



## Dhaka looks to Beijing for fresh loans

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and JAGARAN CHAKMA

Talks on Chinese loan proposals will be at the fore during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming visit to Beijing.

During her visit, Bangladesh may seek around \$5 billion in budget support in addition to loans for a number of large projects, said a finance ministry official on condition of anonymity.

While visiting Bangladesh in October 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping promised about \$20 billion -- the largest amount committed by a bilateral partner of Bangladesh -- over the following four years to implement 27 projects.

Bangladesh is again expecting Chinese financing at a time when it is facing pressure to maintain adequate foreign currency reserves. Hasina's is likely to be in China on July 8-11. Seeking anonymity, a top official of

the Economic Relations Division (ERD) said they have received proposals for large projects from different ministries which suggest taking loans.

The government has been in talks with China about the projects. However, nothing has been finalised yet, the official said.

One of the projects under consideration for Chinese funding is the construction of a broad-gauge rail line from Bhanga to Kuakata via Barishal and Payra Port. It is estimated to cost about \$5 billion.

Another project under consideration is the MRT Line-2, from Gabtoli to Narayanganj via Gulistan with a branch line from Gulistan to

Sadarghat.

The underground and elevated metro rail is estimated to cost around \$5 billion.

Besides, Bangladesh has already sought more than 36 billion yuan, equivalent to \$5 billion, as soft loans from China for

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**Bangladesh may seek around \$5 billion in budget support in addition to loans for a number of large projects.**



An HSC candidate and her guardian shield themselves with an umbrella from the rain as they head towards the exam centre at Habibullah Bahar College in the capital's Shantinagar. The city experienced intermittent rains all day yesterday, the first day of this year's Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent exams.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Two S Alam firms evaded Tk 3,500cr in VAT: NBR

With penalty, they owe govt Tk 7,000cr; S Alam Group official says they didn't 'evade even a single taka in VAT'

SOHEL PARVEZ

S Alam Vegetable Oil Ltd and S Alam Super Edible Oil Ltd have unpaid value added tax (VAT) and consequent penalty worth over Tk 7,000 crore, as they allegedly evaded VAT through various means, including by presenting lower purchase and sales data in VAT returns between 2019 and 2022, according to an audit by the NBR's VAT wing.

During the period, the two companies "evaded" Tk 3,538 crore in VAT, for which they were fined another Tk 3,531 crore, the audit report says.

The audit was carried out by the field office of Customs, Excise & VAT Commissionerate, Chattogram, and was subsequently reviewed by a five-member committee headed by an additional commissioner, Chattogram VAT

- S Alam Vegetable Oil Ltd 'evaded' Tk 1,917 crore in VAT in 3 yrs
- S Alam Super Edible Oil Ltd 'dodged' Tk 1,621 crore in VAT during same period
- The two companies were also fined Tk 3,532 crore
- They have 90 days to appeal by paying 20 percent (over Tk 700 crore) of the VAT claim
- S Alam Group to appeal the decision

Commissionerate, which drew the same conclusion.

Of the amount, S Alam Vegetable Oil Ltd allegedly evaded Tk 1,917 crore and S Alam Super Edible Oil Ltd Tk 1,621 crore in three years from the financial years 2019-20 to 2021-22, according to the audit report submitted in October 2023 and the subsequent review report submitted in May 2024.

The two companies denied any wrongdoing. The regulator came up with the unpaid VAT claims after analysing the VAT returns and the financial statements audited by the two companies' CA firm as well as their written response to the VAT Commissionerate.

The field office audit team submitted its report on October 2 last year. Later, the field office formed a five-member committee to

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## Cybercriminals breach NBR server again

Use login credentials of customs official in a bid to get container of cigarettes released at Ctg port

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

A "cybercriminal gang" attempted to release a container of cigarettes from Chattogram Port after breaching the server of the National Board of Revenue with the login credentials of a customs official.

Acting on a tip off, customs officials seized the container loaded with 50 lakh sticks of Mond cigarettes, worth about Tk 5 crore, at the port on Thursday, hours after a ship carrying the container reached the port.

The breach of the server came to light on Saturday after the officials launched an investigation into the incident. They found that Hamko Corporation Limited imported the cigarettes by providing false declaration and fake LC (letter of credit) documents.

The "gang" used the login ID of Mohammad Zakaria, deputy commissioner of Chattogram Customs House,

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4TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF LATIFUR RAHMAN



THE THIRD VIEW

Remembering the flagbearer of independent journalism

8 years since Chotoo, 4 years since Nana Bhai

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

8th Death Anniversary of **FARAAZ AYAAZ HOSSAIN**  
15 April 1996 - 1 July 2016

Eight years have passed since you left us, and not a day has gone by that we haven't thought of you. You left us in grief when you chose to sacrifice your life to protect your friends. Yet you make us immensely proud when we witness your powerful legacy of courage, friendship, and humanity.

You are no longer just our Chotoo, today you are Bangladesh's, and you are the world's.

You live on as a symbol of courage and continue to serve as our moral compass to this day. Though you are no longer with us, your memory, and bravery live on.

To all who have stood by us, we thank you for your love, and support. Please keep our beloved Faraaz in your prayers. May Allah (SWT) grant him the highest place in Jannatul Firdaus.

Shahnaz Rahman and Family

## 8YRS OF HOLEY ARTISAN ATTACK Militants turning to apps to draw new recruits

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

With the so-called Islamic State trying to regroup in Syria and beyond, Neo JMB, a Bangladeshi IS-inspired group, is becoming active again.

Since June last year, at least 315 people accused of militancy have been released on bail, and around 70 of them are suspected Neo JMB members, said officers of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.



➤ Neo JMB chief Abu Bakar, a former Huji leader, is now in the Middle East

➤ At least 315 suspects released on bail since June 2023

➤ CTTC arrested 826 suspects, including 128 Neo JMB men

➤ Neo JMB uses Threema, Signal, Telegram, and Wickr Me

Many of these suspects who know how to make bombs and have combat training are now a cause for concern, they added.

According to five CTTC officials, citing intelligence reports, many of them may have joined four or five online groups of Neo JMB.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

4th Death Anniversary of **LATIFUR RAHMAN**  
28 August 1945 - 1 July 2020

Four years since you left us, and you remain as our guiding light. Your strong values of ethics and integrity are still woven into every moment.

You were the pillar of our family and to all those around you. You remain a shining example of honesty, patriotism, and excellence in every sphere of life. We may miss your physical presence, but you live on in all our hearts. You live on in all your strength and as a symbol of ethics.

Though you are no longer with us, your memory, and glorious legacy continues.

To all who have stood by us, we thank you for your love, and support. Please keep our beloved Latifur Rahman in your prayers. May Allah (SWT) grant him the highest place in Jannatul Firdaus.

Shahnaz Rahman and Family

## US PRESIDENTIAL RACE Top Democrats rule out replacing Biden

REUTERS, Washington

Top Democrats yesterday ruled out the possibility of replacing President Joe Biden as the Democratic nominee after a feeble debate performance and called on party members to focus instead on the consequences of a second Donald Trump presidency.

After days of hand-wringing about Biden and the outcome of the November 5 election, Democrat leaders firmly rejected calls for their party to choose a younger presidential candidate. Biden, 81, was huddling with family members at the Camp David presidential retreat, with his political future a likely topic of discussion.

But the drumbeat of calls for Biden to step aside continued, and a post-debate CBS poll showed a 10-point jump in the number of Democrats who believe Biden should not be running for president, to 46 percent from 36 percent in February.



Palestinian families return to their badly damaged homes in an apartment block hit during previous Israeli bombardment, in the city of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Diesel, kerosene prices lowered by Tk 1 Petrol, octane prices unchanged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has reduced diesel and kerosene prices by Tk 1 per litre while keeping petrol and octane prices unchanged at Tk 127 and Tk 131, respectively, for the month of July.

The new price will be effective from July 1 (12:00am), said a gazette of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources.

As per the gazette, the prices of diesel and kerosene were set at Tk 106.75 a litre, which was Tk 107.75 in June.

The government has been adjusting local fuel prices in parallel with the international market since March this year.

On February 29, the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) issued a notification on Automatic Fuel Oil Pricing Guidelines.

According to the notification, the prices of all petroleum fuels – petrol, diesel, octane, kerosene, furnace oil, jet fuel, and marine fuels – will be set automatically based on the international market price.

In May, the government hiked diesel price by Tk 1 per litre, and petrol and octane prices by Tk 2.50 per litre.

In April, the price of diesel and kerosene was reduced by Tk 2.25 per litre but the petrol and octane remained unchanged.

In the first adjustment of March, diesel and kerosene prices decreased by Tk 0.75, Octane dropped by Tk 4 and petrol by Tk 3.

## Two S Alam firms evaded Tk 3,500cr in VAT: NBR

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review the audit findings.

The review report, submitted in May 21, said the “VAT dodging allegations have been proven beyond doubt.”

On June 9, the Customs, VAT & Excise Commissionerate, Chattogram, in its adjudication orders asked the companies to pay the “evaded VAT” worth Tk 3,538 crore along with the penalty to the tune of Tk 3,531 crore and applicable interest to the state coffers within 15 working days.

The deadline ends on July 3 and if the companies do not appeal against the order, the regulator will “take steps to realise the evaded VAT, penalty and interest as per the law,” NBR officials said.

S Alam Group Executive Director (Finance) Subrata Kumar Bhownik told The Daily Star on June 27 that they did not “evade even a single taka of VAT” and that they will appeal the decision.

The two sister concerns of the business conglomerate have 90 days to appeal by paying 20 percent (over Tk 700 crore) of the VAT claim.

Md Mustafizur Rahman, S Alam Group’s company lawyer, told The Daily Star on June 29 that before they file any appeal, they are seeking an in-person hearing with the VAT authorities to present their full response and the relevant documents that the regulator had sought during the audit and review.

“If they give us a full hearing and allow us adequate time, we will be able to convince them that their unpaid VAT claims against us do not reflect the reality,” he said, adding that they applied for a full hearing on June 6, three days before the VAT authorities asked them to pay the unpaid VAT, but were not allowed the opportunity.

FIELD OFFICE AUDIT FINDINGS

The VAT office came up with the findings by comparing the sales data given in the VAT returns and the annual financial statements from 2019-20 to 2021-22 that the companies submitted to the income tax office in the port city.

In its report on S Alam Vegetable Oil Ltd, the VAT Commissionerate said the company showed “deflated sales in its VAT returns” than that in its annual reports, audited by a Chartered Accountancy (CA) firm, submitted to the tax authorities by the company itself.

“As per the audited reports from the financial years 2019-20 to 2021-22, total sales of the company were Tk 12,725.95 crore. On the other hand, the reported sales by the organisation in the VAT returns during the period were Tk 2,401.92 crore,” the report says.

“This means, the company did not present sales worth Tk 10,324 crore in the VAT returns. By concealing actual sales in VAT returns, the organisation did not pay VAT amounting to Tk 1,346.61 crore during the period which is realisable,” it says, citing the 15 percent VAT rate on sales of edible oil applicable at the time.

The other company – S Alam Super Edible Oil Ltd – did the same, but only on a different scale, the audit found.

During the same period, this company’s “sales value in its audited financial statement was Tk 12,850.48 crore. But in the VAT return, the figure was Tk 3,620.63 crore, which is Tk 9,229.84 crore less than that presented in the audited financial report,” the report says.

Besides, both companies “evaded” revenue by showing lower value of raw material purchase in VAT returns than that reported in their annual reports during the three financial years.

For example, S Alam Vegetable Oil Ltd in its financial statement showed “purchase value of raw materials worth Tk 11,245 crore during those three years. But the VAT returns and other related documents submitted by the company to the VAT authorities show the purchase of raw materials was

worth Tk 3,145 crore.”

The amount is Tk 8,100.39 crore less than that shown in the company’s own financial statement.

“It is clear from the comparative analysis of its audited financial statements and VAT returns that in order to evade VAT, soybean and palm oil was sold after producing the item with ingredients procured from local sources or collected by any other means,” the report says.

“In the company report audited by a CA firm, there is information of sales without processing ingredients (CDSO [Crude Degummed Soybean Oil] and RBD palm olein).

“It is clear from data that Tk 8,100.39 crore worth of raw materials have been procured locally against which the company failed to submit any VAT chalan or Bill of Entry.”

During the period, 7.5 percent VAT rate was applicable on such local purchase, and as such “the total amount of unpaid VAT is Tk 607.52 crore, which is collectable from the firm.”

As for the other company – S Alam Super Edible Oil Ltd – its raw material procurement value was shown Tk 11,171.42 crore during the three years, but the VAT returns and other related documents submitted by the company to the VAT authorities put the purchase value at Tk 5,206.53 crore.

“It is clear from data that Tk 5,964.89 crore worth of raw materials have been procured locally against which the company failed to submit any VAT

companies and asked them to appear in a hearing on October 30, 2023. In the hearing, both companies submitted a written response and sought more time for a detailed written reply.

The Commissionerate office allowed time extension for both companies three times since, and the companies submitted its written response on December 28 last year, seeking withdrawal of the charges after a review.

‘PROVEN BEYOND DOUBT’

Following the written submission by the two companies and their appeal for a review of the unpaid VAT claims, the Customs, Excise & VAT Commissionerate formed a five-member committee, which submitted its report on May 21 this year after examining the audit report by the field office and other related documents as well as the response submitted by the two firms.

“All things considered and having analysed everything, it is clear that the allegations of VAT evasion worth Tk 1,917.39 crore by S Alam Vegetable Oil has been proven beyond doubt,” the review report says, drawing the same conclusion about S Alam Super Edible Oil whose total unpaid VAT is Tk 1,621.92 crore.

RESPONSE TO REVIEW TEAM

Both companies in their written response to the VAT authorities said the allegation of VAT dodging and the demand notice by the regulator is “totally unlawful, baseless, fabricated and not based on data.”

the “market demand is much lower than the sales value presented” in their financial reports.

They also maintain that the findings by the NBR’s VAT wing that they procured raw materials from local sources is “incorrect.”

“Because, all the raw materials to produce edible oil is import-based. As such, no raw materials have been procured locally. So the demand for VAT at source is not right.”

‘CRIMINAL OFFENCE’

The VAT authorities’ review report says that purchases and sales data of any firm should be the same in all its commercial documents submitted to regulators, bank, income tax and VAT authorities. This means, it is a legal obligation on the part of the firm concerned that its purchase and sales data presented to VAT office, income tax office, banks and in the financial reports audited by CA firms should all be the same.

“It is clear from analysis of the written response from the firm that the said entity concealed information of actual sales/procurement and VAT at source,” the review team said in case of both the companies.

Also, the company authorities “did not provide any proof/documents to support their written response” although they were requested and granted opportunities more than once to submit proofs against their claim. Neither did the companies “nominate any representative to re-examine the evaded VAT amount” though the audit

for any reason does not arise at all,” it told The Daily Star in a written statement.

RESPONSE TO THE DAILY STAR

S Alam Group company lawyer Mustafizur Rahman said, “The VAT auditors had legal obligations to inspect the factory to assess the sales records and hear us out. But they reached the decision without doing any of these. That is why there has been a misunderstanding. It is solely because we were not given the opportunity to prepare a clearer picture if they heard us.”

Headmitted that the VAT authorities communicated with them several times in writing during the audit and review and allowed them time to offer their explanations in personal hearing and in writing.

“But that was not enough. They gave us way less time than what we sought. It was not sufficient for us to prepare all the documents that date back to 2019 and a detailed response in a matter as serious involving such a huge VAT claim,” he told The Daily Star on June 29.

About the discrepancies in sales records presented in their financial statements and the VAT returns, he said the financial reports audited by their CA firm contained advance sales as well. “But some of these sales eventually did not take place, and we returned the money to the buyers who were not delivered the goods. We did not conceal anything. We have bank documents showing that we returned the money.”

Regarding the VAT authorities’ findings that the two companies sourced certain volumes of goods from the local market and “dodged relevant VAT” in the process, he said, “The goods in question are not available in local markets, they can only be imported. And the VAT authorities’ own report says that they found our import data correct. So the claim that we procured raw materials from local markets is based on assumption.”

‘LAME EXCUSE’

Syed Mushfequr Rahman, commissioner at Customs, Excise & VAT Commissionerate, Chattogram, said they allowed the two companies “multiple opportunities for hearing” which are minutely recorded in the adjudication order.

On the June 6 appeal by the two companies for a fresh hearing, he said they already appeared for hearing and made their submissions during the audit.

“Later, we formed a committee to examine their submissions. Based on the committee reports, we asked them to appear before the hearing twice but they failed. Then when we issued the order, they sent another letter for hearing which couldn’t be entertained. All these details are recorded in my adjudication order.”

On the question of sales figure, he said sales are final figures as per their own audited annual reports.

“We didn’t create any figures. Based on their audited reports, they have paid the income tax, but failed to show the same in VAT returns. If any refunds were made to buyers, how come it was not reflected in their financial statements audited by their CA firms? This is an absolutely lame excuse,” he told The Daily Star on June 29.

On the question of sourcing raw materials, the commissioner said companies are supposed to import the raw materials.

“But they can be procured locally from other manufacturers, which is the only plausible explanation for the higher sales volumes in their financial statements compared to their imports. That is why, we have imposed VAT that is due to be deducted by the two S Alam companies at source while buying from local sellers.”

“The VAT auditors had legal obligations to inspect the factory to assess the sales records and hear us out. But they reached the decision without doing any of these. That is why there has been a misunderstanding. It is solely because we were not given the opportunity to be heard. They would have gotten a clearer picture if they heard us.”

Mustafizur Rahman  
S Alam Group’s company lawyer

“We gave two companies ‘multiple opportunities for hearing’ which are recorded in the adjudication order. We didn’t create any figures. Based on their audited reports, they have paid the income tax, but failed to show the same in VAT returns. If any refunds were made to buyers, how come it was not reflected in their audited report? This is an absolutely lame excuse.”

Syed Mushfequr Rahman,  
Commissioner, Customs, Excise & VAT Commissionerate, Ctg

chalan or Bill of Entry,” the report says, adding that the total amount of unpaid VAT in this case was Tk 447.36 crore.

The Customs, VAT Commissionerate, Chattogram, also compared the procurement data of goods and services provided in the annual financial statements and VAT returns in the years from 2019-20 to 2021-22 and found that “S Alam Vegetable Oil paid lower VAT at source, known as VAT Deducted at Source (VDS), than the required amount against its purchase during the period.”

The company’s unpaid revenue against VDS on goods and services, on which 5 percent to 15 percent VAT is applicable, was Tk 5.63 crore in those three years, the report says.

During the same period, S Alam Super Edible Oil had unpaid revenue against VDS worth Tk 1.78 crore.

The Commissionerate report on both the companies says “these sorts of activities of the organisations are a clear violation” of 10 sections of the VAT and Supplementary Duty Act 2012, and six Rules of VAT and Supplementary Duty Rules 2016.

The field office of the NBR also slapped a penalty of Tk 1,911 crore and Tk 1,620 crore on S Alam Vegetable Oil and S Alam Super Edible Oil respectively for “non-compliance” of VAT rules.

“Legal steps can be taken to realise the evaded VAT against the company under sections 85 and III of the VAT and Supplementary Duty Act 2012,” the report says about both firms.

During its audit, the field office sought explanations from the

“We have been carrying out business by paying all sorts of applicable VAT as per laws and regulations,” the two companies said in an identical response.

“Every year, we deposit crores of taka in revenue to the state coffers. But bank loans are needed to operate this large company. We have been carrying out business and producing goods with bank loans. For availing bank loans, we have to show excess transactions, which is why excess sales and purchase of raw materials have been shown in the financial reports audited by the CA firm,” read both the letters.

“Excess sales value has been presented in the audited reports by the CA firm to get loans from banks. But [VAT] returns have been filed as per the actual sales and VAT has been paid accordingly.”

The two companies also said it was “not even possible to produce the goods shown in their audited financial statements with the raw materials that were imported from 2019-20 to 2021-22.”

“If import and input-output coefficient and imported raw materials data are analysed, it will be clear that the sales data shown in the annual reports audited by our CA firm is not correct. Rather, the sales data presented in the returns and the amount of VAT paid against the sales are correct,” both companies said.

Further, they informed that “the machinery and workforce of the respective companies also do not have the capacity to produce the goods shown in the audited report” and that

team made such requests in writing to the companies, the review report says.

“They claim that in order to avail loans from banks, they prepared the report by incorporating inflated purchase and sales data. If this is true, they have clearly committed a criminal offence.

“On the other hand, the audit firm that has prepared this report has demonstrated professional dishonesty and aided the accused firm to commit a criminal offence,” the review report says, again about both firms.

The related bank has also “acted very unprofessionally” if it sanctioned loans based on an “imaginary and untrue” financial statement, it added.

“To accept such claims by an accused firm will be to patronise its criminal activities, which no government agency can do.

“The related income tax circle has determined tax liabilities of the firm based on the audited financial reports submitted by the firms. It has no relations with bank loans. So the claim that the report has been prepared to get bank loans cannot be acceptable.”

Howladar Yunus & Co, which audited the financial statements of these two companies for two of the three years in question, said they were the “auditor of the companies, not preparer of the accounts.”

“Our mandate was to audit the accounts along with notes to the accounts prepared by the management. We followed the international auditing standards to conduct the audit and concluding our audit opinion. The question of cooperating with anybody

## Dhaka looks

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trade facility.

At present, Bangladesh has about \$22 billion trade deficit with China. Once received, the \$5 billion policy loan will help the country ease the ongoing pressure on foreign currency reserves.

The ERD official said they were in talks with China regarding the policy loan and that a deal could be signed during Hasina’s visit.

Although China had promised to lend about \$20 billion in 2016, as of January this year, the two sides managed to sign agreements on only nine projects, involving \$8.08 billion, figures from the ERD show.

Of the \$8.08 billion, Bangladesh could utilise only \$4.91 billion, less than a quarter of the money promised by China. Red-tape on both sides is largely to blame for the slow loan disbursements, said officials and experts.

The ERD official said this time, loan agreements are expected to be signed under a model different from the one used after 2016.

After China promised the \$20 billion, agreements were signed on a project-by-project basis.

This time, officials are expecting that the loan agreements would be signed during Hasina’s visit.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank’s Dhaka office, said what the Chinese president had announced was a promise.

He thinks that red-tape on both sides has been responsible for the slow progress and low fund disbursements.

Kazi Shofiqul Azam, a former secretary to the ERD, said there were bottlenecks on both sides, causing delays in loan deal finalisation and implementation.

“The countries need to follow a number of formalities, and they are time-consuming sometimes. This has been the main reason behind the delays a project face...”

STATUS OF 27 PROJECTS

Twenty-seven projects were supposed to be funded with the \$20 billion initial commitment. Of those, two projects have been struck off the list.

Two projects – the digital connectivity project of Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Ltd (BTCL) and the Info Sarker 3 of the Bangladesh Computer Council – involving \$388 million have been implemented.

Seven other projects received \$7.7 billion and their implementation is ongoing.

The Karnaphuli Tunnel, built under a \$707 million project, has been opened to traffic.

The \$550 million Single Point Mooring with a double pipeline project and the \$2.67 billion Padma rail link project are nearing completion.

The expansion and strengthening of the power system network (\$1.4 billion), the power grid network project (\$977 million), the Dhaka-Ashulia elevated expressway project (\$1.12 billion), and Rajshahi Wassa surface water treatment plant project (\$276.25 million) – are in various stages of implementation.

The loan applications have been sent for two projects. The loan agreement for the establishment of digital connectivity involving \$473.75 million is likely to be signed this year.

Negotiations for commercial contracts to convert the Akhaura Sylhet rail line to dual-gauge from metre gauge, involving \$1.3 billion, and expansion and modernisation of Mongla port, costing \$354 million, were underway.

Four projects are being evaluated by the Chinese side: Chinese economic and industrial zone in Chattogram (\$221 million); construction of dual-gauge line parallel to the existing metre-gauge line on Joydevpur-Mymensingh-Jamalpur section (\$902 million); water supply, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management for small size municipalities (\$229 million); and construction of the sewage collection system under Dasherbandi sewage treatment plant catchment of Dhaka city (\$198 million).

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## 8 YEARS OF HOLEY ARTISAN ATTACK

# Final justice yet to be delivered

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Although eight years have passed since the horrific militant attack on the Holy Artisan Bakery in Dhaka's Gulshan, justice is yet to be finalised for the families of the victims.

The High Court bench of Justice Shahidul Karim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman on October 30, 2023, delivered a verdict in the case filed over the attack, commuting the death sentences of seven militants to jail sentences until their deaths.

But the HC bench is yet to release the full text of the judgement, which is needed to move any appeal before the Supreme Court.

The judges are now writing the judgement of the Holy Artisan attack case.

According to court sources, it cannot be specifically said when the full text of the verdict will be

released and when appeals will be moved, heard and disposed of before the apex court.

Ariful Islam, a defence lawyer for the convicts, told The Daily Star on June 29 that his clients wanted to move their challenge appeals. But they have not been able to do so as the full text is yet to be released, he said.

Contacted, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin said the state will decide, after receiving the full text of the judgement, whether any appeal will be moved before the Appellate Division seeking enhancement of the convicts' sentences.

On July 1, 2016, five militants with firearms, machetes, and grenades stormed the bakery and held the diners hostage before killing three Bangladeshis, seven Japanese people, nine Italians, and one Indian.

The militants were killed

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Traffic remains halted due to a gridlock in the capital's Shantinagar area yesterday morning. A combination of HSC exams, heavy rainfall and the fact that it is the start of the week contributed to the problem.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Dhaka University turns 103

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka University, the oldest university in Bangladesh, marks its anniversary today, celebrating a rich history of academic excellence and significant contributions since its establishment in 1921.

DU has chalked out elaborate programmes.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday greeted all concerned on the occasion and wished continual success of the university.

The university played a pivotal role in the Language Movement and Liberation War. However, despite its illustrious past, the university faces numerous challenges, including technological lag, insufficient funding, inadequate campus and library facilities, and the impact of student and teacher politics.

## HSC, equivalent exams begin amid inclement weather



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Higher Secondary Certificate and its equivalent exams began nationwide yesterday, except in Sylhet division, where exams were postponed until July 8 due to severe flooding.

The government made this decision on June 20, in response to the ongoing flood impacting the region. Exams scheduled from July 9 onwards in Sylhet will continue as planned.

On the opening day, nearly 10,000 students from nine general education boards remained absent, according to the Secondary and Higher Secondary division of the education ministry.

Exams are being conducted with a reduced syllabus, a measure that was implemented during Covid-19 pandemic and continued for 2021-2023 academic years.

The capital saw heavy monsoon rains early in the morning yesterday. The downpour resulted in reduced public transport availability, creating significant obstacles

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## 'Nothing moves without bribes'

MPs criticise corruption in education system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The opposition Jatiyo Party and independent MPs yesterday in parliament raised allegations of widespread corruption in the education system.

The level of corruption in the education sector cannot be expressed in words. Nothing happens without money. For getting monthly pay order (MPO) facilities, a teacher has to pay from table to table, they said.

They were speaking at the cut motion proposals against the demand of the Secondary and Higher Studies Division of the financial year 2024-25.

Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury in his response speech, neither refuted the corruption allegations, nor acknowledged it.

Md Hamidul Haque Khandker of Kurigram-2 highlighted that the education budget consistently falls short of the GDP target. He pointed out institutional, curricular, and regional disparities, adding that field-level education officers remain in the same workplace for 5-7 years, leading

to irregularities and corruption.

Independent MP Pankaj Nath from Barishal-4 praised the NTRCA's teacher recruitment process but added that teachers are often posted at places far from home, which ultimately ends up with them not joining their schools.

He suggested regionalising recruitment, especially in hilly areas, and called for filling vacancies swiftly.

Jatiyo Party MP Hafiz Uddin Ahmed criticised the education system's focus on building unnecessary infrastructures over ensuring quality teaching.

"Today's education is like - I have a house and bathroom but do not have food," Hafiz added.

Independent MP Abul Kalam from

Natore-1 said no teachers get retirement allowances without paying bribe.

Nasser Shahrear Zahedee from

Jhenaidah-2 proposed reducing administrative expenses to boost educational research funding.

The education minister acknowledged the issue of teachers not joining distant posts and mentioned ongoing efforts to amend laws to address this.

Today's  
education is like  
- I have a house  
and bathroom  
but no food.

HAFIZ UDDIN AHMED  
Jatiyo Party MP



## Abul Mansur Ahmad speech contest launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the first time, "Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad and Tarkajal are jointly organising a national speech competition in honour of renowned journalist, politician and litterateur Abul Mansur Ahmad.

Two subjects have been fixed for the competition, titled "Abul Mansur Ahmad Speech Competition 2024," which are - "Abul Mansur Ahmad in journalism" and "Rashtra Chintay Abul Mansur Ahmad".

To participate in the competition, contestants must be under 30 years old. A participant can compete

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Metro fares won't go up from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite the NBR not extending the VAT exemption on metro rail fares, the metro rail authorities have decided not to increase fares from today.

The Metro authorities said they are yet to receive a reply from NBR regarding their appeal seeking a review of the revenue authority's decision to impose 15 percent VAT from Monday.

"We are waiting for their [NBR] reply... We have to talk to them about some technical issues even if we have to impose VAT on fare," MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), told The Daily Star.

Another DMTCL official, wishing not to be named, said even if DMTCL decides to impose VAT, they would not increase metro rail fares without giving a prior announcement.

The issue of whether 15 percent VAT would be imposed on metro rail fares from July 1 has been under discussion for the last couple of months.



The discussion began in April when NBR decided to revoke the tax exemption for DMTCL.

But, DMTCL, through the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry, wrote to NBR to review the decision.

An NBR official said they did not extend the exemption order till Saturday.

Meanwhile, MAN Siddique said no reply from NBR came till 8:30pm yesterday.

"There are technical issues regarding the imposition of VAT on fare. We have to talk with the [NBR] officials to settle the issues. But they were busy as the budget was passed today," he said.

## Magistrate to look after Benazir's Gulshan flats

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday appointed a first-class magistrate as an administrator to look after four confiscated flats of former IGP Benazir Ahmed and his family members.

The flats are located in Gulshan. Judge Mohammed Ash Shams Joglul Hossain passed the order accepting a petition filed by ACC director (property management unit) Md Monjur Morshed, said its Public Prosecutor Mahmud Hossain Jahangir.

In the application, Morshed told the court that the same court on June 6 appointed administrators to look after some of the immovable properties of Benazir and his family members.

After that, Morshed along with some ACC officials went to visit the flats and talked to the building's receptionist Meherab Hossain. The receptionist informed them that the flats' owners did not live there, and he did not know their

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## Rain disrupts life in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Ctg

Chattogram experienced heavy rain yesterday morning, causing difficulty for commuters, including HSC examinees.

The Met Office reported 32mm of rain between 6:00am and 9:00am.

Many areas, including GEC, Muradpur, Katalganj, and Bahaddarhat, were waterlogged, forcing residents to wade through knee deep water. Low-lying parts of the city faced a shortage of vehicles, making it difficult for students and parents to reach their destinations.

Many vehicles were stranded for hours. Traffic jams were severe on Zakir Hossain Road and in GEC area. Shahnaj Begum, whose son is an HSC candidate, said they had to walk in the rain to the exam centre for transport shortage.

Meteorologist Ali Akbar cautioned that the monsoon could bring more rainfall causing similar distress to the city dwellers.



Many areas, including GEC, Muradpur, Katalganj and Bahaddarhat, in the port city got waterlogged due to yesterday's rain, forcing residents to wade through knee-deep water. The Chattogram Met Office reported 32mm of rain between 6:00am and 9:00am.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Padma Bridge project now complete

PM to formally conclude much-talked-about project July 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project came to an end yesterday, around 17 years after it was taken in August 2007, giving great relief to tens of thousands of users daily.

Although Padma Bridge, the largest bridge in the country with roadway on the top and railway on the bottom, was inaugurated in June 2022, some works, including river training, remained incomplete then.

So, the authority extended the deadline up to June 30 this year, with a one-year defect liability period.

"Yes, the much-talked-about project is going to be completed today," Project Director Shafiqul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will formally conclude the project through a programme at Mawa end of the bridge on July 5, he said.



When the project was taken in August 2007, the cost of the project was Tk 10,161 crore and it was supposed to be implemented with foreign loan.

The project went through a major revision in January 2011, when the rail line was incorporated into the bridge, bringing the project cost to Tk 20,507 crore.

The project went through several revisions afterwards and the cost rose to Tk 32,605 crore. However, some Tk 1600 crore may not be required, Shafiqul said, adding that the cost of the project would be around Tk 31,000 crore.

The cancellation of World Bank loan, changes in bridge design and the pandemic shrouded uncertainty over the long-cherished project but the project was completed with the government's funds, directly connecting the capital with the southwestern region.



The prize giving ceremony of "Aly Zaker Liberation War Book Reading Initiative" was held at Liberation War Museum in Dhaka on June 29. Students from various schools, colleges and universities took part in the competition. Among others, Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury, lawmaker and a trustee of the museum Asaduzzaman Noor, Dr Sarwar Ali, Mofidul Haque, Sara Zaker, jury board member and Jatiya Grantha Kendra director Minar Mansur and Iresh Zaker were present.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Tragedy strikes family twice

Mother dies in road crash while taking deceased son home for burial

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Her boy just died. The relatives could not part the grieving mother from her dead son's side while they were taking the body back home from the hospital.

Although Puspog Begum, 65, was told to travel in a separate vehicle, she refused and boarded the ambulance, which was taking her deceased son Alam Howladar, 45, to their home in Gandamari village of Patuakhali for burial from Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal.

Alam had just died in the hospital while undergoing treatment for liver cirrhosis.

Who knew, death was waiting for the mother too.

Or maybe it was destiny which could not keep the mother and son apart.



Puspog died when the ambulance carrying them collided head-on with a motorcycle on Saturday night.

After the collision, the

ambulance driver lost control over the steering and the vehicle fell into a ditch.

Everybody in the ambulance survived, except Puspog, said her grandson Omar Farooq.

The motorcyclist, Rubel Sikder, 32, also died in the incident which took place at Doktorbari bus stand in Amtali upazila on Patuakhali-Kuakata highway, confirmed OC Kazi Sakawat Hossain Tapu of Amtali Police Station.

Alam Howladar's wife Maqsuda Begum, 35, and motorcycle passenger Monirul Islam, 40, were given first aid at the local health complex for minor injuries, he added.

## HSC, equivalent

FROM PAGE 3  
for students and their guardians.

Besides, waterlogging and severe traffic congestion further complicated the situation.

Prof Tapan Kumar Sarkar, chairman of Dhaka Education Board and president of Inter-Board Coordination Committee, said students would be allotted extra time if exams started late due to traffic or waterlogging.

"If an exam centre starts at 10:30am instead of 10:00am, the exam will end at 1:30pm instead of

1:00pm," he added.

HSC written exams are scheduled to continue till August 11, followed by practical exams from August 12 to 21.

This year, a total of 14,50,790 students from 9,463 educational institutions are registered for the exams, which are being held across 2,275 centres.

Among the examinees, 11,28,281 are from the nine general education boards, 88,076 from the madrasa board, and 2,34,433 from the technical education board.

## Final justice yet to be delivered

FROM PAGE 3  
during a rescue operation by army commandos. A chef who worked at the cafe was also killed during the 12 hour standoff, while another injured employee died later. Two police officers died from wounds sustained during the immediate response to the attack.

After the attack, which drew global condemnation, law enforcers launched a massive crackdown on terror networks.

On November 27, 2019, the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal in Dhaka convicted

and sentenced seven militants to death for their involvement in the Holey Artisan attack, terming it a disgraceful attack aimed at assassinating the non-communal character of Bangladesh.

The convicted are Jahangir Hossain, Aslam Hossain Rash, Hadisur Rahman, Rakibul Hasan Regan, Md Abdus Sabur Khan, Shariful Islam Khaled, and Mamunur Rashid Ripon.

The tribunal also acquitted one accused as it found him not guilty.

The convicted

individuals then filed appeals with the HC challenging the tribunal verdict.

After holding hearings on the death references (lower court documents for confirmation of death sentences) and the appeals, the HC bench on October 30 last year commuted the death sentence of seven jailed militants to imprisonment until death.

Asked why the HC gave them jail sentences until death when the law stipulates life sentence as the highest punishment for the offences, Deputy

Attorney General Bashir Ahmed said failing to understand a sub-section of the Anti-Terrorism Act, the tribunal gave death sentences to the convicts, and that's why the HC changed it.

He, however, said 20 people, from home and abroad, and two police officials were brutally killed, which tarnished the country's image abroad and hampered public safety seriously.

So the court handed down jail sentences until death, citing a previous verdict.

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## Abul Mansur Ahmad Magistrate

FROM PAGE 3  
held in the capital with the top 10 contestants from each category.

A total of 20 participants will be awarded from each category. In both categories, Tk 10,000 will be awarded as first prize, Tk 8,000 as second, and Tk 5,000 as third prize. The winners will be awarded with a certificate and crest.

Each of the remaining 14 will get Tk 1,000 in cash, a certificate, and books.

After the final selection, the information about the prize distribution programme will be announced in September on the occasion of Abul Mansur Ahmad's birth anniversary.

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FROM PAGE 3  
whereabouts. The owners even took the keys of the flats with them.

Moreover, the manager of the building was not found there.

Earlier, on June 27, the court appointed some administrators to look after the confiscated immovable properties of former IGP Benazir and his family members.

ACC's director of property management unit will look after the properties in Dhaka and Rugganj in Narayanganj. The deputy commissioner of Bandarban will look after the land properties in the district.

## ASP sent to forced retirement over corruption

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An assistant superintendent of police has been sent to forced retirement after allegations of misconduct and corruption were proven against him, according to a circular signed by Md Jahangir Alam, secretary of the Public Security Division under the home ministry.

The circular said Yakub Hossain, ASP of the Bangladesh Police Academy in Sarda, Rajshahi, formed a team in 2019 with the intention of making financial gains.

The other members of the team included former sub-inspector Jiban Biswas, constables Al Amin and Abdus Sabur, driver Samiul, and runner constable Anik.

According to the circular, on January 19, 2019, Jiban, Al Amin, and Sabur entered the house of a ward councillor in Kushtia. They handcuffed two individuals, Ashraf Hossain and Shamim Reza, who were present at the time, and beat them up under the pretence of criminal allegations. They had to pay Tk 1 lakh to the ASP's team through a mobile financial service agent for their release.

Ashraf and Shamim then filed a complaint, leading to the investigation that found ASP Yakub guilty.

## Govt deals with India anti-state: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday denounced the 10 MoUs signed with India during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent Delhi visit.

Party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir termed the deals a "new form of slavery".

He said allowing India to establish a corridor through Bangladesh for linking different parts of their country via railway tracks would compromise Bangladesh's sovereignty and national security.

He accused Hasina of signing agreements for personal gain and demanded transparency in the deals.

The party said they would mobilise public opinion against what it said "anti-state" agreements.

## KHALEDA'S ILLNESS

### BNP providing false info: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP leaders are confusing people by providing false information regarding illness of the party chief Khaleda Zia.

"There is no precedent for a person convicted of a criminal offence to receive such treatment freely. But the BNP has been demanding Khaleda Zia's release for the last few years without any legal procedure. They are also instigating the people by spreading rumours about her physical condition and trying to get sympathy from the people after failing in their movement," said Quader in a statement signed by AL Office Secretary Biplab Barua.

Quader also said demanding the release of a convict by going beyond the constitution and the legal process is nothing but audacity.

"According to the constitution of Bangladesh, everyone is equal in the eyes of the law. Khaleda Zia is convicted of corruption... There is no scope for a convicted person to leave the country beyond the legal procedure," added the AL's second-in-command.

## Unfit vehicles, brick kilns behind air pollution: minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LGRD Minister Tazul Islam yesterday told parliament that the main causes of air pollution are unfit vehicles, black smoke emitted from factories and brick kilns, and dust pollution caused by urbanisation.

The minister said this while responding to a tabled question of ruling Awami League MP Mohammad Sayeed Khokon.

He also said the impact of methane gas emitted from landfills on air pollution is not serious.

However, modern technology-based sanitary landfills and waste-to-energy projects have been planned to control methane gas emissions, he added.

**Trust Bank**  
A Bank for Financial Inclusion  
Head Office & Registered Office:  
Shadhinata Tower, Bir Srestha Shaheed Jahangir Gate  
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka-1206, Bangladesh.

**Notification to Shareholders**

This is for kind information of all concerned that, the 25<sup>th</sup> AGM of Trust Bank is scheduled to be held on 16 July 2024 at 11:00 a.m. through Digital Platform. In this regard, the Annual Report-2023 has already been uploaded to the website of the bank. (Link: <https://www.tblbd.com/annual-report-2023>)

Dated, Dhaka  
30 June 2024

Sd/-  
Md. Mizanur Rahman FCS  
Company Secretary

## Probe

FROM PAGE 5  
Sagar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Runi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012, in their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar.

Their only son Mahir Sarwar Megh, then 5, was at home at that time.

Nousher Ali Roman, Runi's brother, filed a case with Sher-e-Bangla Police Station on the following day.

**PRAYER TIMING**  
JULY 1

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-45	5-00	6-54	8-17
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-57	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**বারডেম জেনারেল হাসপাতাল**  
(বাংলাদেশ ডায়াবেটিক সমিতির একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান)  
১২২ কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম এভিনিউ, শাহাবাগ, ঢাকা-১০০০।  
☎: ৪১০৬০২০১-২৪, ফ্যাক্স: ৪১০৬০৪৯৬  
Website: [www.birdembd.org](http://www.birdembd.org) or [www.dab-bd.org](http://www.dab-bd.org)

উপদেষ্টা প্রকৌশলী প্রতিষ্ঠান/কার্যের নিকট থেকে বারডেম জেনারেল হাসপাতালের অন্তর্গত ঢাকার বাসাবোতে বারডেম নার্সিং কলেজ, নার্সিং হোস্টেল এবং ১০০ বেডের হাসপাতাল নির্মাণের জন্য স্থাপত্য নকশা প্রদান, স্বীকৃতিস্বরূপ ডিজাইন, প্রাক্কলন এবং অন্যান্য আনুসঙ্গিক ডকুমেন্ট প্রস্তুতের জন্য কারিগরী ও আর্থিক প্রস্তাব আহ্বান।

এ সকল কাজের সকল প্রকার অনুমোদন দরপত্র দাখিলকারীর প্রতিষ্ঠানকে নিজ খরচে করতে হবে।

ঢাকা শহরের বাসাবোতে প্রস্তাবিত বারডেম নার্সিং কলেজ, নার্সিং হোস্টেল এবং ১০০ বেড হাসপাতালের জন্য নির্ধারিত ৯৯ শতক জমির উপর নির্মিত ভবন সমূহের স্থাপত্য নকশা প্রদান, স্বীকৃতিস্বরূপ ডিজাইন, ইলেকট্রো মেকানিক্যাল ডিজাইন, প্রাচীর ও ওয়ালার সাপ্লাই ডিজাইন, অগ্নিনির্বাপন ব্যবস্থাপনা ডিজাইন, প্রাক্কলন প্রস্তুতকরণ, বিল অব কোয়ালিটিজ ও টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট প্রস্তুত করার জন্য প্রকৃত অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং এবং আর্কিটেকচারাল কনসাল্টিং ফার্ম/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হইতে ভিন্ন ভিন্ন খামে কারিগরী ও আর্থিক প্রস্তাব আহ্বান করা যাইতেছে।

প্রস্তাব দাখিলের পূর্বে বারডেম জেনারেল হাসপাতালের নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর সহিত যে কোন কার্য দিবসে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে যোগাযোগ করিয়া কাজের বিস্তারিত জানিয়া আলোচনা করে সরেজমিনে স্থান সমূহ পরিদর্শন করিয়া কি কি কাজ করিতে হইবে তাহা জানিয়া ও বুঝিয়া আশ্রমী ২১ জুলাই ২০২৪ রোজ- রবিবার সকাল ৯:০০ ঘটিকা থেকে দুপুর ১২:৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত বারডেমের ২৩০ নং কক্ষের সম্মুখে সংরক্ষিত বক্সে দরপত্র দাখিল করিতে হইবে এবং ঐ একই দিনে দুপুর ১২:৩০ ঘটিকার সময় দরপত্র দাতাদের সম্মুখে (যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকে) ২৪৬ নং কক্ষ খোলা হবে। দরপত্রের সাথে হালনাগাদ ড্রেড লাইসেন্স, টিন, বিন, ভ্যাট ও ইনকাম ট্র্যাক্সের সার্টিফিকেট দাখিল করতে হবে।

নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে প্রস্তাব প্রেরণ না করলে পরবর্তীতে এ বিষয়ে কোন আপত্তি গ্রহণযোগ্য হইবে না এবং কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্ত চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।

মহাপরিচালক  
বারডেম জেনারেল হাসপাতাল, শাহাবাগ, ঢাকা-১০০০।

## Matiur's wife seeks withdrawal of travel ban

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Laila Kaniz Lucky, wife of former member of National Board of Revenue Matiur Rahman, yesterday applied to a Dhaka court to withdraw a travel ban imposed on her for alleged corruption.

The same court on June 24 issued a travel ban on her, her husband and their son Ahmed Taufiqur Rahman Arnob.

Laila, also upazila parishad chairman of Narsingdi's Raipura, in her application, said she is suffering from different ailments, including heart disease, for which she has taken treatment from India, Canada, USA and Dubai.

The application said the travel ban needs to be lifted as she requires regular check-ups in those countries.

ACC Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam opposed it saying that she will flee if the court allows her to go abroad.

Judge Mohammed Ash-Shams Joglul Hossain of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka set July 27 for a hearing on the issue.

On June 24, the ACC placed an application to the court and said Matiur, also former president of the NBR's Customs, Excise and VAT Appellate Tribunal, and his family members were trying to leave the country, so a travel ban should be needed to prevent them from going abroad.

Moreover, they are also trying to launder money abroad, it said.

Earlier, the ACC formed a three-member committee to probe into the allegations brought against them over amassing a huge amount of wealth through illegal means.

The controversy regarding Matiur's wealth surfaced after his son Mushfiqur Rahman Ifat posted a photo of a sacrificial goat on social media and claimed to have bought it for Tk 12 lakh.



Santal community yesterday observed the 169th anniversary of their historic rebellion, commonly known as Santal Hool, in Gaibandha. Marking the occasion, they brought out a procession in the afternoon. According to historians, Santals in Jharkhanda revolted on June 30, 1855 against the misrule, torture and extortion by zamindars, wholesalers and police. The revolution lasted eight months and thousands of Santals and others were killed.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 15.90 tonnes of rice seized from UP chairman's home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Local administration has seized 15.90 tonnes of government VGF rice meant for fishers from the house of Angaria Union Parishad chairman Syed Golam Mortuza Sukkur in Dumki upazila, Patuakhali.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Shahin conducted the raid around 10:30pm on Saturday, confirmed the UNO.

A total of 318 sacks of rice weighing 50kg each were seized, he said.

**Nobody is allowed to store government rice in any place except for a government warehouse.**

UNO MD SHAHIN

"Nobody is allowed to store government rice in any place except for a government warehouse. A case was filed accusing the UP chairman with Dumki Police Station," he said.

Md Kamrul Islam, Patuakhali district fisheries officer, said the government allocated the rice for distributing among fishers but the UP chairman illegally hoarded it. Contacted over phone, Chairman Ghulam Mortuza, who was not at home during the seizure, said since the union parishad building is far away, he kept the rice at his house to distribute among the local fishers.

## Resolving irregularities major hurdle

Says new Biman MD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Resolving irregularities in selling tickets and improving on-time performance are the two main challenges for Biman Bangladesh Airlines, said Biman's new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Jahidul Islam Bhuiyan yesterday.

While exchanging views at Biman headquarters in the city's Kurmitola, he said the national flag carrier wants to eradicate all kinds of mismanagement by agents in selling air tickets.

"Biman Bangladesh Airlines wants to be free from the situation where no tickets are accessible online despite having empty seats on a flight," said the Biman MD.

This was the Biman MD's maiden press briefing since he assumed office.

Jahidul, additional secretary to the Prime Minister's Office, was appointed as the new MD on June 26.

"We want to solve the ticket problem completely so that no more questions arise in the future. That's why we have already warned the online travel agencies," he said.

On the issue of its 10-year fleet plan, the MD said, "Biman will be an airline with 47 fleets by 2034. In the meantime, six aircraft of the existing 21 fleet will be phased out. So, we have to add 32 new aircraft by the next decade to achieve the expansion plan."

"Discussions with Airbus have taken shape. There is also a proposal from Boeing. Since our needs are high, one company might not be able to meet them," he also said.

Stating that Biman will make a profit in the next year as well, he said, "We expect to earn 1,200 crore taka in the current financial year from cargo alone."



Jahidul Islam Bhuiyan

## Nexus of politicians, businessmen misusing 'indemnity act'

Speakers tell CAB discussion on power sector

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A nexus of politicians and businesspeople has been taking advantage of the "indemnity act" in the power sector and increasing the energy supply cost, which is ultimately borne by the public, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Since the government took charge of setting energy prices by themselves, the prices have been increasing irrationally, they also said.

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) organised the citizens' discussion on their proposed Energy Transition Policy 2024 at the capital's CIRDP auditorium.

The Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010 is commonly known as the indemnity act, as it doesn't require any tender process to allow any company to build power plants, or establish transmission or distribution facilities.

Besides, no officer or employee shall be subject to a suit, prosecution, or other legal procedure for anything done under this act.

The government initially passed the act for two years in 2010 which

was later extended several times.

CAB President Ghulam Rahman said it seems like there is a nexus between businesspeople and politicians, which has not been working for public interest.

If the government wants to provide electricity at reasonable prices, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) should be strengthened for transparency, accountability and equality, he said.

In the keynote paper, Prof M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to CAB, said since the government bypassed BERC to set the energy prices by themselves, energy supply costs and prices have been increasing irrationally and illogically.

"The monopoly of the government has been enhancing the scope of corruption. When the private sector gets involved in the market, they also don't face any competition, as they get permissions with the help of illegal transactions and collusion," he said.

In January 2023, the government amended the BERC Act and curtailed the commission's power to set tariffs on electricity and other energies to set them by themselves.

Since then, the electricity and fuel prices have been hiked several times.

"Earlier, BERC set prices after public hearings and let people know the rationale for hiking the prices. But now, there is no transparency, accountability, or clarity in this sector," said Prof MM Akash, former chairman of Economics department at Dhaka University.

"The prime minister announced an all-out drive against corruption. The first step of the drive should be cancelling the indemnity act, which created the opportunity for corruption in this sector," he added.

Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua said the amendment of the BERC Act is contrary to the spirit of the main act.

Former Buet Professor Ijaz Hossain said, "It is absurd that we produce electricity from high-priced diesel or furnace oil during the daytime when we could use solar energy instead."

"We should focus on only exploring gas reserves until we confirm that there is no more gas left. But the government always neglects the process. They always depend on either private or foreign investments," he added.

**The monopoly of the government has been enhancing the scope of corruption. When the private sector gets involved in the market, they also don't face any competition, as they get permissions with the help of illegal transactions and collusion.**

PROF M SHAMSUL ALAM, Energy advisor to CAB

## Mother, son die in Sylhet road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A mother and her son were killed and two others injured in a head-on collision between a truck and a CNG-driven auto-rickshaw in Companiganj upazila of Sylhet yesterday.

The accident happened on Sylhet-Bholaganj highway in Khagail area around 4:00pm. Smriti Akther, 25, and her son Abdullah, 7, of Narsingdi died on the spot.

The injured - Smriti's husband Delwar Hossain and the auto-rickshaw driver - were admitted to a hospital.

OC Golam Dastagir of Companiganj Police Station, said, "The family was on the way back to Sylhet city after travelling to Sada Pathor area in Companiganj."

**North-West Power Generation Company Ltd.**  
ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 & ISO 45001:2018 Certified  
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

**Office of the Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)**  
Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-1)  
Soydabad, Sirajganj

Ref: 27.28.8878.101.07.001.19.155 Date: 30/06/2024

**e-Tender Notice**

The following e-Tenders have been invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief description of tender	Publication date	Last selling date & time	Opening date
1	995570	Procurement of Seal Air Fan Motor for Bypass Stack Damper, Sirajganj 225 MW CCPP (Unit-1), NWPGL	27/06/2024	21/07/2024, 16:00	22/07/2024
2	1000822	Supply of Mechanical equipments & tools for Sirajganj 225MW CCPP (Unit-01)	30/06/2024	24/07/2024, 15:45	25/07/2024

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

**Engr. Brojendra Kumar Sarker**  
Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)  
Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-1)  
NWPGL, Soydabad, Sirajganj

GD-1053

**বঙ্গমাতা শেখ ফজিলাতুন্নেছা মুজিব মেডিকেল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, সিলেট**  
ঠিকানা: চৌহাটা, সিলেট-৩১০০, বাংলাদেশ।  
ফোন/ফ্যাক্স: ০২৯৯৬৬৩৬৫৩৮ মোবাইল: ০১৭১৫-৭৭০৮৭২  
Email: [bsfmmusylhet@gmail.com](mailto:bsfmmusylhet@gmail.com), Web: [www.bsfmmu.edu.bd](http://www.bsfmmu.edu.bd)

স্মারক নং- বিএসএফএমইউ/রেজি/২৮/২৪/০৫২ তারিখ: ৩০/০৬/২০২৪ খ্রি.

**ফ্ল্যাট/বাড়ি ভাড়া বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, আগস্ট/২০২৪ খ্রি. এবং তৎপরবর্তী নিকটতম সময়ের মধ্যে বঙ্গমাতা শেখ ফজিলাতুন্নেছা মুজিব মেডিকেল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, সিলেট এর ঢাকা পেষ্ট হাউজের জন্য কলাবাগান, শেরে-বাংলা নগর ও ধানমন্ডি এলাকায় আধুনিক সুযোগ-সুবিধা সমন্বিত এবং ০১ (এক) একটি গাড়ী পার্কিংসহ সর্বমোট ২৪৫০-২৫০০ বর্গফুটের (কমবেশি) একটি ফ্ল্যাট ভবন ভাড়া নেওয়া হবে। অত্রই বাড়ির মালিকপক্ষে আগামী ১৫/০৭/২০২৪খ্রি. তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন (সকাল ৮.০০টা থেকে দুপুর ২.৩০টা) সময়ের মধ্যে রেজিস্ট্রার, বঙ্গমাতা শেখ ফজিলাতুন্নেছা মুজিব মেডিকেল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, সিলেট এর চৌহাটায় অস্থায়ী কার্যালয় বরাবরে বাড়ি/ফ্ল্যাট ভাড়া শর্তাবলী/ভাড়ার পরিমাণ ইত্যাদি উল্লেখসহ আবেদন করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

উপাচার্য মহোদয়ের অনুমোদনক্রমে

**আবুল কালাম মো: ফজলুর রহমান**  
রেজিস্ট্রার

বঙ্গমাতা শেখ ফজিলাতুন্নেছা মুজিব মেডিকেল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, সিলেট

GD-054

# Bangladesh is lagging behind in female-led projects:

## SADIA KHALID REETI

MAHIYA TABASSUM

Fresh from her second stint as a jury member under the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI) division at

the prestigious 77th Cannes Film Festival, Reeti has also secured her place on the Golden Globes voting panel for an impressive third consecutive year. Her sharp critical eye and deep understanding of cinema have earned her respect in film circles around the globe.

**You've recently returned from the Cannes Film Festival as a jury member. How would you describe your experience?**  
It was exhilarating. My second time at Cannes, I was thrilled by the increased Bangladeshi representation, with co-producers Adnan Al Rajeev and Tanveer Hossain present. The festival buzz and interactions with global filmmakers were incredible, showing Bangladesh's growing mark on this prestigious platform.

**Congratulations on your third nomination to the Golden Globes voting panel. What's your approach to evaluating films for such a prestigious award?**

Thank you! It's an honour and a massive responsibility. The process is incredibly demanding – we're talking about potentially watching over 1,000 hours of content. I've learned to be efficient, dropping projects that don't meet the mark early on. It's about balancing quantity with quality of assessment. Given my background, I pay special attention to the screenplay but I strive to consider all aspects – cinematography, direction, acting – to give a holistic evaluation.

**How do you maintain objectivity in your critiques when you have personal preferences as an audience?**  
It's a delicate balance. Previously, film critics

avoided other industry roles to prevent conflicts of interest, but this is changing. Personal tastes inevitably play a role – I prefer fantasy and horror and usually avoid the crime genre. But as a critic, it's crucial to step back and evaluate each work on its own merits. I believe in specialised criticism; experts in cinematography, for instance, can offer deeper insights. If critics evaluate films based on their expertise, we can elevate and diversify the role of film critics.

We cannot survive wearing only one hat in the evolving media landscape; we must wear multiple hats. The key is acknowledging our biases while striving for a comprehensive assessment.

**You've worked with major Hollywood studios. Any standout experiences?**

The relentless pace in Hollywood makes it hard to dwell on any single project. I'd say working on *To the Bone* was a highlight. It's currently on Netflix, starring Keanu Reeves. Interestingly, my least favourite project also starred Reeves – *Siberia*, which I haven't brought myself to watch yet.

**Bangladesh's OTT platforms are buzzing with content, but there seems to be a lack of diversity in storytelling. What's your take on the current state of Bangladeshi cinema?**

Frankly, we're stuck in a rut of caution, too afraid to explore new territories. The capital-

intensive nature of filmmaking and limited resources make filmmakers hesitant to break from established trends, sticking to proven formulas instead of risking innovation.

What we desperately need is more comprehensive market research to understand audience preferences and demands. Until we're willing to take calculated risks, we'll struggle to bring fresh perspectives to our cinema.

**How do you view the representation of women in Bangladeshi cinema, both on-screen and behind the scenes?**

It's a complex issue. Globally, there's a rise in female-led projects, but Bangladesh is lagging. Even acclaimed films like *Rehana Maryam Noor* sometimes receive underwhelming audience reception. Ironically, films with misogynistic themes often perform better, even with female viewers. It's disheartening, but producing quality, progressive content may gradually shift audience preferences.

**What advice would you give to aspiring filmmakers and critics in Bangladesh?**

Do your research. Analyse films, understand the grammar of screenwriting, and then make it your own. No one's born a genius – it takes consistent hard work, expert feedback, and constructive criticism to improve. Remember, cinema is for the audience. And please, avoid shortcuts.



**From penning screenplays to critiquing global cinema, meet Sadia Khalid Reeti – who has navigated the complexities of a male-dominated industry with grace and determination. A multi-faceted talent, Reeti wears the hats of film critic, screenwriter, and journalist with equal aplomb, bringing a fresh perspective to an industry often set in its way.**

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

## Parambrata calls Pori Moni a 'powerhouse of talent'

Indian actor Parambrata Chattopadhyay's full-length film *Ajob Karkhana* is set to release in Bangladeshi theatres on July 12. During a recent



visit to Dhaka to promote the film, he expressed admiration for Bangladeshi artists, including Mosharrar Karim and Chanchal Chowdhury.

However, he showered praise on the *Bishwashundori* actress Pori Moni as he believes her to be one powerful artiste. "I think Pori Moni is a 'powerhouse of talent'. If she utilises her skills properly in films, she could do very well," said the actor.

Parambrata also spoke about his admiration for Afran Nisho and Apurba's performances. He has also seen Tasnia Farin's work and believes that as a budding artiste, she is doing really well.

## Arifin Shuvoo to lead in Indian web-series

**Jubilee** famed director Soumik Sen is on his way to showcase the story of Bangladesh's Liberation War in his upcoming web-series.

According to several sources, Arifin Shuvoo and Sauraseni Maitra will be seen in the lead roles. The still-untitled project will be in Hindi, and reportedly, Arpita Chatterjee will be the producer. The series will stream on OTT platform Sony Liv.

Rumour has it that the first draft of the script is done, and the initial conversations with the two actors have also been completed. If all goes well, shooting will commence soon.



# NEWS

## What steps

FROM PAGE 12

as a public interest litigation based on a report published on The Daily Star on June 2 headlined "Jobs in Malaysia: Mismanagement left over 3k workers with no ticket to KL".

According to the report, Mismanagement by government authorities and local recruiting agents led to over 3,000 workers failing to reach Malaysia before the deadline of May 31.

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) initially estimated that 3,000 to 4,000 Bangladeshi workers could not reach the Southeast Asian country within the deadline, set by Kuala Lumpur in early March.

On May 31, several hundred workers waited for hours at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to catch flights. Many of them went there without tickets after receiving assurances from local recruiters that they would be given tickets on time, the report added.

## NBR official

FROM PAGE 12

and immovable properties of Faisal. The court also ordered the confiscation of all properties of his wife Afsana Jasmin and some owned by his relatives in connection with graft allegations brought against them.

The court order came after the Anti-Corruption Commission submitted documents to the court on Thursday after its preliminary investigation.

The judge subsequently ordered ACC to freeze 87 bank accounts belonging to Faisal, his wife, and relatives.

## Corrupt officials

FROM PAGE 12

"Corrupt politicians collude with corrupt officials. They cannot do it without the support of the government officials," the former bureaucrat said.

"The ill gotten money does not stay in the country. It is laundered abroad. This cannot go on because it is harming the national interest," he added.

Asked if he would place a bill to amend the laws governing government officials and employees, he said he would work towards this with other MPs.

## Latifur Rahman's 4th death anniv today

FROM PAGE 12

terrorists during the July 1 attack at the Holy Artisan Bakery in Gulshan in 2016.

Latifur was the founding director of Mediaworld, the company that owns The Daily Star, and chairman of Mediastar, the owning company of Prothom Alo. The newspapers are the leading English and Bangla dailies in the country.

A respected figure in the global business community, he single-handedly built one of the biggest business conglomerates in the country with his hard work, perseverance, and entrepreneurial skills.

Born in Jalpaiguri on August 28, 1945, he began his education at St Francis School and then went to St Edmund's School, Shillong, in 1956. He also studied at St Xavier's College in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

After coming to Dhaka, he started as a trainee at his family-owned jute mills – W Rahman Jute Mills in Chandpur – in 1966. The jute

mill was the first to be owned by a Bangalee in the erstwhile East Pakistan.

He became an executive and worked there until 1971. But the government nationalised industries in 1972 and Latifur found himself in a very difficult situation. The family also owned some tea estates in north-eastern Bangladesh but after the independence the price of produce was less than production cost.

But he did not give up hope. The same year, Latifur came across a Swiss company and started a trading business. There was no looking back after that.

He established the Transcom Group in 1981. It is now one of the country's largest conglomerates, with operations in the areas of manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, electronics, beverages, media, consumer, food, and insurance.

Latifur was a member of executive board of ICC-Paris, VP of ICC-Bangladesh and member

of Brac's governing body. He was a member of the Bangladesh Better Business Forum and Advisory Committee on World Trade Organisation.

He was also president of the MCCI, Dhaka for seven terms and of Bangladesh Employers' Federation.

Latifur was also chairman of the Bangladesh government's Trade Body Reforms Committee and a member of Bangladesh Bank's executive board.

The business icon was an honouree of "Oslo Business for Peace Award 2012" and was awarded Business Executive of the Year 2001 by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh. He was also honoured with the "Saarc Outstanding Leader" award and Lifetime Achievement Award.

Latifur Rahman married Shahnaz Rahman. They have three daughters Simeen Hossain, Shahzreh Huq, (late) Shazneen Rahman and son (late) Arshad Waliur Rahman.

## Teachers go on work abstention indefinitely

FROM PAGE 12

Following the briefing, DU authorities, in a notice yesterday, announced the suspension of all exams until further notice citing "unavoidable circumstances".

As part of the work abstention programme, protesting teachers at their respective universities will observe an hour-long sit-in every afternoon to speak to the media and provide updates about the programme.

They had earlier threatened the action in case the government did not meet the demand.

Now, teachers in all 35 public universities, including Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Jagannath University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, said they will join the work abstention programme starting today.

"The decision to implement the new pension scheme was taken without first discussing it with us – the teachers who are the primary stakeholders. This is discriminatory and unacceptable," said Prof Zeenat Huda, general secretary of the Dhaka University Teachers' Association.

Prof Habibur Rahman, president of the Rajshahi University Teachers' Association, said, "Our demand is based on the fact that those who join as teachers in July will face problems in the future. We've clarified our stance by holding a press conference during the movement. But the government did not respond to our demands."

Earlier, FBUTA, citing a recently published gazette, said teachers who will be appointed in public universities from July 1 will fall under the new pension scheme instead of the current pension facilities offered by the universities.

They fear that many meritorious

students will not join the teaching profession if the new scheme, which they termed "discriminatory", is implemented.

They have been demanding the cancellation of the gazette in this regard through several peaceful protests since May 26.

Speaking on the issue, Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury said the ministry could not make any decisions on the Universal Pension Scheme as it is a matter of government policy and falls outside the ministry's jurisdiction.

"We cannot comment for or against a government policy. This policy applies to all autonomous institutions, not just universities," he told reporters at the International Mother Language Institute.

The minister, however, said that they are aware of the ongoing movement of the university teachers and that a dialogue is ongoing with the protesters to resolve the issue.

## Bellingham, Kane

FROM PAGE 12

Gareth Southgate's reign as England boss.

Kane then headed in just a minute into extra-time to set up a quarter-final meeting with Switzerland on Saturday.

"That's the desire and the attitude from the boys. It looked tough for a second there but you keep going... Jude does what Jude does and what an unbelievable goal," Kane said.

Southgate looked certain to fall on his sword after steadfastly refusing to make changes to a side that stumbled through as winners of Group C despite scoring just two goals in three games.

Kobbie Mainoo was introduced for his first competitive start in Southgate's only change and he paid the price with another lacklustre display lacking in any speed or invention for long spells.

The one saving grace of England's performances in the group stage was that a makeshift defence had held up well, conceding just once in three games.

However, they were torn to pieces early on by a Slovakia side ranked 45th in the world.

England did not heed a couple of warnings as David Hanco and Lukas Haraslin were wasteful with big chances.

Slovakia finally punished their more illustrious opponents when David Strelac was given acres of room to turn and play in Schranz, who confidently stroked past Jordan Pickford for his third goal of the tournament.

Despite his lack of experience,

## French far right wins

FROM PAGE 12

The final turnout in 2022 was just 47.5 percent.

The July 7 second round will see run-off votes take place in seats where there was no absolute majority, allowing the final composition of the National Assembly to take shape.

With Russia's war against Ukraine in its third year and energy and food prices much higher, support for the anti-immigration and eurosceptic RN party has surged despite Macron's pledges to prevent its ascent.

The two-round vote could put the

Mainoo was one of the few players who threatened to spark England into life as the Manchester United midfielder's effort was deflected wide.

The half-time whistle was met with a chorus of boos but Southgate still stuck to his guns and did not make a change until 25 minutes to go.

England did at least improve on a dismal first half and had the ball in the net within five minutes of the restart.

Phil Foden turned in Kieran Trippier's cross but was caught offside after a VAR review.

Slovakia should have doubled their lead shortly afterwards when England gave away possession and Strelac saw Pickford well off his line but failed to hit the target from the halfway line.

Southgate's hand was finally forced on 66 minutes by an injury to Trippier.

With Luke Shaw not match-fit, Bukayo Saka was forced to deputise at left-back to make room for the introduction of Cole Palmer.

England's chances seemed to have gone when Kane headed wide a golden opportunity and Declan Rice smashed the post with a long-range pot shot.

However, there was an incredible twist as Bellingham acrobatically turned home Guehi's flick-on from a throw-in in the final moments of added-on time.

Kane hailed the goal as "one of the best in our country's history, I reckon".

The Brentford striker headed Eberechi Eze's mishit shot back across goal for Kane to power home his second goal of the tournament.

Despite his lack of experience,

far-right in power in France for the first time since the Nazi occupation in World War II and give 28-year-old RN party chief Jordan Bardella, a protégé of its longtime leader Marine Le Pen, the chance to form a government.

This would create a tense period of "cohabitation" with Macron, who has vowed to serve out his term until 2027. Bardella has said he will only form a government if the RN wins an absolute majority in the elections.

In the southern city of Marseille, Nabil Agueni said he had skipped the European elections but voted on yesterday.

UK ELECTION
Govt warns of Russian interference

AFP, London
Britain's deputy prime minister warned yesterday that the country's upcoming general election faces threats from hostile actors such as Russia seeking to influence the UK's democratic process.



A Palestinian woman bakes unleavened bread in a makeshift oven while sitting on the rubble of buildings destroyed in the Israeli bombardment, as some residents return to the city of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia downs 36 Ukraine-launched drones
Claims two more east Ukrainian villages

REUTERS
Russia's air defence systems destroyed 36 drones that Ukraine launched overnight targeting several regions in Russia's southwest, the Russian defence ministry said yesterday.

Delhi's heavy rains claim 11 lives
Flight operations stutter in the city's main airport

REUTERS, New Delhi
The death toll from this week's sudden heavy rain has climbed to 11 in New Delhi, including four citizens who drowned in submerged underpasses, the Times of India reported, while flight operations stuttered in the Indian capital.

Hospital generators to run out of fuel in 48 hrs

Warns Gaza health ministry as much of electricity infrastructure decimated by Israeli attacks

AGENCIES
Gaza's few functional hospitals and health facilities could lose power in 48 hours if they don't receive fuel, causing life-saving medical equipment to stop working.

who cited the Palestinian embassy in Cairo. The rest reached Egypt with assistance from foreign embassies or through a private Egyptian travel agency, which charges large sums to coordinate their exit.



'Asian version of Nato'
North Korea condemns drills by US, Japan, South Korea

REUTERS, Seoul
North Korea criticised a joint military exercise by South Korea, Japan and the United States held this month, state media said yesterday, saying such drills show the relationship among three countries has developed into "the Asian version of Nato".

POST-COUP MYANMAR
Central bank denies UN report on weapons transactions

REUTERS
Myanmar's central bank denied a UN report that the military government can still access money and weapons for its war against anti-coup forces, saying financial institutions under bank's supervision followed prescribed procedures.



Militants turning to apps

FROM PAGE 1
Some of these groups have over 500 members or followers, who are possibly looking for an opportunity to stage a subversive act, they add.

raids over those two years. Neo JMB was earlier found involved in the Holy Artisan cafe attack in Gulshan that left 22 people dead, including foreigners and two policemen.

says the report. Besides, the outfit is planning to hack into the cable TV network in different parts of the country and "broadcast" content asking viewers to join it.

Cybercriminals

FROM PAGE 1
to register the consignment with the NBR server, said customs officials involved in the investigation.

addresses and no OTP was sent to the mobile phone of the official concerned, said investigators. Customs Commissioner Mohammad Fyuzur Rahman said, "The NBR had taken some steps after a large number of consignments were cleared from the port by using the IDs of customs officials to evade tax."

Official document from Bangladesh Customs regarding a consignment of cigarettes. It includes a table with columns for 'ক্রমিক ক্রমিক' (Serial No.) and 'বিস্তারিত বিবরণ' (Detailed Description). The document is signed by the Customs Commissioner and includes a date and time stamp.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

## A facility encouraging malfeasance

### Provision granting amnesty for black money holders is a disgrace

We condemn the parliament's decision to once again approve a provision allowing black money holders to legalise undisclosed wealth without any scrutiny by paying a 15 percent tax, despite protests over the past few weeks. The provision is set to come into effect from July 1. While the country's highest income tax rate stands at 25 percent, allowing black money holders—many of them accumulating their wealth through corrupt means—to legalise it at a much reduced rate is truly befuddling. Experts, anti-graft watchdogs and even some lawmakers had strongly opposed the move which would send a wrong message to both individuals amassing black money and honest taxpayers.

The message is simple: the law is set in such a way that it favours black money holders over honest taxpayers. The former will no doubt be encouraged by it. And when those who earn their money legally are made to pay higher taxes compared to those who do so illegally, why should they, too, not try to game the system? Because the Awami League government has regularised this budget provision over the years, citing scenarios that defy logic, honest taxpayers (belonging to the higher tax slabs) may be forgiven for thinking they would be better off by not filing regular taxes, and making use of this provision later to pay a reduced tax. When laws are designed to create such discrepancies and encourage immoralities, it is not difficult to understand the moral standards of those arguing for these laws.

Given how widespread corruption has become in the country, the provision would come as a huge relief for the corrupt. They would be assured to know that despite massive public outcries, many in key positions are still willing to bend the rules in their favour. Not only that, they are even willing to undermine Article 20(2) of the constitution to do so. Except in 2020-21 (during Covid-19), the amount of black money whitened through this process has been a drop in the ocean compared to the estimated size of our black economy. The data clearly debunks the government's narrative that providing such a facility is going to bring significant amounts of black money into the mainstream. But even if it did, why would lawmakers accept money made from drug dealing, human trafficking, or other criminal activities being legalised under a special provision in the first place?

Having provided this facility repeatedly, has the government succeeded in reducing the size of the shadow economy? Has it improved its tax system or revenue collection as advertised? Has it managed to reduce corruption and strengthen rule of law? The answer to all these questions is a resounding "No". The government should, therefore, immediately withdraw the provision, and make sure black money holders—particularly those involved with criminal and corrupt activities—are held to account.

## A monument to systemic negligence

### Chattogram testing lab remains inoperative even after nine years

It is disheartening that Chattogram's Modern Food Testing Laboratory—a Tk 34.4 crore project funded by the Asian Development Bank—has remained non-operational despite its completion in 2015. The facility, intended to enhance food safety, began trial testing in January 2016. However, according to a report by this daily, the lack of a signing authority has rendered its results useless, as no official certifications of food safety can be made. This is a glaring testament to the systemic negligence and inefficiency that so often stymie the functionality of government facilities.

The laboratory, divided into two sections, is equipped to test a wide range of food items including milk, meat, vegetables, edible oil, etc. It's a pity that such an important and expensive facility would sit idle year after year just because no one in the administration cared to provide the support necessary to make it fully operational. Normally, the first order of business in any such project would be appointing an appropriate signing authority, since no actionable steps can be taken without one regardless of how dire its findings. The second priority would be having adequate and properly motivated manpower. Reportedly, out of the 24 officials initially appointed in the laboratory, only seven remain due to delays in regularising their jobs. So the question is, why would these basic issues remain unresolved even after nine years, and despite receiving operational approval in as far back as 2016?

Unfortunately, we have seen too many cases of vital technical or medical projects languishing after completion of construction to consider the Chattogram case as an isolated one. In fact, the government has a rather unenviable reputation when it comes to operationalising such public interest initiatives. Among the issues that new projects usually suffer from are staff shortages, lack of equipment, lack of power supply, coordination issues among the relevant institutions, etc.—all of which can be attributed to bureaucratic inertia and mismanagement. The gap between the completion of projects and their actual operationalisation can be overwhelming.

We, therefore, urge the government to remove all barriers to the seamless operation of the food testing laboratory in Chattogram so that it can serve its intended purpose. As well as the problems mentioned above, another issue delaying its operation is that the Chattogram City Corporation has yet to assume control of the lab despite this transition being scheduled post-2021. All this should be addressed urgently.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### 8 years of Holy Artisan terrorist attack



On this day in 2016, five militants with firearms, machetes, and grenades stormed the Holy Artisan Bakery, an upscale eatery in Dhaka's Gulshan area, and held the diners hostage before killing 22 people, including three Bangladeshis, seven Japanese, nine Italians, and one Indian.

# Can the latest school census data help curb dropout?



Dr Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at BRAC University, chair of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), adviser to the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), and associate editor of the International Journal of Educational Development. Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

MANZOOR AHMED

The Annual Primary School Census (APSC) 2023 report published by the Directorate of Primary Education provides an account of children attending and completing primary education and of institutions at this level. It says little about what students take from primary schools by way of knowledge, skills and values that can make a difference for the next stages of their education and life.

Rumana Ali MP, state minister of primary and mass education, said in a preface to the recently published report that insights from it would help undertake "targeted actions and strategic measures" to enhance the "educational journey and achievements of every Bangladeshi child." Shah Rezwana Hayat, director-general of primary education, added that the insights and recommendations of the report would serve as a "fundamental platform for fostering informed discussions and collaborative actions."

What are the insights offered by the report, and what are the recommendations? There are two pieces of advice: about improving the quality of data for the report itself, and about improving primary education outcomes. Let's look briefly at them.

As the report notes, a post-enumeration quality check of the APSC data, undertaken by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), showed that there was an estimated error of 3.44 percent in coverage of institutions in the school census. This means that over 4,000 primary-level institutions may have been missed out by the census.

More importantly, the quality check also showed that there was a measurement discrepancy of five percent (plus or minus) between the school census data and the post-enumeration check. The report claims that a probability of five percent error was "negligible" and the results "seemed to be good and acceptable" for policy measures. Actually, the under-coverage of institutions and the error margin do cast doubt on the validity of the findings as the basis for corrective actions and policy measures.

For example, the drop in student enrolment by about 8.5 lakh from the previous year is under 0.5 percent of total enrolment, well within the

five percent plus or minus margin. It is also noted in the report that accuracy regarding the data from kindergartens and private schools has been challenging and no data has been collected from Qawmi madrasas. These institutions together are likely to be enrolling one-third of the primary-level students. The declining birth rate in recent years also reduces the number of children seeking primary education enrolment.



The latest Annual Primary School Census report points to problems, but does not provide a full and reliable picture. FILE PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The report mentions that better methodology and tools such as the Integrated Primary Education Information Management System (IPEIMS) may have helped to correct past data biases, and that the improved tools as well as verification through post-enumeration check should be applied to maintain data quality. These are reasonable advice and deserve serious attention to come out with reliable educational input data regarding students, teachers, and institutions.

At the same time, it is necessary to remember that by its very nature and intended purpose, the APSC lacks outcome data regarding how much and what students learn. The annual school census is far from a comprehensive and holistic picture of primary education.

So, should we not be concerned about dropout and exclusion of children from school? Yes, we should, and the APSC points to problems but does not provide a full and reliable picture. We should also ask what light the school census throws on improving primary-level performance and student-learning outcomes.

Drawing conclusions from the collected input data about institutions, students, and teachers, the report suggests a number of action steps. These are based more on general discourse on education equity, quality and inclusion issues, rather than extracted specifically from the census findings. They include: targeted interventions to engage all primary school-going children more effectively in education; expanding access to pre-primary education for equitable participation across genders; strengthening special needs education

in Classes 3 and 5 had below grade-level competencies in Bangla, and only a third of the students achieved expected grade-level competencies in mathematics. These were results largely similar to those seen from the NSA in 2017 and earlier rounds. In other words, more than half of children who attend and complete primary grades do not achieve the expected basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and the situation has not improved over the years. By contrast, the primary school completion examination (now discontinued) and Class 5 annual examination routinely showed pass rates of over 95 percent.

It has been noticed that there is a greater involvement of education officials and external development partners, much fanfare and public discussion associated with the annual APSC reports than with the less regular NSA reports. The policymakers seem to be more interested in inputs than outcomes, and there is an antipathy towards connecting the two.

Periodic assessment of learning and annual reporting on inputs have not been undertaken systematically at the secondary level, which is under the jurisdiction of a different ministry. But available evidence suggests that learning outcomes at secondary level could not be any better. A reason, it may be plausibly argued, is that poor foundational learning of children at primary level has knock-on effects on later stages of education.

A pragmatic, relatively simple and easily implementable assessment of learning known as Annual State of Education Report (ASER) has been pioneered in India by the NGO Pratham, and replicated in Pakistan, Nepal and a number of African countries. An NSA or ASER model, with adaptation as necessary, developed and applied systematically to school education can be a way to better understand the interplay of learning inputs and learning results. Thus, policy and action can be better guided and implemented to ensure basic education for all children with equity, quality, and inclusion.

As argued by this writer and others, taking the sustainable development goal for education (SDG4) and the education imperatives for scaling the heights of a higher-middle-income country status seriously means that basic K-12 school education must be ensured for all children.

We cannot continue to keep primary and secondary education in discrete boxes and try to plan and manage these separately just because the education bureaucracy has been set up in a certain way. Denial of basic education to more than half of the children should not continue.

# Bangladesh on the renewable energy race track

RMG NOTES

Mostafiz Uddin is the managing director of Denim Expert Limited. He is also the founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE).



MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

When deciding where to source clothing from, an increasingly important factor will be energy use as fashion brands and retailers look to reduce carbon emissions in supply chains.

A country's energy mix may even one day override all other issues given the climate crisis we face. Here I look at progress made by five garment exporting countries—China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Pakistan, and Turkey—in their transitions to renewable energy sources.

**China** China, the world's largest energy consumer, has made significant strides in renewable energy development. The country's energy mix is still dominated by coal, accounting for more than 50 percent of its energy consumption in 2021.

However, China is the global leader in renewable energy capacity, with extensive investments in solar, wind, and hydropower. As of 2023, China has over 500 GW of solar and wind capacity combined, with ambitious plans to reach 1,200 GW by 2030.

Hydropower also plays a significant role, contributing about 20 percent to the national grid. The nation has committed to achieving carbon

neutrality by 2060. Government policies, substantial subsidies, and advances in technology have propelled China's rapid growth in renewables.

**Bangladesh** Bangladesh's energy mix is heavily reliant on natural gas, which accounted for about 62 percent of its total energy consumption in FY 2021-2022. Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in solar home systems, with over five million installations serving rural households. Despite this, renewables contribute only around three percent to the national grid as of 2023.

This has to improve if we are to remain internationally competitive. Our customers will demand that it does. To this end, the government has set a target to generate 10 percent of its electricity from renewables by 2030, but achieving this goal requires significant investments and policy support. The energy mix also includes imported oil and coal.

**Vietnam** Vietnam, the third largest exporter of clothing after China and Bangladesh, has a diverse energy mix, with coal being the predominant source, accounting for more than 40 percent

of the total energy consumption in 2023. Hydropower is also significant as well as natural gas and oil.

Vietnam has seen a dramatic increase in its renewable energy capacity, particularly in solar and wind power, thanks to favourable government policies, including feed-in tariffs and tax incentives. The wind energy sector is also growing, with projects like the 99.2 MW Bac Lieu wind farm. Vietnam aims to have 30 percent of its electricity generated from renewables by 2030.

**Pakistan** Pakistan's current energy mix is dominated by fossil fuels, with natural gas, oil, and coal making up the majority as of 2023. The renewable energy sector is still in its early stages, but the country has significant potential, particularly in wind and solar power.

As of 2023, renewable energy accounts for about six percent of Pakistan's total energy mix, with plans to increase this share to 30 percent by 2030. Key projects include the Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park and various wind farms in the Sindh province.

Government initiatives and international support have been crucial in advancing these projects. However, Pakistan faces challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, financial constraints, and a need for more robust policy frameworks to attract private investment.

**Turkey** Turkey's energy mix is quite diverse, with natural gas (27 percent), coal (25 percent), and oil (29 percent) being the primary sources of energy in 2022. Renewables including wind, solar

power and hydro also makes significant contributions.

The country has implemented various incentives, including feed-in tariffs and purchase guarantees, to encourage investment in renewable energy.

However, the transition is challenged by economic instability and fluctuating policy environments, which can impact investor confidence.

Overall, the renewable energy transition in China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Pakistan, and Turkey highlights diverse paths and challenges. China's leadership in capacity and investment sets a global benchmark, while Vietnam's rapid adoption showcases the potential of favourable policies and incentives.

Pakistan's journey emphasises the need for policy and financial frameworks, and Turkey's balanced approach reflects a strategy of building energy security through renewables.

But what about Bangladesh? We must improve the supply of renewable energy available to our industrial base. Our government, regional authorities, garment manufacturers and international fashion brands must collaborate on this issue to better understand the current state of our energy mix, decide how it can be shifted heavily in favour of renewable energy and then work out what this will cost—and, most importantly, how it will be funded.

Bangladesh has a chance to lead on this issue, but China, Pakistan, Turkey, Vietnam and other garment producing countries will also be looking to boost their own renewable energy use. The race is on.



4TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF LATIFUR RAHMAN

# Remembering the flagbearer of independent journalism



**THE THIRD VIEW**  
Mahfuz Anam  
is the editor and publisher of *The Daily Star*.

MAHFUZ ANAM

Latifur Rahman—Shamim or Shamim Bhai to all—was an unlikely person to become a flagbearer of independent journalism. But once he did, he was most unwavering about it.

Before *The Daily Star*, he never showed any sign of wanting to get involved in this complicated and highly sensitive industry. Credit to draw him towards the media goes, as far as I know, to his one-time business partner and friend, Mr AS Mahmud (Mahmud Bhai to me) who convinced him about the importance of this crucial industry. It was my privilege to enjoy the latter's affection through my elder brother, Mahfuz Anam, who was his professional colleague in the oil sector from pre-Bangladesh days. It was Mahmud Bhai who organised my first meeting with Shamim Bhai at the Dhaka Club in 1988-89. I really don't know if I had made any significant impression on him, but it seemed enough for him to continue to meet and carry on the discussion for investing in a new English language newspaper. He was a no-nonsense person and thought about whether I would really leave my tenured UN job—at that time posted in Bangkok, Thailand—to plunge into the uncharted waters of Bangladeshi media, which in the 1990s had very few new investors. I think it was our meeting at my apartment in the Thai capital in January 1990 that convinced him that my determination was for real. From then on, our friendship grew and we soon became partners in giving journalism in Bangladesh a new life, with SM Ali, our founding editor, at its helm.

It was in the initial board meetings of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of *The Daily Star*, that the true commitment of Shamim Bhai to independent journalism became apparent. Both Ali Bhai—a very famous and highly respected journalist and editor in the Asia-Pacific region—and I were most thrilled by the rules of the game that Shamim Bhai was enunciating, along with other founding directors, to run the newspaper. Before Ali Bhai or I could suggest

it, Shamim Bhai persuaded other directors to collectively declare that the role of the board would be to formulate the overall policy and only monitor the financial aspect of the paper. The full journalistic control of *The Daily Star* would be totally in the hands of its editor-publisher. Nothing could energise us more.

It would be fair to think that it was as a mark of respect for Ali Bhai that the board of Mediaworld took such a hands-off approach. But when I was made its editor-publisher, following the sad demise of Ali Bhai in 1993, within two and half years of our founding, the same respect and independence was shown to me, proving that Mediaworld board's approach was institutional and not personal.

It was this institutional approach that was the hallmark of Shamim Bhai. *The Daily Star* must become an institution and everything must function systematically—this was the supreme message of the board. I can say with utmost pride that *The Daily Star* has a board which is among the most enlightened

There are many examples, but two would suffice to tell the whole story of Latifur Rahman's commitment to independent journalism.

Once, Shamim Bhai was contesting to become the president of (Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries) FBCCI. His opponent was Yussuf Abdullah Harun. Throughout the campaign, the paper, of which he was a vital leader, gave

There was another occasion when a fellow businessman complained to him about some coverage by *The Daily Star* about corruption, especially willful loan default and laundering of that money. Shamim Bhai advised him to contact the editor. "I don't run the paper, the editor does," he said. The businessman was shocked and exclaimed, "You own the paper and the editor runs it. How can that be possible?" That was Latifur Rahman.

the biggest Bangla news portal in the world, outstripping *Anandabazar Patrika* of Kolkata of that position, his happiness showed no end. He was usually not very expressive, but on that occasion, it crossed the usual bounds.

There was an occasion when Transcom was about to own a well-known TV channel. Mati Bhai and I were assisting Shamim Bhai. At the very end of months-long negotiations, it came out that there was no official channel to pay

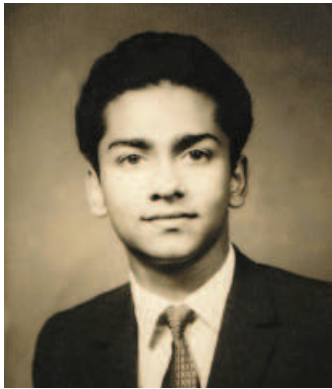
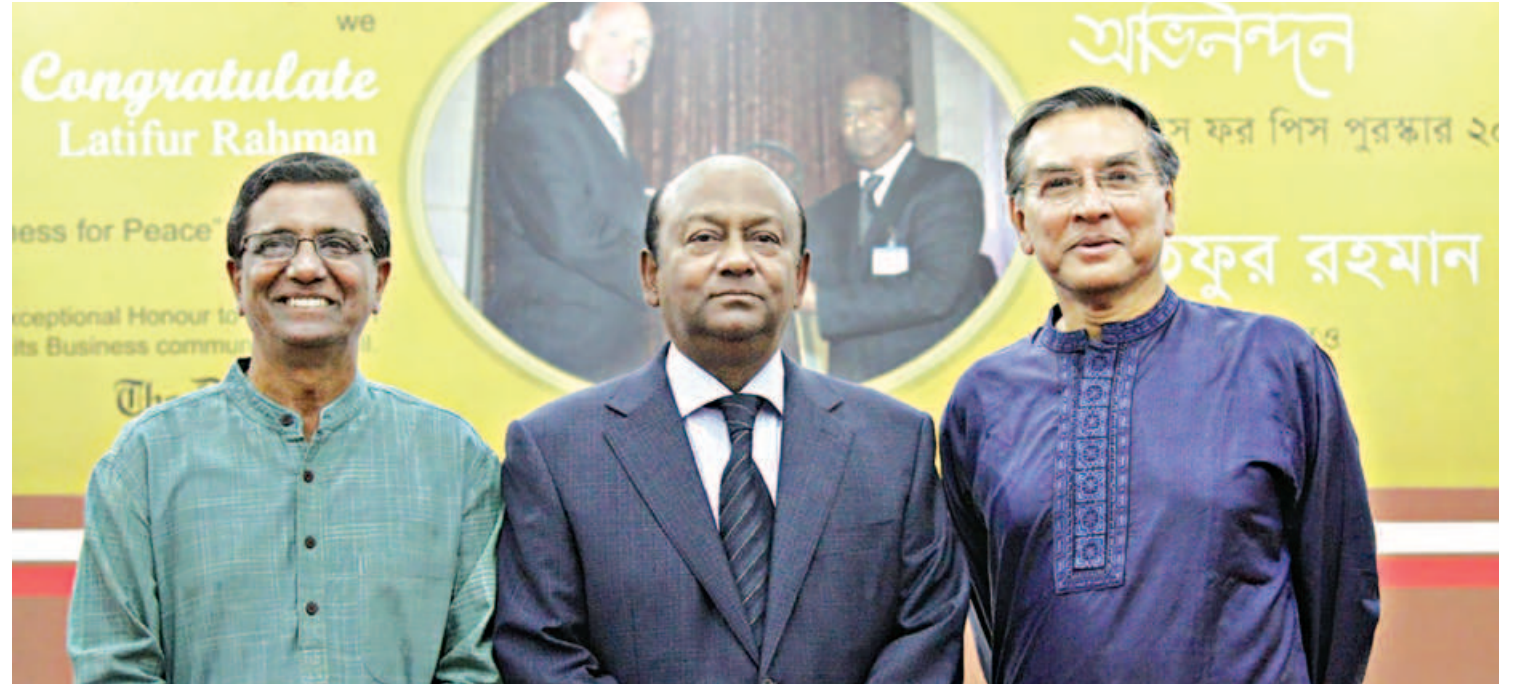


PHOTO: COURTESY  
A young Latifur Rahman.



Latifur Rahman at a reception after he was honoured with the Oslo Business for Peace Award in 2012, with Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman and The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam.

PHOTO: COURTESY

equal coverage to both. We interviewed both, wrote on both, but never tilted on either side. I went one step further. In every coverage, his opponent's item featured before his. As a contestant, he definitely must have wanted

When Matiur Rahman (Mati Bhai) and I approached him with the suggestion to launch a Bangla newspaper, he immediately agreed and found in Mati Bhai the perfect editor to go forward with it. All his values about journalism that he started with in *The Daily Star*, he implemented with equal gusto in *Prothom Alo*. He realised that an English newspaper was necessary, but a Bangla one would reach a far greater audience with the message of independent journalism. He greatly appreciated the extra efforts that Mati Bhai made and encouraged him to take newer initiatives like Prothoma publications, etc.

He would never miss the annual staff meetings of the two papers, especially of *Prothom Alo*. While appreciating the paper's magnificent performance and congratulating the staff and the editor for it, he would never fail to goad them to aspire for greater circulation, quality and business. When the paper reached a circulation of five lakh, he said, "Why not aim for 10 lakh?" That sort of ambition would require huge additional investment, but Shamim Bhai never shied away from it. When *Prothom Alo*'s digital version became

the satellite fee and the channel paid it through "unofficial means." Shamim Bhai would have none of it. He said he would never accept that as a practice. We again marvelled at his ethical stance and wholeheartedly supported him.

Following every board meeting, he would join many of the senior colleagues of the paper and spend hours talking with them about any issue that would come up, but never forgetting to inquire about their personal and family situations. Once, a photographer of *Prothom Alo* suffered a life-threatening accident; Shamim Bhai arranged for him to be airlifted to Singapore and personally paid all his expenses till he recovered. This endeared him forever to all of us.

Today, as we commemorate Latifur Rahman on his fourth death anniversary, we at *The Daily Star* sorely miss his presence. We miss his warmth and his personal touch in going forward in the cause of independent journalism. He will be remembered for, among many other things, his sterling contribution in helping the emergence and continued success of the two most trusted and respected newspapers in Bangladesh.

**Both Ali Bhai—a very famous and highly respected journalist and editor in the Asia-Pacific region—and I were most thrilled by the rules of the game that Shamim Bhai was enunciating, along with other founding directors, to run the newspaper. Before Ali Bhai or I could suggest it, Shamim Bhai persuaded other directors to collectively declare that the role of the board would be to formulate the overall policy and only monitor the financial aspect of the paper. The full journalistic control of The Daily Star would be totally in the hands of its editor-publisher. Nothing could energise us more.**

anywhere in terms of giving the utmost respect to the institution of the editor and allowing the management a free hand in running the newspaper. That is how we started, and that is how it remains till date.

more coverage. But as a newspaper owner, he knew that the public would be watching and judging us as to how we handled the coverage. He never said a word to me about it. That is how objective he had the quality to be.

## 8 years since Chotoo, 4 years since Nana Bhai



Zaraif Ayaat Hossain,  
grandson of Latifur Rahman and elder brother  
of Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain, is head of strategy and  
transformation at Transcom Group.

ZARAIF AYAAT HOSSAIN

To write a piece on July 1 in remembrance of my loved ones is a challenge. The same day belongs to two of them, and maybe that's exactly what they'd want. My clever younger brother wouldn't have had it any other way but to be remembered on the same day as his Nana Bhai for eternity.

Remembering both Chotoo and Nana Bhai today, I think about what a 20-year-old could possibly have in common with his grandfather. It turns out, quite a lot. A calming presence that made everyone feel at home. A quiet confidence that exuded incredible strength, without ever being loud. A tenacious sense of right and wrong. Their refusal to back down when faced with adversity.

One day, when Faraaz and I were kids, we went to see Nana Bhai and Nanu Ma the evening before the beginning of a new school year. That night, he told us the story of his first day of boarding school at St Edmunds. On a cold morning in Shillong, he landed up in school as the new kid, when a student a year senior to him decided to pick on him. The senior student, according to Nana Bhai, was "acting funny" and so he had to do something to stand up for himself. He gave this senior a strong shove to back off, and that's when he established himself as the kid nobody should bully. He told us this story to teach us that we must find the

strength to fight back even in our most vulnerable state.

That young Latifur Rahman would then lead a life with the same spirit. Standing up for himself, his family and protecting his loved ones.

Faraaz would go on to stand up to fiends of a greater magnitude as a young man. On July 1, 2016, Faraaz found himself confronted by armed terrorists. With his

**Remembering both Chotoo and Nana Bhai today, I think about what a 20-year-old could possibly have in common with his grandfather. It turns out, quite a lot. A calming presence that made everyone feel at home. A quiet confidence that exuded incredible strength, without ever being loud. A tenacious sense of right and wrong. Their refusal to back down when faced with adversity.**

life in danger, he chose to fight, to protect, to not cower to evil.

On July 1, to remember Nana Bhai and Chotoo is to keep standing by the same righteous values they both lived by. To remain steadfast in doing good while weathering malicious storms, undue pressure and dire circumstances. To honour them is to keep standing up the way they did.

Mr Latifur Rahman, business icon, industrialist, founder chairman of Transcom Group. Faraaz Hossain, the boy who heroically sacrificed his life during the terrorist attack at Holey Artisan Bakery. But to me, to my family, they'll always be Nana Bhai and Chotoo. Nana Bhai as a grandfather, a husband, a father, and Chotoo as a brother, a son, a grandson. Our beloved Latifur Rahman and Faraaz Hossain remind us to keep fighting for what is right.

Remembering both our guardian angels together on this day, the ultimate remembrance of both Nana Bhai and Chotoo is to live with the courage they would want to see in us. I pray their light shines brighter than ever and that the strength they give never fades.

To our family, friends, loved ones, and well-wishers, our deepest gratitude to you on behalf of our family for always standing by us.



Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain with his grandparents Latifur Rahman and Shahnaz Rahman after graduating from American International School Dhaka in 2014.

PHOTO: COURTESY

# Arrows against muskets

## THE SANTAL HUL

The Hul was and is not just important to Santals alone. It was an event of importance in India's colonial history. The rebellion which consumed the Santal country in 1855 was (after the great mutiny-rebellion of 1857) the single largest rebellion faced by British India's rulers until the great independence movement began in the late nineteenth century.

PETER STANLEY

Exactly 169 years ago, in the jungles of what is now the Indian state of Jharkhand, Bengal Army sepoy fired the final shots in what became known as the 'Hul', or uprising, of 1855. The last of about two thousand Santal fighters died in the Hul's last, anonymous clashes. For six months Santal bands had roamed the jungles of Bengal, burning, plundering and murdering those who had oppressed them. The Hul remains the central event in the recorded history of the Santal people of India and Bangladesh, the subject of songs, poems and stories – and later novels and even films, a heroic episode more celebrated than analysed.

Though of great importance to the Santals, the Hul has been the subject of just a handful of books, though many anthropologists refer to it in explaining how Santal culture has evolved, especially in relation to the nations of which they are a part, of India and Bangladesh. In 2022, my own book on the uprising appeared – *Hul! Hul! the Suppression of the Santal Uprising, Bengal 1855*, published in India by Bloomsbury: its first military history. I tried to explain the failure of the Hul by drawing upon an historical source never before used by its historians – the vast and detailed records of the Bengal Army.

I consulted the existing sources (including precious Santal accounts of the Hul), visited some of the sites

where the Hul occurred and especially read the huge number of detailed accounts of the rising as it is revealed in unpublished British records. That gave me a new and challenging view of it. Was I merely repeating British accounts? I don't think so: read on.

But what right, you might ask, did I, an Australian historian, have to write about an event of such importance to Santal people – especially when I have not a word of Santali? I must admit that my research might seem to be surprising; even offensive. I can only reply that I think that the Hul deserves to be accorded the respect of being treated like the major conflict it clearly was. The Hul was and remains important to Santals, and Santal authors should be writing about the Hul, drawing upon the communal and cultural sources only they can obtain. I offer a perspective that can only help to illuminate Santal historical experience.

But the Hul was and is not just important to Santals alone. It was an event of importance in India's colonial history. The rebellion which consumed the Santal country in 1855 was (after the great mutiny-rebellion of 1857) the single largest rebellion faced by British India's rulers until the great independence movement began in the late nineteenth century.

In describing the Hul, many authors quote Vincent Jervis, a British officer of the Bengal Army, who famously described an incident in the suppression of the rising as 'not war ... it was execution'. The incident he was describing, when sepoy of the 56th Bengal Native Infantry trapped a party of Santals in a house in Narainpore (now Narayanpur, West Bengal), was a matter of simply killing men who simply would not surrender. But should Jervis's description be applied to the Hul as a whole? Was the suppression of the Hul merely a matter of 'execution'? The more I read the British records, the more I saw the Hul as an insurgency fought by both sides.

The Santals, I realised, should not be seen merely as the victims of British repression.

They rose in rebellion in the monsoon of 1855, finally unable to stand the oppression of the landlords, merchants and moneylenders who oppressed them (most of whom were Bengalis). They rebelled not so much against the rule of the East India Company (though they were disillusioned at how poorly its officials protected them from exploitation) but it was the forces of the East India Company's Bengal Army which acted swiftly, efficiently and often brutally to suppress the uprising. Indeed, more than a tenth of the entire infantry strength of the Bengal Native Infantry was deployed against the Santal Hul: this was a major challenge to the stability of British India.

The Hul began late in June 1855 in the Rajmahal Hills. The hot weather had rumours circulated, reports of supernatural portents of a coming apocalypse. No one anticipated the scale of the spontaneous outbreak of rebellion (certainly not the district's British officials, who had no idea of Santal grievances). It began with the killing of a darogah – a police official – who had been notable for his

**The Santal leader, Sidhu Manji, one of the four brothers who inspired and led the Hul, who was executed at Bhugnadihee in February 1856.**



A British artist's depiction of a Santal ceremony, one of the few depictions made of the Santals before the Hul, which hints at their rich communal traditions.

IMAGE SOURCES: ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

cruelty against Santals. The killing sparked a mass movement, in which thousands of Santals joined.

Columns of Santals moved out of the Rajmahal hills, killing the merchants, zamindars and petty rajahs who had oppressed them. Reports of atrocities they committed – a measure of their desperation and despair – reached the British authorities, who reacted swiftly. Within a week, sepoy regiments began marching toward the disturbed region.

At first, the Santals experienced military success. At Peer Pointee, just south of the Ganges, on 16 July, they routed a force of Hill Rangers sent from Bagulpur. Inspired by the charismatic brothers of Bhugnadihee (today Bhugnadee, Jharkhand), especially the Santal heroes Sidhu and Kanhu, they believed that sepoy's musket balls would turn to water. Some British officials panicked and refugees, British and Bengali, fled from the approaching Santal bands. For several months a huge swathe of Bengal, from Bagulpur in Bihar to Suri in West Bengal, and east to the Bagiruti River, was out of British control.

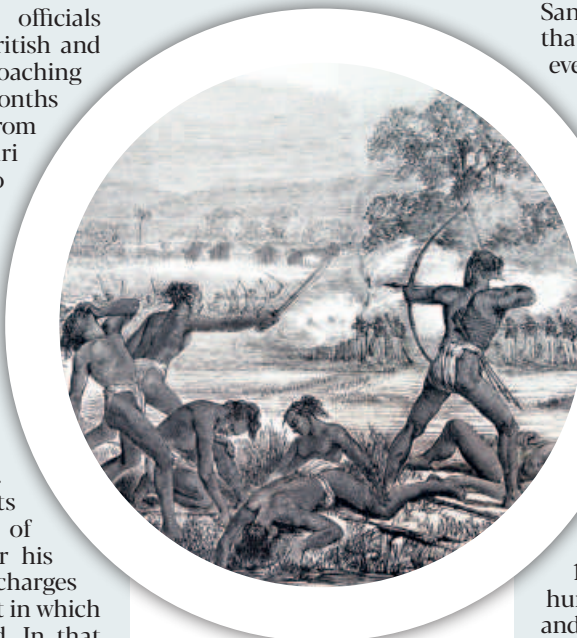
Soon, though, the Bengal Army exerted its power. The 7th Bengal Native Infantry marched from Berhampore and as early as 15 July attacked a large Santal force at Moheshpore (now Mahespur, Jharkhand). Sepoy arrived on elephants with musket volleys, a fight in which perhaps 200 Santals died. In that battle three of the Bhugnadihee brothers were wounded, bravely leading their followers. Sepoy columns advanced into the Santal country from Suri in the south, Bagulpur in the north and from Berhampore to the east. While for a month or so the two clashed almost accidentally, each side then developed a sort of strategy.

Lacking coherent leadership, the Santal bands roamed around the region, looting and living off villages, driving off tens of thousands of refugees, many Bengalis. Gradually, they moved towards the south-west, seeking to cross the Grand Trunk Road towards their ancestral lands in Chota Nagpore. When British movements frustrated this impulse, diehard Santals gathered in rugged jungle-clad hills on the borders of what were then Bhagalpur and Beerbhoom districts, holding out even as they suffered from starvation and disease.

After initial indecision and even panic, the British strategy blocked Santal movements by holding chains of military posts, combined with aggressive forays (which they called 'dours') under energetic younger officers, and then in November and December declared martial law and launched a concerted 'drive' to destroy and disperse the last Santal bands.

The Hul saw many fights between small sepoy forces and large Santal bands, the names of which have

usually never been published in English sources, though Santal songs and stories may record them. These included the six day Santal siege of the post at Koomerabad (Kumrabad, now covered by the waters of a dam on the Mayurakshi River), and the fight at Bissohuwa, somewhere in eastern Jharkhand. There, on 1 August the two sides clashed, at a place I could not identify, but the fight was described by the British officers, and drawn by a surveyor accompanying the force. The officer wrote of Santals who 'arose as if by magic', charging the sepoy even as they fired volleys at them. Many other skirmishes occurred at nameless places. Though often the only accounts of them were written by the British officers – never before published – they give valuable insights into the Santals'



**The fight at Bissohuwa, fought on 1 August 1855 and drawn by a British officer whose admiration for the Santals was expressed by depicting it from the Santal perspective, and in distinctly heroic terms.**

experience of rebellion, including making clear why so many risked so much for their communities.

The Santals acted out of desperation, hampered by many serious shortcomings: they had no warrior tradition or military organisation or political program; their only arms were hunting weapons – bows and arrows. Crucially, they had no accepted commanders, besides the four brothers of Bhugnadihee, whose charismatic leadership inspired the outbreak of the Hul but proved unable to control it.

While the Hul failed largely because the Santal bands abandoned their villages and fields and increasingly suffered from disease and starvation in huge, improvised jungle camps, Santals learned how to fight an insurgency as they went. They used their assets well – they knew their own country and were able to move more swiftly than

the slow-moving sepoy columns, moving at the speed of their elephant transport. While at first trusting in sorcery, Santal leaders learned how to direct their bands to stand and fight, even using bows and arrows against musket volleys. They learned the tactics of jungle insurgency: these brave men were not simply the victims of 'execution'.

The Bengal Army 'Field Forces' which responded to the Hul also learned. Sepoy learned how to move and live in the jungle, adopting 'light infantry' tactics, search and destroy patrols, bringing in cavalry and even using rockets in pursuing Santal bands. They used river steamers and Bengal's first railway to move troops, supplies and intelligence around the region. British records show that they saw the Santals as an enemy whose courage they came to respect. A British civilian who witnessed Santals attacking wrote admiringly that they 'never dodged but stood' – even as he shot at them.

The Hul was a war, and a 'dirty' war at that. For every report of Santal 'savagery' – they took bloody revenge on those who had oppressed them – there was a report of the troops' 'severity'. Eventually, after the end of the monsoon, columns of sepoy conducted 'drives', advancing across the Santals' lands, breaking up their bands and killing or capturing those still resisting. By the end of 1855 the rebellion had been extinguished, at a cost of about 10,000 Santal lives, most dead of hunger and illness: many women and children.

Although the rebellion failed, it did bring change for the Santals. Recognising that a tribal people needed protection, the Company created the Santal Parganas, governed by British officials whose paternal care contrasted with the indifference that had provoked the Hul. They ruled through the very village leaders who had been instrumental in the Hul.

The Hul was largely forgotten by India's British rulers – they published almost nothing about it. But the Santals never forgot, creating a rich seam of songs, stories and poems about it. In due course, as India's freedom movement grew, Indian nationalist historians re-interpreted the Hul as a rebellion against British rule, one suppressed by 'British' troops. In fact, the Santals rebelled against the oppression of Bengalis, the Hul suppressed overwhelmingly by Indian troops – under British command.

Regardless of how it may be viewed, the Hul deserves to be better known, and not just among Santals. My book *Hul! Hul!* offers a new view of the Santal uprising, inevitably largely from the perspective of those who fought against it. But even the British records shed new light on the Santals' bravery, ingenuity and resolution in fighting to defend their interests as a people.

**Prof. Peter Stanley of UNSW Canberra is one of Australia's most distinguished military historians.**



## Reliance on gamechanger Bumrah key in India's triumph

AGENCIES

Jasprit Bumrah was one of the main architects of India's T20 World Cup triumph and he capped off his tournament as the player of the tournament after the Men in Blue won the final by seven runs against South Africa on Saturday.

Bumrah's campaign will go down in history as one of the greatest individual displays ever seen in the event's history.

Collecting 15 wickets at an average of 8.26, Bumrah finished with an astonishing economy of just 4.17, by far and away the best rate of those to bowl a minimum of 20 overs at the tournament. He joins teammate Virat Kohli (a two-time winner) as India players to claim the Player of the Tournament award.

"I honestly think he's the best seam bowler who has played white ball cricket," former England captain Michael Vaughan told Cricbuzz yesterday.

"If you can tell me a better seam bowler. I know Wasim Akram was special and there have been many others to mention but I just think he's got this amazing action ability and he's got the pace, he's got all



the different skill sets and he does it under pressure day in and day out. It's not just two or three times at the World Cup. It's pretty much every single game."

Vaughan put it neatly as Bumrah delivered outstanding displays of his acumen throughout the tournament and propelled his reputation to newer heights. He was immaculate in all three phases of play. He bowled unplayable deliveries with the new ball, disrupted the opposition's momentum in the middle overs, nailed yorkers as well as slingers to knock the wind out of the opposition's sails in the latter stages, and was skipper Rohit Sharma's go-to option whenever India were in a bothersome position.

One could hardly point out an occasion when a batter tried to take Bumrah on as most, if not all, tried to see off his overs and look for scoring opportunities elsewhere.

His economy rates of 4.07 in the Powerplay, 4.75 in the middle overs, and 3.78 at the death were also instrumental in Bumrah winning phases of play. And that assurance he brought gave Rohit and India the belief of winning games from any situation.



## Legendary trio's FAREWELL TO REMEMBER

SPORTS REPORTER

"The nice guy who finished first" is the title of a biography on Rahul Dravid, an obvious attempt at wordplay in reference to Dravid's reputation as cricket's ultimate nice guy who went on to become one of the greatest batters India has ever produced.

However, before June 29, 2024, this title was essentially propagating a lie. While Dravid had risen to incredible heights in his playing career, 'The Wall' never truly came 'first' as he was never a world champion.

As a coach, he shepherded India's Under-19 team to a World Cup trophy in 2019, and after taking over the reins of the senior team in 2021, India played two finals in 2023 - the World Test Championship and the ICC ODI World Cup - but once again, his side slipped up.

Up against South Africa, the final of the just-concluded Men's T20 World Cup was Dravid's final chance to be involved in a World Cup triumph for India in any capacity for the foreseeable future, as the 51-year-old had already announced that he would be leaving the post after the tournament.

Meanwhile, for Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, two modern-day greats of India and world cricket, the final was their chance to bid adieu to the shortest format as world champions. Both knew what it felt like to lift a World Cup, with Rohit being part of India's triumph in the maiden edition of the T20 World Cup in 2007 and Kohli lifting Sachin Tendulkar on his shoulders after they won the final of the ODI World Cup in 2011 in front of an enraptured home crowd in Mumbai.

But after tasting the ultimate success so early in their respective careers, the

duo had to endure the agony of getting close but eventually falling short in ICC tournaments for over a decade. Rohit and Kohli, aged 37 and 35 respectively, are nearing the swansong of their respective careers and, while they had already done more than enough to cement their positions as icons of Indian cricket, failure to drive their team to a world



championship as leading figures remained a blemish in both of their careers.

The desperation to win a World Cup trophy was evident, as Rohit wanted his batters to move past the circumspect approach that brought their downfall in previous T20 World Cups and lead by example at the top. Especially, his assault against Australia in the Super Eight, a swashbuckling 92 off 41 balls, set the stage for Australia's eventual elimination, removing the biggest thorn to India's

charge for the title.

Kohli, on the other hand, had a terrible tournament leading up to the final. But even though he couldn't get among the runs, he continued opening the innings for India, not dropping down to his favourite one-down position where he averages almost 54 in T20s. Kohli conceding his superstar status for the betterment of the team is

one example of how motivated The Men in Blue were

to make sure this time they return home with the trophy.

In the end, Rohit's bold stance and Kohli's sacrifice bore fruit as they both have now hung up their boots in T20s as World Cup winners. Meanwhile, the place where Dravid had experienced his biggest failure, when India got eliminated from the group stage of the 2007 ODI World Cup in the Caribbean under his leadership, has become the place where he finally became a world champion.



## WIMBLEDON prepares for new era

REUTERS

Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz and world number one Jannik Sinner will take their simmering rivalry at the top of the men's game to Wimbledon, where the two young guns will look to prolong seven-times winner Novak Djokovic's trophy drought in 2024.

Even before the tournament begins, however, Djokovic's quest for a record 25th Grand Slam title is under a cloud with the Serb building match fitness after undergoing knee surgery three weeks ago for an injury that prematurely ended his French Open.



Fellow 37-year-old and former champion Andy Murray is also in a race to be ready for what is likely his Wimbledon swansong after the injury-plagued Briton went under the knife last week for a back issue.

With Roger Federer retired and Rafa Nadal skipping Wimbledon to focus on next month's Paris Olympics, the potential pullout of Djokovic would ensure the first Wimbledon without any of the Big Three since 1998.

All eyes would then be on Alcaraz and Sinner as they usher in a new era at Wimbledon.

"I don't feel more pressure about playing a tournament that not one of the Big Three is playing in," Alcaraz said last week before Djokovic arrived in London on Sunday to give fans hope.

### Swiatek looks for breakthrough

For all her achievements over the last few seasons, Iga Swiatek remains largely unproven on grasscourts, but the Pole will have a golden opportunity to claim a maiden Wimbledon title with her rivals hampered by injuries and illness before the Grand Slam.

The five-times major champion has been an unstoppable force since inheriting the world number one spot, although none of the 22 titles have come on the sport's slickest surface.

But fresh from her fourth French Open title amid a 19-match winning streak stretching back to May, the 23-year-old will head to the All England Club primed to go past the quarter-finals for the first time and prove herself as an all-court player.



Even though the Cristiano Ronaldo-led Portugal looked confident in training, they have been a lot patchy on the field as Roberto Martinez's side fell to a shock 2-0 defeat to debutants Georgia in their final Euro 2024 group game. They progressed as group champions regardless. However, as they face Slovenia in a Round of 16 game in Frankfurt on Monday, they will hope for a lot more potency up front, especially from star man Ronaldo who is yet to score in this edition of the tournament.

PHOTO: X

## Misfiring France & Belgium on collision course

AGENCIES

By this stage of the European Championship, favourites France and contenders Belgium would have wanted to be well into their stride and hitting their straps as they enter the knockout stages.

Instead, the neighbours go spluttering into the last 16 and into a head-on collision in Dusseldorf on Monday after both failed to finish top of their first-round group.

France's much-vaunted attack is suffering from a crisis of confidence and coach Didier Deschamps, usually a steady hand guiding the squad, looks unsure of what his next move will be.

Belgium will have had some motivation sucked out of their cause following an astonishingly hostile reaction from their own supporters after they limped into the next stage of the tournament in Germany.

Despite Wednesday's draw with Ukraine assuring them progress, they were subjected to loud barracking from their fans and have since closed ranks.

Captain Kevin De Bruyne did

not take kindly to the abuse. His attitude and demeanour will set the tone for the rest of the Belgian side as they look to leave behind them the limp performances from the group stage.

De Bruyne did, however, later mention that they would "need the fans against France". It is



understandable as Belgium will be looking for revenge against the French, who beat the Belgians in the 2018 World Cup semifinal to hand their so-called "golden generation" a bitter experience.

For that to happen, Romelu Lukaku would need to find his scoring touch after a number of missed opportunities in the

tournament. His record 85 goals for Belgium does not include any from Euro 2024, and overall he has a poor scoring record at major tournaments.

Few would have envisaged a French forward line failing to score in open play in their opening three matches at the tournament.

One of their two goals was a penalty from Kylian Mbappe and the other an own goal from Austria in their opening game.

Deschamps must now decide whether to restore Antoine Griezmann to the line-up and pair him up front with Mbappe.

Griezmann has been a long-time mainstay for Deschamps but was dropped for their last game, a 1-1 draw with Poland, which allowed Austria to emerge as unexpected winners of Group D, which also included the Netherlands.

As things stand, the oldest and most frequent opponents will hope for getting everything right, both tactically and selection wise, in order to get their rhythm back through this crucial encounter.



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## Latifur Rahman's 4th death anniv today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the fourth death anniversary of Latifur Rahman, founder chairman and CEO of Transcom Group, a well-known and highly respected business house in Bangladesh.

Soft-spoken and humble, the visionary and ethical businessman passed away in his sleep on this day at his paternal home in Cumilla after suffering from lung-related illness for a long time.

His passing coincided with the death anniversary of his grandson Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain. Faraaz, a student of Emory University in Atlanta, US, was brutally killed by

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**A MIGHTY DOWNPOUR BECKONS...**A swarm of dark clouds drape the vast, open sky over the Kirtankhola near the Dapdapia bridge in Barishal Sadar upazila. Moderate to heavy rain drenched much of the country, including Barishal, yesterday, thanks to a monsoon low-pressure system over the Bay. PHOTO: TITU DAS

## 35 PUBLIC UNIVS Teachers go on work abstention indefinitely

**Demand reinstatement of pension benefits**

DU CORRESPONDENT

Public university teachers across the country will go on an indefinite work abstention starting today as the government has not heeded their demand to reinstate previous pension facilities in place of the Universal Pension Scheme.

Nizamul Hoque Bhuiyan, secretary general of the Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association, announced the programme yesterday afternoon when teachers were observing a full-day work abstention programme at Dhaka University's Arts building.

"The work abstention programme will continue until our demand is met. Classes, exams, and other academic and administrative activities will remain suspended during the movement," Nizamul said while briefing the media.

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## CHAOS OVER FLIGHTS TO KL

### What steps were taken against those responsible?

**Enquires HC about migrant workers who failed to go to Malaysia**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know what steps have been taken against people responsible for the mismanagement that led to Bangladeshi jobseekers failing to reach Malaysia before the deadline of May 31 this year.

The court asked Deputy Attorney General Tushar Kanti Roy and Assistant Attorney General Selim Azad to enquire about the steps taken by the authorities concerned and place the information before it in a week.

The bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice SM Masud Hossain Dolon passed the order during a hearing of a writ petition.

Seeking necessary directives, Supreme Court lawyers Md Tanvir Ahmed and Biplab Kumar Poddar filed the petition

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## LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN FRANCE

### French far right wins first round: exit polls

AFP, Paris

France's far right won the first round of pivotal legislative elections yesterday with the centrist forces of President Emmanuel Macron coming in only third behind the left after the highest turnout in over four decades, estimates said.

But it remained unclear if the far-right National Rally (RN) party of Marine Le Pen would win an absolute majority of seats in the new National Assembly lower house in the July 7 second round and claim the post of prime minister.

Macron had stunned the nation and baffled even some allies by calling snap polls after the RN trounced his centrist forces in European Parliament elections this month.

That gamble risks backfiring, with Macron's alliance now expected to win a far smaller minority contingent in parliament, making the president a far less powerful figure for the remaining three years of his term.

Projections from prominent French polling

firms gave the RN 34.5 percent of the vote, compared to 28.5-29.1 percent for the left-wing New Popular Front alliance, and 20.5-21.5 percent for Macron's centrist camp.

The polling agencies projected this would give the RN a majority of seats in the 577-seat National Assembly after the second round and a possible absolute majority.

In a statement, Macron called for a "broad" alliance against the far right in the second round.

Julien Martin, a 38-year-old architect, who voted in the southwestern city of Bordeaux, said: "These are not easy elections, the results are very uncertain, and the repercussions could be serious for society."

With the French facing their most polarising choices in recent history, turnout soared. The Elabe organisation projecting a final turnout of 67.5 percent, the highest participation in a regular format legislative election in France since 1981.

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## NBR official transferred amid graft scandal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has transferred tax official Quazi Abu Mahmud Faisal to Bogura amid allegations of ill-gotten wealth against him.

His transfer to inspection range-1, Bogura is effective immediately, the NBR said in a notice yesterday.

Meanwhile, Faisal's previous position as NBR's first secretary (tax legal and enforcement) will be filled by Additional Commissioner Md Moniruzzaman, the notice added.

The move comes after a Dhaka court ordered the authorities to confiscate the moveable



Faisal

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## Israeli forces push deeper into Gaza 43 more Palestinians killed

REUTERS, Gaza

Israeli forces yesterday advanced further into the Shejaia neighbourhood of northern Gaza and also pushed deeper into western and central Rafah in the south, killing at least six Palestinians and destroying several homes, residents said.

Israeli tanks, which moved back into Shejaia four days ago, fired shells towards several houses, leaving families trapped inside and unable to leave, the residents said.

Speaking at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting yesterday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeated his position that there was no substitute for achieving victory in the offensive against Hamas.

"We are committed to fighting until we achieve all of our objectives: Eliminating Hamas, returning all of our hostages, ensuring that Gaza never again constitutes a threat to Israel and returning our residents securely to their homes in the south and the north," he said.

The Israeli military said forces operating in Shejaia had over the past day killed several Palestinian gunmen, located weapons, and struck military infrastructure. On Saturday it announced the death of two Israeli soldiers in northern Gaza.

The armed wing of Hamas and the allied Islamic Jihad reported fierce fighting in both Shejaia and Rafah, saying their fighters had fired anti-tank rockets and mortar bombs against Israeli forces operating there.

More than eight months into Israel's air and ground offensive in Gaza, Hamas fighters continue to stage attacks on Israeli forces, operating in areas that the Israeli army said it had gained control over months ago.

## Bellingham, Kane rescue England

AFP, Gelsenkirchen

England escaped an embarrassing Round of 16 exit at Euro 2024 thanks to Jude Bellingham's overhead kick before Harry Kane struck in extra time for a 2-1 win over Slovakia on Sunday to set up a quarterfinal clash against Switzerland.



The Three Lions have been hyped as one of the favourites to end a 58-year wait for major tournament glory but looked set to go out with a whimper to Ivan Schranz's 25th-minute goal.

However, Bellingham's moment of inspiration five minutes into six added on in stoppage time breathed new life into

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**England midfielder Jude Bellingham celebrates with striker Harry Kane after scoring his side's first goal in a 2-1 win over Slovakia in a Round of 16 fixture of the European Championships in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday. Bellingham netted through an overhead kick in the 95th minute of regulation time to level the score at 1-1, and Kane headed home in the first minute of extra-time to give England the advantage that sealed the win for the Three Lions.** PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'Corrupt officials must be fired, not just transferred' Momen says their assets should be auctioned off

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The corrupt individuals should be dismissed from their jobs, said former foreign minister AK Abdul Momen, adding that they are enemies of the people and the country.

"Transferring the officials accused of corruption cannot be an effective punishment. Rather, there should be an actual account of the assets of the person accused of corruption; the assets need to be confiscated and auctioned off and the individual promptly sacked," he wrote on Facebook yesterday.

"Remember, the government job is their biggest and most powerful asset," wrote the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Asked about his Facebook post, Momen said corruption had been so pervasive that it was a matter of shame for the country.

The laws are framed in a way so as to not hold government officials accountable. A section of government officials don't serve the people unless they are bribed, he said.

All government officials need to report their income and expenses every year, he said.



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