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# No one will be spared in drive against graft

PM tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said no one indulging in corruption will be spared, irrespective of their identity, and vowed to continue the ongoing drive against graft.

"We will catch the corrupt," she said during the discussion on the proposed 2024-25 budget in parliament.

The comments came at a time when former and current government officials facing allegations of corruption are making headlines.

Responding to criticisms of the scope to legalise black money, she said, "Everything is pricier now. Someone owning one katha of land in Dhaka has a few crores of taka... They can neither show the money nor pay income tax. Sometimes these opportunities are given in order for them to pay income taxes and join the

energy.' mainstream... and not do such things anymore."

destroy the country." Stating that the power and energy sector was highly subsidised, she said, "Why do we subsidise this sector? I will do everything necessary to change the fate of the people of the country. Those who consume more must pay the cost of production. But we are not doing that overnight. It is being done slowly and patiently. We are providing uninterrupted electricity and energy.

The PM said, "The country will not go backwards. No

matter how many efforts they make, no one will be able to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BLACK MONEY HOLDERS GET AMNESTY -- PAGE 12

who consume

[power] more must pay the cost of production. But we are not doing that [reducing subsidy on power sector] overnight. It is being done slowly and patiently. We are providing uninterrupted electricity and



India players and officials celebrate with the trophy after winning the ICC Men's Twenty20 World Cup following a thrilling seven-run victory against South Africa in the final at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown yesterday.

### Glitch stops power supply from Adani plant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Electricity supply from the Adani power plant in Jharkhand has stopped, exacerbating the ongoing power crisis in Bangladesh.

in the Power generation 1,496-megawatt coal-fired power plant is on halt now.

The Adani power plant authorities said they found a leak in a valve of the circulating water pump of the plant, said Khandaker Mokammel Hossain, member (generation) of Bangladesh Power Development Board.

"They forcibly shut down the unit of the plant. It will take at least two to three days to start the maintenance SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

# Calls for Biden to step aside grow louder

Some Democrats, NYT urge him to drop out of race; Biden admits bad debate performance

AGENCIES

US President Joe Biden is facing a brutal reckoning he repeatedly stumbled during Thursday night's debate, with some Democrats calling for him to step aside ahead of the November election.

Biden was incapable of

swatting down a stream of falsehoods from Donald Trump, who appeared calm and energised in contrast to a lawmaker who has been a solid Biden bewildered looking President who supporter.



struggled to maintain thoughts.

"This was like a champion boxer who gets in the ring past his prime and needs his corner to throw in the towel," said a Democratic lawmaker, adding that he meant Biden should exit

the race. It's "time to talk about an open convention and a new Democratic nominee," said a second Democratic SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

### Kohli, Rohit lead India's redemption

India won the T20 World Cup title with Virat Kohli starring in a thrilling seven-run victory over South Africa in a classic final at Kensington Oval on Saturday.

Kohli, who later announced his retirement from T20 internationals, steadied the India innings with his fine 76 taking them to a strong 176-7.

When Heinrich Klaasen blasted a  $superb\,52\,from\,27\,balls, it\,looked\,as\,though$ South Africa, appearing in first final, were closing in on victory but they were halted by some outstanding Indian bowling and catching at the end.

South Africa ended on 169-8 with Hardik Pandya taking 3-20 for India to the

Indian following at the stadium. The win is the

delight of the huge

second T20 World Cup title for India following

their triumph in the first edition in 2007 and it also ends their 11year wait for a major title going back to the

2013 Champions Trophy.

Veteran Kohli had struggled in the tournament, coming into the final with an average of just 10.7, but he delivered his

best innings at the perfect moment with his balanced batting ensuring India won the title after an unbeaten tournament. "I am so proud to get the runs for the

team the day it mattered most," said Kohli. "The occasion prompted that change for me, I felt like it was now or never. We

have wanted to lift a trophy for a long time. "The occasion made me put my head down, respect the situation and play the

innings that the team needed from me. "I wasn't feeling myself before today." wasn't confident. So I am very grateful and humble right now. It has been difficult, so there are a lot of emotions," he added

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A train runs on the flooded lines in the capital's Malibagh following heavy rain yesterday morning. Locals say this area started experiencing waterlogging after the construction work of the Dhaka Elevated **Expressway commenced.** PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

### Get organised, avoid excess Quader asks AL leaders, activists at rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday instructed colleagues

his organised and avoid taking things too far.

"I am telling all [party men] not to flaunt muscle power. No one will be spared. Sheikh Hasina has a strict "zero-tolerance" policy against corruption."

Quader made the remarks at a discussion organised by AL's Dhaka City (South) unit in front of the party headquarters in the capital's Gulistan, marking its 75th founding anniversary.

The AL second-in-command said that corrupt people are the ones who are most vocal against corruption. "If you look around, you will find many such people."

Addressing the BNP, Quader said they have no moral ground to talk SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

# Free Khaleda or face consequences

Fakhrul tells govt; urges all opposition parties to unite

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday warned the government of facing consequences if party Chairperson Khaleda Zia was

"Either release Khaleda Zia or be ready to face any consequences," said Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the BNP.

He was addressing a rally in front of the party headquarters in the capital's Nayapaltan. The BNP

organised the programme demanding unconditional release of Khaleda. Fakhrul said people will not accept the sentencing of Khaleda in graft cases and the government must keep it in mind.

"Khaleda Zia is the symbol of democracy, symbol of movement. She needs to be saved and protected. All the opposition political parties must unite to save her," he said, urging the parties to get united to intensify the movement to defeat the government.

Talking about the agreements signed between Bangladesh and India during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to the neighbouring country, the BNP leader said those are against the interest of Bangladesh.

'We want water [from transboundary rivers]. We want fair share of water. We don't want to see any killing at the border. We want to resolve the pending issues. But the government gave everything to them [India] without having anything," he said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2 PHOTOS ON PAGE 3



Based on Audited Financial Statements



**RATING DESCRIPTION** 

31 December 2023

	LONG TERM	SHORT TERM	
Rating Outstanding Declared on 24 June 2024	AAA  Best Quality  Highest Safety  Highest Credit Quality	ST-1 Highest certainty of timely payment	
Validity of Outstanding Rating	Validity upto 23 June 2025		
Rating Outstanding Declared on 25 June 2023	AA+ (Double A Plus) Higher Safety High Credit Quality	ST-1 Highest certainty of timely payment	
Validity of Outstanding Rating	Validity upto	24 June 2024	

Credit Rating was conducted by the Credit Rating Information and Services Limited (CRISL) on the basis of Audited Financial Statements of Pubali Bank PLC. for the year ended 31 December 2023.



### **HSC** exams begin today

UNB, Dhaka

The Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and its equivalent exams begin across the country today.

A total of 14,50,790 students from 9,463 educational institutions are expected to sit for the exams at 2,275 centres.

Of the total examinees, 11,28,281 students are from the nine general education boards, 88,076 from the madrasah board, and 2,34,433 from the technical education board. Additionally, 281 students will take the exams from eight overseas

This year's number of candidates has increased from last year's 13,59,342 examinees.

Earlier on June 20, the government deferred the HSC and equivalent exams scheduled up until July 8 under the Sylhet division due to the ongoing floods. The exams on July 9 and subsequent exams will be held as per schedule. The schedule for the deferred exams was to be announced

According to the original routine, HSC written exams will continue till August 11, and practical exams will be held from August 12 to August 21.

Besides, the exams under the technical board will continue till July 18 and their practical exams will begin on July 19 and will continue till

All examinees have been asked to enter the exam centres 30 minutes before the examinations start.

Mobile phones are strictly prohibited inside the exam centres, except for the in-charges, who are allowed to carry a mobile phone.

Besides, no one except examinees, centre invigilators, teams of the ministry, teams of boards, local administration and upazila administration teams, and security personnel will be allowed in the exam

To ensure smooth conduct, a Quick Response Team (QRT) from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) will be on standby to assist examinees.



At a makeshift recycling shop, workers separate scrap metal and a cement-like substance from waste generated by steel rerolling mills. While the recycled materials find their way back to steel mills and construction industries, the recycling process itself raises serious health concerns. The photo was taken in Kutubpur area in the capital's Shyampur yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# Ukraine drone attack kills 5 in Russian village

Moscow claims east Ukrainian village in offensive on Toretsk

AFP, Moscow

A Ukrainian drone attack on a house in a Russian border village killed five people, including two children, the regional governor said yesterday.

The drone hit a house in the village of Gorodishche, a tiny village in Russia's Kursk region, just a few metres from the border with Ukraine.

"To our great grief, five people were killed ... including two small children. Another two members of the family are in a serious condition," Kursk governor Alexei Smirnov said in a post on Telegram. The attack was with a "copter"-style

drone, he added, a small device that can be fitted to carry grenades or other explosives that are dropped over targets.

Both sides have used drones, including larger self-detonating craft with ranges of up to hundreds of kilometres, extensively throughout the conflict which began in February 2022.

Meanwhile, Russia yesterday claimed another village in eastern Ukraine as it pushes towards the city of Toretsk in a fresh local offensive in the embattled Donetsk region.

Toretsk lies north-west of the city of Gorlivka, which has been under separatist

Ukraine has stepped up its attacks on Russian territory this year, targeting both energy sites that it says fuel Russia's military, as well as towns and villages just across the border.

Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a major new land offensive on Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region last month in what he said was an operation to create a "buffer zone" and push Ukrainian forces back to protect Russia's border Belgorod region from shelling.

The Kursk region, where yesterday's attack occurred, lies further north, across from Ukraine's Sumy region, which Kyiv

### Transwoman found dead in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police recovered the body of a transwoman who was murdered at her home in Jashore's Manirampur upazila on Friday night.

The deceased, identified as Poly, 30, of Khanpur village, had her throat slit, said police.

According to locals, Poly bought land and built a house in Khanpur. On Friday evening, she had come home and had not left the house for a while. When neighbours knocked on her door, they got no response, so they informed the police.

Police then broke into her house and found her dead around 11:00pm.

Her body was later sent to Jashore General Hospital for an autopsy.

ABM Mehdi Masud, officer-in-charge of Manirampur Police Station, said, "The victim was killed sometime between 8:00pm and 11:00pm. We suspect the killer was someone close to her. An investigation is underway."

### Three drown in Sylhet, Habiganj

STAR REPORT

A teenager and two children died by drowning in Sylhet and Habiganj yesterday.

In Sylhet, the body of a 17-year-old was recovered from the Motorgate area of Ratargul swamp forest

The deceased is Shamim Ahmed, son of Shahjahan Ali, of Sylhet city's Baghbari area. On Friday. he along with three of his friends cycled from the city to the entrance of Motorgate in the forest. They then went to bathe in the Chengerkhal river, where Shamim was swept away by the strong

Nunu Mia, officer-in-charge of Sylhet Airport Police Station, confirmed the matter, reports UNB. In Habiganj, two children drowned in a pond in Mahmudpur village in Ajmeriganj upazila in the afternoon.

The deceased are Pralay Das, 7, son of Gobinda Das, and Surya Das, 6, son of Rubel Das, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

Ajmeriganj Police Station OC Dalim Ahmed said Pralay and Surya and other children went to bathe in the pond next to a local field after playing football there. Pralay and Surya slipped from the steps of the pond and drowned.

Family members and locals took them to the Upazila Health Complex, where the doctor on duty declared them dead, he added.

### No one will be spared in drive against graft

FROM PAGE 1

Referring to power outages, Hasina said she asked the authorities to ensure that the villages do not suffer.

She said outages should be in the wealthy neighbourhoods of Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara so that the well-off are reminded that slogans. the comfort of air conditioning, cars, elevators, come at a cost

Regarding quick rental power plants, Hasina said, "I am also hearing criticism about the special law that we enacted. My question is, what if we did not have this special law? If you had not built power plants, would there be electricity today?"

Referring to the economy, she said, "Some so-called intellectuals criticise everything. There is a lot of talk about loan defaults, a lot of talk about bad

The GDP in 2009 was \$102 billion, she said. The loan was only Tk 22,000 crore then, while bad loans were 10.5 percent, she informed.

"GDP size in 2023 is \$460 billion. The loan amount is Tk 1 lakh and 55 thousand crore. The bad debt ratio is 9.9 percent. That means it has

decreased." urged the "so-called She intellectuals" not to mislead people.

If the construction of MRT Line 1, Line-2, Line-4 and Line-5 is done by 2030, there will be no traffic congestion in Dhaka city and people will be able to commute easily.

There are plans for metro rails in all divisional cities.

Speaking on the universal pension scheme, she said from July 1, 2025, new government officials and employees will be included under the

The PM said there will be an opportunity for all citizens to participate in the scheme and secure their future financially.

The Leader of the House said some termed the budget as highly ambitious, and a while ago, the opposition leader said this budget is not feasible.

"Taking challenges is our job... I do not think the budget is highly ambitious at all. We set goals. A target is never reached 100 percent. It's not possible. Yet, we have specific goals

that we will achieve.' Referring to rising prices, Hasina said, "The results of the steps we have taken to control inflation will be in the market soon. We will be able to lower [inflation] according to our expectation."

### Free Khaleda or face consequences

FROM PAGE 1

Though the rally was scheduled to begin at 3:00pm, BNP leaders and activists from different parts of Dhaka and adjacent districts started thronging the venue since noon braving heavy rain.

Carrying placards and posters, they came to Nayapaltan in small processions from different wards. They chanted anti-government

This was the first major demonstration organised by the BNP in nearly eight months.

Addressing the rally, BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas said, "We are talking about Khaleda Zia after a long time. This voice will not fall silent. We will not compromise on her release. We will free her. We will not tolerate any obstacles, come what

He said the BNP continued its movement for the last 15 years but could not achieve success for the failure to "act at the right time".

"If we could have stayed on the streets on October 28 last year with were deployed in and around

succeeded. But we were afraid of death," he said.

government to free Khaleda.

proper treatment for her. There release. is no alternative to Khaleda Zia's independence and sovereignty. We including will realise our demands through waging movement without being disheartened," said Abbas, also the chair of the meeting.

Another BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy said, "We had to fight a war to achieve the country's independence. We will not be able to free Khaleda Zia only by delivering speeches.'

"Each of the agreements signed with India will spell doom for Bangladesh. We are not anti-India. We are in favour of our country's independence and democracy."

A large number of law enforcers

a counter procession, we might have Nayapaltan to maintain law and

A total of 41 BNP leaders spoke at OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole He said that more programmes the event. They said that they were will be declared in future to force the ready to make the party's upcoming demonstration programmes "We are tired of demanding successful to ensure Khaleda's

On Wednesday, the BNP leadership to protect the country's announced a three-day programme, vesterday's demanding release of the party

> The party will hold rallies at all metropolitan cities on July 1 and at

> in prison in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. The government suspended her sentence on March 25, 2020 for six months on the conditions that she would stay in her house and not leave the country. Since then she stayed at her Gulshan house. She was moved to a Dhaka hospital several times for treatment.

the suspension order several times.

# Man sued for raping neighbour's child

A 55-year-old man has been sued in a case filed over the rape of his neighbour's 5-year-old daughter in Jashore's Chougachha upazila.

Shahjadpur village of the upazila, is a Police Station. rickshaw-van driver, said police.

Mansher, took her to his house and raped her.

Later, the child returned home and told her mother. That night, the child's father filed a case under the Women and Children Repression The accused is Mansher Ali, 55, of Prevention Act with Chougachha

Chougachha Police Station Officer-According to the case statement, in-Charge Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury the child was playing in front of her said a case has been registered. "The house in Shahjadpur around 12:30pm accused is absconding. A drive is on Friday, when her neighbour, underway to arrest him.

### Get organised avoid excess

about corruption as they are the most

corrupt party.

"The main leader of your party Tarique Rahman] is leading a lavish life by laundering thousands of crores. He is now plotting against a legally elected government. He must be returned to Bangladesh and brought to book.

Criticising the media for terming the AL's programme a counter to the BNP's, Quader said, "We announced earlier that we will hold programmes around the year. But some [media] reported that we were holding counter programmes. We held a cycle rally yesterday [Friday]. Was there any BNP programme on that day?"

He further added that different party units will continue to hold various forms of programmes throughout the year as part of the platinum jubilee celebration of AL's founding anniversary.

Activists of various ward and thana units of Dhaka City South AL attended the discussion programme that began a little after 3:00pm.

Awami League presidium members Abdur Razzaque, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury (Maya), and Kamrul Islam; joint general secretaries Mahbub Ul Alam Hanif and AFM Bahauddin Nasim, among others, were also present.

### Calls for Biden

FROM PAGE 1

The New York Times editorial board, which endorsed Biden in 2020, called on him to drop out of the race to give the Democratic Party a better chance of beating Trump by picking another candidate. "The greatest public service Mr Biden can now perform is to announce that he will not continue to run for re-election," the editorial said.

Democratic spokesperson Michael Tyler said there were no conversations taking place about that possibility. "We'd rather have one bad night than a candidate with a bad vision for where he wants to take the country," he told reporters aboard Air Force One.

Biden, however, said on Friday evening he intended to defeat Trump in the November presidential election, giving no sign he would consider lropping out of the race.

"I know I'm not a young man, to state the obvious," an ebullient Biden said at a rally. "I don't walk as easy as I used to, I don't speak as smoothly as I used to, I don't debate as well as I used to," he said, as the crowd chanted "four more years."

"I would not be running again if I didn't believe with all my heart and soul that I could do this job. The stakes are too high," Biden said.

The campaign held an "all hands on deck" meeting on Friday afternoon to reassure staffers that Biden was not dropping out of the race, according to two people familiar with the meeting.

Though Trump, 78, put forward series of falsehoods throughout the debate, the focus afterward was squarely on Biden, especially among Democrats.

Hakeem Jeffries, the Democratic Party leader in the US House of Representatives, avoided answering directly when asked whether he still had faith in Biden's candidacy, reports Reuters.

Some other Democrats likewise demurred when asked if Biden should stay in the race. "That's the president's decision," Democratic Senator Jack Reed told a local TV station in Rhode

But several of the party's most senior figures, including former presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, said they were sticking with Biden.

"Bad debate nights happen. Trust me, I know. But this election is still a choice between someone who has fought for ordinary folks his entire life and somebody who only cares about himself," former Democratic President Barack Obama wrote on X.

# Kohli, Rohit lead India

confirming that the game was his last T20 for India

This was an open secret. It's time for the next generation to take over."

Kohli's assured display was just what was needed for India who had slipped to 34 for three after their captain Rohit Sharma won the toss and opted to bat.

In what has been a low scoring tournament, the total looked to be a daunting one for South Africa but then Quinton de Kock (39) and Tristan Stubbs (31) set the Proteas on their way before Klaasen turned the game in their direction in the 15th over, smashing Axar Patel for 24 including two fours and two

When Klaasen was finally removed, caught behind off Hardik Pandya, the Proteas needed just 26 off the last 23

Knowing they had to take the initiative, Rohit turned early for Jasprit Bumrah's final over and he answered the skipper's call perfectly, bowling Marco Jansen and conceding

just two runs in the 18th over. That meant South Africa needed 20 from the final two overs and Arshdeep Singh bowled a superb length to allow just four.

With 16 to win off the last over, Pandya bowled a full-toss at Miller who smashed it high straight down the ground but Suryakumar Yadav produced a breath-taking catch on

the boundary, throwing the ball back into play before he crossed the ropes and then returning to complete the catch.

Kagiso Rabada edged a four and Pandya showed some nerves with a wide but the seamer kept his cool to ensure silverware for India after they lost in last year's 50 Over World Cup on home soil.

For the 35-year-old Kohli it was the perfect way to bow out in the format. "This was my last T20 World Cup and this is exactly what we wanted to achieve," he said. "It was an amazing game. One day

one day, things just click. It hasn't quite sunk in for me yet." It was a bitter end for South Africa who had reached their first World Cup final after ending a streak of seven defeats in semi-finals in both

you feel like you can't get a run but

World Cup formats. "Gutted for the time being, it'll take some time to reflect on a really good campaign, hurts quite a bit but incredibly proud," said captain Aiden Markram.

"We bowled well, not a lot to work with, it was a chaseable total, batted well, came down to the wire, gutted not to get over the line. "Things happen quickly at the

back end, but got into a great position

to prove we were worthy finalists. "South Africans are competitive, respectful and will go down with a fight. It's still a proud moment for us."

chairperson.

district towns on July 3. Khaleda was sentenced to 10 years

The government later extended

### Glitch stops

FROM PAGE 1

work, as it would require the boiler to cool off," he said. The other unit of the plant went into regular maintenance during the Eid

holidays. That unit is expected to start operation by the first week of July. "We are getting less electricity from the coal-based power plants. One of the two units of Payra Power Plant is also under maintenance. But with other options, the loadshedding situation is still stable at

### World 'failing' to meet development goals: UN chief

less than 1,000MW," he said.

AFP, United Nations

War and funding shortfalls have hampered progress toward the United Nations' flagship development goals which include action to combat climate change, the organization's Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Friday.

17 targets to transform the world by 2030 including by completely ending extreme poverty and eliminating hunger. But Guterres said Friday that "the

In 2015, UN member states adopted

the Sustainable Development Goals,

world is getting a failing grade."

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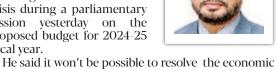


Left, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader addresses an event in front of the party headquarters in Gulistan yesterday afternoon, marking its 75th founding anniversary, Right, demanding immediate, unconditional release of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamqir speaks at a rally in front of its central office in the city's Nayapaltan area around the same time. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, AMRAN HOSSAIN

### Corruption main threat to economy Says GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader and Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader lambasted the government's handling of the economic crisis during a parliamentary yesterday on the proposed budget for 2024-25 fiscal year.



downturn due to widespread corruption and criminalisation. The Jatiyo Party chairman accused the government of facilitating corruption and encouraging tax evasion

and money laundering. He said a wealthy circle has emerged comprising corrupt individuals, bank defaulters, and money

GM Quader argued that the lack of accountability and governance failures, rather than external factors like the Covid-19 pandemic or the Ukraine conflict, pose greatest threat to Bangladesh's economic stability.

He criticised the mismanagement in the banking sector, pointing at the mounting bad debts.

GM Quader opposed the budget proposals to whiten SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

# Colonial legacy lives on among the wealthy

Says Serajul Islam Choudhury at autobiographical lecture marking his 89th birthday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Much like during the colonial era, a segment of wealthy individuals in independent and sovereign Bangladesh continues to exhibit the same exploitative characteristics while ruling the country, said Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury yesterday.

He said many people accumulate wealth not through labour but through acts of plundering, such as bank scam, and grabbing. They smuggle the plundered wealth abroad, mirroring the colonial-style exploitation.

Prof Serajul Islam made these remarks while addressing an autobiographical lecture titled "Looking Back", held at Bangladesh Shishu Academy on the occasion of his 89th birthday.



Many people accumulate wealth not through labour but through acts of plundering. such as bank scam, and grabbing. They smuggle the plundered wealth abroad, mirroring the colonial-style exploitation.

In the presence of several hundred attendees, the emeritus professor said, "During the British era, we were a colony. Even within Pakistan, a form of colonialism was emerging. Later, we established an independent and sovereign Bangladesh, but colonialism still

"The wealthy in Bangladesh are influenced by capitalist ideologies,"

Prof Serajul Islam said, "We thought that becoming part of Pakistan would bring about a renaissance, but it didn't happen. When Bangladesh was established, we hoped for social change, but that didn't happen either."

"But still, I remain hopeful. The reason for my hope is that people SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

### Legal recourse for cybercrimes still a far cry

59pc victims women, 87.5pc dissatisfied with existing justice system, says survey NILIMA JAHAN

Imagine one day, you wake up and realise fraudsters have gotten information about your NID numbers, purchased SIM cards in your name, and have committed crimes by impersonating

Scary, isn't it?

Such cybercrimes have become increasingly common these days, with personal information of many citizens being openly sold at different online platforms. The Daily Star has published multiple reports in the recent past on this topic.

Tania, a 27-year-old doctor, is one such victim. In November 2023, she discovered 15 SIM cards had been registered using her National Identity Card and fingerprint.



These SIMs were linked to three different mobile operators and were used to take small loans.

After she contacted BTRC, the SIMs were deregistered later, but a subsequent investigation by the regulatory body failed to track the culprit (or culprits) as of May 25, 2024.

Falguni, another victim, fell prey to a similar scam. The fraudster called her brother Javed before his university admission test and claimed he had won a prize.

Javed, convinced by the caller who knew his exact personal details, directed him to Falguni.

Falguni, trusting the caller, revealed her bank card number and OTPs, leading to a loss of Tk 60,000. Despite filing a complaint, Falguni received no resolution and gave up due to concerns about legal complexities.

These are just two cases highlighted in a recent SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

PADMA BRIDGE PROJECT

# Corrupt yet let off the hook too easily

Forced into retirement for graft, land surveyor gets his job back with lower salary

**Mainul Hasan** 

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

A government employee has been reinstated to his job after being dismissed for being involved in a fraudulent compensation scheme in the Padma Bridge project.

Mainul Hasan, a former land surveyor of Madaripur, was sent into forced retirement in November last year after the district administration and land ministry's investigation found him guilty of facilitating a scam, for which the government lost Tk 1.64 crore.

However, land ministry Secretary Khalilur Rahman reinstated him on June 9 this year, reducing his punishment from forced retirement by lowering his salary grade for five years.

Earlier in September 2022, a divisional case was filed against him over misconduct and corruption.

During Mainul's posting in Madaripur deputy commissioner's office in 2020, he was responsible for overseeing land acquisition for the Padma Bridge in Shibchar upazila.

He granted Tk 1.64 crore to two individuals for supposedly using 3.37 acres of their land for the project in Sujanagar mouza.

However, the land never belonged to the two in the first place, in fact, those were government land. The compensation was provided based on forged

Following allegations against Mainul, a threemember investigation committee was formed, led by the deputy director of local government.

The committee confirmed that Mainul issued compensation cheques on September 9 and September 20 of 2020. The land ministry also formed a separate probe committee.

"Allegations of negligence in the misconduct of for comments.

duties are found true," the probe body concluded. On November 8, 2022, the ministry issued a notification stating that Mainul would be forced into retirement for his involvement in corruption.

"This type of dishonest activity harms the interests of the government and tarnishes the image of the office. It shows a lack of honesty, impartiality, responsibility, and efficiency in his work," said the notification. It also stated that Mainul "personally benefited from the scheme". Mainul's response to a show-cause letter was

deemed unsatisfactory, according to the notification. However, on March 11, 2023, Mainul appealed to the land ministry.

After the appeal hearing, led by the secretary, the ministry backtracked from its original decision. Although the committee, which heard the appeal, was convinced that Mainul failed to provide satisfactory response in his defense, the forced retirement was suddenly deemed as

'excessive punishment". On June 9, 2024, a new notification was issued, reducing Mainul's punishment to a lower salary grade for five years.

Many senior government officials at the land ministry were baffled by the decision.

Requesting anonymity, an officer of the ministry, said the reduction in punishment does not set a good precedent for junior officers.

Mainul could not be reached for comments. Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said, "Specific allegations against the accused employee [Mainul] were proven and undeniable. The ministry officials, including the secretary who protected this employee, are guilty of supporting corruption."

Despite repeated attempts through texts and phone, the land secretary could not be contacted

### Corruption, capital flight key concerns

Speakers tell event STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Corruption and capital flight are the two main concerns of the country, said speakers at a press conference yesterday.

Capital flight, economics, occurs when assets or money rapidly flow out of a country.

EquityBD and other civil society organisations arranged the event at the Economic Reporters' Forum auditorium.

They demanded the formation of a public expenditure commission to stop graft.

They also said yearly income tax evasion is nearly \$25 billion, which is four times the per capita health allocation.

Md Ahsanul Karim, COAST director of Foundation, called for a review commission combat corruption, an inter-country bank transparency agreement to halt capital flight and black money, mandatory annual asset and bank statement submissions for dual nationals, and cessation of unnecessary public SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

**PRAYER** TIMING **JUNE 30** 

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

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#### 1971 WAR CRIMES

### Extradite Mueen, Ashrafuzzaman

### Freedom fighters urge govt, protests UK court verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbery at

A CORRESPONDENT,

fighter's house

A gang of robbers has

looted valuables, including

iewellery and a licensed rifle.

from the house of a freedom

fighter in Debhata, Satkhira.

at the house of Subhash

Chandra Ghosh, 62, at

Jagannathpur village early

firearm from the house

president of the district

Puja Udjapan Committee,

filed a case against six to

seven unnamed people

with Debhata Police Station

According to the case, a

gang looted various items,

including 27 tolas of gold

ornaments, a licensed gun,

two mobile phone sets, Tk 6

lakh in cash, a motorcycle,

a bank check book, and a

Subhash said police

personnel stayed at their

house from Friday morning

till late night. He did

not understand how the

robbers left the stolen gun

said they could not arrest

Debhata Police Station

Mahmud Hossain

at the house, he added.

anyone as of yesterday.

assport at gunpoint.

regarding the robbery.

Police recovered the

. Chandra,

Friday, said the victim.

premises yesterday.

Subhash

The incident took place

freedom

Efforts are underway to challenge the verdicts issued by the International Crimes Tribunal regarding genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War, said Sector Commanders' Forum-Liberation War '71.

The group in a statement yesterday called on the government to take decisive legal and diplomatic actions against a recent British Supreme Court ruling concerning Chowdhury Mueen Uddin, a convicted war criminal living

In 2019, Chowdhury Mueen Uddin sued then British Home Secretary Priti Patel for £60,000 in libel charges after she shared a report on Twitter linking him to war crimes during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

Later, the British High Court dismissed the case. However, on June 20 this year, British Supreme Court

took cognizance of the complaint and gave Mueen the opportunity to continue the case.

The forum expressed concerns that such rulings could undermine Bangladesh's sovereignty and the integrity of International Crimes Tribunal.

They reiterated demands for the extradition of Mueen and Ashrafuzzaman Khan, both convicted of war crimes. The two have been living abroad evading justice.

Abdul Mabud, joint secretary general of the forum, said Khan resides in the US, while Mueen became a British citizen in 1984.

FROM PAGE 3

do not exist."

including

politicians

dream, without it humans

At the event, individuals

authors, journalists, and

gratitude to Prof Serajul

Islam for his lifelong

contribution to the country.

Speaking at the event,

ASM Kamal Uddin praised

Serajul Islam for always

"To truly honour Serajul

Islam, we should enlighten

ourselves with the wisdom

he has imparted," said

Kamal, who chaired the

of Shishu Academy, said

Serajul Islam epitomises free

Rashid of Bhashani Parishad

said Serajul not only writes

about the struggles of the

oppressed, he also stands

beside them. Harun also

credited Serajul for writing

Ganosamhati Andolan said

Seraiul dedicated his life

for the liberation of people.

"Even amid deep despair,

garment workers' leader,

said, "Looking around today,

we see political figures and

Mishu, a

he [Serajul] ignites hope,"

Zonaved Saki from

on the Palestine issue.

Saki added.

Moshrefa

Professor Harun or

and intellectual thinking.

Anjir Liton, director

yielding to any situation.

academics,

expressed

# Collapsed bridge affects 300 families

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

Residents of Purba Nazirdah in Haragachh union of Rangpur's Kaunia upazila are facing severe hardship after a 140-foot bamboo bridge over the Manas river collapsed due to heavy rainfall and flooding.

The bridge, which served as the sole connection for locals to cross the river, deteriorated over time and collapsed recently amid rising water levels from the Teesta river.

Local Rumel Mia said the bamboo initially bridge, built by the union parishad facilitate commuting, became unsafe collapsed multiple times in the

with corrupt forces. Serajul

Islam Choudhury remains a

"Beyond classrooms, he

has educated countless

people, fostering educated,

imbued with cultural and

humanistic values. He leads

communalism, advocating

of the Communist Party

"He not only enriched

us with knowledge but

actively participated in

"For any collective action.

Writer and journalist

Serajul Islam Choudhury is

the dedicated and unifying

Abu Saeed Khan, Professor

the Socialist Party of

Bangladesh, Masud Rana

from the Socialist Party

of Bangladesh (Marxist),

addressed the audience.

and Socialist Party of

revolutionary act bridging theory

leader," he said.

Khaliquzzaman

Khaleguzzaman

Bangladesh

Chakraborty

Azfar

leader

intellectuals often aligning moderated the programme.

bridging

practice.

Bangladesh

for social ownership."

misrule

Mujahidul Islam Selim

Saiful Haq, president

Workers

highlighted,

minded and

generations

activities,

from

faction

Hossain

also

Shubhrangshu

rare beacon of pride."

Biplobi

Party,

scientific

conscious

against

standing tall without the intellectual struggle

Colonial legacy lives

Efforts to replace it despite repeated pleas from locals.

Visiting the area recently, this correspondent saw a part of the broken bamboo bridge lying in the middle of the river, while locals were crossing the river either treading

the water or using the broken bridge

amid risks. "Around 300 families live on the river bank areas in the village. The collapsed bridge has

caused much inconvenience with a new wooden bridge stalled to the people. Children are scared to go to schools using the broken bridge. No one has even come to inspect or take any steps to address the issue yet," said Abdul Momin of the village.

Hamida Begum of the village

Two killed, 10

Two people were killed and

10 injured in road accidents

In Sirajganj, the helper

of a truck driver was killed

when the vehicle hit a

tree beside Hatikumrul-

The truck fell into

a roadside ditch as the

driver lost control over the

steering, said Hatikumrul

Highway Police Station

Md Morsalin Islam,

20, from Baliadangi in

Chapainawabganj, died on

the spot after he went under

The driver of the truck

Highway police salvaged

In Mymensingh, the

and 10 of its passengers

were injured after the

vehicle hit a sand-laden

truck from behind on

Dhaka-Mymensingh

highway at Dhalibari in

from Rajapur in Jhalakathi,

died on the spot, said

Swapon Hossain, 55,

managed to escape, said

the vehicle, said the OC.

the police officer.

the truck.

Bonpara highway

Horinchora Bazar.

Officer-in-Charge

Abdul Wadud.

in two districts yesterday.

hurt in road

accidents

STAR REPORT

Aziz, a local farmer, said, "My crop fields lie on both sides of the river. As the bridge has collapsed, I have a hard time transporting my produce from crop-fields. Also, it has become arduous to travel an additional five kilometres on the alternative route to reach upazila headquarters and other areas.'

Chairman Raju Ahmed of Haragachh union parishad urged the authorities to build a concrete bridge.

upazila engineer Asaduzzaman Jemi said a wooden

### bridge would be constructed soon.

# GD seeking security

Independent lawmaker Barrister Syed Sayedul Haque Sumon yesterday filed a general diary seeking safety, said police.

Station in Dhaka last evening, Sajib Dey, inspector (investigation), told The Daily Star last night.

Sumon, an outspoken MP from Habiganj-4

According to the GD, Sumon said he received

The OC claimed that a team of four to five people

### in Kurigram fire **OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat**

15 houses gutted

At least 15 houses of nine families were burnt to ashes in a fire in the Puratan Post Office area of Kurigram town on Friday night.

The fire might have originated from an electric short circuit around 11:30pm, said the fire service.

No casualties were reported as the residents managed to escape. The firefighters brought the blaze under control

in two hours. The affected families told The Daily Star that they

lost everything to the fire and are now staying under the open sky.

Shariful Islam, senior station officer of Kurigram Fire Service, said they rushed to the spot upon receiving information. They had to struggle to douse the fire as there was no water source nearby, he added.

### Illegal sand lifting puts school at risk

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat** 

Illegal sand lifting near Dobariya Government Primary School in Kachua upazila of Bagerhat has sparked an outcry among locals.

The activity threatens to weaken the school building's foundation, thereby putting it at risk of collapse or damage.

The sand is being extracted for the construction of a road in Dobariya area, said locals.

"The illegal activity has endangered the lives of the students besides disrupting the school's academic activities," said a parent fearing safety of

> While visiting the area to report on the situation yesterday, this correspondent encountered threats from unidentified individuals, highlighting the risks faced by those attempting to bring the issue to light.

Contacted, Rakhi Banerjee, UNO of Kachua upazila, said she informed the upazila engineer of the Local Government Engineering Department in this regard.

Md Sharifuzzaman, executive engineer of LGED in the upazila, said, "We are looking into the matter urgently. Steps will be taken to stop the illegal sand lifting and damage caused to the school's foundation will be assessed."

Contacted, Bagerhat's Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Khalid Hossain said a mobile court has one accused Tk 50,000 in this regard under the

A dredger machine was also removed from the

# **Barrister Sumon files**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

He filed the GD with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police

constituency, also shared a copy of the GD on his verified Facebook page.

a phone call from the officer-in-charge of Chunarighat Police Station, which falls under his constituency, around 2:00am on June 27.

The OC, without revealing the identity of the team members, asked him to be cautious, leaving him in a situation of insecurity, reads the GD.

### Balumahal and Soil Management Act, 2010. spot during a drive, he added.

#### Legal recourse for cybercrimes still a far cry they wouldn't get justice Among those who Al Marjuk, a senior lecturer

survey titled "CCAF Cyber Crime Research Report Foundation. The survey interviewed

132 victims of cybercrime from April 2023 to April 2024.

According to the report, nearly 59 percent of the victims are women. Social media and online

account hacking is the most common crime, making up 21.65 percent of cases, followed by online threats at 8.6 percent.

The report also found that 78.78 percent of the victims were aged 18 to 30, which is an increase from 75 percent a year ago.

The survey highlights the dissatisfaction of victims with legal resources available at their disposal. Many, like Falguni, thought

from the existing system.

Cyber Crime Awareness 11.85 percent of total spreading, information job scams, and online gambling.

Pornography-related crimes increased in 2023. affecting 11.35 percent of victims, with 50 percent of them experiencing cyber bullying.

Nearly 48 percent of victims face social disgrace, 40 percent suffer financial losses, and almost all endure mental anguish.

legal recourse in 23-24, which was 21 percent in a similar CCAF study in 22-

CCAF attributed this decline to the lack of trust among victims in legal resources.

victims were unaware of the cybercrime act. The study recommended

not clicking or sharing without anything verification, being cautious with digital transactions, checking security and measures before sharing personal information.

It also urged the government to coordinate public-private partnerships public awareness, Only 12 percent sought protect personal data, enhance law enforcement training, inform citizens about laws, and decentralise the Cyber

Police Center for grassroots

service. The study

chose the legal path, 87.50 in the Social Science and The study found that percent said they did not Humanities Department 2024", conducted by the cybercrimes make up achieve satisfactory results. at Independent University, The study mentioned Bangladesh, with research crimes, including personal that 70 percent of the assistants from CCAF Ishtiaq Ahmed,

additional deputy commissioner of Police at the CTTC Unit of Dhaka Metropolitan said most sections of the Cyber Security Act 2013 are bailable, making it difficult to bring offenders to justice.

He also mentioned that delayed complaints from victims hinder legal protection and that child pornography is increasing through social media.

CCAF President Brig Gen Kazi Mustafizur Rahman said increasing individual awareness can reduce cyber crime and the was responsibility for awareness conducted by Obydullah must be shared collectively.

#### Invitation to loan artworks of Artist Professor Nasreen Begum for a retrospective exhibition at Bangladesh National Museum It is with great pleasure that Bangladesh National Museum and Artist Professor Nasreen Begum will

jointly organise a month-long (From 1st to 30th November, 2024) retrospective exhibition of Nasreen Begum at Nalinikanta Bhattasali Gallery, Bangladesh National Museum. An edited volume of the artist's lifetime artworks and various writings will be published in an exclusive book. You are requested to loan artworks of Nasreen Begum from your personal or institutional collection for the aforementioned exhibition. If you are agreed to loan the artwork for the exhibition and book, the artist and the curator of the exhibition will take appropriate security measures from the collector to bring and return the artworks as soon as possible after the exhibition. You are kindly requested to contact the undersigned for the loan of artworks.

Ment (Professor Dr. Malay Bala) Curator of the exhibition Mobile: +8801716056515. Email: malaybala@du.ac.bd



(Professor Nasreen Begum) Mobile: +8801714294310 Email: shilpi.nasreen@gmail.com

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Bids prepared in accordance with the instructions contained in the RFP document must be submitted in two separate envelopes, clearly marking Technical' and 'Financial' offers on the envelopes to the Office of the Chairman, Purchase Committee, Head Office, Eastern Bank PLC., 100 Gulshan Avenue, Dhaka-1212 on or before Tuesday, 30 July 2024.

#### Corruption FROM PAGE 3

Bhaluka upazila.

police.

black money with minimal taxes, suggesting higher tax rates to deter tax evasion effectively.

He also slammed the power sector for its excess generation capacity. Despite production increased capacity, about 15,000 MW of power remains unused, leading private owners to incur substantial rental or capacity charges in foreign currency.

He questioned the accuracy of the country's reserve figures, expressing skepticism towards official statements from Bangladesh Bank.

GM Quader concluded by saying the budget fails to address fundamental economic issues.

### Corruption

FROM PAGE 3 expenditures instead of subsidy reductions.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, moderator of EquityBD, suggested that stopping the \$25 billion income tax evasion could double the social safety net for the poor or quadruple per capita health spending.

advocated reinstating annual wealth statements for civil servants and imposing capital punishment for corruption.

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department Office of the Executive Engineer District: Shariatpur

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Date: 27-06-24

Memo. No. 46.02.8600.000.07.001.23-1552

e-Tender Notice No. 63/2023-2024/Tender (OTM)

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1	999489	DDIRWSP/Shariatpur/Goshairhat/23-24/RD-07	29-Jul-2024	30-Jul-2024	
		Widening and Strengthening of Nagerpara GC	16:00	12:00	
		(Daptoribari)-Kasherhat Road (Goshairhat Portion)			
		from Ch.00-3090.00m (Effect Length 3090m), under			
		Upazila Goshairhat, Dist: Shariatpur (Road ID:			
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GD- 1051

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### Farmer killed over land dispute in Sherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

A farmer was killed in an attack allegedly by his neighbours following a dispute over land in Sadar upazila of Sherpur yesterday.

The deceased is Samedul Haque Kena, 65, from Joginimura village in the upazila.

Quoting family members and locals, Md Emdadul Haque, officerin-charge of Sherpur Sadar Police Station, said there has been a longstanding dispute over a piece of land between Samedul and his neighbours Md Harun and Siddique Khalifa.

When Harun Siddique went to the disputed land to plant banana saplings in the morning, Samedul and his men locked in an altercation with them.

At one stage, the rivals attacked Samedul with sticks, leaving him injured. He was taken to Sherpur General Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

### Indian national held at Kurigram border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Border Guard Bangladesh has detained an Indian national at Phulbari border in Kurigram for entering Bangladesh illegally.

The detainee is Babul Mia of Tharaikhana area in Cooch Behar of West Bengal, said Phulbari Police Station Officer-in-Charge Nawabur Rahman.

The 15 BGB Battalion of Gangahat camp in Phulbari upazila under Lalmonirhat handed him over to Phulbari Police Station vesterday afternoon.

BGB and police claimed Babul, a smuggler by profession, was held near sub pillar 8 of main pillar 938 at the border around 11:00pm on Friday.

The OC said a case has under the Passport Act.

CTG FOOD TESTING LAB

# Sitting idle for a bureaucratic tangle







The chemistry and microbiology labs, filled with facilities, lie abandoned at Modern Food Testing Laboratory in Chattogram.

PHOTO: STAR

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Chattogram's Modern Food Testing Laboratory, a Tk 34.4 crore project funded by the Asian Development Bank, remains inoperable despite construction being completed in December 2015.

The project, initiated in 2013, aimed to ensure food safety in Chattogram by providing a facility to test a wide range of food items including milk, meat, vegetables, and edible oil. While testing began on a trial basis in January 2016, a crucial hurdle has rendered the results useless: the absence of a

Though the Ministry of Food granted approval for the lab's operation in November 2016, it mandated maintaining quality, employing trained manpower, and upholding equipment standards. However, without signing authority, the lab cannot declare food items as safe or unsafe.

The project's initial tenure saw food inspectors collect samples for testing. However, the lack of a signing authority meant no official action could be taken based on the results.

Further crippling the lab's potential, project personnel, including microbiologist Priya Saha, haven't been regularised despite being appointed eight years ago. This lack of job security led to many leaving their positions, hindering the lab's ability to function effectively.

Adding to the troubles, the Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) has not yet assumed control of the lab's operations from the private firm Star Link, despite being scheduled to do

Visiting the laboratory in Bibirhat area of port city recently, this correspondent saw no test being done there.

In fact, an eerie silence prevailed in the ntire three-storey laboratory building with 31 rooms across an 8,000 sq feet area.

The laboratory has two sections chemistry lab and microbiological lab. Each section has three labs with equipment. The laboratory also has a power sub-station.

"The project began with 24 officials including a director, a senior microbiologist and a senior chemist. The officials were supposed to be regularised as government officials later but it has not been done yet,"

"As a result, 17 left their job one after another," she added.

Shaheda Akter, another microbiologist, echoed her.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the facility's foundation stone on October 12, 2013. The construction work to set up six modern labs with food testing facilities including 83 machines was completed in December 2015.

Contacted, Sheikh Mohammad Tauhidul company, could not be reached for comments.

Islam, chief executive officer of CCC, said the contractor company of the project was yet to hand over the laboratory to CCC.

We had three meetings with them to this end, but they are dilly dallying in handing over the laboratory to us, although the project ended in June 2021," he said.

"They are demanding a huge sum of money from us citing their expenditure for maintenance of the lab for the past three years," the CCC CEO also said.

"However, we will take over the laboratory in a few weeks. We have appointed four staffers including a microbiologist, a cleaner and two security guards to run the laboratory for the time being. We have also been paying Tk 35,000 for the monthly electricity bill. Once we take over the lab, we will appoint adequate manpower to run it," he added.

The authority of Star Link, the contractor

### People suffer for frequent power cuts

### One unit shut down for maintenance, Patuakhali gets half the required power

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Residents across Patuakhali district have been suffering due to frequent power outages after one of Payra Thermal Power Plant's two units was shut down on June 26 for maintenance.

Jitendranath Roy, a resident of Baufal upazila, said, "The frequent power cuts have left us amid much suffering and discomfort. Also, the HSC and equivalent examinations are going to start from June 30. The students are facing difficulty to study due to load-shedding."
"The 1,320 MW plant is now able to produce

only 660 MW power with one operational unit since June 26. As such, load-shedding has become unavoidable as the power generation is much lower compared to the demand," said Shah Mani Ziko, assistant manager (investigation) of the plant.

An assistant engineer of Patuakhali grid, wishing anonymity, said, "Total demand for electricity is 100 MW in Patuakhali district, but it is getting only 50 MW since Wednesday.

The power generated at Payra plant is also supplied to Barishal, Khulna and Dhaka divisions through the Power Development Board."

"A total 14 MW electricity is required for 32,000 consumers in Patuakhali Municipality, but the supply has been around 10-12 MW since Wednesday. As a result, load-shedding has become unavoidable," said Dean Mohammad Muhim, executive engineer of Patuakhali's West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited.

Shah Mani Ziko added, "The Payra power plant needs at least 45-50 days of maintenance annually to generate power without interruption for the rest of the year. The maintenance works will continue for another four or five days. After that, power generation will resume to full capacity."

### Cop closed for beating autorickshaw driver

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A police official was closed for allegedly assaulting an auto-rickshaw driver in Singra upazila of Natore yesterday.

Salim Reza, sub-inspector of Singra Police Station, was attached to Natore Police Lines after a video in this regard went viral on social media, said Abul Kalam, officer-in-charge of the police station. Tariqul Islam, superintendent of Natore police,

signed the order, said the OC. Locals said auto-rickshaw driver Harun Ali was returning to his Baisha village home from

Damdama around 11:00pm on Thursday. When he reached in front of Desh Furniture Shop in Upazila Parishad Road area, SI Salim Reza and two others got into the rickshaw and asked

him to take them to the Singra bus stand. As Harun said he wanted to go home rather than take a passenger, Salim got angry and started

beating him. OC Kalam also said departmental action will be taken after investigation.

This correspondent could not reach Salim fo



A dried up Harihar river in Keshabpur upazila of Jashore.

# Siltation clogs 18 sluice gates

### Vast areas in Jashore at risk of flooding, waterlogging

MOHSIN MILON, Benapole

gates on three rivers -- the Harihar, Aparbhadra and Buribhadra along a stretch of 30 kilometres in Keshabpur upazila of Jashore.

As such, the areas are at risk of flooding and waterlogging in the monsoon if the sluice gates cannot drain away rainwater, said officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board in Jashore.

Earlier, around 18km stretch of Aparbhadra river completely dried up due to a lack of water flow caused

by siltation. A proposal to excavate the three rivers has been included in the amendment project for the Kapotaksha river and submitted to the ministry concerned as well as BWDB. However, it has not been approved yet and no funding has yet been received, said officials.

As a result, the situation is only

worsening over time. In the 1980s, the BWDB built dams

in the name of polder construction Siltation has clogged 18 sluice under coastal embankment projects, thereby separating the rivers from the tidal floodplains and canals connected to those.

As a result, siltation started accumulating in the riverbeds as the dams prevented tidal water from entering the rivers and washing away silt. Kapotaksha, Harihar, Aparbhadra and Srihari became the most affected rivers.

Consequently, in 2017, severe floods inundated Keshabpur upazila town and adjoining areas along the

Later in 2019, BWDB took a Tk 50 crore project to dig Harihar, Buribhadra and Aparbhadra rivers to prevent floods.

The rivers were dug, but their width reduced. Besides, the water levels did not return to expected level, and the flow did not restore to normalcy. As a result, the waterlogging problems returned within two years after the excavation

on a number of rivers in the region while siltation remained a persistent

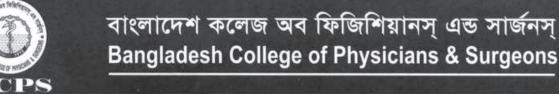
At present, the rivers resemble narrow canals on their deathbed.

"We are likely to suffer due to flooding and waterlogging this monsoon and the problems will only worsen in future unless the rivers are excavated promptly, and properly, said Azizur Rahman, a resident of Mangalkot village in the upazila.

Abubakar Siddique, convenor of Keshabpur upazila unit of Bhabadah Water Drainage Committee, said, "The rivers must be dug before the onset of next monsoon to prevent flooding across a vast area in Keshabpur and neighbouring upazilas.'

"The existing situation has already affected the region's agriculture adversely," he added.

Contacted, Suman Sikdar, subdivisional engineer of BWDB in Jashore, said if the project proposal for dredging the rivers is accepted, the work will begin promptly upon receiving funding.



বিসিপিএস নং নিয়োগ-৫৩৩/২০২৪/২৩২৬০

তারিখঃ ২৯-০৬-২০২৪ খ্রিঃ

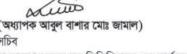
### নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ কলেজ অব ফিজিশিয়ানস্ এভ সার্জনস্ (বিসিপিএস)-এর নিম্নবর্ণিত পদে চুক্তিভিত্তিক লোক নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিকদের কাছ থেকে দরখান্ত আহ্বান করা যাচেছ %-

ক্রমিক নং	পদের নাম	পদের সংখ্যা	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা	বেতনক্রম (জাতীয় বেতন ক্ষেল ২০১৫ মোতাবেক)
٥.	সহকারী পরিচালক (মেডিকেল এডুকেশন)	٥٥	<ul> <li>(क) কোন স্বীকৃত প্রতিষ্ঠান হইতে চিকিৎসা বিজ্ঞানে এফসিপিএস বা সমমানের ডিগ্রি/এমডি/এমমেড;</li> <li>(খ) কম্পিউটার চালনায় দক্ষতা।</li> </ul>	আপোচনা সাপেকে

### প্রার্থীদের জন্য পালনীয় শর্তাবলী ও জ্ঞাতব্য বিষয় সমূহ

- (১) উল্লিখিত পদে আবেদনকারীগণকে সাদা কাগজে "সচিব, বাংলাদেশ কলেজ অব ফিজিশিয়ানস্ এন্ড সার্জনস্ (বিসিপিএস), ৬৭, শহীদ তাজউদ্ধিন আহমেদ সরগী, মহাখাণী, ঢাকা-১২১২" বরাবর আবেদন করতে হবে।
- (২) আবেদনপত্রে আবেদনকারীর পূর্ণ জীবন বৃত্তান্ত যথা: (ক) প্রার্থীর পূর্ণ নাম বাংলায় ও ইংরেজীতে (Capital Letter), (খ) পিতা/দ্বামীর নাম, (গ) মাতার নাম, (ছ) পদের নাম (৪) স্থায়ী ঠিকানা, (চ) বর্তমান ঠিকানা, (ছ) জন্ম তারিখ, (জ) ১৫-০৭-২০২৪ খ্রি, তারিখে বয়স (ঝ) ধর্ম, (ঞ) জাতীয়তা, (ট) শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা, (ঠ) অভিজ্ঞতার বিবরণ (ড) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের নম্বর (ঢ) ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার নম্বর এবং (ণ) মোবাইল/ফোন নম্বর উল্লেখ করতে হবে। আবেদনপত্রে অবশ্যই প্রার্থীর স্বাক্ষর থাকতে হবে এবং প্রত্যেকটি ছবির পেছনে প্রার্থীর নাম থাকা আবশ্যক।
- (৩) প্রার্থীগণকে আবেদনপত্রের সাথে (ক) প্রথম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতার সকল সনদপত্রের সত্যায়িত অনুলিপি (খ) প্রথম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক প্রদন্ত চারিত্রিক সনদপত্র (গ) ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ চেয়ারম্যান/পৌরসভার চেয়ারম্যান/গুয়ার্ড কমিশনারের নিকট হতে নাগরিকত্বের সনদপত্র (ঘ) সদ্য তোলা পাসপোর্ট সাইজের সত্যায়িত ০৩ (তিন) কপি ছবি এবং (ঙ) জাতীয় পরিচয় পত্রের সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।
- (৪) কোন বোর্ড বা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অধীন কোন পরীক্ষায় ৩য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণি বা সমমানের গ্রেড প্রাপ্ত আবেদনকারীর আবেদন গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়
- (৫) শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা থাকার ক্ষেত্রে সংশ্রিষ্ট পরীক্ষায় অ্যাপিয়ার্ড প্রার্থীগণের আবেদন বিবেচনা করা হবে না।
- (৬) চাকুরীতে নিয়োজিত অথবা বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদেরকে অবশ্যই স্ব স্থ নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে। আবেদনপত্তের কোন অগ্রিম কপি গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।
- (৭) আবেদনকারীকে খামের উপর পদের নাম অবশ্যই উল্লেখ করতে হবে
- (৮) মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধার পুত্র/কন্যা হিসাবে ঢাকুরী প্রার্থীদের মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা পিতা/মাতার মুক্তিযোদ্ধা সংক্রান্ত সার্টিফিকেট (যা গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মুক্তিযোদ্ধা বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়ের সচিব এবং মাননীয় মন্ত্রী/প্রতিমন্ত্রী/উপদেষ্টা কর্তৃক যথাক্রমে স্বাক্ষরিত এবং প্রতি স্বাক্ষরিত/ ১৯৯৭-২০০১ সাল পর্যন্ত বাংলাদেশ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা সংসদের অধীনে তৎকালীন মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী কর্তৃক প্রতি স্বাক্ষরিত)-এর সত্যায়িত কপি আবেদন পত্রের সাথে জমা দিতে হবে।
- (৯) "সচিব, বাংলাদেশ কলেজ অব ফিজিশিয়ানস্ এত সার্জনস্"-এর অনুকুলে উক্ত পদের জন্য ১০০০/- টাকার (অফেরৎযোগ্য) ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ভার দরখান্তের সঙ্গে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে। (১০) প্রার্থীর আবেদনপত্র খাম বন্ধ অবস্থায় অবশ্যই রেজিষ্ট্রি ডাকযোগে/কুরিয়ার সার্ভিসে অথবা ব্যক্তিগতভাবে সরাসরি নিম্নখাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তরে আগামী ১৫-০৭-২০২৪ খ্রি. আরিখ বেলা ২.০০ খটিকার মধ্যে পৌছাতে হবে। উক্ত তারিখ বা সময়ের পরে ডাকযোগে বা অন্য কোন উপায়ে প্রেরিত আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণযোগ্য হবেনা।
- (১১) প্রাপ্ত আবেদনপত্রসমূহ প্রাথমিক বাছাইয়ের পর কেবলমাত্র যোগ্য প্রার্থীদেরকে পরীক্ষার জন্য ডাকা হবে। অসত্য/ভূয়া তথ্য সম্বলিত/অসম্পূর্ণ/ ত্রুটিপূর্ণভাবে পুরণকৃত আবেদনপত্র কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই বাতিল করা যাবে। আবেদনপত্র যাচাই-বাছাইয়ের ক্ষেত্রে কর্তুপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্ত চুড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।



বাংলাদেশ কলেজ অব ফিজিশিয়ানস্ এন্ত সার্জনস্ (বিসিপিএস)

GD-1052



BILL MELINDA GATES foundation The Paily Star

The Daily Star

# THE FUTURE OF MONEY

### Central Bank's Digital Currency

Policy Research Institute (PRI) in collaboration with The Daily Star organized a roundtable titled 'Future of Money' on March 31, 2024. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION OF



palpable sense of cautiousness, with major central banks and governments waiting to see who will take the lead in launching digital currency at retail level. Several smaller countries have made strides, albeit with mixed success. It's clear that before making any decisions, we must closely examine the experiences of others.

in terms of technology upgradation, is imperative. This includes internet-based systems, networking, and cybersecurity. Bangladesh Bank must also strategize for potential future scenarios. The Reserve Bank of India has made significant progress in their research on digital currency, though implementation still remains far off. The silence from the Chinese government adds to the intrigue, especially considering their successful city-level trials.

Inevitably, the digital currency will become global in future. However, the pros and cons are myriad. While its introduction can combat corruption, it also poses political economy risks towards its effective introduction, particularly if corruption is ingrained within bureaucratic structures and political system. Privacy concerns also persist as financial data becomes more accessible. In balancing efficiency with state mechanisms and regulatory hurdles, we must foster innovation while safeguarding individual rights to



The study has been led by PRI in association with The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, with primary missions of enhancing financial

PRI actively engage in policy research and contribute in advocacy. The feasibility assessment of digital currency by central bank mentioned in budget of fiscal year 2022-23 worked as a drive behind commencing of this

Currency) marks a pivotal innovation, shifting from physical currency to digital wallets. Understanding its dynamics and implications is paramount in today's monetary landscape. Cost savings are significant compared to traditional printing, as digital security measures complicate counterfeiting. Tracking transactions becomes easier, reducing the

CBDC paves the way for a cashless society, enhancing transparency and combating corruption. However, our paper advocates for a balanced approach, promoting coexistence of digital currency and physical cash to capitalize on benefits while gradually transitioning towards a cashless economy.

Digital currency manifests in two main forms: Wholesale CBDC, facilitating bank-tobank transactions with distinct regulations, and Retail CBDC, providing digital currency

it's important to note that cryptocurrency operates on blockchain technology, which can also serve as the foundation for CBDC. Ensuring a reliable storage system including cloud-based storage or physical storage systems, is crucial for recording every transaction and maintaining data integrity. An accessible interface can be established through web-based platforms, mobile

Transactions can be easily traceable in CBDC making the approach transparent albeit at a potential cost of privacy. In contrast, cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, uses complex technology to give a maximum protection to privacy with one of its adverse impacts being facilitating transactions that may be deemed

There are two principal sources of information on CBDC research and adoption. The Atlantic Council, which is an American think tank in the field of international affairs, reports that three countries have already launched their digital currencies and 36 countries are in the pilot stage, whereas according to CBDC Tracker—a collaborative

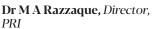
Dr Ahsan H Mansur, Executive Director, PRI

Over the past decade and a half, extensive research has been conducted on the topic across the globe by different central banks and researchers. Some countries

have even embarked on trial runs. There's a

Infrastructure development, particularly

privacy.



literacy

fostering financial inclusion. In this journey,

Undoubtedly, CBDC (Central Bank's Digital cost of combating forgery.

CBDC differs from cryptocurrencies. While cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum operate privately and face varving legal statuses depending on the country, however CBDC functions similarly to traditional money, holding solid legal backing. Bangladesh, for instance, has explicitly stated its disavowal of Bitcoin and prohibited Bitcoin transactions within its jurisdiction. Cryptocurrency's speculative trading nature leads to high volatility, whereas CBDC, not intended for trading, remains stable. Though subject to periodic fluctuations, akin to monetary policy effects like inflation, CBDC maintains overall stability.

directly to individuals.

a sudden leap towards a cashless society is imperative. applications, or computer interfaces.

illegal or inappropriate.

CBDCs hold significant promise, particularly for financial inclusion, through instant money transfers to remote regions;



central bank digital currencies are already in operation with 46 countries are in the pilot and proof of concept stages. Despite the differences between specific details, both the sources show that there are more than 100 central banks globally that are either researching or in the process of piloting

Notable CBDCs that are in operation include Jamaica's JamDex, Nigeria's eNaira, and the Bahamas' Sand Dollar. On the other hand, Ecuador and the Philippines are examples of countries that have either canceled or backtracked their digital currency projects. The world's largest CBDC pilot is being conducted by China. Its digital yuan (e-CNY), reached 260 million wallets in 26 cities in 17 provinces. In recent years, digital yuan has been experimented in various sectors, from transportation and healthcare to purchasing crude oil. India is also seriously pursuing its CBDC project with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) planning to introduce the ability to conduct offline transactions using its digital rupee (e-Rupee) as part of its CBDC pilot. This functionality aims to enable transactions in areas with limited or no internet connectivity, expanding the digital rupee's accessibility and practicality. The United States appears to have a cautious approach to CBDC.

Some countries are also exploring options for using CBDCs for cross-border

> The costs of combating counterfeiting in traditional money can be drastically reduced with the introduction of digital currency equipped with utmost security.

Increasing adoptability and knowledge

among the public is vital. Conduct a meta-analysis before launching CBDC pilot programs to avoid blindly replicating other countries' pilots.

Increased investment in local manpower, digital literacy, and understanding financial behavior is essential.

Assess how digital currency can benefit us, aiming for transparency in a cashless society, while considering our social and political context.

Promote collaboration between civil society and the Bangladesh Bank to address challenges and opportunities in digital currency adoption, fostering informed decision-making and public awareness.

Using digital currencies for cross-border transactions to address challenges like currency dominance and sanctions, enhancing financial flexibility and resilience for developing countries.

The importance of public sector involvement in infrastructure development to foster financial inclusion is paramount. Bureaucratic barriers in analog practices hinder

Bangladesh's transition to digital currency, necessitating comprehensive reforms. Navigating a gradual transition rather than

transactions. For instance, Project Jura is a collaboration between the central banks of France and Switzerland, along with the Bank

of International Settlements (BIS), for the settlement between two wholesale CBDCs. Similarly, the mBridge Project involves the BIS and the central banks of China, Hong Kong, Thailand, and the UAE, aiming to establish a multi-CBDC platform that improves crossborder payments and foreign exchange transactions by using distributed ledger technology for more efficient transactions. From the experiences of the countries that

have adopted CBDCs, it seems that there has been an uptick in digital wallet registrations and usage although the progress towards a cashless economy remains an objective for the

faster, cheaper and simplified transactions;

internet access, cybersecurity deficiencies, and digital literacy gaps continue to impede progress. Updating digital infrastructure and policies on data storage and privacy concerns are essential steps. Pilot programmes, such as paying government workers with digital currency, can offer valuable insights for future implementation. There are important lessons for Bangladesh in CBDCs. Firstly, given the widespread global interest in digital currency, it's essential for us not to remain on the sidelines. Secondly, the pace of CBDC adaptation appears to be slow and thus achieving quick gains by introducing a CBDC is not to be expected. Thirdly, transitioning to CBDC doesn't necessitate an immediate shift to a cashless society; instead, gradual progress is more realistic and effective.

Bangladesh Bank must intensify research and exploration into CBDC technology. Identifying innovation opportunities and conducting small-scale experiments can enhance understanding of digital currency potential.

Lastly, the utmost priority lies in strengthening our national capacity. Without advancements in institutions, infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks, digital currency initiatives will falter, and other service systems ike DFS and MFS will also struggle to thrive. Focusing on improving overall infrastructure and literacy is imperative for progress and avoiding digital gap led inequality.



#### Dr Jamaluddin Ahmed, Board Member, bKash

Transitioning to digital currency mandates skilled workforce, yet our bureaucratic structures, deeply entrenched in analog practices, pose formidable

barriers to this transformation. Unlike many countries actively researching and piloting digital initiatives, Bangladesh has lagged due to its adherence to traditional systems. However, it's essential to recognize that such evolution will take time but should not be unduly prolonged.

While our existing payment systems, including MFS, have served us adequately, their limitations are evident. It's evident that both the operators of such platforms and our regulatory bodies lack sufficient expertise in this domain. Therefore, our primary focus should be on providing comprehensive training to empower them for optimal performance in this evolving landscape.

Sweden, a cashless pioneer, faces central bank digital currency dilemmas. Despite global prominence, it cautiously navigates decisions, offering valuable insights. In democratic settings, safeguarding rights and privacy is paramount.

Seminars needed to clarify confusion on cryptocurrency, digital currency, and MFS distinctions, essential for better understanding and dissemination of knowledge. Regulators, including NBR overseers, need trainings to initiate appropriate approaches. Additionally, urgent modernization required for transitioning NBR to digital system.

Given the printing cost of physical currency, for every BDT 100, it costs BDT 3. with the remaining constituting profit. Thus, if the central bank were to adopt digital currency, what potential issues might arise?



#### M Sabbir Hossain, DMD and Chief Operating Officer, Brac Bank

The emergence of Bitcoin Facebook's Libra, and coupled with Mark Zuckerberg's ambitious plans for Libra, spurred

active engagement from central banks and relevant bodies worldwide. While Bitcoin presented promising aspects, concerns about its adverse effects became apparent. It's crucial to maintain a safe distance from potentially harmful cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, making CBDCs a viable solution to effectively address and mitigate such risks.

lack of infrastructure conducting pilot projects for CBDCs poses a significant obstacle. Despite this, there's acknowledgment that a completely regimented approach to CBDC implementation may not be suitable for Bangladesh. As mentioned by our deputy governor in Barishal, transitioning to a cashless system could potentially enrich the economy by more than 1.27 percent in GDP growth. However, achieving 100 percent cashlessness remains unrealistic.

Today, we're inaugurating the Astha App, facilitating monthly transactions worth 10,000 crore through 20 lakh transactions. This achievement is remarkable, considering we've transitioned from zero to such substantial digital transactions in just three years. It's imperative to highlight the substantial volume of transactions through MFS, underscoring our progress towards a cashless society.



#### Aminul Haq, Director, Chief Executive Officer (Acting) & CFO, Nagad

Before introducing CBDC in Bangladesh, it's crucial to address the significant reliance on cash transactions. Currently, the prevalence of

cash-in and cash-out transactions exceeding 1000 crore in our MFS indicates that we haven't fully transitioned this substantial volume into digital transactions. Establishing an ecosystem based on cashless transactions is imperative before implementing CBDC in Bangladesh. While countries like China and others have embraced cashless transactions, the Philippines' lack of a centralized KYC system presents challenges due to its geographic division. However, Cambodia's successful pilot of CBDC could serve as an example for Bangladesh.

Collaboration between Thailand and Hong Kong on cross-country settlement offers another avenue to address our remittance challenges, especially with a significant number of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia. Notably, Nagad has received a digital banking license, positioning itself to lead in this sector. However, reliance on foreign companies due to a shortage of skilled manpower in Bangladesh underscores the need for investment in local talent to navigate the complexities of the financial system effectively.



#### Arif Rahman, Manager, MicroSave Consulting

The concept of CBDC and cryptocurrency is relatively new in the context of Bangladesh. While digital money was introduced around 10 to 12 years ago,

the idea of digital currency dates back to 1983 and has been rapidly gaining traction. My focus has been on studying human behavior and adaptation, particularly in relation to digital money and financial services. If these cryptocurrencies are backed by the central bank, they could find utility in various sectors such as companies, remittances, and international transactions. However, the level of adoption among the general population is a crucial consideration. Despite the significant presence of MFS, many individuals still prefer traditional cash-in and cash-out transactions, valuing the tangibility of physical currency.

Issues such as network reliability and infrastructure pose challenges to the widespread adoption of digital money. Therefore, any proposed system or policy ultimately hinges on how well it is embraced by users. There is immense potential to raise awareness among the public about the evolving nature of financial systems. However, it's equally important to understand and address the behavioral factors that influence users' attitudes and preferences towards digital transactions.



#### Dr Ashikur Rahman, Senior Economist, PRI

Like every technological innovation, CBDC can cut both ways. In developing countries, commercial banks are primarily responsible its opportunities and its risks.

for processing savings into investments. Therefore, if CBDC aims to directly connect individuals with the central bank - who will process savings into investments? The commercial banks are not only instrumental in screening potential investors who can effectively use the deposited savings, but it has been the only dominant mechanism of supporting large private sector investments in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is not clear how we can open such a technological window without hurting commercial banks, which complicates how CBDC will actually influence economic growth.

Furthermore, we have to be careful about the political economy concerns. If misused, CBDC can be used to violate economic freedom of individuals, which can empower authoritarian polities.

#### **OPEN DISCUSSION**

### Dr Jamaluddin Ahmed, Board Member,

After the central bank's transition to digital currency, the roles of MFS and the overall banking system will remain distinct. There is no need for confusion in this matter. The central bank will not engage in lending activities; its function is to support the government in managing the economy as needed. This fundamental role will not change. Commercial banks will continue their operations and will likely become more digitalized, leading to a reduction in transaction costs.

MFS won't become obsolete; their relevance persists. Debit and credit card services may face challenges with service charges compared to MFS. Platforms like bkash, Nagad, and Roket are poised to expand in this evolving landscape.

### Dr Ahsan H Mansur, Executive Director,

Regardless of whether we shift towards digital currency or not, digitized transactions are inevitable and unquestionably necessary. We must develop our digital infrastructure and strive for 100% digital outreach and a cashless society.

Even with digital currency, many safeguards should be incorporated to ensure the principles and values of democracy. We must address these issues thoughtfully.

Finally, we need to assess how beneficial the digital currency will be for Bangladesh. If we can achieve a cashless society, we go a long way toward the efficiency gains out of digital currency. We must consider our social and political context when evaluating its potential contributions. I believe the civil society and Bangladesh Bank should collaborate to advance these safeguards and, the efficiency of digital infrastructure further.

If the infrastructure is ready, digital currency can be compatible with any technological advancements. Currently, central banks are at innovation stages, indicating that they would initially implement CBDC within the commercial bank structures. They do not intend to replace commercial banks at this stage. For instance, if Bangladesh Bank plans to disburse 5,000 crore Taka in digital currency, it will do so through the commercial banks.



#### **Arun Dev Nath,** Deputy Editor, The Daily Star

The possibility of crossborder transactions using digital currency is crucial to notice. The way the dollar has dominated against other developing countries'

currencies raises hope. This could be a compelling argument for us to present to the government and the central bank, as it seems like an area where they may see the need for

For instance, consider a recent example where Bangladesh struggled to pay Russia at least 400 US dollars due to sanctions. In such cases, exploring options like using yuan or digital currencies from specific digital banks for transactions could be promising. However, this is just speculation, and there's still a long way to go.



Tanjim Ferdous, Incharge of NGO and Foreign Missions, Business Development Team, The Daily Star & Moderator of the session

As we stand on the brink of a digital revolution, the

inevitability of digital currency becoming a global phenomenon is undeniable. This shift promises to combat corruption and streamline transactions, yet it also introduces a complex array of challenges. Today, we have delved into a comprehensive discussion of both the positive and negative aspects of this issue. It is crucial that we continue this dialogue, as we can no longer ignore the reality of the digital transformation within our currency system. Together, we must navigate this new landscape, addressing both

# INTERNATIONAL

LEBANON BORDER

### Iran warns Israel of 'obliterating' war

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday warned that "all Resistance Fronts", a grouping of Iran and its regional allies, would confront Israel if it attacks Lebanon.

The comment from Iran's mission to New York comes with fears of a wider regional war involving Israel and Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement. The two sides have engaged in near-daily exchanges of fire since the offensive on Gaza began.

In a post on social media platform X, the Iranian mission said it "deems as psychological warfare the Zionist regime's propaganda about intending to attack Lebanon".

But, it added, "should it embark on full-scale military aggression, an obliterating war will ensue. All options, incl. the full involvement of all Resistance Fronts, are on the

### **US** military destroys seven drones, vehicle in Yemen

AFP, Washington

American forces destroyed seven drones and a control station vehicle in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen over 24 hours, the US military said Friday.

The strikes were carried out because the drones and the vehicle "presented an imminent threat to US coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region," the US Central Command said in a statement on social media platform X.

The Iran-backed Houthis have been targeting vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since November 2023.

Friday, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for attacks on four vessels, including a "direct hit" on the Delonix tanker in the Red Sea after an operation involving a number of ballistic missiles.



Palestinians run for cover during an Israeli drone attack in western Rafah yesterday. Witnesses in the southern Gaza City reported dead and wounded after a new incursion by Israeli troops.

# Thousands displaced as Israel pummels north Gaza

**AFP,** Palestinian Territories

Explosions, air strikes and gunfire rattled northern Gaza yesterday, the third day of an Israeli military operation that has uprooted tens of thousands of Palestinians and compounded what the UN called "unbearable" living conditions in the territory.

An AFP correspondent reported ongoing explosions from the Shujaiya area near Gaza City, with a resident saying bodies were visible on the streets.

Israel's military yesterday said its operations were continuing in Shujaiya where fighting "above and below the ground" left a "large number" of Hamas fighters dead.

A resurgence of fighting in the area comes months after Israel had declared the command structure of Hamas dismantled in northern Gaza.

Last Sunday Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the "intense phase" of the offensive was winding down after almost nine months, but experts see

a potentially prolonged next phase.

Israel's offensive has killed at least 37,834 people, also mostly civilians, according to data from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. It reported at least 69 deaths over the previous 48

- lsraeli forces continue pounding Shujaiya area
- > Death toll in enclave rises to

Mohammed Harara, 30, said he and his family, young and old, felt as though they would become part of that toll.

He said they fled from their home in Shujaiya with nothing, "due to the bombardment by Israeli planes, tanks and drones" that they barely survived.

"We couldn't carry anything from the

house. We left the food, flour, canned goods, mattresses, and blankets," Harara said.

Israel's military on Friday said it was conducting "targeted raids" backed by air strikes against Hamas in the Shujaiya area.

The United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA estimated that "about 60,000 to 80,000 people were displaced" from the area this week.

AFPTV images yesterday showed men moving belongings on a donkey cart. Some people were pushed in wheelchairs. Children walked with backpacks past piles of dusty debris.

"I saw a tank in front of the Shuhada mosque firing" at targets, said Abdelkareem al-Mamluk. "There were martyrs in the street."

Elsewhere in the coastal territory, the civil defence agency yesterday said four bodies were pulled from an apartment after an Israeli strike in the central region.

Further south, in the Rafah area, witnesses reported dead and wounded after a new incursion by Israeli troops

### Far right scents power as France braces for polls

AFP, Paris

A divided France braced for high-stakes parliamentary elections that could see the antiimmigrant and eurosceptic party of Marine Le Pen sweep to power in a historic first.

The candidates ended their frantic three-week campaigns at midnight Friday, with political activity banned until the first round of voting

Yesterday, voting began in France's overseas territories that span the globe, with residents of the tiny archipelago of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, located off the coast of Canada, casting their ballots from 1000 GMT.

They will be followed by voters in France's islands in the Caribbean and the South American territory of French Guiana. Voting will later start in territories in the Pacific and then in the Indian Ocean before it gets underway on the mainland

Most polls show that Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN) is on course to win the largest number of seats in the 577-member National Assembly, parliament's lower house, although it remains unclear if the party will secure an outright

### **UK GENERAL ELECTION** Sunak slams racist slur by Farage party campaigner

REUTERS, Stockton-on-Tees

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on Friday evening he was hurt and angry that a supporter of Nigel Farage's right-wing Reform UK party had been recorded making a racial slur about him, saying it was too important for him not to speak out.

Britain's first ethnic-minority prime minister, Sunak was responding to comments broadcast by Channel 4 News, by a man named as Andrew Parker calling Sunak a "\*\*\*king Paki" - a British racial slur for people of South Asian descent.

Sunak, currently campaigning for a July 4 national election that his Conservative Party is tipped to lose after 14 years in power, was born in the southern English port city of Southampton to Hindu parents of Punjabi Indian descent.

"My two daughters have to see and hear Reform people who campaign for Nigel Farage calling me an effing Paki. It hurts and it makes me angry, and I think he has some questions to answer," Sunak told reporters. "I don't repeat those words lightly, I do so deliberately because this is too important not to call out clearly for what it is," he added.

### ACC probe into Benazir

apply to the court for an executive magistrate to inspect Benazir's four flats in Gulshan. The unit intends to compile an inventory of the contents inside these flats, which are reportedly part of Benazir's vast wealth. The ACC will then seek the court's guidance on managing these assets.

The former IGP's family resided in these four flats, which are currently locked as the family is believed to be

As part of the investigation, the ACC summoned Benazir on June 6, and his wife and daughters on June 9 for questioning, but they did not appear. However, no travel bans have been issued against them by the ACC. They were again summoned on

they submitted the written statement through their lawver on June 20. According to various sources, the family remains abroad. Along with allegations

corruption and substantial illegal wealth accumulation, Benazir is also accused of concealing his police identity in his passport. Despite holding high positions within the police force, he obtained a passport as a private employee, violating employment government passport regulations.

This was discovered during a renewal attempt, which led the passport office to halt the process. At the time, Benazir was the director general of the Rapid Action Battalion,

June 23 and 24. Instead of appearing, and managed to resolve the issue FROM PAGE 12 using his influence.

The ACC has found seven passports belonging to Benazir and his family On June 25, the commission

interrogated eight officials from the passport office regarding Benazir's passport forgery. On March 31, allegations of illegal

wealth acquisition by Benazir and his family published in a national daily prompted the ACC to launch an investigation after verifying the

It began the probe, led by Deputy Director Hafizul Islam, on April 22. The team also includes a threemember special investigation team from the ACC headquarters.

# 7 held after woman raped

9:30pm, a group of six people, led by a man named Abul Kashem Suman, abducted them. They took the two to a secluded

area and demanded a ransom of Tk 70,000 from the husband. When he left to fetch the money, he contacted the National Emergency Service "999". ACMuttajul said police immediately

went to the area after receiving the information. The kidnappers kept changing their location, realising the police were after them.

Police finally rescued the victim around 4:00am but the kidnappers with a remand petition.

LaLiga-Champions League double.

am," Vinicius told reporters.

"Today I played a game that is

"I always say that I never play for

compatible to the level of the player I

myself, I play for the team, for Brazil,

for my country. I always try to do the

best things, but it's not always possible.

know I can improve a lot and I will do

to help Brazil. We want to put Brazil

Brazil were initially struggling against

another defensive opponent and

After their disappointing opener,

in the place we deserve," he said.

"Today I played a great match, I

After talking to the woman, the police learned that she had been

Quoting the woman, the AC said four of the accused raped her.

Law enforcers conducted raids at various locations and arrested seven individuals yesterday, including the main accused, Suman.

During primary interrogation, Suman claimed that the woman was previously known to him. The AC said the arrestees would be

produced before a Dhaka court today

almost lost their composure when

Lucas Paqueta badly missed a penalty

But instead, they were rescued by

Vinicius, who took charge and was

all over the field, striking twice and

creating another chance that allowed

Savinho to score, helping Brazil to go to

the break with a comfortable 3-0 lead.

Brazil that were playing under huge

pressure with the hopes of 215 million

compatriots on their shoulders.

That was more than enough for a

Dorival was pleased with Vinicius's

exploits and said the best of Brazil is

halfway through the first half.

### Black money holders

FROM PAGE 12

kleptocracy,' Iftekharuzzaman added.

The provision is unethical and insulting to honest taxpayers, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

"I don't know who will benefit from such a move. But certainly, they are powerful and they are people in high positions. The interest of the country has certainly not been considered

"Today he played a very important role," Dorival told reporters, speaking

"He played an almost perfect

match, he created very good

situations and opportunities. He

was dynamic, very effective and

teamed up nicely, he has great capacity.

are undergoing different moments

but I have no doubts that Brazil will

perform at the highest level, and I

expect that it will be better than these

"He played well with other players and

"These are different teams that

with the help of a translator.

straightforward and direct.

### Faisal bought savings certificate

post of assistant tax commissioner. first bought a savings certificate worth Tk 30 lakh in his name on November 12, 2020.

Four days later, a savings certificate worth Tk 5 lakh was bought in his wife Afsana Jesmin's name.

On January 10, 2021, two savings certificates worth Tk 10 lakh and Tk 20 lakh respectively were brought in his father-in-law Ahmed Ali's name.

Three weeks later, another savings certificate worth Tk 30 lakh was purchased in the name of Faisal's relative, Khondaker Hafizur Rahman. Ten days later, he bought another saving certificate worth Tk 10 lakh in Rahman's name.

On February 2, 2021, Faisal bought another savings certificate worth Tk 30 lakh in the name of his brother Ouazi Khalid Hasan.

On December 26, he bought

Gaza civilians

The Dhaka court directed the

authorities concerned to freeze 87

bank accounts of Faisal, his wife and It also asked them to ensure that the properties cannot be transferred to another part by Faisal and his

family and that the money cannot be laundered. The ACC informed the court that Faisal opened many bank accounts in his relatives' names to hide his illicit earnings. Among these, the ACC found specific transaction details for

87 bank accounts. According to ACC documents, Faisal and his 11 relatives conducted transactions worth crores through 87 accounts across 19 banks and 1 nonbank financial institution.

The largest volume of transactions

another savings certificate worth Tk amounting to Tk 11.57 crore was 29 lakh in his brother-in-law Aftab found in the account of his fatherin-law, a retired bank officer. Ali has eight bank accounts.

Faisal's mother-in-law Momtaz Begum, a housewife, has ten bank accounts and transactions amounting to Tk 7 crore were spotted in these accounts.

Faisal has six accounts, which had transactions amounting to Tk 5.21 crore. His wife, who is also a housewife, has five bank accounts where transactions worth Tk 2.25 crore took place.

The ACC also found Faisal and his wife had bought a five-katha plot from the Jolshiri Housing Project in Khilgaon, while his wife bought another five-katha plot for Tk 75 lakh from East-West Development. His father-in-law purchased a flat for Tk 1 crore from Rupayan Housing Estate in the city's Ramna area.

### Panama court acquits 28 in 'Panama Papers' trial

Vinicius comes alive for Brazil

AFP, Panama City

A Panamanian court on Friday acquitted 28 people charged with money laundering in connection with the now-defunct law firm Mossack Fonseca, the epicenter of the "Panama Papers" international tax evasion scandal.

Among those acquitted were the firm's founders, Jurgen Mossack and Ramon Fonseca, the latter of whom died in May in a Panamanian hospital. During the trial, which was held in

Panama City in April, the prosecution asked for 12 years in prison for the duo, the maximum sentence for money laundering.

However, Judge Baloisa Marquinez

finding that evidence taken from the law firm's servers had not been gathered in line with due process, raising doubts about its "authenticity and integrity," a court statement said.

The judge also ruled that "the rest of the evidence was not sufficient and conclusive to determine the criminal responsibility of the defendants," the court statement said.

Leaked documents from Mossack Fonseca in 2016 revealed how many of the world's wealthy stashed assets in offshore companies, triggering scores of investigations around the globe.

Those implicated included former British premier David Cameron, Russian President Vladimir Putin,

acquitted the pair and 26 others after football star Lionel Messi, Argentina's then-president Mauricio Macri and Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodovar, to name but a few.

Panamanian prosecutors had alleged that Mossack and Fonseca helped create opaque companies in which executives of the German multinational Siemens deposited millions of euros outside the company's official accounts.

They were also charged with helping divert money from a massive

"Justice has been done, we are extremely satisfied with the ruling

#### FROM PAGE 12 camps to landfill sites.

Now, appeals to the Israeli authorities for access to the landfill sites were frequently denied, she said. And lacking fuel meant even when access was granted, trucks could not go in to clear out the mess.

Wateridge said food insecurity in the territory was having a visible effect on the population. "When I see my colleagues, my friends

because having such unsustained access to food for so long, you start to age, you look unhealthy, your skin changes colour," she said.

Thursday saw the first medical evacuations from Gaza into neighbouring Egypt since the Rafah border crossing was closed in early May, when Israeli forces took over the Palestinian side.

The World Health Organization

here, they're visibly unrecognisable says 10,000 patients need evacuating from Gaza for treatment.

Wateridge said one of her own UNRWA colleagues, Abdullah, had to wait for two months before being evacuated in April. He was injured in a strike and had his legs amputated in late February.

Since then, he had spent weeks in the devastated Al Shifa hospital once Gaza's largest medical complex when it was under siege.

fraud in Argentina.

handed down by the judge," Guillermina McDonald, lawyer for Mossack and other defendants, told AFP.

# **EDITORIAL**

# The Baily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

### Zero tolerance, but plenty of clearance?

The corrupt should have no place in public service

It is frustrating that the government's "zero tolerance" policy against corruption continues to be a slogan without substance even as it plagues the whole nation. The recent disclosures of alleged corruption involving two top officials of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), following high-profile cases involving a former IGP and an army chief, have once again underscored how widespread corruption has become. The government claims there are stringent anti-corruption measures in place, and that actions are taken whenever an incident is reported. The truth couldn't be more different, however. While we have laws criminalising bribery, money laundering, or use of public resources for private gain, in reality, those are seldom used. If anything, anti-graft laws and regulations targeting government employees have been rather relaxed, lightening penalties for corruption.

A report by *The Daily Star* tracks some of the changes made in relevant laws over the years. For example, in 2018, an amendment to the Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules (1985) introduced "reprimand" as a penalty for proven corruption. Other penalties include forced retirement, removal from the job, suspension, and demotion. But when public officials abuse their authority to commit crimes including corruption, they lose their moral right to be in service. In any other sector other than public, the punishment for that would be termination. So, penalties like a reprimand, or salary reduction, or "closing", or even demotion do feel like a slap on the wrist, and this is what has been happening in the public sector.

In April, for instance, Promatha Ranjan Ghatak, now an assistant secretary, was found guilty of embezzling Tk 7.35 crore while he served as a land acquisition officer in Madaripur, but was only demoted rather than dismissed. Around the same time, Bir Amir Hamza, an assistant commissioner (land) of Bogura Sadar Upazila, was sentenced to a reduced salary for a year after being found guilty of forgery. The leniency shown in their cases has understandably raised eyebrows. Experts believe the government provided impunity to public servants by enacting the Government Services Act, 2018, which replaced the Public Servants (Dismissal on Conviction) Ordinance, 1985. That ordinance had harsher provisions including dismissal for any employee punished for criminal offences. As per the 2018 act, however, an official can be in service even after being sentenced to up to 12 months in prison. The act also requires the ACC to seek permission before arresting any official.

All such lenient, protective and even discriminatory provisions send a dangerous message: that corruption by public officials, even when proven, will be met with minimal consequences. Against this backdrop, when ruling party MPs decry it, as some of them did in parliament recently, but stop short of using their mandate to toughen up related laws, it comes across as hollow and insincere. To really check corruption, the government must not only get rid of all questionable provisions but also ensure strict compliance with existing rules and regulations.

### Painful struggles of coastal women

Govt must address the crisis of drinkable water in southwest

It is disheartening that at a time when Bangladesh is boasting massive infrastructural development, women in remote areas in southwest still have to bear the burden of walking for miles and carrying back heavy pitchers of water for their families. People in these villages lack access to clean drinking water, and are often forced to drink salty water leading to serious health problems. A report by our Khulna correspondent describes the harsh reality of women who have been hit particularly hard by climate change and the proliferation of shrimp business that has resulted in the salinity of all nearby water sources.

According to the report, over 40 lakh people across the southern coast are facing a freshwater crisis with the women being the biggest sufferers, as they are the ones who must take the backbreaking walk to collect clean water for their families. Climate change has also led to lower rainfall, so harvesting rainwater is becoming difficult. Often people are forced to drink saline water and end up having hypertension and kidney diseases. Again, women are more affected by this, many developing reproductive health problems.

Salinity due to overzealous shrimp cultivation has wreaked havoc on the environment for decades. More and more land is being affected by salinity, making them barren and unfit for food cultivation. Yet precious little has been done to reduce the number of shrimp enclosures. The interests of local influentials have always taken precedence over those of the poor people in these areas. Climate change, meanwhile, has forced many paddy-field workers to seek employment in urban areas, leaving their female family members to take on all the responsibilities of the households, making their lives even more burdensome.

Urgent action is needed to address this situation. The government must immediately invest in building proper water infrastructure so that people can access clean water within the villages. It must also reduce salinity of the soil and water by drastically reducing the number of shrimp enclosures. Shrimp traders who have built unauthorised sluice gates in Khulna, thereby weakening river embankments, should be punished. The authorities must also support the women in these areas and end their daily misery of walking for miles under the scorching sun to bring back heavy pitchers of water.

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY



### Santal Rebellion

On this day in 1885, the Santal leaders Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu organised thousands of Santals to rebel against the East India Company. They protested against the oppressive colonial rule, and specifically the exploitative revenue system, as imposed by the zamindars, police, and the legal apparatus set by the British East India Company.

# How healthy is the health budget?

UHC Forum is a coalition of professionals who aim to strategically push for universal health coverage (UHC)—an SDG4 priority. It recently organised a webinar on how well this year's budget relates to key health sector challenges. Five experts share their views on the matter with The Daily Star.





Dr Rumana Huque Department of Economics, University of Dhaka.

The proposed health sector budget There are two important lenses of 2024-25 emphasises on achieving through which to assess this year's the Sustainable Development Goals budget. The first is an equity lens. (SDGs) by 2030 and the goals of the Perspective Plan by 2041. The proposed allocation for health is Tk 41,407 crore, which was Tk 38,051 crore in FY2023-24. Though this represents an increase of 8.8 percent in absolute terms, in real terms it is a decrease if inflation is considered. With small variations over the past decade, the health sector budget has remained stagnant at around five percent of the national budget. This is far below the international standard, which suggests allocating 15 percent of the government budget to health. Experts suggest that every government should commit to spending at least five percent of their GDP on health and move progressively towards this target. The 8FYP (eighth five year plan) committed to allocate two percent of the GDP towards the health sector by 2025. In contrast, the health budget has remained around 0.7 percent of GDP. India's current public healthcare spending is around 1.6-1.8 percent of GDP, and they are aiming to increase the public healthcare spending to 2.5 percent by 2025.

It is also suggested that the government should ensure health expenditure of at least \$88 per person per year. The World Bank data suggests that the per capita health expenditure is \$74 in India and \$65 in Nepal, but only \$58 in Bangladesh. Furthermore, a large portion of this health expenditure is paid by the people themselves: out-of-pocket health expenditure as a proportion of current health expenditure is 73 percent in Bangladesh compared to 50 percent in India and 51.26 percent in Nepal and 17.05 percent globally.

The allocation of Tk 100 crore for "Integrated Health-Science Research and Development Fund" is a good initiative, but the key issue here is its efficient utilisation. The import duty on dialysis filters and dialysis circuits has been reduced from 10 percent to one percent on import, but 10 percent customs duty on import of medical equipment and supplies by referral hospitals has been imposed. We need to avoid creating additional burdens on people seeking health care.



Dr Syed Abdul **Hamid** is professor, Institute of Health Economics, University of Dhaka.

Two of the health sector programmes explicitly addressed to citizens-the Shasthyo Shurokhsha Karmasuchi (SSK) and the maternal voucher scheme-have seen no horizontal or vertical expansion in allocation.

The second lens to assess the budget through is an efficiency lens. The proposed budget does not provide any noteworthy plan to enhance the functionality and efficiency of public health facilities. It does not propose measures to fill the current workforce vacancies, to create new positions necessary for dealing with emerging and re-emerging diseases, enhance the supply chain of essential medicines.

There is a clear need for dedicated modern storage facilities, an updated dispensing mechanism, and improved diagnostic facilities, all of which are not addressed in the current budget. There is a notable absence of initiatives to strengthen primary healthcare in both rural and urban areas. Furthermore, there is no indication of optimising the existing budget by addressing the well-known governance constraints, whether at ministry/directorate level or at facility-level. Genuine political and administrative support is required from the ministry and directorate levels to ensure efficient use of the allocated funds.



**AMM** Nasiruddin is former Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

An important concern with the health sector budget is incomplete utilisation of allocated funds. Due to this, a substantial amount must be surrendered to the Ministry of Finance at the end of the fiscal year despite the glaring needs of the sector.

There are several reasons for the low utilisation of the health budget. One is

the gap in training of health facility managers on government financial management and rules relating to government procurement. Such shortcomings in many cases hinder and cause delays in timely budget utilisation. A second reason is the over-

centralisation of decision-making related to budget utilisation. Implementing authorities have little line items even when warranted by circumstances. Such adjustments require approval of higher authorities, and the process is both complex and time consuming. Delay in fund release, rigid spending rules, over-spending without appropriation, payment of arrear bills causing budget shortfall, excessive financial management requirements, fear of audit objections, absence of a robust monitoring, and accountability mechanism, etc. contribute to low rate of budget utilisation in the health sector. During the budget finalisation at the end of the month, an explicit recognition of this entrenched problem of low utilisation of the health budget and its well-known underlying reasons will be a very welcome first step.



Dr Aminul Hasan is quality care expert and former director, Directorate General of Health Services.

Despite a nominal increase, this year's budget, as indeed the budgets of previous years too, remain glaringly inadequate given the population size and healthcare demands. The priority health sector requirements are in primary healthcare, maternal and child health (MCH), and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

The most glaring gap in primary healthcare is in the urban areas which lack meaningful budgetary attention. MCH has seen some increase in allocation, but this too is glaringly inadequate to meet the needs of antenatal and postnatal care, immunisation programmes, and nutrition support, especially in rural areas. NCDs, the growing health sector challenge, is yet to get the budgetary attention it deserves. Minimal allocation for this growing problem is leading to inadequate screening, diagnosis, and treatment facilities, with many patients unable to afford

treatments. Preventive necessary patient education, and measures, chronic disease suffer due to resource scarcity. Strengthening primary healthcare requires investment in infrastructure and capacity building. Enhancing maternal and child health services involves developing comprehensive programmes community engagement. Addressing or no authority for adjustment of necessitates prioritising preventive health and promoting integrated care



Hossain Zillur Rahman is executive chairman, Power and and **Participation** Research Centre (PPRC), and convener. UHC Forum.

This year's budget has a block allocation of Tk 2,000 crore for health emergencies. This is a welcome step, but how confident should we feel that this allocation will be efficiently utilised? For example, the dengue menace this year is projected to be a possible health emergency. Meaningfully dealing with the problem requires close coordination between the ministries of health and local government. Unfortunately, coordination between these two critical ministries is the exception rather than the norm.

Without such coordination. funds will remain under-utilised and the results will be poor. UHC Forum intends to identify and work on meaningful areas and spaces in which this necessary coordination can be fostered. Health literacy among the general population is also a highly under-appreciated agenda that requires both budgetary and programmatic attention. Neither our attitudes nor our health system is geared towards early identification of health problems. Early screening for birth defects and provision of correctible surgery can reverse the destinies of many unfortunate children who grow up with disabilities.

Outreach programmes which work as reverse referral, taking specialist care to the grassroots, can benefit immensely from budgetary attention. This year's budget is most likely a closed chapter. The conversation must start in earnest so that next year's health budget sits more meaningfully nearer to people's expectations and needs.



# Who benefits from the white elephants in the power sector?



**Ghulam Muhammed Quader** is an MP and leader of the opposition,

#### GHULAM MUHAMMED QUADER

escalating across the country. Rural areas are facing more frequent outages than urban centres. Industrial areas are also suffering due to shortage of power

The daily electricity requirement in Bangladesh ranges from 13,000 megawatts (MW) to a maximum of 17,000MW. Generally, the country 13,000MWbetween produces 15,000MW based on the need. Presently, the total power generation capacity of the country, as per government report, is 27,515MW.

Interestingly, on April 29, the country suffered a power shortage of over 3,000MW when the demand reached 17,000MW. Throughout the last week of April, escalating temperatures led to a gradual increase in demand for electricity. The supply could have been adjusted to meet this demand. But we saw a continuous rise in load shedding due to supply shortage between April 23 to April 29.

To address the electricity and gas crisis, the "Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010" was enacted for an initial period of two years. The tenure was subsequently extended in 2012 by two years, in 2014 by four years, in 2018 by three years, and most recently in 2021 by five years. With four extensions, the validity of the law has been extended up to 2026.

This legislation effectively shields almost all aspects of the energy sector from legal scrutiny. The law allows purchase of rental power plants, importation of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), and construction or procurement of all sorts of infrastructure in connection with the operation and distribution of gas-electricity without following the usual procedures. Government officials involved in any sort of activities in connection with enhancement of electricity—purchase, production, transmission, distribution, and electricity related fuel transactionshave been allowed legal impunity under the provisions of this law.

The aim and objective of this law was to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply nationwide at reasonable prices. But what the impunity law has done is empower the authorities with limitless laterality.

Despite the existence of power plants capable of producing at least 10,000MW more than the existing maximum demand, load shedding is being imposed if there is a slight rise in demand from what is normal. This additional production capacity is either not being utilised or is for some reason not usable.

Research shows that a significant portion of such privately-owned plants has never produced electricity or has produced minimal amounts, such as one or two percent of their capacity, in

During 2018-22, some plants did production.

Load shedding or power cuts are not produce any electricity, but the government bore all their operational expenses

> Until the fiscal year 2021-22, the country had 151 power plants. Among these, 42 government-owned and 26 private power plants operated at 10 percent or less of their production capacity over the past five fiscal years. Despite this low production, they have charged the government capacity fees based on their full capacity production.

> > In short, power generation capacity is being increased despite insufficient demand. As a result, many of these plants remain idle without producing electricity. Since there is no production, there is no opportunity to earn revenue by selling electricity produced by these plants. However, according to the contracts, large amounts of money still need to be paid on account of capacity charges.

Presently, Bangladesh Development Board (BPDB) is incurring huge financial losses as it is selling electricity at a much lower cost than the cost of production.

To cover the deficit, a provision for subsidy is kept in the national budget. An amount of Tk 39,406 crore was earmarked from the public exchequer for the fiscal year 2023-24 on that

However, it has been observed that during this period, an estimated Tk 32,000 crore was paid as capacity charges for unused power stations. This amount constitutes approximately 81 percent of the total subsidy.

In other words, a major portion (81 percent) of the amount provided as subsidy to mitigate BPDB's losses goes to pay capacity charges or rentals of private power plants. This indicates that almost the entire amount of BPDB's losses stem from payments made to privately rented power plants against capacity charges.

From 2009 to the fiscal year 2023-24. Tk 1,37,000 crore has been paid for capacity charges or rentals without utilising the production capacity.

Two large gas-powered power plants have recently begun production in Meghnaghat. These plants, operated by Summit and Unique Group, have a combined capacity of 1,167MW. Additionally, a 718MW power plant by Reliance in the same area is ready for

With the inclusion of these plants, BPDB's total production capacity will significantly increase. Due to the lack of demand, these plants or some other plants in lieu of them will remain unused, leading to additional capacity charge payments. Consequently, the total expense for capacity charges will rise further.

In short, power generation capacity is being increased despite insufficient demand. As a result, many of these plants remain idle without producing electricity. Since there is no production, there is no opportunity to earn revenue by selling electricity produced by these plants. However, according to the contracts, large amounts of money still need to be paid on account of capacity

Although the burden of subsidies is now being shifted onto the customers through accrued electricity prices, most of the additional revenue is being used to pay rent to these privately-owned power plants.

So, the capacity charge is the main reason for the increase in electricity prices. If such power plants were absent or fewer in number, electricity prices would not have to be increased, or increased so much.

Since 2010, the electricity price has been raised 13 times, rising from an average of Tk 3.73 per unit to Tk 8.70. According to the conditions set by the IMF, this trend of increase is expected to chronically continue. Consequently, it is difficult to assert that electricity is or will be supplied at a reasonable price.

It may be mentioned here that renting private power plants, having provision for payment of rent or capacity charge are not the problems. The main problem lies in creating excess production capacity in relation to demand, and then keeping them idle and paying capacity charges or rent. Any money paid to such power plants enriches the deficit unilaterally. In short, these power plants have now become white elephants.

And it is difficult to understand why a power generation capacity exceeding 27,000MW was created at a time when our electricity demand typically ranges from 13,000MW to a maximum of 17,000MW.

Moreover, it appears that this capacity expansion trend persists, incurring significant costs and escalating both domestic and foreign debt. Notably, 19.46 percent of foreign loans are allocated to the power sector. Yet, the anticipated economic growth necessary to justify the increase in electricity usage remains elusive.

Private power plants are domestically owned, but they are being paid in foreign currency. According to our banking law, no bank can lend to any company more than 25 percent of its capital. This limit is not enforced in the power sector for the private power plant owners. It is difficult to find any logic for these extraordinary facilities to be provided to them.

Despite giving various types of benefits across the board in the power sector, uninterrupted electricity supply is not being ensured. Far from getting electricity at a fair price, white elephantlike power plants have been created and the ever-increasing high cost of maintaining them has been thrust upon the shoulders of the people.

# Fallout from Starmer's controversial comment about Bangladesh



is an independent researcher based in the UK.

MAHADEV GHOSH

UK's Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer has faced significant backlash after his recent comment where he singled out Bangladesh as a country from where people coming in should be sent back. He made the comment during an interview with The Sun when he was asked about small boat crossings in the English Channel and how a Labour government would address the issue. When pressed by Harry Cole, The Sun's political editor, as to which countries the migrants could be returned to, Starmer responded, "At the moment people coming from countries like Bangladesh are not being removed, because they're not being processed." This statement was alarming for several reasons—including because it was contextually

In regards to small boat crossings across the English Channel, Bangladesh's contribution is far from significant. According to the University of Oxford's Migration Observatory, Bangladesh did not even rank in the top 10. Furthermore, the UK government's Home Office data shows that only 13 Bangladeshis applied for asylum after crossing the Channel using small boats between 2018 and 2024, compared to a total of 126,609 crossings. This means that Bangladesh accounted for a negligible number of crossings-eight out of 31,079 so far this year. Labour

11,000 Bangladeshi nationals entered the UK on visas and then applied for asylum within 12 months, using student, worker, and visitor visas. This led to Bangladesh and the UK signing an agreement last month to expedite the removal of Bangladeshi migrants who have no right to stay in the country. Nevertheless, even in terms of asylum seekers, both India and Pakistan were ahead of Bangladesh, with Afghanistan and Iran at the top. This makes Starmer's singling out Bangladesh inappropriate, even if the question extended beyond small boat Channel

Labour has often been accused of not having any real plans to solve the issue of small boat crossings, and Starmer's comment does not help counter such accusations. This criticism extends beyond immigration, as Starmer has lacked cohesive plans on foreign policy, climate, or the economy. He has largely relied on platitudes, with Labour expected to win due to anti-Tory sentiments rather than pro-Labour ones. With immigration expected to be a major issue this election, every party has more or less agreed on the need to control the flow of immigrants, although each party has proposed different approaches to solving the crisis.

The Conservatives have stood firmly behind their



**UK Labour Party leader Keir Starmer.** 

Bangladeshi heritage, due to its stance on Israel's war in Gaza. And his comments have even led to backlash from within his own party.

Labour MP for Poplar and Limehouse, Apsana Begum, accused Starmer of "dog whistle racism against Bangladeshis." Moreover, Councillor Sabina Akhtar resigned over Starmer's comments, adding that she felt Labour had taken the Bangladeshi community's vote "for granted to please a small group of people." This reflected the wider effects of his comments, as it seemed to downplay the Bangladeshi community's contribution to the UK's culture and economy. Over half a million British-Bangladeshis live in the UK and operate 10,000 restaurants, forming a vital part of the £4.5 billion British curry sector. Additionally, British-Bangladeshis work in the NHS and in the armed forces—contributions the community felt were being undervalued, especially given their history of being victims of racist attacks.

However, this is not to say that Bangladesh is in no way contributing to the UK's immigration and asylum woes. Last year, a large number of Bangladeshis were accused of abusing the visa system. Nearly

has already marginalised voters, especially those of Rwanda plan, with the right-wing party Reform UK pledging a complete freeze on immigration, in addition to deportation of people crossing the Channel in small boats. Labour plans to dismantle the Rwanda scheme and establish a "Border Security Command," relying on bilateral agreements to deport illegal immigrants. This reflects a wider consensus amongst voters that immigration numbers must come down, with 52 percent of the public saying it must be reduced. This means that Starmer's Labour will have to depart from the empathetic approach and defence of migration characteristic of the party during the Corbyn-era. However, political expediency should never justify scapegoating a historically marginalised community that is not only an integral part of your voter base but also of the country as a whole.

To Starmer's credit, he has apologised for his "clumsy" comments and acknowledged the "massive contribution" made by Bangladeshis to the UK. He further emphasised that mutual cooperation between the UK and the Bangladeshi community could lead to "great benefit" for both, which was the main reason for his remark.

### **CROSSWORD** BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**DOWN** 

6 Lush

9 Spur on

1 Contrived

4 Writer Bronte

5 Reactor parts

7 John or Paul

2 Oscar winner Mahershala

8 Made every possible effort

3 Made oneself prominent

**ACROSS** \1 Indiana player 6 Make lumber out of 11 Texas landmark 12 Sung drama 13 Meek 14 Salad servers 15 "Frozen" queen 17 Dele undoer 18 Feel sorry for 20 Damon of "The Martian" 22 Hubbub 23 Family of five, say 26 Rose part 28 Paris subway 29 Depth charges, in naval slang 31 Egg layer 32 Sicilian peak 33 Accomplishment 34 Remove 36 Work the fields

38 Steer clear of

43 Audacity

44 Dome home

45 Putting site

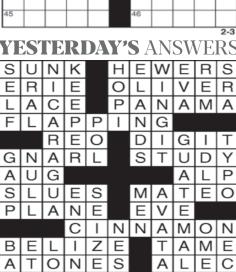
46 Kick back

40 Many Mideast natives

10 Days gone by 16 Dr.'s org. 18 One of a bear trio 19 Midmonth day 21 Prepares for war 23 Large family 24 Open space 25 Warning word 27 When Macbeth dies 30 Afternoon break 33 Smith's place 34 "Shucks!" 35 Finished 37 Animal home 39 Animal home 41 Squeezing snake 42 Boston team, for short

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# HEAITI



**CRITICAL WARNING** 

### The dangerous link between obesity and dengue hospitalisation in children

Dengue, a mosquito-borne viral infection, can range from mild flu-like symptoms to severe, life-threatening conditions. While obesity is already known to worsen the severity of dengue in hospitalised patients, its role in increasing the likelihood of hospitalisation has not been thoroughly explored. With the global rise in obesity rates, understanding this potential link is vital for effective disease control and prevention strategies.

A team of researchers set out to investigate whether obesity is associated with an increased risk of hospitalisation for dengue in children. The study focused on a large cohort of Sri Lankan children, forming part of an island-wide dengue serosurveillance project and was published in the PLOS

Neglected Tropical Diseases journal.

The study involved 4,782 children aged 10 to 18, selected from nine districts in Sri Lanka. The results showed that, while dengue infection rates were similar across different BMI percentiles, there was a significant difference in hospitalisation rates. Among children with a BMI percentile over 97 (considered obese), 18.2% who were seropositive for dengue had been hospitalized. In comparison, only 9.48% of seropositive children with a lower BMI percentile (less than 97) had been hospitalised. Children with a BMI percentile over 97 had more than twice the risk of hospitalisation compared to their peers with lower BMI percentiles.

Obesity is known to increase the risk of severe disease from many infections. If rising obesity rates lead to higher dengue hospitalisation rates, obesity could significantly contribute to the increasing hospitalisations seen in many dengue-endemic countries. Additionally, understanding how obesity and diabetes worsen dengue could lead to the development of specific biomarkers and treatments

for at-risk populations.

# GLOBAL HEALTH ALERT 1.8 billion adults risk disease from physical inactivity

STAR HEALTH DESK

New data show that nearly onethird (31%) of adults worldwide, approximately 1.8 billion people, did not meet the recommended levels of physical activity in 2022. The findings point to a worrying trend of physical inactivity among adults, which has increased by about 5 percentage points between 2010 and 2022.

If the trend continues, levels of inactivity are projected to further rise to 35% by 2030, and the world is currently off track from meeting the global target to reduce physical inactivity by 2030. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that adults have 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or equivalent, per week. Physical inactivity puts adults at greater risk of cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks and strokes, type 2 diabetes, dementia, and cancers such as breast and colon.

The study was undertaken by researchers from WHO together with academic colleagues and published in the Lancet Global Health journal.

"These new findings highlight a lost opportunity to reduce cancer and heart disease and improve mental health and well-being through increased physical activity," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "We must renew our commitment to increasing levels of physical activity and prioritising bold action, including strengthened policies and increased funding, to reverse this worrying trend."

The highest rates of physical inactivity were observed in the highincome Asia Pacific region (48%) and South Asia (45%), with levels of inactivity in other regions ranging from 28% in high-income Western countries to 14% in Oceania.

Of concern, disparities remain between gender and age. Physical inactivity is still more common among women globally compared lost opportunity to reduce cancer and



with men, with inactivity rates of 34% compared to 29%. In some countries, this difference is as much as 20 percentage points. Additionally, people over 60 are less active than other adults, underscoring the importance of promoting physical activity for older adults.

Despite the worrying results, there are some signs of improvement in some countries. The study showed that almost half of the world's countries have made some improvements over the past decade, and 22 countries were identified as likely to reach the global target of reducing inactivity by 15% by 2030 if their trend continues at the same pace.

In light of these findings, WHO is calling on countries to strengthen their policy implementation to promote and enable physical activity through grassroots and community sport and active recreation and transport (walking, cycling, and use of public transport), among other measures.

"These new findings highlight a

heart disease and improve mental health and well-being through increased physical activity," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "We must renew our commitment to increasing levels of physical activity and prioritising bold action, including strengthened policies and increased funding, to reverse this worrying trend."

"Promoting physical activity goes beyond promoting individual lifestyle choices; it will require a wholeof-society approach and creating environments that make it easier and safer for everyone to be more active in ways they enjoy to reap the many health benefits of regular physical activity," said Dr Fiona Bull, Head of the WHO Unit for Physical Activity.

Collective efforts based on partnerships between government and nongovernmental stakeholders and increased investments in innovative approaches will be needed to reach the least active people and reduce inequalities in access to measures promoting and improving physical activity.

### HAVE A NICE DAY

### Embracing Meliorism: Hope amidst uncertainty

DR RUBAIUL MURSHED

In the late nineteenth century, George Eliot believed she had coined the term 'meliorist when she wrote, "I do not know that I ever heard anybody use the word 'meliorist' except myself." Her contemporaries credited her with coining both 'meliorist' and 'meliorism,' and one of her letters contains an early documented use of 'meliorism.' George Eliot is the pen name of Mary Ann Evans, a writer praised for the realism of her work and her accurate depiction of lower and rural-class England.

Meliorism describes positions in moral philosophy that favour improving or making more tolerable the conditions that cause suffering, even if those conditions have long existed. This could involve advocating for cures for common diseases or supporting the development of serious anti-aging therapies. The term is also used by ethicists, who specialise in the study of right and wrong actions in human

Meliorism

decisions

means 'better.' It opposes pessimism. generally means 'worst,' and optimism, which means 'best.' Meliorism is the idea that progress is real and that humans can intervene in natural processes to improve the world. Social

simply

meliorism posits that education can improve society by increasing individual intelligence, regardless of background.

Today, in an age of internet-educated researchers and policymakers, can studies of human psychology help with choosing the right precautionary methods on an individual or national level? Beyond war, conflicts, and economic dimensions, this unpredictable chaos also has a mental and spiritual dimension. People are afraid, frustrated, and distressed in the face of this unprecedented wave of international political events. Here, scholars can offer some guidance with their research on the concepts of meliorism and 'moralogy' (kindness, forgiveness, and other moral values) and how to approach life more meaningfully.

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### Accessible education for children with special needs

RABEYA FERDOUS

Education is one of the most crucial basic rights for all children. Children with special needs also have an equal right to educate themselves. Education may impact their everyday lifestyle. It may also improve personal development and increase people's independence in their daily lives.

Education is most challenging for children with special needs. There are a number of disabled children who have physical and psychological problems. Some children with special needs get the chance to enroll in school. Severely disabled children have difficulty attending school.

According to Bangladesh Education Statistics Report 2018, there were approximately 46,000 children with disabilities enrolled in government primary schools.

There are numerous challenges faced by students with special needs. There are listed below:

1. Students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or cerebral palsy (CP) may write or read slower than other normal students. For that reason, they and their parents feel dissatisfied with their school performance. They need more time and extra care to cope with this situation.

2. Student with special needs feels distracted in a disorganised classroom. They are not attentive to the teachers. So, the classroom should be well decorated. This can help to increase their performance.

3. Some students with special needs face difficulty making friendships. Normal students do not want to make friends with students from special schools. They try to isolate and give different types of stigma. In this situation, their teacher may socialise with new peers and learn from one another's unique strengths and knowledge. This type of peer monitoring may help students develop social skills, independence, and problem-solving skills.

4. Inaccessible classrooms may

hamper the education of students with special needs. The maximum classroom has stairs to enter the classroom. In this situation, we need to talk with the authorities about building a ramp. Additionally, accessible doors need to be ensured for wheelchair-user students. 5. Some teachers lack knowledge

about the learning procedures of students with special needs. They need extra care, modification, and an individual education plan (IEP) as a course module. So, teachers should be trained to handle these challenging issues.

facilities Education participation is one of the basic rights for children with special needs. To fulfill this basic right, the government focuses on accessibility in education. Accessibility means removing barriers that hamper a child's education. Disabled children need to make their environment accessible.

According to the National Education Policy 2010, the government follows the following strategies for physically challenged students:

1. The lavatory facilities and the scope of smooth movement will be adequately designed and created with special attention in order to fulfill the special needs of the physically challenged.

Special and preferential attention will be given to their needs.

3. At least one trainer will be recruited in each of the PTIs to meet the special teaching methods and needs of various types of challenged

If proper education is achieved, then other rights such as job accessibility, participation at the economic and national level, or any other right granted by the government are likely to be easily obtained.

The writer is an occupational therapist at the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospitals (NINS & H). Email: rabeya1988@gmail.com

### Lipid-lowering drug slows progression of diabetic retinopathy

Fenofibrate is an FDA-approved medication for treating severe high triglycerides. Although it has not been shown to provide extra heart health benefits when added to statins, some studies suggest it might help reduce the need for laser treatment in diabetic retinopathy (a diabetes-related eye condition).

To investigate this, researchers studied 1,150 Scottish patients with early diabetic retinopathy or maculopathy, giving them either fenofibrate or a placebo. People with severe kidney issues were excluded, and fenofibrate doses were adjusted based on kidney function. This research was published in The New England Journal of Medicine.

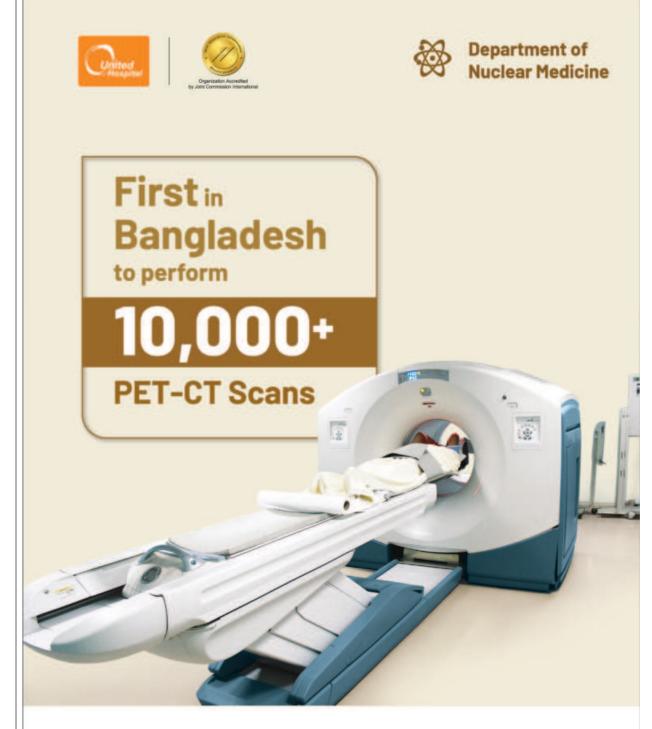
The main goal was to see if fenofibrate could slow down the



progression of retinopathy or reduce the need for eye treatments like laser surgery. Over four years, fewer people taking fenofibrate needed these treatments compared to those on the placebo (23% vs. 29%). However, there was no difference in visual clarity or daily visual function between the two groups.

Fenofibrate was associated with a lower average kidney function (by 8 mL/minute/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>) during the trial, indicating a need for caution in patients with poor kidney health.

In summary, fenofibrate seems to slow diabetic retinopathy progression, with one in 15 patients benefiting over four years. However, its role in treating this condition is still uncertain, and it has not been FDA-approved for this purpose yet. Additionally, fenofibrate can temporarily increase serum creatinine, requiring careful use in those with very low kidney function.



### Usage of PET-CT scans:

- More accurate way to stage cancer than other imaging tests, such as CT scans or MRIs
- Detect cancer earlier than other imaging tests
- Help doctors to determine the best course of treatment for cancer
- Help doctors to monitor the effectiveness of treatment



UNITED HOSPITAL LIMITED Plot 15 Road 71 Gulshan Dhaka 1212



# INDIA END DECADE OFHEARTBREAK

SPORTS REPORTER

Rohit Sharma, the captain who led India from the front with his fearless batting, fell to the ground with a look of relief washing over his face, the confident but sometimes brash Hardik Pandya shed tears of joy while at the dressing room, coach Rahul Dravid, known for his calm demeanour, roared in triumph.

These were the scenes at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Saturday after India overcame a decade of heartbreak with a win over South Africa in the final of the ICC T20 World Cup 2024.

The win, one they snatched from the jaws of defeat with Proteas at one point needing just 30 off 30 balls, made them the tournament's first-ever undefeated champions and also put them on par with England and West Indies as the only other two-time winners of the competition.

This T20 World Cup was about absolution for Rohit and his side after before," Rohit said after the match. the heartbreak in the ODI World Cup final last year in Ahmedabad at the

Rohit revealed that many years with backs to the wall," he added. of preparation went into this year's manner under pressure.

"Hard to sum up what we've been Virat Kohli, whose 76 off 59 through in last three-four years. A balls took India to a total they lot behind the scenes, not what we could defend. did today [yesterday], it's what we did

have been on the wrong side of it. Guys the job done for the team on the day hands of Australia, which was their fifth understand when the pressure is on it mattered. Now or never, last T20 for defeat in a final of an ICC event since what needs to be done, today [yesterday] India, wanted to make the most of it. was perfect example, stuck together Wanted to lift the cup."

triumph and commended his team win over the Proteas, but the man who generation, will get to walk off into the for coming through in such a grand stole the spotlight and was named the sunset in the shortest format with the player of the final was the indomitable biggest prize in hand.

After the match, however, Kohli announced that this was "A lot of high-pressure games, and we his last T20I, "God is great, and I got

With the win, Kohli, one of There were several heroes in India's the greatest batters of this or any

he had played his last T20I after starring in India's thrilling seven-run win over **South Africa in the T20 World Cup final in Barbados** on Saturday. The star batsman put a run of low scores behind him to make 76 as he was named player of the match, with the 35-yearold Kohli saying afterwards: "This was my last T20 World Cup, and this is what we wanted to achieve. One day you feel you can't get a run. then things happen. God is great, and I got the job done for the team on the day it mattered. Now or never (that

India great Virat Kohli said

was my) last T20 for India, wanted to make the most of it. Wanted to lift the cup, wanted to respect the situation rather than force it." The prolific right-hander retires from the format with 4,188 runs from 125 T20I with a strike rate of 137.

# Holders Italy sent packing

T SPORTS AND SONY

Live from 6:00 am (Monday)

**SPORTS 2** 

Copa America

Mexico vs Ecuador

Jamaica vs Venezuela Live from 6:00 am (Monday)

AFP, Berlin

**T SPORTS** 

**England vs Slovakia** 

Live from 10:00 pm

Spain vs Georgia

Live from 1:00 am

Euros

Switzerland dumped reigning champions Italy out of Euro 2024 with a stunning 2-0 victory on Saturday to reach the quarterfinals for the second time in their history.

Murat Yakin's supremely well-drilled side outplayed the flat two-time winners in the last 16 clash in Berlin and will face England or Slovakia in the next round. Ruben Vargas teed up Remo Freuler for

Switzerland's 37th-minute opener before curling home superbly himself right at the start of the second half to deservedly double their lead. A new-look Italy, short on star power and

without many of the key figures that led them to Euro 2020 glory, offered little in response to Switzerland's energetic display.

"It hurts, it really hurts," said Italy's captain and

goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma.

Former Arsenal midfielder Granit Xhaka,



arriving at the Euros after a stunning season with German champions Bayer Leverkusen, pulled the strings as the Swiss rarely looked like letting the lead slip away.

Italy coach Luciano Spalletti dropped Jorginho after his worrying group stage performances, bringing in Nicolo Fagioli in defensive midfield among a hefty six changes which failed to bring the Azzurri to life.

Italy scraped through the first phase thanks to Mattia Zaccagni's last-gasp strike in the 1-1 draw with Croatia and Spalletti said his team had no alternative but to improve in the knock-out rounds.

However, it was Switzerland who grew in confidence and pulled off their best display yet, making a bright start at the Olympiastadion in a sweltering Berlin, where a far more impressive Italy won the 2006 World Cup.

Spalletti hooked Stephan El Shaarawy at halftime for Zaccagni, but Italy gave the ball away from the kick-off and Switzerland doubled their lead just 27 seconds into the second period.

Augsburg midfielder Vargas, who started in place of the suspended Silvan Widmer but on the left of the attack, broke into the area and arced a superb curling shot over Gianluigi Donnarumma.

The closest Italy came to scoring in the first hour was when Swiss defender Fabian Schar misjudged a header and hit the frame of his own goal.

Substitute Mateo Retegui produced Italy's first shot on target as the clock ticked down and the near-invisible Gianluca Scamacca hit the post from close range, but the defending champions could never really threaten their opponent as they saw their run end rather meekly.

# Non-conformist blockbuster conserves charm

KHALID HOSSAIN

Bob Woolmer, the late South African coach renowned for his cricketing insights and innovation, once said, "Football is a game of space, whereas cricket is a game of time," in his book 'The Art and Science of Cricket', shedding light on the trials and tribulations a cricketer goes through on the battlefield.

Woolmer's book, a decade in the making and published in 2009, emerged at a time when the shortest format of the game

- Twenty20, designed to draw a wider range of audiences for the sake of making cricket a global sport -- had already found its footing and threatened the status quo of its elder siblings Tests and the 50-over format -- in terms of mass appeal.

Much like how fast food has surpassed fine dining in popularity this millennium, intimidating cricket proved to be an unstoppable force as the cash-rich franchise leagues reshaped the sports' landscape, leading the game's global governing body ICC to hold the T20 World Cup in

Eventually, when it came to the 20-over format, cricket matches

every two years.

element of time and more about negating of surfaces, playing conditions,

which had become predominantly batting-friendly, and about

became less and less about the between the leather and willow, extrapolations made the initial conditions: the nature from recent performances in major franchise leagues, to

perennial underachievers minnows and having their moment in the sun, the marquee event held in West Indies and the USA has ticked all the boxes for a truly memorable global tournament.

Super Over thriller, one of the seven who shrugged off the tag of 'Chokers' tournament up until he got his group stage.

amping up cricket's fan-following in the country, remained hungry for more as they cemented further history by entering the second round - the Super Eights – in their maiden appearance, setting the narrative for one of the fairytale triumphs of the mega event.

Even though fellow hosts West Indies could not make the cut to the

- Expanded World Cup lives up to billing
  Superstars shine, promising talents
  - Pacers and spinners grab spotlight in
  - IPL expectations did not match

leave trace

number of power-hitters a team possess

Minnows and hosts get boost

Thrillers in abundance

Perennial underachievers flip script

However, the ninth edition of the T20 World Cup, an expanded version featuring 20 teams from the last edition's 16, disproved the existing consensus and went on to preserve the timeless charm of the game.

At the same time, the 2024 instalment churned out almost everything that makes it an undeniable blockbuster, meeting the ever-increasing demands of modern

The associate teams disproved the notion of being pushovers, as former champions Pakistan and England found out.

Pakistan fell prey to the USA in one of the greatest upsets in the history of the tournament, setting the ominous tone of the last edition's finalists' eventual exit. On the other hand, England were forced to edge past a driven Scotland in the group stage based on net run rate.

And even Nepal, devoid of any expectation, almost pulled off the highly improbable, losing to South Africa and Bangladesh by a whisker, whereas teams like Namibia and Oman From even contests made their mark by locking horns in a

semifinals, they would be pleased to give their fans the impression that the two-time champions are on the right track, especially following a string of debacles in the preceding white-ball World Cups.

The team that accompanied the West Indies in the Super Eights were Afghanistan, who created their own fairytale chapter. Defying odds, Afghans first scripted New Zealand's exit and then set the Super Eights alight by taking down the mighty Australia before holding their nerves against Bangladesh in two World Cup classics.

Afghanistan's triumphant run was eventually cut short by South Africa,

first for the Proteas after being on the USA, meanwhile, en route to receiving end of seven excruciating exits in the last-four stage.

As far as individual glories are concerned, elite superstars like Australia's swashbuckling opener Travis Head, India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and opener Rohit Sharma, among others, lived up to their reputations while promising talents were unearthed in Bangladesh's leggie Rishad Hossain, pacer Tanzim Sakib, et al. Rishad was the joint third in the wicket-taker's column before the final, a list that

pacers and spinners in the top 15. Last but not the least, the 29-day tournament verified notion that a n

features an almost even mix of

international completely different beast, in terms of the challenges it presents, compared to what franchise leagues keep dishing out.

Case in point, the influence of the latest edition of Indian Premier League (IPL), which made way to a bunch of 200-plus scores, did not go onto set the tone in the USA and West Indies by any means. Prior to Saturday's final, this edition saw only four 200-plus totals in 54 matches - three of which materialising in Saint Lucia - while 175-plus totals were achieved 16 times.

highest run-scorer, limped the entire

final-over nail-biters witnessed in the to land a coveted place in the final -- a bearings right in the final, while a struggling Hardik Pandya rekindled his form in every department. Like Pandya, his IPL teammates in Suryakumar Yadav, Rohit and Bumrah from bottom dwellers Mumbai Indians, who ended the campaign at rock bottom, were unfazed in national colours. All in all, this T20 World Cup

will go down in the memory

lane as an unforgettable

one that refused

to play by



competition is a

Negating the IPL narrative further, Virat Kohli, who had been IPL 2024's



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### 7 held after woman raped in Dhaka's Khilkhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was raped in the capital's Khilkhet area on Friday night while she was visiting the area with her husband, said police.

The victim, 37, filed a case against six people under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with Khilkhet Police Station yesterday, Dhaka Metropolitan Commissioner Assistant (Cantonment Zone) Sheikh Muttajul Islam told The Daily Star.

Khilkhet police have arrested seven people, including three juveniles, over the incident.

The arrestees include Abul Kashem Suman, 39, Mehedi Hasan Hridoy, 22, Mir Azizul Islam Tutul, 23, and Robin Hossain Dewan, 28.

Citing the case statement, the AC said the woman and her husband went to a relative's house in the Kawla Bazar area. From there, she went walking with her husband towards Khilkhet around 8:30pm. When they reached Bonorupa area around SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



Navigation has become almost impossible in this old channel of the Buriganga as water hyacinths cover the river in Muslimbagh of the capital's Kamrangirchar. The area has turned into an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes also. The photo was taken on Friday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

### Faisal bought savings certificate worth Tk 2.55cr

DIPAN NANDY

Controversial taxman Quazi Abu Mahmud Faisal had purchased family savings certificates worth Tk 1.45 crore for himself and his relatives in three months, according to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

On June 27, a Dhaka court ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate all moveable and immovable properties of Faisal, a first secretary (taxes legal & enforcement) of the National Board of Revenue.

Faisal has accumulated about Tk 1,000 crore by taking bribes for transferring income tax officials, intimidating taxpayers and resorting

to other irregularities, according to documents submitted by the ACC to the court on Thursday after its preliminary investigation.

ACC decided to investigate Faisal last year after allegations of misuse of power and accumulating significant wealth through bribery.

Among the documents were proof of Faisal's purchase of savings certificates worth Tk 2.55 crore between June 2019 and November 2023 in his and his family's names. Of them, family savings certificates (Paribarik Sanchayapatra) worth Tk 1.45 crore were bought between November 12, 2020 and February 10, 2021.

Faisal, who joined the NBR in 2005 as a BCS cadre in the

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

# Black money holders get amnesty

Criticism of think-tanks, lawmakers ignored

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Parliament yesterday approved a provision that will allow black money holders to legalise their undisclosed wealth without any scrutiny by paying a 15 percent tax, disregarding widespread condemnation from various

The provision will take effect in the upcoming fiscal year that begins on July 1.

Think-tanks, watchdogs, chambers and several lawmakers criticised the provision, terming it unethical, unjust and unacceptable.

'This represents sheer insensitiveness of the members of parliament to growing public concerns about widening floodgates for corruption, illegality and corruption, which this provision facilitates," said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh.

The move also undermines Article 20(2) of the constitution that makes black money clearly illegal, he

It is also discriminatory against honest income earners, who have to pay up to 30 percent tax while black money holders are being rewarded instead of being subjected to accountability and getting the provision to pay only 15 percent, he said.

"In effect, the government is inviting people at large to be corrupt, immoral and dishonest to earn black money throughout the year with the guarantee that they will be rewarded and given impunity for earning any amount of income disproportionate to the legal source. Unfortunately, the state is being pushed further down the

SEE PAGE 7 COL 6

# Gaza civilians living in unbearable conditions

Warns UNRWA as huge mounds of rotting trash pile up across the Palestinian enclave

AFP, Geneva

Gazan civilians are forced to live in bombed-out buildings or camp next to giant piles of trash, a United Nations spokeswoman said Friday, denouncing the "unbearable" conditions in the besieged territory.

Louise Wateridge from UNRWA, the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees, described the "extremely dire" living conditions in the Gaza Strip.

"It's really unbearable," she told reporters in Geneva, via video-link from central Gaza.

Wateridge, who returned Wednesday after four weeks outside the territory, said that even in that time the situation had "significantly deteriorated".

"Today, it has to be the worst it's ever been. I don't doubt that tomorrow again will be the worst it's ever been," she said.

Nearly nine months into the offensive, Wateridge said the Gaza Strip had been "destroyed". She said she had been "shocked" on returning to Khan Yunis in central Gaza.

"The buildings are skeletons, if at all. Everything is rubble," she said. "There's no water there, there's



no sanitation, there's no food. And now, people are living back in these buildings that are empty shells," with sheets covering the gaps left by blown-out walls.

With no bathrooms, "people are relieving themselves anywhere they

Wateridge said the struggle to bring fuel into Gaza and distribute it safely was having a knock-on impact on the ability to deliver aid.

"Without the fuel, the "And yet people are living there again. humanitarian response really grinds to a halt," she said.

Wateridge was speaking from a guesthouse as there was no fuel to go out and undertake missions.

About 150 metres away, she said, a pile of around 100,000 tonnes of waste was building up, with makeshift tents pitched all around it.

"The population is living among it," she said. "With the temperatures rising, it's really adding misery to the living conditions.'

Wateridge said that before the offensive, sanitation units would clear all the trash from refugee SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

### ACC probe into Benazir, family's wealth at final stage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has completed a thorough analysis of documents and field-level investigations regarding former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed, as its two-month-long inquiry reaches its final stages.

The anti-graft body did not accept Benazir's written claims that his assets were acquired legally.

The ACC team is now preparing a comprehensive report to submit to the commission. The report may recommend filing charges against Benazir Ahmed, his wife Jissan Mirza, and his two daughters, Farheen Rishta Binte Benazir and Tahsin Raisa Binte



There is, however, some uncertainty within the commission regarding whether to request a detailed wealth statement from Benazir. Depending on the directives received, the ACC team might either issue a notice for asset details or directly recommend filing

An ACC high official, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star, "Benazir and his family have claimed in written statements that their wealth was legally acquired. But their explanations don't add up and thus unacceptable. The ACC team will soon submit their report to the commission based on the analysis of the collected data."

Benazir and his family's written statement was submitted to the ACC chairman on June 20,said ACC Secretary Khorsheda Yasmin.

"Hopefully, we will be able to file the report with the court as per our schedule."

However, ACC's asset management unit plans to

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

### Vinicius comes alive for Brazil

REUTERS

Vinicius Jr unleashed his inner beast in a little over 45 minutes of pure Brazilian football mayhem to guide the five-time World Cup champions to their first 2024 Copa America win against Paraguay on Friday.

The 23-year-old electric winger scored twice and delivered a muchneeded statement performance that Brazilian fans have long been waiting for. The Real Madrid rising star may be one of the best players in the world but until now that fiery spark has not been seen in his national team performances.

Even in Brazil's Copa America opener this year - a goalless draw against Costa Rica - Vinicius ended up being substituted halfway through the second half after not managing a single scoring attempt. After that, Brazil manager Dorival Jr changed tack and that decision paid back in a

Instead of being deployed as more of an orthodox winger wide on the left against Costa Rica, Dorival gave Vinicius the freedom to roam across the front line on Friday against Paraguay and fans were shown why he is a strong contender to win the Ballon d'Or after guiding Real to a SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



Brazil forward Vinicius Junior celebrates scoring his team's third goal against Paraguay in their Copa America Group D match at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas yesterday. The Read Madrid star scored twice as the six-time champions eased some pressure following a goalless draw against Costa Rica in their first match of the 16-nation tournament.

### Radioactive rhino horns to curb poaching in S Africa

AFP, Mokopane

South African scientists have injected radioactive material into live rhino horns to make them easier to detect at border posts in a pioneering project aimed at

curbing poaching. The country is home to a large majority the world's rhinos and as such is a hotspot for poaching driven by demand from Asia, where horns are used traditional medicine for their supposed therapeutic effect.

At the Limpopo rhino orphanage in the Waterberg area, in the country's northeast, a few of the thick-

skinned herbivores grazed in the low savannah. James Larkin, director of the University of the Witwatersrand's radiation and health physics unit who spearheaded the initiative, told AFP on Tuesday he had put "two tiny little radioactive chips in the horn" as he administered the radioisotopes on one of the large animals' horns.

The radioactive material would "render the horn useless... essentially poisonous for human consumption" added Nithaya Chetty, professor and dean of science at the same university.