.



Unlike the past two Lok Sabha elections, where Narendra Modi's BJP won enough seats to form the government alone, the party has fallen short of a clear majority this time and is dependent on the coalition NDA. PHOTO: REUTERS

India's election opens the door to the past



BLACK, WHITE & GREY
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ALI RIAZ

Defying predictions of pundits proffered for almost a year, opinion polls of the past months and exit polls over the past six weeks, the opposition alliance INDIA has done so well that the Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has fallen short of a clear majority, although the incumbent alliance NDA is holding on to more than 272 seats to form a government. The results and trend are evident that no single party has been able to secure a majority. As Modi's return to power for a third consecutive term breaks a record set six decades ago, it is also a return to a coalition era after a decade. In the previous two elections in 2014 and 2019, BJP had enough seats to form the government alone.

The conventional wisdom is that alliances are formed to be together to go to and stay in power. The NDA is no exception; the members of the alliance have remained together since 1998 and have been in power on several occasions since. In the past decade, despite BJP's enormous support among voters, its extraordinary mobilisation capacity, and the rise of Narendra Modi, NDA remained a key element in Indian politics. As the poll results started to come in, what has become a matter of speculation is whether some alliance members will ditch the NDA and join the opposition. In India, as elsewhere, that's not without precedence. Alliances, especially when a government's survival is dependent on it, tend to be more fragile. Horse-trading has been part and parcel of Indian politics; besides, as the BJP seems to have done poorly and voters have expressed a dismay regarding its politics, it is not out of the realm of possibility that some parties will try their fortune elsewhere. Two parties are being watched closely at the time of the writing of this commentary: Telugu Desam Party of Andhra Pradesh led by Chandrababu Naidu, and Janata Dal United of Bihar led by Nitish Kumar. While publicly the leaders have reaffirmed their allegiance to the NDA, politics is a game of unpredictability; tomorrow is another day.

If the opposition alliance INDIA

can cobble together 272 seats, a coalition of disparate parties will end up in power. Press reports suggest that the alliance leaders are reaching out to parties who can only be described as "strange bedfellows." While it is speculation, or in some ways wishful thinking, such a scenario will be *deja vu*—a return to the 1990s. India witnessed a tumultuous time between May 1996 and October 1999 when coalition governments came and left in quick succession. The period is referred

If the opposition alliance INDIA can cobble together 272 seats, a coalition of disparate parties will end up in power. Press reports suggest that the alliance leaders are reaching out to parties who can only be described as 'strange bedfellows.' While it is speculation, or in some ways wishful thinking, such a scenario will be *deja vu*—a return to the 1990s.

to as "the era of fragile coalition." In the context of a long history of stable Indian democracy, the instability during the 1990s was seen as deeply concerning. This period ended with the emergence of the BJP as a dominant party. It offered stability but over the past decade, such stability only contributed to serious democratic erosion and deep entrenchment of authoritarianism. It produced a leader who claimed that he had been chosen by God. It is in this context that if India returns to the 1990s' pluralistic political instability, that will be progress. Indeed, it sounds outlandish to suggest that going backwards is progress, but in the battle against authoritarianism, returning to a flawed democracy is a step forward. The election has created an opportunity.

Speculations aside, the unanticipated better results of the alliance INDIA has a message insofar as reversal of autocratization around the world. In a democratic

society, each political party has its own ideology, vision, strategy, and tactics; they compete, but when the democracy itself is at stake, they might have to compromise and build a wall of resistance. Waiting for a perfect solution to the democracy crisis and the emergence of a democratic force free of stains of past deeds will not only help authoritarianism to sustain, but will increasingly make citizens depoliticised. The Congress-led alliance INDIA is not an ideology-driven cohesive alliance. Some of the differences among these parties are significant; the past of some parties is chequered, to say the least. The partners of the alliance INDIA set their eyes on a goal: to stop autocratization by offering an alternative to Modi's divisive policies.

While the alliance has not succeeded in winning the majority, it has emerged as a roadblock to the politics of divisiveness and hate.

Faizabad's result is telling in this regard. The place, which became the symbol of BJP and ilk's rise due to the demolition of the mosque and the pompous inauguration of the Ram Mandir in January, has now delivered a defeat to the BJP. As for the alliance INDIA, bringing the parties together was a difficult task, holding each other together through the election was harder, but keeping the alliance intact in the coming days to fight for democracy will be the hardest.

The numbers of the final election results will be dissected in many ways. A more nuanced picture will emerge, and analysts and political scientists will try to explain the messages from Indian citizens. In the meantime, it is evident that a strong opposition in the parliament has emerged, and voters have expressed their desire to see a pluralistic polity in India, a past that defined the Indian polity and made it worthwhile to call the country "the largest democracy of the world."

Trump, now a felon, presents a huge political challenge



Ashfaq Swapan is a writer and editor based in Atlanta, US.

ASHFAQ SWAPAN

Say what you will about former US President Donald Trump, but give him his due.

Just when you thought there were no norms of political etiquette left to destroy, Trump comes up with a sledgehammer, creating history by achieving the dubious distinction of becoming the first US president ever to be convicted as a felon.

This follows a whole slew of firsts: the first president in US history who refused to concede defeat; the first president to incite a mob to attack the US Capitol (the last time the Capitol was attacked was by the British in 1814); and the first president to defend insurrectionists. During his presidency, Trump lied with such abandon that the US media,

his party had plummeted, they told him, and Nixon was likely to be impeached. The next day, Nixon resigned. In a bit of gallows humour, erstwhile Republican Senator Bob Dole quipped that at least they had the burglar vote, referring to the break-in at Democratic headquarters in Washington, DC that snowballed into the scandal that felled Nixon.

Today, it is impossible to imagine any Republican lawmaker standing up to Trump, and for good reason. Some have tried before and have had to kiss their political careers goodbye. Contrast the Republican leaders of the Nixon era with today's Republican lawmakers, who are falling all over themselves

Trump, he didn't miss this occasion to make a quick buck. His campaign reports that it raised over \$58 million in 24 hours of the verdict. No surprise there: here is a guy who made money off his mugshot after he was booked in Georgia.)

Thanks to Trump, American politics is in uncharted territory. We have an unprecedented situation where the US Secret Service has to figure out how to provide the former president security if he does become a jailbird.

Meanwhile, the upcoming presidential election in November is still up in the air. Trump is like the proverbial tail wagging the dog—he holds a significant part of the Republican electorate in Svengali-like thrall. So now, it is he who decides what the Republican Party stands for, not vice versa.

The effect of Trump's conviction on his support is hard to gauge, given mixed response to recent polls. While he has lost some support, about half of the respondents say they are more likely to vote for him, Axios



Could Donald Trump be the first felon elected to be US president?

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

usually deferential to the office, were forced to explicitly say so—and keeping track of Trump's lies became a real journalistic exercise.

These dubious "firsts" are leavened generously with political misdemeanours of a bewildering variety and number. Just a random sampling: Trump forced his press aide to falsely claim that he had a larger crowd than Obama at the inauguration. He suggested bleach as a cure for Covid. To this day, he claims the 2020 presidential elections were rigged, despite the fact that all his campaign's lawsuits were thrown out of court by judges, including many appointed by him.

The extraordinary thing is not just how outrageous Trump's actions are. It is the fact that he keeps getting away with it. This has turned US politics on its head and has political analysts scratching their heads in despair.

Let's take a quick trip down the memory lane to see what happened to another disgraced US president, and you will get an idea of how the guardrails have completely come off.

On August 7, 1974, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, and House Representative John Rhodes of Arizona—the top Congressional Republican leaders—gave erstwhile President Richard Nixon a warning: support within

to ingratiate themselves to the former president.

Yet, the fact remains that Trump has been found guilty on 34 felony counts by a jury of his peers. It is noteworthy that Trump's family members were conspicuous by their absence—only his son Eric showed up in court.

Whatever happened to former First Lady Melania? Melania, it must be said, is an oddity. Whether it's Republican first ladies like Pat Nixon, Barbara or Laura Bush, or Democratic first ladies like Rosalynn Carter, Hillary Clinton or Michelle Obama—US first ladies have a reputation for warmth and engagement. Much of it is stage-managed, to be sure, but all nonetheless command some degree of respect and affection. Melania is an exception. It isn't that she is widely loathed. The curious thing about her is that she is a bit of a cypher—one doesn't quite know what to make of her.

That said, one can't be too harsh. It can't be much fun playing the loyal wife in a case where your husband is accused of giving hush money to cover up a liaison with a porn star. Marital loyalty has its limits.

Meanwhile, the Republican Party is quite clearly stuck with Trump, felon or not. Trump's reaction has been his usual bluster: it's all rigged, everybody is out to get him. (Trump being

reports.

It is a strange world indeed, where a felony conviction fails to undo a presidential candidacy, but these are indeed the strange political times we live in. In the recent past, US presidential elections have had nail biting finishes, with just some tens of thousands of votes in a handful of swing states determining the winner. Add to that the deepening polarisation where most voters are staunchly partisan, and you have a political tinderbox where every little thing matters.

Trump's conviction may cast a shadow on his support, but then incumbent President Joe Biden isn't exciting the electorate all that much. Add to that Biden's stand on Israel's mass slaughter in Gaza, which has deeply antagonised two demographics Democrats desperately need to push Biden over the finish line: Black Americans and young people.

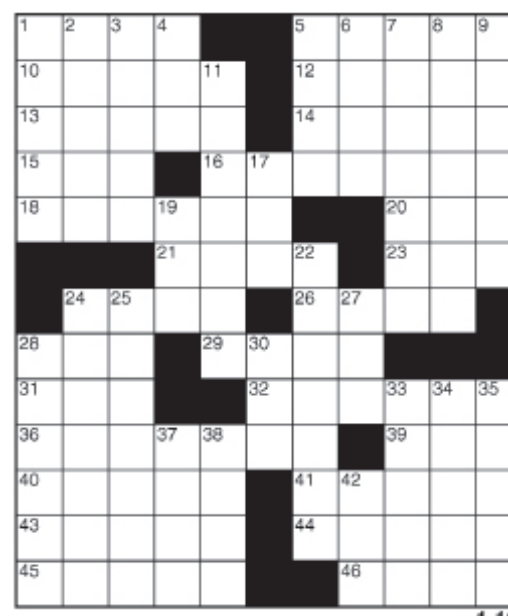
Former British Prime Minister Harold Wilson once observed, "A week is a long time in politics." November is months away. Obviously, a lot can change as the world waits to see if Trump is capable of another first: can he be the first felon elected to be US president?

We won't know the answer to that before November 5. In the meantime, fasten your seatbelts, because this is going to be one crazy political rollercoaster ride.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ACROSS | 21 Aide: Abbr. | 41 John of music | 5 Checkout act | 25 Spring forth |
| 1 Writer Uris | 23 Some | 43 Quartet doubled | 6 — Kong | 27 Travel stop |
| 5 Musical symbol | 24 Posted | 44 Day in Hollywood | 7 Wakening | 28 Selects via finger |
| 10 Secret lingo | 26 Lose freshness | 45 Calls for | 8 Glowing | 30 Make a choice |
| 12 Pink shade | 28 Bob Cratchit's son | 46 Walk in water | 9 More than enough | 33 Aquarium fish |
| 13 Rice field | 29 Before long | | 11 Keyboard pros | 34 Steer clear of |
| 14 Battery end | 31 Imitating | DOWN | 17 Golfer Ernie | 35 Tightly packed |
| 15 Try out | 32 Group of five | 1 Accept eagerly | 19 Fire | 37 Imitated |
| 16 Bird with flippers | 36 Fine | 2 Make blank | 22 Like the jack of diamonds | 38 "Why don't we!" |
| 18 Solving tool | 39 Holiday lead-in | 3 Poet Nash | 24 Library request | 42 Depressed |
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MAY 23 ANSWERS



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Sanya Rushdi and Arunava Sinha discuss 'Hospital'

Once the novel was published in text, Rushdi's elder sister and writer, Luna Rushdi, sent a copy to renowned Indian translator, Arunava Sinha, who expressed an interest in translating the novel into English.

NABILAH KHAN

"We are truly prisoners of the mind", says Sanya Rushdi, the author-narrator of *Hospital* (Giramondo Publishing, 2023), originally published in Bangla (Bohiproakash, 2019) and translated into English by Arunava Sinha.

Shortlisted for the 2024 Stella Prize and longlisted for the 2024 Miles Franklin Literary Award, two of the highest literary honours in Australia, it conveys the emotions swirling around in the story's protagonist, who is diagnosed with schizophrenia after her third episode of psychosis. Based on events that occurred in Rushdi's life, the autofiction takes us deep into the recesses of the narrator's mind and portrays a simple, yet powerful picture of the illness.

A slim volume that packs a powerful punch, *Hospital* came about by chance. A few months after she left hospital in Melbourne, Bangladeshi-born, Australia-based Rushdi commenced journaling her thoughts. She shared them with a friend, a renowned poet, writer, and artist, Bratya Raisu, who recognised a novel in those notes.

Having only written for academic purposes before (as a student of biological sciences and psychology at Monash University, University of Sydney, and Deakin University), Rushdi was uncertain about her abilities to write a full length novel. So, Raisu suggested writing a few lines of a chapter at a time, which was then published in shahitya.com.

Once the novel was published

in text, Rushdi's elder sister and writer, Luna Rushdi, sent a copy to renowned Indian translator, Arunava Sinha, who expressed an interest in translating the novel into English. With over 80 translations (English to Bangla and vice versa) of classic, modern and contemporary fiction, nonfiction, and poetry under his belt, he is no stranger to the literary landscape of the Indian subcontinent.

What was the thought behind the title 'Hospital'? Was it simply a place or the narrator's state of mind? Is there a deeper meaning behind the simple title?

Rushdi: I guess I ended up with a broader name such as "Hospital" because the book can be read at different levels. What this name means really depends on how the reader is reading it. At first, I named it "Hospital and a flock of smoking pigeons." In Bangla, the name was "Hospital o ek jhak dhumpayi kobutor" but the name was changed to "Hospital" later on.

The narrator has a strong awareness of 'the self' when she describes it being allowed to thrive in a community house while 'the self' is "subdued with medication at every opportunity" in the hospital. Why was it important for the narrator to feel this way?

Rushdi: I think, if we take them out of the hospital and community house context for a moment, we find that a person living in today's society, who is not very politically aware or is very innocent and naïve in a lot of ways, is generally treated in two different ways. The first way is to just tell them

what to do and what not to do, and in so doing, infantilise him or her or take control of his or her life; and the second way is to just let them be and let them go about their own business, but have an undercurrent agreement that they are really not a member of the larger society, and so, eventually, they have to be eliminated. I think, in *Hospital*, I compared this second way to the slow death of a frog in a gradually heating water pot. I feel that both of these ways exist due to a sense of care for these people, but also, a sense of not knowing what to do with them.

The narrator portrays a lot of compassion and empathy for her fellow psychiatric ward patients, whom she refers to as "inmates". What was it like to see yourself through the eyes of a character in a novel? Did you discover something about yourself you weren't aware of while penning your thoughts down?

Rushdi: There is a part in the novel about assertiveness, where the protagonist is in the courtyard with two other patients. There are pigeons on the floor that the narrator is a bit uncomfortable with. The dialogues that took place there about assertiveness between the narrator and another patient, where I, as a writer, was kind of shuffling positions between the narrator and the other patient, seeing the narrator or 'myself' through another person's eyes, led to the realisation of this tendency that I have to react rather than to assert myself. There are lots of other little discoveries like that throughout the book.

What made you choose *Hospital*? What was the first thing that drove you to want to translate this book?

Sinha: Sanya's sister, Luna Rushdi, whom I have known for several years, asked me if I'd like to read her sister's debut novel (in Bangla). I said of course, and they sent me a copy. The moment I read the first few pages, I felt this was the kind of novel that one would like to translate. So, I made my decision very early on and I'm very happy to say I wasn't disappointed. When a novel really speaks to me within the first few pages, and I talk to the author and they are okay with my going ahead and

There is a part in the novel about assertiveness, where the protagonist is in the courtyard with two other patients. There are pigeons on the floor that the narrator is a bit uncomfortable with.

translating it, I start translating it right away without waiting to finish reading it till the end. So, reading *Hospital* in this case was simultaneous with translating it. It was a truly extraordinary experience from beginning to end.

Do you start translating it in your head or do you prepare in advance? What does the process involve?

Sinha: The curse for the translator sometimes, especially when you're reading from the language in which you're translating, is that a part of your mind is always asking the question of whether this is a book you'd like to translate or not (assuming it hasn't been translated

before). So, that part of the brain is always active, and you're right, even if I am not consciously translating in my head, I'm thinking of how it'll sound in English and so on. I'm not saying it happens with every book I work on, but *Hospital* was one of those books where I knew from the word go that this is a book that would work just as well in any other language.

In certain parts of the book, you left the original terms in Bangla where the characters are referring to family members as "Luna apa" or "Luna'r ma", the narrator's parents affectionately calling her "baba" and "ma", etc. Was that a conscious choice to keep the authenticity?

Sinha: Well, it's verisimilitude. It's important because at the back of your mind, you know that those conversations did not originate in English. When you start using terms like 'dear' or 'darling', you cannot insert a cultural context that does not exist. If you were talking about a family that was entirely integrated into the Anglophone world, and it didn't matter what the origins were, then it'd be fine. But, in this case, the family is not integrated in the sense that they have completely given up their ways of speaking in their own manner, including using endearments, and to gently point out the fact that, at the end of the day, this is a slightly different group of people, therefore those were useful markers.

These are excerpts from two interviews. Read the full conversations on DS Books and The Daily Star's websites.

Nabilah Khan was born and raised in Bangladesh and currently resides in Sydney, Australia. After more than a decade working in the global banking and financial services industry, she now works in the Australian public service.



SHELF LIFE

The Glass Menagerie

Tennessee Williams, 1944

When we see glass, we think two things—how beautiful it is and how easily it can be broken. When we meet Laura in the play, we see the embodiment of this concept. Quietly struggling with mental illness, she spends her days tending to her little glass menagerie. She, her mother, and her brother live in a world of their own, wrapped in a cocoon of nostalgia and tucked away from reality. Yet, their world is what

strikes the reader as real because of the way the play brings to life an all-too-familiar internal world rife with loneliness and human desperation. This play tugged at my heartstrings like none other! In the absence of a plot, there is the presence of an emotional tempest.

Syeda Fatema Rahman
Undergraduate student of English at North South University

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



"The opposition to Negro education in the South was at first bitter, and showed itself in ashes, insult, and blood; for the South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro. And the South was not wholly wrong; for education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent."

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Babar and Co take on charged-up USA

AGENCIES

Ahead of their T20 World Cup opener against co-hosts USA at the Grand Prairie Stadium in Dallas today, Pakistan captain Babar Azam did not hesitate to state their aim in the mega event.

"We are here to try to win the World Cup," said Babar, who recently became the second batter after Virat Kohli to go past the 4000-run mark in T20Is. Star Indian batter is leading the chart with 4037 runs, and Babar is a close second with 4023 runs.

But for Babar, who has been reinstated as the Pakistan skipper after their tumultuous brief spell under pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi following the 50-over World Cup in 2023, the focus was solely on playing as per the team requirement.

"I am not here thinking about personal records. What matters is that the team does well," Babar added.

Pakistan are dangerous opponents for the best of teams in major tournaments but they could face a rocky road in their quest for a first Twenty20 World Cup title since their sole triumph in 2009 after a radical overhaul in recent months.

Pakistan are one of the three teams to have not played any warm-up fixtures ahead of the 20-team tournament, but Babar was not fixated on it.

Pakistan come fresh from playing a four-match T20I series against defending

Having come into the mega event on the back of a historic series win over Bangladesh, the USA opened the T20 World Cup in majestic fashion. Powered by a 40-ball 94 from Aaron Jones,



USA's Aaron Jones leads the T20 World Cup top-scorers chart, having scored a 40-ball 94 in their first game against Canada.

Pakistan's Imad Wasim, the only left-arm spinner available in the squad, will be missing the USA game owing to a persistent side strain.

champions England, but two of those games in England were washed out while the other two were won by the hosts.

Meanwhile, ICC associates USA, despite being ranked 11 spots lower than sixth-placed Pakistan in T20I rankings, will be fancying their chances of springing a surprise in Dallas today.

the USA chased down a 195-run target with seven wickets and 14 balls to spare.

That effort definitely showed that USA not only have the firepower for a big chase -- something they might need against top T20 nations like Pakistan in the tournament.



SHORT CORNER

Antonio Conte named new Napoli coach

Former Chelsea and Tottenham coach Antonio Conte was hired by Napoli on Wednesday as the deposed Serie A champions try to bounce back from their disastrous league title defence. Conte has signed a three-year deal which according to Italian media is worth eight million euros per season.

Shakib regains top spot from Hasaranga

Shakib Al Hasan is the beneficiary of an unusually disappointing outing for Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga against South Africa on Monday, with the Bangladesh all-rounder leapfrogging Hasaranga into the top spot in the latest ICC all-rounder rankings. Shakib had held the top sport for quite a few years before losing the throne to Hasaranga last week. However, despite Hasaranga taking two wickets against South Africa, the Lankan captain slipped to second position behind Shakib.

More than one in four Germans are not interested in Euro 2024

More than one in four Germans have no interest in the upcoming Euro 2024 hosted by their country, the biggest sports event in Germany in almost two decades, a poll conducted for public broadcaster ARD showed on Wednesday.

Read full stories on The Daily Star website

'Pakistan-India contest is like Super Bowl'

AGENCIES

Pakistan legend Shahid Afridi is excited that the American public will witness cricket's equivalent of the Super Bowl in New York on Sunday when archrivals Pakistan and India face off in a blockbuster T20 World Cup clash.

Comparing it to the famous Super Bowl, Afridi, the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 ambassador, said that America's cricket-loving crowd will witness the 'greatest cricketing rivalry'.

"For those Americans discovering the tournament, they should know that Pakistan's game against India is like our Super Bowl," Afridi wrote in his column for the ICC. "I used to absolutely love playing India and I really believe it is the biggest rivalry in sport."

"Against India, it is about handling the pressure of the occasion. There is so much talent in both teams, they just need to put it together on the day."

"People are going to love the support in the States. There is a great expat community over there which absolutely loves cricket."

"And the Americans absolutely love their sport, whether it is American football, basketball or baseball. I really believe that cricket will hit the mainstream over there in the next few years."

While he refused to pick any favourites from the India-Pakistan contest, he backed the Men in Green to overcome their recent indifferent form and bring their A-game out during the tournament.



Australia begin treble bid against self-assured Oman

AGENCIES

With the ICC Test Championship and the ODI World Cup already in the bag, Australia begin their T20 World Cup campaign against Oman at the Kensington Oval in Barbados today in their quest to become champions in all three formats.

The 2021 winners have brought an uber-experienced squad for their title charge and one will not be surprised if it's Mitchell Marsh's men dancing in ticker-tape after the final in Barbados, with history made as the first nation to hold all three of cricket's top global trophies.

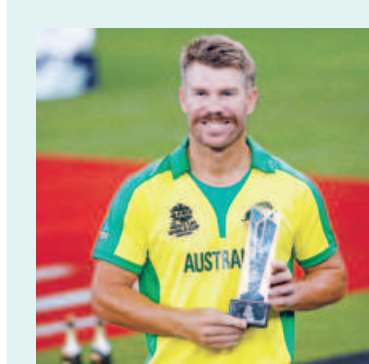
Australia boast world-class players from top-to-tail and a champion outfit's conviction that no matter how bad things get, someone among them will carry the day.

Plenty of old hands remain, though, with 37-year-old opener David Warner to soak up his final farewell from international cricket and the usual pace trio of Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood reporting for duty.

Most of the players in the squad are over 30 and some will be managed carefully by staff, especially against a relatively feeble Oman who began their campaign with a Super Over defeat.

A few of Australia's key players whose teams progressed into the playoff of the IPL arrived late as they were allowed to return home for a few days.

Either Mitchell Starc or Pat



This is set to be Australia's first-ever T20I encounter against Oman.

Oman skipper Aqib Ilyas is set to play his 50th T20I.

Australia leg-spinner Adam Zampa is eight wickets away from becoming the first from his country to pick up 100 T20I scalps.

Opener David Warner, currently with 3099 runs, is 21 away from surpassing Aaron Finch to become Australia's top run-scorer in T20Is.

Cummins is expected to be rested and the Aussies might look to go with the spin option of Ashton Agar instead. Marcus Stoinis and Cameron Green will fight it out for place in the eleven because of their ability to bowl compounded with Marsh's fitness restrictions which will not allow him to contribute with the ball.

Despite the significant mismatch, Oman skipper Aqib Ilyas, buoyed by their opening game, assured that his side will not be overwhelmed by stars in Australia's ranks and even pointed out a key weakness against spin he thought his opponent had.

"With the Australian team, they used to have a few players with good techniques in the past like Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne. But I don't think they have many now. They look to hit big. They only try to go for sixes," Ilyas told reporters.

"But every day is not the same day, and if we get the same wicket (as the one against Namibia) maybe it could be a problem for them."

"Just like the way you saw how difficult it was for the West Indies against PNG. They struggled to chase 130-odd despite them having some of the biggest hitters in the side."

Spin is indeed expected to play a part at the venue as spinners have an economy rate of 7.75 in contrast to the 8.12 runs an over pacers have conceded there.

Paolini stuns Rybakina to reach French Open semis

REUTERS, Paris

Italian surprise package Jasmine Paolini staved off a fightback from fourth seed Elena Rybakina to seal a stunning 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 win on Wednesday and advance to the French Open semifinals for the first time.

The 12th-seeded Paolini set up a last-four showdown with either Belarusian world number two Aryna Sabalenka or Russian 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva, who meet in the quarter-finals later on Court Philippe Chatrier.



Playing in her first Grand Slam quarter-final, the 28-year-old Paolini got off to a confident start by winning the opening two games and forced her opponent to work hard to hold serve, before breaking again en route to taking the first set.

A sublime backhand winner gave Paolini another break in the third game of the next set but 2022 Wimbledon

champion Rybakina responded with one of her own and slowly came to grips with the Italian's power and precision.

Russian-born Kazakh Rybakina exchanged breaks with Paolini again but the 24-year-old held firm to level the contest at one set apiece and recovered after surrendering her serve at the start of the decider.

Paolini secured a hold to love to make it 4-4, playing at the level she showed early in the match and she took advantage of Rybakina's errors to close out a famous victory.

Bangladesh aim to 'make things difficult' for Australia

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are eager to give visiting Australia a tough time when they square off in a Group I fixture of the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers in Dhaka today.

The match at the Bashundhara Kings Arena is set to kick off at 4:45pm.

Having confirmed a third-round berth in the World Cup Qualifiers with a maximum 12 points from four matches, Australia, who are ranked 160 places higher than Bangladesh, appear upbeat ahead of the encounter against the group's bottom dwellers.

The men in red and green, on the other hand, remain confident in their ability to use their home advantage this time against the Socceroos, who thrashed Bangladesh 7-0 at AAMI Park in Melbourne in November last year and had handed 5-0 and 4-0 defeats at home and away matches, respectively, during the Russia World Cup Qualifiers in 2015.

"If you compare it to Melbourne [match], of course, we have the responsibility of improving what we did there. We had some good moments there, but definitely struggled for different reasons -- one of those was that we conceded quite early, which we want to avoid tomorrow," Bangladesh head coach Javier Cabrera said at a pre-match press conference yesterday.

"We want to show our people at home that here we can compete with everyone, though

we know how challenging it's going to be against tomorrow's [today's] rivals.

"We want to compete and make things difficult for Australia. That is our objective," the Spaniard added.

Captain Jamal Bhuiyan also wants to display their best in front of a familiar environment.



"Although we got short time to get prepared, the positive side was that all players had been in action in the league, and they had been at the top of fitness. We will be trying our level best to perform better against strong Australia," said Jamal, who also believes the day in Melbourne was a bad one for them.

"Wearing hand gloves, we had to play amid chilly weather in Melbourne, but this time we have some advantages -- home ground, familiar conditions and home crowd. So, we

want to utilise these small things to prove that the 7-0 drubbing in Melbourne was a bad day for us," said Jamal.

Australia, who enjoyed a rest day on Tuesday after arriving here, underwent their only training session yesterday in Dhaka following a four-day training in Bangkok, Thailand.

The Socceroos brought a comparatively younger side, dropping 12 players from the squad that played their last match against Lebanon in March. Also, around 10 players, who were part of the Australia squad during their recent Bangladesh encounter, will also miss today's affair.

According to Australia coach Graham Arnold, his troops would be wary of the home team.

"We do know that Bangladesh, when they play at home, they are a different team than away from home. Of course, we beat them seven-nil in November last year but that's all in the past. It's all about tomorrow and making sure our boys are mentally ready and strong for this game; and hopefully in front of a good crowd," said Arnold at yesterday's presser.

"Look, we have our standards and, when I say that, all our players understand that 'I don't care who we play against, whenever you wear the national team shirt of Australia on your heart, you play to the best of your ability with the right mindset to win the game'," remarked the Australia coach when asked about the slim chances of losing against Bangladesh.



Bangladesh and Australia players sweated it out at the practice venue of the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday ahead of their World Cup Qualifier today. The Men in Red and Green had lost the reverse fixture 7-0 in Melbourne in November last year.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



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WORKERS FAILING TO GO TO KL People responsible will face the music PM tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said her government will investigate why workers could not go to Malaysia before a deadline expired and will take action against those responsible.

The premier was responding to a supplementary question from Opposition Chief Whip Mujibul Haque Chunu in parliament yesterday.

Earlier, the House went into budget session around 5:00pm, with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

In the supplementary question, Chunu enquired whether any action would be taken for the failure to send workers to Malaysia by the June 30 deadline.

In reply, the leader of the House said the government operated special flights to send workers to Malaysia.

"Workers were sent [to Malaysia] on special and regular flights. But many were left out. An investigation will be conducted to identify the reason [for not being able to send all workers to Malaysia]."

"Whenever we discuss and decide how many people will go abroad, we see a group of people in our country, who deals with manpower export, try to send workers abroad in a hurry," she said.

Highlighting various steps taken by her government to send workers abroad, Hasina said that those who want to



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India's Rishabh Pant and Shivam Dube celebrate their eight-wicket win over Ireland in their Twenty20 World Cup Group A match at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York yesterday. India bowled out Ireland for 96 runs in 16 overs before racing to the victory target with 46 balls to spare.

PHOTO: AFP

Not much surprise left for Tigers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh travelled to the United States for a bilateral series with the hosts in the early hours of May 16 before beginning preparations for the T20 World Cup. Consequently, Bangladesh have had enough time to acclimatise to the conditions offered in Dallas and New York, the venues for their first two matches in the marquee event.

The Tigers have played four matches since then, with their game against USA in Dallas abandoned due to extreme weather conditions, which may have hindered a few subsequent training sessions. By and large, Bangladesh will not have an excuse in terms of adjustment to the conditions.

The wickets in question have been under scrutiny, with international media and experts calling out the subpar nature of the wickets. However, the

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Ansar Al Islam raised Tk 18 lakh through crowdfunding

Say CTTC officials; three operatives arrested

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and
EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Ansar Al Islam, a militant group inspired by al-Qaeda, has raised Tk 18 lakh through crowdfunding within a few months.

In the name of sending aid to the victims in Palestine, the outfit made Facebook posts mentioning mobile financial service accounts.

In the last two months, Ansar Al Islam raised the money after launching a platform called "Deen Islam Foundation" on Facebook.

This move was made after al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) late last year called upon the Bangladeshi citizens to provide assistance to Palestinian people.

Officials of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit disclosed this to The Daily Star recently.

The government banned Ansar Al Islam in March 2017.

On Saturday, the CTTC unit claimed to

have arrested three operatives of Ansar Al Islam for collecting money under the banner of Deen Islam Foundation.

A team of the CTTC's counterterrorism investigation wing picked up Shakil Ahmed, 21, Fardin Ahmed Mirdul, 22, and Rayhan Hosain, 26, from the capital's Wari.

On the same day, the CTTC unit filed a case with Wari Police Station against the three under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Speaking to this newspaper, Jahidul Hoque Talukder, deputy commissioner of the DMP at the CTTC unit, said the arrestees had been involved in raising funds for the outfit. They gave false information like sending aid to Palestine, or Rohingya community, he added.

The CTTC unit later produced the arrestees before a Dhaka court seeking 10-day remand for each. The court, however, granted three-day demand.

Yesterday, a Dhaka court sent the three arrestees to jail.

According to the primary investigation

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AZIM MURDER Amanullah led the killing He confesses before court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Amanullah, a Bangladesh-born US citizen, gave him the contract to kill Azim, Amanullah said in his confessional statement yesterday.



Aktaruzzaman, known in his hometown Jhenidah as Shaheen Mia, and Azim used to syphon money out of the country through hundi and were involved in gold smuggling, said Amanullah.

After the two had a disagreement over the illegal racket, Aktaruzzaman met Amanullah and told him to kill Azim.

The Israeli military said jets were hitting Hamas targets in central Gaza while ground forces were operating "in a focused manner with guidance

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Israel launches new incursion into central Gaza

Mediators to resume talks on truce deal

REUTERS, Cairo

Israel yesterday announced a new military campaign against Hamas in central Gaza where Palestinian medics said dozens of people had been killed in airstrikes, complicating expected

talks between mediators to try to finalise a ceasefire deal.

At least 44 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli military strikes in central Gaza Strip areas since Tuesday, health officials in the enclave said. "The sounds of bombardment didn't stop all night," said Aya, 30, a displaced woman in Deir Al-Balah.

The Israeli military said jets were hitting Hamas targets in central Gaza while ground forces were operating

from intelligence" in the area of Al-Bureij - one of Gaza's long established refugee settlements.

Residents said Israeli forces had sent tanks into Bureij and planes and tanks pounded the nearby settlements of Al-Maghazi and Al-Nuseirat as well as Deir Al-Balah city, where tanks have not invaded.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said yesterday that at least 36,586 people have been killed in the territory during more than seven months of offensive. The toll includes at least 36 deaths over the zpast 24 hours, a

ministry statement said.

Meanwhile, Slovenia became the latest European Union country to recognise an independent Palestinian state after its parliament approved the

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- 44 Palestinians killed in Deir Al-Balah
- Israeli ground forces move into Al-Bureij refugee camp
- Slovenia becomes latest EU country to recognise Palestinian state

CUSTODIAL DEATH Identify those responsible, take action NHRC writes to home ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Human Rights Commission has asked the home ministry to conduct a proper investigation into the death of a woman in police custody in Abhaynagar, Jashore, and identify those involved in torturing her.

The commission asked the secretary of the Public Security Division of the ministry to come up with a report on the investigation by July 30, according to a statement issued by the NHRC yesterday.

A letter from NHRC Chairman Kamal Uddin Ahmed said there were allegations that the woman's hair was tied to the ceiling fan while she

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Afroza

4TH PHASE UZ POLLS Trend of low voter turnout continues

STAR REPORT

The fourth and last phase of upazila parishad elections was held by and large peacefully yesterday and the turnout was low like the previous phases.

In this phase, 60 upazilas went to polls.

Talking to reporters at the Election Commission after voting ended, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal said the turnout in the fourth phase would be 34.33 percent.

He said the EC made the estimation based on information provided by the election officials of 5,144 polling centres.

The CEC did not respond to a query about the reason for the low turnout.

He said the polls were held peacefully and without any major violence.

He said 28 people were arrested over election-related offences, adding that voting at a polling station in Kishoreganj's Bhariab upazila was suspended as a ballot box was taken away.

The CEC said a presiding officer was arrested as he was found stamping ballot papers in Netrakona's Kendua upazila.

If the CEC's estimate is proven to be correct, this would be the lowest turnout

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Tree lovers observing the various trees and plants at the Jatiyo Brikkho Mela-2024, or national tree plantation drive and fair, at the old trade fair ground in the capital's Sher-E-Bangla Nagar. Organised by Bangladesh Forest Research Institute and inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday on the occasion of World Environment Day, the fair will continue till June 13.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Boeing Starliner launches first crew on third try

AFP, Cape Canaveral

Boeing yesterday launched its very first astronauts bound for the International Space Station aboard a Starliner capsule, which joins a select club of spacecraft to carry humans beyond Earth.

The third time turned out to be the charm for the aerospace giant, after two previous bids to fly with crew were aborted late into the countdown, for technical reasons.

Astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, both of whom have two previous spaceflights under their belts, blasted off at 10:52 am (1452 GMT) from the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida, for a roughly one-week stay at the station.

"Suni and I are honored to share this dream of spaceflight with each and every one of you," Wilmore, who is commander of the test flight, said just before liftoff. "Let's put some fire in this rocket, and let's push it to the heavens."

Starliner becomes just the sixth type of US-built spaceship to fly Nasa astronauts, following the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo programs in the 1960s and 1970s, the Space Shuttle from 1981 to 2011, and SpaceX's Crew Dragon from 2020.

