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A TRIBUTE TO GRANDMASTER Zia was devoted to chess till his last day



NAZ MURSHED

Ziaur Rahman was my first real competitor in chess in Bangladesh. From 1979 to 1996, I was at the top. In 1996, Zia overtook me in the ratings and became the country's best chess player, a position he held longer than anyone else.

Personally, I used to struggle a lot whenever I played against him, he was excellent. I took a sabbatical from the game in 1996 and after my return, he always gave me a really tough time and I admired him for it.

His dedication towards the game was unparalleled in Bangladesh. No one has played in more chess World Cups than him or won more national championships. He also represented Bangladesh in 17 Chess Olympiads, more than anyone else. His devotion towards chess was

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Seasonal fruits, mostly mangoes, grown on the hills are being sold on boats in Banarupa area of Rangamati. In several districts in the region, there is a niche market for fruits and vegetables that indigenous communities of the hills grow. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

UP chairman shot dead in Dumuria

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Khulna

Armed criminals shot and killed the chairman of Shorapur union parishad in Khulna's Dumuria upazila last night.

Sheikh Rabiul Islam Rabi, 45, the union's three-time chairman, was also a member of the Khulna district unit Awami League.

This incident took place in the Gutudia area of the upazila around 10:00pm, said his brother-in-law Badruzzaman Bablu.

Armed criminals shot Rabiul from the back near the Brac Hatchery in Gutudia as he was returning to his Khulna residence on a motorcycle after attending a meeting at Zobaid Ali Auditorium.

He was declared dead after being taken to Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Dumuria police OC Sukant Kumar, said, "I've heard about the incident. But, I don't know the details."



Starmmer 'restless for change' after win

AFP, London

Newly elected UK prime minister Keir Starmer yesterday began his first full day in charge declaring himself "restless for change" and pledging that growth would be his Labour government's "number one mission".

Starmer also confirmed his previously declared intention to end the outgoing Conservative government's flagship scheme to deport migrants to Rwanda.

"The Rwanda scheme was dead and buried before it started... I'm not prepared to continue with gimmicks that don't act as a deterrent," he told reporters following his first cabinet meeting.

The party on Friday won a landslide election victory, bringing to a close 14 years of Conservative rule.

The Labour leader told his top team, including Britain's first woman finance minister Rachel Reeves and new foreign minister David Lammy, it had been "the honour and the privilege of my life" to be invited by King Charles III to form the government.

"We have a huge amount of work to do, so now we get on with our work," he said to applause and smiles around the cabinet table.

Starmer spent his first hours in Downing Street on Friday appointing his ministerial team, hours after securing his centre-left party's return to power with a whopping 174-seat majority in the UK parliament.

Notable lower-ranking appointments included Patrick Vallance, chief scientific government adviser during the Covid-19 pandemic, who has been made a science minister.

James Timpson, whose shoe repair company employs ex-offenders, was also made a prisons minister.



"We have a huge amount of work to do, so now we get on with our work."

KEIR STARMER
UK prime minister

PROMISED CHINESE LOANS Transport sector projects fare poorly

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

China promised to provide loans for eight transport sector projects eight years ago, but only one of those has been completed so far.

Two other projects are currently underway, but those are running behind schedule, documents show.

Two more projects have been taken off the list while the implementation of the three others has not started due to multiple reasons.

The delay in implementation means Bangladesh will struggle to enhance the capacity of its rail lines, highways and sea ports with a view to serve the steadily growing economy, officials said.

Amid such a situation, Bangladesh is expected to seek more Chinese loans for several transport projects during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's China visit from July 8 to 10. The projects may include construction of Bhanga-Payra rail line and Mass Rapid Transit Line 2.

During his visit to Bangladesh in October 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged to provide about \$20 billion loan — the largest amount committed by a bilateral partner of Bangladesh — over the following four years to implement 27 projects.

But as of January this year, the two sides managed to sign agreements on only nine projects involving \$8.08 billion, figures from the Economic Relations Division (ERD) show.

Of the \$8.08 billion, Bangladesh could utilise only \$4.91 billion, less than a quarter of

the amount promised by China. Red tapism on both sides is largely to blame for the slow disbursement of loans, said officials.

Of the 27 projects, eight were for the transport sector, including four under the railways ministry, three under the road transport and bridges ministry, and one under the shipping ministry.

The delay in implementation of projects means Bangladesh will struggle to enhance the capacity of its rail lines, highways and sea ports.

RAIL PROJECTS

Four railway projects were supposed to be implemented with the Chinese loans to build new a rail line and expand three existing ones.

The Padma Bridge Rail Link Project is the only railway project being implemented now with the Chinese loan.

The Ecneec in May 2016 approved the project to connect the capital with Jashore with a 169km line via the Padma Bridge at a cost of

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France kicks off 2nd round of polls

AFP, Paris

France yesterday prepared for its most consequential legislative election of recent times, with residents of overseas territories opening voting for a poll expected to give the far right its biggest ever presence in parliament.

A traditional final day pause was observed yesterday ahead of today's second round runoff after a frenetic campaign that saw tensions rise across the country and dozens of attacks on candidates.

Underlining France's global footprint that spans the oceans of the world, the first French region to vote was Saint Pierre and Miquelon, a small French archipelago off the coast of Canada where citizens began voting from 1000 GMT.

They were to be followed yesterday by residents of French Caribbean territories including Martinique and Guadeloupe as well as Guiana in South America.

French Pacific territories come next before people in mainland France cast their ballots from 0600 GMT today.

Polls will close by 1800 GMT today when projections of seat numbers, regarded in France as a firm indicator of the final outcome, are published.

Final opinion polls on Friday suggested that far-right leader Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) would fall short of winning an outright 289 seat majority in the 577-member National Assembly while being the largest party ahead of the New Popular Front (NFP) left-wing coalition.



England into Euro semis after shootout win over Switzerland

AFP, Duesseldorf

England's quest for a first major tournament win in 58 years remained alive after another late fightback before beating Switzerland 5-3 on penalties to book their place in the Euro 2024 semi-finals.

After the 120 minutes finished level at 1-1, goalkeeper Jordan Pickford was the Three Lions' hero in the shootout as he saved Switzerland's first spot-kick from Manuel Akanji.

Cole Palmer, Jude Bellingham, Bukayo Saka, Ivan Toney and Trent Alexander-Arnold converted their penalties to send England into a semi-final meeting with Turkey or the Netherlands in Dortmund on Wednesday.

After needing Bellingham's 95th-minute equaliser before going on to beat Slovakia in extra time in the last 16, England were again staring at defeat with 10 minutes to go.

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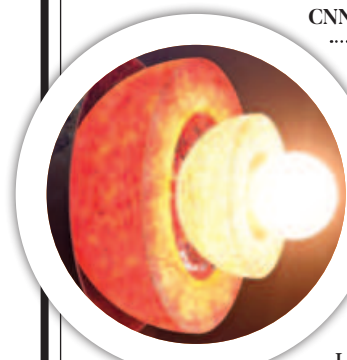
England players celebrate after beating Switzerland 5-3 on penalties to book their place in the semifinals of the Euro 2024 at the Duesseldorf Arena yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Earth's core so slow, it is now backwards!

Scientists confirm

CNN ONLINE



Deep inside Earth is a solid metal ball that rotates independently of our spinning planet, like a top whirling around inside a bigger top, shrouded in mystery.

This inner core has intrigued researchers since its discovery by Danish seismologist Inge Lehmann in 1936, and how it moves — its rotation speed and

direction — has been at the center of a decades-long debate. A growing body of evidence suggests the core's spin has changed dramatically in recent years, but scientists have remained divided over what exactly is happening — and what it means.

Part of the trouble is that Earth's deep interior is impossible to observe or sample directly. Seismologists have gleaned information about the inner core's motion by examining how waves from large earthquakes that ping this area behave. Variations between waves of similar strengths that passed through the core at different times enabled scientists to measure changes in the inner core's position and calculate its spin.