

# Foreign debt costs to spiral

Interest payments to surge 65pc to \$2.21b by 2027

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MAHMUDUL HASAN

Bangladesh's interest payments on external borrowing are projected to soar by 65 percent within three years due to rising global interest rates and an expanded foreign loan portfolio, which will put further pressure on the dwindling foreign currency reserves.

According to a finance ministry report, the interest payments will rise to \$2.21 billion or around Tk 26,000 crore by 2027 with the taka losing 35 percent of its value against the greenback over the last two years.

The principal amount is also forecast to jump by 28 percent to \$3.17 billion in fiscal 2026-2027, compared to the current fiscal

year. Foreign loan repayments, including interest and principal amount, are projected to reach \$3.82 billion in the current fiscal year. Foreign debt servicing already stood at \$2.81 billion in the first 10 months of the fiscal year. The amount will rise to \$5.38 billion by 2027.

"The impact of currency depreciation on external debt levels underscores the need for careful monitoring and management of external debt risks to maintain economic stability and resilience," said the report titled Medium-Term Macroeconomic Policy Statement (MTMPS).

The proportion of external interest payments in the budget is also expected

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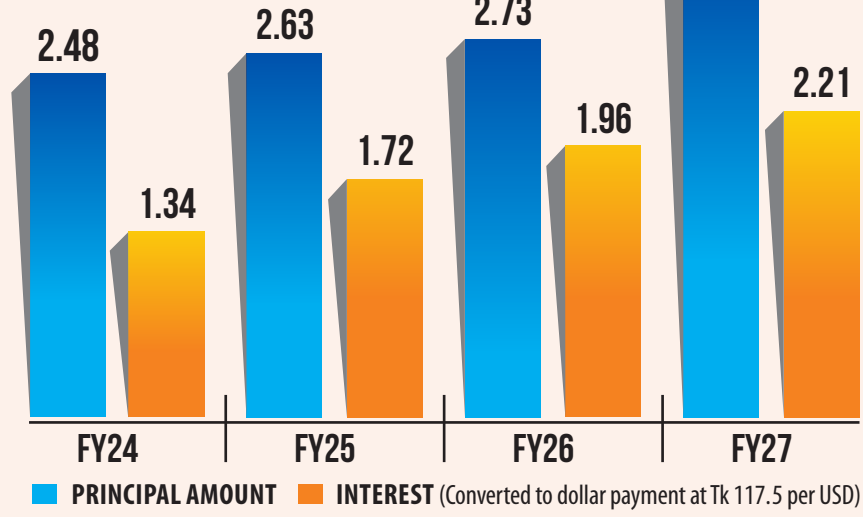


WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange upon his arrival at Canberra Airport in Australia yesterday. He returned home to restart his life as a free man after admitting he revealed US defence secrets in a deal that unlocked the door to his London prison cell. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## EXTERNAL DEBT REPAYMENT

In billions of dollars  
SOURCE: FINANCE MINISTRY



## IMF for stronger asset disclosure process for civil servants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Monetary Fund has urged Bangladesh to strengthen the asset declaration process for public officials in order to combat high-level corruption effectively.

The Washington-based lender made the suggestion in its document released on Tuesday. It also outlined measures to restore macroeconomic stability and end the balance of payments crisis.

The suggestions have to be followed

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## A moronic end to a daring jailbreak

4 death row convicts dig a hole for 20 days to escape Bogura jail, get caught after an hour and half

MOSTAFA SHABUI, Bogura

Sentenced to death in separate cases, four convicts were housed together in a condemned cell in Bogura District Jail on June 1.

Over the next 25 days, the four -- Nazrul Islam, 60, of Kurigram; Amir Hamza, 38, of Narsingdi; Md Zakaria, 31, and Farid Sheikh, 28, of Bogura -- hatched an escape plan and worked accordingly.

After managing a screwdriver and an iron-sheet scrap from outside sources, they used those to make a hole in the ceiling. They also tied several bedsheets together to use as a rope.

Then early yesterday, they climbed out of the

cell one by one and scaled down the building.

However, their taste of freedom lasted just an hour and half, as police rounded them up from Chashi Bazar, a few blocks from the jail.

Bogura Superintendent of Police Sudip Kumar Chakraborty described the incident at a press briefing at his office yesterday.

The jail has three condemned cells, housing 13 death row inmates. The four escapees were shifted to one of the cells on June 1, according to jail sources.

They said the building was built in the British era, and no iron rods were used in the construction of the roof.

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## Professional bodies siding with corrupt officials

AL MP Nasim tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling Awami League MP AFM Bahauddin Nasim yesterday in parliament blasted professional bodies for issuing statements in favour of corrupt government officials.

"By issuing statements in favour of corrupt persons, those associations are taking the responsibility for the corruption," he said while participating in the general discussion on the proposed national budget for 2024-25 fiscal.

The AL leader also stressed identifying the other corrupt government officials and urged the government bodies concerned to take appropriate actions.

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## Bangladeshi women being sold in China

Gangs use elaborate ruse of marriage to traffic them

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Fooled by a gang, a widow in Chuadanga got her daughter married to a Chinese national named Cui Po Wei on July 1 last year, hoping that she would rise out of poverty.

**On March 11, Lovely managed to call her mother using an app and said she was seriously ill because of the torture she was facing. She added that Bangladeshi traffickers had sold her to Cui Po Wei for Tk 10 lakh.**

The family was led to believe that the Chinese man had converted to Islam, worked at a factory in Gazipur, and would settle in Bangladesh

permanently.

But six months later, Lovely, not her real name, was taken to China by the man and forced into prostitution, according to a case filed by the mother with a Dhaka tribunal on March 31 this year.

On March 11, Lovely managed to call her mother using an app and told she was seriously ill because of the torture she was facing. She added that Bangladeshi traffickers had sold her to Cui Po Wei for Tk 10 lakh.

Lovely's mother told The Daily Star that she personally knew four other poor women who were duped into marrying Chinese nationals. The same group of local people who had duped her were involved in arranging those marriages.

Requesting anonymity, a resident of the capital's Uttara, who works for a Chinese firm, said he personally knew two groups of locals who actively

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Workers cleaning and drying plastic sheets under the sun in Razanagar area of Rangunia, Chattogram city, before sending these to facilities in Dhaka for recycling. The sheets used by brick kilns to protect clay from rains in monsoon become unusable due to wear and tear after a season. Recycling keeps these from adding to the plastic waste. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

জয় বাংলা আদ্বাহ সর্বশক্তিমান জয় বঙ্গবন্ধু

সবার মিলে সবার ঢাকা

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স্থান: মানিক মিয়া এভিনিউ সংসদ ভবনের দক্ষিণ গেট

যোগাযোগ: ০১৭৭৬২৬৮৫৯৭, ০১৭১৭৭৮৪২৭১, ০১৭১১৭৮৯৩০৯





## Legal issues delaying Tarique's repatriation

Hasina tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some legal issues were delaying the process of bringing home BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman from the UK, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told parliament yesterday.

Tarique has been convicted in multiple cases, including the August 21 grenade attack case.

The government is determined to bring the BNP leader back home after resolving all pending legal issues to make him face the punishment, Hasina said in response to a query from Farida Yasmin, an Awami League lawmaker from a reserved seat for women.

The questions to the PM and her answers were tabled in the House, with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

The premier said strong diplomatic and legal initiatives have been taken to bring Tarique back home.

A total of 15 convicts in the August 21 grenade attack case, including Tarique, are absconding.

Hasina, also the Leader of the House, said an Interpol red notice was issued against the absconding convicts, including Maulana Tajuddin, Md Harish Chaudhary and Ratul Ahmed Babu.

She informed parliament that she sent several letters to the heads of state and governments of the countries concerned at different times seeking cooperation from them in bringing the murderers back home.

The PM said she raised the issue with some government leaders at international forums.

Hasina, however, said the progress in bringing the convicts back home has not been satisfactory.

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An array of solar panels at the Sirajganj 68MW Solar Park in Soyadabad near Bangabandhu Bridge. A total of 1.56 lakh solar panels have been set up there. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Another solar farm to go online in days

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, *Pabna*

Commercial operation of another solar power plant may start on June 30 on the bank of Jamuna in Sirajganj.

The "Sirajganj 68MW Solar Park," which was financed by Bangladesh and China companies, will be the 12th operational commercial solar plants in the country.

Eleven such plants now generate 536 megawatts of electricity, according to the national database of renewable energy.

When the Sirajganj plant supplies power to the national grid, the total production will be over 600 megawatts from renewable energy, said sources.

The solar park has been constructed in Soyadabad area near Bangabandhu Bridge at a cost of Tk 880 crore. Bangladesh and China Renewable Energy Company Ltd (BCRECL) and North-West Power Generation Company Ltd (NWPGL) funded the project, whose construction

work began on January 9, 2023.

Following power purchase and implementation agreements, NWPGL and China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CMC) started

been set up to produce 68MW of power. "We have already completed construction work of the plant. Now we are working for commissioning the plant," Tanvir said.

Line commissioning and other work for the commercial operation have successfully been completed, the PD said, adding that they are hopeful of starting the commercial operation on June 30.

"We will supply power to the national grid at a cost of Tk 11.20 per unit," said Tanvir.

Talking to this correspondent, Khandakar Mokammel Hossain, a member of Bangladesh Power Development Board, said the government is determined to increase solar power generation. "We are getting only 536 megawatts of power from renewable energy sources, but we want to get a significant amount of power from this sector. So, the government is patronising solar plants," he said.

A total of 1.56 lakh solar panels have

**"We have already completed construction work of the plant. Now we are working for commissioning the plant."**

TANVIR RAHMAN,  
project director

## Professional bodies

FROM PAGE 1

Nasim said that politicians do not take sides when allegations of corruption or misdeeds are raised against a fellow politician.

"Rather, they raise their voice for taking political and legal actions. That's the greatness of honest politicians. But whenever allegations of corruption are raised against a particular person of a government, private, or semi-government organisation or a law enforcement agency, a statement is issued in favour of that corrupt person," he said.

He said the associations concerned will have to get out of this practice.

The lawmaker from Dhaka-8 said initiatives should be taken to implement Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's zero-tolerance policy against corruption by taking strict actions against corrupt persons and institutions.

Talking about defaulted loans, Nasim said such loans should be reduced by taking strict measures against the defaulters.

He called for identifying the loan defaulters, money launderers, bank robbers, and those who hike prices of essentials.

"I think that preparing a list of those people and presenting the list before the nation are necessary."

The AL leader said the people should be protected from the corrupt persons by forming a special task force.

On June 21, Bangladesh Police Service Association (BPSA) issued a statement condemning what it termed a "smear campaign orchestrated by certain media outlets" against current and former members of police.

BPSA termed some recent media reports on retired and serving police officials "ill motivated, sweeping, and exaggerated". It also requested the media to be more cautious while publishing reports on the force.

The statement came at a time when the Anti-Corruption Commission is conducting an investigation into the allegations of accumulating huge illegal wealth by former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed and his family members.

Former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia also hogged the headlines recently over allegations of amassing illegal wealth.

Matiur Rahman, president of the National Board of Revenue's (NBR) Customs, Excise and VAT Appellate Tribunal, has been transferred to the Internal Resources Division of the finance ministry following a controversy over his wealth.

The ACC is investigating accusations of accumulating assets by Motiur at home and abroad through illegal means.

## Foreign debt costs to spiral

FROM PAGE 1

to rise to 2.6 percent in FY27 from 0.9 percent in FY22, reflecting a growing impact of external debt on the budget, the report mentioned.

It further said two major factors are contributing to the increase in interest payments for foreign loans.

One factor is that the reference rates in advanced countries are expected to stay high, and the other is that Bangladesh's graduation from the category of LDCs will gradually narrow the window for getting concessional loans from external sources.

A reference rate is an interest rate benchmark that is used to set other interest rates. The Fed Funds Rate, the Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR), and the prime rate are among the most common reference rates.

The report said the implicit interest rate on external borrowing exhibits a gradual increase over the period - from 1 percent in FY21 to 2.6 percent in FY27.

"This increase is attributed to a higher proportion of borrowing through floating and semi-

concessional rates, which are more sensitive to market fluctuations compared to fixed-rate financing."

It also mentioned that the depreciation of the taka has elevated the value of external debt when measured in local currency terms.

This highlights the influence of currency fluctuations on the debt portfolio and the importance of managing external debt exposure in the face of exchange rate volatility.

Referring to the gradual increase in foreign loan repayments, the report said that managing these debt service obligations is essential for ensuring financial stability and preventing liquidity crises.

"Despite the increasing amounts of external debt repayment, they are expected to remain within tolerable limits, supported by the government's efforts to diversify funding sources and build up foreign exchange reserves," it added.

Talking to this newspaper, Ahsan H Mansur, executive director at the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said that given the ongoing forex crisis, Bangladesh has

to be judicious about taking loans and choose projects that are of high social and economic importance.

"Many of the investments were good, but many were not, which is why our debt burden is rising. The government's capacity to borrow is decreasing due to the inability to expand revenue growth in line with economic growth."

He said projects such as the Dhaka Metro Rail and even an underground rail line in Dhaka will be beneficial.

However, the huge spending on the train line to Cox's Bazar, the Padma Rail Line, and the nuclear power plant in Rooppur will not yield expected outcome. They will add to the burden of foreign debt repayment, he said.

According to the report, Bangladesh's foreign loans are mostly made up of five currencies. The US dollar remains predominant, constituting 53 percent of the total, followed by the Japanese yen at 20 percent, the euro at 15 percent, the Chinese renminbi at 8 percent, the British pound at 3 percent, and other currencies making up 1 percent of the debt.

## Bangladeshi women being sold in China

FROM PAGE 1

look for gullible Bangladeshi women, especially the ones from indigenous communities of the hill tracts, and get them to marry Chinese citizens.

"I often see parties at restaurants in Uttara where Chinese men meet women from the hill districts. Sometimes, I see them preparing marriage registration documents. Some locals are members of the gangs."

He had heard that the local arrangers get from Tk 10-Tk 20 lakh for each woman who agreed to fly to China.

The people accused in the case filed by Lovely's mother are Cui Po Wei; Ji Yixian, a woman who introduced herself to the family as Wei's sister; Abdullah Al Mamun of Bogura, Faruq and Abdul Mannan of Chuadanga; Solaiman of Kashimpur; and Hafizur Rahman Mollah, a marriage registrar from Jatrabari in the capital.

"The accused are organised human traffickers who took advantage of our helplessness... and trafficked my daughter to China for sexual exploitation and forced prostitution," reads the complaint.

The Criminal Investigation Department is investigating the case.

On May 1 in Rangamati, a Chakma woman filed a case with Naniarchar

Police Station, stating that a gang of traffickers held her sister captive at an unspecified place in the capital and may soon take her to China.

The complaint said the gang promised to admit the 21-year-old woman to a nursing institute and took her to Dhaka in a microbus. The gang later took indecent photos of her and forced her to marry a Chinese man.

A woman named Rika Chakma was accused in the case as the leader of the gang. Rika, who is from Khagrachhari's Dighinala upazila, lives in the capital's Uttara Sector-14. Seven named and four to five unidentified others were accused in the case.

On April 26, a 21-year-old Marma woman from Khagrachhari filed a case with Laxmichhari Police Station accusing five named and two or three unknown others of attempting to traffic her to China.

She was taken to a house in Uttara Sector-II and was compelled to marry a Chinese man. Luckily, locals rescued her and caught three of the gang members on April 25 when the men were taking her to a government office in Khagrachhari to get a document for her passport.

The CID is investigating both cases. In 2018, three women of indigenous

communities were brought back from China through diplomatic efforts.

Chandra Dewan, head teacher of Ghagra High School in Kawkhali, Rangamati, said that in the last few months at least three young women from the area were taken to China, and two schoolgirls were recently rescued from traffickers.

Gautam Dewan, president of CHT Citizens Committee, urged the government to ensure that there is monitoring so that underprivileged women are saved from falling victim to human traffickers.

Noor E Alam Mina, deputy inspector general of Chattogram range police, said police were looking into the matter.

The Chinese embassy in Bangladesh in an email said the Chinese government protects the rights and interests of women and children and cracks down on human trafficking. Besides, the embassy is committed to safeguard the rights and interests of the Chinese citizens in Bangladesh.

Regarding Lovely's case, it said the embassy has not received any notification from the Bangladesh government.

[Our Rangamati correspondent Laltanlian Pangkhua contributed to this report.]

## Principal secy's tenure extended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday extended the contract of Tofazzel Hossain Miah, the principal secretary to the prime minister, by another year.

The contractual appointment will be effective from July 5, according to a gazette notification from the ministry of public administration.

The government appointed Miah on a year's contract when his regular service age expired on July 4 last year. The contract expires on July 4 this year.

Meanwhile, the government also extended the tenure of service of ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of road transport and highways division, for another year.

Nuri has been reappointed on a contractual basis in continuation of his previous contract with the government and under the same conditions from July 1 or the day of his joining the office, according to a public administration order yesterday.

In another notification, additional secretary Gautam Chandra Pal was appointed the chairman of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority. Pal is currently serving as the personal secretary to Obaidul Quader, the minister of road transport and bridges.

## Postal officials embezzled Tk 55cr: Palak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Postal officials have embezzled Tk 55 crore from people and the department, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for posts, telecommunications, and information technology, said yesterday.

"We have found that Tk 55 crore was misappropriated by postal officials nationwide, and I have already written to the ACC chairman, urging him to take action," he said.

Most of the fraudulent activities involve postal officials embezzling people's deposits without issuing official documentation for the purchase of government savings certificates.

The state minister made the remarks while speaking to reporters after a workshop jointly organised by a2i (Aspire to Innovate) platform of Information and Communication Technology Division, and the International Telecommunication Union at a city hotel.

Palak said they recently noticed the financial irregularities at post offices when a woman of Rajshahi's Tanore attempted to commit suicide after failing to recover Tk 2 lakh from the local postmaster.

The official did not provide her with any official documents even though she bought savings certificates, he added.

## IMF for stronger asset

FROM PAGE 1

in order to receive the remaining instalments of the IMF's \$4.7 billion loan.

The advice comes hard on the heels of revelations of financial felonies of unprecedented scale involving a number of former and incumbent senior government officials.

The amassing of huge wealth by former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed has particularly taken the nation by surprise.

"To combat high-level corruption effectively, it is essential to reinforce the asset declaration process for public officials by enforcing sanctions for non-compliance and adopting a standardised approach for the usage and regular updating of the declarations," said the IMF.

According to the document, the government told the IMF that it remained committed to strengthening governance and combatting corruption.

## 2 more suspects held

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"We are bringing to book only those against whom there is clear evidence. No innocent person will be arrested and no one will get a guilty individual released."

Yesterday morning, detectives with the help of divers and fishermen with nets looked in two ponds of Jhenaidah town for three phones with which Kazi Kamal Ahmed Babu, relief and social welfare affairs secretary of the Jhenaidah Awami League, contacted the assailants, officials said.

Babu earlier told officers that he

threw the phones into two ponds to destroy evidence. On June 25, police took Babu to Jhenaidah jail from Kashimpur jail in Gazipur to find the phones.

Police called off the search for the day after two hours.

DB chief Harun told reporters in the town that some valuable information was on the phones.

Slain lawmaker Azim went to Kolkata on May 12, and on May 22, India and Bangladesh police said he was murdered.

[Our Jhenaidah correspondent contributed to this report.]



A plume of smoke billows during Israeli bombardment on the village of Khiam in south Lebanon near the border with Israel yesterday, amid ongoing cross-border tensions.

PHOTO: AFP



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## Will die if I am isolated from people PM urges SSF not to alienate her from countrymen

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the members of Special Security Force not to alienate her from the people as they are her strength.

"If I become isolated from the people, I would die," she said.

The premier made this remark while addressing a special darbar (gathering) arranged at her office, marking the 38th founding anniversary of the SSF.

She said she does politics for the people and work with them. "I've no other strength except the people. I move forward with the power of people," she added.

"So, you will have to pay attention so that I won't be isolated," she said, adding that SSF needs to deal with these matters sensibly.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina cuts a cake on the occasion of the 38th founding anniversary of the Special Security Force at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## DU allocates only 2.12pc for research

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University authorities yesterday approved a Tk 945.15 crore budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year, while setting aside only Tk 20.05 crore as research grants.

The research budget was approved against 2,000 teachers of the university, meaning only Tk 1 lakh has been allocated per teacher. The allocation for research grants is only 2.12 percent of the total outlay.

More than half of the budget will be spent on the salaries and pensions of teachers and staffers.

There are 60 research centres at the university. If the amount of grants is divided among them, each would get Tk 33.41 lakh for research work for a year.

Of the total outlay, around Tk 299.19 crore (31.65 percent) was allocated for salaries, Tk 218.43 crore (23.12 percent) for gratuity, and Tk 112.95 crore (11.95 percent) for pensions and retirement, according to the DU budget book.

Educationists have expressed dissatisfaction over such a paltry allocation for research grants.

Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said, "Teachers are losing interest

in research. Society and the state's disinterest in creating new knowledge is responsible for this, as the allocation is very low. It is not only at Dhaka University. It is the same in all universities."

"Research requires concerted initiative. We lack that too. This

**Society and the state's disinterest in creating new knowledge is responsible for this, as the allocation is very low. It is not only at Dhaka University. It is the same in all universities.**

SERAJUL ISLAM  
CHOUDHURY  
Professor Emeritus at DU

is an ominous sign for society and the state. The interest in creating new knowledge should be increased among teachers, and the state should take initiatives for this," he added.

## Put an end to custodial torture and mistreatment

Amnesty urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International yesterday called upon the Bangladesh government to end impunity for torture and other ill treatment by police and security forces, urging authorities to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure reparations for victims.

In a statement marking International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the global rights group said impunity continues to prevail for police and security forces in Bangladesh, despite the country ratifying the UN Convention Against Torture in 1998 and enacting the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act 2013.

There has only been one conviction under the torture law in more than a decade. In September 2023, the Bangladesh government reported to the UN Human Rights Council that 24 cases had been filed under the 2013 torture law so far, reads the statement.

Between January 2013 and May 2024, Bangladesh rights group Ain O Salish Kendra documented 138 deaths that were allegedly caused by physical torture by law enforcement agencies.

It also documented 923 deaths in jail custody that were reported in the media during the same period, reads the statement.

In a recent alleged case of drug possession, on June 2, SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

ACTION AGAINST CORRUPT PERSONS

## 'Role of ACC questionable'

Shahriar Kabir tells event marking 30th death anniv of Jahanara Imam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The role of the Anti-Corruption Commission in taking action against individuals being investigated for graft allegations is questionable, said war crimes researcher Shahriar Kabir yesterday.

He demanded that the ACC be held accountable.

"Why do the ACC's directions come after a person under their investigation flees the country? Why does the announcement of freezing bank accounts come after a person leaves the country?" questioned Shahriar, referring to former IGP Benazir Ahmed and former NBR member Matiur Rahman.

He was addressing a discussion commemorating the 30th death anniversary of Shaheed Janani

**Why do the ACC's directions come after a person under their investigation flees the country? Why does the announcement of freezing bank accounts come after a person leaves the country?**

SHAHRIAR KABIR

Jahanara Imam.

Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee organised the event at the National Museum in Dhaka.

Slamming the Bangladesh Police Service Association's recent protest SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

YUNUS CASE

2 SC lawyers challenge charge framing order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Supreme Court lawyers have filed a petition with the High Court challenging a Dhaka court order that framed charges against Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus and 13 others in a case filed over misappropriation of about Tk 25.22 crore of Grameen Telecom Workers' Profit Participation Fund.

Barrister Md Yousuf Ali and Advocate Jafrul Hasan Sharif, who are among the accused, submitted the petition to the HC on Tuesday.

In the petition, they said they have not committed any offence, but the trial court has delivered the charge framing order using a Google based AI tool, which is not permitted by the law. SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

KHALEDA'S RELEASE

BNP to hold rally in Dhaka on Saturday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP will hold a rally on Saturday in front of the party's Nayapalton headquarters demanding the release of its Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

It will also hold rallies in cities and districts across the country on July 1 and 3 respectively to press home the same demand.

Party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir announced the programme after holding the party's joint meeting with the front and associate bodies at the party's central office yesterday.

"Khaleda Zia is seriously ill and her life is at risk. But she was denied better treatment showing legal excuses. That's why we announced protest programmes," the BNP secretary general said.

Khaleda Zia is undergoing treatment at the capital's Evercare Hospital since Friday. A pacemaker was implanted in her chest.

Earlier, when Khaleda went to Evercare Hospital on May 1 for a regular health check-up, doctors treated her at the CCU for two days.

The former prime minister, 79, has long battled various ailments, including liver cirrhosis, arthritis, diabetes, and issues related to the kidney, lung, heart, and eyes.

Since her conditional release from prison in 2020, the BNP chairperson has been receiving medical care repeatedly at the hospital under the supervision of a medical board headed by cardiologist Prof Shahabuddin Talukder.

## 'Forced into sex work'

Eight members of online racket held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department busted an online sex trade ring led by two medical students who forced women into prostitution under the guise of offering them lucrative jobs, modelling opportunities, and talent-hunting.

The victims, including underage girls, were tricked and coerced into taking inappropriate pictures and videos, which were then shared on social media.

As such, the gang was blackmailing hundreds of young women to participate in explicit activities, CID Chief Mohammad Ali Mia said during a press briefing at the CID Headquarters yesterday.

CID arrested eight individuals in this connection, including the two medical students, from Jashore, Satkhira, Chandpur, and the capital on Tuesday.

The arrestees are -- Mehdi Hasan, 25, a student of International Medical College; his cousin and main cohort, Sheikh Zahid bin Sujon, 26, a student of Ibn Sina Medical College; Zahid Hasan Kankan, 28; Tanveer Ahmed Deepto, 26; Syed Hasibur Rahman, 27; Sadat Al Muiz, 29; Sushmita Akhter Poppy, 27; and Naina Islam, 24.

They have earned crores of taka in the last seven years by creating adult content and providing related services on Telegram, WhatsApp, and Messenger, said the CID chief.

Initially, the racket advertised jobs through Facebook and other social media, posing as modelling agents or organising "talent hunt" competitions.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Hajj returnees reunite with family members after landing at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Girl raped on moving train, three held

UNB, Ctg

A 19-year-old girl was allegedly raped by staffers of a catering company on the Chattogram bound Udayan Express train yesterday.

The incident took place around 4:30am, said SM Shahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Chattogram Railway Police Station.

Police arrested three employees of SA Corporation, the catering company that supplies food to trains, in connection with the incident, he added.

The arrestees are Jamal, 27, Sharif, 28, and Rashed, 27. The railway authorities suspended Abdur Rahim, a guard on the train.

Police said the girl boarded the train at Bhairab at 10:00pm on Tuesday, to travel to her home in Chattogram. She was in the dining coach when the incident occurred.

The arrestees were sent to a court with a seven-day remand prayer, said the OC.

No formal complaint has been filed yet.





IT'S A SIX... A boy swings a coconut tree branch bat for a perfect hit. The stumps behind him are wooden planks, overall a rather creative way to play a game of cricket with friends. The photo was taken in Babuganj upazila of Barishal yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Role of ACC

FROM PAGE 3  
against the media, Shahrar said the police force or the government should not bear the responsibility for alleged corruption of former IGP and some other police personnel.

"The state cannot bear the responsibility of the corruption of an individual," he said, denouncing the police department for not taking any departmental actions against their former IGP.

Kabir, also the president of the advisory committee of Nirmul Committee, criticised the passport department and said it was not possible for Benazir to get nine passports without the help of the department. "The home ministry will have to take this responsibility as well."

"These people are harming the nation. Then why is there a dilly-dally over taking actions against them?" he asked.

Prof Mahfuza Khanam, president of Federation of World Teachers' Association, said as long as the nation lives, it will remain grateful to Jahanara Imam.

Prof Mizanur Rahman, former

of National Human Rights Commission, said his organisation, Empowerment through Law of the Common People (ELCOP), will take initiatives to bring the Pakistanis who committed war crimes to the fore and hold mock trials if needed.

Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan was supposed to give the "Jahanara Imam Memorial Lecture" on the political vision of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the trial of war criminals. As he was not present at the programme, Barrister Tapas Baul read out the written speech on his behalf.

Prof Mahfuza and Prof Mizanur's ELCOP were given "Jahanara Imam Smriti Padak" at the programme for their contributions to the trial of war criminals and in the movement of establishing the spirit of the Liberation War.

Educationist Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, president of the Nirmul Committee, chaired the discussion.

Attorney General Advocate Abu Mohammad Amin Uddin spoke, among others.

## Take measures to mitigate pilot shortage

Minister asks Biman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil Aviation Minister Muhammad Faruk Khan yesterday asked Biman Bangladesh Airlines to take necessary measures to overcome its pilot shortage.

The minister came up with the directives while holding a meeting with the Biman authorities at its headquarters at Kurmitola. Faruk Khan also directed to recruit cockpit and cabin crews soon by maintaining existing recruitment policies and transparency.

He said the national carrier needs more cockpit and cabin crew as Biman started flight operations in several new international destinations in the last few years.

The minister also stressed passenger service quality and asked officials to make sure that the Biman's call centre remains open for 24 hours.

## Recognise women's household work

Recommends JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday recommended that the government recognise women's domestic work as an economic activity.

The parliamentary standing committee on the women and children affairs ministry made the recommendation at its meeting at parliament.

Awami League MP from Munshiganj-2 and chairperson of the committee Sagufa Yasmin presided over the meeting. The parliamentary watchdog recommended taking necessary steps to empower women entrepreneurs at the grassroots.

In the meeting, it was recommended to strengthen the monitoring system to keep all the activities undertaken by the National Women's Organization in 64 districts and 50 upazilas of the country.

## Put an end

FROM PAGE 3

Afroza Begum, 40, died in police custody following her arrest in Abhaynagar.

"Torture and other ill-treatment are abhorrent and never justified," said

Taqbir Huda, Amnesty International's regional researcher for South Asia.

Bangladesh's authorities must ensure that allegations of torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement personnel

are impartially and independently investigated, and suspected officers are brought to justice through fair trials, he said.

Bangladesh must establish a compensation fund for torture victims and also ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture so that victims can file complaints directly to the UN Committee against Torture, he added.

## Blasts heard across

FROM PAGE 5

No more Myanmar nationals will be allowed to enter Bangladesh, said Adnan Chowdhury, upazila nirbahi officer of Teknaf, clearing the government's stance on this issue.

He also confirmed that the sound of explosions across the Myanmar border is being heard from Teknaf. Haji Mohammad

Islam, mayor of Teknaf municipality, echoed him.

Kamal Hossain, chairman of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals Representative Committee, said around 50,000 Rohingya living in Maungdaw downtown gathered in ward 5 of the township amid an intense war between Arakan Army and Junta forces in the area.

## 2 SC lawyers

FROM PAGE 3

The entire amount of Tk 25.22 core was part of the entitlement of the listed 164 individual employees of Grameen Telecom, who contributed to their trade union to pay the expenses including lawyers' fees.

The trade union representative paid the fees to them (lawyers Yousof and Jafrul) out of that amount and the same does not constitute any offence, and therefore, the instant proceedings are liable to be quashed to ensure the ends of justice, the petitioners stated in the petition.

Yesterday, petitioners' lawyer Barrister Aneek R

Haque placed the petition before the HC bench of Justice Md Ruhul Quddus and Justice Md Ali Reza for its hearing.

But the bench adjourned the hearing for this week. Lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan appeared for the ACC during the hearing yesterday.

Gulshan Anwar Prodhan, a deputy director of the ACC, filed the case with the ACC's integrated district office in Dhaka on May 30 last year.

On June 12, Judge Syed Arafat Hossain of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka framed charges. On May 2, the court granted them bail.

## Will die if I am isolated

FROM PAGE 3

The PM said when she was not in power, her party's men and the country's people were beside her. "You'll have to keep that in mind," she added.

On June 15, 1986, the Presidential Security Force was formed, which was later

renamed as SSF in 1991 following the restoration of the parliamentary government system in the country.

Now the primary function of the force is to protect the president, the prime minister and other VIPs.

## Death anniversary of Shafiur Rahman

CITY DESK

Today is the thirteenth anniversary of Shafiur Rahman, a pioneer of the movement for promotion of classical music in the country.

He was the founding general secretary of the "Shuddha Sangeet Proshar Goshthi". Shafiur dedicated his life to the cause of classical music.



## Amend tobacco control law

Demand women MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Anti-Tobacco Parliamentary Women's Forum yesterday called for the swift passage of amendments to the Tobacco Control Act proposed by the Ministry of Health, in line with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's vision of a tobacco-free Bangladesh by 2040.

They made the remarks at an event titled, "Achieving Tobacco-Free Bangladesh: Amendment of the Existing Tobacco Control Law and Way Forward", organised by Nari Maitree at the capital's Krishibid Institute yesterday.

The event was presided over by lawmaker Shahnam Jahan Shila, convener of the forum. She, along with other women parliamentarians, emphasised the urgency of the amendment. Highlighting the forum's activities, she stressed that 1,61,000 people die annually due to tobacco use in Bangladesh.

They also highlighted the need for grassroots level social movements to support the anti-tobacco initiative.

Other participants included lawmakers Mahfuza Sultana, Zara Jabin Mahbub, Masuda Siddique Rozy, Najma Akhter, Anima Mukti Gomez, Sheikh Anar Koli Putul, Ashrafun Nesa, Kanan Ara Begum, Laila Parveen, Sanjida Khanam, Farida Yasmin and Hasina Bari Chowdhury. The meeting also featured representatives from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the South Asian programme of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, and Nari Maitree president Masuma Alam.

## Former BCL leader

FROM PAGE 5

(ADC Prosecution) Md Mafiz Uddin told The Daily Star, "The court sent the two to jail after rejecting their bail prayers."

Akbar Shah police and locals said everyone in the teen gang who committed the murder is known in

the area as followers of Nisan.

The police and Rapid Action Battalion in Chattogram listed more than 200 active juvenile gangs in the city. Each gang consists of five to 20 members, according to them.

## Increase agriculture

FROM PAGE 5

"But the new budget does not support farmers in raising food grain production. The country's development is not possible if the agriculture sector is not prioritised," he added.

Jahangir Alam, director of Dhaka School of Economics, read out a written statement urging the government to increase investment in agriculture.

"To ensure food safety, more funds need to be allocated for research. The sector has been repeatedly affected by natural disasters, requiring special attention," he said.

He also highlighted the need for the government to reduce the prices of agricultural products for farmers.

Sadia Islam, assistant professor at the institution, recommended that the government reduce the operational budget and increase the development budget to better support the agriculture sector.

## 70pc incidents

FROM PAGE 5

land-related disputes, destruction of properties and religious sites.

Political violence also remains a big concern for religious minorities in Bangladesh, especially during the election time.

The ASK in a report highlighted that people from Hindu community were disproportionately affected by violence following the elections on January 5, 2014.

**বসুন্ধরা বারিধারায় প্লট বিক্রয়**

বসুন্ধরা বারিধারা আবাসিক এলাকায় এন-ব্লকে ১০০কাতা, প্লট নং- ৭৮৪২, পি-ব্লকে ৬কাতা, প্লট নং- ৪০১৫, পি-এক্সটেনশনে ২০কাতা কমাশিয়াল, প্লট নং- ৬০৫, ৬০৬, সবগুলো প্লটই বিক্রয় করা হইবে। প্লটগুলো রেজিস্ট্রেশন, মিউনিসিপালিটি এবং বাউন্ডারী সম্পন্ন করা আছে।

যোগাযোগ: ০১৭১১ ৫৪৬৬৮৭, ০১৭১১ ৫৪৯৫৩৮

**PRAYER TIMING**

**JUNE 27**

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-54 8-17  
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-57 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**UNHCR**

**TENDER NOTICE**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bangladesh is hereby announces the launch of the following tender:

TENDER REFERENCE NUMBER	ITEM DESCRIPTION
RFP/HCR/CXB/2024/006	FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FRAME AGREEMENT FOR THE PROVISION OF CUSTOMS CLEARANCE, AND FREIGHT FORWARDING/TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR UNHCR OPERATIONS IN BANGLADESH
VIRTUAL PRE-BID CONFERENCE	Date and time: 07 July 2024 at 11:00 AM hrs. BST

Interested and bona fide vendors are invited to participate in this Invitation To Bid (ITB) by accessing and downloading the tender documents at the following web link: <https://www.unghm.org/Public/Notice/238685>

**Bids to be submitted:**  
Bids should be submitted as per the guidance in section 2.6 of the ITB document via the URL below: <http://etenderbox.unhcr.org>

Bid submission deadline: 21 July 2023 - 14:00 hrs. (BST) Bangladesh time.  
Kindly note that no hard copy is acceptable. The offer will be acceptable who submit only in the above link.

**নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়: বিধি মোতাবেক প্রদেয় অন্যান্য ভাতাদিসহ টাঃ ২২,০০০-৫৩০৬০/-বেতন স্কেলে (জাতীয় বেতন স্কেল-২০১৫) ব্যবসায় গবেষণা ব্যুরোর ১টি শূন্য সচিব পদ পূরণের জন্য ৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ) টাকার বিনিময়ে রেজিস্ট্রারের দপ্তরে প্রাপ্তব্য নিখারিত করমে বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। প্রার্থীকে এস.এস.সি. ও এইচ.এস.সি./সমন্বিত পরীক্ষায় ন্যূনতম ২য় বিভাগ/জিপিএ ৫ স্কেলে ন্যূনতম ৩.৫ অথবা সিজিপিএ ৪ স্কেলে ন্যূনতম ৩.০০সহ স্নাতকোত্তর পাশ হতে হবে। সরকারি বা সরকার অনুমোদিত প্রতিষ্ঠান থেকে কমপক্ষে ০৬ (ছয়) মাসের কম্পিউটার প্রশিক্ষণসহ কম্পিউটার পরিচালনায় দক্ষ হতে হবে। শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা, কম্পিউটার প্রশিক্ষণ ও অন্যান্য যোগ্যতার (যদি থাকে) সনদসমূহ আবেদনের সঙ্গে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে। অভ্যন্তরীণ প্রার্থীর পোশানীয় প্রতিবেদন সন্তোষজনক সাপেক্ষে চাকরির অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন প্রার্থীকে অগ্রাধিকার দেয়া যেতে পারে। চাকরির দপ্তরে প্রার্থীকে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে। প্রার্থীর বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ (ত্রিশ) বছর হতে হবে।

রেজিস্ট্রারের অনুকূলে প্রদেয় ৭৫০/- (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা মূল্যের পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট এবং সকল সার্টিফিকেট ও প্রশংসাপত্রের সত্যায়িত প্রতিলিপিসহ ৮(আট) প্রস্ত দরখাস্ত আশামী ১৬-০৭-২০২৪ তারিখের মধ্যে রেজিস্ট্রারের নিকট পৌঁছাতে হবে।

GD- 1041

**পরিসংখ্যান গবেষণা ও শিক্ষা ইনস্টিটিউট**

**ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়**

**নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

বিধি মোতাবেক প্রদেয় অন্যান্য ভাতাদিসহ টাঃ ২২,০০০-৫৩০৬০/- বেতন স্কেলে (জাতীয় বেতন স্কেল-২০১৫) ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের পরিসংখ্যান গবেষণা ও শিক্ষা ইনস্টিটিউট-এর ১(একটি) স্থায়ী সহকারী প্রকৌশলী (কম্পিউটার) শূন্য পদ পূরণের নিমিত্তে ৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ) টাকার বিনিময়ে রেজিস্ট্রারের দপ্তরে প্রাপ্তব্য নিখারিত করমে বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। প্রার্থীকে এস.এস.সি. ও বিজ্ঞানে উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক পরীক্ষায় ন্যূনতম দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ/জিপিএ ৫ স্কেলে ন্যূনতম ৩.৫ অথবা সিজিপিএ ৪ স্কেলে ন্যূনতম ৩.০০ সহ সরকারি বা সরকার অনুমোদিত প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে ৪ বছর মেয়াদী বি.এসসি. অথবা ইন. কম্পিউটার সায়েন্স/কম্পিউটার সায়েন্স অ্যান্ড ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং/ইনফরমেশন অ্যান্ড ইন্টারেক্টিভ ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ও সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ে জিপিএ ৫ স্কেলে ন্যূনতম ৩.৫ অথবা ৪ স্কেলে ন্যূনতম ৩.০০ বঞ্চিত হইবে। প্রার্থীকে UNIX ডিভিক সার্ভার ইনস্টলেশন ও ব্যবস্থাপনা, কম্পিউটার ল্যাব ব্যবস্থাপনা, নেটওয়ার্ক ইনস্টলেশন, user credential ব্যবস্থাপনা ও পরিচালনা, সফটওয়্যার ইনস্টলেশন, ট্রাউবল শিউটিং পরিষেবা ইনস্টলেশন, ওয়েব সাইট ব্যবস্থাপনা, গ্রহণযোগ্য অটোমেশন, ই-নবি প্রকৌশল ব্যবস্থাপনা ও পরিচালনায় দক্ষ হইতে হবে। চাকরির প্রার্থীকে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করিতে হবে। চাকরির অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন অভ্যন্তরীণ প্রার্থীর পোশানীয় প্রতিবেদন সন্তোষজনক সাপেক্ষে অগ্রাধিকার দেয়া হইতে পারে। প্রার্থীর বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর হইতে হবে।

রেজিস্ট্রারের অনুকূলে প্রদেয় ৭৫০/- (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা মূল্যের পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট এবং সকল সার্টিফিকেট, মার্কেটিং ও প্রশংসাপত্রের সত্যায়িত প্রতিলিপিসহ ৮(আট) প্রস্ত দরখাস্ত আশামী ১৬-০৭-২০২৪ তারিখের মধ্যে পরিচালক, পরিসংখ্যান গবেষণা ও শিক্ষা ইনস্টিটিউট (আইএসআইটি), ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়-এর নিকট পৌঁছাতে হবে।

GD- 1040

**এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড**

**ঠান্ডানিয়া, বগুড়া**

সূত্র নং: ইডিসিএল/বগুড়া/ক্রম/২০২৪/৪১৩ তারিখ: ২৬/০৬/২০২৪ ইং

**পুরাতন/অকেজো ক্রয় মালমাল বিক্রয় টিকাদার নিয়োগের পূর্ণস্বাক্ষরিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড(ইডিসিএল), বগুড়া কারখানার ২২(বাইশ)টি অব্যবহৃত পুরাতন/অকেজো ক্রয় মালমাল তালিকা অনুযায়ী বিক্রয়ের জন্য "পুরাতন/অকেজো ক্রয় মালমাল বিক্রয়" টিকাদার নিয়োগকারার লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ীদের নিকট থেকে পূর্ণস্বাক্ষরিত আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে। বিস্তারিত নিয়মাবলীসহ পুরাতন/অকেজো মালমাল/ক্রয় তালিকা সংশ্লিষ্ট দরপত্র সিডিউল ইডিসিএল, প্রধান কার্যালয়, ৩৯৫-৩৯৭, পি/এ, তেজগাঁও ঢাকা-১২০৮ হিসাব বিভাগ ও ইডিসিএল, ঠান্ডানিয়া, বগুড়া'র হিসাব বিভাগের ক্যান কাউন্টার হতে নগদ ২,৫০০.০০ (দুই হাজার পাঁচশত) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য) মূল্যে আশামী ৩০/০৬/২০২৪ ইং তারিখ থেকে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে জমা করা যাবে। অগ্রাধী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে আশামী ১৬/০৭/২০২৪ ইং তারিখে বেলা ১২:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে শুধুমাত্র ইডিসিএল, বগুড়া'র ক্যান বিভাগে স্বাক্ষিত সিগমোহরকৃত টেন্ডার বন্ডে দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে এবং ঐ দিনই বেলা ১২:১৫ ঘটিকায় দরদাতাদের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি থাকে) ইডিসিএল, ঠান্ডানিয়া, বগুড়ায় খোলা হবে। উল্লেখ্য যে, দরপত্র দাখিলের দিন দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয় করা হবে না। সকল অগ্রাধী দরদাতাকে আশামী ০৮/০৭/২০২৪ ইং তারিখে বেলা ১১:০০ ঘটিকায় ইডিসিএল, বগুড়া অফিসে সি-বিড মিটিং এ উপস্থিত থাকার জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

কোন প্রকার কারন দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে ইডিসিএল কর্তৃপক্ষ এই টেন্ডার প্রক্রিয়া যে কোন পর্যায়ে বাতিল করার পূর্ণ ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

উপ-ব্যবস্থাপক ক্রয়  
পক্ষঃ উপ-মহাব্যবস্থাপক ও প্রাইট প্রধান, বগুড়া

GD-1043



## CONFLICT IN MYANMAR Blasts heard across Teknaf border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The sound of sporadic mortar shell explosions across the border in Rakhine State of Myanmar has been heard in Teknaf and neighbouring areas in Cox's Bazar since Tuesday afternoon.

Due to this, locals have become wary in the upazila, including the areas along the Naf river.

The fighting between the Myanmar Junta and rebel Arakan Army has intensified in recent times, prompting many Rohingyas in Rakhine State to leave their homes behind to look for safety in and around Maungdaw township, said Rohingya leaders living in Cox's Bazar camps.

Many Rohingyas have gathered along the Naf river, trying to flee into Bangladesh, said border sources.

However, Border Guard Bangladesh personnel are on high alert to prevent any intrusion.

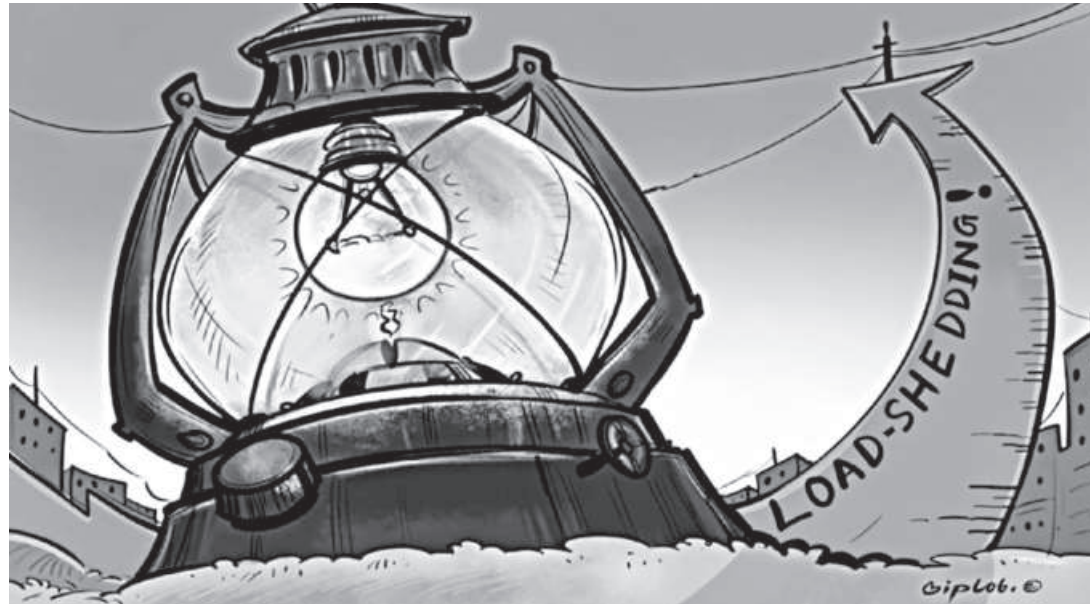
BGB men are patrolling different areas, including Chowdhurypara Transit Ghat in Teknaf town, Nightong Para, Keruntali, and Baraitili, said locals.

No one is being allowed near the border areas, they added.

Around five lakh Rohingyas live in Maungdaw township in Myanmar, in close vicinity of the warzone.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Port city grapples with frequent power cuts



ARUN BIKASH DEY

Shuvechha Ghosh, a resident of Askar Dighir Par area in Chattogram city, was finding it hard to put her toddler to sleep on Tuesday night, amid severe heat alongside frequent power cuts.

"Power cuts occurred a total of eight times today, including four times since the evening. This situation has been going on over the last one week. It has become very difficult for us to stay inside in this heat with power outages occurring so many times daily. My father-in-law and my son couldn't sleep the whole night due to discomfort," she said.

Like her, many residents in the port city, including in Askar Dighir Par, Panchlaish, Bakalia, Chawk Bazar, Halishahar, Bahaddarhat, Chandgaon, Agrabad, Pahartoli, Muradpur, Katalganj, Sholoshahar, Mehediabagh, Bibir Hat and Dampara areas, have been suffering due to frequent load shedding, occurring as many as 12 times a day in some areas.

The highest and lowest temperatures recorded in the port city were 33.1 degrees Celsius and 26.4 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, said Mahmudul Alam, officer of

Chattogram Met Office.

Abdul Aziz of Panchlaish area said, "Such frequent power cuts are somehow tolerable during daytime, but at night it is unbearable. We could not sleep last night due to this amid the heat."

The officials of Power Development Board, Chattogram said they were compelled to go for load shedding due to a big discrepancy between the local demand for power and its supply.

**Chattogram city has a daily demand for around 1,200 MW in peak hours and around 1,100 MW in off-peak hours during summer. It gets only 900-1,000 MW power from the national grid on average.**

"Chattogram city has a daily demand for around 1,200 MW in peak hours and around 1,100 MW in off-peak hours during summer. It gets only 900-1,000 MW power from the national grid on average. As such, there is no alternative to load shedding in the present scenario," said Akbar Hossain, assistant director of PDB, Chattogram.

According to PDB sources, the power stations in the greater Chattogram region generate more power compared to the demand.

On Tuesday, the 29 units of 22 power stations in the region produced 2,202 MW power, against a demand for 1,175 MW at 11:00am and 1,217 MW at 7:00pm in the port city.

However, the supply to the port city was 900 MW at 11:00am and 1,084 MW at 7:00pm.

As such, frequent load shedding happened every now and then across the city, causing sufferings to the city dwellers.

Asked, Humayun Kabir, chief engineer of PDB, Chattogram, said the power supply is controlled centrally through the national grid and they had nothing to do with it.

"We have to manage the distribution of power with what we get from the national grid. Due to the discrepancy between demand and supply, load shedding becomes unavoidable," he added.

Contacted, SM Nazer Hossain, central vice president of Consumers' Association of Bangladesh, said the government should set a criterion for distribution of power according to priority.

## ATTACK ON MINORITIES 70pc incidents land related Says Peace Observatory report on 2013-2021

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 people from the Hindu community died and 862 were injured in 3,710 incidents of violence against the country's Hindu community between January 2013 and September 2021, said a recent report of Bangladesh Peace Observatory.

The religious minorities have been facing physical, non-physical and gender-based violence, it said, adding that around 2 percent of the incidents are of gender-based violence.

Land grabbing continued to be a threat to religious minority groups during this time, irrespective of the political party in power, the report said.

Citing rights body Ain o Salish Kendra, the report mentioned that at least 26 incidents of land grabbing took place between 2013 and 2021.

As per the report, almost 70 percent of incidents of violence ensued in connection with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

## Increase agriculture budget, subsidies

### Economists urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Economists have called on the government to increase subsidies and budget allocations to improve farmers' livelihoods in the proposed budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

"The new budget has reduced subsidies by Tk 272 crore compared to the current fiscal year, they said during an event.

"Around 40 percent of the workers are engaged in the agriculture sector, yet the new budget gives it little attention. The prices of agricultural products and machinery have also risen due to the higher dollar rate," said Narayan Chandra Sinha, associate professor at Dhaka School of Economics.

"In this situation, without increased budget and subsidies, how can farmers boost their production?" he asked.

A group of teachers and economists discussed these issues at the event organised by the Dhaka School of Economics in the capital yesterday.

Sinha also said, "In the current global situation, every country should prioritise increasing internal production."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## MURDER OF CTG DENTIST Former BCL leader among two sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Chattogram court yesterday sent a former leader of Chhatra League and one of his supporters to jail in a case filed over the murder of a physician.

Judge Jebunnesa of Chattogram Metropolitan Session Judge's Court passed the order after Golam Rasul Nissan, former vice-president of BCL's Chittagong University unit, and Arif Ullah Raju surrendered before the court upon completion of their bail in the case.

Police said Korban Ali, a dentist, sustained serious injuries in his head while trying to save his son from a group of teen gang members led by the accused near his residence on April 5 at West Firojshah Colony in Akbar Shah area.

As he died of his injuries, his son filed a murder case accusing Golam Rasul Nissan and seven others.

Chattogram's Additional Deputy Commissioner

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



Sudden rain in the capital yesterday forced these bikers to stop at a section of the Mohakhali flyover. Doing this, they also took up a portion of the flyover, leaving only one lane for other vehicles to use.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Dhaka South City Corporation  
Office of the Project Director  
Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP)  
Level 10, West Block, Room-919  
Nagar Bhaban, Fulbaria, Dhaka-1000

Memo No. 40. 207.014.09.10.282.2004 310

**"e-Tender Notice" (Corrigendum-(02))**

e-Tender are invited in e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Project Director, DCNUP, Dhaka South City Corporation for the procurement of

SL	Tender ID, Ref No.	Description of items	Start date & time	Last selling date and time		Tender closing date & time	
				Previous	Amended	Previous	Amended
01	Tender ID: 986-468, Ref No. 46.207.014.09.10.282 2024, Date: 24.04.2024	Works: Improvement and Construction works of Mayor Sheikh Taposh Bridge (Loharpool) Contract Package No. DCNUP/W-03/KAC	27-May-2024 15:00 BST	30-June-2024 11:00 BST	07-July 2024 16:00 BST	30-June-2024 13:00 BST	08-July-2024 13:00 BST

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and offline hard copy(s) will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

**Rajib Khadem**  
Project Doctor, PU,  
Dhaka City Neighborhood Upgrading Project (DCNUP)  
Dhaka South City Corporation  
Tel. 880-2223350461  
e-mail: pddcnupdscc24@gmail.com

DSCC/PRD/574/2023-2024

GD-1044

**Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Limited**  
Road Transport and Highways Division  
House No-04, Road No-21, Sector-04  
Uttara, Dhaka-1230  
[www.dhakabrt.gov.bd](http://www.dhakabrt.gov.bd)

**Invitation for Tenders**

1	Ministry/Division	Road Transport and Highways Division
2	Agency	Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Limited (DBRTCL)
3	Procuring Entity Name	Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Limited (DBRTCL) represented by General Manager
4	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
5	Invitation for	Supply and Installation of Galvanized Steel Rolling Shutter Gates in Station Front (Docking Locations) of 25 BRT stations.
6	Invitation Ref No	35.06.0000.010.07.001.24-506
7	Date	26 June 2024
8	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (NCT)
9	Budget and Source of Funds	GoB through Project Aid
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>		
10	Tender Package No.	D GD-2B
11	Tender Package Name	Supply and Installation of Galvanized Steel Rolling Shutter Gates in Station Front (Docking Locations) of 25 BRT stations.
12	Tender Publication Date	27 June 2024
13	Tender Last Selling Date	24 July 2024 (05.00 PM)
14	Tender Closing Date and Time	25 July 2024 02:00 PM
15	Tender Opening Date and Time	25 July 2024 02:15 PM
16	Name & Address of the office(s) - Selling Tender Document	Manager (Maintenance), 3rd Floor, Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Ltd. House:04, Road:21, Sector:04, Uttara, Dhaka-1230
	- Receiving Tender Document	Conference Room 1st Floor, Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Ltd. House:04, Road:21, Sector:04, Uttara, Dhaka-1230
	- Opening Tender Document	Conference Room, 1st Floor, Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Limited, House:04, Road:21, Sector:04, Uttara, Dhaka-1230
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>		
17	Brief Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderer	The Tenderer shall submit with its Tender the following additional documents: 1. The minimum of years of general experience of the Tenderer in the supply of Goods and related services as Supplier shall be three (3) years. Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper. 2. The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods of at least one (1) contract successfully completed within the last five (5) years, with a value of at least Tk. 4,20,00,000.00 (Taka forty-two million). 3. The minimum supply and/or production capacity of goods are similar type of metal goods with 5,000 square meter or equivalent quantity supply and/or production capacity per year. 4. The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e working capital or credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be Tk. 5,00,00,000.00 (Taka fifty million). 5. Up-to-date valid ABC Category Electrical Contractor and Electrical Supervisory License from Electrical Licensing Board. 6. Other conditions were mentioned in the tender document.
18	Brief Description of Goods & Related Services	Supply and installation of galvanized steel rolling shutter, including all necessary elements, side rails, shafts, and locking arrangement. The slat's nominal thickness is 1.20mm. The guide rail thickness shall be 3.00mm galvanized steel power coated finish.
19	Price of Tender Document (Tk.)	3,000.00 (Three Thousand Taka Only)
20	Lot No	Identification of Lot
	1	Supply and Installation of Galvanized Steel Rolling Shutter Gates in Station Front (Docking Locations) of 25 BRT stations.
		Location
		Airport to Gazipur BRT Corridor
		Tender Security Amount (Tk.)
		15,00,000.00 (Taka One million five hundred thousand)
		Completion Time in Weeks / Months
		3 (three) Months
21	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md. Mohiuddin
22	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	General Manager
23	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Limited
24	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	02-48957784 E-mail mohiuddin.dbrt@gmail.com
25	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings	

SD/-  
(Md Kamruzzaman)  
DGM (Maintenance)  
Dhaka BRT Company Limited

GD-1039



# AUSTRALIA

## A desired destination for higher education

NAFISA KHAN

Australia has become a popular destination for international students aiming to pursue higher education abroad. It is home to some of the most student-friendly cities in the world. According to the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, over 14,000 Bangladeshi students enrolled to study in Australia in 2023 alone - a 70 percent increase from the previous year and the highest number on record, taking 13th place in student numbers.

More than half a million international students from 192 countries choose to study in Australia for its quality education. Australian universities offer numerous scholarships to support these students. For example, Charles Sturt University offers attractive scholarship opportunities for international students. Each applicant is granted with 10 percent international student support scholarship and there is also a 25 percent international student merit scholarship available.

The Australian Government has a large scholarship programme for international students and invests some AUD 200 million per year in programmes at universities and other tertiary institutions around the country. Among Australia Awards Scholarships alumni surveyed in Bangladesh, 97 percent reported that the skills and knowledge developed through their scholarship would enable them to contribute to the development of Bangladesh. During 2023, a total of 72 Australia Awards Scholarship recipients from Bangladesh (36 women, 36 men) studied at master's degree level at Australia's world-class universities, including three people with disability. One of the most popular scholarships is the Australia Awards Scholarship, which is funded by the Australian government and provides full tuition fees, living expenses, and other allowances to recipients from eligible countries in Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East, and Africa.

Another notable scholarship is the

Destination Australia Scholarship, which provides financial support to both domestic and international students studying in regional Australia. Other scholarships available to international students in Australia include the Endeavour Scholarships and Fellowships, which provide funding for research or professional development in a range of fields, with business management and information technology being the most preferred subjects.

The country offers three intakes per year: February, July, and November, each with unique benefits and limitations. The major intakes in Australia are in February, followed by July, and finally, November.

The initial step to applying would be shortlisting universities based on the subjects one might want to pursue. Business and Information Technology are currently among the most preferred subjects for international students. Sydney and Melbourne are the popular destinations for Bangladeshi students to pursue their higher studies.

While selecting universities, it is crucial to consider their employment prospects. Among the leading Australian universities Charles Sturt University is considered one of the best for graduate employment. Around 90 percent of its undergraduates secure full-time jobs within four months of graduating. Moreover, the average earning of Charles Sturt University graduates is AUD 64,100 per year.

An aspiring admission seeker should prepare a statement of purpose, letters of recommendation, and academic transcripts as per the requirement of the specific university, standardised test scores (GRE, GMAT, SAT if necessary) and proof of English proficiency.

The new migration policy of Australia has renewed visa policies to increase the minimum score

requirements and the score requirement for a student visa from 5.5 to 6.0. Highlighting the interests and relevant experiences in the required essays can complement previous academic performance and increase one's chances of getting into their desired programmes.

Once accepted, students should start preparing the necessary documents for their visa application. To start the application, one needs to provide the letter of offer and confirmation of enrolment they received from the university upon acceptance. Genuine Student requirement consists of an array of information, including the details of a student's current circumstances, ties to family, community, employment and economic circumstances, reasons behind applying to Australian universities, history of study in Australia (if any) and other relevant information for screening.

To meet the requirements for a student visa, one must provide proof of financial savings required to cover the costs and expenses associated. International student visa applicants must provide proof of at least AUD 29,710. International students also need to have Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) for the duration of their stay. They may also need

to undergo a health examination to meet the student visa health requirement. There are also certain character requirements that an international student must meet before coming to study in Australia. In some cases, a student may also need to provide a police background check.

After preparing these documents, a student needs to open an ImmiAccount. The best part of this seemingly complicated process is that a student can also take a professional guidance and advice from any registered expert under any particular university.

The two things international students need the most are information and research. If you are armed with these two, you are ready to dive into this new exciting chapter of studying in Australia.



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→ [sydneymelbourne.csu.edu.au](http://sydneymelbourne.csu.edu.au)



\* Good universities guide 2023-24  
\*\* [sydneymelbourne.csu.edu.au/how-to-apply/scholarships](http://sydneymelbourne.csu.edu.au/how-to-apply/scholarships)

Charles Sturt University - TEQSA Provider Identification: PRV12018 (Australian University), CRICOS Provider: 00005F. Under a service agreement with Charles Sturt University ABN 83 878 708 551, the Navitas Group through the College of Business & Technology (NSW) Pty Ltd ABN 72 113 382 884 operates both Charles Sturt University Sydney and Charles Sturt University Melbourne. Courses offered at these locations are accredited by Charles Sturt University, students studying at these locations are enrolled at Charles Sturt University, and operational staff members working at these locations are employed by the Navitas Group.



## INTERNATIONAL

## SPY CHARGES

## Russia starts trial for WSJ reporter

REUTERS, Yekaterinburg

A shaven-headed Evan Gershkovich went on trial behind closed doors yesterday in a Russian court where the US journalist is facing accusations of espionage.

Prosecutors say the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reporter gathered secret information on the orders of the US Central Intelligence Agency about a company that manufactures tanks for Russia's war in Ukraine. If convicted, he faces a sentence of up to 20 years.

Gershkovich, his newspaper and the US government all reject the allegations and say that he was just doing his job as a reporter accredited by Russia's Foreign Ministry to work there.

"His case is not about evidence, procedural norms, or the rule of law. It is about the Kremlin using American citizens to achieve its political objectives," the US embassy in Moscow said in a statement, calling for Gershkovich's immediate release.

## PROTESTS IN KENYA

## President backs down on tax rises

REUTERS, Nairobi

Kenya's president yesterday withdrew planned tax rises, bowing to pressure from protesters who had stormed parliament, launched demonstrations across the country and threatened more action this week.

William Ruto said he would not sign a finance bill including the hikes a day after violent clashes between police and protesters at the assembly and nationwide left at least 23 people dead and scores wounded, according to medics.

"Listening keenly to the people of Kenya who have said loudly that they want nothing to do with this finance bill 2024, I concede. And therefore, I will not sign the 2024 finance bill, and it shall subsequently be withdrawn," he said in a televised address.

## New finalists

FROM PAGE 12

maiden wins in T20Is against both sides -- from the competition this time to reach their first-ever semifinal in an ICC event. The Afghans thrashed the Black Caps by 84 runs in the group-stage and then blew the Super Eight Group 2 wide open with a stunning win over Australia.

An inspired all-round display from Rashid sealed a thrilling win over Bangladesh in Antigua on Tuesday and cemented Afghanistan's spot in the semifinals.

"I think the semifinal is going to be a massive, massive inspiration for the youngsters back home in Afghanistan," said skipper Rashid. "It's an unbelievable feeling. We are capable -- but as long we keep the things very simple."

In the second semifinal, India, who have also won all their matches barring a washout against Ireland, look the part to lift the trophy owing to a formidable run much like their lead-up to the 2023 ODI World Cup final but will take on defending champions England who knocked the Men in Blue out of the semis in the 2022 edition of the tournament.

The two teams have had contrasting pathways to the final four as while India cruised, England laboured through the group stage battling fears of early elimination and finally hit top gear in the Super Eight when they thrashed West Indies. But they were dealt a blow in a narrow defeat at the hands of South Africa.

With Australia out of the picture, if India had to choose between South Africa or England, they probably would've wanted to face Jos Buttler's side who have so far blown hot and cold.

## Delhi for early

FROM PAGE 12

"Discussed our deep concern at the impact of continuing violence and instability in Myanmar on our border. India is open to engaging all stakeholders in addressing this situation," Jaishankar wrote on X.

He also said he called for an early return to the path of democratic transition in Myanmar, days after the Indian ambassador to Myanmar met the chief of the junta administration's election commission this week.

A junta spokesman did not respond to calls from Reuters seeking comment.



Palestinian children gather to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen, amid food scarcity, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'There are no safe centimetres left in Gaza'

UN aid worker narrates trauma of desperate civilians

AFP, Geneva

A UN humanitarian worker described the suffering she witnessed first-hand in Gaza, where she saw children mutilated and families bombed out of their homes, in an emotional testimony Tuesday.

Speaking to journalists in Geneva following a three-month stint in the territory, Yasmina Guerda of the UN humanitarian agency OCHA described the desperation from the viewpoint of civilians under the Israeli military's assault.

"You have 10-15 minutes to evacuate your building because it's going to be bombed. Your little kids are sleeping... You wake them up," she said. "You take one last look at your room and say a permanent goodbye, because you know it will be dust."

As horrifying as that sounds, she stressed that this is the "best-case scenario", since many others are not warned before an attack.

Guerda met people whose homes were destroyed by Israel's operation in the Nuseirat

refugee camp to secure the release of four hostages earlier this month. Gaza's health ministry said at least 274 Palestinians were killed during the operation.

The next day at a hospital, Guerda met children who lost limbs in the attack. "Many of whom reminded me of my own two little toddlers. They were staring into the void, too shell shocked to produce a sound or a tear," she said.

For Guerda, there are no "living conditions" there. "What they have... are survival conditions, and barely. They are holding on by a thread."

She said aid workers were trying to "quantify the suffering with figures", looking at the total number of displaced people, the litres of water they get per day, or the truckloads of aid that make it across the border.

"But it doesn't matter," she said. "Those numbers, they're never near enough ... (for) a population that has lost nearly everything." The fighting has displaced much of Gaza's 2.4 million population. "There are no safe centimetres left in Gaza," Guerda added.

## Heavy rains in Nepal kill 20 amid landslides

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Heavy rainfall triggered landslides and flash floods in Nepal, killing at least 11 people, with another nine killed by lightning strikes over the past two days, officials said yesterday.

Landslides swept away three houses overnight in Lamjung district, about 125 km (80 miles) west of Kathmandu, killing four people including two children, district administrator Buddha Bahadur Gurung said.

In Morang district about 500 km southeast of the Nepali capital, flooding has taken the lives of four people since Tuesday, district official Tek Kumar Regmi said.

## US seeks deeper ties with Maldives

Blinken tells his Maldivian counterpart

REUTERS, Washington

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with his counterpart from the Maldives on Tuesday and said Washington sought a deeper partnership with the Indian Ocean island state and stood with it in ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific region and in dealing with climate change.

Maldives Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer's Washington visit comes two months after the party of President Mohamed Muizzu won a landslide in elections. Muizzu has pivoted ties towards China and away from India, a key US regional partner in standing up to China in the Indo-Pacific.

The US opened an embassy in Male in 2023 to boost engagement with the low-lying archipelago of about half a million people in the face of China's efforts to spread its regional influence.

After the April election, Washington said ties were being strengthened in areas including economic development, education, security cooperation, and climate crisis response.

"For us, the Maldives is an important partner, and we want to make sure that we're a good partner to the Maldives," Blinken told Zameer. "We stand together in working to make sure that we have a free and open Indo-Pacific region," he said.

## Trump policies will fuel inflation Say 16 Nobel Prize-winning economists

REUTERS



Sixteen Nobel prize-winning economists signed a letter on Tuesday warning that the US and world economy will suffer if Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump wins the US presidential election in November.

The jointly signed letter says the economic agenda of US President Joe Biden, a Democrat, is "vastly superior" to Trump's, the former Republican president seeking a second term. The economists say Trump's economic plans would reignite inflation, in part because of his pledge to impose stiffer tariffs on Chinese imports, which they say will hike prices on many goods bought by US consumers.

"While each of us has different views on the particulars of various economic policies, we all agree that Joe Biden's economic agenda is vastly superior to Donald Trump," the economists state in their letter.

## Assange back home

FROM PAGE 12

husband would one day be pardoned.

Australia Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who has lobbied for years to free Assange, said he had spoken to him by phone after his plane landed.

Assange's arrival ends a saga in which he spent more than five years in a British high security jail and seven years in asylum at the Ecuadorian embassy in London battling extradition to Sweden on sexual assault allegations and to the US, where he faced 18 criminal charges.

Those charges stemmed from WikiLeaks' release in 2010 of hundreds of thousands of classified US military documents on Washington's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq - one of the largest breaches of secret information in US history.

During a three-hour hearing held earlier in the US territory of Saipan, Assange pleaded guilty to

one criminal count of conspiring to obtain and disclose classified national defence documents but said he had believed the US Constitution's First Amendment, which protects free speech, shielded his activities.

"Working as a journalist I encouraged my source to provide information that was said to be classified in order to publish that information," he told the court.

"I believed the First Amendment protected that activity but I accept that it was... a violation of the espionage statute."

Chief US District Judge Ramona V Manglona accepted his guilty plea, noting that the US government indicated there was no personal victim from Assange's actions.

She wished Assange, who turns 53 on July 3, an early happy birthday as she released him due to time already served in a British jail.

While the US government viewed

Assange as reckless for putting its agents at risk of harm by publishing their names, his supporters hailed him as a hero for promoting free speech and exposing war crimes.

Assange's British and Australian lawyer Jennifer Robinson thanked the Australian government for securing Assange's release. His father, John Shipton, told Reuters he was relieved.

Assange had agreed to plead guilty to a single criminal count, according to filings in the US District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

The US territory in the western Pacific was chosen due to his opposition to travelling to the mainland US and for its proximity to Australia, prosecutors said.

Politicians in Australia who had campaigned for his release raised concern about the guilty plea on US soil, saying he was a journalist who had been convicted for doing his job.

## Rahul Gandhi vows MPs

FROM PAGE 12

for his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), allowing his government to drive laws through parliament with only cursory debate.

"We would like the house to function often and well. It is very important that the voice of the opposition is allowed to be represented in this house," Rahul told veteran BJP lawmaker Om Birla, the Speaker in

the previous parliament, who was reelected yesterday to the post.

Modi and Rahul exchanged a polite handshake following the election of Birla as the Lok Sabha Speaker.

The two leaders, along with Union minister Kiren Rijiju, accompanied Birla to the Speaker's chair after a motion moved by Prime Minister was adopted through voice votes, reports TNN.

## Legal issues delaying

FROM PAGE 2

Responding to a question from independent MP Md Abdullah, the premier said the government has primarily decided to adopt a policy to recycle e-waste.

"The data collection process [in this regard] is going on and [the policy] will be finalised after taking opinions from the stakeholders."

Plants will be built for recycling e-waste, she added.

Replying to a question from AL

MP Ali Azam from Bhola-2, Hasina said that 33,50,274 specially abled people have been identified and given registration and identity cards (Golden Citizen Card). Among them, 13,12,594 are women.

Responding to another query from Farida Yasmin, the PM said that Tk 45.23 crore from the Journalist Welfare Trust has been distributed among 13,582 journalists and journalist families as welfare grants and financial assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## A moronic end to a daring jailbreak

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking to The Daily Star, an officer involved in the search and arrest, said the four managed to make a hole in the ceiling using only a small screwdriver and an iron-sheet scrap for 20 days.

During this time, they did not allow any cleaners into their cell, he said, adding that police found the screwdriver and the iron scrap hidden about their person.

About how they may have gotten the tools, Additional Inspector General (Prisons) Col Sheikh Sujaur Rahman, who visited Bogura Jail yesterday, said, "We're currently investigating all the jail personnel and officers here to know if they had any role to play. Once the probe is complete, appropriate actions will be taken."

Bogura SP Sudip Kumar Chakraborty yesterday told reporters that the four inmates managed to escape at 3:05am. "The jail authorities informed us at 3:56am."

"After getting the information, all police outposts and patrol teams were put on high alert, and police managed to find and arrest them from the Chashi Bazar area around 4:30am."



Sub-inspector Khorshed Alam, who led the search, said, "They were planning to cross the Korotoa river through Chelopara bridge."

However, before police could reach the spot, the four convicts were initially apprehended by a group of young men.

Describing the incident, Parimal Chandra Das, councillor of Bogura

Municipality Ward-6, told The Daily Star, "Around 3:50am, a group of boys were sitting on the rail tracks near Chashi Bazar, as there was no electricity in their homes and it was very hot last night. Suddenly, they noticed a pack of dogs surrounding four individuals. The boys - Saeed, Rabbi, Kabya, Dukhu, Nayan, Tinku and Bappi - suspected that the four

men were criminals and apprehended them then and there. They then called SI Khorshed Alam and informed him."

Police sources said Nazrul Islam and Amir Hamza were sentenced to death on February 16, 2021. Farid Sheikh received the death penalty on July 10, 2023, and Zakaria, son of Kahaloo upazila mayor and upazila BNP's acting president Abdul Mannan, was sentenced to death on January 15, 2017.

Combined, the four had five murder cases and seven other cases on various charges against them, filed at different times in separate districts. They were also brought to Bogura jail at different times, but sent to the condemned cell together on June 1.

Bogura Deputy Commissioner Saiful Islam told The Daily Star that a six-member probe committee, led by the additional district magistrate, has been formed. He also requested the jail authorities to place six more security posts in front of and behind the jail building.

About the jail's vulnerable security system, Additional IG Col Sujaur told this correspondent, "The jail was built in 1833. The security came

into question only today [yesterday] after the incident. We will check the system."

Speaking to The Daily Star, Inspector (Investigation) Shahinuzzaman Shaheen, of Bogura Sadar Police Station, said a case was filed yesterday afternoon against the four for escaping.

Bogura Sadar Outpost Inspector Sujau Mia, the investigating officer of the case, told this correspondent that the four were produced before a court and then sent back to jail. "We're thinking about whether they can legally be remanded as they are already death row convicts."

Meanwhile, Bogura jail authorities last night took action against eight prison guards who were on duty during the incident.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Jail Super Anwar Hossain said, "Three prison guards were dismissed while a departmental case was recommended against three others and a show-cause notice was issued to the other two. Further measures will be taken according to the recommendations from higher authorities."

He, however, did not name the guards.



## The price we pay for processed rice Govt must formulate clear guidelines on rice processing

It is a truth universally acknowledged by now that laws and directives in Bangladesh are meant to be broken. It is no surprise, then, that millers across the country have been defying a 2023 ban on polishing rice and selling it under fake names, such as the popular variety "miniket." This processed rice comes at a steep cost: compromised nutrition, wasted resources, and potentially inflated prices.

The allure of miniket lies in its polished appearance, a characteristic achieved by removing layers of the rice bran, which is rich in essential nutrients: iron, calcium, and B vitamins. Studies reveal that excessive polishing strips rice of up to 70 percent of its zinc content, a crucial mineral for immune function and growth. Furthermore, this excessive polishing leads to significant rice wastage. Experts estimate that 16 lakh tonnes of rice are lost annually due to over-polishing. This not only impacts national food security, but also contributes to potentially higher rice prices for consumers. Alarmingly, as per a recent study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), over 30 percent of the rice sold in city markets in Bangladesh is refined into a different shape, size, and colour and branded as miniket.

While we laud the government for recognising the harmful impact of over-processing rice, we are at a loss to understand why the ban is yet to be implemented. There are as many as 4,000 automatic rice mills across the country, according to Bangladesh Auto Major and Husking Mills Owners Association (BAMHMOA). Millers say there are no clear guidelines on what an acceptable limit of processing rice is, while food controllers, who should be implementing the ban, say they have received no instructions from the government or high officials on what steps to take. This inaction, which not only undermines the law but also jeopardises the health of Bangladeshi citizens, is simply unacceptable.

The solution lies in swift and decisive action. The government must expedite the issuing of clear rice polishing guidelines, establishing acceptable limits, and outlining enforcement mechanisms. Rice millers also have a role to play here. They must embrace responsible practices and prioritise the well-being of the nation over short-term profit gains. Additionally, public awareness campaigns are crucial to educate consumers about the misleading nature of the miniket label. It is truly mind-boggling that we are allowing our staple to be stripped of its nutrients under the ignorant belief that white, processed rice is better than nutrient-filled coarse rice, and even paying a steeper price for it!

## Don't ignore startups in the budget

### They need govt support now more than ever

When the country is struggling with a number of economic challenges, it is not unexpected that the government would propose conservative measures in the new budget to stem the outflow of money. However, it does not explain why such measures would be proposed for startups—a key sector that can give our economy the push it so desperately needs right now. According to a report in this daily, the government not only has no plan to offer relief to the startups in these trying times, but it actually plans to discontinue the existing benefits.

According to the report, startups in Bangladesh have already been feeling the bite of a declining fund flow. Investment plummeted 70 percent quarter-on-quarter in January-March this year due to the ongoing global funding downturn; compared to the same period last year, the decline is even steeper at 82 percent. Under the circumstances, the government is looking to suspend the existing benefits and impose more duties. The finance minister recently announced that investors and developers at the hi-tech parks would no longer be given the 10 year tax waiver on their earnings come the next fiscal year. Moreover, in government hi-tech parks, a one percent duty will be imposed on capital machinery imports. Meanwhile, the government has not addressed any of the concerns and demands raised by the startups. For example, the demand from e-commerce and logistic startups for the withdrawal of the 15 percent VAT on parcel delivery and five percent VAT on online product sales have not been met in the proposed budget.

These decisions are truly puzzling, especially when we consider the consequences. Industry insiders said withdrawal of the tax waiver would surely hinder the growth of the hi-tech parks as investors—particularly the foreign ones—may get discouraged when they are no longer allowed the benefits. And imposing additional duties will push the cost of doing business upward for the startups. We urge the government to see reason and facilitate the growth of startups, instead of stunting it by employing growth-averse policies. Given the current fund crunch, it could arrange for soft loans on easy terms for startups. It must also come up with incentives that would draw in more investors for the sector. In order to create a smart economy and realise the vision of a smart country, we must smoothen the way for the startups, not create obstacles for them.

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

#### Ebola breaks out in Sudan

On this day in 1976, a factory storekeeper in Nzara township, Sudan fell ill and died within five days. This marked the beginning of the world's first recorded Ebola virus epidemic. At the time, the epidemic affected 284 people, half of whom died.



## TEESTA MANAGEMENT PROJECT

# New challenges before Bangladesh



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KALLOL MUSTAFA

Discussing the Teesta water-sharing agreement has become part of the routine in prime minister-level meetings between Bangladesh and India. In each meeting, the prime minister of Bangladesh would request the Indian prime minister for the conclusion of the interim agreement on sharing the water of Teesta, as agreed upon by both governments in January 2011. And then the Indian PM would reiterate that his government was working with all the stakeholders in India for an early conclusion of the agreement. This kind of request and assurance can be found in all the recent joint statements, like the joint statements issued during the Bangladesh PM's visit to India in October 2019, and the Indian PM's visit to Bangladesh in March 2021.

However, an exception can be seen in the statement of September 2022, during the Bangladesh PM's visit to India, where she raised the issue of signing the draft Teesta agreement prepared in 2011. That time, there was no assurance from the Indian PM in the statement. Subsequently, neither of the prime ministers mentioned the Teesta water-sharing agreement in the joint statement titled "India-Bangladesh Shared Vision for Future," issued after the latest visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India on June 21-22 this year.

Instead, it was announced that an Indian technical team would soon visit Bangladesh to discuss "conservation and management of the Teesta River inside Bangladesh." What India meant by "conservation and management" was elaborated on by Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra.

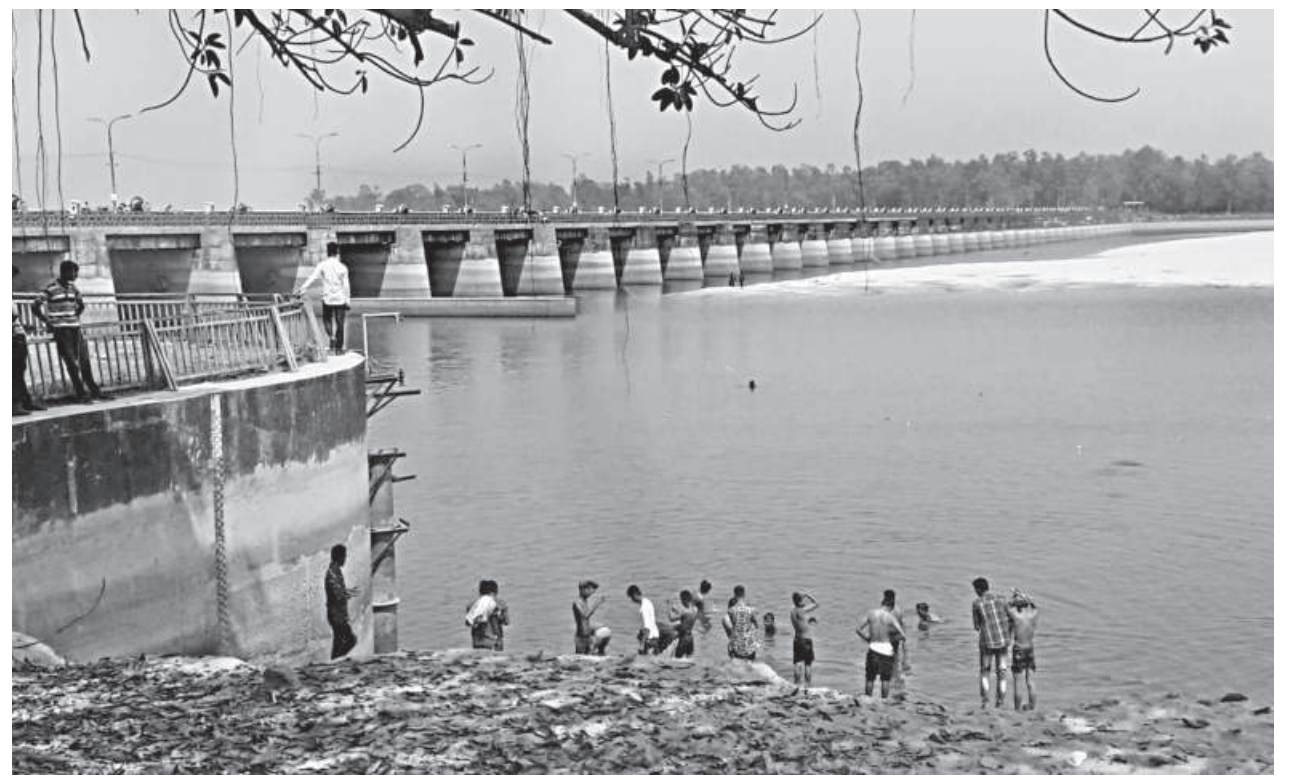
"It is less about the water-sharing part, but more about management of water flow within the Teesta River," explained Secretary Kwatra, in a special media briefing.

This omission of the Teesta water-sharing agreement from the joint statement is a significant change. Does this mean that the Teesta water-sharing agenda has been abandoned?

The discussion on the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP) has been going on in Bangladesh for quite a few years. This megaproject to restore the Teesta is supposed to be implemented with financial and technical assistance from China. Since 2019, China and Bangladesh have been discussing this matter. Now it appears that India has also become seriously

interested in the project.

This is because the region where the TRCMRP is to be implemented is deemed strategically important by India. According to a report in the *Hindustan Times* on June 22, besides worries about water flow data and other information on the cross-border river being scooped up by China, India has concerns about Chinese personnel establishing a presence at the project site located near the "chicken's neck"—



Any discussion on the Teesta management should involve a water-sharing agreement with India.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

the narrow strip of land connecting the northeast of India to the rest of the country.

But will the Teesta crisis be solved by conserving and managing the water of the Teesta inside Bangladesh? The main problem of the Teesta River is India's unilateral withdrawal of water from the river by building barrages upstream and the creation of obstacles in river flow by constructing infrastructure projects, including hydroelectric power plants. So, what will be the procedure of involving India, the country which is responsible for drying up the Teesta River and depriving Bangladesh of the fair share of the river's water, in the management of the river inside Bangladesh? Accepting India's technical assistance in an attempt to revitalise the Teesta

is 3.1 kilometres. Under the TRCMRP project, this width will be reduced to 0.7 kilometre to one kilometre, which will cause a serious adverse effect on the velocity and water carrying capacity of the river.

According to a study by Dr Md Khalequzzaman, professor of geology and environmental sciences at the Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania in the US, due to the reduced cross-section of the river, the velocity of the river will increase. As a result, when the flow of water increases greatly during the rainy season, the erosion tendency of the two banks will increase. Due to the embankments on both sides of the river, most of the tributaries and distributaries of the Teesta will likely be cut off from the main river. For this

Bangladesh cannot get an equitable share of the water from upstream, the Teesta crisis will not be resolved. Even if the Teesta water-sharing agreement is signed between Bangladesh and India over sharing water only at Gajoldoba point, without taking into account the impact of upstream projects in Sikkim, the crisis will not be solved.

Any discussion on the Teesta management should involve a water-sharing agreement with India which will ensure equitable water flow, enforce restrictions on unilateral changes in upstream river flow, keep provisions for mandatory exchange of data regarding any upstream project, and have the option for third-party dispute settlement. Otherwise, Bangladesh will continue to suffer for the Teesta for decades to come.

## MICRO-, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES DAY

# For shared prosperity, formalisation of work is vital



Gunjan Dallakoti is small and medium enterprise development specialist at the International Labour Organization (ILO).

GUNJAN DALLAKOTI

Md Bilal Hussain, 73, learnt weaving from his father. Born in a family of weavers, he believes weaving is in his blood, inherited from his ancestors. His last employer confirms that Bilal is the best weaver he ever had. He is excellent at weaving silk sarees and salwar kameez.

Bilal worked for 57 years—42 with his last employer and 15 years with another. At retirement, he earned Tk 6,200 a month on average, being paid Tk 1,400 for each piece of clothing he made. Bilal retired in November 2023. His failing eyesight and aching body compelled him to stop although he did not want to. His low earnings never permitted him to save anything. He is not getting any retirement benefits as his employment was informal. Devoid of benefits, he is now at the mercy of his sons for the rest of his life and believes the Almighty will provide for him.

Ferdous Munsi, the owner (malik)

of the small saree-making cottage enterprise where Bilal worked, explained the business. He spends Tk 2,000 on raw materials, mostly imported, for each saree and pays workers like Bilal Tk 1,400 to make the saree. This then retails at Tk 4,000. His gross profit does not even cover the rent of the space and the holding cost of inventory for the off season. He is critically aware of the low wages his workers are getting, but can do nothing about it.

This is the reality in the informal sector. The Bangladesh Labour Force Survey 2022 shows that close to six crore (60 million) people, 84.9 percent of total working population in Bangladesh, are in informal employment. It is noteworthy that out of the total employed women in Bangladesh, 96.6 percent are in informal employment. Similarly, 92.7 percent of youth aged 15-27 years are employed informally. Informal

employment can be both in formally registered businesses and in the unregistered ones.

Economists opine that some level of informality is expected in a growing economy like Bangladesh, where an effective business governance system and procedures are yet to be established. There are several reasons for the widespread informality in the country. Studies have suggested that the ineffectiveness of public services like registration, licensing and tax processing of businesses are among the main reasons. On the other hand, lack of clear incentives to formalise, limited understanding of the process of formalisation, and limited employment opportunities are other impediments.

The consequences of the high informality are severe: low tax to GDP ratio, widening inequality, stagnant industrial competitiveness in sectors other than ready-made garment (RMG) and low labour productivity, and low product and service quality. Informality also hinders the potential of the industrial sector to participate and benefit from growing international value chains and export market opportunities. These are extremely critical as Bangladesh prepares to graduate from LDC status and enters the global market on the basis of competitiveness and productivity.

While the prioritisation of

formalisation in the Industrial Policy 2023 is a welcome step, there is a dearth of studies on the potential positive impact of formalisation and Bangladesh's capacity to formalise to inform policymaking. Furthering the formalisation agenda is imperative for the country if it is to achieve the ambition of economic diversification and modernisation of the private sector to become competitive globally. The implementation of the policy requires an integrated effort from the whole of the government, the private sector, and workers' organisations. The success of ongoing labour sector and social protection reforms are also key to addressing informality.

The informal sector, which comprises cottage, micro-, small and medium enterprises, not only operates closest to local communities, but plays a crucial role in creating local jobs, especially for women and youth in Bangladesh. As we commemorate the Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day today, we recognise that it is a vital sector at the heart of our societies with tremendous potential to accelerate decent job creation and achievement of the SDG goals.

To fully harness its potential, a transition to formalisation is necessary to ensure that the millions of workers in the sector do not end up like Bilal—destitute after a fully productive working life.



# FY2025 budget: Strategic insights on trade policy directions



Dr Zaidi Sattar  
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ZAIDI SATTAR

While fiscal and monetary policy implications of the FY2024-25 budget are easy to untangle, one needs to drill down deeper to decipher the true stance and direction of trade policy, as immersed in the budget.

As a trade economist, a focus on the government's articulation of trade policy under the rubric of annual budgets has been my *raison d'être* for a post-budget column for the past several years. This time is no exception. But it took on greater importance this time in light of the fact that the economy is faced with a number of critical challenges that deserve immediate attention. Regrettably, trade policy has often not been on the radar.

It is fair to say that the domestic side of the equation has been adroitly addressed through a combination of fiscal restraint and a constricted fiscal deficit to complement the inflation-reduction stance of the monetary policy already under way. On the external side, restoring stability in the balance of payments was partly addressed in the weeks preceding the budget presentation by moving to a flexible exchange rate regime—the crawling peg—along with a modest depreciation of the taka on top of the massive depreciation already enacted over the previous 18 months. All eyes have been glued to the one salient macroeconomic indicator of external stability: official foreign exchange reserves.

A pivotal step towards stabilising forex reserves was the move by the central bank to

system around 2020-2022. The exchange rate became significantly overvalued making exports uncompetitive. One indication of this overvaluation was the appreciation of the Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER), a measure of export competitiveness, by over 50 percent compared to 2011.

In FY2022, the dam broke, as it were, and Bangladesh Bank could not avoid letting the exchange rate depreciate a massive 30 percent during 2023, and another six percent in a pre-budget adjustment in May 2024. Such a significant one-time depreciation—rather than gradual depreciation over several years—is disruptive and causes a shock to various parts of the economy. The shock—inflation, depleting forex reserves, import curbs, balance of payments volatility—had to be mollified with bold measures to restore macroeconomic stability. Unfortunately, for the economy, those measures came late in the day, only in the last three to six months, with the finishing touches to be expected from the FY2025 budget. So, it would be fair to commend the budget policymakers, headed by the finance minister, for deftly putting the finishing touches on restoration of macroeconomic stability, both internal and external, in order to move forward on a path of stable and rising growth that was the stock of Bangladesh's economy for three decades.

Yet, in my view, some more proactivity would have been desirable on the trade policy front given that forex reserves had barely

regime intended to prop up domestic import substitution industries (ISIs), which then serves to discourage export activity because they become less profitable relative to domestic sales. There was high expectation that, following so much discussion on the subject over the past year, the budget, which usually lays down the magnitude and direction of tariff adjustments (indicating trade policy direction), would be aggressively

graduation, the prospect of anti-dumping or countervailing duties cannot be ruled out. An opportunity was thus missed to move aggressively on the tariff rationalisation path.

A notable innovation was the promotion of brand Bangladesh through the emphasis on "Made in Bangladesh" strategy for giving stimulus to "domestic industries." What is not clear from the budget is what strand of this strategy the policymakers espouse.

there is clear evidence that export-oriented industrialisation creates much greater employment than import substituting, domestic market driven industrialisation. In our country, RMG is a case in point.

The budget may not be the place to articulate the entire strategy for trade policy directions as the country moves into the LDC graduation phase of development. This post-budget note is meant to underscore



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

**Some more proactivity in the budget would have been desirable on the trade policy front given that forex reserves had barely stabilised at about three and a half months of import cover. Aggressive measures are needed to boost reserves by providing impetus for export growth and remittance inflows. This is where trade policy direction becomes vital for providing the right stimulus to exports.**

launch a regime of exchange rate flexibility (a component of trade policy) shortly before the budget announcement. Technically, Bangladesh has been on a floating exchange rate regime since 2004, when this sort of exchange rate system was officially launched.

A freely floating exchange rate system is the epitome of exchange rate flexibility. If allowed to function, the exchange rate will depreciate when there is an excess demand (via imports) for foreign exchange and will appreciate when there is an excess supply (via exports) of foreign exchange. Thus, this system contains a built-in adjustment process (not instantaneous but over a period) for restoring balance in trade or current account deficits or even the entire balance of payments. Usually, most economies subscribing to the floating exchange rate system adhere to what is called a "managed float." The devil lies in the degree of management of the float. In our case, the managed float became so entrenched over time that the system failed to respond to changes in demand and supply, approaching a fixed exchange rate

stabilised at about three and a half months of import cover whereas the dire need is to restore a comfortable zone for forex reserves at around five or more months of import cover. Aggressive measures are needed to boost reserves by providing impetus for export growth and remittance inflows. This is where trade policy direction becomes vital for providing the right stimulus to exports.

Already, the first step towards stimulating exports has been taken, with the substantial depreciation of the exchange rate that has pretty much eliminated the past appreciation of REER. But one fundamental policy that favours domestic sales over exports—anti-export bias of tariffs—remained unaddressed, though a rare opportunity was presented by the depreciation-induced tariff spike across the board (36 percent depreciation raised all tariffs by 36 percent). It presented the scope for drastic rationalisation of tariffs without the revenue loss implications that continue to haunt the revenue authority.

The persistence of anti-export bias emerges from the high tariff protection

moving to purge anti-export bias of tariff protection in a substantial degree. Indeed, there is a hint that this might be in the offing as the finance minister's budget speech highlights the formulation of National Tariff Policy 2023, which, if implemented in whole or in part, could open the doors for export diversification, enhance product competitiveness, and rationalise tariffs for reducing anti-export bias and ensuring balanced development of import substituting industries. As no implementation programme for NTP 2023 was noticeable in the budget speech, perhaps the programme will be undertaken subsequently, as media reports suggest.

If anything, tariff rationalisation was modest as Regulatory Duty (RD) and Supplementary Duty (SD) were withdrawn from 110 tariff lines. The surprising element was the reduction of SD on 172 RMG tariff lines, from 45 percent to 30 percent. Why not completely eliminate SD on RMG imports? Do we really need protective tariff for RMG when we are the second largest apparel exporters in the world? The budget also lays down some feeble tariff rationalisation measures in light of the impending LDC graduation when what was needed was aggressive action. For instance, as 90 percent of SD are applied for protection purposes (higher rates on imports, lower or nil SD on domestic production), this could run afoul of WTO compliance. Though we can hope for some "due restraint" on the part of WTO members following

There are two strands to this trade policy strategy: (a) MADE IN BANGLADESH, SELL IN BANGLADESH; and (b) MADE IN BANGLADESH, SELL IN THE WORLD MARKET.

My reading of the support measures seems to suggest that the preferred policy is geared to the former dispensation. Although export-oriented sectors are also on the radar, the budget seems to focus on promoting several import substituting industries with protection support—raising output tariffs and lowering input tariffs—in a classic demonstration of raising effective protection and, thereby, discouraging exports of the same products via anti-export incentive bias.

This is where history of trade and development diverges. The first strand of trade policy, by focusing on the domestic market, has never given growth rates of seven to eight percent on a sustained basis anywhere in the world. There is no historical or cross-country evidence of this happening. No matter how large the domestic market is, it is no match to the size and scale of the world market. It is the second strand of trade policy that has the potential to generate seven, eight, nine percent or even higher growth rates by harnessing the demand of the massive global market. China, Vietnam and several other East Asian countries are classic examples of turning around poor economies into high-growth, high-income economies within a few decades. Should Bangladesh not opt for the second orientation of trade policy? Moreover,

the urgency of the task ahead, lest we reach a cliffhanger on November 24, 2026—the date for graduation out of the LDC status. A crisis always presents opportunities to be seized. In 1990, when the economy faced a macroeconomic and balance-of-payment crisis, the country's policymakers chose to go for radical trade policy reforms, investment liberalisation, and market-oriented reforms. These reforms, though ostensibly incomplete, still gave the impetus for two decades of rapid growth and poverty reduction. Given that the economy is once again faced with heightened degree of macroeconomic and balance-of-payment challenges, and LDC graduation is imminent, one would be looking for another round of structural reforms at least in the long overdue trade and tax policy arenas in order to restore macroeconomic and balance-of-payment stability and resume its long-run rapid growth path.

With regard to a medium-term development strategy, the budget may not be the end game. There are signs of change in trade policy directions, but our hope was for more clarity and aggression in moving forward with change. Maybe that part of the agenda for action has been left for post-budget activities.

It is important to recognise that trade has been the handmaiden of Bangladesh's development. It will remain so for the next decade and beyond. So, adopting the most dynamic trade policy for future progress is a national imperative now.

# Assange is free, but justice has not been done



Caitlin Johnstone  
is an Australian journalist.

CAITLIN JOHNSTONE

Julian Assange is free. As of this writing, he is en route to Australia from the Northern Mariana Islands, a remote US territory in the western Pacific, after finalising a plea deal with the US government which will see him sentenced to time served in Belmarsh Prison. Importantly, according to experts I've seen commenting on this astonishing new development, it doesn't appear that his plea deal will set any new legal precedents that will be harmful to journalists going forward. Joe Lauria reports the following for Consortium News:

"Bruce Afran, a US constitutional lawyer, told Consortium News that a plea deal does not create a legal precedent. Therefore Assange's deal would not jeopardise journalists in the future of being prosecuted for accepting and publishing classified information from a source because of Assange's agreeing to such a charge."

I've obviously got a lot of big feels about all this, having followed this important case

so closely for so long and having put so much work into writing about it. There's so very, very much work to be done in our collective struggle to liberate the world from the talons of the imperial murder machine, but I am overjoyed for Assange and his family, and it feels good to mark a solid win in this fight.

None of this undoes the unforgivable evils the empire inflicted in its persecution of Julian Assange, however, or reverses the worldwide damage that has been done by making a public example of him to show what happens to a journalist who tells inconvenient truths about the world's most powerful government.

So while Assange may be free, we cannot rightly say that justice has been done.

Justice would look like Assange being granted a full and unconditional pardon and receiving millions of dollars in compensation from the US government for the torment they put him through by his imprisonment



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange arrives at a United States District Court in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, US, on June 26, 2024.

PHOTO: REUTERS

in Belmarsh beginning in 2019, his de facto imprisonment in the Ecuadorian embassy beginning in 2012, and his jailing and house arrest beginning in 2010.

Justice would look like the US making concrete legal and policy changes

guaranteeing that Washington could never again use its globe-spanning power and influence to destroy the life of a foreign journalist for reporting inconvenient facts about it, and issuing a formal apology to Julian Assange and his family.

Justice would look like the arrest and prosecution of the people whose war crimes Assange exposed, and the arrest and prosecution of everyone who helped ruin his life for exposing those crimes. This would include a whole host of government operatives and officials across numerous countries, and multiple US presidents.

Justice would look like a hero's welcome and a hero's honours from Australia upon his arrival, and a serious revision of Canberra's obsequious relationship with Washington.

Justice would look like formal apologies to Assange and his family from the editorial boards of all the mainstream press outlets that manufactured consent for his vicious persecution—including and especially *The Guardian*—and the complete destruction of the reputations of every unscrupulous "presstitute" who helped smear him over the years.

If these things happened, then we could perhaps argue that justice has been served to some extent. As it stands, all we have is the cessation of one single act of depravity by an empire. We all still live under a globe-spanning power structure which has shown the entire world that it will destroy your life if you expose its criminality, and then stand back and proudly call this justice.

So, I personally think I'm just going to take this one small victory in stride. There is still so much to do, and vanishingly little time to do it. The fight goes on.



LITERARY CURTAINS

# 'BEGUM'S BLUNDER' shines in Wilde splendour

**The director, however, took some poetic licence to appropriate some of the contextual references. She transforms Lady Windermere's titular fan into a shawl for Begum Mumtaz, a gift from her husband. The change is not superficial; it remains pivotal to the plot of societal intrigue.**

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

*Begum's Blunder* is a clever adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*. The play transports the Victorian setting to the imaginary Behrampur, the heyday of the Nawabs in India. With Naila Azad Nupur's direction, and Sadaf Saaz working her behind-the-scenes magic as the producer, the production by Kaleidoscope projects lights on the prism of Wilde's 1892 play to find their contemporary refractions and reflections in colonial India.

The play reminds the Dhaka audience that the gossip-mongering Victorian upper class, with their deceitful moral stance, is no different from their own. Human behaviours are uncannily the same across time and space, making Wilde our contemporary. The proximity is further heightened by the choice of location and the ambience created for the staging. The immersive theatrical experience, which was performed at Aloki in the upscale part of town before a select upper-class audience, has a fourth wall effect. The cabaret-style seating at the venue became an extension of the stage where the main action takes place.

The characters join the birthday party of the protagonist, Begum Mumtaz Nizamuddin (i.e., Lady Windermere), through the aisle that divides the audience. The herald announces their names, and the characters enter the stage, interacting



PHOTOS: SHADAB SHAHROKH HAI



with the audience, who, in turn, have become extensions of the attendees. The set design and choreography provide a backdrop against which the drama unfolds. The immediate intimacy between the audience and the characters highlights the central theme of the play: the manipulation of appearances to navigate societal expectations. The plot pivots around a disgraced character, Amirun Nahar Khatun (i.e., Mrs. Erylne), who is trying to buy her way into her former society through deceptions. Almost all of the characters in the play are unaware of her motives. This irony serves as a piston that propels the narrative story forward.

The play more or less retains the original dialogue, with changes primarily in the names of characters and places. It would be almost sacrilegious for any script writer to try to tweak Wilde's texts. Wilde's crunchy dialogues often feel like nuts in a nutrient bar that mixes love with betrayal and righteousness with common sense under the masks we wear in society. Naila Azad was smart to leave Wilde's words alone, as they have the reputation of being an omnibus of quotable quotes. However, the script does use vernacular languages to authenticate its adapted location. The play's seamless transition between Hindi, Bangla, and English serves as a

reminder of its adopted location. The inclusion of western songs and classical dance, as well as the use of a digital backdrop, creates a party mood that is in contrast to the storm that the central character is facing, thinking that her husband, Nawab Nizamuddin, is having an affair with an older woman, Amirun.

The director, however, took some poetic licence to appropriate some of the contextual references. She transforms Lady Windermere's titular fan into a shawl for Begum Mumtaz, a gift from her husband. The change is not superficial; it remains pivotal to the plot of societal intrigue. Visually, as a stage prop, the shawl is much more effective for the characters dressed in

traditional Indian dresses. It is a deft nod to local customs and aesthetics.

The satirical comedy has many private jokes. One such joke involves the characterisation of Nawab Mahiuddin Zafar, who comes from Dhaka. His counterpart in the main text is Mr. Hopper, who comes from Australia. For the snooty society of Grosvenor Square in London, colonised Australia is still a place infested with "flying kangaroos." One only hopes that Dhaka's slighting in this analogy was not deliberate.

The most notable aspect of the play is the professionalism displayed by a group of brilliant amateur performers. Their superb acting and almost flawless enunciation have given the play its elan. The cast delivers their lines with a finesse that captures the cultural and contextual nuances of Wilde's play. The transition between scenes is seamless, a testament to the hard work that has gone into its making.

The producer Sadaf Saaz mentions that Kaleidoscope, a BHN Experiences venture created with Jatrik and with support from Asiatic EXP, is a multidimensional platform that wants to elevate the experience of theatre, the arts, and more. Jatrik, responsible for organising massive events such as Dhaka Lit Fest, has always strived to create a creative space that nurtures local talents. *Begum's Blunder's* actors come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and it was the director's brilliance that brought out the best in the characters by highlighting their uniqueness and peculiarities as part of the drama's overall effect. Jatrik will stage the play for seven more shows at the Mohila Samity in the coming weeks. The grandiose immersive effect that Aloki offered in its premier show is likely to be missed at the other venue. Nevertheless, kudos to Kaleidoscope for bringing Oscar Wilde's wit and wisdom to the Dhaka stage, as well as for offering a delightful evening of theatre that is both thought-provoking and entertaining.

**Dr Shamsad Mortuza is a professor of English at Dhaka University, and former pro-vice-chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).**

INTERVIEW

## Outliers take centre-stage in Shah Tazrian Ashrafi's debut collection

**My intention was to explore how certain factors intimidate and ridicule them and further consolidate their marginalised positions, as if to say they (the outliers) do not deserve a shot at life and redemption.**

SARAH ANJUM BARI

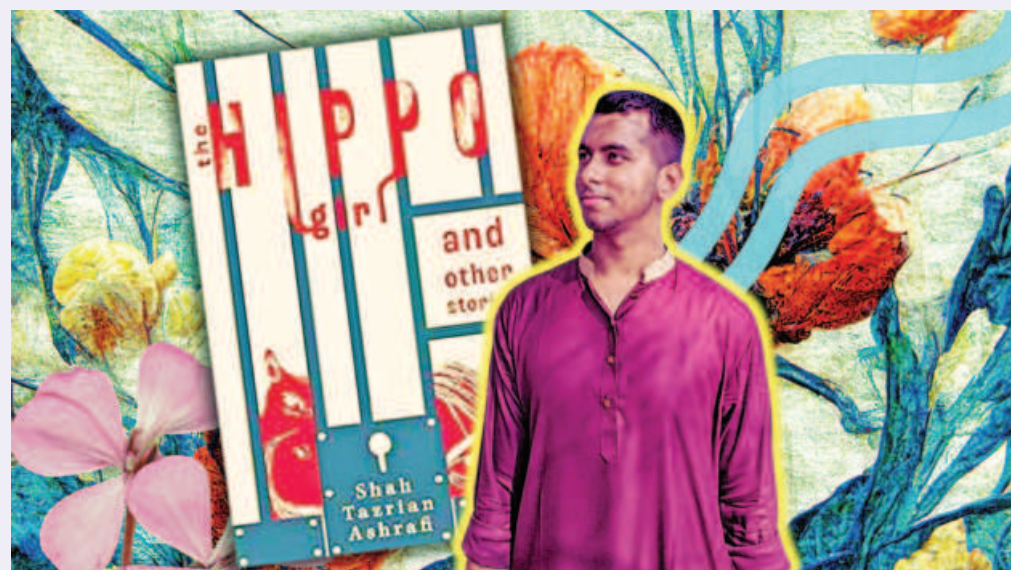
It's hard not to recall our many conversations about literature as I try to summarise Shah Tazrian Ashrafi's debut collection of short stories. They were always short discussions, opening and closing off in spurts, as happens over text. Exclamations over a new essay collection by Zadie Smith, or a new novel by Isabel Allende.

As an undergraduate student, he majored in International Relations at BUP, but it's his growth as an artist that's been so fulfilling to witness. In 2021, he worked on his short stories under Karan Mahajan in the Write Beyond Borders mentorship programme; in 2023, he was mentored by Sonia Faleiro in the South Asia Speaks fellowship programme. Between working on his debut book and publishing fiction and nonfiction in *Himal South Asian*, *The Diplomat*, *Caravan*, *TRT World*, *The Aleph Review*, *Six Seasons Review*, *Dhaka Tribune*, and *The Daily Star*, Tazrian also got accepted into the MFA in Creative Writing Program at UW Madison, due to start in Fall 2024.

*The Hippo Girl and Other Stories* (Hachette, 2024) plays with all those themes that have percolated in his essays and reviews over the years. The book stays often in the shadows of war, but illustrates moments of humour, friendship, and bravery between characters who are seldom on the upper end of a hierarchy. We hear from a dog who watches his human suffer through the Liberation War, a housemaid who must abandon her mentally ill sister in the calm streets of a fictionalised Baridhara. The textures of life in Bangladesh appear as they are in this collection, sans nostalgia or elitist gloss. It's a rare joy to recognise our familiar streets, customs, histories, and relationships depicted with such loving attention to detail in a book that will reach readers across South Asia.

**What inspired these stories? Were you drawing ideas or information from any particular sources?**

There was no particular inspiration, but before



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

writing these stories, I was fascinated by Petina Gappah and Jamil Jan Kochai's short stories. Their fictions were etched in my mind because of how they managed to write about hopeless scenarios (often involving wars) in a palatable and light-hearted manner. As such, I actively looked back on their work to learn how they did and did not do certain things, especially in terms of subverting readers' expectations and upending assumptions. This is why I mention them in my synopsis. Besides, I was also inspired by Samanta Schweblin, Mariana Enriquez, and multiple stories from Commonwealth Short Story Prize and Caine Prize shortlists. The one thing they all share in common is their penchant for narrating stories of violence that leave the reader pondering about the characters for a long time. For instance, I got the idea for "Lucky" after reading this brilliant Caine Prize-shortlisted story called "Memories We Lost", which, like "Lucky", is about a pair of siblings in dire straits, ostracised by the society due to the stigma around mental health. Similarly, I was

inspired to write "Indira Road" after reading a Commonwealth Short Story Prize-shortlisted story called "Something Happened Here"; in both the stories, the narrators return to their previous homes and revisit the unwanted forces that pushed them away in the first place.

**We move through different classes in your book, from slums and working class families to diplomatic residential areas. But in all cases, we're focusing on the outliers in each of these spaces—the bullied, the marginalised. What are your stories trying to accomplish through these gazes?**

By giving the outliers the centre stage, I wanted to establish that some people are outliers in a society because of their helpless circumstances. My intention was to explore how certain factors intimidate and ridicule them and further consolidate their marginalised positions, as if to say they (the outliers) do not deserve a shot at life and redemption.

**One way in which you do this—and this was my**

**favourite thing about the book—is your choice of narrators. Nearly every narrator in the book comes with a distinct personality, they have their biases, their joys and resentments, even when you're writing a third person omniscient narrator. Some of the more fascinating narrators appear when you write in the first person collective. Tell me about your choice of narrators (the adults, the children, the animals). How did you want them to shape the stories you were telling? And how did you develop their voices?**

I had a lot of fun writing in the first-person collective voice. I have always wanted to do that ever since I read NoViolet Bulawayo's story, "Hitting Budapest". I enjoy the limitless fluidity that this mode of narration gives me.

Writing in this as well as other modes of narration, one thing I hoped to accomplish was to give my narration a blend of humour, cynicism, and unreliability with generous doses of unforgiving observations. For example, my narrator in "Brother" was not only someone who constantly groaned about the Pakistani military's occupation, but he was also someone who derived small joys from playing hide and seek with his friends and seeing the physical altercation between two women. I wanted him to be a character who, despite living in gloomy conditions, is in touch with his typical teenage characteristics from before the war. Like him, I wanted my other characters throughout the book to be defined by a myriad of other things besides their cruel fates. Some of them love reading, some love writing, some are academic high achievers, some refuse to let go of their intrinsic generosity even in the face of harshest conditions, and so on.

**This is an excerpt. Read the full interview on DS Books and The Daily Star's websites.**

**Sarah Anjum Bari is a writer and editor, pursuing an MFA in the Nonfiction Writing Program at the University of Iowa where she also teaches rhetoric and literary publishing.**





## South Africa face test of nerves and Afghanistan

REUTERS

South Africa's bid to lift a first major cricket trophy could come down to whether they can finally shed the unwanted tag of "chokers" and the latest test of their nerves will be against Afghanistan in Wednesday's Twenty20 World Cup semifinal.

The Proteas have competed in seven semifinals over both short format World Cups but have never reached a title match, although they will be happy to avoid Australia this time around having lost to them three times in the last four.

together for that semi-final."

After stunning Australia in their penultimate Super Eight match, the plucky Afghans ensured the 2021 champions were sent packing from the tournament with a dramatic eight-run win over Bangladesh on Monday.

Afghanistan's maiden World Cup semifinal appearance is a sign of how much the sport has grown in the war-torn country and skipper Rashid Khan's side, who also upset New Zealand earlier in the tournament, will target another statement victory.

They failed to register a single win

## India's knockout hurdle against holders England

REUTERS

India can take a huge step towards winning their first major title in over a decade and bury any doubts about their backbone in the knockout rounds when they face defending champions England in the Twenty20 World Cup semifinals on Thursday.

Despite being backed by the world's richest cricket board, success on the biggest stage has largely proved elusive for India and their 2013 Champions Trophy triumph is the most recent of their five global titles.

Rohit Sharma's team, however,

However, this time India look in fine fettle with both bat and ball. Rohit has scored 191 runs in six matches, while pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah has 11 wickets and spinner Kuldeep Yadav has claimed seven in three games.

England's campaign has stuttered with losses to Australia and South Africa in the group stages and they only made the Super Eights by virtue of having a better net run rate than Scotland.

Now, however, they stand only two victories away from becoming the first team to retain the T20 World Cup

## Women booters to play Bhutan in July

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team are set to play two more FIFA international friendly matches against Bhutan to utilise the July window and prepare for the upcoming SAFF Women's Championship.

The women in red and green will fly out to Thimphu on July 8 and be in action on July 11 and 14, before returning home on July 15. The decision was made at the meeting of Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) women's committee yesterday.

"We were supposed to play a four nation tournament involving hosts Lebanon, Jordan, Nepal and Bangladesh, but the situation in Lebanon did not permit it. So, we wanted to utilise the July window and arranged Bhutan matches following no response from other countries," BFF executive member Mahfuza Akhter Kiron, who presided the meeting, told The Daily Star, adding that they had also proposed Nepal, who, however, expressed their inability to make necessary arrangement within a short time.

"Playing Bhutan will also be a part of preparation ahead of the SAFF Women's Championship [running from October 17-30], but we are also trying to arrange more friendly matches in the September window," she further informed.

Earlier this year, Bangladesh women's team played two home matches against Chinese Taipei in the May-June window, where they suffered 4-0 and 1-0 defeats.



## Messi may skip Peru clash

REUTERS

Lionel Messi may sit out Argentina's next Copa America game against Peru to rest a sore thigh with his team already qualified for the next round after two wins.

Messi, who turned 37 this week and has been suffering muscle niggles, required brief medical treatment on his thigh during Argentina's 1-0 victory over Chile at the U.S.-hosted tournament.

But he completed the 90 minutes, shaving the post with one long-range shot and was at the heart of Argentina's attacks.

"It bothers me a bit, but I was able to stay on until the end. I hope it's nothing serious," he said, acknowledging it might be wiser to sit out the Peru game on Saturday.

"Let's see how the next few days go, how I recover. We've taken an important step to qualify and be relaxed," added Messi, saying he had also suffered from a sore throat and fever before the Chile game.

With a 2-0 win over Canada also under their belt, world champions and tournament favourites Argentina are looking comfortable in the early stages of the Copa America. They top Group A with six points, ahead of Canada on three.

Coach Lionel Scaloni would not say whether he would rest Messi against Peru, to keep him fit for the quarterfinals, but Argentine football commentators assumed he would do just that.

- The Afghanistan-South Africa semifinal in Tarouba has a reserve day, on June 28. However, an extra 60-minute will be allocated on the first day and another 190 minutes on the reserve day for an outcome.
- South Africa and India are the only two ICC full-member sides Afghanistan have not beaten in international cricket so far.
- The Proteas have won a total of seven matches so far – most by any team in one edition of the tournament.

- In this T20 World Cup, Afghanistan openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran have starred in four fifty-plus stands – most for any team in one edition of the tournament -- including three hundred-plus stands -- most by any opening pair in the history of the competition.
- Afghanistan bowlers have dominated the powerplay in this T20 World Cup, taking 20 wickets at an economy rate of 7.19 during this phase.

- India are unbeaten in this T20 World Cup, winning six matches with the group-stage game against Canada getting washed out.
- India hold a slender advantage in head-to-head T20I meetings with England, winning 12 of their 23 encounters. England have won 11.
- In T20 World Cups, however, it is all square at 2-2 between the two sides, with England winning by 10 wickets in their recent-most meeting in the 2022

- T20 World Cup semifinal.
- No reserve day has been set aside for this semifinal, meaning, if the game in Guyana gets washed out then India would go through to the final -- courtesy of Rohit Sharma's men winning more Super Eight matches than defending champions England.
- However, an extra 250 minutes have been allotted for this game in order to aid an outcome.

The perennial under-achievers of international cricket are on a hot streak, with solid bowling displays helping them power through the group and Super Eight stages.

South Africa will be encouraged by how several players have stepped up in tense situations to keep their 100% record intact after seven matches so far.

"We haven't played our best game of cricket yet," Markram said after his team ended the campaign of co-hosts West Indies in a shootout for a semifinal spot on Sunday. "So we'll try and put our best game of cricket

in the last edition of the tournament but were still tipped to make the last four this time around by West Indies great Brian Lara, after whom the Tarouba venue for the semi-final is named.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz has been a key player for Afghanistan, leading the scoring table with 281 runs, while Fazalhaq Farooqi leads the bowling charts with 16 wickets. "Being in the semi is big for us," Rashid added. "But we have to go with a very clear mind and know what we have done so far. Keep things simple for ourselves and make sure we enjoy that big occasion."

head into the clash with England in Guyana on a six-match unbeaten streak in the tournament and determined to emulate the title success of the 2007 side in the inaugural edition.

Rohit, who along with fellow stalwart Virat Kohli could be playing at a last World Cup, returned to form with a 41-ball 92 in a thumping win over Australia in the Super Eight stage and said his side would continue being aggressive.

Indian fans will still be anxious given their team's shaky displays in the latter stages of big tournaments.

trophy.

England's failure to defend the ODI World Cup last year heaped pressure on skipper Jos Buttler and coach Matthew Mott and they will hope West Indies born pacers Jofra Archer and Chris Jordan can continue their good form in the knockout rounds.

Buttler is England's top scorer with 191 runs while opener Phil Salt has 183 and the pair's form could prove crucial if they are to advance.

Awaiting India or England in the title clash will be the winner of the first semifinal between South Africa and dark horses Afghanistan.

## Sabitzer puts left foot forward for Austria

REUTERS, Berlin

Austria's historic 3-2 win over Netherlands to top Group D at Euro 2024 on Tuesday will go down as one of the greatest moments in the country's sporting history, especially considering the unlikely source of their triumph - Marcel Sabitzer's left foot.

The 30-year-old is well known for his thunderous strikes from distance with his right boot, but Tuesday's winner - rattled into the roof of the net from a tight angle - came from his less-heralded left to secure a famous victory.

"I got the ball deep, I looked up to see if someone was free in the middle, but I got the impression that they (the Dutch) had more men there. In the past, the left foot has often helped me, so I thought that was the moment I could give it a try," Sabitzer told reporters.

"As soon as the ball left my foot, I knew it

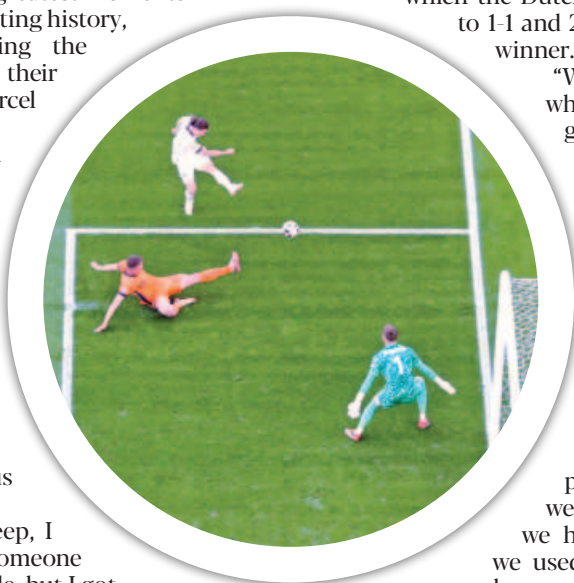
could be good."

The midfielder, who received the man of the match award for his performance, shared the credit with his team mates after a game in which the Dutch pegged them back to 1-1 and 2-2 before he got the winner.

"We are all footballers who want to win games, and that is our objective in every game. And if you have moments where things are a bit more difficult and it goes back and forth, then the question is how does the team react to that," he said.

"You can be proud of the unity we have, the mentality we have on the pitch ... we used our strengths, the goal was very nicely worked. So many Austrians who watch us in the stadium trust us, and we want to give them something back."

Austria will find out their last-16 opponent when the final round of group games is completed.




Slovenia's Jaka Bijol and Vanja Drkusic celebrate with goalkeeper Jan Oblak after qualifying for the Round of 16 of Euro 2024 following a goalless draw against England in their last Group C match at Cologne Stadium on Tuesday. The Central European nation drew all three of their matches and qualified for the knockout rounds for the first time in their history in only their second appearance in the continental competition.





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## Assange back home as a free man

REUTERS, Canberra

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange landed to an ecstatic welcome in Australia yesterday after pleading guilty to violating US espionage law in a deal that sets him free from a 14-year legal battle.

Assange disembarked from a private jet at Canberra airport just after 7:30 pm (0930 GMT), waving to waiting media and cheering supporters before passionately kissing his wife, Stella, and lifting her off the ground.

He embraced his father before entering the terminal building with his legal team.

Assange has not spoken publicly since being released and did not appear at a WikiLeaks press conference at a hotel in Canberra, where Stella Assange said it was too soon to say what her husband would do next.

"Julian needs time to recover, to get used to freedom," she said. "I want Julian to have that space to rediscover that freedom."

She added she believed her

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



Argentina striker Lautaro Martinez celebrates with Lisandro Martinez and Marcos Acuna following his last-gasp winner against Chile in Copa Group A match at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey yesterday. The Inter Milan striker came off the bench to score the decisive goal as the defending champions cruised into the quarterfinals of the 16-team competition. PHOTO: AFP

## New finalists on the cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ongoing T20 World Cup of many firsts will get to see another unprecedented case as a new finalist will feature in the grand finale of the showpiece event as South Africa and Afghanistan will face off in the first semifinal in Trinidad and Tobago today.

In the second semifinal later tonight, 2007 champions India will take on two-time winners England in Guyana for a spot in the final.

South Africa, who are often considered favourites going into ICC events, are not strangers to heartbreaks as they don't farewell in such phases of a major tournament, losing in seven consecutive World Cup (T20I/ODI) semis, but will look to finally break their semifinal curse and progress to their first-ever final in a World Cup.

The Proteas, like they most often do prior to the knockout phases, have won all of their matches in the lead-up to the semis and set a record for most consecutive wins (seven) in a T20 World Cup. But teams like Nepal and Bangladesh have pushed the Proteas to the limit and despite the results going their way, Aiden Markram and Co will be wary of not letting the Afghans have a sniff in the game.

Meanwhile, Rashid Khan's Afghanistan are making a habit of creating history in this tournament and wouldn't be much daunted by the task as they have had a direct hand in eliminating Australia and New Zealand -- with

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



## 2 more suspects held in the hills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of detectives from Dhaka yesterday arrested two men suspected of being involved in the murder of Jhenaidah-4 lawmaker Anwarul Azim Anar.

Faisal and Mustafiz were arrested in Khagrachhari where they had been masquerading as devotees at a remote Kali Temple for 23 days, said Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (Detective Branch) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

They introduced themselves in Khagrachhari as Palash Roy and Shimul Roy, he added.

They were among the seven people present in the Kolkata flat where Azim was killed in May, he said.

Officers learned their whereabouts on Tuesday, and then caught them in a special drive yesterday.

Harun later flew back to the capital with the suspects in a helicopter and landed in Purbachal.

Officers have information that Faisal used chloroform to make Azim's lose consciousness and Mustafiz later stripped him and tied him to a chair, he told reporters.

On May 19, they came back to Bangladesh from Kolkata after the murder and contacted Aktaruzzaman who planned the murder.

"Aktaruzzaman then gave them Tk 30,000. With the money, they went to the remote hilly area," he said.

A total of nine people have been arrested in Bangladesh, India and Nepal in connection with the killings, he said.

Aktaruzzaman is currently in the US, and the authorities are trying to get him extradited.

Harun reiterated that there was "no pressure" on officers regarding the investigation.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



## Probe on to unearth wealth of cops: IGP

UNB, Khulna

Probe into the wealth of police officials is underway, with authentic information expected to emerge, said Inspector General of Police (IGP) Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun.

He made the statement while addressing reporters at the Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) Lines yesterday afternoon.

The IGP mentioned that a meeting was held between the Police Services Association and journalists to discuss recent media reports on the wealth of police officials and the police headquarters' response.

"The issue will be resolved through discussion," he assured.

Regarding actress Pori Moni issue, IGP Mamun said that Golam Saklain, former Additional Deputy Commissioner of the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), was sent on compulsory retirement after allegations against him were confirmed.

Bangladesh Police adheres to a zero-tolerance policy towards any immoral activity, he said.

## 60 Palestinians killed as Israeli forces pound Gaza

AGENCIES

Israeli forces pounded several areas in north and south Gaza yesterday, and residents reported fierce fighting between Israeli troops and Hamas fighters in Rafah in the south of the Palestinian enclave.

Residents said fighting intensified in the Tel Al Sultan neighbourhood in western Rafah, where tanks were also trying to force their way north amid heavy clashes. The armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fighters attacked Israeli forces with anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs.

Since early May, ground fighting has focused on Rafah, abutting Egypt on Gaza's southern edge, where around half of the enclave's 2.3 million people had been sheltering after fleeing other areas. Most have since had to flee again.

Medics said two Palestinians were killed in one Israeli missile strike in Rafah earlier yesterday.

The Israeli military said in a statement its forces killed a Hamas member who had been involved in the smuggling of weapons through the border between Rafah and Egypt. It said jets struck dozens of Hamas targets in Rafah overnight, including fighters, military structures and tunnel shafts, reports Reuters.

In the northern Gaza town of

Beit Lahiya, an Israeli air strike destroyed a house, killing four Palestinians and wounding several others, medics said.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said yesterday that at least 37,718 people have been killed during more than eight months of offensive. The toll includes at least 60 deaths over the past 24 hours, a ministry statement said.

More than eight months into the

thousands of children were suffering from malnutrition that has already killed at least 30 since October 7.

"There is only flour and canned food, there is nothing else to eat, no vegetables, no meat, and no milk. I have lost over 25 kilos of my weight," said Abu Mustafa, who lives in Gaza City, with his family.

Meanwhile, President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday that



- » Severe food shortage in Gaza
- » Turkey stands with Lebanon as tensions rises
- » Gaza death toll rises to 37,718

offensive, international mediation backed by the US has failed to yield a ceasefire agreement. Hamas says any deal must bring an end to the offensive and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, while Israel says it will accept only temporary pauses in fighting until Hamas is eradicated.

In the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinians complained of a severe lack of food and soaring prices, and health officials said

Turkey stood in solidarity with Lebanon in light of growing tensions with Israel and called on regional countries to also support Beirut.

Speaking in parliament, Erdogan said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu planned to spread the Gaza offensive to the region and that this would lead to a "catastrophe", adding the Western support for Israel was "pitiful".

## BSF shoots Bangladeshi dead near border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) near the Lohakuchi border in Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat early yesterday.

According to BGB and locals, the incident occurred early yesterday when a group of eight or nine locals, including the deceased Nurul Islam, 63, tried to enter Indian territory to fetch cattle.

At that time, the BSF, patrolling the West Chamta camp on the Indian side, opened fire on the group injuring Nurul Islam.

Nurul was brought back to Bangladesh by his associates. He later succumbed to his injuries, reports our local correspondent quoting Intiaz Kabir, officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station.

Police has taken Nurul's body to the police station, said Intiaz Kabir.

A protest letter has been sent to BSF, said Subedar Manjurul Islam, commander of the Lohakuchi camp of Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) Lalmonirhat-15 Battalion.

## Delhi for early democratic transition in Myanmar Says Jaishankar

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's foreign minister said he voiced concern about the impact of continuing violence in Myanmar in a meeting with his counterpart from the Southeast Asian nation yesterday.

Myanmar plunged into turmoil after a 2021 military coup seized power from an elected government, sparking a protest movement that has evolved into a full-blown civil war, in which the military has lost control of large swathes of territory.

India has maintained its relationship with the ruling junta, even as armed resistance to the military has expanded, and it has an infrastructure project in Myanmar's western Rakhine state where heavy fighting has raged in recent months.

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said he sought a commitment to protecting India's ongoing projects in Myanmar in the meeting with counterpart Than Swe.

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Women walking across Begum Rokeya Sarani after an hour of downpour flooded parts of the street yesterday morning. Many other areas in the capital often remain waterlogged in monsoon due to poor drainage. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Rahul Gandhi vows MPs won't be silenced

Modi, Rahul shake hands, escort Om Birla to Speaker's chair

AGENCIES

India's new leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi said yesterday that his lawmakers would not be silenced, in his first speech since formally taking up a post vacant for a decade.

Rahul, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's chief rival, was appointed by fellow opposition lawmakers to the post in a signal of a reinvigorated challenge to the government.

"The government has political power, but the opposition also represents the voice of India's people," Rahul said in a speech in the lower house of parliament, accompanied by supportive thumps by his party's lawmakers on their desks.

"This time, the opposition represents significantly more voice of the Indian people."

In the past two parliaments, Rahul's once-mighty Congress party did not have enough seats in the legislature to qualify him for the post, reports AFP.

Modi's first two terms in office followed landslide wins



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