



Embracing old-world charm, one antique at a time

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England face Swiss test

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The paradox of whitening black money while fighting graft

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Keep your phone safe, or it may end up in India

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EXPORT DATA

BB finds 6 types of wrongdoing

Sends clarification to govt agencies after shocking statistical correction

REJAUl KARIM BYRON and SOHEL PARVEZ

The central bank discovered six types of statistical wrongdoing that inflated export data, a development that led to a multibillion-dollar correction.

Anomalies range from serial duplication errors to miscalculations of the value of fabrics to repeated miscounts of sample items as exports.

Bangladesh Bank sent a note to government agencies, explaining the rationale for the correction. The document seen by The Daily Star offers shocking glimpses into the extent of data inaccuracies with serious implications for the economy.

Discrepancies were covered last year by several media outlets, including this newspaper, but the massive correction by the central bank on July 3 in a balance of payments update came as a surprise to economists and business leaders.

To eliminate the anomalies, the central bank obtained export data from scheduled banks in the July-September period last year and verified them against statistics provided by the National Board of Revenue.

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- Serial duplication errors in customs data
- Miscalculations of value of fabrics
- Sample items classified as products with export value
- Sales by EPZ-based firms were counted twice
- Failure to adjust gap between initial LC value and actual export proceeds
- Losses from stock-lot sales, discounts and commissions were not adjusted



'Padma Bridge a source of huge pride for Bangladeshis' PM says it altered int'l community's mindset towards us

UNB, Munshiganj

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the construction of Padma Bridge with the country's own funds has taken the nation to a dignified position before the world and it changed the international community's mindset towards Bangladesh.

"The people of Bangladesh can move now

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Labour back in power with huge mandate

Starmer sworn in as UK PM ending 14 years of Conservative rule, pledges to fix country



"Now, our country has voted decisively for change, for national renewal and a return of politics to public service. The work of change begins immediately, but have no doubt, we will rebuild Britain."

KEIR STARMER



"... first and foremost, I am sorry. I have given this job my all, but you have sent a clear signal that the government ... must change. And yours is the only judgement that matters."

RISHI SUNAK

Customs official acquired Tk 6.43cr properties in 8yrs

Show ACC papers; he 'grossly underreported' assets value

DIPAN NANDY

In just eight years, Customs Commissioner Mohammad Enamul Haque bought properties that, on paper, cost him over Tk 6.43 crore.

According to an Anti-Corruption Commission report, Enamul bought real estate, flats, large commercial spaces in buildings, and built a nine-storey building while working as a joint commissioner and commissioner of Customs, Excise, and VAT Commissionerate in Chattogram and Rangpur from 2013 to 2020.

A Dhaka court on Thursday ordered confiscation of his properties worth over Tk 6.51 crore. Investigators believe Enamul grossly underreported the price of the properties when he bought them.



Enamul Haque

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Onion price jumps up to Tk 120 a kg

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD ABBAS

Ruma Akhter, an employee of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, could not believe her ears yesterday when a trader at the capital's Karwan Bazar asked Tk 104 for a kilogram of onions.

"The price shocked me when I heard it," she said. She bought onions for Tk 70 per kg a month ago.

"How come the price of onions went up by Tk 34 per kg in a month?" said Ruma, the only breadwinner of her three-member family.

Visiting Karwan Bazar, Shewrapara, Ibrahimpur, Kochukhet, and Mirpur-II kitchen markets yesterday, The Daily Star found that the retail prices of onions have surged by Tk 10 to Tk 20 per kg within a week.

The essential cooking ingredient was sold for Tk 100-120 a kg yesterday, up from Tk 90-100 last week.

Traders claimed that the prices increased due to supply shortages.

Sajib Sheikh, proprietor of Matri Bhandar at Karwan Bazar, said they are getting small supplies from Faridpur and Pabna, two major onion producers.

"The drop in supplies are leading to the price hike," he said, adding that he is now being forced to sell Indian onions.

Mohammad Majed, general secretary of Shyambazar Onion Traders' Association, said the prices of all varieties of local onions increased over the last one week due to the supply crunch.

"We are currently importing onions from India where the prices are high," Majed, also an onion importer, told The Daily Star.

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Grandmaster Zia breathes his last doing what he loved

SPORTS REPORTER

Chess Grandmaster Ziaur Rahman passed away yesterday after suffering a cardiac arrest during the 12th round match of the National Chess Championship in Dhaka, leaving the country's sports fraternity numb with grief with his sudden demise at the age of 50.

Zia suddenly fell to the ground midway during a game against GM Enamul Hossain Razib at the Bangladesh Chess Federation Hall room at around 5:45 pm.

He was immediately

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AGENCIES

Britain's new Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday pledged to use his massive electoral majority to rebuild the country, saying he wanted to take the heat out of politics after years of upheaval and strife.

Standing outside his new office and residence at Number 10 Downing Street, Starmer acknowledged the scale of the challenge after his party's landslide victory in a parliamentary election ended 14 years of often tumultuous Conservative government.

He warned that any improvements would take time, and he would need to first rebuild faith in politics.

"This lack of trust can only be healed by actions, not words. I know that," he said.

"Whether you voted Labour or not, in fact, especially if you did not, I say to you directly - My government will serve you. Politics can be a force for good. We will show that."

Standing behind a lectern, he said he understood that many Britons were disillusioned with politics after years of scandal and chaos under the Conservatives, who were roundly rejected in Thursday's election, suffering a historic loss.

Starmer said the rejection signalled that Britain was ready for a reset: "Because no matter how fierce the storms of history, one of the great strengths of this nation has always been our ability to navigate away to calmer waters."

MASSIVE MAJORITY

The centre-left Labour won a massive majority in the 650-seat parliament, prompting Rishi Sunak's resignation yesterday morning, before Starmer went to meet King Charles and be formally named prime minister.

He said he would fight every day to rebuild trust, saying Britain would have a "government unburdened by doctrine", underlining something he had repeated during the campaign - that he would put country first, party second.

"To defy, quietly, those who have written our country off. You have given us a clear mandate, and we will use it to deliver change."

The election result has upended British politics. Labour won more than 410 seats, an increase of 211, while the Conservatives, the western world's most successful party, lost 250 lawmakers, including

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4 Bangladesh-origin MPs reelected

Tulip, Rushanara among them

AGENCIES

Four Bangladesh-origin candidates - Tulip Rizwana Siddiq, Rushanara Ali, Rupa Huq and Apsana Begum - have been elected as Labour Party lawmakers in the UK parliament.

The result was published on the official website of the British Parliament yesterday morning.

Tulip, granddaughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has won by a huge margin in the Hampstead and Highgate constituency in northwest London. According to a BBC report, Tulip got 23,432 votes while her nearest rival Don Williams of the Conservative and Unionist Party got just 8,462 votes.

This is the fourth consecutive win for Tulip.

Rushanara Ali, the first Bangladeshi-origin

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Flood victims salvage what is left of their houses from Gaibandha's Kharzani Char yesterday. The shoal in the Brahmaputra river went under water on Wednesday due to onrush of water from upstream. Flooding has affected about 29,000 families in four upazilas of Gaibandha.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Flood in North to continue for another week

STAR REPORT

The flood situation in several northern districts, including Kurigram and Gaibandha, is likely to linger for another week.

"The water level of the Brahmaputra will continue to rise for the next two to three days and after that, it will start declining," said Sarder Udoy Raihan, executive engineer of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre.

However, the situation in the Sylhet region has improved slightly as the water level of the Surma is decreasing, he said.

According to reports of our district correspondents, several lakh people, especially those living in low-lying areas, in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Sirajganj, and Sylhet are marooned in floodwater.

Many schools have been closed in the flood-affected areas.

Several flood victims told The Daily Star that they are in dire need of food and pure drinking water as relief assistance distributed by the government is not enough.

Rezia Begum, 30, of Hatia village in Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, said she and her family members have shelter on a WDB dam as water entered their home on Thursday afternoon.

According to Kurigram district administration and relief and rehabilitation offices, 55 unions out of 72 in the district have been hit by flood, causing suffering to over 1 lakh people.

The flood situation in Gaibandha and Bogura is worsening as the low-lying areas have been flooded for the last four days.

Juwel Mia, district relief and rehabilitation officer

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Dhaka’s tea trade

RBR

“Cha ar biskoot” (tea and biscuits) is Bangalee’s favourite quick grab. And strong and flavoursome tea is our favourite. Looking for premium tea in Dhaka can be a tad difficult now but once the city boasted dedicated shops that sold different grades and blends of local tea.

We get blended tea in plastic packets from our bazaar or local grocers but CTC (crush, tear, curl) pellets of orange pekoe in brown paper packets, tied with thin jute ropes are not a common sight anymore.

Despite a robust domestic tea market, we have very few specialised tea stores in Dhaka selling exclusive products. The Halda Valley Tea Lounge offers exclusive silver tips and orthodox black tea. However, before all these, New Market’s kitchen market had a lone store selling loose tea.

The big wooden chests of tea lots were stacked inside the shabby shop.

There were rows of tin boxes the sides of which were made of transparent glass to facilitate the buyers to pick their choice; the boxes were lined with different grades of teas. The containers were arranged according to the tea categories, which a real tea lover would be able to appreciate.

The narrow by-lanes of Kaptan Bazar also have some tea shops selling loose tea. They buy tea lots from Chattogram tea auction and boast that they supply tea to most of our local tea stalls, namely the roadside tongs or tea canteens, famous tea spots in Chawk Bazar, Nazira Bazar – even to reputed restaurants.

Long ago there used to be a famous tea store in Shantinagar Bazar that sold different grades of tea and a variety of

loose tea powders like orange pekoe, orthodox, fanning orthodox tea, and premium blend tea; I picked the name orange pekoe from that store and thus began my tea adventures impressed with the complexity of the taste.

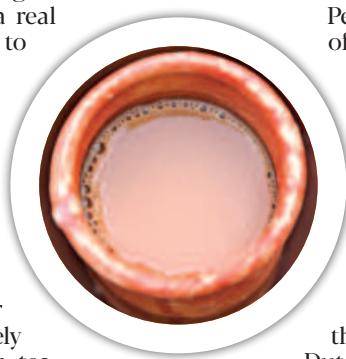
Pekoe is a particular grade of black tea made from the downy tips of the young buds of the tea plant and does not have an orangey flavour or colour, just so that you know. The story goes as far as the Dutch coming to India and introducing the best black tea to the royals. Now, the Dutch royal family belonged to the House of Orange, so naturally when tea came down to the commoners, they nicknamed it orange pekoe to isolate the kind from other variants and blends.

Today, Dhaka’s tea scene is going

strong with exclusive tea bars offering premium loose tea. In the city’s evolving tea scene, the legacy of teas persists despite challenges in the industry, highlighting a market coming to terms with new norms and preferences.

The reason why the tea industry is not doing well from a trader’s perspective is primarily because there are no rules and regulations in the industry to monitor ethical trading practices. Some suppliers are directly procuring tea from gardens and distributing it to the retailers at a lower price compared to the ones bought from the auction. This prompt selling, that too on credit, has become a major risk factor in this industry.

The loss of the export market has also reduced the profitability of the tea industry as now all the traders are competing in the domestic market. Nevertheless, our thirst for a cup of good tea remains as strong as ever! Specially so when the rains come pouring.



Onion price jumps BB finds 6 types of wrongdoing

FROM PAGE 1

He said the cost of imported onions stands at Tk 90.95 a kg after calculating import taxes, transportation and other costs.

Md Shamsur Rahman, senior agricultural marketing officer in Pabna, said the supply of onions is not adequate.

“Farmers have adequate stocks of onions, but they are selling in small quantities, causing the prices to go up,” he added.

Meanwhile, the prices of almost all vegetables have also increased by Tk 10-40 per kg in the capital’s kitchen markets over the last one week.

Traders attributed this price hike to supply shortage due to incessant rains.

Yardlong beans were sold for Tk 100-120 per kg yesterday, up from Tk 70-80 last week.

Bitter gourd was sold for Tk 80-100 per kg yesterday against the previous week’s price of Tk 60, spiny gourd Tk 100 per kg against Tk 80 a week ago, and aubergine Tk 80-120 per kg against last week’s price of Tk 60-100.

The prices of sponge gourd, papaya, snake gourd, bottle gourd and ash gourd have surged by Tk 10 per kg during the same period.

Suman Miah, a vegetable trader at Karwan Bazar, said crops were damaged in different parts of the country due to incessant rains in the last few days. This led to a fall in supplies, causing the prices to rise, he added.

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Bank found multiple entries, equivalent to 20 percent of the total dataset. The ratio of multiple entries to total exports in the previous months was 14 percent.

“So, the dataset did not give a true picture of the country’s exports,” the central bank concluded, explaining why it corrected data in the BoP for the July-April period.

As the document indicates, both the NBR and the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) mishandled the export data.

The statistical revision, while it was necessary, raised questions about the country’s economic performance and the policy that revolved around it.

Actual exports in the July-April period of fiscal 2023-24 were nearly \$14 billion below the shipment value of goods published by the EPB earlier, according to the central bank. The difference between export figures has been persisting for at least 12 years, with the gap crossing \$12 billion in fiscal 2022-23.

The BB said multiple entries of shipments by customs officials at the NBR were the main reason.

In the case of garment orders under a manufacturing process known as cutting, making and trimming (CMT), the Export Promotion Bureau calculated the prices of fabrics and accessories, although it was supposed to take into account the making charge only. That was another reason behind

inflated data.

On many occasions, sample items shipped abroad for buyers were counted as exports, which means a certain value was assigned to those items with no export value.

The central bank said sales by companies inside the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) were counted twice – first during shipment from the EPZs to local firms and second during shipment from the ports by the exporters.

The document also said actual proceeds usually fall below the initial value mentioned in the letters of credit. The EPB did not adjust the discrepancy later.

Losses stemming from stock-lot sales, discounts and commissions were not adjusted by the EPB either, according to the BB.

The central bank arrived at these findings in its inquiry into the reasons behind the increase in net trade credit, the gap between reported shipment values and actual money flowing into Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Bank prepares the BoP, which reflects a nation’s transactions with the rest of the world, regularly based on data gathered from scheduled banks, the EPB, the NBR and other agencies.

GDP GROWTH MAY BE LOWER THAN GOVT ESTIMATE

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank’s Dhaka

office, said the central bank’s latest data on the BoP has remarkably altered the narrative on the drivers of external stress without changing the signal on the overall stress.

“The bottom line on persistent external imbalance remains pretty much the same but the composition is palpably different. The corrections made by the BB were long overdue,” he said.

“Hopefully, BB would appropriately correct the entire historic series to make sure the BOP data remains comparable over time. It appears BB has finally made a laudable attempt to present export values plausibly close to reality.”

Hussain said the most pressing implication of the correction of the shipment value of exports is for the GDP growth estimate.

He said the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has projected GDP growth at 5.8 percent for FY24. In making this calculation, they projected a 5.63 percent growth in the real exports of goods and services.

Following the correction, economic growth may be about one percentage point lower than the government’s preliminary estimate.

Thus the 5.8 percent GDP growth could be 4.8 percent due to the shortfall in actual export growth relative to the export growth projected, other things equal, Hussain said.



Tulip Siddiq Rushanara Rupa Huq Apsana

4 Bangladesh-origin MPs reelected

FROM PAGE 1

MP in the UK parliament, has been reelected from Bethnal Green and Stepney, bagging 34.1 per cent of the vote. Rushanara got a total of 15,896 votes, followed by Ajmal Masroor, an Independent candidate who received a total of 14,207 votes. She has won this seat for the fifth consecutive time since 2010.

Labour Party candidate Dr Rupa Huq has been re-elected as MP for Ealing Central and Acton with 46.8 per cent of the vote. Rupa Huq, first elected as MP in 2015, got 22,340 votes beating Conservative candidate James Windsor-Clive who got 8,345 votes. She has been elected as a British MP for the fourth consecutive time.

Apsana Begum won from Poplar and Lime House constituency by getting 18,535 votes. She secured 43.1 per cent of the vote.

Bangladeshis account for less than 1 percent of the UK’s total population.

According to reports by local UK news outlets, Rushanara Ali, Tulip Siddiq, and Rupa Huq, all of whom have previously served as shadow ministers, have the chance to assume ministerial roles in the new cabinet.

Keir Starmer yesterday became Britain’s new prime minister after his centre-left opposition Labour Party swept to a landslide general election victory.

Rishi Sunak conceded defeat in the poll, which brings an end to 14 years of right-wing Conservative rule.

Labour back in power

FROM PAGE 1

a record number of senior ministers and former Prime Minister Liz Truss.

Sunak’s Conservatives suffered the worst performance in the party’s long history as voters punished them for a cost of living crisis, failing public services and a series of scandals.

“To the country, I would like to say first and foremost I am sorry,” Sunak said outside Downing Street, adding he would stay as Conservative leader until the party was ready to appoint his replacement.

“I have given this job my all, but you have sent a clear signal that the government of the United Kingdom must change, and yours is the only judgment that matters. I have heard

your anger, your disappointment and I take responsibility for this loss.”

TOUGH ROAD AHEAD

Despite Starmer’s convincing victory, polls suggested there was little enthusiasm for Starmer or his party. Thanks to the quirk of Britain’s first-past-the-post system and a low turnout, Labour’s triumph was achieved with fewer votes than it secured in 2017 and 2019 – the latter its worst result in terms of seats won for 84 years.

The pound and British stocks and government bonds rose marginally yesterday, but Starmer comes to power at a time when the country is facing a series of daunting challenges.

Customs official

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Citing the deeds, the court order says Enamul bought six katha of land in Bashundhara Residential Area in 1999 for Tk 61,000.

He later built a nine-storey building with 3,200 square feet floors on the land at G Block, considered one of the most expensive neighbourhoods in the city.

According to an ACC report submitted to the court, Enamul in 2017 purchased the 3rd, 4th, and 5th floors and three car park spaces in Aftab Tower on Ring Road for Tk 2.14 crore.

The floors – 4,000 square feet each – are rented out to different commercial entities.

In 2020, Enamul bought the 2nd and 4th floors of Sara Sandhani Life Tower at Mohammadpur Housing Society and eight car parks for Tk 2.35 crore. The two floors – over 10,965 square feet in total – are used as commercial spaces.

In 2015, Enamul bought two flats at Bhuia Trade Centre in Kakrai: a 1,900 square feet one on the 1st floor and another 3,800 square feet one on the 5th. The record shows he paid just about Tk

2.08 crore for both.

In 2014, he bought an 1,835-square-foot flat at Iris Noorjehan building in Kakrai for Tk 51.29 lakh. In the previous year, he purchased another 1,170 square feet flat at the same building for Tk 28.3 lakh.

In 2019, he bought a 2,428.81 square feet flat in Glydia Shahida building in Banani for Tk 72 lakh.

In 2020, he purchased a four-katha plot in the Badda area for Tk 14.55 lakh and in 2008, a 33 decimal one in Khilkhet for Tk 7.84 lakh.

Enamul also owns a five-katha plot in Chandana, Gazipur. He informed the court that the land worth Tk 62.4 lakh was a gift from someone.

The ACC started investigating Enamul in November 2022. In July last year, it sued him for acquiring assets worth Tk 9.76 crore through questionable means.

ACC lawyer Mosharraf Hossain Kajol told the court on Thursday that the properties should be seized immediately.

Since September 5 last year, Enamul has been the customs and VAT commissioner in Sylhet.

Flood in North to continue for another week

FROM PAGE 1

said 28,938 families in Gaibandha Sadar, Phulchari, Sundarganj, and Sagghata upazilas have been affected.

In the four upazilas, classes have been suspended at 80 primary schools as water entered the institutions, said Shahidul Islam, Gaibandha district primary education officer.

Fifteen secondary schools were closed on Thursday, said Rokshana Begum, district education officer.

Golam Kibria, district relief and rehabilitation officer, said the

flood has affected 78,332 people in Sariakandi and Sonatola upazilas of Bogura.

In Sirajganj, more than 100 villages of 34 unions in five upazilas of the district have been flooded.

According to the Water Development Board in Sirajganj, the Jamuna was flowing above the danger level at Sirajganj and Kazipur points at 6:00am yesterday.

In Jamalpur, the situation has worsened due to onrushing water from upstream.

The Jamuna was flowing 93cm above the danger mark at Bahadurabad Ghat point around noon yesterday, according to WDB officials.

Flood has forced the authorities concerned to suspend classes at 50 primary and 17 secondary schools in the affected areas.

Around 42 unions in six upazilas and five municipalities of Jamalpur have been hit by flood, said Alomgir Hossain, district relief and rehabilitation officer.

Grandmaster Zia breathes his last doing what he loved

FROM PAGE 1

rushed to the Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital in Shahbag but was declared dead by the duty doctor.

“Zia bhai and I were playing when suddenly he fell down,” GM Razib told The Daily Star.

“Zia bhai had shown no signs of discomfort. He fell down to his right side and I thought he was picking up a bottle of water. When I called him, he did not respond. Everyone rushed to him. He was senseless. He was immediately taken to the hospital but he was no more,” Razib recalled the events.

Zia, who in 2002 became the second chess player from Bangladesh to become a GM after Niaz Murshed,

was the only chess player of the country who took chess as a profession.

He earned a living by competing locally and internationally in chess tournaments, unlike other top chess players of the country who have other sources of income.

His only child – FIDE Master Tahsin Taswar Zia – also plays chess and the father-son duo represented Bangladesh in the Chess Olympiad in 2022. His wife Tasnim Sultana also played chess at an amateur level.

In 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Zia told this reporter that despite all the hardships he has gone through, he never strived for any other occupation as he loved the

game of chess.

After GM Zia fell to the ground, the other players also abandoned their respective matches and came to the hospital, which turned into a place of mourning.

“I think Zia bhai had been the best chess player of the country. What he did was unachievable for other chess players including me whether it was in the national chess championships or international competitions,” Razib said.

“As a human being, he was excellent, he had no bad habits. He even offered his prayers during the games. During the Asian Games in China last year, he was not performing

well and he felt bad. But he was more concerned about my performance rather than his.”

Having played in many local and international competitions over the years, Zia devoted himself to coaching in the last few years but continued playing chess for the club and Bangladesh.

Razib believes Zia is irreplaceable.

“It is a big loss for Bangladesh chess because he could have served the nation for few more years. We always relied on Zia bhai when we competed the Chess Olympiad because we knew there was no one other than Zia bhai to play against the strong opponent in board-1.”

IGP Mamun's tenure extended for second time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday again extended the tenure of Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, this time for one year under contract.

The public administration ministry issued a circular, signed by its deputy secretary Bhaskar Debnath Bappi, in this regard.

On January 9 last year, his tenure as IGP was extended for a year and a half under contract.

Police sources said it was the first time that an IGP was given two extensions.

According to the circular, he will serve as IGP for one more year under conditions of the contract mentioned in the previous circular that extended his tenure last year.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina being presented with a framed painting of the Padma Bridge at a rally in Munshiganj yesterday. The rally was organised on the occasion of the closing ceremony of Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project.

PHOTO: PID

A corrupt taxman and his 'blessed' in-laws

Faisal, his relatives undervalued their properties in official documents, claims ACC

DIPAN NANDY

"When you rise, lift others [read in-laws in this case] with you" – even if it means bending a few rules along the way.

Quazi Abu Mahmud Faisal, former first secretary of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), seems to have lived up to these words.

Faisal, who was recently transferred to the Bogura office of NBR, has been under the spotlight recently for allegedly amassing a staggering Tk 1,000 crore illegally, as claimed by the ACC. But it's not just Faisal whose fortune has risen exponentially thanks to his government job; his in-laws too seem to have hit the jackpot.

Faisal has purchased a 2,990-square-foot flat in Siddheshwari and 10 katha of land in Meradia, Dhaka, in the names of Ahmed Ali, his father-in-law, and Momtaz

Begum, his mother-in-law.

The values of these properties were strategically undervalued in official documents.

Although the Siddheshwari flat was purchased in the name of Ahmed Ali on paper, in reality, it's Faisal and his family who have been living there for a year, according to locals.

The flat, located on the 10th floor of one of the four buildings in Rupayan Swapno Niloy in Siddheshwari, was shown to be bought for Tk 95.50 lakh.

The market value of the 2,990-square-foot flat is Tk 1 crore, according to an ACC document submitted to the court. The Daily Star has a draft copy of the document.

Bazlur Rahman, who has been living in the area over the past three decades, also finds the official valuation "unbelievable".

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In police, 'benefits are for seniors'

Say disgruntled junior cops who haven't been promoted for years, and even decades

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Thirteen years ago, Md Halim (name changed) was promoted to police inspector.

Since then, he has served as officer-in-charge at various police stations in Dhaka.

His name was enlisted for promotion to assistant superintendent of police (ASP) in 2017, but six years later, he is still waiting for the call.

"It seems the authorities do not think we are capable, or else they would have given us the promotion," he told The Daily Star recently.

"All benefits are for seniors. Why shouldn't we get the promotion after working 10 to 12 years in the field? It's embarrassing for me and my family."

According to the Police Headquarters database, around 655 inspectors and 115 Traffic Inspectors were listed for ASP promotion in 2017, and 291 inspectors and 72 TI were listed in 2016. Additionally, at least 515 inspectors were listed in 2012 and 2014.

These officers, who joined

between 1991 and 1999, have completed 25 to 33 years of service and will retire soon.

Over the past year, junior officers have met with the home minister, inspector general of police, and other top officials to address the promotion crisis.

In response, PHQ in a

ranks are grade nine, so no additional salary would be required.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter.

Mazharul Islam, general secretary of the Bangladesh Police Association, said, "We have placed our demands to the government several times.

Although ASPs were supposed to be promoted to additional SPs after five years, 113 officials of the 36th BCS and 97 officials of the 37th BCS are still waiting after six and five years, respectively. Promotions for the 35th and 36th BCS batches won't be possible until 2027, and the 37th BCS until after 2030.



recent letter informed the home ministry that no ASP posts are currently available.

While some ASP posts will be vacant by 2028, they are insufficient for the large number of awaiting officers.

PHQ requested the ministry to create 300 supernumerary (officials who hold the same position and perform the same duties after their elevation) ASP posts.

Both inspector and ASP

It is our legal demand and we hope the government will address our demands soon."

The PHQ letter also requested the creation of 350 supernumerary Additional SP posts, as officials of the 35th BCS have not been promoted despite serving as ASPs for about seven years.

There are around 114 ASPs in the 35th BCS.

Although ASPs were supposed to be promoted to additional SPs after five years,

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MoUs with India one-sided

Speakers tell Ganatantra Mancha rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recently signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) between India and Bangladesh are one-sided and unbalanced, said leaders of Ganatantra Mancha, an alliance of several opposition parties, yesterday.

They said these deals favoured India's dominance over Bangladesh's economy, security, and governance. During a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club, they also said the people of Bangladesh have rejected the MoUs with India that go against the country's interests, said a press release by the platform.

The leaders criticised the deals signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to India, which

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'On this journey, no one cares if you live or die'

Migrants face violence, rights violation on journey through Mediterranean, says UNHCR report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Refugees and migrants, including Bangladeshis, continue to face extreme forms of violence, human rights violations, and exploitation on land and sea routes through the African continent towards its Mediterranean coastline.

The information was disclosed in a report titled "On This Journey, No-one Cares If You Live or Die" (volume 2), which was released by UNHCR, International Organisation for Migration and Mixed Migration Centre yesterday.

Risks and abuses reported by refugees and migrants include torture, physical violence, arbitrary detention, death, kidnapping for ransom, sexual violence and exploitation, enslavement, human trafficking, forced labour, organ removal, and robbery, alongside collective expulsions and refoulement, said the report.

It also said at least 1,180 people died while crossing the Sahara between January 2020 and May 2024, but the number could be much higher.

During the same period, around 7,115 people were reported

to have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea, it adds.

The report states that the Central Mediterranean route starts in East and West Africa and the Horn of Africa, leading

Maghreb countries, where people reach their destination or move towards the European Union, crossing the sea.

The report builds on data collected by IOM, MMC, and

through Libya reported the country to be risky, followed by Ethiopia (62 percent), Algeria (55 percent), and Guinea (33 percent), among other countries. The report says the main



At least 1,180 people died while crossing the Sahara between January 2020 and May 2024, but the number could be much higher.

to the Mediterranean.

It also said people from many countries, including Bangladesh, travel through Dubai, Istanbul, or Cairo to reach the route's North Africa section, which leads through the desert to and through

UNHCR from January 2020 to March 2023, for which refugees from a total of 59 different countries were interviewed.

Also, 66 percent of respondents who were interviewed in or transited

departure points to cross the Mediterranean Sea include the coastal cities of Zuwara and Misratah in Libya and Sfax in Tunisia.

People traditionally start their sea voyage from Libya to go

Keep your phone safe, or it may end up in India

Transnational phone smuggling gangs active

MUNTAKIM SAAD

If you lose an iPhone in Bangladesh, chances are it has already been sold at an unbelievably cheaper price in one of the many states of India.

Likewise, smartphones stolen in the neighbouring country make their way to Bangladesh and are sold at far below the market price.

On November 7 last year, Ferdous Miah, a deputy jailer from Dinaipur, was robbed in Dhaka's Dhanmondi area, losing his Samsung S23 Ultra mobile phone.

After filing a GD and using a tracking app, he located the phone months later in Gujarat, India.

Following coordination with Indian authorities, he received news of its recovery on March 1 and the phone was returned via parcel shortly thereafter.

Meanwhile, Religious Affairs Minister Md Faridul Haque Khan's mobile phone was stolen in Jamalpur on April 30, but was found in Malaysia a month later. Detectives investigating the incident busted a gang and seized 63 stolen mobile phones from their possession.

There are transnational rackets active in Bangladesh and India that are smuggling stolen and unauthorised mobile phones between the two countries, law enforcers found.

The issue re-emerged on June 30 when Dhaka Metropolitan Police recovered a stolen iPhone belonging to a Kolkata resident from Keraniganj, Bangladesh.

Moutusi Ganguly, an Indian resident, lost her phone in Kolkata's Park Circus area on July 26, 2023.

Her daughter, Ashmita Ganguly, tracked the phone to Bangladesh by using technology.

Nearly a year later, Shahjahanpur Police recovered the device.

Ashmita submitted a general diary to the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata and communicated with Sub-inspector Milton Kumar Deb Das of Shahjahanpur Police via WhatsApp.

"I tried to track the phone 25-30 times over the last year before finally recovering it from Keraniganj. A man had purchased the iPhone for only Tk 17,000," said SI Milton to The Daily Star.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Met office predicts rain across country

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) has predicted rain or thundershowers in all divisions including Dhaka over the 24 hours from 9:00am yesterday.

"Light to moderately heavy rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at most places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram and Sylhet divisions with moderately heavy to very heavy at places over the country," said Met office.

The highest 54mm of rainfall was recorded in Chandpur yesterday.

Day and night temperatures may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The country's highest temperature was recorded in Chuadanga at 33.5 degrees Celsius yesterday while the lowest was in Teknaf at 23.7 degrees Celsius.

Ctg hospital shut over irregularities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Ctg

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has directed to close Central City Hospital at Parbartak Intersection in Chattogram city due to various irregularities.

The DGHS issued a notification on Wednesday, signed by its Director (Hospitals and Clinics) Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, in this regard.

According to the notification, the hospital has been operating without a licence from the health directorate and without clearance certificates from the Department of Environment.

Additionally, the hospital lacks adequate and qualified doctors and nurses, as well as necessary equipment.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, Chattogram Civil Surgeon Mohammad Ilias Chowdhury said, "As per the direction of the health directorate, we issued instructions to stop all operations of the hospital yesterday [Thursday]."

He also mentioned that if there are any admitted patients in the hospital, they must be referred to an appropriate hospital by Monday.

They make jute braids to send their kids to school



S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Women from Rajpur, Khuniagach, and Gokunda unions along the Teesta river in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila have been crafting jute braids for the past five years to supplement their family incomes.

Facing impoverishment exacerbated by recurrent floods and erosion, approximately 60 percent of families in these unions have lost their lands and homes, relying on government lands and dykes for shelter.

Tulsi Rani, 27, took matters into her own hands in Madhuram village, and inspired around 3,000 women along the way to weave jute braids during their free time after household chores.

"I started making jute braids to earn some money to help my family. Later, I engaged some other women to work with me," said Tulsi Rani.

"Different handicraft establishments provide me jute fibres. I weigh and deliver the fibres to

women, and they make braids and submit those to me. I would then weigh and send the braids to the establishments," she added.

Different other jute products, including bags, floor-mats, and rugs are also made by them.

Through their craftsmanship, these women have transformed adversity into opportunity, showing resilience and entrepreneurial spirit in challenging circumstances. With the money these women are earning, they are now able to send their children to school and meet the expenses, they added.

Each woman earns between Tk 24 to Tk 90 per braid, depending on its thickness, producing an average of 3-4 kilogrammes of braids daily.

Karla Rani, for instance, earns Tk 100-150 daily. She has recently used her savings for her daughter's wedding.

Meanwhile, the income has helped women like Mina Rani and Jannati Begum send their children to school. They praised Tulsi Rani for leading the way.



A corrupt taxman and his 'blessed' in-laws

FROM PAGE 3

"It's a real miracle," Rahman said, adding that the per square foot price in Siddheshwari ranges from Tk 10,000-15,000, and the actual market value of Faisal's flat is at least Tk 3 crore.

Besides, at least Tk 25 lakh more is required for parking space, he added.

Meanwhile, Momtaz Begum's fortune turned bright in February 2022 when she acquired 10 kathas of land in Meradia for Tk 52 lakh.

ACC believes the actual market value of the property is Tk 4.5 crore.

Besides, Faisal's father-in-law purchased a flat for Tk 1 crore from Rupayan Housing Estate in the city's Ramna area.

These are just the tips of the iceberg. The story goes even deeper.

For example, Faisal and his 11 relatives conducted transactions worth crores through 87 accounts across 19 banks and one non-bank financial institution.

The largest volume of transactions, amounting to

Tk 11.57 crore, was found in the account of his father-in-law, a retired bank officer, who has eight bank accounts.

Faisal's mother-in-law Momtaz Begum, a homemaker, has 10 bank accounts, and transactions amounting to Tk 7 crore were spotted in these accounts.

ACC is now investigating how Faisal's father-in-law acquired so much wealth.

But Faisal didn't forget his wife Jesmin. She owns five kathas of land in Boro Kathaldia Mouza in Bhatarara area, "valued" at Tk 18.17 lakh.

However, during the investigation, the ACC found the market value of this land to be Tk 75 lakh.

Moreover, there is also land "worth" Tk 7.5 lakh in Purbachal New Town, but the ACC has not disclosed its true value yet.

As for Faisal himself, he owns approximately 15.5 kathas of land spread across five places in Dhaka and Narayanganj, which he valued at Tk 40.29 lakh.

However, the ACC's

investigators have stated that these land values have been significantly undervalued.

Faisal and his wife had also bought a five-katha plot from the Jolshiri Housing Project in Khilgaon, while his wife bought another five-katha plot for Tk 75 lakh from East-West Development.

Faisal has six accounts, which had transactions amounting to Tk 5.21 crore. Jesmin, a homemaker, has five bank accounts where transactions worth Tk 2.25 crore took place.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court ordered the seizure of Faisal's assets, including plots, flats, and bank accounts, which include 19 bank accounts and 87 financial institution accounts held by 11 of his relatives.

The seized assets, both movable and immovable, are valued at approximately Tk 17 crore as shown in official documents by Faisal and his family members.

However, ACC officials claimed in court that

those properties were undervalued and they amount to no less than Tk 20 crore.

Faisal also purchased savings certificates worth Tk 2.55 crore between June 2019 and November 2023 in his and his family's names.

The allegations against

Faisal include taking bribes for transferring income tax officials, intimidating taxpayers, and other irregularities.

ACC decided to investigate Faisal last year.

Faisal joined NBR in 2005 as a BCS cadre in the post of assistant tax commissioner.

In police, all benefits

FROM PAGE 3

113 officials of the 36th BCS and 97 officials of the 37th BCS are still waiting after six and five years, respectively. Promotions for the 35th and 36th BCS batches won't be possible until 2027, and the 37th BCS until after 2030.

Creating these posts would cost an additional Tk 2.71 crore.

Officials of the 35th and 36th BCS have held several meetings with the home minister, IGP, and top police officials to demand promotions.

"We were supposed to be promoted after five years, but we are not getting it even after seven years of service. The officials of 35th and 36th BCS, who joined other cadres like admin, foreign, and even Ansar, got promotions at least a year back," said an official

of 35th BCS police.

Abul Fazal Mir, joint secretary (police-1) of the public security division of home ministry, said, "Creating supernumerary posts is a policy-level issue. It requires approval from other ministries like public administration, so nothing can be said right away about the application."

According to PHQ, there are around 3,146 cadre posts in the police. This includes one IGP, two additional IGPs (grade-1), 20 additional IGPs (grade-2), 87 DIGs (grade-3), 201 additional DIGs (grade-4), 596 SPs (grade-5), 1,008 additional SPs (grade-6), and 1,231 ASPs (grade-9).

Last year, PHQ sought 529 supernumerary posts for IG, DIG, additional DIG, and SP promotions.

But public administration ministry created 342 such posts, causing dissatisfaction among cops.

On September 19, the home ministry applied for more posts, leading the public administration ministry to approve eight additional IGP and 15 DIG posts on October 23.

IGP Mamun

FROM PAGE 3

As per the two circulars, Mamun's post-retirement leave and related benefits have been suspended as per Section 49 of the Public Service Act 2018 and his tenure as the IGP has been stretched for one year on a contract from July 12 or the date of joining.

On September 30 in 2022, Mamun became the IGP. He was the Rab director general when the US on December 10, 2021, imposed sanctions on him and six other current and former Rab officials and the force itself.

Keep your phone safe

FROM PAGE 3

Earlier on March 7, DB arrested 10 Indian nationals linked to a cross-border smuggling group allegedly involved in trafficking Indian goods, including stolen mobile phones.

Last December, Indian authorities dismantled a syndicate smuggling stolen mobile phones into Nepal and Bangladesh, recovering 153 devices from a mobile repair shop in Ghaziaba.

The gangs primarily target high-priced cell phones in Bangladesh and smuggles them to India, Malaysia, and Thailand.

High-end phones like iPhones, known for their hard-to-alter IMEI numbers, are risky to sell locally, so criminals smuggle them to a different country.

Besides, there is a significant demand in Bangladesh for unauthorised mobile phones that evade customs duties and taxes upon entry.

Recently, Rapid Action Battalion arrested four members of an unauthorised mobile phone dealing gang during a raid in Narayanganj, recovering over 800 mobile phones.

Abu Taher, one of the arrestees, supplied over 2,500 mobiles to the market through his organised gang in the last one and a half months, said Rab-3.

Meanwhile, State Minister for IT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, on June 13, directed the National Board of Revenue to track and take action against users of high-value unregistered mobile phones.

MoUs with India

FROM PAGE 3

They held the PM include provisions for rail corridors, use of ports, joint satellites, and military cooperation.

Sheikh Rafiqul Islam Bablu, a freedom fighter and convener of Bhasani Anusari Parishad; Mahmudur Rahman Manna, president of Nagarik Oikya; Saiful Haque, general secretary of Biplobi Workers Party; Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolan; Hasnat Quaiyum, coordinator of Rastra Sangkar Andolon; and Tania Rob, vice president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), spoke at the rally.

They held the PM responsible for signing these MoUs to maintain power without holding proper elections.

They criticised the PM's statement, "What's the harm if India is given transit?," claiming that the government is compromising national interests for its own benefit.

The speakers condemned the recent statement by the foreign minister, who said, "India has no objection to PM's visit to China."

They said the PM of a sovereign country should not need permission from other nations to visit a country.

Asma Abbasi passes away

CITY DESK

A s m a Abbasi, an educationist, T V personality, and writer, passed away at her residence in Dhaka on July 4, at the age of 83, said a press release.

She left behind her husband, Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, a musician, artist, and folklorist; two daughters, Samira Abbasi and Sharmini Abbasi; and four grandchildren, Armaan, Shaiza, Sarina, and Alvi.

Asma Abbasi was the niece of the renowned writer Mujtaba Ali.

She completed her honours and master's degrees in Bangla literature from Dhaka University.

Throughout her career until retirement, she taught at Purana Paltan Girls' College.

She was also a leader at the Inner Wheel Club and the Ladies Club in the capital.

She was laid to rest in her mother's grave at Banani graveyard yesterday.

PRAYER TIMING

JULY 5

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:10	12:45	5:00	6:55	8:17
JAMAAT 4:45	1:15	5:15	7:00	8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Jatisangha Park remains

FROM PAGE 5

sitting arrangements, restrooms, lighting, a fountain, iron pergolas, a kids' zone, and sports facilities.

Improved drainage is also planned to prevent waterlogging.

DELAY AND RESIDENTS' FRUSTRATION
Despite the promising plans, the delay in completing the renovation has frustrated the city dwellers.

"There is no other park for the residents of Panchlaish, Katalganj, Chawk Bazar, Kapasgola, Badurtola, Shulakbaha,

Mirzarpool, Parobartak, Sugandha, and Muradpur areas. The park has been in a sorry state for around six years, depriving us of its facilities," said Milton Das from Katalganj.

A recent visit to the site revealed that the area had been covered with corrugated sheets, and around 20 workers were found working.

The ground has been elevated with earth-filling to prevent waterlogging, and the boundary wall and walkway have been constructed. Workers are currently excavating land to construct a swimming

pool.

However, it is unlikely that the project will be completed by the end of this month as scheduled, as confirmed by Kamrul Islam Khan, executive engineer of PWD, Chattogram (Div-1).

"Around 90 percent of the project work has been completed so far. We had to wait for the monsoon to plant around 3,000 saplings to ensure they thrive in favourable weather, causing some delay," he said.

Khan said they expect to complete the project by August this year.

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০১৭০৪-১৭০০৭৮
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ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়
লালমাটিয়া বি-ব্লক-এ ১৬০০ বর্গফুটের শতভাগ রেডি ব্র্যান্ড নিউ ফ্ল্যাট।
ম্যাজিক প্রিন্স হোমিসেস লিম।
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Shamsad Shahjahan Convener, Admission Committee		Professor Dr. Md. Abu Masud Principal

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সওজ
সড়ক বিভাগ, নীলফামারী।
email: rhndnil@gmail.com

স্মারক নং: ৩৫.৩১.৭৩৬৪.৪৫৬.০৭.০১৩.২৪-১৩৮৬ তারিখ: ০৪ জুলাই ২০২৪

সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে টিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি/লাইসেন্স নবায়ন বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, নীলফামারী সড়ক বিভাগ, নীলফামারী কর্তৃক পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ এর আলোকে সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তরের পরিচালন (রাজপ) বাজেটের আওতায় সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (LTM) প্রয়োগের মাধ্যমে অভ্যন্তরীণ ক্রয়কার্য (NCT-Works) সম্পাদনের লক্ষ্যে ২০২৪-২০২৫ অর্থবছরের জন্য টিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি/লাইসেন্স নবায়ন করা হবে। সিপিটিইউ (CPTU) কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফরম নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, নীলফামারী কার্যালয় অথবা উপ-বিভাগীয় প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক উপ-বিভাগ, নীলফামারী/১ম সারি কারখানা উপ-বিভাগ, নীলফামারী কার্যালয় হতে আগামী ০৮-০৭-২০২৪ হতে ৩১-০৭-২০২৪ খ্রি. তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। ১০০০.০০ (এক হাজার) টাকা অফেরতযোগ্য পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, নীলফামারী এর অনুকূলে জমা প্রদান করে অথবা মানি রিসিপ্টের মাধ্যমে ১০০০.০০ (এক হাজার) টাকা পরিশোধ করতঃ অন্ত্রী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান নির্ধারিত আবেদনপত্র (ডকুমেন্ট) সংগ্রহ করতে পারবেন। নির্ধারিত আবেদনপত্র (ডকুমেন্ট) সঠিকভাবে পূরণ পূর্বক প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্রসহ আগামী ৩১ জুলাই ২০২৪ খ্রি. তারিখ বিকাল ৫:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে এ অফিসে জমা প্রদান করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো। সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (LTM) প্রয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ এর বিধি ৬৩ ও ৬৪ অনুসরণযোগ্য এবং এ তালিকাভুক্তিকরণ দরপত্র আহ্বান/কাজ প্রদানের নিশ্চয়তা বিধান করে না।

উল্লেখ্য, ইতোপূর্বে এ অফিসের তালিকাভুক্ত টিকাদারগণ ২০২৪-২০২৫ অর্থবছরে লাইসেন্স নবায়ন ফি বাদে টাকা = ২,০০০/- (দুই হাজার) + ১৫% ভ্যাটসহ বিনা জরিমানায় আগামী ৩১-০৭-২০২৪ খ্রি. তারিখের মধ্যে এ অফিসে জমা প্রদান পূর্বক লাইসেন্স নবায়ন করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

ছক-১: নতুন তালিকাভুক্তি

বিবরণ	তালিকাভুক্তি ফরমের মূল্য	তালিকাভুক্তি ফি	ভ্যাট	তালিকাভুক্তি ফরম সংগ্রহ ও জমা প্রদানের সময়সীমা
টিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তি	১০০০/-	৫০০০/-	৭৫০/-	০৮-০৭-২০২৪ হতে ৩১-০৭-২০২৪ খ্রি. তারিখ বিকাল ৫:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত

ছক-২: নবায়ন

বিবরণ	নবায়ন ফি	ভ্যাট	বিনা জরিমানায় নবায়নের সময়সীমা	৫০% জরিমানায় নবায়নের সময়সীমা	১০০% জরিমানায় নবায়নের সময়সীমা
টিকাদার লাইসেন্স নবায়ন	২০০০/-	৩০০/-	০৮-০৭-২০২৪ হতে ৩১-০৭-২০২৪ খ্রি. তারিখ বিকাল ৫:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত	০১-০৮-২০২৪ হতে ২৯-০৮-২০২৪ খ্রি. তারিখ পর্যন্ত	০১-০৯-২০২৪ হতে ৩০-০৯-২০২৪ খ্রি. তারিখ পর্যন্ত

০৪-০৭-২৪
(মোঃ জুয়েল রহমান)
সহকারী প্রকৌশলী (অ.দা.), সওজ
সড়ক বিভাগ, নীলফামারী

০৪-০৭-২৪
(মোহাম্মদ জহিরুল ইসলাম)
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ
সড়ক বিভাগ, নীলফামারী

GD-15

Anti-quota demos continue

STAR REPORT

Hundreds of students from three universities yesterday rallied against the reinstatement of the quota system in government jobs.

The universities are: Chattogram University, Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University in Dinajpur, and Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University in Tangail.

In Chattogram, CU students blocked Sholosohor road for one and a half hours, starting at 4:00pm, causing significant traffic disruptions.

They gathered earlier at Shaheed Minar to voice demands for the abolition of the quota system.

In Dinajpur, HSTU students defied rain to protest in front of the university gate, demanding quota reforms and shouting slogans like "No place for discrimination in Golden Bengal" and "Merit, not quota!"

In Tangail, students from Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University formed a human chain at the university gate.

Meanwhile, students of other institutions including Dhaka University said they will bring out processions today and boycott classes and exams on Sunday if their demands are not addressed.

Man held over rape of 6-year-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police arrested a man in Ghoraghat, Dinajpur, on Thursday night on charges of raping a six-year-old girl.

The arrestee is Sajju Mia, 25, from Loharband Uttarpara area.

Md Asaduzzaman Asad, officer-in-charge of Ghoraghat Police Station, said the incident occurred on Tuesday afternoon when the girl went to a nearby shop to buy some snacks.

On her way back home, Sajju Mia allegedly raped her while brandishing a sharp weapon, said the OC.



Traditionally, by the first week of Ashar (monsoon), farmers prepare Aman paddy seedbeds. However, due to a lack of rain, farmers are yet to prepare seedbeds this time around. The photos were taken at Tetultala beel and Batiaghata upazila recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Aman farmers worry over lack of rain

June saw 250mm less rainfall than normal; no seedbeds prepared yet

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Paddy farmers in Khulna division are worried as a lack of rainfall on the onset of Aman season threatens to adversely affect cultivation.

This staple crop is crucial for over 10 lakh farmers in Khulna, Bagerhat, and Satkhira districts, who rely on monsoon rain for irrigation due to water salinity during the rest of the year.

Traditionally, by the first week of Ashar (monsoon), farmers prepare Aman paddy seedbeds.

However, this year, June recorded 250mm less rainfall than usual, leaving canal and river waters unsuitable for irrigation due to high salinity.

After visiting 15 villages in Batiaghata, Dumuria, Paikgachha, Dacope, and Rupsha upazilas, this correspondent saw no seedbeds were being prepared.

Agricultural lands lie fallow, covered with grass and used for pasture. In Batiaghata, two canals were found dried up.

"I haven't been able to prepare Aman seedbeds due to inadequate rain, which

hasn't lowered canal salinity, making the water unsuitable for irrigation," said Proshad Roy from Khalashibunia Kachhari Bari.

"Last year's delayed cultivation due to a lack of rain led to pest attacks and a poor harvest. This year looks worse," he added.

Approximately 930 farmers from Proshad's village share his predicament.



Abdur Rob of Pankhali village in Dacope upazila echoed similar concerns, adding that the Bhadra river's water remains too salty for irrigation and groundwater is also highly saline.

"Rainwater is our only hope," he said. Environmental experts attribute the

situation to disrupted weather patterns and erratic monsoons due to climate change.

In recent years, Khulna division has seen a decline in precipitation during crucial Aman cultivation months, intensifying the hardships for the farming community.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension in Khulna, 84,810 hectares are designated for Aman cultivation with a target production of 291,563 tonnes of paddy, involving 317,274 families.

"It rained 305mm in May, much more than the usual 175mm, but it was too early to benefit the farmers. Till June 27, only 46mm of rain was recorded, 250mm less than the usual June rainfall," said Md Amirul Azad, senior meteorologist at Khulna Meteorological Office.

Md Mosaddek Hossain, senior monitoring officer of DAE's PARTNER programme, expressed concerns about the delayed seedbed preparation, which could lead to lower yields.

He added that the lack of rain is damaging Aus paddy cultivated in the region.

Farmers remain hopeful for timely rainfall to salvage the Aman cultivation season and mitigate the looming agricultural crisis.

UPAZILA HEALTH COMPLEX

Patients suffer for shortage of doctors

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

The 50-bed Sarishabari Upazila Health Complex, serving over four lakh residents across Jamalpur and Sirajganj, is facing a severe shortage of medical staff.

Operating with only four medical officers and two consultants, well below the required 29, the facility struggles to meet the basic healthcare needs.

Dr Rabiul Islam, resident medical officer, said essential departments like surgery, gynaecology, cardiology, and others lack dedicated doctors and staffers.

The absence of a gynaecologist for six months has particularly hampered maternity care, while an equipped, but unused operation theatre due to surgeon shortage symbolises the facility's underutilisation.

With only one cleaner instead of the required seven, the hospital remains unhygienic.

Visiting the health complex recently, this correspondent found only one doctor busy working, while a huge rush of patients was seen in the emergency room.



Meanwhile, middlemen were seen taking advantage of the situation and taking patients to private clinics.

Saddam Hossain, a resident from Kumariabari of Kazipur, said he had been waiting in the hospital's corridor for an hour, but no doctor was available in the emergency room.

Instead, he saw a medical assistant attending patients.

Shahin Miah, a resident from Adra village of Sarishabari upazila, said he went to the hospital after an accident and waited for half an hour, but found no doctor till that point.

Dr Rabiul said, "Over a hundred patients are currently admitted to the health complex.

However, the hospital only has 50 beds, so half the patients are on the floors."

Sarishabari upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Md Shafiqul Islam said, "The issue of doctor shortage has already been informed to the authorities."

Local lawmaker Abdur Rashid, president of the hospital management committee, said he has been trying his best to solve the matter.



The park has been off limits to city dwellers for over a year now due to a renovation project.

PHOTO: STAR

Jatisangha Park remains off limits

First bureaucratic tangle, now renovation keeps visitors away

ARUN BIKASH DEY

Residents of port city are currently unable to use Jatisangha Park in Panchlaish due to delayed renovation work.

The port city lacks sufficient parks and open spaces for its residents. Jatisangha Park, established in 1964 and spanning 2.17 acres, is one of the few parks in Chattogram with free public access.

The park has been off limits to city dwellers for over a year now due to a renovation project.

Earlier, a tug of war over the park between the Chattogram City Corporation and Public Works Department led it to utter disarray, neglect and abandonment for six years, alongside a wastage of around Tk 5 crore of public money.

PARK HISTORY AND DECLINE

Originally established by the PWD and later handed over to the Chittagong Municipal Corporation in 1969, the park was named Jatisangha Park in 2002.

"It used to be a beautiful park with various trees and a walkway around an artificial lake," said local resident Shahedul Azam.

In 2012, the Chattogram City Corporation constructed two swimming pools and a boundary wall in the park at a cost of Tk 4.80 crore.

However, following a child's drowning in one of the pools, they were abandoned.

In 2016, CCC attempted to lease the park to a private organisation for 25 years, but this was opposed by the then minister for housing and public works, Mosharraf

Hossain.

Consequently, a dispute ensued, leaving the park abandoned for six years until it was handed back to the PWD in 2020.

RENOVATION PROJECT

The PWD began a Tk 12.62 crore renovation project for the park in January last year, scheduled for completion by June this year. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation stone for the project on December 4.

Babar Associates and Coronation Corporation, a joint venture, is responsible for the renovation.

The project aims to develop a green garden with attractive greenery, a boundary wall with iron grilles, a walkway, SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

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Memo No. 35.01.0651.171.99.37.22-4447 Date: 04.07.24

(Re-Tender Notice (Open Tendering Method, NCT))

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal in Bangladesh (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the following works mentioned in the table below:-

Invitation Reference No.	03/e-GP/PMP-Roads/BC/JRD/2023-2024
Tender ID	1001927
Name of Works	DBS Wearing Course work at Chainage:0+000 (Naikathi) to Chainage:9+140(Halder bari Bazar) km of Naikathi-Bhandaria (Z-8717) (Jhalokathi Part) Road under Jhalokati Road Division during the year 2023-2024.
Tender Last Selling Date and Time	21-Jul-2024 16:00
Tender Closing Date and Time	22-Jul-2024 12:00
Tender Opening Date and Time	22-Jul-2024 12:00

a) This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.

b) To Submit e- Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal ("http://www.eprocure.gov.bd") is required.

c) The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branch.

d) Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


(Md. Masud Khan)
ID No. 601926
Superintending Engineer (C.C.), RHD
Barishal Road Circle, Barishal.

GD-14

Biden seeks reset with high-risk TV interview

AFP, Washington

With his reelection bid on the line, US President Joe Biden sits down Friday for a crucial TV interview to persuade doubters of his physical and mental fitness for a second White House term.

The one-to-one with the ABC network has been hyped as the most consequential of the 81-year-old's long career, after a disastrous campaign debate with Donald Trump triggered panic within his Democratic Party and calls for him to pull out of the race.

The Biden campaign has pushed back hard on any suggestion he may withdraw, and just hours before the ABC interview it released an aggressive campaign travel schedule



for the rest of July.

At least three of his party members in Congress have called on him to step aside, as have several major newspaper editorial boards and a raft of Democratic-supporting political commentators.

The president has said that he is "not leaving" and is "in this race to the end," but post-debate polls have shown Trump's lead widening.

Biden has also not yet spoken publicly without a teleprompter since the debate, other than some brief remarks.

Friday's interview with ABC presenter George Stephanopoulos, set to be recorded during a campaign trip to Wisconsin. With soaring anticipation for the interview, ABC has switched up its original plan of airing excerpts through the weekend, and will instead broadcast it in full Friday at 8:00pm (0000 GMT Saturday).



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria pose on the steps of 10 Downing Street in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

As Europe turns right, UK steers to centre

REUTERS, London

The centre-left Labour Party's crushing victory in the British election stands in stark contrast to recent gains by the far right across Europe.

But the party's triumph was not so much a rejection of populism by voters, but rather an echo of the same disenchantment with their political leaders.

Keir Starmer swept to power yesterday winning a large parliamentary majority and condemning Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party to its worst defeat in history.

The victory comes days after Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally (RN) party scored historic gains to win the first round of the parliamentary election in France.

That followed similar advances by populist parties in last month's European Parliament elections where German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats recorded their worst result ever.

Before his poll triumph, Starmer said progressive politicians had to demonstrate that they had learned the lessons from the rise of nationalism and populism.

But rather than a bulwark against a European populism wave, Starmer's success was built on the same voter desire for change and to punish perceived incompetence by incumbent governments that is driving

support for the far right.

Britain, once renowned for political stability, has lurched from crisis to crisis since the 2016 vote to leave the European Union, through the Covid-19 pandemic, increasingly stretched public services and a cost of living crisis.

The Conservative Party, in power for 14 years, had increasingly followed a more populist agenda with a focus on immigration, including a plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, promising to tackle immigration and to reshape the economy, but its credibility was shattered by years of economic stagnation and the failure to stop tens of thousands of asylum seekers arriving in small boats.

"The Tories were populist, but it hasn't gone very well so people are fleeing," said Professor Geoffrey Evans from Oxford University.

"I wouldn't say that is a reaction against populism. I would just say that is a reaction against the perceived incompetence of the party and generally bad economic circumstances that the country finds itself in."

The strong performance of Reform in the British election, where it won four seats and four million votes, would appear to bear that out.

Labour's likely foreign minister David Lammy said: "The truth is when we see the

tide of nationalism across Europe and in other parts of the world, he (Starmer) knows if he doesn't deliver for the working people, then populists and those with a different account of how you deliver will be coming back and will be biting at our heels."

Meanwhile, Britain's Labour Party suffered significant election setbacks in areas with large Muslim populations yesterday amid discontent over its position on the war in Gaza, despite a landslide victory in the parliamentary vote.

Pro-Gaza independents also won in Blackburn, and Dewsbury & Batley, beating Labour into second in both. Labour also failed to win in Islington North, where its former leader, veteran left-winger and ardent pro-Palestinian activist Jeremy Corbyn won as an independent.

Corbyn resigned as Labour leader in 2019 after the party suffered its worst election defeat since 1935, and Starmer threw him out of the parliamentary party less than a year later, accusing him of undermining efforts to tackle anti-Semitism.

While Labour has said it wants the fighting in Gaza to stop, it has also backed Israel's right to defend itself, angering some among the 3.9 million Muslims who make up 6.5% of Britain's population.

Russian strikes kill 2, wound 15 in Ukraine

AFP, Kyiv

Russian attacks killed two and wounded more than a dozen others in the eastern Donetsk region of Ukraine yesterday, regional officials said.

Moscow has centred its firepower on the industrial region, which it claims to have annexed and has been partially controlled by Kremlin-backed forces since 2014.

"A village council employee was killed and 14 of her colleagues were wounded during hostile shelling in the Volnovakha district," prosecutors said in a statement.

The head of the region said one person was killed and another was wounded in a Russian Smerch rocket attack on the town of Ukrainsk.

"The Selydivska community is constantly under enemy attack -- it is dangerous to stay here, as well as in the rest of Donetsk region," said governor Vadym Filashkin.

Russian forces are pushing towards the hilltop settlement of Chasiv Yar in the Donetsk region. Images distributed by Ukrainian forces of the town show rows of destroyed and smouldering Soviet-era housing blocs.

Russian President Vladimir Putin told Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban that Ukraine must abandon four regions in the east and south -- including Donetsk -- that Moscow claims as its own if Kyiv wants peace.

PRESIDENTIAL RUN-OFF Iranians vote amid apathy

REUTERS, Dubai

Iranians voted yesterday for a run-off presidential election that will test the clerical rulers' popularity amid voter apathy at a time of regional tensions and a standoff with the West over Tehran's nuclear programme.

The final result will be announced today, although initial figures may come out sooner.

The run-off follows a June 28 ballot with historically low turnout, when over 60 percent of Iranian voters abstained from the snap election for a successor to Ebrahim

Raisi, following his death in a helicopter crash. The low participation is seen by critics as a vote of no confidence in the Islamic Republic.

The vote is a tight race between low-key lawmaker Masoud Pezeshkian, the sole moderate in the original field of four candidates, and hardline former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, a staunch advocate of deepening ties with Russia and China.

While the election is expected to have little impact on the Islamic Republic's policies, the president will be closely involved in selecting the successor to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's 85-year-old Supreme Leader who calls all the shots on top matters of state.



Martinez saves Messi's blushes

FROM PAGE 12

attempted an audacious 'Panenka' chip to outwit the goalkeeper. However, his shot clipped the crossbar, leaving fans and teammates stunned.

Yet, Argentina's No.1 quickly turned the tide once again, making crucial saves on consecutive penalties, demonstrating his unwavering nerve

in pressure situations and redeeming Messi's earlier miss.

Reflecting on Martinez's impact, Messi remarked, "When we're at this stage, that's an advantage."

Coach Lionel Scaloni emphasized Martinez's pivotal role in the penalty shootout, stating, "The team has complete faith in our goalkeeper.

Even with Leo missing, we knew something positive would happen."

Despite Messi's penalty miss, Argentina's shooters remained composed throughout the shootout, scoring four in a row to secure their place in the semifinals, where they await the winner of today's match between Venezuela and Canada.

Six lives lost as bus hits truck

FROM PAGE 12

Farid Hossain said, "A bus of Nabil Enterprise was traveling from Dhaka to Ranisankail upazila in Thakurgaon. Around 6:00am, as the bus approached Chawkrampur village, the driver lost control and collided with a speeding truck coming from the opposite direction."

Upon receiving the emergency call, police and the rescue response team from Dinajpur Fire Service and Civil Defence promptly arrived at the location.

They rescued 30 people, mostly passengers of the bus, and rushed them to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital. Three of them died at the hospital.

The accident damaged the truck's cockpit and the front of the bus. Police had to cut through the mangled wreckage of both vehicles to recover the bodies. It took police an hour to clear the wreckage and restore road communication on the highway.

In a separate incident, later in the afternoon, a collision between a truck and a cattle-laden three-wheeler

in Phulbari upazila resulted in two fatalities and four injuries.

The incident occurred around 2:00pm on the Dinajpur-Gobindaganj regional highway, near the Phulbari Upazila Health Complex in North Sujapur, said Phulbari Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mostafizar Rahman.

The deceased were identified as three-wheeler driver Menhazul, 40, and cattle trader Aman, 45, both from Joypurhat's Panchbibi upazila.

According to police and local sources, a truck was heading towards Dinajpur while the three-wheeler, carrying nine cattle, was travelling from Amabari Hat towards Panchbibi. As they reached the road bend near North Sujapur on the Dinajpur-Gobindaganj highway, a head-on collision with a truck severely damaged the front parts of both vehicles. Menhazul and Aman died on the spot.

Police and fire service personnel, along with locals, rescued the injured and took them to the health complex.

Efforts to secure Gaza

FROM PAGE 12

Gaza health authorities say more than 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli offensive launched since last Oct 7.

The war has displaced hundreds of thousands of Gazans and caused a humanitarian crisis. It has also fuelled tension across the region, triggering exchanges of fire across Israel's northern border with the Iran-backed Hezbollah group in Lebanon.

Hamas said it had told Hezbollah it had agreed to a ceasefire proposal in Gaza and that the Lebanese group's leader had welcomed the step, two sources familiar with the matter said.

"If there is a Gaza agreement, then from zero hour there will be a

ceasefire in Lebanon," said one of the sources, an official in Hezbollah, which says its rocket and drone attacks on northern Israel are in support of the Palestinians.

Turkey's president, Tayyip Erdogan, was quoted by Turkish media as saying he hoped a "final ceasefire" could be secured "in a couple of days", and urged Western countries to put pressure on Israel to accept the terms on offer.

Some far-right partners in Netanyahu's governing coalition have indicated they may quit the government if the war ends before Hamas is destroyed. Their departure would probably end Netanyahu's premiership.

Merino's 119th-minute winner sends

FROM PAGE 12

for penalties, Olmo lofted a cross for Merino, who headed Spain into the semi-finals and on course for a record-breaking fourth Euros crown.

Germany's exit brings to an end the hosts' hope of a summer fairytale Euros victory after a decade of poor performances at major tournaments, while also lowering the curtain on Toni Kroos' stellar career.

The battle between the two most successful Euros nations, with three titles apiece, was billed as a final come early, with the in-form Spaniards against Nagelsmann's reborn hosts.

Spain nominated Kroos as Germany's most dangerous pre-match but the midfielder had a huge, even if unintended impact early, colliding with Pedri, who was then subbed off with a leg injury for Olmo.

Germany, with the oldest squad at Euro 2024, struggled with Spain's speed during the first half, frequently coming into duels a fraction too

late, but the two best chances of the opening half fell to the hosts -- and both to Kai Havertz.

The Arsenal forward leapt highest to head a cross directly at Unai Simon early and then scuffed a tame shot at the goalie later in the half with just the 'keeper to beat.

After a goalless first half, Nagelsmann took off surprise starter Emre Can for the pink-haired Robert Andrich, while the ineffective Leroy Sane was hooked in place of Wirtz.

The substitution who would make his mark however was Olmo, who gave Spain the lead six minutes into the second half, slicing through the sleepy Germany defence to perfectly place a Yamal pass past Manuel Neuer in the bottom left corner.

The goal kicked Germany into gear with Wirtz particularly dangerous.

The Bayer Leverkusen starlet linked with Fuellkrug on the counter with a quarter of an hour remaining but the striker, under heavy attention

from the Spanish defence, could only hit the post.

With 10 minutes remaining Nagelsmann made his final substitution, bringing veteran Thomas Mueller from the bench.

But it was Wirtz -- 13 years his junior -- who made the difference, skimming a Joshua Kimmich header across the grass and in at the far post in the final minute, sending the game to extra time.

Mikel Oyarzabal, on for Williams, curled a 104th-minute shot just wide of the post and Wirtz did the same a minute later with the goal beckoning.

Germany appealed strongly for a penalty in the second period of extra time, after a goal-bound Jamal Musiala shot clearly connected with Marc Cucurella's outstretched hand.

After the penalty drama, Olmo curled in a cross for Merino, who leapt high to head the ball past Neuer and put Spain into the Euros semi-finals.

Padma Bridge a source of huge pride

FROM PAGE 1

with pride in the international arena... This is the biggest achievement," she said.

Hasina was addressing a rally in Mawa marking the closing of the Padma Bridge construction work.

She said that the mindset of those who used to show an attitude towards Bangladesh that it cannot do without their support has changed.

"This Padma Bridge is the structure of our pride.... Now the people honour Bangladesh in the international arena..."

The PM said the country would be transformed into a developed, prosperous and Smart Bangladesh by 2041 through socio-economic development.

"We will continue to move forward at an irresistible pace overcoming all obstacles, no matter how many are in the way. We will take Bangladesh forward by implementing the ideals of the Father of the Nation."

Hasina said the Padma Bridge has opened the door for socio-economic advancement of the southwestern region.

She said Bangladesh's independence, which came at the cost of tens of thousands of martyrs,

has not gone in vain.

The premier thanked the consultants, workers, and others involved in the Padma Bridge project. She also expressed her gratitude to those local families who gave up their land for the project.

Hasina recalled the contribution of late Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury, an eminent civil engineer who served as the chair of an international committee of experts, and late communications minister Syed Abul Hossain.

Criticising the role of Dr Muhammad Yunus in the withdrawal of the World Bank's offer of funds for the Padma Bridge project, the PM said she never got the answer as to why a Nobel laureate is so obsessed over the mere post of the managing director of a bank.

Now the people can know what kind of honey was in the MD post when they see the labourers filing lawsuits and cases being lodged for tax evasion and corruption (against Dr Yunus), she said.

"More information will come out when the auditor's report on Grameen Bank is revealed."

On her arrival at the rally venue at 3:50pm, Hasina was received by Road Transport and Bridges Minister

Obaidul Quader.

Former cabinet secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, Bridges Division Senior Secretary Monjur Hossain and Project Director Shafiqur Islam also spoke at the event, with Quader in the chair.

The Bridges Division secretary said the project was completed on June 30 at a cost of Tk 30,770.13 crore.

A documentary on the Padma Bridge was screened at the programme.

On June 25, 2022, Hasina inaugurated the 6.15-km Padma Bridge which directly connects the country's 21 southern and south-western districts with the capital.

PM PAYS HOMAGE TO BANGABANDHU

In the afternoon yesterday, the prime minister travelled to her ancestral home at Tungipara of Gopalganj by road.

She paid tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman there and offered prayers at his mausoleum.

Hasina joined a prayer seeking eternal peace of the departed souls of Bangabandhu and his family members who were killed on August 15, 1975.

ARTCELLISM LIVES ON

In the dim light of a cosy studio, the air thick with anticipation, I found myself face-to-face with the rock legends of our country. The members of Artcell, clad in their iconic black band t-shirts, lounged before me with an air of casual camaraderie that belied their status in Bangladesh's rock pantheon.

MAHIYA TABASSUM

As I was preparing for the camera to roll, a humbling realisation struck me—this band had been crafting sonic masterpieces before I had even mastered my mother tongue. Their creations, like—*Oniket Prantor*, *Onno Shomoy*, *Obosh Onubhutih Deyal*, *Amar Poth Chola*, *Dhushor Shomoy*—had become the soundtrack to a generation's hopes, dreams, and rebellions.

Twenty-five years. A lifetime for some, a blink of an eye for others. For Artcell, it represented a journey etched in power chords and poetic lyrics, a reflection of their enduring impact on Bangladesh's musical landscape.

As four members from the current lineup—George Lincoln D'Costa, Kazi Faisal Ahmed, Kazi Ashequeen Shaju, and Iqbal Asif Jewel—graced The Daily Star studio, they talked about their 25-year celebration, recent tour, future projects, and more.

To mark their silver jubilee, Artcell embarked on an ambitious international tour. Lincoln shares, "We kicked off our celebration with a tour starting in Australia, followed by performances across nine Canadian provinces."

The Canadian leg proved particularly significant, with shows in major cities like Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. Notably, Artcell made history as the first Bangladeshi band to perform in St John's, Newfoundland, and Regina, Saskatchewan. Band member Saef Al Nazi Cezann,

currently residing in Australia, rejoined the group for this tour.

Shaju highlights the unique connection experienced during these performances. "We reconnected with fans from our RCC days, many now settling into careers or pursuing PhDs. It's a rare opportunity to engage so intimately with our audience, something we don't often experience during larger gigs back home."

The tour, organised by Toronto-

since the massively successful *Oniket Prantor*. "Conceived over a decade ago, it explores the destination, something that we search for. The destination may seem incomprehensible, miraculous, or unreal at first, but it can be the only truth, to be comprehended in the future," says Lincoln.

"Lincoln is being cryptic with the answer," interrupts Jewel with a playful smile. He then goes on to elaborate, "This is a concept album, there's a lot of

The band also discusses the double-edged sword of digital platforms, which have democratised music distribution by labels but led to content oversaturation. "People are constantly looking for dopamine hits, even videos are becoming too long for their attention span. So, they are switching to reels with a shorter duration. This way, it has become difficult to find that space to grow a loyal fanbase for a song or band. But quality songs are being made, tons of them. We need to listen to them sincerely," he adds.

Jewel further emphasises the collective responsibility to promote quality, "Instead of making low-quality content viral, we must promote quality ones. Otherwise, not just the music industry, art, film, and every other form of media industry will suffer."

On the topic of AI in music creation, Jewel expresses measured scepticism. "While AI has its uses, like restoring old recordings, it can't replicate the emotional depth of human-created music. It's a tool, but not a substitute for genuine creativity."

Artcell hints at several upcoming projects, including a corporate collaboration featuring a music video. Jewel reveals, "We're developing six or seven new tracks and have plans for more. Our creative process is organic; we don't rush to meet external demands."

Reflecting on their enduring success, Lincoln attributes it to "perseverance, consistency, dedication, and passion for music."

Twenty-five years. A lifetime for some, a blink of an eye for others. For Artcell, it represented a journey etched in power chords and poetic lyrics, a reflection of their enduring impact on Bangladesh's musical landscape.

based MNC Entertainment, allowed Artcell to showcase a broader repertoire. Jewel explains, "In Bangladesh, mixed concerts often limit us to our greatest hits. In Canada, we had the freedom to play extended sets, as long as two hours, including deeper cuts like *Rahur Grash*, *Otrito*, *Bhul Jonmo*, and *Dhushor Shomoy*."

"*Bhul Jonmo* wasn't even on our list. The crowd started chanting it and we had to play it on the spot," shares Faisal.

In 2023, Artcell released *Otrito*, their third album, following a 17-year hiatus

room to think for the listener. This is a story set in the future, blending science, fiction, as well as spirituality."

The band acknowledges that *Otrito* hasn't resonated as strongly with audiences as their earlier work. Shaju explains, "We deliberately departed from our conventional approach. As a progressive rock album, we knew it might not immediately appeal to younger listeners. Our goal was to create a conceptual album and make a statement as a band, that would remain in history."

Discussing the current state of local music industry, the band reflects on the challenges of creating timeless classics in today's fast-paced, content-saturated environment. Shaju notes, "It's too early to say we're not getting enduring hits. *Oniket Prantor* was released in 2006. It was around 2012-2013 when it became a hit or achieved its classic status."



OUT AND ABOUT IN DHAKA



Nachiketa Live in Dhaka with Joy Shahriar Vol 2
July 26 | 6:30pm-10pm
KIB Complex



Play 'Wolfed Down'
July 9-July 10 | 7pm-9pm
Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy



Exhibition 'The Actuality of Fiction'
July 5-July 16 | 6pm
Alliance Française de Dhaka

TV TALKIES



‘Maamla Legal Hai’: Legal realities from diverse lens

The courtroom drama of Netflix's *Maamla Legal Hai* owes its entertainment value entirely to the whole cast. Directed by Rahul Pandey and written jointly by Kunal Anja and Saurabh Khanna, it cleverly blends real-life cases through each of its episodes—offering insights into the courts of the Indian heartland and their challenges.

Actor Ravi Kishan shines brightly in his role as advocate VD Tyagi. The show takes an engaging approach to depict the lives and challenges of various lawyers belonging to different social classes: some in their chambers, others seated on benches in the court's parking area, and some under trees. Most importantly, all of them face genuine struggles, including those in positions of judicial authority.

In *Maamla Legal Hai*, the lawyers are portrayed as complex characters with shades of grey, rather than simply black or white. While Ravi Kishan leads the cast, every character plays a significant and equally important role, making each one a unique hero in their own right.

WHAT'S PLAYING

Ami Jharer Kachhe Rekhe Gelam

Ami Jharer Kachhe Rekhe Gelam, sung by the legendary Hemanta Mukherjee, is a haunting Bengali melody that showcases the artist's deep, mellifluous voice. The song, composed by Salil Chowdhury, evokes a profound sense of longing and separation. Hemanta's emotive rendition perfectly captures the poignant lyrics, which speak of leaving one's beloved in the care of a storm.

The composition's gentle, flowing rhythm mimics the ebb and flow of emotions, while the orchestration subtly enhances the mood without overshadowing Hemanta's vocals. The interplay between the singer's rich baritone and the delicate instrumentation creates an upbeat yet melancholic atmosphere that lingers long after the song ends. This timeless piece, exemplifying the golden era of Bengali music, can be a perfect addition to your playlist to celebrate this monsoon season.



OLIVIA COOKE

Olivia Cooke, the leading lady of Team Green in the ongoing HBO Max series *House of the Dragon*, showcased a remarkable look during the show's London premiere.

Decked out in an all black Stella McCartney gown, embellished with glittering black tassels, the strapless piece gave the actress an edgy and moody look. Her understated makeup was accentuated by nude pink lipstick, and she finished off the look with a high-up curly bun.

Olivia's fluffed face-framing bangs, alongside the silver vintage-esque necklace, give her the overall regal flair—reminiscent of her character Alicent Hightower in the series.

TRENDY STREAMS

Netflix
Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F



Prime Video
Mirzapur



Disney Plus
Red Swan



HBO Max
House of the Dragon



Hoichoi
Bijoya



Don't dismiss human rights violations

ASK report paints disturbing picture of first six months of 2024

We are disturbed by Ain O Salish Kendra's (ASK) report on the human rights situation in Bangladesh in the first half of 2024. According to one of the leading human rights organisations—which prepares the report every year based on news published in national dailies, alongside its own findings—political killings have tripled, and custodial deaths doubled this year compared to the same period in the previous year. At least 250 women were raped across the country from January to July this year, 631 children became victims of killings, torture, and repression, 35 people were lynched by mobs and 21 temples and 25 Hindu homes were vandalised. If this is how the first six months of the third term of the Awami League government has played out, can citizens be blamed for worrying about what the future holds?

At least 41 people were killed in incidents of political violence in the first six months of 2024. The alarming increase in political violence can be traced back to the general election on January 7, city corporation elections, and upazila polls held in four phases across the country. Although the polls were boycotted by the main opposition parties, including BNP, it is unfortunate that we still witnessed untoward killings and violence, mostly among supporters of Awami League candidates and independent AL candidates or, in the case of local elections, among AL-affiliated candidates. We have not seen any acknowledgement from the government, its law enforcement agencies and the Election Commission about its failure in preventing intra-party violence and an intimidating election-time environment. Instead, in a controversial move, the home ministry deleted all data relating to 1,524 complaints of electoral violence and breach of electoral code of conduct received between December 19, 2023 and January 10 this year.

Meanwhile, at least eight individuals, including two women, died in custody during this period. Again, we have not seen any meaningful action to hold accountable law enforcers involved in allegations of torture and extrajudicial excesses, despite repeated appeals from national and human rights bodies. In fact, there has only been one conviction for custodial death over the past decade, though ASK documented at least 138 deaths that have been allegedly caused by physical torture by law enforcement agencies.

Over the years, we have observed a concerning dismissal or downplaying of human rights abuses by the government, even when presented with compelling statistics. Will the third term of the Awami League government be more of the same, or will it finally realise that no amount of economic growth and infrastructural development can make up for gross human rights violations, and that it is ultimately in its best interests to address them? For the sake of citizens, we hope it is the latter.

Stop ignoring militancy threats

Focus more on deradicalising ex-militants in prison

A recent police intelligence report has confirmed what we have been warning about in this column for years: militants in prisons, far from being rehabilitated and deradicalised, are continuing their communications with members of militant outfits outside of prisons, possibly gathering strength and reorganising. This indicates that the soft power approach being pursued by the authorities in prisons are not working at all.

Militants in prison, like all other prisoners, need to be rehabilitated and shown a better path. But because of the way our prisons are presently operating—with prisoners crammed beyond prison limits, inadequate resources allocated for them and very little focus on their rehabilitation—they are doing the exact opposite. Only a year ago, this newspaper reported on how militant leaders have been taking advantage of gaps in surveillance to form new outfits and recruit members inside and outside prisons. By intercepting communications, intelligence officers also managed to learn that Neo JMB leader Saiful Islam Khaled, now on death row at Kashimpur High Security Prison for the 2016 Holey Artisan cafe attack, was contacting Bangladeshi IS militants in Afghanistan, asking for financial support to reorganise the militant group in Bangladesh. This, of course, should seriously concern the authorities. Unfortunately, it seems that has not been the case as surveillance gaps continue to persist in our prisons, according to police report.

What is further concerning is that militants in prisons have apparently been able to smuggle cell phones into the jails with the help of some prison guards. Due to such neglect, even militant leaders living abroad are regularly communicating with jailed members in Bangladesh. With that being the case, it is difficult to imagine that the jailed members will ever become deradicalised. What then, will be the outcome when they finally get out of prison? Will they not again bolster the ranks of different militant groups? It seems that the government has no plan on what to do with these people. And the militant outfits are taking full advantage of that.

Hence, we once again reiterate the importance of cutting off the communication of these prisoners with outside militant forces. Authorities must put greater focus on deradicalising and rehabilitating them, and also increasing surveillance in prisons to ensure that these measures are actually working. After all, militancy poses one of the greatest threats to our national security, as well as our secular social fabric—and strongly contradicts the religious values held by the majority of our citizens.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Frida Kahlo was born

On this day in 1970, Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, noted for her intense, brilliantly coloured self-portraits, was born.

The paradox of whitening black money while fighting corruption



Kamal Ahmed is an independent journalist. His X handle is @ahmedkai

KAMAL AHMED

Bangladesh is often described as a “paradox”; it excels in crucial social indicators while scoring poorly on the quality of governance. This paradox was evident when two contrasting news stories emerged from the same session of the Jatiya Sangsad on June 29: one about the prime minister's vow to crack down on graft, and the other about retaining amnesty for possessors of black money. How does one reconcile such contradictions? Has the government redefined corruption by excluding proceeds from illegal transactions, graft, and tax evasion, commonly known as black money?

Critics argue that the definition of black money varies depending on who holds it. This money seems less problematic if the holder is connected to the ruling party. Despite loud proclamations of “zero tolerance,” government efforts rarely make a lasting impact on curbing corruption.

Currently, the country is abuzz with complaints about bureaucratic corruption. Previously, there was noise about traders' excessive profits and syndicates. A few years ago, Awami League embodied the zero-tolerance mantra when it tackled illegal wealth from casinos, gambling, and extortion. There was no shortage of theatrics when alleged casino kingpins were arrested in raids, which included quite a few Jubo League leaders, such as Ismail Chowdhury Samrat, Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan, Kazi Anisur Rahman, and AKM Mominul Haque. Now, however, prosecutors seem to have forgotten about pursuing conviction for the accused, with all of them out on bail.

Considering the slew of unresolved large-scale financial crimes such as fraud and embezzlement of bank loans, insider trading, and manipulations in the stock market involving thousands of crores, one may wonder why there is even talk of a crackdown on corruption.

In the past decade and a half, the stock market has experienced at least three major manipulations. Those who looted investors' wealth faced no significant consequences. Similarly,



VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

fraud and embezzlement of bank loans have been long standing issues. In 2012, the late Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith downplayed Hallmark's Tk 4,000-crore fraud, saying, “It is not a big sum.” At the time, his words seemed incredible, but now, with the scale of corruption being uncovered, his statement appears less mistaken or humorous. Banks being used to break rules and create precedents for anonymous loans in the billions is now commonplace.

Despite the noise about corruption, the corrupt seem largely unaffected. Government measures, like transfers or demotions after grand corruption allegations, suggest a “hate the sin, not the sinner” approach. Thus, criminals have no trouble withdrawing money or transferring assets before fleeing abroad. Critics of the government or opposition members, however, struggle to secure court permission just to travel.

Everyone wants corrupt bureaucrats tried, but the belief

(integrity) Award, intended as part of the anti-corruption drive, ironically has been bestowed upon record-setting corrupt individuals like former police chief Benazir Ahmed.

The one-sided election on January 7 has probably faded from many of our memories, along with the asset lists of candidates. Since the election was boycotted, and most candidates were from Awami League, the wealth disclosures in their affidavits highlighted how lucrative politics is. Transparency International Bangladesh found that the assets of the top 10 wealthiest MPs multiplied by up to 55 times in five years. The wealth of the richest MP's wife increased about 35 times, and over 15 years, his wealth surged 2,436 times. Many of these politicians are businessmen, yet such business growth is rare even in the West. Transparency's analysis of ministers' and state ministers' wealth also found up to eleven-fold wealth growth and 22 times income growth in five years.

analysing their assets and income statements, and confiscating any illegal asset through proper legal processes. They also recommended seizing land exceeding legal limits, which was not too difficult as these disclosures came in their affidavits. None of this happened. Had politicians' illegal land been confiscated, bureaucrats might have been deterred from pursuing dreams of becoming zamindars.

It has already been proven that raising alarm bells about the corruption of various professionals and groups will achieve little if the political sponsors of corruption are kept out of the reckoning. What's happening now is best described as mega-corruption, and at the rate at which complaints are heard, corruption has become decentralised. Whoever has the power, the maximum of it is being used for corruption. There is no solution to this problem unless there is a change in politics and a return to accountable democracy and the rule of law.

Why Macronism failed



Jan Werner Mueller is the author, most recently, of Democracy Rules

JAN-WERNER MUELLER

Following his party's decisive loss to the far-right National Rally in the European Parliament election, French President Emmanuel Macron shocked everyone by dissolving the National Assembly and calling a snap election. He has justified his decision by claiming that an election will “clarify” the political situation, but his compatriots do not share this view.

As Edouard Philippe, Macron's prime minister from 2017 to 2020, put it, the president has needlessly “killed the presidential majority.” A hung parliament with National Rally as the largest party is now considered the most likely outcome. Still, Macron's decision has clarified one thing: his strategy to create a powerful centrism in France has failed. Other European leaders should take note.

Legend has it that the first question Napoleon would ask about a military officer was not whether he was talented, but whether he was lucky. In 2017, Macron was extraordinarily lucky. The incumbent was so unpopular that he did not even bother to run for a second term, and the likely conservative winner was felled by a scandal. Macron seized the moment to offer what one might call a Second Coming of the “Third Way.” Just like Tony Blair, the British Labour Party leader who came to power in 1997, Macron held that the old ideological cleavage of left and right was dépassé, and that centrists should simply pick the policies that “worked best.”

Macron appealed to both socialists and conservative Gaullists, on the assumption that all reasonable people could unite happily in the moderate middle. For a while, this approach had traction, because Macron's seemingly ever-expanding was flanked by Marine Le Pen's National Front (now National Rally) on the far right and by the firebrand Jean-Luc Mélenchon's France Unbowed on the far left. But the technocratic approach—“if you're not with us, you're unreasonable”—ultimately failed to transform the political landscape.

The far right, far left, centre left, and centre right each still tend to win at least a fifth of the vote in the first round of French presidential elections, on average. But the centre-right Republicans have been hemorrhaging votes to National Rally, prompting the party's leader, Eric Ciotti, to endorse an alliance with the far right. This matters, because Macron's overwhelming support in the second round of the 2017 and 2022 elections—when he was facing off against Le Pen—was largely due to voters' hostility to the far right, not burgeoning enthusiasm for Macron-style technocracy.

Macron's haughty style—already in 2017, he let it be known that he wanted to rule like “Jupiter”—certainly did not help. But quite apart from the personal failings of a man who fancies himself a philosopher-king, a centrist project aimed at taking the best from the left

and the right was always more likely to alienate both than to harmonise their contradictory agendas.

Once Macron had lost control of the National Assembly in 2022, his prime minister, Elisabeth Borne, heroically tried to cobble together ad hoc majorities to advance the president's agenda. But on more than 20 occasions, she resorted to constitutional shortcuts to ram

Macron's haughty style—already in 2017, he let it be known that he wanted to rule like “Jupiter”—certainly did not help. But quite apart from the personal failings of a man who fancies himself a philosopher-king, a centrist project aimed at taking the best from the left and the right was always more likely to alienate both than to harmonise their contradictory agendas.

through measures that clearly lacked popular support.

Macron's centrism not only looked increasingly authoritarian; it also acquired a rightward tilt. Hence, his hardline interior minister went so far as to accuse Le Pen of being soft on Islamism, and Borne introduced an immigration law that seemed to legitimise the claims made by the far right. Constantly shift rightward, and you eventually will reach a point where you can no longer blackmail

voters with the argument that you are the only thing standing in the way of right-wing extremism and the end of the Republic.

Some commentators speculate that Macron wants the National Rally to govern until the 2027 presidential election so it will prove itself incompetent and set the stage for a triumphant shift back toward the centre. But this kind of quasi-pedagogical project—with the headmaster showing his pupils that the substitute teacher doesn't know how to do the job—is misguided for several reasons.

For starters, not all far-right populists have overly simplistic policy ideas or are amateur administrators. In cases where they do prove themselves incompetent, their fortunes can recover. When Austria's Machiavellian Christian Democratic chancellor, Wolfgang Schäussel, brought Jörg Haider's far-right Freedom Party into government in 2000, the populists descended into infighting and revealed their incompetence and corruption. But after splitting up and licking its wounds, the Freedom Party sailed to victory in last month's European elections.

Moreover, since the French system allows for “cohabitation”—when the president and the prime minister belong to opposing parties—an incompetent-seeming governing party can blame the other side for tying its hands. Wielding the extraordinary powers of the French presidency, Macron will doubtless find an outlet on the international stage. But it is sobering to see that his vision has been downgraded from a “revolution” in 2017 to a “renaissance” in 2022 to what it is today. Macron failed to transform the movement he started into a proper political party that is not dependent on a charismatic leader. His charisma gone, the centre's prospects for 2027 look bleak.

The large cracks in Bangladesh that IMF missed



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SADIQ AHMED

In January 2023, Bangladesh entered into a \$4.7 billion IMF programme, spanning over 42 months, to fight the pressures on the macroeconomy and arrest the associated economic downside. These pressures, triggered by a series of external shocks emerging from Covid-19, global inflation and the Ukraine War, had accumulated over a number of years owing to weak economic management. The policy corrections, therefore, involve macroeconomic adjustments, structural reforms and institutional strengthening.

The core IMF programme was broken down into six reviews, and the associated policy reforms were designed to become progressively more challenging. The government should take some comfort in successfully negotiating the release of the second review on June 24. While the government succeeded in ticking many of the conditionalities for the first and second review and convinced the IMF to be more flexible on some others, in substance, the two most important policy reforms implemented so far are the flexibility of the exchange rate and interest rate. However, fiscal correction has not happened, and the structural reforms in taxation, subsidies, state-owned enterprises, trade policy, and the banking sector have not made adequate progress.

Against this backdrop, the IMF has identified nine specific risks and uncertainties that could jeopardise progress with implementation of the IMF programme and constrain the ability of Bangladesh to successfully stabilise the macroeconomy and resume the growth process on a sustainable path. Five of these risks are global in nature and four are domestic.

The global risks include intensification of regional conflicts, commodity price volatility, abrupt global slowdown, systemic financial instability, and deepening geoeconomic fragmentation. The domestic ones relate to failure to maintain a market-based flexible exchange system, failure to address banking sector reforms, insufficient international support in resolving the Rohingya crisis, and higher frequency and severity of natural disasters related to climate change.

The global risks are well identified. It is hard to quarrel with them. Regional conflicts and deepening geoeconomic fragmentation are of

anytime soon. Without meaningful progress on banking reforms, the overall quality of the IMF programme will suffer.

On the exchange rate, an encouraging beginning has been made with the reform on May 8. The unification of the exchange rate and adoption of the interim crawling peg regime is a sound reform. Steps must be taken to quickly move to a fully flexible market-based exchange system. The risk of slippage is high, but the IMF must remain vigilant in monitoring this risk and engage with the government to stay on track.

Several substantial domestic risks have not been identified in the IMF risk matrix. These risks are not only high but present more immediate adverse consequences for the macroeconomy and resumption of growth momentum than the seven other risks noted by the IMF (the five global, the Rohingya, and the natural disaster ones).

First and foremost is the weakness of fiscal policy. This is the Achilles heel of Bangladesh's

A big missing item in the budget is the absence of reform of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The financial return on investments in SOEs is very low and net budgetary transfers to sustain these poorly performing SOEs are way too high. Reform of SOEs is an easy win and surprisingly not emphasised in the IMF programme.

development strategy, and progress has been faltering for a long time. The 18 months of the IMF programme has brought in some marginal progress, but most of the institutional and structural aspects of the tax reform programme have not been addressed.

Of immediate concern is the consistency of the FY2025 budget with monetary policy for inflation control. At 4.6 percent of GDP, the budget deficit is way too high to allow the credit tightening that is needed to control inflation. There is a high risk that the budget will either crowd out private credit or cause a loosening of monetary policy thereby jeopardising inflation control.

A big missing item in the budget is the absence of reform of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The financial return on investments in SOEs is very low and net budgetary transfers to sustain these poorly performing SOEs are way too high. Reform of SOEs is an easy win and surprisingly not emphasised in



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

particular concern. Yet, it is fair to say many of these risks have prevailed over the decades. The main policy implication of these risks is to make an all-out effort to stabilise the macroeconomy and resume the momentum of sustainable growth as quickly as possible. Growing economic resilience is the best way to absorb external shocks and take corrective actions in the future.

The list of domestic risks is way too conservative and misses out some big-ticket items. Regarding the Rohingya crisis, this is more in the nature of an external risk. Bangladesh is doing its best to drum up international support. Progress with fiscal reforms will help create more space to fund Rohingya needs.

Concerning climate related natural disasters, this is more a long-term challenge, although admittedly, Bangladesh's response in instituting policies and programmes to build greater climate resilience so far has been weak. It is not clear whether the IMF programme's \$1.4-billion climate resilience component has been very effective in strengthening this policy response, especially in regards to mainstreaming climate change policies in planning, budgeting, incentives and institutional capabilities. I would like to throw the ball back at the IMF's court and ask it to reassess this component to see if the programme design was adequate to secure substantial climate reforms with potential long-term benefit.

The two remaining domestic risks are both very relevant and fall in the high risk category. It has now been 18 months since the IMF programme was approved, and little progress has been achieved in the banking sector. If anything, downside risks have increased. The volume of non-performing loans and distressed assets continues to increase, and there is little sign that a reversal is coming



Students and job seekers have taken it to the streets, seeking an end to positive discrimination under the quota system that looms over half of government jobs. FILE PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PENSION WARS AND QUOTA PROTESTS:

The manufactured divide



BLOWIN' IN THE WIND
Dr Shamsad Mortuza is professor of English at Dhaka University.

SHAMSAAD MORTUZA

How does it feel to live in a society that seems to be melting from the bottom up, as well as from the top down? On one end of the pendulum, you see one of your country's biggest loan defaulters, aka one of the "Crazy Rich Asians," throwing a lavish wedding party in the Middle East. Then you witness common people groaning in front of the fish market, unable to afford anything except the throwaway guts and bones.

The "division bell" is responsible for creating a toxic climate in which our resentment for one another grows while our compassion for one another declines. Polarisation, rife with mutual fear and rage, is on the rise. Something dark and sinister is occurring. Our long-term sense of solidarity is fading; we are seeing a rise in isolationism and hostility. The problem is sociological. People blame rotten politics, social media, and moral or spiritual degradation for the venom's spread. It seems each group is on its own. We hardly give each other any thought until the issue flares close by.

Many divisive problems that pit one group against the other clearly show how our society is disintegrating. Public university teachers are on strike, calling for the protection of their pension rights. Students and job seekers have taken it to the streets, seeking an end to positive discrimination under the quota system that looms over half of government jobs. The court has overturned a previous decision to end quotas for the offspring of freedom fighters. The time is tough. A troubling pattern emerges that masks the deeper systemic issues through a



Public university teachers are on strike, calling for the protection of their pension rights. PHOTO: STAR

the stick. Why change the existing scheme and create a system through which incoming colleagues receive a different and disadvantageous payoff? Why separate the state-affiliated autonomous bodies from the state schemes? Why then, delay the pension scheme for civil servants by a year while maintaining secrecy about its details? The striking teachers have reason to believe that the intended parity and inclusivity promoted by the universal pension scheme are not universal after all.

The administration has made no secret of its intention to limit the scope of the teachers. Without consulting the teachers, authorities decided to implement a contributory pension scheme for new teachers,

So much so, there is no communication between the teachers holding sit-in demonstrations inside the campus and the students staging protests at Dhaka's Shahbagh, each man for himself. Adding fuel to the fire, we see the civil servants creating a new list of perks and benefits: scholarships for higher studies, allocation of land and provision for housing societies, car loans, and selection grades. Their constant disregard for the teachers' community, whom they perhaps hate for their academic freedom, was evident when they requested a university of their own. Already, we have seen military professionals create their own universities to rehabilitate their officers or provide them with degrees for post-retirement job opportunities. The current socio-political landscape is characterised by a perilous game of division and control.

Teachers are now pitted against students, students against the government, and the mainstream media against anyone who dares to speak out. This coordinated conflict serves two purposes: it deflects attention from the rampant abuses of private entrepreneurs who use tax holidays and other incentives to launder money, and it diverts attention from the shortcomings of civil servants and military officials who are often involved in corruption scandals. It muffles the voice of civil society, which has the ability to speak.

In this climate of division, public anger and frustration have become palpable. This pervasive distrust has tainted our interactions with one another, whether on the road, in public spaces, or in our daily lives. A sense of betrayal and helplessness is increasingly driving us, unravelling the societal fabric.

As we navigate through this turbulent situation, it's crucial to understand the underlying issues: the systematic manipulation of social tensions to uphold the status quo for a select few, leaving the rest of us to bear the consequences. The consequences fall on the rest of us. The solution to these problems depends on a democratic climate that promotes openness, inclusion, and sincere communication.

Why change the existing scheme and create a system through which incoming colleagues receive a different and disadvantageous payoff? Why separate the state-affiliated autonomous bodies from the state schemes? Why then, delay the pension scheme for civil servants by a year while maintaining secrecy about its details? The striking teachers have reason to believe that the intended parity and inclusivity promoted by the universal pension scheme are not universal after all.

calculated orchestration of conflict. In the process, the focus shifts from the real culprits who have brought our economy to a halt.

What do I mean by orchestration? The government's handling of the pension reform offers a case in point. Everyone welcomed the government's announcement last year of a universal pension package under four categories: Probog for expatriate Bangladeshis, Progoti for private service-holders, Surakkha for self-employed nationals, and Samata for those below the poverty line. The inclusion of Prottoy, a contributory pension scheme that affects new teachers joining from July 1, 2024, triggered the issue. This scheme is for all autonomous entities, among other bodies, funded by the government.

Once the details were revealed, the stakeholders found that they would be getting the short end of

which does not include the existing one-time lump sum gratuity. This unilateral approach has not only sparked widespread outrage but has also further exacerbated the divide between the state and the educators who have long been the backbone of our society.

The policymakers have completely ignored the demands of the striking teachers. The finance minister, in charge of introducing a new contributory pension programme, called the protest "irrational." The education minister echoed the government's stance, stating that his office has nothing to do with it and that all new teachers have to follow the universal programme. Assigned to hear the teachers' side of the tale, the minister for road, transport, and bridges called off his planned meeting on Thursday, saying he had to first speak with the prime

“I want to play forever. I love the sport. It’s given me so much, taught me loads of lessons over the years that I can use in the rest of my life. But I don’t want to stop, so it is hard.”

Two-time Wimbledon singles champion Andy Murray, who had an emotional sendoff on Centre Court following Thursday’s doubles defeat at Wimbledon. The British tennis icon is still set for at least one more match in the mixed doubles.



When will Hathurusingha take responsibility?

SHABAB CHOWDHURY

A lack of ambition has clearly surmounted the lack of ability in the Bangladesh national cricket team setup.

The team, evidently, is striving to maintain the mediocre status quo is an environment where no real ambition can pierce through, with the major stakeholders having no vision to reach excellence.

Exhibit A in this regard is how Bangladesh fluffed an opportunity to reach the semifinals of the T20 World Cup for the first time in their history.

Bangladesh needed 116 runs in 12.1 overs against Afghanistan in their last Super Eight contest to guarantee qualification. However, after losing a few wickets, the Tigers abandoned their attempt at fulfilling that equation and instead played for the win.

The reason behind that questionable approach that reeked of a mediocre mentality was later revealed by the skipper in a statement which most took as utter buffoonery, as Shanto

said that after Bangladesh lost three in the first three overs, they focused on only winning the game, a victory that would be of no benefit to them.

While Shanto has been copping a lot of flak for this statement, with even the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon criticising the skipper for it, the person who got the ball rolling in this mediocre path, head coach Chandika Hathurusingha, has seemingly got off scot-free.

After Bangladesh qualified for the Super Eight for the first time since 2007, Hathurusingha stated that the Tigers had achieved their goal in the tournament and whatever came after would be a bonus.

The players’ performances in the next two matches reflected the coach’s statement, where they surrendered against Australia and India without even putting up a fight.

And when circumstances presented them with an opportunity that every team could only dream about, the Tigers did not even go all out at taking it, perhaps already

satisfied with their ‘bonus’ phase of the competition.

Since Hathurusingha’s re-appointment at the beginning of last year, Bangladesh have played two World Cups– the 2023 ODI World Cup in India and this year’s T20 World Cup in North America.

He was brought in to streamline a path to the semis in last year’s World Cup but instead under his tutelage Bangladesh had one of their worst ever campaigns. In the T20 World



With another major ICC tournament – the 2025 Champions Trophy – ahead, one would have to be overly optimistic to believe that Bangladesh would fare better with Hathurusingha at the helm.

Cup, other than a few match-winning efforts from the bowling unit, there wasn’t anything to get excited about.

However, these underwhelming displays have hardly mattered as Hathurusingha’s job seems to be secure and much like the BCB, his role seemingly demands very little accountability.

In every sport, the coach has to take responsibility along with the players for disappointing campaigns but Hathurusingha seems to be an exception in this regard.

Papon, who is serving his third

term as the BCB boss, expressed his satisfaction with the team reaching the Super Eight and with the team ending their campaign with three wins overall – the most ever by Bangladesh in a campaign.

He hardly said a word about Bangladesh’s appalling batting display, head coach Hathurusingha’s role in allowing the team to slip into such mediocrity and the failure of batting coach David Hemp to get the batters out of their slump.

Hathurusingha’s evolution as the Bangladesh coach also provides an interesting insight on how a culture of mediocrity effects everyone that’s part of it. When he was first appointed as Bangladesh coach in 2015, it seemed that Bangladesh had brought in a top coach who was astute in planning successful campaigns. And impressive results did follow.

Almost a decade later, and into his second stint with Bangladesh, it seems that the Sri Lankan has clothed himself in mediocrity and the once result-oriented and stubborn coach has settled himself well into

Bangladesh’s culture of playing it safe and doing the bare minimum.

BCB has always lacked in long-term vision and when the coach at the helm shares the same attitude, it’s a recipe for an unsustainable future filled with uninspiring showings and inevitable mediocrity.

In the T20 World Cup, Bangladesh shook the very foundation of why professional sports is played by consciously choosing to ignore a shot at excellence. It won’t be a stretch to assume that the 19 other teams that played in the tournament would go out of their way to achieve excellence if they were presented with the opportunity Bangladesh received.

With another major ICC tournament – the 2025 Champions Trophy – ahead, one would have to be overly optimistic to believe that Bangladesh would fare better with Hathurusingha at the helm.

Now, will the BCB finally demand accountability from Hathurusingha or will they maintain the status quo as raising questions will bring them directly into the firing line?

MARTINEZ the shoot-out ‘animal’

AGENCIES

It will be tough for Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez to top his penalty shoot-out heroics from the run to World Cup glory in Qatar in 2022 but that certainly won’t stop him trying.

The keeper, known as ‘El Dibu’ by his adoring fans, produced two brilliant diving saves in the shoot-out to earn his team a 4-2 win on penalties against Ecuador in the Copa America quarter-finals on Thursday.

The game had ended 1-1 in normal time and with no extra time in the Copa, until the final, the game went straight to penalties.

When Lionel Messi chipped the opening attempt against the top of the bar, the almost 70,000 fans in NRG Stadium could have been forgiven for thinking Argentina’s title defense was about to end. But Martinez had other ideas.



Just as he had done against Colombia, in the Copa semi-final in Brazil in 2021 and then against the Netherlands in the quarter-final of the World Cup when he saved two Dutch spot-kicks, the Aston Villa keeper turned the game in his team’s favor.

“Dibu is an animal. The truth is that what he is doing is crazy. He deserves it. He loves to wear these colors. He gives us a lot of security and peace of mind. We try to do the same for him, but in these important moments he’s always there, he’s always there,” said midfielder Rodrigo De Paul.

“I knew that ‘Dibu’ would come good, he loves those moments, he rises to them,” said a relieved Messi. “He had faith in himself. Even before the game he was joking that if it went to penalties, we should relax.”

His most famous performance of all, of course, was in the World Cup final against France when not only did he save from Kingsley Coman but his mind games put added pressure on Aurelien Tchouameni who missed his kick as Argentina won the shoot-out 4-2.

This time there was no dancing on his line, no indication of his chatter with opponents or other mind-games – although he certainly made clear his joy at the saves with his gestures to the fans.

“I told the guys before the penalty shootout that I wasn’t ready to go home. This group deserves to go all the way to the final,” Martinez told Argentine television.

Martinez dived to his left to deny Angel Mena and then to his right to keep out

Alan Minda’s spot-kick, celebrating his saves wildly.

It also extended the 31-year-old’s penalty record with Argentina to an astonishing 50%. Of 24 penalties faced for the national side, Martinez has saved nine with three off target.

“I got a bit full on with the crowd. I had all the Argentinians here, my family close by. So these are special moments,” he said.

Martinez, who won the Golden Glove at the World Cup and was voted FIFA’s Best Goalkeeper in 2022, has come through plenty of tough battles in his career, having moved to England as a teenager, joining Arsenal.

While he dreamt of making his mark in the Premier League and with the national team, there was little glamour in his early years with the Gunners as he was loaned out to lower-league clubs.

He had spells at Oxford United, Sheffield Wednesday and Rotherham United before stepping up to Wolverhampton Wanderers and eventually getting a chance with Arsenal.

He was sold to Aston Villa in 2020 and saved a penalty in his first game for his new club against Sheffield United.

He has established such a rapport with the Argentine team and produced such vital saves from the spot and in open play that coach Lionel Scaloni said he had ensured an ultra-confident mood for his team-mates in the shoot-out.

“In the penalties I think the team felt a blind trust in their goalkeeper and for us that is fundamental. Even if Leo missed I think the team knew that something positive was going to happen. That is so important,” he said.



Zia ‘Bangladesh’s best’ with legacy unparalleled

Bangladesh’s fourth GM Abdullah Al Rakib shared his experience and memories with Ziaur Rahman, who passed away from a heart attack while competing in the National Chess Championship in Dhaka yesterday. Here are the excerpts:

“I have been playing for the national team since the age of 14 and from the beginning, I had a good personal relationship with Zia bhai; someone who always treated me as a younger brother. I have numerous memories with him during our chess journey. A friendly, big-hearted person, his simplicity, strong ethics and sincerity always inspired us. When we came into the scene, Niaz [Murshed] bhai had already passed his prime. We didn’t see much of his playing before he became Grandmaster, but Zia bhai and Rifat [Bin Sattar] bhai had seen him at work.

I think Zia bhai’s dedication and contribution to the sport is unmatched. After Niaz bhai, Zia bhai got the first GM norm and then I achieved the landmark in 2001. After that, Zia bhai told me that my GM norm has made him excited to seek another GM norm.

Actually, we were not jealous about others’ success. We have become Grandmaster nearly at the same time. We played so many tournaments as teammates and also as opponents. I can’t describe all these words. I think his contribution to the sport and Bangladesh will be remembered for a long time. I can say that, performance-wise, he was the best chess player for Bangladesh.”

Paris-bound archer Sagor ‘confident of bringing home Olympic medal’

Archer Sagor Islam, at just 18 years old, has made history as the youngest athlete from his country to earn a direct spot in the Olympic Games, following in the footsteps of golfer Siddiquir Rahman and archer Ruman Sana who achieved the same in previous editions. Overcoming poverty with unwavering support from his widowed mother, BKSP, and the Bangladesh Archery Federation, Sagor, a high school student in the 11th grade, has reached this milestone. While he has not yet won an individual event medal in either domestic or international competitions, Sagor surprised many by securing a direct Olympic entry and even clinching a silver medal in last month’s Final Olympic Quota tournament. The lad from Rajshahi discussed his career, passion for archery, and future aspirations with The Daily Star’s Anisur Rahman in an exclusive interview, the excerpts of which are as follows:

ANISUR RAHMAN

The Daily Star (DS): How did you feel talking to your mother from Turkey after securing a direct entry to the Paris Olympic Games?

Sagor Islam (SI): It took me nearly four hours to reach my mother by phone from the hotel in Turkey because I had no network during the competition. When I asked her if she knew about my achievement, she replied positively and blessed me, hoping for even better results in the Olympics. At that moment, I felt like the most successful son in the world; I felt like I was number one. My mother’s happiness is my happiness because she raised me without my father, fulfilling as many of my demands as she could. I have come this far because of her.

DS: What were your expectations going into the Final Olympic Quota tournament in Turkey?

SI: We started to believe that our hard work and continuous practice could lead to something significant. Others also supported us in achieving our goals. I personally believed that this year, with seven months of relentless training, we had become really strong.

DS: There were high expectations for the men’s recurve team to secure a quota place,

but they were eliminated in the quarterfinals, and you outshone them in the individual events as the youngest team member.

SI: Yes, we had hoped for a lot from the team event, but things didn’t go as planned. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, we cannot control the outcome. We approached the competition in our own way, but unfortunately, we didn’t succeed.

DS: What was going through your mind when you entered the quarterfinals following the elimination of two teammates in previous rounds?

SI: I started with a positive mindset. I focused solely on my performance without worrying about others because I had nothing to lose. I was confident that if I performed to the best of my ability, I could secure a direct quota place for the Paris Olympics.

DS: You will be competing against the world’s top archers in the upcoming Paris Olympics, although they were absent from

the Final Olympic Quota tournament in Turkey. How confident are you in your ability to compete with them?

SI: Korean archers and other top archers qualified directly. I achieved the same qualification as they did, so I never considered myself inferior to them. I believed I am on their level because I competed against archers from all over the world, not just Asia.

DS: What kind of training are you undergoing now under German coach Martin Fredrick in Tongi, following your qualification for the Paris Olympics?

SI: Previously, the coach focused on all members of the national team, but now he is solely guiding me for the Olympics. I continue to train by shooting over 320 arrows every day, similar to what I did during national camp. Fredrick and others are inspiring me greatly to boost my confidence and provide mental motivation so that I can perform well in the Olympics.

DS: What are your thoughts on the Paris Olympics?

SI: It’s hard to predict my own performance at the Paris Olympics, but I am confident



that if I perform naturally, I can compete with anyone and bring a medal home for the nation. The biggest challenge for me is to stay composed during critical moments and maintain my focus, as archery is as much a mental game as it is physical.

DS: How do you feel about the discussion to potentially send Hakim Ahmed Rubel instead of you to the Paris Olympics?

SI: I think it’s normal because I earned the quota for the nation, and the coach and federation have the right to decide what’s best for the country. I didn’t feel upset about it because I would have accepted whatever decision the coach and federation made. Nevertheless, I am grateful to finally represent the nation at the Paris Olympics.

DS: What are your expectations from the other athletes – Imranur Rahman, Robiul Islam, Samiul Islam, and Sonia Akter – participating in the Paris Olympics?

SI: It’s a rare opportunity to compete in the Olympics, so I hope they will give their best efforts to achieve something for the nation. In sports, there are no guarantees that even a talented athlete will succeed. As for archery, anything can happen.

Southgate under pressure as England face Swiss test

REUTERS, Weimar

England's European Championship campaign looked dead and buried before it was salvaged by a remarkable last-gasp goal from Jude Bellingham in the round of 16, but they have barely made their presence felt in Germany.

Gareth Southgate's men take on in-form Switzerland in the quarterfinals on Saturday in Duesseldorf, and the Swiss underlined their credentials by beating defending champions Italy in the last 16.

A couple of weeks ago, England would have relished facing Switzerland – a team they have lost to only three times in their 27 meetings and most recently in 1981.

Murat Yakin's team, however, have

played with a consistency and confidence that has eluded England.

Yakin even said he sympathised with Southgate, who has been lambasted in Germany for not getting more from his talented squad.

"I know this myself from last year a little bit, just focus on the football game, not what we read in the newspapers, that's the only thing we can do as a coach," Yakin said.

Southgate has been criticised for not making many changes to his team but that could be about to change as they practised a back three in training, with Kyle Walker moved to the right of centre three and Bukayo Saka potentially playing as wing-back.

Of concern to Southgate is the fact that defender Marc Guehi, who has been solid on his major tournament debut, is suspended for Saturday's match, John

Khaka acting as the midfield playmaker. Khaka, who played a pivotal role in Bayer Leverkusen's Bundesliga victory last season, was delighted by Switzerland's



Stones has been training with his leg heavily bandaged and Luke Shaw has not played since February due to injury.

While England have not played with three at the back since finishing runners-up to Italy at Euro 2020, it would allow Southgate to employ his wing-backs higher up the pitch.

Yakin, meanwhile, will rely on the experience of Manchester City's Manuel Akanji and Newcastle United's Fabian Schar to anchor the back line, with Granit

win over Italy which was sweet revenge for their 3-0 thrashing by them at Euro 2020.

"I have never seen the Azzurri in such difficulty on the field as against us," Khaka said. "We won even before going on the pitch, just as they did with us three years ago. They were scared."

England are bidding for their first European Championship title in 11 appearances while a Swiss victory would put Yakin's team into the semifinals for the first time.

- This will be Gareth Southgate's 100th international match in charge of England, becoming only the third manager to hit the milestone.
- England have lost just one of their last 24 meetings with Switzerland in all competitions (W17 D6), and are unbeaten in 13 (W9 D4) since a 2-1 loss in a World Cup qualifier in May 1981.

- England also aim to become the sixth European side to earn 50 victories at major tournaments – after Germany, Italy, France, Spain and the Netherlands.
- Granit Khaka has created more chances (8), completed more passes (254) and made more line-breaking passes (51) than any other Switzerland player in this tournament.

Spotlight on Guler, Gakpo in Dutch-Turkey clash

AFP, Berlin

Cody Gakpo and Arda Guler endured frustrating seasons but both have established themselves as their teams' vital players as the Netherlands face Turkey in a Euro 2024 quarterfinal clash on Saturday in Berlin.

"Gakpo is our star," former Netherlands international Pierre van Hooijdonk said on Dutch channel NOS.

Overshadowed by Mohamed Salah at Anfield, where he has played inconsistently, Gakpo has burst into life in Germany as a constant threat coming in off the left.

Half of the forward's 12 goals for his country have come at major tournaments, with three at the World Cup two years ago.

With another he will match compatriots and former stars Ruud van Nistelrooy and Arjen Robben on seven.

"He is a great player who is solid on the ball... and super important for us," said Koeman after the 3-0 last 16 win over Romania, in which Gakpo scored and also brilliantly teed up Donyell Malen.

At the other end, Real Madrid attacker Guler is Turkey's main weapon.

After months of injury problems and struggling to earn a chance in the Spanish capital, Guler burst into life in the final weeks of the season.

With the Spanish title won, Carlo Ancelotti let Guler loose and he blossomed at the perfect time to take the creative controls for Turkey this summer.

The 19-year-old scored a stunning effort against Georgia in Turkey's thrilling opening win and created both of his



- The last two matches between the Netherlands and Turkey have featured 13 goals (6.5 per game). Turkey won 4-2 in March 2021 and the Oranje won 6-1 later that year.
- Arda Guler is one of just three teenagers to score and assist at a single Euros, after Wayne Rooney (4 goals, 1 assist) and Cristiano Ronaldo (2 goals, 2 assists), both at Euro 2004.
- While this is set to be the 15th international meeting between Netherlands and Turkey, this tie is the first fixture between these teams to come at a major tournament.



team's goals against Austria in the 2-1 last 16 win with set pieces.

It is only the fourth time Turkey have reached the quarterfinals of a major tournament and the first since 2008. They are boosted by the return of captain Hakan Calhanoglu and defender Samet Akaydin from suspension.

In the stands at the vast Olympiastadion Turkey have the advantage, despite Oranje fans taking over every city they have visited in their vibrant shirts.

"It will be an away match," Netherlands

defender Daley Blind warned his teammates on Thursday, with around three million Turks living in Germany, many supporting their team fervently.

However, Turkey will be held back in one aspect as defender Merih Demiral will miss this quarterfinal clash after UEFA suspended him for two games on Friday for making an alleged ultra-nationalist salute when he scored his second goal in their 2-1 last-16 win over Austria on Tuesday.

The ban is a significant blow for Montella's side, already missing the

suspended Orkun Kokcu and Ismail Yuksek -- by contrast the Netherlands have their full complement available.

And that is what Koeman's men, who, according to Gakpo, "are not yet where we (they) want to be", will be hoping to capitalise.

If Netherlands can get through their Turkey test then fans can start dreaming of a second Euros triumph, with England or Switzerland awaiting in the semifinal in what has been dubbed the "easier" side of the draw.

Tigers brace for challenging Test fixtures

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh are all set to brace the Test challenge from next month after competing mostly in the T20 format for the last couple of months in the buildup to the T20 World Cup, which concluded on June 29 in the USA and West Indies.

The challenge will start with a two-match series against Pakistan which will be followed by series against India, South Africa, and the West Indies respectively in the coming five months where the Tigers will compete in a total of eight Tests, two each against these four strong opponents.

India and West Indies had already confirmed the itinerary of the full-fledged Bangladesh tours, scheduled for September-October and November-December, respectively, while on Friday, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officially announced the fixture of their home series against Bangladesh.

According to the itinerary, Bangladesh will play the first Test in Rawalpindi on August 21-25 while Karachi will host the second Test between August 30 and September 3.

In between the India and West Indies tours, Bangladesh will host South Africa on home soil, although the itinerary of the series is yet to be confirmed.

BANGLADESH TOUR OF PAKISTAN

- First Test in Rawalpindi from August 21-25
- Second Test in Karachi from August 30-September 3



Bangladesh haven't been in a Test mood since their last home series against Sri Lanka in March-April where they showcased an underwhelming performance in both matches to lose the series.

The poor batting display of the batters had significant impact on Bangladesh's performance in the series as they failed to cross the 200-run mark in three of their four innings. Apart from Mominul Haque and Mehidy Hasan Miraz, none of the batters could score any fifty in the series.

Although the Bangladesh national team were mostly occupied with T20 assignments, a number of Test players have been involved in camps across multiple venues of the country under the 'Bangladesh Tigers' banner.

Bangladesh, who have a disastrous record against Pakistan in Tests as they lost 12 out of 13 matches with six of those being innings defeats, toured Pakistan last in 2020 where they lost the opening match in Rawalpindi by an innings and 44 runs.

The tourists were scheduled to fly to Pakistan again to play another Test but the surge of Covid-19 saw that fixture abandoned.

Bangladesh's current Test skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, who was part of the Rawalpindi Test and made 44 and 38 runs in two innings respectively, admitted that they need to provide their A game in Pakistan to do well against the hosts.

"As a team, we are looking forward to returning to Pakistan for the ICC World Test Championship," Shanto was quoted in a PCB press release on Friday.

"Playing in Pakistan is always a challenging but exciting prospect, and we will have to be at our very best to compete against a formidable side in their backyard," he concluded.

The series will also give a clear indication where Bangladesh are actually heading into the ongoing ICC Test Championship 2023-25 cycle in which they are currently placed eighth among nine teams with one win in four matches.

A lot to fix for Brazil against in-form Uruguay

STAR SPORTS DESK

Coming up against Uruguay, the standout performers of this Copa America so far, Brazil, missing their key player Vinicius Jr, will have a lot to fix in this heavyweight quarterfinal clash at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas on Sunday morning.

Uruguay have shown that they have the credentials to go all the way this year, though, and can be optimistic of success on Sunday as they secured a 2-0 victory over Brazil in their last competitive meeting in 2026 World Cup qualifying in October last year.

Brazil have reached the knockout rounds of the Copa America for the third successive tournament, but they missed the chance to secure top spot in Group D after they were held to a 1-1 draw by Colombia.

What would see Brazil coach Dorival Junior, who is yet to taste defeat since taking the charge of the Selecao in

January, scratch is head is the fact that he would have to go without his star player Vinicius for this clash. The Real Madrid forward, who scored twice in their 4-1 win over Paraguay in the group stage, will be missing this game due to a suspension for receiving two yellow cards in the group stage -- against Paraguay and Colombia.

Dorival could swap Arsenal winger Gabriel Martinelli directly in the left-wing or he could go for fitting in the young prodigy Endrick alongside his soon-to-be Real Madrid teammate Rodrygo and Barcelona's Raphinha in the right flank.

With Brazil already struggling to find their way into opposition's defence in this tournament, Dorival will know he is up for his toughest challenge so far in this Copa against a Uruguayan side that have not only racked up nine goals -- most by any team so far -- but have also been defensively solid as they let in just one in stoppage time in a 3-1 win over Panama in the first game.



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Put an end to harassment of Prof Yunus immediately

4 US senators urge Bangladesh govt



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four US senators, including the Senate majority whip, issued a statement demanding an immediate end to what they said was harassment of Prof Muhammad Yunus, adding that the “seemingly personal vendetta” against him will negatively impact the US-Bangladesh partnership.

They also urged the Bangladesh government to respect democratic values and institutions.

The statement dated
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Parked pickups take up a large part of the Dhaka-Chattogram road next to the wholesale fish market in the capital's Jatrabari, leaving little room for vehicles to pass through. The traffic situation is aggravated by some makeshift shops under big umbrellas. The photo was taken around noon yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Six lives lost as bus hits truck



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least six people, including two children, were killed and some 28 others injured in a head-on collision between a bus and a fruit-laden truck in Dinajpur Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The incident took place on the Dinajpur-Phulbari regional highway in Chawkrampur village adjacent to Panchbari Bazar around 6:00am.

Most of the victims were on the bus, said police. The deceased were identified as truck driver Hasu Mia, 28, of Thakurgaon's Pirganj; bus supervisor Rajesh Bahadur, 30, of Dinajpur's Bochaganj; bus driver's assistant Md Ali, of Pirganj; Jyna 5, daughter of Mominur Rahman of Dinajpur's Chirirbandar, Bibha Akhtar, 10, daughter of Jahid Hossain of Bochaganj, and passenger of a paddy-laden van Swadesh Chandra Roy, 30, of Chirirbandar.

Dinajpur Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC)

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A 28-year-old Bangladeshi man was gunned down by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) along the Baliadangi border in Thakurgaon early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Raju Islam, son of Habib Ali of Garijali village under Boro Palashbari union of the upazila.

“BSF members opened fire on a group of Bangladeshi cattle smugglers near the Nagarbhita border pillar 376/5-S. Raju got shot and died on the spot,” said Baliadangi Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Firoz Kabir.

After the incident, BSF members took custody of Raju's body, he added.

In this regard, a flat meeting was held with the BSF in the afternoon, according to sources at the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)-50 Battalion.

BSF claimed that their members opened fire in self-defence as they came under attack, they said.

MIGRANT SHIPWRECK

89 migrants dead at sea off Mauritania

AFP, Nouakchott

89 migrants bound for Europe perished when their boat capsized earlier this week off the coast of Mauritania, the state news agency and a local official said Thursday, while dozens more remain missing.

“The Mauritanian coast guard recovered the bodies of 89 people aboard a large traditional fishing boat that capsized on Monday July 1 on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean” about four kilometres from the country's southwest city of Ndiago, the state news agency said.

The coastguard rescued nine people, including a five-year-old girl, it said.

The agency quoted survivors saying that the boat had set sail from the border of Senegal and Gambia with 170 passengers on board, bringing the number of missing to 72.

A senior local government official gave AFP similar information, on condition of anonymity.

The Atlantic route is particularly dangerous due to strong currents, with migrants travelling in overloaded, often unseaworthy, boats without enough drinking water.

But it has grown in popularity due to increased vigilance in the Mediterranean.

The number of migrants landing at Spain's Canary Islands in 2023 more than doubled in one year to a record 39,910, according to the Spanish government.

Mauritanian coastguard rescued nine people, including a five-year-old girl.

Efforts to secure Gaza truce gain momentum

Hamas makes fresh proposal on ceasefire deal as Israel says it is resuming stalled negotiations

AGENCIES

Efforts to secure a ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza gathered momentum yesterday after Hamas made a revised proposal on the terms of a deal and Israel said it would resume stalled negotiations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US President Joe Biden on Thursday he would send a delegation to restart negotiations, and an Israeli official said his country's team would be led by the head of the Mossad intelligence agency.

Biden welcomed the move and a source in Israel's negotiating team, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there was now a real chance of achieving agreement.

The Israeli remarks were in sharp contrast to past instances in the nine-month-old war in Gaza when Israel said conditions attached by Hamas were not acceptable.

A Palestinian official close to the internationally mediated peace efforts said

the latest proposal by the militant Islamist group could lead to a framework agreement if embraced by Israel.

He said Hamas was no longer demanding as a pre-condition an Israeli commitment to a permanent ceasefire before the signing of an agreement and would allow negotiations to achieve that throughout a first six-week phase.

“Should the sides need more time to seal an agreement on a permanent ceasefire, the two sides should agree there would be no return to the fighting until they do that,” the official told Reuters.

Hamas later said it rejected the presence of foreign forces in Gaza, signalling its opposition to any plan to send an international contingent to the Gaza Strip to help keep the peace in the Palestinian enclave.

The Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), a group allied with Hamas, said separately that it would consider any international or other forces in Gaza as occupiers.

➤ Israel sends Mossad chief to Qatar for Gaza hostage negotiations: sources

➤ Seven killed in Israeli West Bank raid

➤ More than 38,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza since last Oct 7

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Martinez saves Messi's blushes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



In a tense quarterfinal encounter of Copa America 2024 yesterday (Bangladesh time), defending champions Argentina narrowly overcame a feisty Ecuador in a penalty

shootout after a 1-1 draw in regulation time at a packed NRG Stadium in Texas, thanks to their reliable goalkeeper, Emiliano Martinez.

The match provided a thrilling finish and a surprising twist involving the winning captain Lionel Messi, who remained subdued throughout the 90 minutes while his teammates sporadically sparked in offensive transitions.

Argentina's title defense was threatened when Ecuador's Kevin Rodriguez scored a late equaliser, cancelling out Albiceleste's 35-minute lead through defender Lisandro Martinez's goal against the run of play, pushing the game into a decisive penalty shootout, as extra time is reserved only for the final.

The spotlight then fell heavily on Messi, who stepped up to take the first shot of the shootout. Known for his composure and precision, Messi

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Carpenter ants perform amputations to save lives

CNN ONLINE

Humans aren't the only ones capable of performing amputations to save lives.

Florida carpenter ants have been observed biting off the injured limbs of nestmates, depending on the location of the wounds, to help their counterparts survive, according to a new study published Tuesday in the journal Current Biology.

About 90 percent to 95 percent of the ants receiving amputations make it through the process and continue with their duties within the nest just fine despite losing a leg, researchers found.

Reddish-brown Florida carpenter ants, which reach about 1.5 centimeters in length, can be found nesting in rotting wood throughout the southeastern United States. They have to defend their nests against rival ant colonies, which can result in injuries.

Lead study author Erik Frank, a behavioral ecologist at the University of Würzburg in Germany's state of Bavaria, said he doesn't think the ants consciously know what to do. Instead, it may be more instinctual, similar to how humans bring their fingers to their lips after a paper cut.



Spain midfielder Mikel Merino celebrates with teammates after heading home a 119th-minute winner in a 2-1 win over Germany in a Euro 2024 quarterfinal at the Stuttgart Arena in Stuttgart on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Merino's 119th-minute winner sends Spain into Euro semis



AFP, Stuttgart

A Mikel Merino goal in the final minute of extra time took Spain to a 2-1 win over Germany and into the Euro 2024 semis.

After a fiery yet goalless first half, Spain's Dani Olmo latched onto an inch-perfect pass from Spanish wunderkind Lamine Yamal to give La Roja the lead on 51 minutes.

Niclas Füllkrug struck the post with 14 minutes remaining but with the hosts staring at an early exit, Florian Wirtz slammed in a Joshua Kimmich knock-down in the 89th minute to take the game to extra time.

With a minute remaining in extra time and the game looking set

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Embracing the old-world charm, one antique at a time

If you pass through Gulshan DCC 2 market, the shops selling antiques just grab your attention; an old dresser or a bureau in teak wood would make a beautiful foyer table or an entryway table. With lace curtains drawn on the mirror, the dresser can serve as a writing table for guests, who missed you for being out.

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

There is a certain drama in being mystified with all things retro and vintage. You are always in your world of imagination and creativity, fleeing from one era to another, flying on wings of yellow butterflies, which symbolises transformation, rebirth, and personal growth. And for people being hopelessly attached to the old-world charm, the renaissance of giving antiques a new lease of life by transforming and upscaling the old classics in current context is all about being retro-chic.

We have categories of antiques in our open market, there are the real products dating 100 to 150 years back, then there are chemically treated antique looking items hog washing buyers and there are also collectibles from ship-breaking; selling scraps from ship breaking is a very robust industry in the country.

THE BHATIARI PULL
Collecting old artifacts is a hobby and sometimes old ship



area can be great for finding lower-end antiques and it's always worth a rummage," says Mansoor.

"The shops in Gulshan do carry some fine vintage stuff dating back roughly a hundred years or so after the British period ended. Rarity also factors in pricing, especially if it's a collectible in a particularly active market like antique coins, lamps, and glassware that sell regularly for surprising sums at such stores. These beautiful pieces of history are collected from zamindars who fell on bad patches, or old family heirlooms where the new owner is not interested in their new windfall, sell off," Mansoor talks from an experienced antique bargain hunter's point of view.

FROM THE ONE IN BUSINESS

Fahim Metal Handicraft, a traditional business selling brass, copper, bronze items in Rayerbagh, Jatrabari claims to be in this line of business for five generations now.

"I am one of the biggest antique dealers in business and I can say that it is very easy to be double crossed in buying such antique products. The market is full of new products that are washed in chemicals to achieve that antique, rusted look. Having said that, we do get hold of real vintage items collected from excavation sites or sold off by current owners," says NM Fahim Rahman, the current business head of the shop.

"We do not have products made of real copper in Bangladesh, we mostly used the alloy called bell metal or kasha to make kitchenware and dining ware. These were considered an investment in bygone times. Our markets of antique products are also selling Indian or Pakistani handicrafts in the guise of archaic heirloom products. Selling old items is a collector's game and before it

industry collectibles. It is an industry with a market value exceeding Tk 10,000 crore, but currently it is going through a stagnation due to the rising dollar price and margin rates imposed by banks," says Yousuf.

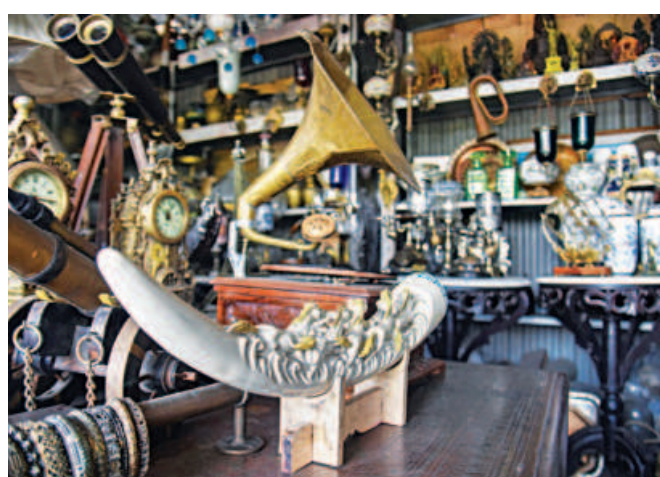
Every object is reusable and value adds to the economy. A mere example of the fact that the re-usage of 5,000 tonnes of ship furniture proves how it impacts the economy and environment. We do not need to cut down trees for making furniture," he says.

The ship-breaking industry in Bangladesh holds the top global

adopted styles of periods past. Just like an old easy chair with criss cross cane back support, adds a grand look to your wide veranda, rewinding you to the days when your great grandfather would sit in his quiet corner and listen to dramas and Rabindra sangeet on shortwave radio programmes.

An ornate palonka or zamindari antique bed, that has steps to get up on and is tightly tucked up with croquet or hand embroidered bedsheet and pillow cases will lend your bedroom an air of romantic period play theme.

With such antique pieces you can let your ideas run wild. The antique



wreckage is the best place to look for retro vibes. In Bhatiari, Chattogram the entire street situated near the highway N1 is dotted with stores selling antiques from old ships.

"People do flock to Bhatiari to

search for unique items that would add a statement to their home of collectibles. For example, marine sextants in wooden boxes are a collector's delight. The shops have shelves of ornamental wooden boxes of intact sextants, used in navigation to determine latitude and longitude," starts Mizanur Rahman Yousuf, a journalist by profession and a former antique dealer.

In fact, they are the hottest items on sale on the online shopping platforms, he adds.

"Now, before putting them up for sale, the business experts buy in lots at the source, which are then brought by marine stores and sold to retailers. There are separate lots for marine items, brass items, furniture, kitchenware, tableware, so on and so forth. It is said that 96 percent of ship scrap is recycled. Though, in terms of antiques, these items are only 30 years old maximum, because it is mandatory to scrap a ship after 30 years of running; but they attract local and foreign tourists equally," Yousuf explains.

Brass favourites, an old coal iron, oil lamps, bells, and donges are bought by weighing their weight in kilogrammes, then they are polished and resold. Ceramic and porcelain ware with a web of tiny cracks over its surface are very sought after pieces for repurpose, as well. These bowls add a tag of charm to table décor as fruit bowls or floating candle holders.

Lifeboat oars are a collector's item, if you want to believe it. People paint them in happy pastel colours or intricate geometric designs and many upcycle them by using them as nameplates near the main entrance or as kitchen hook hangers or even as eccentric garden accessories.

"Tourists and collectors are drawn to Chattogram's ship breaking



position, but the industry faces a challenge in converting all ship recycling yards into green yards by 2025.

UPSCALING ANTIQUES

Not just the collectibles from ship breaking yards, Dhaka has its fair share of shops boasting antiques.

"If you pass through Gulshan DCC 2 market, the shops selling antiques just grab your attention; an old dresser or a bureau in teak wood would make a beautiful foyer table or an entryway table. With lace curtains drawn on the mirror, the dresser can serve as a writing table for guests, who missed you for being out. It can have a fountain pen, an ink pot, blue letter pads and envelopes and an old brass vase of freshly cut flowers, setting a décor tone for your home," says Nasira Mansoor, an interior consultant.

This vintage dresser with a mirror can be a versatile piece of furniture and can also be used as a statement piece in your drawing room with

markets are like treasure-troves for people who love the time-worn period look. From tableware like old English porcelain bowls, plates and cups to cut glass candle holders, oil lanterns, door charms that protect from evil eye to rusted and dusty brass idols, dolls, decoration pieces; the shops are stuffed with antiquated things.

You cannot walk from one aisle to another without stepping on some fragile objects. Tea pots and chinaware dating back to the British rule that are stamped with Made in England or Holland labels and various sizes of cooking pots and other belongings of a lost generation are on display here.

"Though Dhamrai boasts bell metal products, very rarely you will find an antique there. Their products are given an antique look but the

goes to the real buyer, you must remember that it has changed a minimum of four to five hands. When a client asks us to collect something for them, we search for it within our commercial network or circle, thus this involvement of different stakeholders," he explains.

Mitford in Old Dhaka is the biggest hub of collectibles both imported and local. Recently a buzz has been created in the antique business, by people who can afford it, and they are opting for old-world aristocracy, as Fahim feels.

When upscaling is trending with a go green sticker on it, these items, holding aesthetic and old family significance, can be re-used in many ways. Antiques add grandeur to your home if used in an artistic way. You do not have to turn your home into a museum rather highlight a period piece for that subtle grace.





ILLUSTRATION: AMREETA LETHÉ

BEGUM ROKEYA

A redoubtable Muslim feminist and educationist

Rokeya’s most famous story is “Sultana’s Dream”, in which a young Muslim girl, Sultana, visits Ladyland in her dream, where women run the state and men are confined indoors or in the “mardana”. In this seriocomic utopian story, Rokeya shows how beautiful and morally as well as socially prosperous a country can be when women are given their rights and opportunities, and are allowed to act according to their potential, unimpeded by male bias or misogynous policies.

MOHAMMAD A. QUAYUM

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932), fondly known as Begum Rokeya, was an autodidact who became a formidable champion of women’s rights and education when women in South Asia, especially Muslim women, were forced to live in subhuman conditions, almost like animals, or even worse than animals (Rokeya’s analogies). She was brought up in an environment that was brutally indifferent to women and often viewed them, following the teachings of the legendary first man and lawgiver in Indian mythology, Manu and his influential “laws”, as embodiments of “untruth, sin and darkness” and comparable to “dogs” and “cows.” Rokeya’s mission was to root out such primitive, pejorative, and gynophobic ideas from society and make women equal to men, or even outshine them, through their education, empowerment, and emancipation.

Born in a rich but ultraconservative Muslim family on December 9, 1880, in the village of Pairaband, Rangpur, Rokeya did not enjoy parental love or freedom in childhood, only because of her gender identity. In her dedicatory note to her novel *Padmaraag*, she admits, “I have never experienced the love of a father, mother...or a teacher” (All excerpts in the article are from my translation of Rokeya’s work in *The Essential Rokeya*). Moreover, in *Aborodhbashini*, she scornfully recounts how she had to live in an extreme purdah system from the age of five, which segregated her not only from men but also from women outside their family circle.

Her androcentric father, Zahiruddin Muhammad Abu Ali Hyder Saber, was wealthy enough to marry four times, including a European woman, and send his eldest son, Ibrahim Saber, to England for higher study. Yet, he had no interest in sending Rokeya and her elder sister, Karimunnesa, to school. He also prohibited them from learning English and Bangla, considering them “non-Islamic” languages that could corrupt the minds of young girls, but not so much of boys, as Rokeya’s two elder brothers were both brought up in English-medium schools in Calcutta (Kolkata).

However, Rokeya’s eldest brother, Ibrahim Saber, was progressive and supported women’s education. Rokeya once likened his affection for her to “Kausar”, the heavenly stream of nectar mentioned in the Quran. It was Ibrahim Saber who taught English and Bangla to Rokeya, often in the dim light of a candle after their authoritarian patriarch had retired for the night. Another significant figure in Rokeya’s emotional and intellectual growth was her husband, Khan Bahadur Syed Sakhawat Hossain. Like Ibrahim Saber, Sakhawat pursued his education in England and believed in women’s empowerment and emancipation. He inspired Rokeya, who was childless, to dedicate her life to this cause. Their unwavering support was pivotal in motivating Rokeya to challenge the regressive practices of her time and spearhead the charge of rescuing women from what she called their “shipwrecked” state.

Rokeya’s mission of bolstering the status of South Asian women, especially of her own faith community, began with her essay “Strijatir Abanati”, first published in the ladies’ magazine, *Mahila*, in 1903 and then in a Muslim magazine, *Nabanur*, the following year. This was followed by a slew of publications in several other newspapers and popular magazines, such as *Nabaprabha*, *Bharat Mahila*, *Bangeya Muslim Sahitya Patrika*, *Saugat*, *Sadhana*, *Dhumketu*, *Indian Ladies’*

Magazine, *The Mussalman*, to name a few.

In her essays, Rokeya launched stringent attacks on men for depriving women of their inherent rights and subjecting them to various forms of oppression and exploitation. However, she also expressed disdain towards women for internalising society’s male-centred values and thoughtlessly surrendering their dignity and femininity to men. She argues that men have cunningly manipulated women under the guise of love, reducing them to the status of “bonded slaves”, “domesticated animals”, and “feckless mannequins”. In turn, women have accepted their subjugation and embraced lives of passivity and ignorance in the vein of “opium addicts”.

In her essay “Subhasadeq”, she instigates women to rise from their “addictive” state of dehumanising serfhood: “Wake up, mothers, sisters, daughters; rise, leave your bed and march forward...Say, mother, pounding your chest, we are not animals! Say, sister, we are not objects for possession! Say, daughter, we are not items of ornament to be locked away in an iron safe. Say, all in unison, we are humans!” In “Griha”, Rokeya dissects the general perception that men rule the world and women command the home by showing how South Asian women, irrespective of their class, colour, cast, or creed, are all homeless, forced to live within their four walls, at the whim and mercy of men. “For those who live in subjugation and do not have the right to consider the house of their ‘keeper’ as their residence, home is like a prison,” she argues stridently and concludes in a more blistering tone, “Therefore I say, we do not even have a little hut to call our home. No other creature in the animal world is destitute like us. Everyone has a home—only we do not.”

Rokeya’s literary repertoire encompasses not only explosive essays but also a plethora of poems and short stories vehemently condemning toxic masculinity. In her work “Biye-pagla Buro”, she offers scathing criticism towards elderly men who engage in the inappropriate practice of marrying young girls, exploiting the allowance of polygamy in Islam. The way she makes fun of the selfishness and sexual obsession of septuagenarian men in the story is darkly comic and virulent.

In “Nurse Nelly”, she portrays the dire consequences that can befall an entire family due to a woman’s lack of education. The story revolves around Nayeema, an uneducated Muslim girl who succumbs to the manipulative tactics employed by a group of British Evangelical missionaries, leading her to convert to Christianity and become “Nelly”. Tragically, this decision not only results in her own demise but also claims the lives of her mother-in-law and her two children. Rokeya’s underlying message in the story foregrounds the paramount significance of educating and empowering women, as they play an indispensable role in upholding the stability of both family and society. By keeping women uninformed and susceptible to manipulation, the fabric of cultural and religious values can unravel, as Rokeya poignantly depicts in this narrative.

Rokeya’s most famous story is “Sultana’s Dream”, in which a young Muslim girl, Sultana, visits Ladyland in her dream, where women run the state and men are confined indoors or in the “mardana”. In this seriocomic utopian story, Rokeya shows how beautiful and morally as well as socially prosperous a country can be when women are given their rights and opportunities, and are allowed to act according to their potential, unimpeded by male bias or misogynous policies. Ladyland is not only neat and clean, well-maintained like a garden, but

also free from violence, corruption, and crime; people here have tamed nature and tapped its energy for the good of the community; they do not fight over ideological differences or fritter their time away smoking and chatting; child marriage is banned and female education is actively encouraged; and their only religion is adherence to Love and Truth, without the traditional rituals that divide society and induce intercommunal riots and war. This is Rokeya’s blueprint for a future when humanity learns to shun male hegemony and treat all human beings as equals.

Knowing that education was the only way forward for women, Rokeya decided to start a school for girls with the money bequeathed by her husband before he died in 1909. She began the school in Bhagalpur, Bihar, Sakhawat’s hometown, with only five students. But unable to cope with Sakhawat’s dogmatic daughter by his first marriage (Rokeya was Sakhawat’s second wife), she moved the school to Calcutta, starting with eight students this time and naming it after her husband—Sakhawat Memorial School for Girls. When Rokeya founded her school in 1911, there were only two other schools for Muslim girls in Calcutta: one established in 1897 under the patronage of Begum Ferdous Mahal, the Begum of the Nawab of Murshidabad, and the other in 1909, under the patronage of Khojesta Akhtar Banu, mother of the well-known Bangali Muslim leader, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. This speaks volumes about how Rokeya, who had never stepped into a school compound in childhood, became a trailblazer in her adult life in the education and modernisation of South Asian Muslim women.

Rokeya struggled throughout her life to run and expand the school. Her biggest challenge came from religious chauvinists who were fiercely opposed to the education of Muslim girls despite the prophet’s injunction that education was obligatory for all Muslims. Unable to break Rokeya’s iron will, they started spreading hideous rumours that she was a “whore” whose only intention was to make money by using the school as a façade. They also accused her of being a Christian behind her purdahnashin Muslim disguise, determined to convert the Muslim girls to Christianity. Referring to her essay “Strijatir Abanati”, where Rokeya advises women to toss aside all jewellery as insignias of their slavery, one critic asked notoriously, slandering Rokeya, “But could she be truly civilised without getting rid of her clothes as well and becoming naked?”

A second problem was getting students, as Muslim girls in those days were not allowed to step out of the house without purdah. To convince the mothers, Rokeya went from door to door to explain how education would enrich their daughters’ lives and assured them of using covered transports to protect the girls from the male gaze. She also experienced untold financial hardships as rich Muslim men refused to support her mission of educating girls, which violated the norms of Islam in their view. Notwithstanding such mounting hurdles, Rokeya went ahead with her feminist-cum-educational vision and mission till the very end of her life, for which she is now regarded as one of the most admirable icons in South Asian history—deserving of a university and a university hall in Bangladesh, and two schools and a library in India named after her.

Mohammad Quayum’s books on Rokeya include *The Essential Rokeya* (Brill, 2013) and *A Feminist Foremother* (Orient Blackswan, 2017; with M.M. Hasan).

POETRY

Colours

KASHFIA NAHREEN

I see colours everywhere—
I see hues of crimson scattered across the pages
of my books,
The splashes getting darker by the second,
As if someone was bled dry right on top of it.
I see colours everywhere—
Shades of purple with a tinge of red overwhelm my
senses throughout the day,
It reminds me of flesh turning blue
Once the last breath is taken,
And all I can think of when I see it is you.
I see colours everywhere—
Bright yellow spots scattered with white splotches
Are what I see when I feel warm and happy and
content,
And god knows how long it has been
Since I watched the yellow streaks dance across
me,
Maybe I stopped seeing yellow
The day you died.
I see colours everywhere—
Streaks of grey intermingled with splashes of black
Bring to mind overcast days
Where the cloud seems to pour out everything
weighing them down,
And the thought of rain
Always reminds me of you
And how heavily it stormed the night you died.
I see colours everywhere—
Flecks of yellow waltzing amidst an ocean of green
Pulls me into its depth and showers me in a torrent
of your memories,

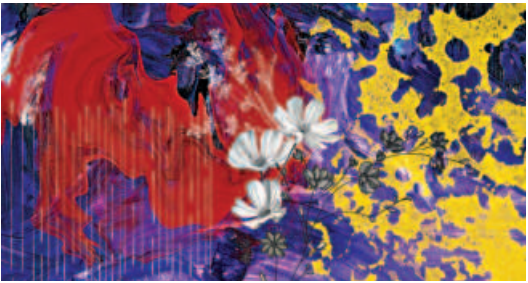


ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

And every time that happens
I am engulfed by the pain of losing you.
Echoes of your voice ring in my ears
As the world turns scarlet in front of my eyes.
Your face haunts my thoughts every goddamn day
And I can’t help but remember the smile on your
face
The last time I saw you,
You looked so peaceful in death
Like you were slumbering in the depths of the
cerulean sea,
Everyone kept telling me
How they never saw anyone looking so content
after death,
But all I could think of was how you were gone,
Suddenly stripping all the bright colours from my
life,
That no longer do I see colours everywhere.

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

Monsoon osmosis

REBECCA HAQUE

Soft melody of Fazr Azaan
A pre-dawn chiaroscuro
of flashing silver sky
and dusky trees
Wafting branches wild
in the sudden Kalboishaki storm
shedding fistfuls of foliage
I inhale the luxurious scent
of squelched earth
smoking under the sodden leaves
Enraptured by shafts of electric
blue lightning bolts
I am drenched in the rushing rain
I feel the sentient plops of raindrops seeping into
the texture
of my soft brown skin
Slowly awakening the spirit within to respond
with gratitude
to the muezzin’s call to prayer

Rebecca Haque is Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka.



PHOTO: MAISHA SYEDA

Cheat officer appointed to look after finances of all large corporations

Despite her stellar results, many people have criticised the actions of the cheat officer. They have gone on to social media and have misspelled her name over and over in outrage. Trolls are having a field day because it is easy to attack a woman on social media, generally.

NUTBOLTU

When you have corruption in your business. When your business partner steals all the money you were planning to steal. When you have product delivery services take your money in a backpack with a bang and disappear to a deep dark valley where you can never get it back. Who you gonna call?

Now you have someone. The government recently appointed Labiba Habiba as the official Cheat Officer (CO), not to be confused with other people who start their introductions at wedding parties with two Cs. Labiba Shabuba has taken on the job to reduce the heat of international governing agencies crying that we have too much unrestrained corruption. Cut down bad business practices to grow and so on and stuff.

“Corruption is like the moon, without it there is utter chaos,” stated Patel Shwarma of the South Indian Mustachioed Businessperson’s Association. They’ve been filing verbal corruption cases against many local firms, but no action has been taken, mainly due to difficulty in understanding the accent.

Habiba Marhaba Labiba has



PHOTO: ALICE PASQUAL

been in office for exactly 63 days and she has already taken some strong corrective measures. She started with drafting old, existing laws into illustrated manuals showing corruption is bad, mmkay? These manuals were then handed out to business owners who strongly appreciated the colourful artwork showing cash taken under the table is darker than cash taken over the desk. Their appreciation was shown through supportive donations via vKash app (number provided at

the end of the article).

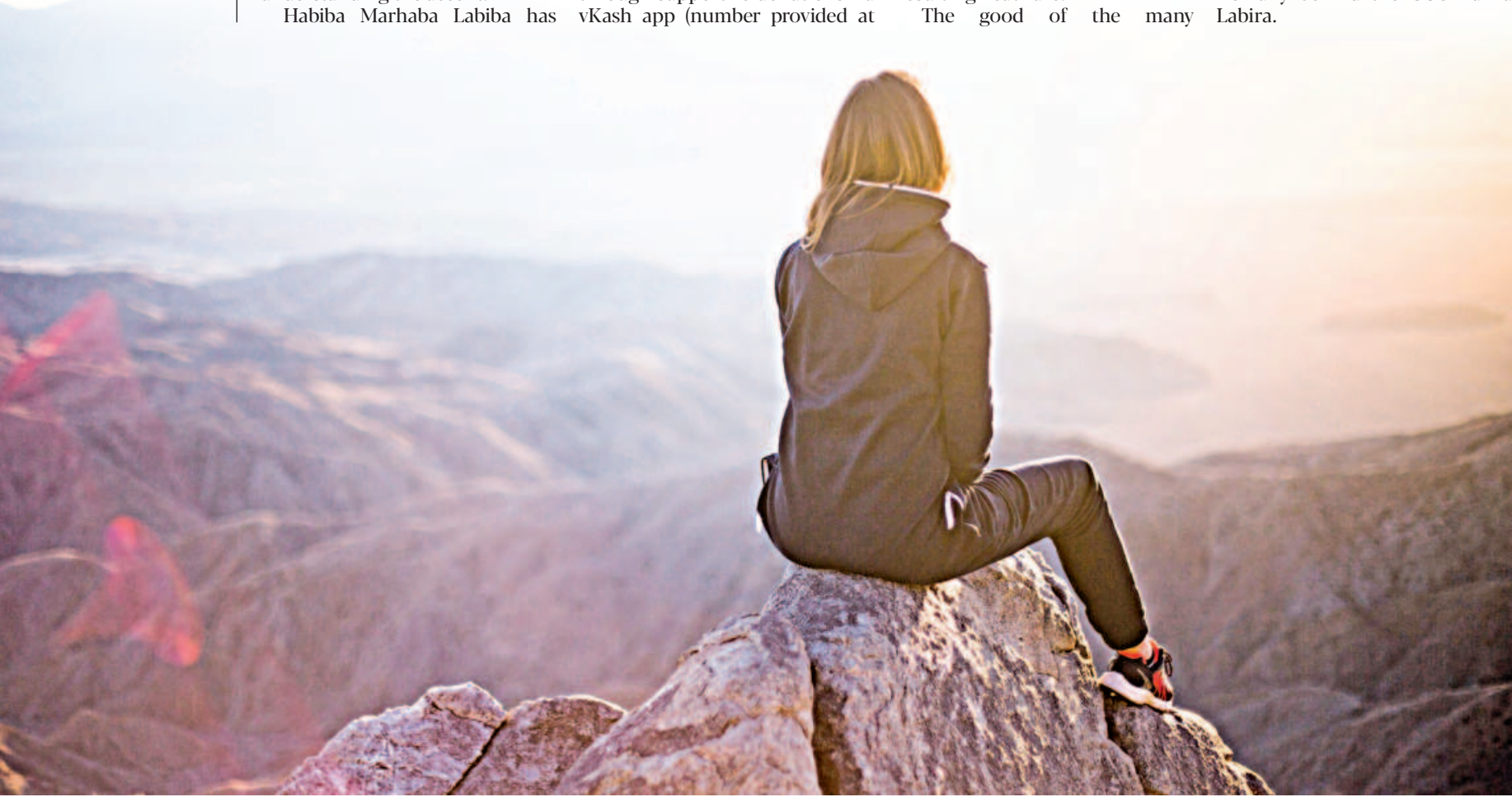
Shabiba Fariba then went on to take extreme steps to reduce the heat put on by donor agencies and anti-corruption bodies. She encouraged people to cut down trees all across the city. Experts claimed this was a bold strategic move. Donor agencies now turned their attention to the actual rising heat in the city, potentially leading to an ecological meltdown. People started dying because of the resulting heatwave.

The good of the many

outweigh the good of the few ... good ... few poor people. No one was looking at corporate and business corruption anymore. As a result, things started getting back to normal, meaning business continued as usual.

“It takes money to make money, preferably other people’s money,” said Tanvir Sultan, MBA. “International donor agencies have been too focused on corporate and business corruption, and the creative moves by Lafiba Shamira have taken the heat off what really matters: business,” he explained.

Despite her stellar results, many people have criticised the actions of the cheat officer. They have gone on to social media and have misspelled her name over and over in outrage. Trolls are having a field day because it is easy to attack a woman on social media, generally. The traditional patriarchy feels women are still not capable of taking on challenging new social objectives. It is a social construct that we at Satireday fight constantly by ensuring women employed here have the same equal rights and salaries as other women. As such, we rally behind the CCO Larifa Labira.



Newly appointed cheat officer stays on top of business corruption.

PHOTO: DENYS NEVOZHAI

Boss goes insane trying to redefine insanity

UNPROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT

The regional manager of the Madaripur branch of Thunder Beefin, a paper company known for intra-office beef, has reportedly gone insane trying to redefine the definition of insanity.

This was confirmed by the assistant to the regional manager, who insisted we run his comments despite him not being a mental health professional qualified to diagnose mental illness. We have decided to run the comments because due diligence is so 2007.

Afaik Haroon, the assistant, said, “Well, it all started in a meeting last month called to address our lack of profits and our abundance of degrowth. There was talk about the digital revolution, which happened about a decade ago with people ordering paper from websites. Some people told the boss that our focus on doing people-to-people sales was not going to cut it anymore, and we had to hire more people to run our own website and make it seamless.”

According to Afaik, the boss then came up with an idea to reallocate existing resources, because new hires were absolutely out of the question with degrowth being at the level it was.

She said in utter frustration, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

One of the meeting attendees fainted because of an overdose of déjà vu, a dangerous drug that causes the matrix to glitch, meeting sources close to the event and closer to developments told Satireday. One of the employees, now a former employee, pointed out to the boss that her colleague had fainted because this reallocation of resources was being floated as a solution for the 43rd time in the last decade.

She said in utter frustration, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

At this, the boss exploded. “What are you trying to say? Are you trying to say I am insane? What do you know about the definition? I will define it for you.

“Insanity is not solving a problem when I give you the solution. I have allocated resources to solve the problem before. It’s not my problem that you aren’t able to implement my solution.

“So, insanity is not being able to do the same thing asked of you repeatedly.”

“Sir, isn’t that incompetence?”

“Well, then insanity is you asking me to solve this problem every two months and expecting me to come up with different results,” the boss shouted at the top of his voice.

“That’s what she said!” exclaimed another former employee.

“Hahahahaha, then we are all insane, we are all insane!” the boss cried and ran out of the room, laughing hysterically, and has not been seen or heard from since.

Afaik said that is what led him to diagnose that the boss went insane.

He said, “As assistant to the regional manager, I have now taken the reins, and I will engage in reallocating resources. And I expect results!”

Email your satire pieces to starsatireday@gmail.com

Official transferred to slightly worse area for embezzling Tk 10,000 crore

SHOAIB AHMED SAYAM

In a big win for justice, a government official who has abused his powers to embezzle Tk 10,000 crore is facing the harshest punishment the legal system can offer: transfer to a slightly worse work area.

M Bazlur Rahman -- a veteran tax official cum money launderer, with over 10 years of experience -- was caught when Anti-Fraud Foundation (AFF) watched TikTok videos of Bazlur buying five resorts and a cruise ship in the name of his wife and son.

Md Murshid Khoka, director of AFF, said, “We had no idea that a government official, whose financial records are available to us at all times, has amassed so much illegal wealth.

“We have taken steps to be more vigilant. Our officers have already increased our TikTok watchtime,” he continued. “A case has been filed, but we think the transfer is more than enough, maybe a bit too much even.”

For over a week, netizens have been demanding justice, with the

“Imagine the barbarity: you can’t meet your work friends every day anymore. The people are new, surely a nerve-racking experience. And on top of that, the commute gets disproportionately long. Does anyone deserve this?”

chant “Transfer him!” Critics of the movement, however, opine that the punishment is just too cruel.

“Previously, he was demoted, from the post of assistant director to assistant to the director, shattering his self-confidence. The transfer just adds to the inhumanity,” said Golam Kibria, a human rights activist.

“Imagine the barbarity: you can’t meet your work friends every day anymore. The people are new, surely a nerve-racking experience. And

on top of that, the commute gets disproportionately long. Does anyone deserve this?” said Mukta Ahmed, a government official who owns seven duplex houses in Gulshan.

Bazlur’s family members are in shock. Speaking to this correspondent at their mansion, they said everyone thought Bazlur was a humble man, but extremely adept at investing his Tk 20,000 salary into profitable ventures.

“My father has done so much for this state, and maybe Canada’s economy. It’s a shame that the state, or Canada, didn’t come to his rescue,” said Bazlur’s daughter Eva Sion Rahman.

Contacted, Bazlur said, “I shouldn’t have embezzled so much, knowing that I’m responsible for managing the people’s hard-earned taxes. Despite this fall, I’m looking forward to working at the customs department.”

Meanwhile, 10 farmers were hanged for failing to pay loans amounting to Tk 5,000.



A photo of a man barely able to cope with the darkness after being caught embezzling. The office he was transferred from had three overhead lamps.

PHOTO: FREEPIK.COM

DISCLAIMER

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How we entered the era of digital money

A Bangladeshi tale of transition from money orders to electronic payments



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Digital systems have increased convenience as there is no need to drive home or face traffic to get services. Covid-19 was also a big push towards adoption of digital services.

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA

Rahman Ali, a 68-year-old retired primary school teacher, begins his day in a serene village in the northwestern district of Bogura with a routine he has perfected over the decades. He methodically prepares tea, reads the newspaper, then walks around the locality, visiting the school premises or taking a stroll through the market. Today, however, he has a different purpose. He is going to the local post office to send a money order to his daughter in Dhaka, just as he has done countless times before. But when he goes there nowadays, something feels different – the once bustling post office has only a few people.

THE COMFORT OF TRADITION

For Rahman, the process of sending a money order is more than a mere transaction – it is a ritual. He meticulously fills out the form, carefully counts the notes, and hands them over to the postmaster with a familiar nod. “I trust this method,” he says with a sense of nostalgia. “It’s reliable. I know my daughter will receive the money safely.” In contrast, Ayman Siddique, a 25-year-old entrepreneur, runs a handicraft business from his small office in Dhaka. He is busy with orders and payments. For him, time is of the essence. “I used to hate the wait at the post office,” he recalls. “But now, thanks to mobile financial services, I can send and receive money in seconds. It’s a game-changer.”



A GENERATION GAP

The contrasting experiences of Rahman and Ayman highlight the generational divide in Bangladesh’s financial landscape. While the older generation continues to hold onto the familiarity of money orders, the younger generation has swiftly adapted to the convenience of digital payments. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the heyday of money orders came over a decade ago in 2011-12, when 2,218 transactions, totaling Tk 625.92 crore were conducted. These figures illustrate the significant reliance on this traditional method at the time. But by 2015-16, the number reduced by nearly two-thirds as only 796 money orders amounting to Tk 197.91 crore were dispatched. This represents the initial phase of digital adoption. Fast forward a few years, the decline became even more apparent: by 2019-20, transactions plummeted 62.19 percent to 301 worth Tk 114.34 crore. In July-December of 2023-24, the last fiscal year, only 99 money orders were booked, involving Tk 22.76 crore, underscoring a near-

complete transition to digital methods. Also reflecting the increasing reliance on digital financial transactions has been the significant growth of the mobile financial service (MFS) sector in Bangladesh over the years. The number of cash-out transactions and the money involved have consistently increased. In January 2019, the total amounted to Tk 13,282 crore. It skyrocketed to Tk 42,230 crore by March 2024, according to Bangladesh Bank data. This reflects both higher frequency and larger individual transaction values. The remarkable transition of Bangladesh from traditional money transfer methods to digital payments through internet banking is also worth showcasing. Over the years, the number of internet banking customers has steadily risen, hitting over 85 lakh in April. Simultaneously, the volume and value of internet banking transactions have significantly increased, with the total transaction amount surpassing Tk 97,100 crore in April, a substantial leap from Tk 3,790 crore in December 2018. Sayema Haque Bidisha, research director at the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, and a professor of economics at the University of Dhaka, said technologies are more advanced nowadays, allowing technological adoption to take place for both senders and receivers. Digital systems have increased convenience as there is no need to drive home or face traffic to get services. Covid-19 was also a big push towards adoption of digital services as people needed to get everything without going outside. Speaking of the challenges, Prof Bidisha highlighted that the whole cashless economy system depends on electricity and internet, which are not always available in rural areas. “A lack of digital and financial literacy is another barrier as the full process is self-administered. For example, sharing your PIN code can harm customers because they can be tricked, but many do so due to a lack of awareness.” The digital money transfer system impacts the economy since the more money is transacted, the more money spreads and circulation increases. Also, people, especially females, who are out of the market system, can get involved through such services, which fosters an inclusive economy, she added. The Directorate of Posts has an electronic money transfer service (EMTS) at a very low cost, said Farid Ahmed, postmaster general for metropolitan circle in Dhaka. “But the facility must be strengthened at the union level to make it more effective by including rural parts of the country. Notably, sub-post offices of upazilas provide EMTS effectively.”

EMBRACING CHANGE

Sharifa Oishee, a third-year university student, shared her experience. “Managing finances was always a hassle. I remember my parents sending money orders to my grandparents before festivals. It was a slow process.” “Nowadays, I never use money orders. With bKash and Nagad, I can pay tuition, buy books,

and even split bills with friends instantly. I even get the tuition from the students who receive lessons privately.” Oishee’s story echoes those of millions of young Bangladeshis who have embraced digital wallets. These platforms offer unprecedented convenience – no long waits, no need for physical currency, and the ability to handle transactions anytime, anywhere. Muhammad Zahidul Islam, vice-president and head of media and communications at Nagad Ltd, opined that the maximum utilisation of technological advancement has been possible in the last 13 to 14 years regarding digital money transfer. “Sending money now takes a fraction of a second. If we can ensure the benefits of digital banking, rural communities will easily adapt to the process.” Awareness must be raised to make the rural people more knowledgeable about these facilities and systems, he added.

THE STRUGGLE TO ADAPT

However, not everyone finds the transition easy. Yasmin Ara, a 55-year-old, struggles with the technology-based service. “I have always trusted the post office,” she confesses. “This digital system feels complicated and confusing. I once sent money to the wrong number, and it was a nightmare to get it back.”



Her experience is not unique. Many older Bangladeshis find digital payments intimidating and worry about security. They also miss the personal interaction and assurance that comes with traditional methods. Yasmin, with the help of his tech-savvy younger son, recently started to make payments through digital transactions. “It was easier than I thought,” she admitted, though still wary of abandoning her trusted money orders entirely. As Bangladesh continues to innovate, the future of financial transactions looks increasingly digital. The decline in money orders is not just a statistic but a reflection of a broader shift towards a more connected, efficient, and inclusive financial ecosystem. For Ayman, Oishee, and millions like them, digital payments are a testament to progress and convenience. For Rahman and Yasmin, they represent a challenging but inevitable transition. The journey from money orders to digital payments is a story of adaptation, resilience, and the promise of a better, more efficient future. In the heart of the bustling city and the quiet corners of rural villages, the echoes of this transition resonate. Ali Ahmed, chief commercial officer of bKash, added: “If time-befitting guidance from the regulator continues along with support from stakeholders, it won’t be hard to strengthen the country’s digital financial ecosystem with continuous innovation in the MFS sector.” There are 22.6 crore MFS accounts in the country, of which 56.21 percent are owned by people living in rural areas. Women account for 57.07 percent of rural MFS users. These numbers indicate that people living in the countryside are ahead in terms of owning MFS accounts compared to urbanites. Such financial inclusion, especially for women, through MFS has multifarious impacts on rural communities. At its heart, it is a tale of two generations, each navigating the changing tides of technology in their own way. As Bangladesh steps boldly into the digital age, this transformation promises to bring greater convenience and financial inclusion to every corner of the nation.



EMTS: The cheapest way to send money across Bangladesh

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA

Many may be surprised to learn that the most cost-effective way to transfer money from one place to another without a bank is through the post office. The Bangladesh Postal Department provides this facility, named the Electronic Money Transfer Service (EMTS), widely known as a digital money order. EMTS keeps a commission or cost of Tk 5 per thousand, meaning an individual can send Tk 50,000 taka for a cost of just Tk 250. The process is simplified by the fact that customers, irrespective of their address, can send and withdraw money from any post office in the country. The Directorate of Posts took a significant step towards modernising its financial services by inaugurating the service on March 26, 2010. After necessary training, the service was launched on May 5, 2010. This system has allowed rapid and secure transfer of funds across the country. Al Mahbub, additional postmaster general of central circle, Dhaka, said the EMTS provides a way to send money at a low cost, with the caveat that deposits or withdrawals cannot be made after 5:00pm.

The fact that the post office is closed on Friday and Saturday also poses a barrier to popularity. But in some aspects, the EMTS bests modern technology. “Fortunately, a sender can freeze the transferred money and get a refund if he wants, which is not possible through mobile financial services,” he added. Speaking about security issues, Farid Ahmed, postmaster general of Metropolitan Circle, Dhaka said: “The security of the money is fully ensured as a PIN is provided to the sender and receiver. The post office also gives a receipt to confirm the transaction from both sides. “If there is any complaint, it is solved then and there.” A proposal to make the EMTS available through an app has been placed to the Ministry of Finance, he added. Currently, the EMTS service is available in 2,752 post offices across Bangladesh.



According to official data, from 2010 to 2023, more than 27,700,000 transactions, amounting to Tk 7,677 crore, were made through the EMTS. Notably, during this period, the Directorate of Posts made an income of about Tk 90 crore. Md Moneruzzaman, programmer of the central ICT cell of the directorate and desk officer of EMTS, said: “Generally, due to a weak financial infrastructure, there are no banks in many parts of the country. But a post office can be found in most places, even if it is not in the best shape. The only hope for marginalised people looking to send money is the post office. Hence, unbanked and rural communities mostly avail and still avail this service.” Increasing the budget for the Directorate of Posts and advancing ICT infrastructure can make the EMTS service more functional and efficient, he added.