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ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

'Hasina herself was involved'

Says commission's preliminary report to CA

ZYMA ISLAM

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her defence adviser Maj Gen (retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, former director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre Maj Gen Ziaul Ahsan, and senior police officers Monirul Islam and Md Harun-Or-Rashid were all involved in enforced disappearances.

Commission for inquiry into enforced disappearances found prima facie evidence of their involvement, said a preliminary report submitted to the chief adviser

The commission recommends disbanding Rab because of its inalienable involvement in enforced disappearances.

It found a "systematic design" that facilitated incidents of enforced disappearances go undetected, chairman of the commission Justice (retd) Mainul Islam Chowdhury said while submitting the report to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

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- 27pc victims in 758 complaints scrutinised never returned
- Commission for amending or repealing Anti-Terrorism Act 2009
- It urges dropping death penalty from act
- Calls for new law criminalising enforced disappearances
- Finds another secret detention centre, bringing total to 9

The forces collaborated with each other to pick up, torture, and keep victims in detention and deliberately compartmentalised the operations, the commission found. The commission recorded 1,676 complaints of enforced

disappearances. Of the complaints, it has examined 758, of which 27 percent of the victims -- approximately 200 people never returned, said commission member Sajjad Hossain

to The Daily Star. Those who returned were mostly shown on records as arrested, said the rights activist.

The number of complaints the commission has scrutinised exceeds preliminary estimates collated over the years by human rights platforms like Mayer Daak and

Many who had not spoken out, fearing reprisal from the Awami League government, are now doing so, Sajjad said. The commission estimates that the number of cases of

enforced disappearances would be over 3,500.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A homeless individual, wrapped in a hoodie and light quilts, spent his night at the foot of the Raju sculpture (not in picture) on the Dhaka University premises amid a cold spell that has gripped the country since Friday. The photo was taken around 7:00am yesterday.

ACC, NBR, CID teams to probe 10 corporate giants

BB-led taskforce aims to bring back money they siphoned off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A government taskforce will investigate the country's 10 major business groups' alleged money laundering and other misdeeds.

For the probe, 10 separate inter-agency teams will be formed within this week and necessary directives have already been issued to the offices concerned, officials

The teams will comprise members of the Anti-Commission Corruption (ACC), National Board of Revenue (NBR) and the Criminal Investigation Department of Police (CID),

The move comes as the

interim government intensifies its efforts to recover money allegedly laundered by the corporate giants that thrived under the Awami League rule.

A government-commissioned white paper

committee on the economy estimated that \$234 billion siphoned off from was Bangladesh between 2009 and 2023. The 10 business groups

are: S Alam Group, Beximco Group, Summit Group. Bashundhara Group, Gemcon Group, Orion Group, Nabil Group, Nassa Group, Sikder Group, and Aramit Group.

month, formed

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

MARTIAL LAW FIASCO South Korea's President Yoon

AFP, Seoul

South Korean lawmakers yesterday President Yoon Suk Yeol over his failed martial law bid, with the opposition

impeached

declaring "victory of the people".

capped more than a week of intense political drama in the democratic South following Yoon's failed attempt to impose martial law on December 3.

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets of the capital Seoul in rival rallies for and against Yoon vesterday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Remembering the dark day in solemnity

JCD, BSU hold exhibitions at DU

MASHFIQ MIZAN

Manob Itihasher "Sonar Banglay Nrishongshotomo Hottakando" (The most brutal massacre in human history of Bengal), read the lead headline in an issue of The Daily Ittefaq published in December



The article's intro roughly translates to: "The Daily Ittefaq announces with profound grief that almost all of the intellectuals, journalists, professors, writers, and doctors who were abducted by the local collaborators of the Pakistani army, far right Jamaat-e-Islami's militia forces -- Razakars, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams just days before their fall, have been killed at the hands of these murderers."

A clipping of this chilling news piece was one of several on display at one of two exhibitions that were launched yesterday at Dhaka University's TSC area.

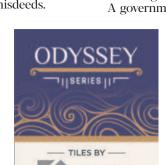
Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Bangladesh Students' Union (BSU) organised the two exhibitions, marking the Martyred Intellectuals' Day.

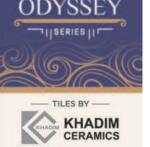
The three-day programme features relics from one of the nation's darkest chapters.

There was another newspaper clipping with the headline "Intellectuals murdered in cold blood" that also recounted the targeted killing of Bangladesh's brightest minds on December 14, 1971.

A clipping from an article in the Daily Sangram from 1971 titled "Momen Shahhi," SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

> For our extended coverage of Martyred Intellectuals' Day





khadimceramic.com

Last government

PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK

Recent photo of Hemanandakathi in Jhalakathi. Here, 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed as freedom fighters of the Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini, led by Siraj Sikder, attacked an enemy vessel on May 7, 1971.

REGIONAL RESISTANCE

PART 10 (LAST PART)

During the 1971 Liberation War, a number of regional forces emerged across Bangladesh. Research suggests that dozens of such forces actively participated in the war. Just as the freedom fighters trained under the sub-sectors and the Bengal Regiment fought valiantly, these regional forces also displayed immense courage in battles against the Pakistani forces. In this month of victory, we bring you the stories of some of these heroic forces.

PURBO BANGLAR JATIYA MUKTI BAHINI

AHMAD ISTIAK

The floating guava markets in the southern districts of Jhalakathi, Barishal and Pirojpur are so picturesque that they have in recent years started drawing tourists, along with the traders. During the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971, however, the densely planted trees in the guava orchards on both sides of the roads and canals in the region became an impenetrable base for Purbo Banglar Jativa Mukti Bahini, a local force of freedom fighters.

Under the leadership of revolutionary communist leader Sirajul Huq Sikder, better known as Siraj Sikder, the freedom fighters of the force liberated

the vast region in the early phase of the war, terrorising the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators.

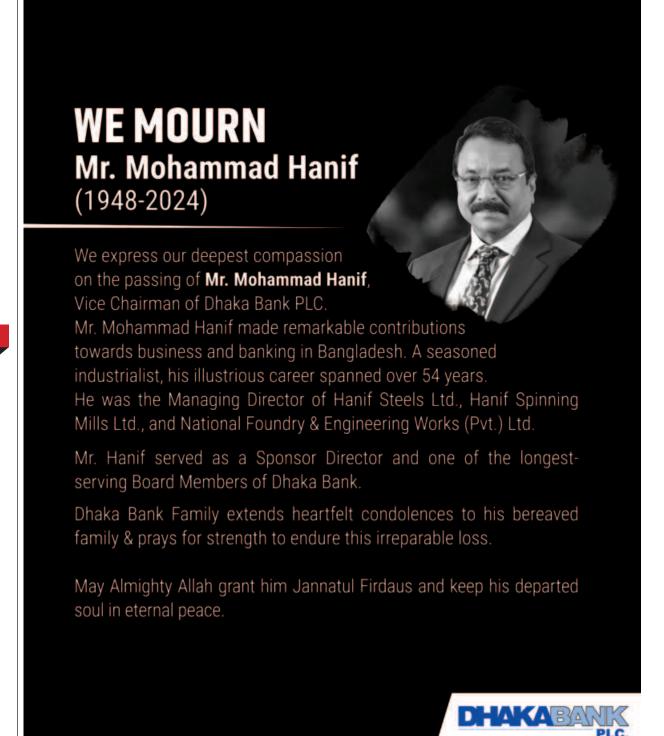
In October this year, The Daily Star spoke to over 10 freedom fighters of the force during a visit to Jhalakathi, Barishal, and Pirojpur.

Siraj, then a leftist student leader, built the Purbo Bangla Sramik Andolan, a workers' movement, in 1968, according to the books "Lal Santras" by Mohiuddin Ahmed, and "Siraj Sikder O Purbo Banglar Sorbohara Party" by Munir

The Siraj-led group published a pamphlet titled 'Swadhin Purbo Bangla Kayem Korun" on January 8, 1971. After the war had begun, Siraj left Dhaka for the Barishal region and took shelter at Runsi village in Jhalakathi's Kirtipasha on April 18, considering

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Four arrested over attack on Hindus in Sunamganj

STAR DIGITAL REPORT

enforcement agencies arrested four individuals for their alleged involvement in vandalsing homes, shops, and a temple of the Hindu community in the Dowarabazar area of Sunamganj district earlier this month.

The arrestees are Alim Hossain, 19, Sultan Ahmed Raju, 20, Imran Hossain, 31, and Shajahan Hossain, 20, according to a press release by the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

The arrests came after police, after an investigation, filed a case yesterday against 150-170 individuals, including 12 named suspects, for their alleged roles in the violence.

On December 3, Akash Das, 20, made a derogatory post on Facebook criticising Islam. Although the post was deleted, screenshots circulated widely. sparking tensions in Dowarabazar area. The local police promptly arrested

Akash and transferred him to another station to ensure his safety. On the same day, enraged locals attacked and vandalised homes, shops,

and the Loknath Temple belonging to the Hindu community. Authorities, including the district's

superintendent of police (SP), deputy commissioner (DC), and army personnel, intervened to bring the situation under control



Kajol Rashid Shaheen, Prof Mizanur Rahman and Professor Salimullah Khan speak at a discussion titled "The role of intellectuals in reforming the state", a part of The Daily Star's exhibition "36 Days of July: Saluting the Bravehearts", held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital on the Martyred Intellectuals' Day yesterday. Story Page 12.

Bangladesh welcomes President of Timor-Leste

President of Timor-Leste José Ramos-Horta was accorded a red carpet reception on his arrival in Dhaka last night on a four-day official visit.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus received President Ramos-Horta at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 10:40pm.

A 19-member delegation, including Timor-Leste's Foreign Minister, is accompanying President Ramos-Horta. During his stay in Dhaka, the president will engage in a series of high-level meetings and events aimed at strengthening bilateral ties between the

Khagrachhari AL leader arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Police yesterday arrested Advocate Ashutosh Chakma, joint secretary of Awami League's Khagrachhari district unit, from the town's Madhupur area.

He was arrested from his Madhupur residence around 7:45pm, Khagrachhari Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Abdul Baten Mridha told The

There are over 20 cases filed against Ashutosh with Khagrachhari Sadar and other police stations, the OC said, adding that he would be produced before court today.

Ashutosh is also the president of the Khagrachhari District Bar Association.

'Hasina herself was involved'

Earlier, the commission members announced at a press conference that they had found eight secret detention centres in Dhaka and its outskirts.

The commission has since found one more Rab-run secret prison, said Sajjad.

While receiving the report yesterday, Prof Yunus said he would visit some of the joint interrogation cells and secret detention centres, better known as Aynaghar, as he wanted first-hand knowledge about the sufferings of the victims.

The commission also recommends repealing or heavily amending the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009.

Sajjad said, "Terrorism is very vaguely defined in the law creating recommended abolishing the death had been confined to such cells for penalty under this law."

The report called for the creation of a new law criminalising enforced

They also told the government to repeal laws under the Armed Police Battalions Ordinance that grants law enforcers indemnity for acts done in

The committee also recommends that the government creates a National Preventive Mechanism as mandated by the UN Convention Against Torture to protect civilians from abuses, Sajjad said.

Last month, commission member Nur Khan Liton told a press conference that the commission found a cell operated by Rab measuring just 3.5 feet x 4 feet. The cell had no source of room for abuse. We have also light, except a small peephole. People

years, he said.

Yesterday, the report was handed over to the chief adviser at the state guest house Jamuna.

The commission chairman told Yunus that another interim report would be delivered in March. It would take at least another year to scrutinise all the complaints.

Commission members Justice Farid Ahmed Shibli, human rights activist Nur Khan, BRAC University teacher Nabila Idris, and human rights activist Sajjad Hossain; Interim Government's advisory council members Adilur Rahman Khan and Sharmeen S Murshid; Principal Secretary to Chief Adviser Md Siraj Uddin Mia; and Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam were present, among others.

Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini

that the guava orchards would be a perfect place to fight the Pakistani

Meanwhile, the training of freedom fighters had already begun at different places in Jhalakathi in early March, including Pipoldia and Romanathpur schools under the supervision of Mujib Mehedi, a leader of the workers' movement.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Fazlul Haque Milu, a freedom fighter of the Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini, recalled that they set up a camp at Palbari with Selim Shah Newaz in

Youths were taking arms training at Jhalakathi police station ground at the initiative of second officer Shafiul Islam and the Awami League with weapons collected from the police station's armoury.

At one stage of the training, the freedom fighters stockpiled food at a guava orchard. Jahangir Kabir, a freedom fighter of the force, said, "We opened up the storage for the common people as well."

Acting on orders from more than 100 students, youths, and Awami League activists, armed with 36 rifles, gathered at Kirtipasha High School when the Pakistani forces entered Jhalakathi town on April 27.

In a book titled "Comrade Siraj Sikder O Muktijuddher Prothom Juddho", Shafiul wrote that a joint force called Oikya Front was formed at Kirtipasha school in Jhalkathi on April 29 by workers' group Purbo Bangla Sramik Andolan and the local Awami League, considering the Pakistanis as "national enemy".

The workers' group held a rally at Bhimruli school in Jhalakathi on April 30, 1971, according to "Ekattorer Biplobi Muktijuddher Prothom Ghanti Elaka Peyarabagan", a book edited by Munir Morshed. The force was named Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini at that rally. A supreme military council of directors was also formed for the force there, with Siraj as the supreme leader of the party and the force, Ram Krishna Pal as political commissioner and Selim Shah Newaz as the commander.

On May 2, the central base of the force was established with the guava orchards as the No. 1 Front Area and Bhimruli as the headquarters. For training, a military school was opened in Bhimruli. The orchards were divided into eight guerilla sectors under one commander and a political commissioner in each.

Khurshid Alam Khasru, a freedom fighter of the force said the political commissioner was mainly the chief of the sector while the commander's duty was to make immediate decisions.

Among the battles at the guava orchards was an assault on a Pakistani launch in Jhalakathi's Hemandkathi on May 7, when the occupation force was carrying out looting and arsons on the villages. As many as 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed in the

fighters took position on both sides of the canal and ambushed the launch when the Pakistanis were returning to their camp after the day's looting.



Operations: more than 100 across the country

Supreme leader: Siraj Sikder



PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK

Recent photo of Bhimruli, Jhalakathi Sadar upazila where this force established its HQ during the 1971 war.

ACC, NBR, CID teams to probe of the Attorney General. The teams nature and drew sustenance from an

11-member taskforce to recover laundered money. Money laundering is considered a major reason behind the country's financial troubles.

The taskforce, led by Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur, has already held two meetings, said ACC and NBR sources.

They said the taskforce selected the 10 major businesses for allegedly laundering money, dodging taxes and investing money abroad without approval. Other businesses involved in such crimes will also be investigated in phases, they said.

Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), which is providing secretariat service to the taskforce, has written to the ACC, NBR and CID, asking them to form separate teams to probe the 10 groups, the sources said.

"The teams are expected to be formed within this week," said an NBR official wishing anonymity.

According to the letters, the investigation teams will also get necessary assistance from the Office on criminal activities of diverse

to the taskforce and the BFIU about the progress of the probes.

Many of these 10 groups are also facing separate investigations by the ACC over alleged corruption, sources of the anti-graft body said.

October blocked the transfer of shares financial, legal and other institutions; of Bashundhara Group, Orion Group, undermined domestic investment and Summit Group, Beximco Group, S Alam Group and Nassa Group. The NBR on October 2 directed the

Registrar of Joint Stock Companies & Firms (RJSC) to immediately freeze any sales or transfers of shares by these companies. As per the white paper committee's

report, the laundered money was sent to or routed primarily through the UAE, the UK, Canada, the US, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and India, as well some tax havens.

The report read, "Illicit financial outflows constituted a complex web of shadow economy that thrived

will have to regularly provide reports unholy alliance of sections of corrupt politicians, businessmen, financial players, middlemen, government officials, influence peddlers and wheeler-dealers of different types.

worked in "These people connivance with and corrupted Moreover, the government in the country's executive, legislative, revenue mobilisation efforts; depleted forex reserves: weakened the country's macroeconomic management; and seriously damaged the cause of good governance in all spheres."

The laundered money was used for buying real estate or was funnelled through "anonymous" business operations, said the 30-chapter and 400-page-long report submitted early this month.

After the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5, BFIU froze banks accounts of 550 individuals and companies, which had a total of Tk 14,500 crore, the

was supposed to signal us upon arrival of the launch opened fire instead of giving us the signal out of thrill. The enemies fired back, but couldn't cope up with our firing. Their launch ran aground to the other bank of the canal."

Khurshid Alam

Siraj Sikder

Abdul Jabbar, another freedom fighter of the force, said, "We took up position in such a strategic way that the bullets fired by the Pakistanis were going over our heads."

The force conducted another significant operation on Banaripara Police Station in Barishal on May 25 with four teams under the command of freedom fighters Khasru, Firoz Kabir, Selim Shahnewaz and Ziaul.

Khasru said they first confined the patrolling police officers to the dispensary. A gunfight took place while looting the armoury as the other police officers resisted the freedom fighters.

"We couldn't take control of the police station because Firoz Kabir's troops failed to enter the premises. But we were able to bring eight rifles, some revolvers and ammunition," Khasru said.

The Pakistani forces deployed one brigade encircling the orchards and forced villagers to fell the guava trees after realising that the freedom fighters established their base there.

Abu Saleh, the pir of Sarsina Darbar Sharif shrine in Pirojpur, also ordered the students of his madrasa to cut the trees.

The freedom fighters were on the verge of being captured as the Pakistani military brought 35 speed boats and two gunboats while tree felling continued for several days.

In this situation, on June 3, the workers' organisation was renamed from Purbo Bangla Sramik Andolan to Purbo Bangla Sarbohara Party.

Having been cut off, the freedom fighters decided to attack the Pakistani military's Kuriana camp on the bank of a river as a diversion on June 6 night.

When all the Pakistani vessels rushed to the Kuriana camp

Jahangir Kabir, a freedom fighter immediately after the attack, the of the force, recalled, "The man who freedom fighters, led by Siraj Sikder, crossed the river to safety on small boats.

The Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini also fought more than 100 battles in other parts of the country by forming several other front areas in Barishal, Bhola, Munshiganj, Pabna, Madaripur and Savar.

Ramakrishna Paul and Khasru were the leaders of the front area in Barishal. Besides Gouranadi, Babuganj, Muladi, Hijla, Mehendiganj, Bamna and Golachipa in Barishal, they fought in Madaripur town, Kalkini and Palong, and Shariatpur's Naria and Zazira.

Under political commissioner Ziaul Quddus and commander Lal Gazi, the freedom fighters of the front area in Bhola took control of Lalmohan and Charfeson police station in August and September.

On October 16, they joined forces with the local Siddique Bahini to fight the battle of Deula in Borhanuddin upazila. At least 29 Pakistani soldiers, the officer-in-charge of the local police station, and another policeman were killed in the five-hour battle.

Mazid alias Engineer Nasir was the leader of the Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini in the front area in Munshiganj, where the regional force began guerilla warfare under Shahjahan Talukder's leadership in late May by driving away the collaborators of the Pakistan.

From the front area of Pabna, the freedom fighters of Purbo Banglar Jatiya Mukti Bahini carried out several attacks on police stations in Pabna, Tangail, Sirajganj, Kushtia and Faridpur.

Madaripur was under the Front Area No. 2 in Barishal first, but a separate front was established in Madaripur later.

The other front area of the force was in Savar, from where they started fighting under Samiullah Azmi in Savar and Manikganj from July.

[Translated and edited from Bangla by Osham Sufian] A video story will be available

on our YouTube channel soon.

Remembering the dark day

documenting an Al-Badr-organised symposium celebrating Pakistan's Independence Day in Mymensingh, reminded visitors of those who betraved the nation.

Symbolising the December 14

horrors, an installation depicted a black door with blood-red text that read: "Knock! Knock!! Knock!!! Sir, please come outside, we need to talk." Another exhibit documented 1,111 martyrs, including 991 teachers, 49

doctors, 42 lawyers, 13 journalists, and 16 others. The exhibition also highlighted human rights abuses over 15 years Sheikh Hasina's regime. citing 2,699 extrajudicial killings, 677 enforced disappearances, and a mother-daughter gang-rape incident

2018 elections for voting BNP. "It's overwhelming to see these stories so vividly displayed," said Nusrat Jahan, a university student. "The sheer scale of the sacrifice and loss of lives is heartbreaking. It's a reminder that

by ruling party activists during the

freedom came at a terrible cost."

Tanvir Ahmed, another visitor, said, "Many are trying to erase one of the darkest chapters of our history. But events like these will always keep the names of the martyrs and perpetrators

alive in our collective memory." Speaking during a discussion organised as part of the event, Ganesh Chandra Roy Sahos, president of JCD's DU unit, said those who suffered defeats in 1971 and 2024 were now conspiring to destabilise the country. "They don't believe in the independence

"If you believe in Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty, we will welcome you. But if you are against it, we will resist you," he added.

and sovereignty of Bangladesh.

Anisur Rahman Khandaker Anik, vice president of JCD's DU unit, said the exploitation of students for political gain must end. "Attempts to erase 1971 with 2024 won't succeed."

Meghmallar Bosu, president of BSU's DU unit, expressed concern over the interim government's reluctance to clearly identify collaborators like

of preserving the historical truth of the 1971 genocide and reclaiming the Awami League's narrative of the war.

bodies with different ideologies came together today to commemorate the

Munir, Shilpigoshthi, of martyred intellectuals – their plays, stories, and novels — remain relevant. We must research and present their works to the

Upon intelligence, the freedom

unit's sources said. Razakars, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams this

He also emphasised the importance

"This is why two political student

Speaking at a separate discussion Bangladesh Udichi intellectual Munier Choudhury, said, "The creations of

youth to reclaim our roots." Meanwhile, this correspondent found no commemorative events by Students Against Discrimination at

post Facebook spokesperson Umama Fatma read, "We are postponing our event on Martyred Intellectuals' Day due to unavoidable circumstances. A new date will be

South Korea's President Yoon impeached abstained, with eight votes nullified.

In a televised address following the parliamentary vote, the impeached Yoon said he would "step aside" but did not apologise for his botched bid to impose martial law.

Out of 300 lawmakers, 204 voted to impeach the president on allegations of insurrection while 85 voted against the motion. Three

With the impeachment, Yoon has been suspended from office while South Korea's Constitutional Court deliberates on the vote.

The court has 180 days to rule on Yoon's future and Chief Justice Moon Hyung-bae vowed to hold "a swift and

If the court backs his removal,

Yoon will become the second president in South Korean history to be successfully impeached. Two hundred votes

needed for the impeachment to pass, and opposition lawmakers needed to convince at least eight parliamentarians from conservative People Power Party (PPP) to switch sides.

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People throughout the country observed Martyred Intellectuals' Day yesterday. Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus visited the Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial in Mirpur to honour the fallen heroes. Similarly, BNP and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad also laid wreaths at the same spot, paying tribute to those killed by the Pakistani army and its collaborators in 1971. PHOTO: PID, STAR

HEALTH REFORM Priorities primary healthcare: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Primary healthcare must be placed at the centre of health sector reforms and health insurance should be introduced in a way that it ensures healthcare for all, said policymakers and health professionals at an event

Strengthening secondary and emergency healthcare systems is equally critical, they said during a national dialogue, titled "Reform Pathways for the Health Sector", organised by the UHC Forum in collaboration with BRAC at the BRAC Centre Auditorium, marking Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day 2024.

Speakers urged the government to grant hospitals financial autonomy to manage resources, including manpower, salaries, and allowances.

Md Saidur Rahman, Secretary of the Health Services Division, highlighted the role of collaboration, saving, "We must recognise the valuable contributions of NGOs and the private sector and support their efforts so we can all work cohesively under a unified framework."

Former Director General of the Directorate General of Health Services Dr Abul Kalam Azad said, "Healthcare in Bangladesh suffers from inequitable access and inadequate service delivery, leaving providers and patients dissatisfied. To address this, UHC must be prioritised."

He also stressed the need for comprehensive reforms across primary, referral, intermediary, and emergency care services to achieve an equitable and accessible healthcare system.

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Martyred Intellectuals' Day observed countrywide

BSS, Dhaka

nation yesterday The observed Martyred Intellectuals' Day paying glowing tributes to the intellectuals who were brutally killed by the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators at the end of the Liberation War in 1971.

Sensing their eventual defeat, the occupation forces and their Bangalee collaborators carried out a systematic massacre to cripple the country's intellectual potential.

National programmes were observed vesterday, honouring the fallen heroes.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Chief Adviser Professor Dr Muhammad Yunus gave separate messages paying profound respect to the memories of the martyred

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Sweeping reforms must for gender equality

Says Naripokkho

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Naripokkho, one of the country's oldest feminist movements, has called for sweeping reforms to promote gender equality, including a demand that political parties nominate women for one-third of their electoral rolls. At a press conference, titled

"Women's Rights and Freedom: Expectations and Actions", held yesterday at Dhaka Reporters Unity, the platform also urged for direct elections to women's reserved seats, replacing the current practice of political parties selecting candidates. "Reserved seats for women must be kept in all 64 districts," they added.

Naripokkho further demanded the reinstatement of the "no-vote" option to allow voters to express a lack of confidence in an election.

The organisation also called for the separation of religion from the state, emphasising the need to make Bangladesh secular and humane.

Other key demands included amendments to the Uniform Family Law, the Inheritance Law, and laws on guardianship, compensation, and citizenship to ensure equal rights for

women in both family and public life. Naripokkho urged the government

to amend labour laws to recognise women's work in informal sectors such as domestic work and street vending. They also insisted that all Birangonas, including those working

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase women's representation in parliament

Direct polls for reserved seats

Reinstate "No Vote"

Ensure secular governance

Amend family laws

Recognise informal work

as sex workers, be accorded due respect and state benefits.

The platform called for the full implementation of the National Drug Policy 2016 and an update to the National Health Policy 2011.

Tribute paid to Helal Hafiz

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Best known as the poet of rebellion and love, Helal Hafiz was laid to rest with state honours vesterday at the Martyred Intellectuals Graveyard at

Mirpur in Dhaka. For a man who cherished solitude throughout his life, his final moments were anything but lonely.

State advisers, journalists, poets, writers, and people from all walks of life flocked to honour him one last time, adorning his coffin with flowers and shedding heartfelt tears.

The poet's body was brought to the Bangla Academy premises at 11:00am, where his first namaz-e-janaza took

Later in the afternoon, following a second funeral prayer at the National Press Club, his body was taken to the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard in Mirpur, where he was laid to rest.

Among those who paid tribute were Law Adviser Asif Nazrul, Cultural Affairs Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, and the Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam.

At the Bangla Academy, freedom fighter and Liberation War Affairs Adviser Faruk E Azam (Bir Protik) and Bangla Academy Director General

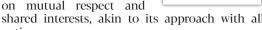
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Indo-Bangla ties should be based on mutual respect

Says foreign adviser

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain has emphasised Bangladesh's commitment to fostering cordial relations with India, based on mutual respect and



"The interim government is working towards this goal," he said during a meeting in Belabo upazila of Narsingdi yesterday.

Touhid underscored the government's primary objective of ensuring a fair and credible election. "Our first task is to restore stability in the country. We aim to organise elections while paving the way for fundamental reforms, ensuring no future government deviates from this path," he said.

He acknowledged the demands of those who ousted the oppressive regime, noting that reforms would take time. "We urge everyone to remain patient," he added.

Touhid also called on political parties to work towards a future where students no longer feel compelled to protest on the streets.

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Don't waste second chance to build nation Says Asif Nazrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The "second chance" to build Bangladesh, earned through the sacrifices of its youth, must not be squandered, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said yesterday.



Speaking at the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in Mirpur, Dhaka, on Martyred Intellectuals' Day, Nazrul told reporters, "The opportunity we have to build the nation, through the sacrifices of our youth, must not be wasted. This is our commitment today."

He reminded the nation that the spirit of the Liberation War, driven by the freedom fighters' love for the country, continued in the July mass uprising. "In July, students fought fearlessly for democracy, people's rights, and a society free from discrimination," Nazrul said.

The adviser also expressed his disappointment over Bangladesh's failure to achieve the dream of a prosperous and just nation. He attributed this failure to a particular mindset and shortcomings in political leadership.

"Despite the sacrifices of many in 1971, we have not realised the dream of a just, prosperous Bangladesh. Let us not allow this failure to repeat," he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



A wreath being placed on the coffin of Helal Hafiz to pay him last respect at Jatiya Press Club yesterday. The poet passed away in Dhaka on Friday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

VICTORY DAY 12 AL leaders arrested over sabotage plot OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Gazipur Police arrested 12 leaders and activists of Awami League on charges of

planning to sabotage

Victory Day celebrations. A Gazipur court sent them to jail yesterday after Solaiman Molla, president of BNP's Kapasia Durgapur union, filed a case against them on Friday, said Kamal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kapasia Police Station.

The OC said the suspects were planning to sabotage activities in the Dhadhar Char area around 2:30pm on Friday. They were detained by locals and would later on be handed over to police.

The arrested individuals include Afzal Hossain alias Rinkon, 30; Maruf, 25; Abul Kalam Azad, 45; Ilias Ahmed, 45.

JCD president

FROM PAGE 5 outrage. "Many are still in the dormitories and participating in rallies," he

claimed.

He warned that failing to bring the perpetrators, including members of Chhatra League, Juba League, Awami League, police officers involved in the violence, to justice would betray the sacrifices made by students and citizens during the protests. "Failure to act will leave an indelible stain on history, he concluded.

Sweeping

FROM PAGE 3

Additionally, they stressed all educational institutions must ensure women's participation in all educational committees.

They further demanded that national climate, forest, and environmental policies include gender goals for equality and women's empowerment.

The fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government has created an opportune moment to execute the reforms needed for gender equality," said the platform.

The press conference was chaired by Naripokkho President Gita Das and moderated by Maheen



The 35th annual general meeting (AGM) of Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (BAPEX) was held at BAPEX Bhaban, Dhaka on December 12. Istiaque Ahmad, chairman of BAPEX, presided over the meeting. The shareholders approved the FY 2023-2024 financial statements. During the programme, the shareholders and the members of the board of directors expressed satisfaction with the company's performance and provided guidance for future improvements.

DUTA office vandalised

STAR REPORT

Miscreants vandalised Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) office on the university campus on Friday night.

According to DUTA members, a group of 20-30 individuals broke into the Dhaka University Club around 10:00pm.

Entering the club, the assailants forced the peon on duty to unlock the DUTA office door, they said. Later, they ransacked and vandalised the DUTA office, including the honour board.

They also ruined the floral wreaths in the office commemorating Martyred Intellectuals Day.

Speaking to The Daily Star, DUTA General Secretary Dr Zeenat Huda said the perpetrators hurled expletives and threatened the office staff and peons while entering the club.

"They even threatened the teachers, saying that they would prevent DUTA teachers from organising any programmes. As a result, we could not hold any event marking Martyred Intellectuals Day."

Zeenat, a sociology professor, said, "It is unfortunate that the current DU administration has failed to protect the DUTA office and ensure the security of the teaching community. DUTA represents the entire teaching community, not any specific group, section, or faction."

Asked if any of the assailants were identified, Prof Zeenat replied, "We are still investigating the matter. We have already reported the incident to the DU Club and its concerned officials."

"We have also informed both the vice-chancellor and the proctor's office," she added.

Contacted, DU Proctor Prof Saifuddin Ahmed

said the VC visited the scene. Necessary steps will be taken, he said.

On December 8, a group of Chhatra Dal men removed the photos of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and ousted former PM Sheikh Hasina from the DUTA office.

Organic

FROM PAGE 5

15kg of earthworms every month at home, which she sells profitably.

"I also grow vegetables in my yard year-round using some of the vermicompost I produce," she added. Mobarak Hossain, 60,

from Panchagram village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said, "I produce vermicompost at home, keep a portion for my own vegetable cultivation, and sell the rest to local fertiliser dealers, who then sell it to other farmers."

When contacted, Al Mamun, Abdullah director deputy the DAE in Kurigram, emphasised that the use of vermicompost is essential for producing toxin-free vegetables and maintaining soil fertility.

have been encouraging farmers to use vermicompost for In recent cultivation. years, its use has increased significantly, benefiting many marginal farmers in the region," he added.





Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha AZAN 5-20 12-45 3-45 5-22 7-00 JAMAAT 5-55 1-15 4-00 5-25 7-30 RCE: **ISLAMIC FOUNDATION**

the vulnerable population during this crisis. Tribute paid to Helal

According

cold wave.

Modern

temperatures

meteorological

classifications,

8 and 10 degrees Celsius

signify a mild cold wave,

6 to 8 degrees Celsius a

moderate one, and below

6 degrees Celsius a severe

in cold-related illnesses.

The cold has led to a surge

resident medical officer at

the 250-bed Thakurgaon

confirmed an increased

influx of patients suffering

from respiratory and other

District administrations

Thakurgaon

Panchagarh have initiated

warm clothing distribution

among the cold-affected,

but the demand far

Md Sabed Ali, deputy

Panchagarh, urged non-

governmental organisations

and affluent individuals to

step forward and support

outweighs the supply.

commissioner

cold-induced ailments.

Rakibul Alam,

between

Hospital,

Mohammad Azam also paid tribute to the poet.

"To my knowledge, never received the Independence Award or the Ekushey Padak. Many his writings remain unpublished. If there's anything the Ministry of Culture can do to preserve his legacy, we will ensure it is done," said Farooki.

Born on October 7, 1948 in Netrokona, Helal Hafiz rose to prominence with his debut poetry collection, "Je Jale Agun Jwole (The Water That Burns)", published in through 33 editions, a testament to its enduring popularity. Hafiz also worked as a

The book has since gone

journalist for many years, contributing to leading newspapers such Helal spent his final days

in a hostel called Super Home in Dhaka's Shahbagh. On Friday afternoon, he fell in the bathroom and suffered a fatal head injury. Despite being rushed to Bangabandhu Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), he was declared dead upon arrival.

Don't waste

FROM PAGE 3

He urged the nation to work towards a democratic and inclusive society in honour of the martyrs.

Meanwhile. Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, paid tribute to the martyred intellectuals highlighted their and lasting legacy.

"The 'new Bangladesh' being built today is a their continuation of vision," he said, drawing parallels between the July morning.

uprising and the 1971 abductions of intellectuals.

Martyred

FROM PAGE 3 intellectuals.

the state As per programme, the president and the chief adviser placed separate wreaths at Mirpur Martvred Intellectuals Memorial in the morning.

memorial from early in the

Cold wave hits A treasure under

FROM PAGE 5

I'm just a poor man trying to support my family through this work, and I never expected to be in this situation.

Jamil Mohammad Khan, Assistant Conservator of Forests for the Wildlife and Nature Conservation Department, said, "We have successfully recovered about 4 acres of forest land. However, we did not encounter anyone during the operation, and no one came forward to claim it."

Nurul Muhaimin Milton, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Sangbadik Samitee in Moulvibazar, said local environmental activists that should be prioritised one."

for recovery. But the forest department has stayed silent in this regard.

According to the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department, the Sylhet Divisional Office has communicated with higher authorities and the Directorate of Survey regarding the need for a survey.

Jahangir Alam, the Sylhet Divisional Forest Officer, said, "There has never been a survey of Lawachhara. The situation remains unchanged, and conflicts have arisen. Many occupants lack proper documentation. We only reclaim land once we are are calling for the forest certain it belongs to us. A department to reclaim the survey is crucial, and I will land, including a resort continue to advocate for

Priorities primary

Md Sarwar Bari, secretary of the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division, said meaningful changes within the ministry often Humanitarian "This 'push' can come from civil society, sector experts, participation in decisionstakeholders," he said.

Professor Dr Liaquat Ali, Reform emphasised importance of prioritising "Allocating budgeting. more funds to primary healthcare, rather than secondary and tertiary care, is crucial to ensuring equitable access for all," he

Dr Naila Z Khan, another commission advocated for a citizencentred approach.

"We need to focus on people's strengths and build on them, rather than just addressing weaknesses address.

in a disease-oriented health system," she said.

Dr Md Akramul Islam, Senior Director of BRAC's Health Programme and

require external pressure. Management Programme, called for community NGOs, and other relevant making. "For the health system to truly thrive, must a member of the Health communities to actively Commission, engage at all stages and levels," he said.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, primary healthcare in convener of the UHC Forum and Chairperson of BRAC, underscored the need for patient-centred services while addressing health finance, human resources, and capacity.

Professor Dr Syed A member, Hamid, of the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University, also spoke at the programme.

Hossain Zillur Rahman delivered the

Indo-Bangla ties

FROM PAGE 3

The event was chaired by Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abdul Karim and attended several prominent figures, including former People from all walks of bridges secretary Zahid life also laid wreaths at the Hossain, MRDI Adviser Shahid

Hossain, and Energy

Research Council Chairman Wahid Hossain. attendees Other

included Assistant Superintendent of Police Afsan Al Alam and Assistant Commissioner (Land) Mohammad Nazmul Hossain.

GD-1186

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT Dhaka

eed1.dhaka.gov.bd

Memo No.37.07.2600.009.34.011.24-480

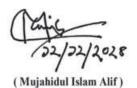
Date: 12-12-2024

e-Tender Notice: 11/2024-2025 (Open Tendering Method)

e-Tender is hereby invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of works/goods mentioned below:

SL No.	Tender ID	Name of woks	Online Tender Publishing Date (On/After)	Online Tender Opening & Closing (Date & Time)
01.	1044292	CONSTRUCTION OF 10-STORIED MAIN BUILDING WITH SINGLE BASEMENT INCLUDING ADMIN, ACADEMIC, TRAINING CENTER, MEDICAL CENTER, LIBRARY, RESEARCH CENTER, CAFETERIA, BANK, POST OFFICE & TRANSPORTATION POOL ETC. ALONG WITH SANITARY, WATER SUPPLY & ELECTRIFICATION WORKS AT ISLAMIC ARABIC UNIVERSITY, KERANIGANJ UPAZILA, DHAKA DISTRICT	15-Dec2024	Please visit the Tender Notice on the e-GP Website

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents of following Package from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks branches.Further information and guidelines are available in the Procuring Entity Office, National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)



ee.dhak.eed@gmail.com

Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat Administration Section Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1225

Invitation for Tender under Framework Contract

1.	Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat
2.	Procuring entity name	Deputy Secretary, Administration Section, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat.
3.	Invitation for	Supply of Photocopier Toner & Developer, Computer Printer Toner, Computer Spare Parts/Accessories & Uniform under Framework Contract.
4.	Invitation Ref. No.	11.00.0000.604.07.006.23/142, Date: 12/12/2024
5.	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (National) Under Framework Contract
6.	Budget and Source of funds	Revenue Budget
7.	Tender package name and short description of goods	Package-6 (Lot-2)- Photocopier Toner & Developer Package-9 (Lot-1)-Computer PrinterToner (HP Brand). Package-9 (Lot-3)-Computer Spare Parts (Supply & Installation) & Others Accessories. Package-13 (Lot-2)-Uniform (For Parliament Security Personnel).
8.	Tender selling place	Administration Section, Block: North-East, Ground Floor, Room No-131, Parliament Secretariat.
9.	Tender selling date	17/12/2024 - 31/12/2024.
10.	Tender submission & opening date and time	Package-6-(Lot-2), Package-9(Lot-1) Submission date: 01/01/2025, Time: 9:30AM-12:00AM Opening date: 01/01/2025, Opening Time: Package-6-Lot-2: 12:05 PM, Package-9-Lot-1: 12:20 PM Package-9(Lot-2) & Package- 13(Lot-1) Submission date: 02/01/2025, Time: 9:00AM-12:00AM Opening date: 02/01/2025, Opening Time: Package-9-Lot-2: 12:05PM, Package-13-Lot-1: 12:20 PM
11.	Tender submission & opening place	Deputy Secretary (Admin-1), Level-7, Block-East, Room No-7, (Lift-13,14,15 & 16)
12.	Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	(a) Reputed supplier firms having valid trade license (2024-2025), Income Tax clearance Certificate (2024-2025) (for company 2023-2024), BIN, Experience Certificate & Authorization Letter. (b) Detailed terms & conditions will be mentioned in tender schedule.
13.	Price of tender schedule	Price of schedule TK.2000/- only (As mentioned in the schedule).
14.	Tender security & Tender Validity Period	Package-6-Lot-2: 70,000/- Package-9-Lot-1: 1,10,000/-, Package-9-Lot-3: 2,00,000/- & Package-13-Lot-1: 1,70,000/- Validity period: 120 days.
15.	Name designation, address & Phone number of official inviting tender	Md. Mahbub Jamil, Deputy Secretary (Administration). Block: North-East, Ground Floor, Room No-131, Parliament Secretariat. (55667711-55667722-2794/2188/2307, 55029007).
16.	Special instructions	 Contract will be for 1(One) year initially and it may be renewed for next 2(Two) years, subject to satisfactory supply of goods. Lot based lowest bidders will be selected. The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.

(Md. Ma Deputy Secretary Phone: 55667711-55667722 2794/2188/2307, 55029007

GD- 1185

RANGPUR DIVISION

Organic fertiliser spurs high yields for farmers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers in five districts under the Rangpur Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha, and Nilphamari are delighted as their winter vegetable vields have significantly increased after using vermicompost, following advice from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

Vermicompost is a organic fertiliser made by composting cow dung, eggshells, vegetable scraps, used tea leaves, rotting tree bark with the help of earthworms.

The DAE has long recommended farmers use vermicompost for cultivating vegetables, as it enhances yields and improves soil health.

Azaharul Islam, 45, a farmer from Chawratari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, shared that he has been cultivating vegetables with organic fertilisers for the past four years.

"I produce some vermicompost at home and purchase the rest from the local

market. I have been achieving good crop yields while also improving soil fertility,"

Echoing him, Dhaniram Chandra Das, 65, a farmer from Mahipur village in Rangpur's Gangachhara upazila, said, "Earlier, I used chemical fertilisers before switching to vermicompost. This organic fertiliser is toxin-free, cost-effective,

> According to DAE sources, around 15,000 farmers across the five districts of the Rangpur division have been benefiting from producing, using, and selling vermicompost. farmer produces up to 10 tonnes of vermicompost

annually at a cost of Tk 6-7

and provides better yields."

per kilogram, which is then sold for about Tk 12-13. Over the years, the use of vermicompost for vegetable cultivation has gained popularity, particularly among small and marginal farmers.

Sahera Banu, 55, from Thanahat village in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, said she produces 300kg of vermicompost and SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Workers transport crushed ice from this mill in the Harta Bazar area of Wazirpur upazila of Barishal. They take this ice to various fish markets. By working from the morning to evening, a worker can earn around Tk 20,000 per month. The photo was taken yesterday.

Left destitute by Teesta, Rahima now struggling to survive

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Rahima Begum, 78, was married at the age of 15 to a prosperous man in Dhubani village on the Teesta shoal under Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha upazila.

However, only four years later, her husband passed away before they could have a child.

Despite her family's repeated requests to remarry, she chose to stay in her husband's village, determined to spend the rest of her life there. She owned arable land where she cultivated paddy and raised cattle, earning enough to sustain herself and help others in the village.

That was before the Teesta River devoured all her land and homestead, leaving her destitute. Now old, lonely, landless, and penniless, Rahima spends her days in starvation, largely dependent

on assistance from others.

Her neighbours, who were once beneficiaries of her generosity, later built her a hut to live in and have been supporting her with food as much as they can. However, the hut has become dilapidated and nearly uninhabitable due to years of neglect. "Rahima Begi

widow without a child, and her relatives never came to look for her. Even though the government allocated houses to many landless people, Rahima couldn't get one for herself.

She can neither work nor move around much because of her age. There is no electricity in her hut. She once helped almost everyone in the village, but now she is in desperate need of help," said Amjad Hossain, 56, a neighbour.

"As neighbours, we try to do as much as we can to support her, but it's not always possible because of our busy schedules," he added.

"My hut has become rundown and could collapse completely any day. I have no money to repair it. I have been wearing the same saree all year because I can't afford a new one. I hardly manage to eat every day. On days when no one gives me food, I am forced to starve," Rahima said.

She has appealed to the government to provide her with a home to live in and some financial assistance to sustain her.

Dulal Hossain, acting upazila nirbahi officer of Hatibandha, said he would inquire about Rahima Begum's situation and arrange support from the upazila administration.

A treasure under threat of encroachment

Around 250 acres of Lawachhara National Park remain occupied

MINTU DESHWARA

The Lawachhara National Park has long been the victim of continuous encroachment over the years. According to local environmentalists, approximately 250 acres of the park is currently occupied, mostly by various local influential figures.

At the heart of the problem lies the fact that no proper boundary was ever established for the park. Without a comprehensive survey, the process of demarcation cannot be initiated. In the 28 years since the forest was first declared a national park, no survey has been conducted and as such there is no established boundary.

Adding to the woes, the Forest Department is rarely engaged in efforts to recover occupied land within the park.

The park, rich in diverse flora and fauna, is home to various endangered and rare species of wildlife, making it a popular destination for environmentalists, wild animal lovers, and tourists. Located in Kamalgani upazila of Moulvibazar, Lawachhara National Park spans 1,250 hectares and was designated as a national park in

The park is home to 167 species of trees, 246 species of birds, 20 species of mammals, 59 species of reptiles, and 22 species of amphibians.

Surrounding the park are villages and privately owned land. This is where some some landowners have encroached onto the forest land planting seasonal fruit trees and even constructing homes.

The village of Baghmara, for instance, is located about three kilometres from the park. The park is currently engaged in a legal dispute that involves hundreds of

residents living across 155 acres of

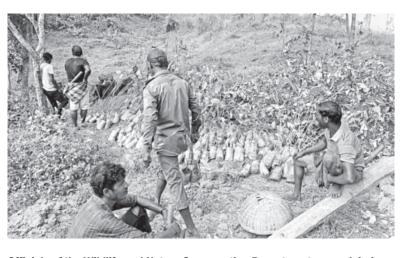
Shahidul Islam, Sreemangal Range Officer of the Wildlife Management and Conservation Department, said, "There are public land right next to the park. However, without a survey I cannot even place a marker because the boundaries are undefined. A survey would clarify the park's borders.'

On a positive note, recent efforts

former agriculture minister Abdus Shaheed, near the National Park's student dormitory -- an attempt that had previously failed in 2018.

The Forest Department believes that further land remains under the control of various individuals, complicating additional recovery efforts.

On November 3, local Awami League leader Zenar Ahmed reportedly occupied approximately 4 acres of the Lawachhara forest.



Officials of the Wildlife and Nature Conservation Department are reclaiming this portion of land and removing the lemon trees that were planted there. Md Shah Alam, who planted the trees, claimed that he had leased this land from Awami League leader Zenar Ahmed, paying Tk 1,20,000 in advance for two years.

by the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department successfully recovered six acres of land from two locations, both deep inside the park, thus needing no disputes over the boundary.

On September 22, one acre was reclaimed from an individual named Jamshed Mia in the Battali

Then, on September 15, around five acres were recovered from

Despite efforts to contact Zenar Ahmed, he could not be reached. Md Shah Alam from Sreemangal upazila, claimed to have leased the

land from Zenar Ahmed. He said. "I have cultivated lemons here under a 5-year lease from Zenar Ahmed. I paid Tk 1,20,000 in advance for 2 years. The remainder will be paid as I sell the lemons, according to our lease agreement.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

livelihoods and daily routines.

her struggle to cope with the chilling weather saying, "The cooler wind from the north makes it tough to carry on daily activities." Even multiple layers of blankets fail to keep her

"This is the peak time for preparing seedbeds, but the icy wind makes it almost impossible to work in the fields," he said.

Day labourer Jotis Barman from Basiadebi village in

Thakurgaon Sadar upazila was found waiting for work at Thakurgaon intersection but lamented the lack of job opportunities due to the adverse

yet," he said.

Rafiqul Islam, a rickshaw-puller shared a similar plight, reporting a drop in daily income as people avoid venturing out unless absolutely

because most people are staying indoors," he said. Farmers are also struggling to protect their Rabi crops, including potatoes and vegetables,

The adverse weather has increased the demand for warm clothes, but relief efforts remain insufficient.

Weather Observatory Centre, said the cold wave is expected to persist for the next few days.

3 more die of dengue

STAR REPORT

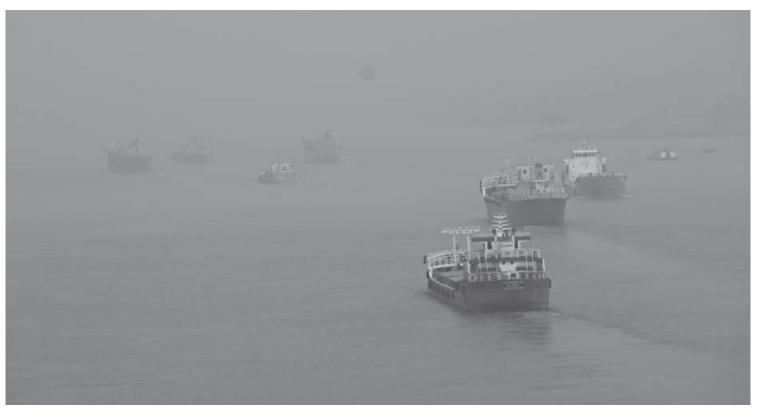
At least three dengue patients died and 316 others were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

Of the deaths, one was reported in Dhaka South Corporation, and one each in Barishal and Khulna divisions. According

Directorate General of Health Services, with the new deaths and cases, the total number of deaths rose to 548 while total number of cases rose to 98,508 of which 59,072 are from outside Dhaka.

Currently, 1,777 dengue patients are undergoing treatment, of which 1,080 are from outside Dhaka.

A total of 96,179 patients have been released till yesterday.



Even in the afternoon, heavy fog over the Kirtankhola river stops the sun, making it appear as if it is still dawn. As a result, cargo ships slow down to ensure they reach their destination safely. The photo was taken recently from the Dopdopia Bridge. PHOTO: TITU DAS

Cold wave hits north; more relief efforts needed **OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon**

A sweeping cold wave has disrupted daily life in the northern region, with the lowest temperature recorded at 9.2 degrees Celsius in Panchagarh's Tentulia at 9:00am yesterday.

Yesterday, the temperature in Tentulia was recorded at 8.4 degrees Celsius.

The biting cold has taken a toll on the lowincome population, significantly affecting their

Julfa Bewa, a 60-year-old resident of Sonapatila village in Panchagarh's Boda upazila, described

warm, especially after sunset when the icy wind penetrates her thatched house.

Farm labourer Babul, 58, of Shahapara village, shared the difficulty in preparing Boro seedbeds amidst the freezing

The biting cold has taken a toll on the low-income population. significantly affecting their livelihoods and daily routines.

"It's already 10:00am, but no one has hired me

necessary. "Our earnings have been severely impacted

from diseases exacerbated by the cold.

Jitendranath Roy, assistant officer at the Tetulia

SEÉ PAGE 4 COL 6

JCD president slams anti-discrimination student leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chhatra Dal President Rakibul Islam Rakib yesterday criticised the anti-discrimination student movement for not doing enough to ensure justice for those accused of killing during the mass uprising.

Speaking at the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in Mirpur yesterday, Rakib pointed out that despite the protests spearheaded by the movement over the past four months, no concrete steps have been taken to ensure accountability for Chhatra League leaders and activists involved in the killings.

"Their demands are limited to speeches. There has been no effort to ensure exemplary punishment for Chhatra League," Rakib said.

He stressed the need for accountability for the deaths of students and citizens during the uprising. "Those responsible for the killings must face trial, yet we see no progress on this front," he

Rakib also alleged that members of Chhatra League, a banned organisation, continue to occupy university dormitories despite public

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

ARTS & ENTERTAINMEN



Chirkutt to perform in Victory Day concert at London

the occasion of Victory Day, Chirkutt will be performing London for their solo concert, Love Bangladesh. Fans London will have the chance experience live renditions of Chirkutt's hit including tracks, Ahare Jibon,



Jadur Shohor, Khajna, Kanamachi, and Duniya.

The concert, organized by NextStage Events, is scheduled for December 16 at the Mayfair Venue in Romford, London, running from 4:30 PM to 10:00 PM. Open to all, including expatriate Bangladeshis, the event requires no tickets, but attendees must register for entry

The band will team up with international musicians for this performance. Chirkutt's vocalist Sharmin Sultana Sumi revealed, "We have collaborated globally many times to showcase Bengali music to the world. This event will be no exception, as artistes from different countries will join us. Chirkutt will be the same familiar band, but in a new style.'

Austin Butler to play Patrick Bateman in new adaptation of 'American Psycho'

Luca Guadagnino is bringing a fresh take on Bret Easton Ellis' 1991 novel American Psycho to the silver screen.

As reported by Variety, Austin Butler has been cast in the iconic and chilling role of Patrick Bateman.

The upcoming film, starring Austin Butler as Patrick Bateman, is not a remake of the 2000 adaptation with Christian Bale but a fresh take on Bret Easton Ellis' novel, with reports hinting at a markedly interpretation

American Psycho, featuring Christian Bale, was released in 2000. The film tells the story of Patrick Bateman, a wealthy investment banker in 1980s New York City, who leads a double life as a Wall Street yuppie and a serial killer.

Guadagnino.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?



Shobar Agey Bangladesh concert on Victory Day

On the occasion of Victory Day (December 16), a concert has been organised by **Shobar Agey** Bangladesh at Capital's Manik Mia Avenue. The concert is open to all and will feature performances by popular bands and solo artistes.

Date: December 16

Time: 12 pm

Vikrant Massey blames social media pressure for 'retirement'

Vikrant Massey recently surprised fans by announcing a break from acting. He revealed that his decision was fueled by social media pressure.

During an interview at Agenda AajTak, Vikrant explained that his demanding career had been limiting his time with his wife, Sheetal Thakur, and their son.

Vikrant shared, "I finally achieved the life I had always dreamed of, so I felt it was time to truly live it. Taking a break seemed necessary because, at the end of the day, everything in life is transient. That's why I've decided to work on just one film next year."

He admitted that social media pressure played a major role in his decision to announce the break. "I lead a public life and am somewhat introverted," he said. "Social media is something one has to engage with, but if I had the option, I'd prefer to use it selectively—only when I genuinely want to share something."

Allu Arjun pledges cooperation in stampede case

Telugu superstar Allu Arjun has pledged full cooperation in the investigation following his brief detention related to a fan's tragic death at the premiere of Pushpa 2: The Rule on December 4. Addressing the media after his release, Arjun expressed condolences to the bereaved family, calling the incident "immensely unfortunate".

The tragedy occurred when a stampede broke out after Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna made a surprise appearance. Among the casualties, 35-year-old Revathi lost her life, and her son remains critically injured. The victim's husband filed an FIR naming Allu Arjun as an

The actor was taken into custody on Friday from his Banjara Hills residence and initially



remanded to 14 days of judicial custody. Although the Telangana High Court granted him interim bail, procedural delays forced him to spend a night in jail.

OUNTRYWIDE

BARGUNA'S AMTALI UPAZILA

Unabated encroachment continues

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

An important canal in Bagruna's Amtali upazila headquarters has become badly polluted and almost dead due to mindless filling and continuous encroachments.

The century-old canal, locally known as Basugi Khal, flows through different areas of Amtali town and falls into the

Besides, the canal, which splits into two branches at the heart of the town, flows through Basugi, Nayavanguli, Manikjhuri and New Bazar areas is also connected with another canal called

During a recent visit to the upazila headquarters this correspondent saw different structures, including dwelling houses and shops, are constructed after filling of the canal at different places, which threatens the town dwellers with environment pollution and water-

Locals said a group of local influential people have continued to grab Basugi Khal (canal) at different places of the town although it plays a vital role in the lives of the residents of nearby villages.

Nearly two acres of the canal land, starting from the iron bridge area, have been completely occupied by more than 50 people, including Mosharof Howlader and Rubel Howlader, locals alleged.

One Saiful Islam has built an ice mill by occupying a portion of the canal land, while on the opposite side Mosharef, Razzak Mridha and Nurul Islam erected at least eight to ten shops and earning a handsome amount from those.

Meanwhile, at least 20 to 25 people including Harun Hawladar, Kalam Hawladar and many others have built more than 100 structures in between Amtali Upazila Health Complex and Kamal Talukdar's house and enjoying benefits.

farmers said alongside encroachments, the water of the canal has been badly polluted as fish traders, who sits along the banks of the canal, often throw various types of waste materials into the canal.

Gafur Pada, a local farmer, said due to continuous encroachment normal water flows of the important canal has been severely disrupted, resulting in flooding during the monsoon.

Another farmer Shamim Chaprasi said they cannot cultivate any crops including paddy in their land as the canal needs to be cleared first to maintain its natural flow.

Upazila Amtali Assistant Commissioner (Land) Tarek Hasan said they will conduct eviction drives to free the canal as early as possible.

Rizwana's comment misleading

FROM PAGE 12 lack of progress in political

reforms over decades. political reforms cannot be achieved without the involvement of political parties, why haven't those been implemented in the last 53 years?" she asked, speaking at an awareness and driver retraining programme on noise pollution in the capital.

Responding to her comments, Rizvi said, "All democratic political parties have supported the interim government. Drawing a dividing line between politicians and civil society will create complexities in strengthening democracy."

"The adviser has made a utterly incorrect and untruthful statement. There is no precedent that civil society has ever achieved anything by sidelining someone keeping someone away," he added.

The BNP leader said that the party has been cooperating with the interim government to ensure the national election is held within a reasonable timeframe after completing necessary

Earlier in the morning, BNP

Secretary General Mirza

Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said

the national election will

be held soon in line with

An interim government

has been established, and

we're all cooperating.

Hopefully, arrangements

for polls will be made very

soon as per the people's

wishes" he told reporters

after paying tribute at the

"We're always hopeful.

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people's wishes.

AL leader Siraj abducted, freed

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Siraj was taken to Al-Haramain Hospital around 4:00am, where he underwent a minor surgery on his left leg, said the hospital's director Nahian

Ahmed Chowdhury. "His family told us that he had been in a motorbike accident in which he was injured. He was discharged the next morning as his condition was good," the the victim's family had not mentioned any attack

and thus, the hospital

the police.

Siraj is currently under treatment at another hospital, his daughter Muntaha Misbah told local newspaper Shyamal Sylhet vesterday morning. She, however, declined to say anything more.

An accused in seven cases filed over attacks on protesters during the July uprising, Siraj was doctor said, adding that the president of the nowbanned student organisation Islam, additional deputy Chhatra League's Sylhet district unit. He also served as

authorities did not inform the public prosecutor of the and Family Planning Officer Sylhet District Judge Court.

However, he holds no post in AL's current committee and has been in hiding since August 5. "We are sure that he was

attacked and abducted but we do not know his current location. He has been in hiding as he is accused in multiple cases. We are investigating this attack and trying to locate him," said Mohammad Saiful commissioner (media) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

Mizanur Rahman said th man was dead on arrival around 8:30pm.

After the incident, locals kept three of the policemen confined to a shop. Around two hours later, Border Guard Bangladesh personnel went there and rescued them.

Talking to The Daily Star, Chandgam Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Hafiz Tapan said, "I was in my office that is adjacent to the bridge. Hearing the hue and cry, I went out and saw that the people had confined three policemen. They were saying that the policemen killed Dudu."

Dudu's son Shawkat Ali said, "Police have killed my father without any reason. want justice."

Bheramara Station's Officer-in-Charge Sheikh Shahidul Islam claimed that police had information that Dudu was involved with drug peddling even though there was no case filed against him.

But police did not physically assault Dudu. Rather, Dudu himself came out of his shop and jumped off the bridge to escape the police, said the OC.

Kushtia's Superintendent of Police Mizanur Rahman said he has formed a probe body to investigate the

Janata Bank exempted

FROM PAGE 12

had not paid back most of the sum.

The amount borrowed by Beximco is 410 percent of its own capital, according to records.

The company's Vice-Chairman Salman F Rahman, a former adviser to ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, is currently in jail.

Mazibur Rahman, managing director of Janata Bank, said his bank would lend the Tk180 conglomerate

On December 5, Janata Bank requested the BB's

Graveyard in the capital's

Mirpur around 9:30am on

Martyred Intellectuals' Day

a free, fair and impartial

election, the people will

get the opportunity to

elect their representatives,

form the parliament, and

some senior party leaders,

including BNP

committee

Earlier, Fakhrul and

standing

members

establish the government."

He added, "Through

Martyred

yesterday.

Intellectuals'

permission to lend money to Beyimco Janata mentioned that

its clients had defaulted on 61 percent of the loans, and the bank was facing a liquidity crisis.

taken by loan defaulters Group, AnonTex Group, Group Crescent

Thermex Group. of September, defaulted loans at the bank was Tk 60,489 crore, the highest in Bangladesh, according to central bank

This amount represents Hussain in the chair.

Nazrul Islam Khan and

Abdul Moveen Khan, placed

wreaths at the Martyred

around 9:15am. They then

stood in a solemn silence

for some time to remember

the fallen national heroes

who lost their lives for the

opportunities have been

created after fascism was

removed from the country

through the July uprising.

also

that

Memorial

told

new

Intellectuals'

country.

reporters

Fakhrul

total disbursed loans and 21.22 percent of the sector's total nonperforming loans of Tk 2,84,977 crore. bank recently The

61 percent of the bank's

Of the total sum lent by requested Tk 20,000 Janata, over 45 percent was crore from the interim government and the central Beximco Group, S Alam bank to overcome its crisis, maintain a normal cash flow, and protect depositor confidence.

The decision to let Janata lend money to Beximco was made on November 28 at a meeting with Labour Adviser Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat

Unite to build a fair, inclusive Bangladesh

"By making full use of this opportunity, we want to establish a democratic

Bangladesh and a modern

state free of discrimination." Responding to Awami League for losing connection with the people.

"Those who distanced themselves from the people, killed democracy, suppressed prodemocracy and freedomloving individuals, and sold our independence have

naturally become isolated. That's why they are absent today.'

Meanwhile, BNP kept the national flag at half-mast and hoisted black flags atop question, he criticised the all its offices, including the central Nayapaltan office, to mark the day.

The party's bodies, including Jubo Dal, Chhatra Dal, Swechchhasebak Dal and Krishak Dal, also paid their respects to the martyred intellectuals.



A section of local people have continued encroachment on Basugi Khal in Barguna's Amtali upazila.

INTERNATIONAL

Russia pulling back but not out of Syria: sources

REUTERS. Tartous

Russia is pulling back its military from the front lines in northern Syria and from posts in the Alawite Mountains but is not leaving its two main bases in the country after the fall of President Bashar al-Assad, four Syrian officials told Reuters

The ousting of Assad, who along with his late father, former President Hafez al-Assad, had forged a close alliance with Moscow, has thrown the future of Russia's bases - the Hmeimim airbase in Latakia and the Tartous naval facility - into question.

Satellite footage from Friday shows what appeared to be at least two Antonov AN-124s, among the world's largest cargo planes, at the Hmeimim base with their nose cones open, apparently preparing to load up.

Syrian military and security sources in contact with the Russians told Reuters that Moscow was pulling back its forces from the front lines and withdrawing some heavy equipment and senior Syrian officers.

But the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation, said Russia was not pulling out of its two main bases and currently had no intention of doing so.

Some equipment is being shipped back to Moscow as are very senior officers from Assad's military but the aim at this stage is to regroup and redeploy as dictated by developments on the ground, a senior Syrian army officer in touch with the Russian military told Reuters

A senior rebel official close to the new interim administration told Reuters the issue of the Russian military presence in Syria and past agreements between the Assad government and Moscow were not under discussion.

The Kremlin has said Russia is in discussions with the new rulers of Syria over the bases.

Russia's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment on Reuters reporting.



Protesters calling for the ouster of South Korea President Yoon Suk Yeol react after the result of the second martial law impeachment vote outside the National Assembly in Seoul yesterday. Story on page 1.

PHOTO: AFP

18 killed as Israel strikes shelters, aid point in Gaza

At least 18 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza on Saturday, medics said, while the Israeli military said it targeted gunmen operating from shelters and aid storages.

At least 10 people were killed in an airstrike near the municipality building in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip where people gathered to receive aid, medics said.

Casualties were being carried by foot, on rickshaws and private cars from the site of the attack to the hospital, medics said. The strike killed the head of the Hamasrun administrative committee in central Gaza, a Hamas source said.

The Israeli military was looking into the report, a spokesperson said. Earlier, Israeli aircraft struck militants and weapon caches near an aid warehouse, the military said, after gunmen had fired rockets into Israel from there.

A separate strike in Gaza City on a a local



former shelter housing displaced people targeted Hamas fighters, the military said. At least seven people were killed in that attack, Palestinian medics said, including a woman and her baby.

It was unclear whether any of the other people killed were fighters. The military said it had taken precautions to reduce risk of harm to civilians.

A separate strike in Gaza City killed journalist, medics said. The

military was looking into the report, a spokesperson said.

The war in Gaza began on Oct 7, 2023 when Israel then launched an air, sea and land offensive that has killed at least 44,000 people, mostly civilians, according to authorities in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip, displaced nearly the entire population and left much of the enclave in ruins.

Several attempts to a ceasefire have failed to stop the bombardment on the tiny Palestinian territory.

A fresh bid by Egypt, Qatar and the United States to reach a truce has gained momentum in recent weeks.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi yesterday discussed with visiting US officials efforts to reach a ceasefire in Gaza and a hostages-for prisoners deal in the Palestinian enclave, Sisi's office said.

The killings ame a on the same day as top US officials and regional Arab power met to discuss the conflicts in the region - in Gaza, Syria, Lebanon.

[/] Jamuna Bank

Iran won't impede **IAEA** access

REUTERS

Iran will not impede the UN nuclear watchdog's access and inspection of its sites, the head of the country's Atomic Energy Organization said

According to a report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) earlier this week, Iran has agreed to tougher monitoring by the agency at its Fordow site after it greatly accelerated uranium enrichment to close to weapons-grade there.

Last week, the IAEA reported that Iran had multiplied the pace of its enrichment to up to 60 percent purity, close to the 90 percent of weaponsgrade, at Fordow.

"We have not created and will not create any obstacles for the agency's inspections and access, Atomic Energy Organization head Mohammad Eslami was quoted as saying by Iranian media.

Israeli strike kills 1 in south Lebanon

AFP, Beirut

Lebanon's health ministry said an Israeli drone strike in the south killed one person yesterday, the latest deadly raid despite a more than two-week ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

"An Israeli enemy drone strike... killed one person" in Marjayoun district, the health ministry said in a statement. The official National News Agency said a vehicle was hit.

A ceasefire came into effect between Israel and Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah on November 27 but both sides have accused the other of repeated violations, with Lebanon reporting multiple deadly Israeli strikes, including five people killed on Wednesday.

MIGRANT BOAT SINKING Five killed in Greece

Five migrants died early yesterday when a migrant boat sank off Crete, Greece's coastguard said, leaving 40 people reportedly missing while 39 survivors were rescued. The boat sank 12 nautical miles southwest of the island, according to ERTNEWS, which reported the 40 missing.

A huge rescue operation involving vessels and aircraft was under way in the sea south of the island of Gavdos, south of Crete, after the boat capsized shortly after midnight, the coastguard said.

AI with reasoning power will be less predictable: expert

REUTERS, Vancouver

nake on Friday: reasoning capabilities will make technology far less predictable.

Accepting a "Test Of Time" award for his 2014 paper with Google's GOOGL.O Oriol Vinvals and Ouoc Le. Sutskever said a major change was on Al's horizon.

An idea that his team had explored a decade ago, that scaling up data have but one internet."

to "pre-train" AI systems would send them to new heights, was starting to Former OpenAI chief scientist Ilya reach its limits, he said. More data Sutskever, one of the biggest names in and computing power had resulted artificial intelligence, had a prediction to in ChatGPT that OpenAI launched in 2022, to the world's acclaim.

> "But pre-training as we know it will unquestionably end," Sutskever declared before thousands of attendees at the NeurIPS conference in Vancouver. "While compute is growing," he said, "the data is not growing, because we

Won't spare anyone, even if it's Prof Yunus

the July uprising.

Mentioning that they are not the generation that sells their conscience, Sarjis said the relation of Bangladesh with other countries must be of respect and equal dignity.

"We want to say one thing to India: our relationship with you will be determined through your work. If you want relationship with Bangladesh, you must send back Sheikh Hasina. Hasina's trial will be done by the people of Bangladesh," he added.

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Intellectuals failed to organise consent

barricades to new sensibilities and thoughts, and then he invoked another group, i.e. the "organic" ones who wanted change especially in the face of a desire to establish justice in society. "Desire," Khan said, "is metonymy whereas deception is a symptom, that is to say metaphor."

Talking about the recent mass upsurge, he said it has created hope among many, as many of the organisers of the uprising are young and organic intellectuals with foresight.

"Our society is not infertile. No one knew from where these leaders would emerge. Whether they will survive or not, I can't really say anything as a fortune-teller."

He said that old leaderships are failing to understand that they not be in place of Bangla, and that are on the verge of the end of their political career. The old is dying Bangladesh is just "killing Bangla" as

but the new cannot be born. In the a culture and as an identity marker. interregnum, a whole set of morbid symptoms appear.

He said that a section of teachers worship some people for personal and professional benefits. "University have teachers

land or for a steady job for a relative or even to secure a transfer from one place to another. They have destroyed institutions for getting own benefits.'

Talking about the education system, Khan said medium of classroom instructions at general schools, madrasas and others should be the mother tongue, and a foreign language must not supplant it.

He said that someone can learn different languages but that should the present system of "Englishing"

"If you want to make the education generally available, there is no alternative to having education in the natural language of the student populace."

Journalist and writer Kajal destroyed universities for a plot of Rashid Shahin said that during the independence struggle and Liberation War, intellectuals played a glorious role. He said it is important to know the roles of the architects of the nation and reforms should be carried out in line with their thoughts.

> Government Titumir College Vice-Principal and writer Prof Mizanur Rahman said there should be a process to groom intellectuals and there should be discussions about their role in nation-building.

> The Daily Star editor and publisher Mahfuz Anam moderated the programme.

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US, regional diplomats meet

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas,

Fidan and foreign ministers from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar met around a circular table at a Jordanian government guesthouse. There was no Syrian representative at the table.

The Arab diplomats earlier met separately and issued a statement calling for a peaceful and inclusive political transition that leads towards elections and a new constitution for Syria. The foreign ministers said they were committed to combating terrorism, which they called a threat to security in Syria, the region and the world.

Blinken, meeting Pederson at his

a time of "both opportunity but also real challenge" for Syria.

Arab diplomats attending the talks told Reuters they were seeking assurances from Turkey that it supports an inclusive political process that prevents the partition of Syria on sectarian lines.

Turkey and the United States, both Nato members, have conflicting interests when it comes to some of the rebels. Turkish-backed rebels in northern Syria have clashed with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The SDF, which controls some of Syria's largest oil fields, is the main YPG was Turkey's "strategic target" ally in a U.S. coalition against Islamic and urged the group's commanders State militants. It is spearheaded by

hotel earlier on Saturday, said it was YPG militia, a group that Ankara sees as an extension of Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants who have fought the Turkish state for 40 years and who it outlaws.

Blinken told Turkish officials during a visit to Ankara on Thursday and Friday that Islamic State must not be able to regroup, and the SDF must not be distracted from its role of securing camps holding IS fighters, according to a U.S. official. Turkish leaders agreed, the official with the U.S. delegation said.

Fidan told Turkish TV later on Friday that the elimination of the to leave Syria.

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EDITORIAL

The Baily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

A tribute long overdue

We must promptly complete the martyred intellectuals' list

As we observed Martyred Intellectuals' Day yesterday, honouring the bright minds of this land who were brutally murdered by the Pakistani occupation forces with the help of their local collaborators before our liberation in 1971, it is deeply disappointing that we have yet to finalise a complete list of these martyred intellectuals. Reportedly, the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs initiated efforts in 2020 to prepare a comprehensive list, as no complete record has been compiled even after five decades of the country's independence. Although the work was supposed to be completed by December 16 this year, it has remained suspended since July, casting uncertainty

Over the past four years, the ministry published four gazettes listing the names of 560 intellectuals based on recommendations from a national committee, which also had a sub-committee to scrutinise the list. However, the subcommittee held its last meeting on July 1, and there have been no updates on the project since then. It appears that the political transition in the country might have created a vacuum in the committees, stalling progress. Some committee members have anonymously suggested that the work was postponed to avoid potential debates over the number of martyred intellectuals. Nevertheless, we believe that transparency and efficiency in the enlisting process can prevent any such controversy.

There should be no controversy or disagreement about the invaluable roles these intellectuals played in shaping the course of our history. These luminaries—academics, journalists, politicians, artists, litterateurs, philosophers, scientists, physicians, and engineers—played a pivotal role in the mass movements against the widespread inequality and oppression of the Pakistani regime, culminating in our Liberation War. Beginning on the night of March 25, 1971, the Pakistani army, aided by local collaborators, started abducting and killing these intellectual leaders. As their defeat became imminent, they intensified efforts to eliminate these prominent figures in the lead-up to December 16, 1971, to intellectually paralyse the emerging nation. Their loss has left an irreplaceable void in the intellectual sphere of the country.

Compiling a complete list of these national icons and learning from their lives and contributions is more critical now than ever, as we endeavour to build a nation free from discrimination following the ouster of a 15-year autocratic regime. Numerous sources exist from which information about the martyred intellectuals can be collected. For example, their names can be found in Shaheed Buddhijibi Koshgrantha, the 1972 documentary Bangladesh, Banglapedia, postal stamps, and various books and research works. These sources should be properly verified to ensure accuracy and inclusivity, avoiding any disputes.

We, therefore, urge the interim government to promptly resume the initiative to create a comprehensive list of martyred intellectuals and complete this vital project without further delay.

We must have breathable air

Urgent steps must be taken to address the air quality emergency

Physicians and health workers at Dhaka Shishu Hospital are struggling with a surge of child patients suffering from pneumonia. All the hospital beds are full and each day hundreds of children are treated as outdoor patients. Adults with breathing related problems are also suffering. Doctors say that air pollution is one of the main contributing factors behind cold-related diseases. As we know, Dhaka's air pollution has reached unbearable levels, recently ranking as the second highest in the world, prompting a government advisory for people to wear masks outdoors and for individuals with respiratory issues, allergies, or other vulnerabilities to avoid going out unless absolutely necessary.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year, mainly due to increased mortality from stroke, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections. Over the last decade, the air quality in Dhaka, as well as in towns and villages near toxic smoke-emitting industries, has deteriorated significantly. Air pollution worsens during the colder months, with a persistent smog that lingers, unlike the monsoon months when rain temporarily alleviates the issue. However, the air quality remains poor throughout the year, causing chronic respiratory problems, particularly among children and the elderly, who are more vulnerable.

Unfortunately, little has been done over the years to mitigate the factors contributing to air pollution. Dust is a major nuisance for Dhaka residents, caused by year-long infrastructure and real estate development projects. This unregulated construction has led to unprecedented levels of airborne dust. Additionally, unfit vehicles spewing noxious fumes into the air worsen the situation, especially during daily traffic gridlocks, trapping people, including children, in clouds of poisonous gases. Brick kilns, which have proliferated on the outskirts of cities, further contribute to air pollution, affecting

nearby residents. The current interim government, along with future administrations, must take responsibility for controlling or eliminating the factors that have made our air almost unbreathable. Measures include banning unfit vehicles, enforcing public safety rules during construction, and prohibiting developers from leaving piles of dust on the streets. Air quality must be monitored regularly, particularly in high-pollution areas. Implementing low-emission zones, such as pedestrian-only streets and public spaces, creating more cycling and rickshaw lanes, and facilitating pedestrianfriendly areas are additional ways to improve air quality.

In the long term, Bangladesh must phase out fossil fuels and adopt renewable energy sources. Preserving existing greenery, planting more trees, and encouraging rooftop gardening will also contribute to making the air more breathable.

Time for many to apologise



Muhammad Nurul Huda is former IGP of Bangladesh Police.

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

the philosophy of the ruling party." The underlying disease that has

that the tone of public life has of reached an all-time low. We have been both within and outside academia. burdened with so-called democracy meritocracy, wherein

Our educators who are fondly addressed as the builders of the nation destroyed our democracy is moral, have largely failed to act as the moral political, and constitutional, and to supervisors. Quite disgracefully, cure it, we must recognise it as such. many of them have been willing Our politicians need to appreciate collaborators in the continuation undemocratic dispensation, A number of senior teachers have jockeyed for key appointments in

Given the politico-administrative culture of Bangladesh, it was quite refreshingly surprising to watch the Inspector General of Police (IGP) apologising to the citizens for the criminal excesses committed by the police during July-August mass uprising. He promised to bring the deviant police officials to book for their blatant criminal acts to meet the ends of justice. In fact, this is the minimum he must do to assuage the agonies of the near and dear ones of the victims who suffered immeasurably from the deaths and injuries caused by police action. The enormity of the casualties, numbering a thousand, and the injuries of several thousand shall remain an indelible shame on our national consciousness.

While the police force appears to be the visible principal offender in the indiscriminate loss of lives, a question arises as to whether other organs of the state that resorted to disproportionate use of lethal force have similarly apologised to the nation or, at the least, displayed some remorse or repentance. Then there are others at the policy level and at the strategic command position who are no less culpable in the deaths of scores of defenceless civilians

> Our leaders need to apologise because they have not ventured beyond the safe provision of personal gratifications and have strengthened the autocrat by acting as sycophants and timeservers. History will apportion blame and responsibility among a wide spectrum of politicians who betrayed their trust. Their pretensions to infallibility will remain a sad chapter in our political existence.

during the uprising. Don't they need to apologise, notwithstanding their corporate criminal liability? Specifically, shouldn't



Our politicians, civil servants, kleptocrats, media, and educators must apologise for their collaboration with Hasina's fascist regime. FILE PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

politicians, whose unbridled desire for power and single-minded pursuit of money have landed us in this mess,

It is time for discerning citizens to ponder over the factors and circumstances that have brought us to this precarious condition. During the preceding years, particularly in the last 15, the establishment has subordinated the individual to the government so completely that, with few exceptions, the nation is now made up of one-dimensional human beings. The government has dwarfed its citizens so that they may be docile instruments, without realising that with small men, no great thing can really be accomplished.

We have devalued the judiciary, as we have devalued every other important institution. Instead of defending our judges against political pressures and threats, and instead of insisting upon integrity and impartiality in judicial ignorance, incompetence, and dishonesty are no disqualifications for high public office. Sadly, persons have been appointed to such offices because they represent a group or belong to a particular region. The ethos of public service has been badly compromised, and many government officials have behaved and acted subserviently.

Our leaders need to apologise because they have not ventured beyond the safe provision of personal gratifications and have strengthened the autocrat by acting as sycophants and time-servers. History will apportion blame and responsibility among a wide spectrum of politicians who betrayed their trust. Their pretensions to infallibility will remain a sad chapter in our political

It is no secret now that some of our prominent businessmen and bankers have fleeced the economy so sharply divided castes—the rulers comprehensively that it is becoming and the ruled. The ruling caste too a mind-boggling exercise to put the allowed the executive to supersede house in order. Our kleptocrats had a of unscrupulousness and plain judges of calibre and courage and field day while the nation bled. Don't wickedness. It is now time for them appoint persons who "subscribe to they need to apologise to the nation? to apologise and atone to the ruled.

an unbecoming manner, creating unhealthy precedents. Don't these educators need to apologise for their failings?

A segment of the media, the vital corrective institution aptly called the Fourth Estate, has been sadly and conspicuously biased and polarised in reporting and commenting on the state of public affairs. Some of them have towed official propaganda in the most unprofessional manner. The deviance in the media, no doubt, makes us look petty and small. Don't the conscientious gentlemen and women in the media need to

It is an unfortunate fact of our public life that the majority of our leaders personify the arrogance of power-the exact opposite of the unfeigned humility of great souls. One might not be wrong to assume that we now have two

Could the Indian foreign secretary's visit create positive optics?



is a special correspondent for The Daily Star. He writes from New Delhi, India.

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

Given the steady decline in Bangladesh-India relations since August, it is tempting to view Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's December 9 visit to Dhaka and his talks with top leaders, including the interim government's Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, either negatively or positively. It all depends on one's own perception.

However, Misri's visit, the first by a top Indian diplomat since Hasina's escape to India, appears to have provided a much-needed welcome break from the rising cacophony of megaphone diplomacy and the shriller voices emanating from a section of the media which made the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India frosty, if not downright hostile.

It may be argued that Misri's interaction with Yunus, Bangladesh Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain and Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin did not yield new meeting ground, nor were they expected to during this initial round of talks. What it did at best was for the two sides to bring to the table their respective concerns and expectations of each other. Yunus flagged the issue of Hasina's continued stay in India and

says added to the strained ties. Jashim Uddin conveyed Dhaka's concern over border killings and described India's comments on the plight of minorities in Bangladesh as "interference" in his country's internal affairs.

Bangladesh has resented a security breach at Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala during a large protest there against alleged attacks on Hindus. In Dhaka, Misri articulated the attacks on "religious, diplomatic and cultural properties" which fuelled resentment in India.

But it would be grossly unfair to just look at areas of concern. More than anything else, the Indian foreign secretary's visit underlines that the two countries are willing to not allow the incidents since August to prevent the efforts for charting a new journey. According to media reports, Yunus, during his meeting with Misri, said that the relations between Bangladesh and India were "very solid" and "close" and asked India to help "clear the clouds.'

For his part, Misri stressed India's "desire to work closely with the Interim Government of Bangladesh." The Indian foreign secretary made it a point to recall that since the her statements from there which he political changes in Bangladesh, Prime

Minister Narendra Modi was the first world leader to greet Chief Adviser Yunus on his assumption of office, the two leaders had a "very cordial" telephone conversation thereafter, and Yunus accepted Modi's invitation to speak at the online event 3rd Voice of Global South Summit in August. Plus, there was the meeting between Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Bangladesh Foreign

More than anything else, the Indian foreign secretary's visit underlines that the two countries are willing to not allow the incidents since August to prevent the efforts for charting a new journey. According to media reports, Yunus, during his meeting with Misri, said that the relations between Bangladesh and India were "very solid" and "close" and asked India to help "clear the clouds."

Adviser Touhid Hossain in New York in September this year. Misri emphasised, "India desires a positive, constructive, and mutually beneficial relationship with Bangladesh."

Misri also made two important points. First, he conveyed that India has always seen in the past and will continue to see in the future the relationship with Bangladesh "as a people-centric and people-oriented relationship, one that has the benefit of all the people as its central motivational force." Secondly, he made it clear the development projects executed by India in Bangladesh reflected mutually beneficial engagement on issues ranging from trade, commerce, connectivity, power, water and energy, consular cooperation and cultural cooperation. He said there is no reason why this cooperation should not continue to deliver in the interest of both Bangladeshis and Indians. This should be seen as a counter to criticism often aired in Bangladesh that India has invested in the Awami League rather than the people of that

country. After the Indian foreign secretary's visit, the two sides indicated their readiness to resume the unfinished challenges in bilateral ties-border management, trade and connectivity, water, energy sectors, development cooperation, consular, cultural and people-to-people ties. The jury is still out if the visit helped create largely positive optics. For that to happen, India and Bangladesh must be mindful of each other's areas of concerns and priorities and not brush them aside. It is to be noted that a day after Misri's visit. Yunus's press secretary Shafiqul Alam told the media that there have been 88 incidents of communal violence against the minorities between August 5 and October 22 (with him also saying that many of them were connected to the previous ruling party) and 70 people have been arrested in connection with those incidents.

Right to information is meaningless without information commissioners

and assistant director (RTI), respectively, of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). They can be reached at rib@citech-bd.com.

SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

Over one hundred days have passed since an interim government took over the reins of power in Bangladesh, promising a more just, democratic, law-based, and discrimination-free society. Fulfilling such expectations the violent overthrow of the previous regime is challenging and timeconsuming. The new government soon recognised that a priority area for its attention would be governance $and \, restoring \, government al \, authority$ to ensure a smooth transition.

The Right to Information (RTI) Act 2009 has rich potential to contribute to good governance at this critical moment in our history. There can be no better law to promote a collaborative interaction between public authorities and citizens for transparent and accountable governance. But it needs guiding

Like many other institutions of governance in the country, the RTI regime was disrupted in the aftermath of the July-August mass uprising. Following the spate of resignations or forcible removal of high officials of key public bodies, the country's three information commissioners also had to go. The Bangladesh RTI Commission was and the Information Commission's thus left rudderless and remains so till date. This must end quickly as implementation of the RTI Act is held

is crucial at this critical juncture of the nation. The Information Commission must be reconstituted as a matter of priority.

The RTI Act allows citizens to request information from public bodies primarily to check if they are fulfilling their duties abiding by the laws of the land. In recent years, such information requests have increasingly pertained to areas of government activities that are is not easy, as the transition from of public interest and susceptible to abuse. For example, inhabitants of an upazila may ask a concerned authority's Designated Officer (DO) for information relating to its tendering process for awarding a contract for the repair work of a local road. If the DO does not respond within 20 working days, applicants can appeal to the appellate authority within the same office. If that, too, does not yield a satisfactory response, the applicant can complain to the Information Commission, which must take the necessary action to resolve the dispute.

> Without a functioning Information Commission, there is no one to attend to the complaint, and citizens' role in promoting transparent and accountable governance is thwarted. In the absence of the Information Commission, DOs can disregard citizens' RTI requests without fear of repercussion; any abuse or misuse of their authority remains unchecked, general role in promoting the proper



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

responsibilities under the law through their inclusion and regular website updates. The more public interest information is disclosed proactively, the less pressure there is to use the reactive disclosure process through individual requests.

Data from the Secretariat of the Information Commission revealed that from the time the three commissioners left in September 2024 until now, aggrieved citizens have filed around 190 complaints. All citizens' role in utilising the law to in abeyance. An important area in the of these have remained unattended. law. Even more reassuring would be a monitor the work of all public bodies latter regard is ensuring that public. The figure would be even higher if the clear indication from the government look at the work of the Information government in place.

bodies fulfil their proactive disclosure commission were fully operational. that due process for selecting the There may be other complaints filed before the July-August uprising that have remained unattended. This is not healthy for the RTI regime.

> country, where other urgent matters await government attention, the seeming delay in filling the vacant posts of the three commissioners is understandable. Nevertheless, if the government assures citizens that the matter is under active consideration, this will encourage the use of the

commissioners would be respected, which was not the case previously. The law specifies the participation of all critical stakeholders, including Given the circumstances in the citizens, who are the law's key players and primary beneficiaries. The interim government could set an example to ensure that transparency is respected in all processes related information commissioners would be to the RTI Act, a law that promotes a lasting contribution of the interim transparency.

The need for extra caution in selecting the commissioners will be evident from even a cursory aspirations of the people who put this

Commission in the past 15 years. As a law that empowers citizens to monitor the work of government officials, there is an inbuilt assumption that citizens' requests should deserve priority at any complaint hearing. Unfortunately, this was not the case as most commissioners, as former bureaucrats, felt an affinity with respondent public officials who they considered old colleagues. As a result, such officials were allowed to get away lightly for their wilful neglect of

More importantly, the lack of legal expertise of past commissioners often resulted in the wrong interpretation—and hence misuse of the law. For example, there is a tendency among public officials to use the exemption provisions of the law, which are there to safeguard the interest of the state over citizens, without careful justification. The only way to challenge the Information Commission's acquiescence with public officials' use of the exemption provisions is to resort to a writ petition in the High Court, which most citizens cannot afford. All such hurdles have cumulatively added to citizens' frustration.

Reanimating the Information Commission and establishing a transparent selection process for the government to ensuring accountable governance in the country. It will be a step towards meeting the important

International courts impel advisory climate action



is a board member at Scientific Council of COP29 Presidency, visiting scholar at Brown University, and technical lead at LDC Universities

December 2, 2024, the world is witnessing oral hearings on climate change and state responsibility at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague. More than 100 states and international organisations (IOs) will participate in the process. China and the US as the two largest global emitters will also attend the pleadings. This is perhaps the most attended hearing ever in the ICJ's history. The historic resolution adopted by consensus at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on March 29, 2023, requested the ICJ to deliver its Advisory Opinion (AO) on climate change. Then the ICJ president set the deadline for states and IOs to make written submissions by March 22, 2024. The deadline to respond to written submissions was extended till August 15, 2024.

Vanuatu as a Pacific Small Island Developing State (SIDS) requested the UNGA for the AO. We may recall that Vanuatu was among a few SIDSs which maintained the reservation to approach alternative forums other than the UNFCCC process before ratifying the UNFCCC. As the SIDS are "nano-emitters" in real sense, they are likely to face "watery death" due to rapid sea level rise engendered by an ever-warming world. Developed countries, as historically the largest emitters, are mainly responsible for this. The hearings come at a time when the impacts of climate change are more evident than ever. But the just-concluded COP29 achieved a lackluster outcome, particularly in mitigation, transitioning away from fossil fuels and climate finance.

In response to such "active inaction," as I started calling the COPs years ago, 62 countries including Bangladesh have made written submissions and more than 90 comments have been recorded.

Paris Agreement (PA), though, has an Article 8 on Loss and Damage, the decision text of the PA forecloses any step for liability and compensation under it. Then

The quarters concerned with accept such a provision? I have climate change are aware that since argued elsewhere that IPCC science has established "general causation" for the ever-increasing fever of our planet, liability and compensation through courts warrant "specific" causation that can link climate events to consequences. But it is still not possible to link specific climate events to specific consequences, as attribution science is not perfect yet. Under the PA, country-parties cannot go to court for litigation and seek for compensation. So, countries from both sides have agreed to go for negotiated settlements in loss and

and climate justice, etc. Against this, developed countries have been arguing for limiting discussions on climate change within the UNFCCC process, restricting human rights in change. ITLOS was requested for relation to climate change amongst clear interpretations on the specific other issues.

On December participated in the hearings. Its and preserve the marine environment main arguments, in line with other climate-vulnerable countries, stressed the importance of climate rights change-human nexus, highlighting that unendurable impacts will increasingly worsen in the coming years. The oral submission pointed out the need to clarify state obligations due to the slow progress of the climate negotiations. They rightly pointed out that to remedy harm, the applicable law that the court needs to consider must go beyond the climate regime, to clarify the secondary and primary obligations that states have in relation to adaptation and keeping



At the International Court of Justice, Bangladesh highlighted that the unendurable impacts of climate change are getting worse. FILE PHOTO: STAR

But totally inadequate mitigation by major emitters is failing to curtail the rising harm and the antecedent depositions are making the climate system increasingly unstable, causing unprecedented impacts.

During the last two days, many countries from both the Global North and South have attended the hearings. There is a clear divide on perspectives. Developing countries have been stressing on climate science, violation of development and human rights from climate change, why did the developing countries controlling harm through ambitious

damage under Article 8 of the PA. in mind the principles of equity and differentiated responsibility.

We may cite the first AO given a few months ago by the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). On May 21, 2024, the first ground-breaking AO on the specific obligations of states to climate change was issued by the ITLOS, which provided interpretations of the UNCLOS' role on ambitious climate action. The request for the ITLOS AO was brought by the Commission of Small Island States (COSIS), that represent the SIDS of both the Pacific

mitigation, due diligence, equity and Atlantic regions. COSIS came into being immediately after COP26 held in Glasgow, when SIDS joined forces to solicit AOs on international legal obligations to prevent climate obligations of parties to UNCLOS arising from Article 192 to protect and their obligations under Article 194 to "prevent, reduce and control" marine pollution. ITLOS AO detailed out the links between UNFCCC and UNCLOS, arguing that under UNCLOS, countries must reduce GHG emissions to protect the marine environment and its resources.

This ruling is the first from an international tribunal about state obligations regarding climate change mitigation. It also emphasised that Article 194.1 of UNCLOS imposes a duty of care and due diligence on states in combating climate change, focusing particularly on marine environments.

The ITLOS' AO is expected to influence legal opinions and significantly impact the international regimes regarding climate-related obligations. It reinforces the scientific consensus on climate change and underscores the urgent need for states to phase out fossil fuels to protect our oceans. The ITLOS' AO is the first of three advisory opinions, the other two to be issued after due process including by the ongoing ICJ proceedings and the third AO is expected from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), initiated by Chile and Colombia in March 2023.

The mission of all these AOs is to seek explication of the state obligations under related legal regimes toward climate change. While the legal nature of AOs is nonbinding, it provides authoritative interpretations of obligations under global regimes. Positive AOs from the ICJ and IACHRs will surely galvanise global public opinion to impel speedier actions, and the global youth is likely to capitalise on the outcomes for pressurising their politicians to act and not just talk in the COP jamborees. Reports suggest that such AOs are being sought by countries and CSOs in other regional courts including the African Court of Human Rights. The more such AOs from global and regional courts, the better for the countries and communities facing existential threats from the runaway climate

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

29 Hotel amenity

30 City north of

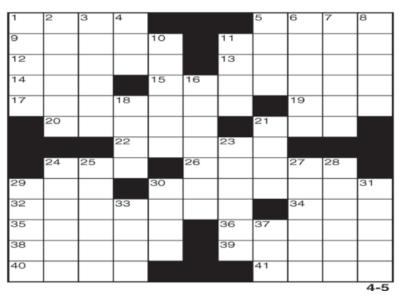
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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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Solidaridad The Paily Star

How Bangladesh's Apparel Industry Can Adapt to EU Sustainability Rules

The Daily Star and Solidaridad jointly organised a roundtable on "Bangladesh's **Apparel Edge: Meeting the European Union's New Sustainability Directive** (EUCSDDD)" on November 13, 2024, at **The Daily Star Centre** in Dhaka. Speakers at the roundtable emphasised the country's readiness to comply with the EUCSDDD, given that the EU market holds a significant share of Bangladesh's garments and apparel exports. **Ensuring the** sustainability of the Bangladeshi garment and textile industry is essential to fostering the country's economic

growth.

>>> Engage meaningfully with stakeholders to identify and mitigate risks, improving due diligence compliance and better positioning Bangladesh's textile and apparel industry in the EU market.

- >> Undertake a collective approach to incentivise the adoption of socially and environmentally responsible business practices, fostering a culture of compliance and sustainability.
- >> Introduce data-driven procurement processes to ensure transparency and accountability in the supply
- >> Take climate-positive actions to achieve cleaner production and carbon neutrality in the supply chain, contributing to improved environmental sustainability.
- >> Foster multi-stakeholder collaboration with national and EU public authorities, industry associations, CSOs, and knowledge institutes to co-create solutions for a smooth transition towards capacity development, technological advancement, and climate-smart financial instruments aimed at improving sustainability in the supply chain.
- >> Encourage innovation and value addition to diversify Bangladesh's export basket, reducing reliance on low-margin products.
- >> Advocate for the integration of the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EUCSDDD) into national regulatory frameworks, including labour and environmental laws, to create a cohesive compliance structure aligned with global changes.

Selim Reza Hassan, Country Manager, Solidaridad

The apparel industry is vital to Bangladesh's economy, employing millions.

industry's sustainability requires significant attention, particularly with the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EUCSDDD). This directive will reshape trade relations and establish new business standards for Bangladesh's textile and apparel sector within the EU market.

While compliance with the directive offers opportunities to maintain and expand market share, it also presents challenges, including the need for significant investment in social and environmental improvements, particularly addressing wages and living incomes. The industry's lowmargin, high-volume business model complicates this process, and brands' moves towards net-zero and climatepositive production practices require further investments in energy and resource efficiency.

Bangladesh must focus on enhancing worker productivity, adopting resource-efficient production methods, and negotiating fair pricing with brands to overcome these challenges. The EUCSDDD provides an opportunity to improve social and environmental compliance, promote cleaner production, and establish fairer value chains. Bangladesh must adapt to this global shift, actively participate in sustainability initiatives, and engage in dialogues to secure a sustainable, resilient, and competitive textile sector. Additionally, the country must adopt carbon-neutral production practices to align with the 'Net Zero'

Having already positioned itself as the second-largest exporter of ready-made garments globally, Bangladesh can successfully comply with brands' sustainability agendas if industry associations, civil society organisations, and the government work together. This collaborative effort will make compliance with the EUCSDDD more achievable and strengthen Bangladesh's position as a sustainable production hub for garments and apparel in the international market.

Compliance with the EUCSDDD will result in better trade relations with the EU market by:

Enhancing the protection of human rights and the environment.

Improving risk management (including liability risks), resilience, innovation, and competitiveness for more sustainable business operations. Creating a level playing field for long-term trade relations.

Improving workers' living conditions, ensuring the sustainability of the industry.



Mohammad **Abdullah Yousuf** Khan, Programme Manager, Textiles & Apparel, Solidaridad The CSDDD

designed to promote a sustainable global economy by enforcing processes to improve human rights, labour rights, and environmental protection. It applies to large EU companies and affects those with supply chains outside the EU, such as Bangladesh's garment industry. These EU companies are required to identify risks in their supply chains and take action to mitigate them. They must also ensure transparency, monitor the effectiveness of their efforts, and embed responsible business practices into their operations. The directive includes a requirement for companies to cooperate in remediation when adverse impacts occur, providing remedies in collaboration with affected stakeholders.

The directive came into force in 2024 and will be gradually implemented until 2029. By 2027, it will apply to EU companies with more than 5,000 employees and €1.5 billion in annual turnover. By 2028, it will extend to businesses with over 3,000 employees and €0.9 billion in revenue. In 2029, it will cover companies with 1,000 employees and €0.45 billion in turnover. This staged implementation means that, by 2029, the directive will apply to a wide range of EU companies, emphasising the importance of due diligence, transparency, and

sustainability. The directive introduces legal and financial implications for EU companies, including civil liability, sanctions, and fines. Companies failing to comply could face



compensation claims, and substantial financial penalties. These consequences underscore the importance of compliance and proactive risk management.

Toremain compliant, factories must map out their entire supply chain and identify risks, including those related to raw materials. Digital tracking systems can enhance transparency and monitor the movement of goods. Factories should strengthen internal systems to align with local and international regulations, regularly assess risks through audits, and adopt environmentally friendly production methods.

In addition, business associations in Bangladesh have a critical role in helping suppliers navigate the evolving compliance landscape. The government plays a crucial role in ensuring compliance with global sustainability standards. Strengthening labour environmental regulations, introducing national grievance mechanisms, and offering financial support to SMEs will help suppliers meet international expectations. By taking these proactive steps, Bangladesh's apparel sector can strengthen its compliance, mitigate risks, and contribute to a more sustainable global supply chain.



Dr. Mohammad Abbas Uddin Shiyak, Associate Professor, **BUTEX**

Bangladesh's apparel sector has played a significant role over

the past 40–50 years, despite facing various challenges such as labour unrest. One of its key advantages lies in the availability of cheap labour and affordable products. Historically, countries like Germany after World War II were known for being the cheapest producers of technology. Similarly, Korea and China followed this path but later transitioned towards value-added products. Today, these nations compete at the highest levels, with their companies rivalling giants like Tesla.

In contrast, over the last 40-50 years, Bangladesh has struggled to shift towards value-added production. The EUCSDDD could provide a strategic advantage in this regard. Proactiveness within the industry will be crucial.

However, this transformation might push small and medium enterprises (SMEs) out of the market. Large corporations are likely to continue growing, as established businesses tend to attract more opportunities and possess the resources to adapt.



Mohammed Zahidullah, Chief Sustainability Officer, DBL

As suppliers, our primary responsibility is to develop our

capacities. This requires investment in market systems to support industry personnel. While we already have many qualified individuals in the sector, we need more strategic thinkers. Previously, the focus was on operational tasks; now, there is a shift

towards strategic approaches. Meeting EUCSDDD standards is an expensive endeavour. Furthermore, we do not receive fair prices from buyers, and there is a pressing need for transparency in pricing. As the cost of raw materials and labour rises, the prices of finished products continue to decline. This makes it challenging for the industry to invest further in sustainability. With the right pricing sustainability however, becomes achievable.



Mohammad Monower Hossain, Head of Sustainability, Team Group

Data is a decisive factor when it comes to effectively aligning with all directives. However, apart from the top 200

companies, data collection systems

strategies are communicated and justified. One notable initiative under the BGMEA was the development of a data disclosure platform for sustainability. This initiative was specifically tailored to support SMEs.

remain inadequate, particularly for

SMEs. Buyers face a significant gap in

this area. Consumers' unwillingness

to pay more cannot serve as an

excuse; rather, it's about how pricing

Brands also need to bear increased responsibility under legal directives. They cannot simply approve or disapprove of companies by ticking compliance boxes. Instead, brands must work collaboratively with their value chain partners. Bangladesh's RMG industry has consistently emerged stronger from every challenge it has faced and is wellpositioned to comply with the EU CSDDD.



Willem Grimminck, Director, One to Watch

Sustainability already a key focus for business leaders; however, it must

also be reflected in their operations. European buyers need to know where their products come from and whether the production processes are fair and sustainable, benefiting both people and the planet. Replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy is a quick win for garment factories in Bangladesh to stay competitive with EU buyers.

Brands also need to contribute to sustainability improvements through smart financial instruments, capacity building, and technology. Buyers must take responsibility for sustainability in the supply chain by ensuring fair pricing and transparency in business case development.

One to Watch provides green financial solutions to companies, helping them reduce emissions in line with the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). Our work holds significant potential in Bangladesh, where the CSDDD presents a major opportunity for the apparel sector.

As a company or factory, it is essential to think about the next generation of leaders and workers. Brands in the Netherlands are actively engaging with sustainability issues, and factories and companies can support these brands by offering insights and recommendations. Additionally, skill development within the apparel sector and financing sustainable initiatives are critical components of the CSDDD.



Dr Carla Dohmwirth, Implementation Lead, IGS, GIZ

One key feature that makes the CSDDD truly unique participatory

Effective stakeholder approach. engagement plays a crucial role in this framework. Article 13 of the CSDDD mandates the involvement of stakeholders in key stages of the due diligence process, including risk assessments, the development of corrective action plans, and the provision of remedies to affected individuals. To ensure inclusivity, the article also requires international companies to address barriers that hinder stakeholders' participation. For example, companies must prevent retaliation by local employers against workers who engage in these processes.

This participatory model offers Bangladeshi workers and their communities a valuable opportunity to voice their concerns and needs directly to international companies. Their inclusion is vital for the success of due diligence, as those directly affected have the most accurate understanding of workplace and community conditions.

In addition to engaging stakeholders, the EUCSDDD empowers NGOs and workers'

representatives to act as "watchdogs." They can file complaints against companies under the scope of the law with the competent supervisory authority in the European Union. Although establishing a direct link between a violation or risk and a company's actions can be challenging, the process has proven impactful. instance, under Germany's Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (2023), several complaints against international companies garnered significant media attention. prompting those companies to take



Ashfike Khalaque, Programme Coordinator, Fair Wear Foundation We need to identify risks within the

supply chain. One of our challenges in implementing the EUCSDDD is training, particularly with the introduction of new technological modules related to labour rights issues. Additionally, sustainability challenges, waste management, conservation, and emission reduction, must be addressed.



Tanzila Tajreen, Senior Policy Advisor, The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh

Proactiveness crucial. The existing and forthcoming regulations present a significant opportunity for progress. We must also explore diversification within our export basket. Within the RMG industry, there is considerable potential for diversification, and should actively pursue these

opportunities. To remain competitive, we need to transition towards high-value production processes. Another critical issue for discussion is pricing, particularly in the countries where the brands are based. While our discussions on this matter may not yield immediate results, it is important to keep the conversation ongoing to maintain pressure.

Active engagement in sustainability is equally essential. The EUCSDDD emphasises worker safety and rights, as well as the environmental wellbeing linked to our production processes. Sustainability reporting demonstrates how environmentally friendly our companies are in their operations. Many of these measures are already in place, but more effective communication is needed to maximise their impact.



Ole Rosenborg Justesen, Sector Counsellor, The Embassy of Denmark, Bangladesh

The new EU directives

due diligence on and ESG reporting have established a high standard for accountability and transparency, not only for European businesses but also for their suppliers outside the EU. We must not underestimate the challenges that our Bangladeshi partners will face in implementing these directives. This is why we are collaborating closely with the government, the business sector, and trade unions in Bangladesh to improve occupational safety, health standards, and regulations, among

It is crucial for Bangladesh to position itself competitively in the evolving landscape of ESG regulations. Strengthening the framework for investments in sustainable production processes, infrastructure, transport, and logistics is vital for Bangladesh to establish itself as a sustainable production hub.



Fazlee Shamim Ehsan. Executive President BKMEA, Proprietor, Fatullah *Apparels* As we know, the

EUCSDDD is a guideline transitioning into law for all European countries, making it essential for us to prioritise compliance. Hence, I would like to urge all stakeholders to approach this with utmost care. While this is not entirely new to us, the reporting and grievance mechanisms must be conducted with precision. Therefore, I strongly encourage everyone to take the EUCSDDD seriously and implement it with the highest level of importance.

We already have two sustainable business hubs under BGMEA and BKMEA, and we have been developing active grievance mechanisms over the past two years. However, our approach must also evolve in a new direction. Thus far, we have focused primarily on the manufacturing aspect and have not adequately addressed the broader dimensions of sustainability

Sixty percent of our buyers are small and medium-sized companies with fewer than 500 employees, which means they do not fall under the same regulatory framework as larger buyers. To address this gap, we need to train our legal practitioners to handle situations where buyers breach their contracts. By implementing such mechanisms, we can ensure fair and long-term relationships between suppliers and buyers.



Shuly Aktar, Senior Assistant Secretary, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments

We learned about numerous standards following the Rana Plaza incident and had to work diligently to implement them. It is now essential to align our own standards with the EUCSDDD. The implementation process is complex and demands meticulous planning. To maintain focus throughout this process, we must establish a unified standard.

With only 44 inspectors currently in place, addressing all issues across all sections poses a significant challenge. This represents a considerable burden on the government, making it crucial to involve all stakeholders in the process.



Sara van Hoeve, First Secretary, Economic Affairs & Private Sector Development, The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh

The EUCSDDD aims to increase transparency and accountability across global supply chains, including Bangladesh as a production hub. It will support businesses in operating the right way, ensuring that business is not done at the expense of people or the environment. Together with brands, manufacturers, trade unions, and civil society organizations, the Netherlands and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Bangladesh are working to mitigate risks in the supply chains and ensure that business is conducted in an environmentally and

socially responsible manner. With the EUCSDDD, the guidelines and standards for responsible business will no longer be voluntary for many companies, particularly those in the EU. Over the past ten years, Bangladesh has made significant progress in sustainability compliance, which can be leveraged as a competitive edge in

the future. In the Netherlands, we consider it crucial to include the voices of supplier countries, such as Bangladesh, while discussing legislation.

The EUCSDDD will help create a level playing field. We must carefully examine the scope and impacts of this legislation on Bangladesh. This legislation safeguards supply chain transparency and sustainability by ensuring that buyers also take responsibility, something we must keep in mind.



Tanjim Ferdous, In-charge, NGOs and Foreign Missions, **Business Development** Team, The Daily Star The apparel sector is

crucial to Bangladesh's economy, employing 4.4 million people, with women making up 60% of the workforce. The European Union (EU) is our largest market, accounting for nearly 70% of garment and textile

The newly introduced EUCSDDD sets higher standards for transparency, human rights, and environmental compliance. While this presents challenges, it also offers opportunities for growth.

DHAKA SUNDAY DECEMBER 15, 2024, AGRAHAYAN 30, 1431 BS

What to

T SPORTS NCLT20 Rangpur vs Rajshahi Live from 9.30 am Chattogram vs Barishal Live from 1.30 pm **STAR SPORTS**

SELECT HD1 Premier League Man City vs Man Utd Live from 10:30 pm Star Sports 1 Australia vs India Third Test, Day 3

Live from 6:20 am (Monday) **SONY TEN 2** New Zealand vs England Third Test, Day 3 Live from 4:00 am (Monday)

A SPECIAL GESTURE FROM STOKES & CO:

New Zealand's Tim Southee. who is playing his final Test at the Seddon Park, received a guard of honour from **England players yesterday.** The visiting side, led by Ben Stokes, showed this heartfelt gesture as the retiring pacer walked out to bat on the opening day of the third Test in Hamilton. Southee, accompanied by his daughter and teammates, took to the field at the start of the play, marking an emotional moment in a career spanning 107 Tests. The 36-year-old then quickfired a 10-ball-23, helping the Black Caps breach the 300-run mark and finish the day at 315-9.





BCB seeks ICC clarification over Shakib's bowling suspension

SPORTS REPORTER

A Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) official yesterday said they have sought clarification from the International Cricket Council (ICC) to understand whether the bowling suspension imposed on Shakib Al Hasan by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will also be applicable in international cricket.

"We have sought clarification from the ICC. When they inform us, we can talk about how we will go about this matter. The BCB will clarify its position regarding him soon," BCB's cricket operations in-charge Shahriar Nafees told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We got the mail yesterday [Friday]. We will assess it and then decide what to do," he added.

Earlier on Friday, Shakib was slapped with a suspension by the ECB after his bowling action during a County Championship match for Surrey in September was found to be illegal at independent testing at Loughborough University earlier this month. This suspension, which officially began on December 10, would not allow Shakib to bowl in any competition organised by the ECB.

However, according to section 11.3 of ICC Regulations for the Review of Bowlers Reported with Suspected Illegal Bowling Actions, ICC and other cricket boards can also enforce this suspension.

Shakib, who has not played international cricket for Bangladesh since the Test series against India in September-October, is currently in Sri Lanka, taking part in the Lanka T10 for Galle Marvels.

Diabate 'inspires'

Mohammedan, frustrates Abahani again

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club's dependency on their long-serving striker Souleymane Diabate continues as they secured a 1-0 victory over archrivals Abahani in a crucial Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) fixture in Cumilla yesterday.

The 33-year-old Malian, who had scored the decisive goal against holders Bashundhara Kings in the previous match, rose high to nod home a welljudged cross from Minhajur Abedin from close range in first-half stoppage time.

Ahead of this much-anticipated clash, Mohammedan coach Alfaz Ahmed's decision to rest six players including Diabate, adjudged player of the match, and Minhajur -- during Tuesday's Federation Cup encounter against Rahmatganj MFS eventually paid off, as the fresh players played vital roles in the closely contested affair.

Since making his debut for the Black and Whites in 2019, Diabate has played 11 league matches against Abahani, scoring eight goals in seven of those matches, in which Mohammedan won one, drew four, and lost two. Diabate also frustrated Abahani by scoring four goals in last year's Federation Cup final, where Mohammedan clinched the trophy with a 4-2 victory in tiebreakers.

"There is no question about Diabate's goal-scoring ability, and he is still our main player, who regularly inspires

others on the field," said Alfaz. "He keeps lighting us up with his performances. Compared to last season, he has been performing well from the start of this season, and we are looking forward to seeing more from him in the coming days."

expressed satisfaction Alfaz after securing three points but

MATCH	RESULT	SCORERS
Mohammedan vs Abahani	1 - 0	Diabate (45+2)
Kings vs Rahmatganj	4 - 1	Fernandes (10), Ferreira (54+1), Rana (53), Tapu (76); Jibon (12)
Wanderers vs Police	0 - 4	Al Amin (36, 42), Dipok (79), Kirmane (84)
0 0		

acknowledged there is still a long way to early in the second half before Arman go as Mohammedan aim for the elusive professional league title this season.

"We have already crossed two big hurdles, and we need to stay focused in the remaining matches to avoid dropping points," said Alfaz, adding that Abahani, despite missing their foreign players, were still strong enough to challenge Mohammedan.

At Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium, Mohammedan dominated the opening half, ending up with a deserving lead. Abahani, however, responded strongly after the interval, creating several chances -- most notably, Mohammad Ibrahim's powerful shot came off the post

Faisal Akash narrowly missed the target late in the stoppage time.

"I am disappointed with the result because we deserved at least one point," said Abahani head coach Maruful Haque, adding that they never felt the absence of foreign players in terms of ball possession and creating chances against Mohammedan.

With three consecutive victories. Mohammedan now top the table with nine points, two ahead of secondplaced Brothers Union and three clear of the joint third-placed teams Abahani, Bashundhara Kings, and Rahmatganj MFS.

Liton's form in focus as Tigers begin final assignment of 2024

SPORTS REPORTER

Stand-in skipper Liton Das's form will be in focus as Bangladesh begin their final international assignment of the year - a three-match T20I series against the West Indies - with the series opener taking place at the Arnos Vale Ground in Kingstown, St Vincent on Monday.

The wicketkeeper-batter has had a horrid time in both white-ball formats this year, averaging just 1.20 in five ODIs and 18.25 in 17 T20Is outings.

With the added responsibility of leadership thrust upon him in the absence of regular skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, it will be interesting to see whether the experienced cricketer can inspire both himself and the team during the T20I series after the 3-0 drubbing they received in the preceding ODI series in St Kitts.

Liton, who has led the Tigers in this format once before against New Zealand in Auckland in 2021, could not have asked for a better venue to change his fortune as it was this very ground where he scored his lone half-century in white ball cricket this year, an unbeaten 54 against Afghanistan during a T20 World Cup match.

Just like Liton, Bangladesh will also be looking for a change of fortunes in T20Is against West Indies, having lost their previous five meetings against the Caribbean side with their last win coming in 2018, when the Tiger won by 36 runs in the second match of a three-match series they

 $To \, end \, this \, cycle \, of \, disappoint ment, Bangladesh$ would be hoping that Soumya Sarkar, who hit a run-a-ball 73 in the third ODI against West Indies,



will replicate his recent good performances in the format.

The southpaw was named the player-of-thetournament in the recently-concluded Global Super League held in Guyana after finishing as the highest scorer with 188 runs for champions Rangpur Riders.

"I came here [Caribbean] few days earlier. I played in the GSL, it was a good opportunity for me, I had a good tournament," Soumya said ahead of the series-opener.

"It's not about which is the big team and which is the small team. It's about which team plays better for 40 overs on the field. If we can do well in all three departments, batting, bowling and fielding, we believe that we can easily beat them.

"They are a good team in T20s. But rather than focusing on that, we need to focus on giving our best. That's how we can win the match," he said, adding that he hoped the bowlers will bounce back from their poor showing in the ODI series.

Meanwhile, West Indies have had an up and down year in T20Is, winning 14 off 24 games and failing to qualify for the knockout stage of the T20 World Cup they jointly hosted with the USA.

The hosts will get the services of their T20 stars like Rovman $\bar{\text{Powell}}$, Brandon King, Johnson Charles and Nicholas Pooran in the series and will hope to carry the winning momentum from the 50-over series into the shortest format.

The match is scheduled to start at 06:00 am Bangladesh time and will be telecast live on T

Shanto shines on return

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto marks a brilliant comeback from injury, smashing 80 off 54 deliveries for Rajshahi Division in their National Cricket League (NCL) T20 fixture against Barishal Division at Sylhet Outer Stadium yesterday. Despite the valiant effort of Shanto after over a month-long layoff from injury, sustained during last month's Afghanistan ODI series in Sharjah, Rajshahi lost by five wickets in a high-scoring thriller. Meanwhile, in other third-round matches, Rangpur Division, Dhaka Metro, and Chattogram Division secured victories in their respective encounters against Sylhet Division, Khulna Division, and Dhaka Division.

PHOTO: NCL

MANCHESTER DERBY

City crisis overshadows United's malaise

REUTERS, LONDON

It would have seemed inconceivable at the start of the Premier League season that by the time the Manchester derby rolled around it would be Pep Guardiola's City enduring a crisis so serious it has distracted attention from United's malaise.

That has really taken some doing. After all, United sacked manager Erik ten Hag in October, parted ways with sporting director Dan Ashworth this week after just five months and sit 13th in the table under new manager Ruben Amorim.

United's 3-2 home defeat by Nottingham last weekend Forest underlined the size of the task Amorim faces at Old Trafford.

Yet it is City's meltdown which is the main talking point ahead of Sunday's clash at

The Etihad Stadium. Guardiola's side have won once in their last 10 matches in all competitions, sit fourth in the Premier League, eight points behind leaders Liverpool, and are in danger of a humiliating exit from the Champions League. Beset with injuries to key players and drained of confidence, City's 2-0 defeat by Juventus on Wednesday had some pundits declaring the end of Guardiola's golden era.

All things are relative though. Since United's last Premier League title in 2013, City have won it seven times, six under Guardiola including the last four.

> City still possess a squad full of serial winners and Guardiola, having signed a two-year contract extension, is hardly likely to walk away or be shown the door any

time soon. The Spaniard is not immune to criticism though and City fans will demand a return to business as usual, starting with the visit of

United on Sunday. "Of course, I question myself in the good moments and the bad moments. I was stable in the good moments and I'm stable in the bad moments," Guardiola said after defeat in Turin left his side in 22nd place in the 36team Champions League group.



Way Way Shai Marma captivates the audience during the 5th National Age-Group Gymnastics Championship, sponsored by Sheltech Group, at the National Sports Council (NSC) gymnasium in Dhaka yesterday. Way, who competed in six events in the 13-15-year-old category for Quantum Cosmo School and College, finished first in parallel bars, high bar, and floor exercise, while securing runner-up positions in the rings and vault events. Quantum Cosmo, established in Bandarban with the aim of accomodating under-priviledged children, claimed an overwhelming 70 out of 80 medals across six age-group categories -- ranging from seven to 15 -- while BKSP bagged the rest.





BANK COMPANY ACT Janata Bank exempted so it can lend more to Beximco

MD MEHEDI HASAN

State-run Janata Bank has been partly exempted from the Bank Company Act-1991 so that it can lend money to Beximco Group, a loan defaulter.

Bangladesh Bank had done this with the government's consent so that the workers of the conglomerate get three months' salary, said Mohammad Shahriar Siddiqui, director of the Banking Regulation and Policy Department-1 at the central bank.

The BB issued a notification with immediate effect on December 12, stating that the Janata Bank had been exempted from part of sections 26 and 27 of the act.

As per the sections, Beximco, the largest borrower from Janata Bank, is not eligible to get more loans because it's a defaulter and it has borrowed over 25 percent of Janata's capital.

Beximco has so far borrowed Tk 23,328 crore from the Janata, and SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Construction work is going on at the Panthakunja Park near Sonargaon intersection in the capital. Bangladesh Gacch Rakkha Andolon demonstrated at the park yesterday demanding cessation of the construction work for an elevated expressway ramp that they said would destroy park. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Unite to build a fair, inclusive Bangladesh

Says Tarique; Fakhrul hopes for polls soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday said his party aims to build a democratic, fair and inclusive Bangladesh through the united efforts of

"Let us all unite to build a democratic Bangladesh with a non-discriminatory, inclusive and liberal society," he told

a views-exchange meeting with a group of physically disabled individuals at the LGED auditorium in the capital's Agargaon.

Tarique, who attended the meeting virtually, pledged that if BNP comes to power, his government will ensure equal rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities, treating them with the same sincerity as all other citizens of the country.

He said his party is committed to taking concrete steps to improve the quality of life of the people with special needs, focusing on ensuring their economic independence, social empowerment and human dignity.

US, regional diplomats meet to discuss Syria crisis

Arab FMs urge support for 'peaceful' transition

Top diplomats from the United States, Turkey, the European Union and Arab nations met in Jordan yesterday for talks on Syria as regional and global powers scramble for influence over whatever government replaces ousted President Bashar al-Assad.

Outgoing US President Joe Biden's administration has begun engaging with the victorious rebel groups including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which led a lightning assault that ended in the capture of Damascus on Sunday.

Biden sent Secretary of State Antony Blinken to the region this week to seek support for principles that Washington hopes will guide Syria's political transition,

Meanwhile, Syria's northern neighbour Turkey has for years supported Syrian opposition forces looking to oust Assad and is poised to play an influential role in

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on Friday that his country's embassy in the Syrian capital would resume work soon after Turkey's intelligence chief visited

this week. The embassy opened yesterday after a 12-year closure, a week after rebels toppled longtime leader Bashar al-Assad. Representatives of the rebels' transitional government were present at the ceremony at the embassy in the capital's Rawda district, which also hosts other diplomatic missions.

Syria's neighbour Jordan was hosting the gathering in Aqaba. Russia and Iran, who were Assad's key supporters, were not invited.

Blinken, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pederson,

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

POLITICAL REFORMS Rizwana's comment misleading, incorrect Says Rizvi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday criticised recent comments of Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan on political and terming reforms. those "misleading" and "incorrect".

Speaking to reporters after paying homage at the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in Mirpur yesterday, Rizvi said Rizwana's remarks hinted at depoliticisation and could strain the relationship between politicians and the civil society.

statement by "This the adviser is wrong and misleading. All reforms have been carried out through the parliament. Various demands raised by the people were implemented in parliament, and politicians played a significant role in this process," Rizvi said.

On Friday, Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan had questioned the SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Intellectuals failed to organise consent for a democratic republic

Salimullah Khan tells Star discussion on Martyred Intellectuals' Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Salimullah Khan yesterday said the task of intellectuals is to realise consent for the state. They constitute the civil society while the organ functioning as political society realises

"Intellectuals constitute civil society, which is another name for ideological state apparatuses. In Bangladesh, intellectuals failed to produce that consensus or that ideological persuasion in favour

of the ruling class ever since gaining independence as sovereign republic," he added.

"What I'm trying to point out is the two pillars on which the edifice of the state stands are civil society and political society -- one being the pillar of consent and the other of coercion. When a state runs on the basis of consent, it constitutes a republic, a democratic state."

solely on coercion. It needs to operate on public consent, especially if it claims to be a democratic republic. Intellectuals are a vital cog in this process; they enable the state to function based on public consent.

Khan, a professor of General Education Bangladesh, was speaking at a discussion PHOTO ON PAGE 2

titled "the role of intellectuals in reforming the

The Daily Star organised the discussion to mark the Martyred Intellectuals' Day, and also as part of storytelling sessions on the sidelines of an exhibition titled "36 Days of July Saluting the Bravehearts" at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

Salimullah Khan, a leading academic of the country, said the history of the last 53 years in Bangladesh is a history of the "failure of

> intellectuals to organise consent of the ruled for the ruling class, and that is what made an event like the July-August revolution not only likely but real.

> "Therefore, as generation of intellectuals failed them, the new generation of students had perforce to lead an upsurge as harbingers of a new generation of organic intellectuals."

Khan said the Pakistanis killed He observed that a state cannot run intellectuals just ahead of Bangladesh's victory as they understood they (intellectuals) had made people conscious about the neocolonial rule of the Pakistanis during the independence struggle.

He described a section of intellectuals as "traditional" ones who are conservatives, if Program at the University of Liberal Arts not outright reactionaries ... who comprised SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Man dies after 'cops pushed him off bridge' Police claim he jumped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A man was killed after being allegedly pushed off a bridge by police personnel in Kushtia's Bheramara upazila on Friday

Rafiqul Islam Dudu, 44, was the owner of a tea stall in Chandipur under Chandgam Union. He was the younger brother of Mostafizur Rahman, general secretary of the union's Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal unit.

Denying the allegation, police said Dudu jumped off the bridge to escape the law enforcers.

Locals and witnesses said a fivemember police team led by Bheramara Police Station's Sub-Inspector Salauddin went to Chandipur around 7:00pm.

Four of them stood near Bridge-4 of the Ganges-Kobadak project while the other one went to Dudu's tea stall, which was around 50 metres away.

When Dudu went to the bridge, he got locked in altercation with the cops. At one stage, the policemen started beating

The Daily Star correspondent talked to at least two persons who claimed that they witnessed the incident.

Seeking anonymity, one of them told The Daily Star that he saw a policeman pushed Dudu off the bridge. Then, the team went below the bridge to get Dudu. He was taken to a local health complex.

Contacted, Bheramara Upazila Health SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

AL leader Siraj 'abducted, freed after payment of ransom'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Misbah Uddin Siraj, former organising secretary of Awami League central committee, was allegedly abducted, assaulted, and then released after payment of ransom early Friday in Sylhet, said sources in his family.

Siraj, a resident the city's Shamimabagh area, was abducted by a group of men on bikes near Fazil Chisth area when he was going to a relative's house on an auto rickshaw late



them and the abductors over ransom. family members, negotiations, paid the ransom. Following the payment, Siraj was dropped off in the city's Sagor Dighir Par area around 3:00am on Friday, they said.

said there were a negotiations between

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



SELLING LIKE HOT CAKES...A sure sign of winter's arrival is the sight of people of all ages lining up at street vendors for traditional rice cakes. The photo shows customers crowding a roadside cake stall to indulge in these seasonal delicacies fresh off the stove in the capital's Farmgate area yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Won't spare anyone, even if it's Prof Yunus

Says Sarjis about those who'd betray spirit of the July uprising

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sarjis Alam, general secretary of the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation, yesterday said they would spare no one who would betray the ideals of the July mass uprising.

"From position, we want to request everyone police, the army, and the interim government -- that we are not power-hungry or blind agents of anyone. If we feel that you are betraying the



Sarjis Alam

spirit of the mass uprising, we will not spare anyone, even if you are Professor Muhammad Yunus," he said.

He was addressing a programme at Rajshahi Zila Parishad auditorium, organised by the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation to provide financial assistance to families of those killed in

SEE PAGE 7 COL 3